

At Home in the World

Architecture, the Public and the Writings of Hannah Arendt

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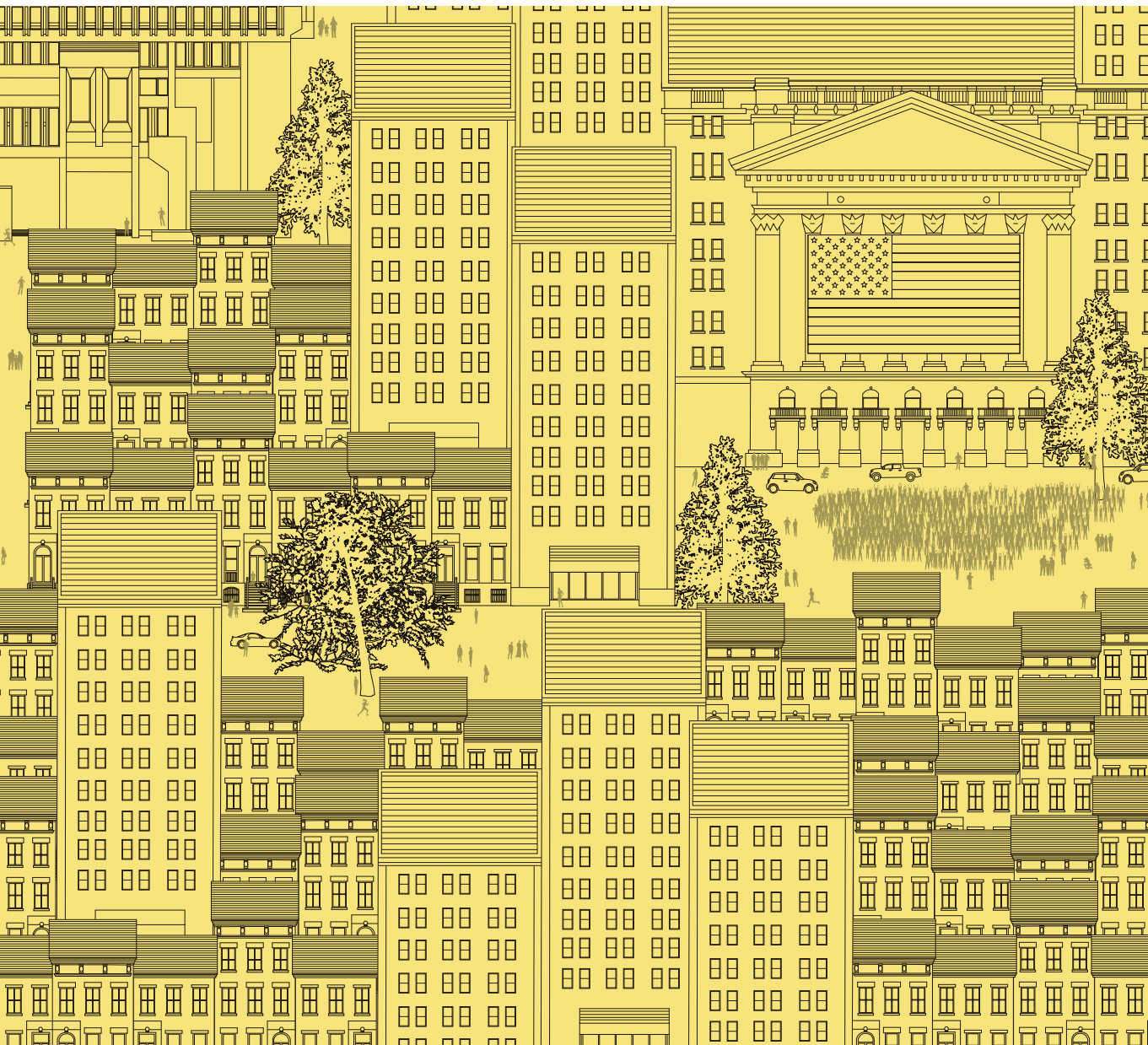
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HANS TEERDS

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ARCHITECTURE, THE PUBLIC
AND THE WRITINGS
OF HANNAH ARENDT



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This dissertation has been approved by the

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HANS TEERDS

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to **Mirjam**
to **Levi, Micha and Abe**
to **my parents**



Corridor in front of the Department of Architecture at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of the Delft University of Technology. October 2017

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The need to think can never be stilled by allegedly definite insights of “wise men”; it can be satisfied only through thinking, and the thoughts I had yesterday will satisfy this need today only to the extent that I want and am able to think them anew.’ [Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 88]

Often dissertations are not the most pleasant books to read. Their scientific character, their nuance, their urgency to discuss all sorts of phenomena towards their very grammar and syntax, or their academic style of writings is boring and tedious. Admitted – to open this dissertation with such remark is quite tricky. It can be read as a warning to the reader: be aware, this is a dissertation! Or it comes back to the writer as a boomerang: did I manage to offer something that is actually readable – or even more: something that is nice to read? As is clear from the book itself: I did not manage to reduce the amount of words, which makes it probably an extra challenge to start reading. However, part of the size is caused by the trial to make this dissertation actually readable. I always had in mind to urge and clarify the issues at hand through clear examples, personal experiences or literary reflections, as if it is an extended essay.

Somewhere in 2005, I promised a Dutch website to review the dissertation of the architectural historian Wouter Vanstiphout, *Maak een stad*, on the figure of the architect J.H. van den Broek. It was published shortly before the summer, and I decided to take it with me on our holiday trip to Crete. Although I was used to take not only ‘literature-light’ with me on journeys, taking a dissertation to read on the beaches of that beautiful Greek island was quite a gamble. Lucky me, it worked out well. Even better, particularly the introduction to this dissertation did read as a whodunit on how the ideas beyond the initial plan of the dissertation were taken down by new insights deepened from documents studied at the archives of the Rotterdam municipality and the Dutch Architecture Institute. Scientific research can be intense, unpredictable, and even thrilling. Although the research presented here is not based on archival investigation (only to a very limited part), but better can be described as literature study, an exploration of the the realm of thoughts and theory, in order to open up a different perspective on ideas about the public aspects of architecture, some of these thrilling aspects I recognize also in my own journey. Not that I can write like Vanstiphout, his dissertation as well as the dissertation of his promotor, the architectural historian Auke van der Woud, *Het lege land*, always has been an example of high standard for me, challenging me during the actual work of writing this dissertation.

Looking back, it is not so clear where my own journey started, but when asked to pinpoint at least an early moment of ambition to bridge architecture and philosophy, I have to mention my time as a student in Delft, and particularly my membership of the C.S.F.R., a protestant Christian student association with ‘local branches’ in different cities of the Netherlands. I became a member only in the second year of my studies, particularly since I was full of doubts about Christi-

anity, religion, science, and society, and was eager to discuss these doubts. The C.S.F.R. form me was the right place to be that time: at the core of this student-society was the will to study, to investigate and debate the deep and thrilling questions of life. We organized ourselves, besides a series of general lectures and broader conferences, in small groups, that met each other once a week in order to discuss readings from the Bible and beyond, often encircling particular theme's. Every month another book, reflecting upon the propositions behind as well as its consequences for our own everyday lives and believes. For me, that has been the way to discover, investigate and discuss a broad range of theological, philosophical, historical and political issues, as well as novels and reflections on the arts. It is through these extensive studies and discussions that I explored the fields of literature and philosophy, sociology and theology. It also is through these studies that I developed a fascination for Christians like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Kaj Munk and Martin Luther King jr. – exemplary figures that were able to stand up against Nazism, Racism, and other wrongs in society, inspired by their reading of the Bible and understanding of the life and death of Christ. To stand up and resist, to speak and act – that inspires me.

Parallel to that, this more fundamental reflections I missed in my studies. I experienced myself being immersed in architecture at the Faculty – and although I really loved it, I also experienced the study felt short on particular the questions behind these nice, thrilling, and innovative projects (it was the end of the nineties, the very moment Dutch architecture was celebrated around the world, particularly because of its remarkable forms, its inventiveness, innovation and courage). What good is this for the world?

At the C.S.F.R. we were also good in organizing lectures and conferences. I myself, together with Jacco Zwemer, Thomas van Dijk and others, once organized a conference in order to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our student association, putting forward the theme of tolerance. We coined that specific theme since we recognized several urgencies, both in our own protestant background as well as in society these days. Within the religious world, we recognized a huge impasse in celebrating diversity as well as a certain reluctance with the approach to other religions on the one side, or the eagerness to diminish differences that there undeniable are there and that are worth discussing. The same could be argued about society in the end of the nineties. A neo-liberal spirit dominated the cultural and political landscape of The Netherlands and other Western countries, which somehow found its apology in Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*. This spirit did not leave so much room for differences, or it was in a modus of superfluous indifference. Religion particularly was treated as redundant, something of the past that quickly will fade away. The question in these cases surely was how to deal with differences in view, in Christianity particularly with minorities. Is there room in society to differ, to explore and expose different worldviews? Coincidentally, after we had worked for about two years on the conference, just two months before the conference day was about to happen, the events of 9/11 pushed the theme in a very terrible and unimaginable way. The theme of tolerance (the room for plurality in society), the individual ability to stand up and act, no matter its consequences, as well as the happenings of 9/11 find their echo in this dissertation study.

The C.S.F.R. has brought me deep and long lasting friendships. First, certainly, with the three other members of the board, Johan Morren, Abjan Jacobse and Arno Nobel. For one year the four of us took responsibility for the organization and thematic issues. We were ambitious, issued even theme's like 'the meaning

of life', and 'the deity of Jesus'. We still meet, together with other members of our generation, Mathijs Bos, Willem-Pieter van Breugel, Pieter Quist, Bastiaan Roodenburg, Eric ten Voorde, Jacco Zwemer, in order to discuss the newest publications or classical books that raised our attention, although I have to admit that I could not join the meetings in the past three years particularly because of writing this dissertation. I owe a lot to our meetings and discussions, and I look forward to continue our conversations. While writing this dissertation, I always had in mind that it should be book that we could put on the table and can discuss together. In a way, it also is an apology to you of my view on architecture – how important the build environment actually is. I never could explain, until this moment.

Probably the first time I heard of Hannah Arendt has been also in the context of C.S.F.R. meetings. The very moment a group of students, a bit further in their studies, finished their studies, they started to discuss the *Vita Activa*, *The Human Condition*, as a trial to reflect upon their coming working-life. Amongst these students Martijn van den Boogaart, Arjan Gooijer, Reinhard Hameeteman, and Aart Nederveen, that has been dear friends along the route of my journey. By mentioning your names, I want to express my gratitude for all the *amicae et amicique* that I met at the C.S.F.R., first in Delft, and later in other cities, older and younger generations. All the meetings we had, the arguments we shared, the collaborations in various projects, have had their undeniable impact on my own views on the world.

However, philistine as I was, I also bought the book of Arendt, but stored it immediately on my book shelf for a couple of years untouched, until the very moment that I started my graduation project on the former sugar factory in Halfweg, exactly halfway between Amsterdam and Haarlem. I graduated in a studio organized by the department of Urbanism, specifically by professor Han Meyer (in collaboration with professor Bruno DeMeulder of the Catholic University of Leuven). He offered us the possibility to read the first draft of what would become the first volume of a series of handbooks on urbanism – and in that draft, suddenly Arendt's name came up in a brief reflection on the distinction between public and private spaces. The name, of course, immediately attracted my attention, as well as the brief note in that text on her recognition of an in-between realm, the 'social' realm, that affected both the private and the public spaces. Only after my studies, when professor Umberto Barbieri, offered me a position as a researcher at the Chair of Public Building, and I started to think about a research-proposal that would end in a dissertation. Hannah Arendt's distinction between the public, the private and the social came back to mind. From that moment onwards, I started reading Arendt. In the meantime, lots of other projects attracted my attention. But they – organizing the lecture series 'Architectural Positions' in 2007, editing the anthology *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* in 2009 (both together with Tom Avermaete and Klaske Havik), joining the editorial board of the architectural journal *OASE* in 2007 (Tom Avermaete, Pnina Avidar, David de Bruijn, Dlane Camp, Joachim DeClerck, Michiel Dehaene, Christoph Grafe, Klaske Havik, Anne Holtrop, Job Floris, Johan Lagae, Ruben Molendijk, Bruno Notteboom, Véronique Patteeuw, Gus Tielens, Christophe Van Gerrewey, Tom Vandeputte, Jeroen Visschers, Hüsnü Yegenoglu, and our graphic designer Karel Martens, often helped by Aagje Martens), publishing the pamphlet *Levend Landschap, Manifest voor stad en land* (together with Johan van der Zwart and Clemens Driessen, 2012), collaborating with David Mulder and Max Cohen de Lara of the Amsterdam-based archi-

tectural office XML in a studio on parliament-buildings – helped me to become much more specific about the debate on architecture, the city and public space, and how the writings of Arendt might contribute on our reflections upon that debate.

Obviously, my colleagues and the several student-assistants I met in Delft, first at the Chair of Public Building chaired by first Umberto Barbieri and later Michiel Riedijk, later at the Chair of Methods and Analysis, chaired by Tom Avermaete, as well as those that I met during other collaborations within our Faculty, have largely contributed towards the development of the arguments I present in this dissertation. They have contributed consciously and unconsciously, with their own projects, writings, discussions. There are too many of you to mention, let be clear that I am grateful to you all, even if I only mention the names of people I have collaborated most extensively with: Dick van Gameren, Esther Gramsbergen, MaartenJan Hoekstra, Susanne Komossa, Esin Komez, Marc Schoonderbeek, Pierijn van der Putt, and Leeke Reinders, as well as the staff and guest teachers of the Chair of Methods and Analysis: besides Tom Avermaete and Klaske Havik, Oscar Andrade, Lilith van Assem, Edwin Gardner, Robert Gorny, Jorge Mejia Hernandez, Lieke van Hooijdonk, Dominique Pieters, Armina Pilav, Dorina Pllumbi, Herman Prast, Elsbeth Ronner, Mike Schäfer, Jules Schoonman, Lara Schrijver, Willemijn Wilms Floet, Chris Woltjes and Leonardo Zuccaro Marchi. The sphere in our Chair is open, ambitious and challenging, on the basis of acknowledging the range of experiences and capacity that each of us represents. That, actually, is an extraordinary atmosphere, for which I am grateful everyday (even if I was often to busy writing this dissertation or organizing all other projects I participate in, to join you for lunch). Great memories I particularly have to our Methods & Analysis participation in the Venice Biennale of 2014, curating the exhibition on the ‘balcony’, as well as to the half year that Yoshiharu Tsukamoto and Momoyo Kaijima from the Tokyo based architectural office Atelier Bow-Wow attended our chair as visiting professor.

I, obviously, owe a great debt to the range of students that I met during teaching studio, seminars and lectures, both in the bachelor as well as in the masters of the architectural track at our Faculty. Your responses, questions, practical issues, ambitions, critics and sometimes naivety challenged me to continue, rethink and not take anything to easily or for granted.

The project of writing this dissertation lasted so long that professor Umberto Barbieri, at the very moment of finishing this writing, has been retired already for a while. It is however Umberto that offered me the freedom to go my own path, for which I am very grateful. The same counts for professor Hans Achterhuis, with whom I had several conversations about Hannah Arendt’s ideas from a philosophical perspective. Achterhuis is a well-known philosopher in The Netherlands, and I contacted him just prior to his retirement as professor of philosophy at the University of Twente, in Enschede. Also after his retirement, we had a couple of meetings which were challenging and inspiring – they made clear to me how particularly the human activity of ‘work’ is within the writings of Arendt, and how that notion could function as a frame to investigate the field of architecture. However, writing took too long, and also professor Achterhuis could not figure as promotor anymore. I however remember the meetings, his willingness to follow me on my journey to bridge the fields of philosophy and architecture.

My reflection upon the relationship between actual public spaces and Arendt’s reflection upon the public realm has been fueled beyond imagination through a three-months visit to the Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities at

Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson (NY) during the fall of 2009. Together with my wife and eldest son we could stay in New York during this visit, where we explored Central Park, the Hudson Park, and street life in Hell's Kitchen extensively, enjoying a perfect Indian Summer and particularly looking through the eyes of our one-year-old. Together with the two other visiting research-fellows, Eveline Cioflec and Silvia Zappulla, we joined a class discussing Arendt's book *The Human Condition*, taught by the initiator of the Arendt Center, Roger Berkowitz. Our conversations not simply opened my perspective to the philosophical and political issues at stake, but also introduced me to the later writings of Arendt. That had shifted the work on this dissertation: it shifted from simply investigating public space towards the broader issue of public aspects of architecture and design. During our conversations – not only with the three of you, but also with other students and Faculty of Bard – it became clear to me how much Arendt's writings are embedded in the reality of the world, and how that is related to the core of the field of architecture. If architecture can contribute to the public interest, it is here in this understanding and embracing the reality of the world. In other words, it showed me the very *human condition* of architecture, the societal and political relevance of architecture even beyond the actual case of public space. I remember particular one case in class, discussing in particular the case of IKEA – mass customization, powerful globalization, but with rather good design (and the threat of 'being fashionable'). The rides to Rhinecliff station, offered by Noah Chasin, who taught architectural and art history at Bard at that time, helped me to relate my experiences with Arendt to the actual circumstances in architecture in Europe and America. My journey through Arendt, framed in the beautiful and quiet campus of Bard, somehow is tangible in this dissertation too. It starts with the concrete question of public space, but it in the second part of it, the focus is re-directed to the broader question of the public aspects of architecture. Or in the words of Arendt: the very worldliness of the work of architecture.

After my stay at Bard, Roger Berkowitz and I continued our conversations. He did read and reflect upon bits and pieces of my writings, enabled me to contribute to the blogs of the Arendt center, and even invited me to lecture at one of the yearly conferences he organizes at the Arendt Center. We met couple of times, in New York as well as in Amsterdam. In all of these meetings, Berkowitz showed his ability to clarify Arendt's writings and connect them to everyday experiences, the city, and developments in the political circumstances in America and Europe. These conversations have helped me to grasp the writings of Arendt more profoundly. Particularly Berkowitz's reflections upon Chapter 5 has helped me to make myself more clear. It particularly helped also to challenge the main sources of thinking about public spaces in Architecture: the notion of the public sphere as coined by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, as compared to the notion of the public realm, that Arendt urges.

During my stay in New York, I also was able to meet professor Jerome Kohn of the New School of Social Research. Kohn has been the student-assistant of Hannah Arendt, and since then has put lots of effort to make her writings accessible to the world, particularly by publishing a series of distinctive collections of her essays. Also with Jerome Kohn I was able to continue our conversation afterwards: each time I visited New York, we were able to meet over coffee, lunch or dinner, and discussed pieces of my writings. Via him, I also met the writer Rochelle Gurstein and her husband, the artist Jack Barth. Rochelle and I were invited together with Jerome Kohn to share our reflections upon the public-private distinction during the previously mentioned conference at the Arendt Center

in 2015. From the first meeting onwards, during which we prepared our contributions to the conference, we started a conversation on Arendt, actualities, the world, the arts, politics, English language, European culture, the experience of writing, that continues until today – every time we meet again. We regularly meet with the four of us, in a tiny Indian restaurant at 2nd Avenue. The spices fuel our conversations. Besides that, Jerome Kohn took effort to extensively read and write comments on the sixth chapter of this dissertation. His questions and suggestions has helped to make this chapter much more coherent and clear.

In New York, I also was able to meet the British-American architectural historian Kenneth Frampton as well as the Canadian architect George Baird during my stay in New York. It is well known in the field of architecture that both Frampton and Baird are influenced by the writings of Arendt. Moreover, they are the main protagonists of Arendt within the field of architecture. Somehow, my work reflects and elaborates their proposals. Particularly with George Baird I developed an extensive conversation on Arendt and architecture. I was able to visit him afterwards a couple of times at his home in Toronto, where we not only had thoughtful discussions on my texts, the current state of architecture, politics, the city, and so on, but where he also drove me around to show the architectural and gastronomic highlights of Toronto. His wife, Elisabeth, who welcomed me in their house with the warmest concerns, proved to be an outstanding cook – the whole of Canada already knew, but I only touched upon that through experience. Many thanks to you, George and Elisabeth. I am very happy that you are able to join me during the defense ceremony of this dissertation – and that the Faculty granted you to participate in the promotion committee, despite your formal retirement at the University of Toronto. You are active as ever, traveling around and still teaching. Many, many thanks for your guidance along this route!

Now that this PHD-project has come to an end, I am of course eager to make it public. The ambition to make it actually readable, also meant something for the 'real book', the graphic design, the 'real book' that I had in mind. In times of e-books, I am still thrilled by real books, by real things that has a certain touch, weight, smell. I am very grateful for the support I got from the graphic designer Klaartje van Eijk turning my pile of word-documents into an actual book in a rather smooth way. She helped me, voluntarily, finding a good printer, nice paper, reflected upon my first drafts for the lay-out of the chapters, discussed with me the cover, and simply shared many good advises about the lay-out program. Your experiences has been very helpful for me. I look forward to continue our collaboration!

I want to mention specifically also three of my students of the 2017 Copenhagen-studio, Max Gelibter, Bronya Meredith, and Josh Stevenson-Brown, together with some of their friends. They allowed to proof-read the chapters of this book in order to correct the my mistakes in the use of the English language. It certainly prevented me from lots of doublures (The wrongs that still are out there, are certainly mine). Your job has been terrific. The effort you put in close-reading my texts makes me speechless.

A dissertation is meant to contribute to our common insight in specific scientific fields and to evoke responses. The first to respond is the committee that is invited to judge my writings. I am grateful to them, George Baird, Margaret Crawford, Hilde Heijnen, Michiel Riedijk, Cecilia Sjöholm, as well as Carola Hein, who acts as reserve member to the committee. To read this enormous work carefully, and granting it defensible, required lots of effort from your side. Only during the

defense, I will get learn your exact responses, and these aspects that attracted and convinced you, or these parts that need to be questioned, challenged, re-directed. It has to be said: you did not know the sheer size of my dissertation at the very moment of accepting the invitation. It probably took more of your time than expected. I am aware of the amount of work I putted on your shoulders through this invitation – it makes me even more grateful to the effort you had to do in order to judge my writings, to come to Delft in order to start a public discussion about my reflections.

Most extensively I of course have been discussing my thoughts over the years with Tom Avermaete, who after the retirement of professor Barbieri became not only the daily supervisor but also the promotor of this dissertation. The conversations we have had has been both inspiring as challenging. I don't know anybody else, Tom, that has the capacity to read and understand quickly the potential of the writings, as well as their inherent deficiencies and shortcomings. You were able to digest my texts, and see relationships that I not yet had discovered, as it often also prevented me to shortcut my writings, or being superfluous. Your outstanding knowledge of the field of architecture and beyond, ranging from contemporary practices to architectural history, and from architectural theory to architectural criticism, as well as your knowledge of the fields of philosophy, sociology, politics (in several contexts around the globe) left me sometimes in awe. There are no words to describe how I enjoy(ed) our conversations - how they are sharp, thrilling and inspiring. Thank you, Tom!

In the final phase, I asked Klaske Havik and Arjan Gooijer to help with preparing the defense-ceremony and being present at that very moment as 'paranimf'. Klaske, you somehow represents the academic field in which this dissertation is written. As a great colleague, I remember many discussions about architecture, landscape, tools of architecture, in particular literature, the public and so on and so forth. Working together actually is a delight. We share a broad view upon our profession, the urge to cross borders, as well as the need to find a different approach to architectural practices. From the many words I need to express myself, you easily shortcut it to less than half...

Arjan, you represent my group of friends that have supported me along my journey in many ways. Many of their names I have mentioned already. At this point, I specifically wanted to mention our 'architecture' group: together with Alwin Kaashoek, and Walter de Vries, we have had intense discussions about the current state of our profession, the potentialities of our cities. We had a nice sequence of traveling around in the Netherlands and abroad (particularly during snowstorms) to see and experience profound architectural, urban and landscape edifices that fueled our conversations. Great memories I nurture on our experiences with Dom Hans van der Laan. But in the car or during dinner, the conversations easily also went to the political developments in The Netherlands, to theological reflections on specific issues, and the actual challenges the churches we attend face today. Besides that, Arjan, you not only helped me to finish my writings by simply being the post-box to which I could send my production at the end of each day, but also with your comments on the parts you actually did read, your inspirings stories from everyday practices, and simply by being such a good friend.

Finally – this work never could have been done without the support and challenge of my family. Here I need to switch to my mother tongue, that can express much more precisely the language of love.

Op allerlei manieren hebben mijn ouders, Niek en Aria Teerds, mijn ontwikkeling gestimuleerd. Niet altijd met veel woorden, maar met duidelijke ondersteuning en zorgen hebben jullie altijd klaar gestaan, vanaf het moment dat ik de universiteit betrad. Ik kwam thuis boordevol kritiek op alles, ook op alles wat er zoal gebouwd werd. Het ontlokte jullie wel eens de opmerking: als jij straks afgestudeerd ben, wat zal jij dan maken? Deze dissertatie is wellicht het antwoord – ook dit behoort tot het vakgebied van de architectuur. Het weerspiegelt mijn zoektocht naar vaste grond in het veld. Niet dat ik hier ‘de juiste architectuur’ heb gevonden, maar wel de reden waarom het noodzakelijk is ons überhaupt druk te maken over architectuur. De appel valt daarmee niet al te ver van de boom. Er werd, binnen ons gezin, niet vaak iets ‘zomaar’ gedaan, zonder dat het daardoor al te ernstig werd. In alles wat jullie doen, proberen jullie het goede te doen voor ‘de naaste’. Er is in jullie altijd ruimte om je belangeloos in te zetten, jullie huis staat altijd open voor diegenen die even ruimte nodig hebben. Dat boden jullie ook mij, om nu dit proefschrift eens af te ronden. Het kwam er slechts een keer van... Mijn dank gaat hierbij overigens ook uit naar mijn broer Jan (en Annelies) en zus Annemarie (met Meindert) – voor gesprekken, vragen, en alle alledaagse dingen waar broers en zussen zich druk over maken.

Via Mirjam heb ik er ook familie bij gekregen – allereerst wil ik haar vader noemen, die ik nog steeds elke dag mis. In de korte tijd dat ik hem heb gekend, is hij als een vriend voor me geworden. Aan een blik hadden we genoeg om elkaar te begrijpen. Prachtige gesprekken voerden we, waarin we elkaar op een prettige wijze aanvoelden. Hoe hij zijn ziekte in geloof en optimisme droeg is nog steeds een groot voorbeeld voor me. Corrie, en later Joop, hebben me ook altijd gesteund, zich ingezet voor ons gezin in de hectiek van alledag, of van verhuizingen en verbouwingen. Net als mijn schoonzussen en zwagers, Janneke en Christiaan, Marloes en Willem-Pieter en Jorien en Henk-Jan – in alles wat we met elkaar hebben meegemaakt is de onderlinge band alleen maar sterker geworden.

Tenslotte is daar natuurlijk mijn gezin – mijn drie stoere zoons: Levi, Micha en Abe. Ik was al bezig met het schrijven van deze dissertatie voordat jullie geboren werden. Arendt schrijft bijzondere dingen over 'geboorte': met elke geboorte verandert de wereld, is er hoop op vernieuwing, worden nieuwe mogelijkheden ontsloten. Dat effect hebben jullie zeker op mij gehad: als baby al lieten jullie, met jullie kwetsbaarheid, me anders naar de wereld kijken. En wat voor nieuwe werelden hebben jullie vervolgens voor mij ontsloten: van *Cars* tot *Minecraft*, van *Lego Starwars* tot alle ins- en outs van de 'hulpdiensten'. Daarmee is mijn bestaan verrijkt, ook al waren mijn gedachten er niet altijd bij. Terecht vroegen jullie wel eens wanneer dit boek nu eens af zou zijn. Nu ja, nu dus.

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SAMENVATTING

(DUTCH SUMMARY)

In het najaar van 1999 bezocht ik voor eerste keer de Verenigde Staten van Amerika. Ik had juist een jaar lang wat minder tijd aan mijn studie architectuur besteed, om in plaats daarvan me in te zetten als voorzitter van de kleine studentenvereniging waarvan ik lid was. Met veel genoeg en existentiële betrokkenheid plaatsten we zwaarwichtige theologische en filosofische onderwerpen op de agenda van onze leden, onderwerpen waarover we artikelen schreven en lezingen en discussies organiseerden. Tegelijkertijd was ik penningmeester geworden van het *International Design Seminar* (INDESEM), een week-lange internationale ontwerp-workshop dat op initiatief van Herman Hertzberger sinds 1986 tweejaarlijks wordt georganiseerd op de Faculteit Bouwkunde in Delft. Na deze uitdagende week in Delft, met sprekers als uiteraard Herman Hertzberger zelf, de architecten Rem Koolhaas (Rotterdam), Annette Gigon (Zürich), en Jean Marc Ibos and Myrto Vitart (Parijs) vertrok een van de mede-commissieleden, Daan Zandbelt, voor een half jaar naar Chicago om er te gaan studeren. Samen met de voorzitter van INDESEM, Renate Pekaar, besloot ik hem er te gaan bezoeken – onze broodnodige vakantie na alle inzet. Een uitgelezen kans ook om kennis te maken met een land dat in de Nederlandse cultuur en media altijd nabij is. Chicago was overweldigend, net als New York, waar we op de terugweg naar Delft een tussenstop van vier dagen maakten. Of is dat een understatement, en kan ik in retrospectief zeggen dat deze kennismaking met de Amerikaanse cultuur beslissend is geweest voor mijn reflectie op de domeinen van de stad, cultuur, en samenleving, en de rol van de architectuur binnen die domeinen? Zeker, maar dan moet in het bijzonder ook één specifieke dag halverwege ons achtdaags verblijf in Chicago genoemd worden. Met zijn drieën huurden we een auto om twee hoogtepunten van de moderne architectuur in de directe omgeving van de stad te gaan bekijken die we met enige regelmaat tijdens onze colleges voorbij hadden zien komen: het *Farnsworth House* ontworpen door Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (Plano Ill., 1951) en het *Johnsons Wax Administration Building*, ontworpen door Frank Lloyd Wright (Racine WI., 1939). Een dag gekenmerkt door uitersten. Vroeg in de morgen reden we de stad uit, de lange kaarsrechte wegen af, die we vanaf het café in de Hancock Tower onder het genot van een goede wijn al hadden afgetuurd tot aan de horizon. Tot dan toe was onze mobiliteit beperkt gebleven van het gedeelte binnen de Loop (de bekende bovengrondse metro die de binnenstad van Chicago omcirkelt) met hier en daar een tripje erbuiten, naar een universitaire campus of één van de vele villa's ontworpen door Frank Lloyd Wright. Deze autorit was de eerste kennismaking met het Amerikaanse landschap (als we Lake Michigan, dat direct grenst aan de binnenstad, even niet meetellen). Of beter gezegd, de eerste kennismaking met de eindeloze Amerikaanse buitenwijken – het ritme van de houten huizen, de glad geschoren gazons, en de Amerikaanse vlaggen.

De titels en ondertitels van boeken die in de jaren negentig zijn gepubliceerd rondom dit thema spreken boekdelen, om een paar voorbeelden te noemen: Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1977; Michael Sorkin, (red.), *Variations on a Theme Park, The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992); Bruce Robbins (red.), *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Don Mitchell, 'The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy', in: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol 85, No.1 (March 1995); Maarten Hajer en Arnold Reijndorp, *Op zoek naar nieuw publiek domein, Analyse en strategie* (Rotterdam: NAi Uitgeverij, 2001); Lieven De Cauter, *The Capsual Civilization, On the City in the Age of Fear* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2004)

Mooier dan het *Farnsworth House* was bijna niet denkbaar – de eenvoud van witte constructie en compositie, omgeven door een herfstbos met dieprode en oranje-gele kleuren. In Racine, waar we kort na sluitingstijd van het kantoor aankwamen, liet de nachtportier ons nog binnen, na onze poging hem te overtuigen dat we juist voor dit gebouw uit Nederland waren gekomen. De lichten gingen niet aan, maar in de schemering mochten we tussen de bureaus rondlopen, voelen aan de bijzondere kolommen, ons vergapen aan de raamconstructie. Hoe overweldigend kan architectuur zijn. In de tussentijd, voordat de portier ons binnen kon laten, aten we pizza in een pizza-bakkerij om de hoek, tussen tal van buurtbewoners die er XXL pizza's en XXL cola's naar binnen werkten onder het ongezellige licht van een TL-balk en schreeuwerige cola-reclame.

De ervaringen van deze reis hebben me niet meer losgelaten, gefascineerd als ik raakte door de Amerikaanse cultuur, de uitgestrektheid van het Amerikaanse landschap en de tastbaarheid van de Amerikaanse droom in de spiegelende wolkenkrabbers, de in serie geschakelde individuele paradijsjes, de malls en haar parkeerplaatsen, de drive-thru's en haar reclames, en tegelijkertijd de keerzijde van dit alles, de grimmige wijken waar blok na blok is gesloopt, huizen dichtgetimmerd, het metrostation gebarricadeerd, en mannen op kratten onder de luifel van het afgebrande tankstation hangen. Mijn onderzoek dat ik jaren later oppakte, en dat zich heeft gekristalliseerd in deze dissertatie, kan gezien worden als een langdurige verwerking van de ervaring van die dagen. In bepaald perspectief was het een schokkende ervaring, opgeroepen door deze kennismaking met de lokale bevolking in de buitenwijken van Chicago, van Plano en van Racine. Het verschil met de bewoners van appartementen aan de Lake Shore Drive en de werknemers die de kantoren bevolkten in het centrum van Chicago en die we op zondag langs Lake Michigan zagen joggen, of in de lunchpauze in de *gym* zagen spinnen, kon haast niet groter zijn. De segregatie van Chicago hadden we al ervaren. Toch drukte de trip naar de buitensteden van Chicago de vinger nog veel sterker op de achterkant van de blinkende wereld.

Met in het achterhoofd deze ervaring start deze dissertatie met een hernieuwde tocht door het Amerikaanse landschap, deze keer in de omgeving van Orlando (FL.). In dit eerste deel van de studie (hoofdstuk 2 en 3) staat de publieke ruimte centraal. Juist in het Amerikaanse landschap staat deze ruimte onder druk. Theoretici spreken wel over het verlies van publieke ruimte.¹ Hoewel elders in de wereld, van Europa tot met name Azië, dergelijke ontwikkelingen ook zichtbaar zijn (en soms zich zelfs nog scherper aftekenen), komt het debat over de publieke ruimte voort uit de ontwikkelingen in de Amerikaanse stad en het sub-urbane landschap. Het landschap wordt er gedomineerd door wat we 'enclaves' kunnen noemen, *gated communities*, *shopping malls*, *historic districts*, *business districts*. Ruimten die eenheden op zichzelf zijn, soms letterlijk afgegrensd van de omgeving. Dit is niet alleen een ruimtelijke karakteristiek, maar ook in gebruik, sociaal gezien zijn het enclaves. Mensen met min of meer dezelfde achtergrond en uit dezelfde sociale klasse wonen of werken, winkelen of ontspannen er zich, terwijl ze tussen deze enclaves heen en weer reizen in de eigen private 'cocon', de auto. Dit beeld staat in scherp contrast met het ideaal dat door de theoretici verbonden wordt met de publieke ruimte. In de publieke ruimte is verschil juist essentieel, stellen zij. Wil de publieke ruimte ertoe doen, dan moet het een ruimte zijn waarin we de 'ander' kunnen ontmoeten, kennis kunnen maken met verschil, ideeën en visies kunnen uitwisselen. Dit ideaal staat nadrukkelijk in de context van de Westerse Democratische organisatie van de samenleving – die kan er immers niet alleen in bestaan dat via de weg van de representatie de verschillen

worden uitgevochten in de neutrale ruimte van het parlement. De democratie bestaat allereerst uit de ontmoetingen op straat, pas daarna uit de ontmoetingen in het parlement, zo is het idee. De twee belangrijkste bronnen voor deze stelling zijn de studies *The Human Condition* van de Duits-Amerikaanse filosoof Hannah Arendt (1958) en *Der Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* van de Duitse filosoof Jürgen Habermas (1962).² Met name de Engelse vertaling van Habermas' analyse die in 1989 als *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* op de Amerikaanse markt verscheen,³ zwengelde het debat aan, waar het via de filosofie, politieke theorie ook in de domeinen van de stadsstudies en architectuurtheorie terecht kwam. Habermas (net als Arendt, overigens) is pessimistisch over de huidige staat van wat hij de publieke sfeer noemt – een somberheid die door de Amerikaanse theoretici ongetwijfeld herkend werd in de ontwikkelingen in de Amerikaanse stad en het Amerikaanse landschap. Met andere woorden: de theorie van Habermas en dagelijkse ervaring van de Amerikaanse samenleving, stad en landschap joegen het genoemde sombere discours over de openbare ruimte aan.

Habermas begint zijn analyse in de opkomst van de burgerij in de 18^e en 19^e eeuw. Door toegenomen welvaart en vrije tijd kreeg een deel van de bevolking tijd voor het bezoeken (en organiseren) van discussies over actualiteiten in de (nieuwe) cafés, salons en theehuizen – een praktijk die vooral in de steden Berlijn, Wenen, Londen en Parijs floreerde. Van belang is hier de uitvinding en ontwikkeling van de drukpers: wat besproken werd, werd aangereikt door 'nieuwe media': de krant en romans. Habermas' stelling is dat die gesprekken, deze uitwisseling van standpunten, een nieuwe sfeer tot stand brachten tussen de traditionele maatschappelijke sferen van de overheid en de markt. In de nieuwe situatie hadden de overheid en de markt rekening te houden met deze publieke sfeer, beter gezegd, met de geldende opinie die in deze sfeer ontwikkeld werd via de gevoerde gesprekken. Het publiek was dus een nieuwe, zelfstandige kracht op het toneel, waartoe de andere krachten zich moesten verhouden om hun legitimiteit te behouden. Habermas is echter somber over deze publieke sfeer: ze komt, net als het domein van de overheid, onder invloed van de sfeer van de markt. De publieke sfeer verliest haar kracht ten opzichte van de andere domeinen, waarbij het gesprek en de uitwisseling van standpunten in de publieke ruimte verloren lijkt te gaan. Deze schets van de opkomst en ondergang van de publieke sfeer viel, niet onlogisch, in vruchtbare aarde in het Amerikaanse discours. Bewust of onbewust was daar de verandering van het Amerikaanse landschap, waarin de segregatie en daarmee het verlies aan gedeelde ruimten met de dag duidelijker werd. Dat debat wordt in het begin van deze studie in kaart gebracht. De fundamentele vraag, die in de loop van deze studie nadrukkelijker aan de orde komt, is op welke manier architectuur er eigenlijk toe doet in dit perspectief. De studie begint echter eenvoudigweg met een inventarisatie van wat we in dit landschap tegenkomen en op welke manier deze artefacten gewaardeerd worden.

De reden om mijn studie in Florida te starten is triest: het bericht van de dood van Trayvon Martin begin 2012. Martin, een zwarte Amerikaanse tiener, werd doodgeschoten door een wijkwacht, die de bewuste avond achterdochtig rondjes reed door de *gated community* waarin hij woonde. Martin was niet gewapend, noch was hij iets crimineels van plan: hij was op bezoek bij zijn vader en liep heen en weer om een zakje Skittles te kopen bij een winkel net buiten het terrein van de *gated community*, en gebruikte daarvoor een sluiproute, een informele route, die rechtstreeks bij de winkel uitkwam, zonder de officiële toegangspoort tot de community te passeren. De zaak riep in Amerika vurig protest op, vooral omdat de nachtwaker snel weer vrijgelaten werd en het er niet naar uit zag dat

2. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1958]) – in het Nederlands verschenen als: Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa, Mens, bestaan en bestemming* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 1994); Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Neuwied/Berlin: Luchterhand, 1962) – in het Nederlands pas recent vertaald als: Jürgen Habermas, *De structuurverandering van het publieke domein* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2015)

3. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1989)

4. Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear, Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 363

5. Deze drie punten ontleen ik aan de inleiding van Michael Sorkin tot de bundel essays die hij regisseerde rondom dergelijke nieuwe (sub)urbane artefacten, *Variations on a Theme Park*, XIII-XIV

6. De *moderne* benadering van de stad wordt gekarakteriseerd door een strikte functie scheiding: er zijn afzonderlijke gebieden voor wonen, werken en recreëren, net zoals er ook een strikte scheiding werd gemaakt tussen snel en langzaam verkeer.

7. Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class, And How it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, & Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 223

er een serieus proces zou komen. De protesten waren het begin van wat later de 'black-lives-matter' beweging zou worden, een beweging die protesteert tegen racisme in de samenleving en vooral ook binnen het politiekorps. Voor mij was het bericht, dat tot in de Nederlandse kranten doordrong, een teken van het failliet van de enclaves die het Amerikaanse landschap domineren. Met name de Amerikaanse stads-theoreticus en activist Mike Davis heeft dit landschap omschreven als een gemilitariseerd landschap. Angst, zo niet paranoia, heerst in de suburbs en binnensteden, stelt hij.⁴ Het heeft het landschap herschreven in een verzameling enclaves, omheind door muren, hekken en wachtposten, toegankelijk via poorten met portiers, camera's, en ontworpen als afzonderlijke paradijsjes. In hoofdstuk 2 onderzoek ik dergelijke enclaves, die ik tegenkom onderweg door Florida (toegegeven, via *Google maps* en *Google streetview*) – van de mall tot de luchthaven, het pretpark tot het *historic district*. Ik concludeer uit deze ervaringen dat er inderdaad geen (stedelijk) netwerk is dat de enclaves bij elkaar brengt en houdt, geen gemeenschappelijke ruimtes meer lijken te zijn, waarin verschillende mensen (en met name vreemden) elkaar tegenkomen, laat staan ontmoeten. Het vreemde is gevaarlijk geworden en moet daarom buitengesloten worden. De enclaves kennen allemaal eenzelfde patroon: een letterlijke terugtrekking uit de wereld, achter muren en hekken, een nadruk op veiligheid die leidt tot een toename van segregatie en ten slotte het benadrukken van de binnen-wereld door er juist een soort paradijselijke oase van te maken. Zeker in het laatste decennium wordt er veel moeite gestoken in het ontwerp van de enclave. De gated community wordt zorgvuldig ontworpen, terwijl de winkelcentra zich steeds vaker en spectaculairder moeten vernieuwen om binnen de aandacht van de consument te blijven.⁵ Dit enclave-landschap resulteert letterlijk in 'left-over space', ruimte die overblijft buiten de poorten van de enclaves, waar de uitgesloten noodgedwongen moeten verblijven. Deze ruimte wordt vervolgens door de enclave-bewoner als 'gevaarlijke ruimte' ervaren, waardoorheen men slechts met de auto reizen kan. In andere woorden: in deze constellatie is het vreemde nooit nabij. Ik karakteriseer dit landschap als 'postmodern', hoewel de strikte scheiding van functies en sub-urbanisering natuurlijk een uitvloeisel is van de Moderne benadering van de stad.⁶ Wat echter tastbaar aanwezig is, is het verlies van gezamenlijkheid. Er is geen verhaal, geen structuur meer wat samenbindt, wat boven het individu uitgaat, of het moet het kapitalistische verhaal zijn.

Het derde hoofdstuk verlegt de blik naar de binnensteden, die opmerkelijk genoeg momenteel in de Westerse wereld een revival ondergaan. In dit hoofdstuk komt de politieke dimensie van de publieke ruimte wat nadrukkelijker naar voren. Waar de Amerikaanse stad, met als meest trieste voorbeeld Detroit, tot voorkort een patroon kenden van leegloop van de binnenstad in het voordeel van de buitenwijk, is er nu een omgekeerde trend aan de gang. Er komen nieuwe inwoners van het centrum en de daaromheen liggende wijken. De mensen willen weer wonen waar het gebeurt, waar reuring is en keuzemogelijkheden, waar men verschil tegenkomt en nieuwe uitdagingen aan kan gaan. Deze omkering wordt ondersteund door een economische theorie rondom de 'creatieve klasse', zoals de nieuwe stadsbewoners door de econoom Richard Florida wordt genoemd. In zijn boek *The Rise of the Creative Class* stelt hij dat de stad het economisch potentieel voor het Westen heeft: creativiteit is cruciaal – en creativiteit wordt geprikkeld door ontmoetingen met anderen – onverwachte ontmoetingen voor onverwachte vergezichten, wendingen, doorbraken.⁷ Daarvoor is de stad met zijn koffiebarretjes, restaurants, cafés, bioscopen, theaters, musea, zijn publieke ruimte, waarin jan-en-alleman door elkaar loopt, de uitgelezen plek. Nieuwe kansen dus voor de publieke ruimte en het daaraan verbonden politieke ideaal van

ontmoeting en uitwisseling tussen vreemden. Het overduidelijke succes van de stad heeft echter zijn keerzijde: de prijzen van vastgoed (en voor levensonderhoud) gaan drastisch omhoog, zodanig dat noch oorspronkelijke bewoners, noch de pioniers van de nieuwe stedelijkheid, noch de middenklasse het zich op lange termijn kan veroorloven in de stad te wonen. Dit wordt het proces van gentrificatie genoemd. De stad wordt de woonplaats van de lagere klasse die in de buitenwijken geen kant op kan, en de hogere klasse, die zich het leven in het centrum kan veroorloven. Met andere woorden: de segregatie in de stad neemt hand over hand toe. In zijn nieuwste boek signaleert Florida deze hevige segregatie, die op een of andere manier duidelijk maakt dat de woningmarkt kwetsbaar is. De nieuwe stedelijke crisis noemt Florida de toenemende segregatie.⁸ Dergelijke segregatie is ook de oorzaak voor de toenemende spanningen tussen de buitenwijken en de binnensteden, zoals deze bijvoorbeeld tot uitbarsting kwamen in 2005 in Parijs en Londen. Met deze plunderingen en protesten zijn we aangekomen bij het politieke perspectief achter de publieke ruimte. In zijn begrip van publieke ruimte scherpt de Amerikaanse architect Michael Sorkin de politieke dimensie aan. Publiek wordt een ruimte pas als er gedemonstreerd kan worden, stelt hij, als deze ruimte geeft aan politieke actie.⁹ Meer nog dan de spanningen tussen buitenwijk en binnenstad geldt voor dit perspectief het voorbeeld van het jaar 2011, toen opvallenderwijs in het Westen de Occupy-beweging de aandacht trok met protesten en bezettingen van (semi-)publieke plaatsen in de stad, en in de Arabische wereld de revolutionaire protesten in een reeks van landen rondom de Middellandse Zee. Met name via de Occupy-beweging komt de vraag naar het ontwerp van de openbare ruimte aan de orde. Veel hedendaagse ruimten zijn prachtig vormgegeven, maar bieden ook weinig mogelijkheid tot toe-eigening. Op welke manier draagt architectuur bij aan een publieke ruimte die ook daadwerkelijk door het publiek toegeëigend, gebruikt kan worden? Het slot van dit hoofdstuk gaat te rade bij het ontwerp van *Parc de La Villette* in Parijs, een ontwerp van de architect Bernard Tschumi uit 1986. Het park zit ingenieus in elkaar, geeft veel mogelijkheid tot toe-eigening van ruimte, naast dat er ook 'vaste programmaonderdelen' zijn. Verschillende routes lopen door het park, terwijl het park ook een eigen routing heeft. Beide aspecten zorgen ervoor dat er mensen komen met verschillende bestemmingen – van buurtbewoners die er even uit willen, tot bezoekers aan het wetenschapsmuseum, van bewoners van verderop die met hun fiets het park doorkruisen op weg naar het centrum van Parijs, tot bezoekers die het kronkelpad aflopen. De analyse belicht, naast deze twee aspecten (route en programma), ook de ogenschijnlijke eenheid, de tastbaarheid van de geschiedenis, de manier waarop het park is ingebed in de stedelijke structuur, en tenslotte de ogenschijnlijke eenheid van het geheel. Ondanks dat het park een 'succes' is, intensief gebruikt door een variëteit aan mensen, kan niet gesteld worden dat het een park is voor iedereen en dat alle mogelijke praktijken er een plaats kunnen vinden. Ook in een dergelijke, tegenstrijdige openbare ruimte, gelden restricties.

De belangrijkste aspecten met betrekking tot de publieke ruimte zijn hiermee aan de orde geweest. Architectuur, zoveel is duidelijk geworden, draagt bij aan de ervaring van deze publieke ruimte, maar tegelijkertijd ook aan de on-mogelijkheid ervan. Ook al passeerden enkele 'instrumenten' van architectuur de revue om 'verschil' toe te laten in de openbare ruimte, hoe architectuur zich op meer fundamenteel dan pragmatisch niveau verhoudt tot het politieke en het publieke bleef onduidelijk. Het ideaal van uitwisseling is, ook in succesvolle publieke ruimten, niet gegarandeerd. Vanaf dit moment in de studie wordt de blik verlegd naar het gedachtegoed van de andere bron van discussie over de publieke ruimte, de

8. Richard Florida, *The New Urban Crisis. How our Cities are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class – And What We Can Do About It* (New York: Basic Books, 2017)

9. Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park*, XV

10.

De voornaamste publicaties waarin Arendt een belangrijke rol speelt zijn: Kenneth Frampton, 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects: a Reading of *The Human Condition*', in: Kenneth Frampton, *Labour, Work and Architecture. Collected Essays on Architecture and Design* (London/New York: Phaidon Press, 2002 [1979]); George Baird, *The Space of Appearance* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1995); George Baird, *Public Space: Cultural/Political Theory; Street Photography, An Interpretation by George Baird* (Amsterdam: SUN Publishers, 2011); Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 2011)

11.

Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future, Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006 [1961]), 7

12.

Hannah Arendt, 'Walter Benjamin', in: Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993 [1968])

filosofe Hannah Arendt, die in het debat over ruimte, stad en architectuur slechts miniem aan de orde komt. Arendt is in het architectonische discours met name geïntroduceerd door de Brits-Amerikaanse hoogleraar architectuur geschiedenis Kenneth Frampton, de Canadese architect en hoogleraar architectuur George Baird, en recent in de theoretische reflectie op het vak door de Italiaanse architect Pier Vittorio Aureli.¹⁰

De keuze bij Arendt te rade te gaan om de verhouding tussen architectuur en het publieke domein te begrijpen verdient enige uitleg. Achter die keuze gaat een fundamentele aanname over de architectonische professie schuil en heeft bovendien methodische consequenties. Er zijn grofweg twee scholen in de architectuur: de eerste benadrukt de autonomie van het veld, terwijl de andere stelt dat architectuur altijd afhankelijk is van factoren buiten het eigen domein. Mijn keuze om een bron van buiten de architectuur te gebruiken als lens om het vak te analyseren plaatst deze studie in het tweede perspectief. Inderdaad is dat de aanname: architectuur mag dan een eigen kennisdomein zijn, ontwikkeld in eeuwen omgang met ruimte en gebouwen, steden en landschappen, het vak opereert niet autonoom. De totstandkoming van gebouwen wordt, naast architectonische overwegingen, ook beïnvloed door bijvoorbeeld economische principes, culturele perspectieven, sociale factoren en politieke uitgangspunten. De keuze om vanuit de filosofie naar architectuur te kijken betekent wel dat er een brug geslagen moet worden tussen twee verschillende kennisdomeinen. Arendt zelf spreekt nauwelijks over architectuur en de meeste reflecties op haar werk brengen geen verbinding tot stand met haar perspectief enerzijds en de stad, het landschap, en de concrete publieke ruimte anderzijds. Deze studie, kortom, leest concepten uit een filosofisch perspectief (die bovendien inmiddels bijna 60 jaar geleden geformuleerd zijn) en brengt deze naar een architectonisch perspectief. Daar zit het gevaar in om de concepten (a.) te letterlijk te nemen, of (b.) te vrij. Kortom, de vraag is op welke manier wordt recht gedaan aan beide perspectieven en kunnen ze toch op elkaar betrokken worden? Dit is geen nieuwe vraag, maar een die, zoals de Duitse filosoof Hans-Georg Gadamer stelde in zijn bekende boek *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960), in alle interpretaties van (historische) teksten aan de orde is: een hermeneutische kwestie. Arendt zelf was zich bewust van de afstand tot haar bronnen. Ook zij gaat in haar werk terug naar de bronnen van bepaalde fenomenen – haar bronnen zijn vooral de Klassieken – en is zich terdege bewust dat deze bronnen in een andere context en tijd geschreven zijn, dan de vragen die zij aan deze teksten stelt. Deze afstand is alleen maar toegenomen door de moderniteit, stelt zij. Ze omschrijft de moderniteit als het doorsnijden van de banden van traditie, waardoor de kloof tussen het verleden en heden groter wordt en deze slechts zelfstandig denkend kan worden overbrugd.¹¹ Die denkbeving is noodzakelijk, stelt ze. Ook al worden we niet meer geleid door traditie, het verleden bepaalt nog steeds het heden. Onze verwachtingen worden nog steeds gevormd door de geschiedenis, ondanks de toekomst-gerichtheid van de moderne tijd. Tegelijkertijd beseft Arendt dat een dergelijk denkproces enkel kan betekenen dat wat we uit bronnen uit het verleden naar het heden brengen een fragmentarisch resultaat kan opleveren. Slechts fragmenten kunnen opgedoken worden uit het verleden – de fragmenten kunnen nooit in zijn gehele betekenis, die het vroeger heeft gehad, begrepen worden. Arendt komt tot deze reflecties naar aanleiding van het werk van de Duitse filosoof en literatuurcriticus Walter Benjamin, die ze uit Parijs kende, toen ze er beide woonden en werkten, op de vlucht waren voor de opkomst van het Nazisme in Duitsland. Ze omschreef zijn methode, die ze met instemming bespreekt en duidelijk ook ziet als een beschrijving van haar eigen benadering, als een 'fragmentarische historiografie'.¹² Dit

geldt ook min of meer voor deze studie, die terug gaat naar een van de originele bronnen van het debat over openbare ruimte, en fragmenten uit die bron opduikt en aan de oppervlakte brengt in het architectonisch discours. Het opduiken van deze fragmenten levert nieuwe gezichtspunten op en aspecten, die geherwaardeerd en gearticuleerd zouden moeten worden. Het openen van deze perspectieven en het bespreken daarvan binnen een architectonisch kader, zonder te komen tot een alomvattende theorie, is het belangrijkste doel van deze studie. Tegelijkertijd geldt dat dit architectonisch kader ook nieuw licht werpt op Arendts reflecties. Het belang van de concrete, tastbare ruimte, van objecten en (kunst) werken, wordt in het veld van de filosofie immers weleens over het hoofd gezien.¹³ Een architectonische reflectie kan bijdragen om deze aspecten weer in beeld te krijgen en nog dichter met Arendts intrigerende studies te verbinden.

Arendt wordt in 1906 geboren in de Duitse stad Hannover, groeit op in Königsberg, de huidige Russische stad Kaliningrad. Ze studeert filosofie en theologie in Berlijn en Marburg, onder andere bij de bekende filosoof Martin Heidegger. Ze schrijft in Heidelberg een dissertatie over het begrip 'liefde' in het werk van Aurelius Augustinus in Heidelberg, onder begeleiding van de filosoof Karl Jaspers. Hoewel het politieke haar aandacht niet trekt, komt ze als Joodse steeds meer in aanraking met de beperkingen die het Nationaal Socialisme in de jaren dertig aan deze bevolkingsgroep oplegt. Dat roept haar weerstand op, waardoor ze zijdelings in aanraking komt met de Joodse als ook met de Communistische beweging. Ze wordt opgepakt en vastgezet door de Gestapo, maar komt na een aantal dagen vrij. Naar aanleiding van deze ervaring vertrekt ze uit Duitsland, om via Parijs in New York te belanden. Haar hele latere oeuvre kan gelezen worden als een reflectie op haar ervaringen en deze gebeurtenissen in haar moederland. Ze publiceert bekend geworden politiek getinte studies als *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), *The Human Condition* (1958), *On Revolution* (1963). Vooral haar reflectie op het proces van Adolf Eichmann, gepubliceerd als *Eichmann in Jerusalem, A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963), en haar omschrijving van deze 'ingenieur' als 'gedachteloos' roept heftige reacties op, zowel binnen de Amerikaanse gemeenschap als ook vanuit Joodse hoek, maar vestigt ook haar naam als weerbarstige en eigenwijze denkster. Het is voor haar aanleiding om nog dieper in deze analyse te duiken. Gedachteloosheid is het gevaar van de moderne tijd, stelt ze. Deze studie heeft ze, door haar onverwachte dood in 1975, niet af kunnen schrijven. Twee van de drie delen zijn geschreven, en worden postuum gepubliceerd als *The Life of the Mind* (1978).

Voor een reflectie op openbare ruimte is vooral *The Human Condition* van belang – het is, zoals hierboven gesteld, een van de primaire bronnen in dit debat. In deze studie maakt Arendt onderscheid tussen drie verschillende vormen van menselijke activiteit: arbeiden, werken en handelen. Arbeiden heeft te maken met de cycli van natuurlijke processen, met overleven. Werken heeft te maken met het weerstand bieden tegen de natuurlijke cycli. Het produceert dingen die blijven, die een zekere permanentie hebben. Dat is essentieel, stelt Arendt. Zonder dat een dergelijke permanentie de natuurlijke cycli doorbreekt, is menselijk leven niet mogelijk. Werken schept een wereld-van-dingen. Deze wereld is nadrukkelijk gemeenschappelijk, de context van de mens in meervoud. De mens is niet alleen op aarde, hij is deel van een menselijke gemeenschap. Tezamen wordt de wereld gevestigd, wordt aan de natuur weerstand geboden. Deze wereld-van-dingen is daarmee ook de noodzakelijke context van het publieke leven, dat centraal staat in de activiteit van het handelen. Het handelen is het politieke bezig-zijn, gericht

13. Dit stelt bijvoorbeeld de Vlaamse filosoof Rudy Visser, *Lof der Zichtbaarheid. Een uitleiding in de hedendaagse wijsbegeerte* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SUN, 2007), 27

op en gevestigd in de wereld. Het handelen wordt noodzakelijkerwijs gevolgd door spreken. Zonder gesprek is handelen niet mogelijk.

In deze dissertatie wordt Arendts reflecties op de politieke, publieke, culturele, fysieke en mentale structuren uitgewerkt in drie hoofdstukken. Het eerste, hoofdstuk 5, pakt dit begrip van het 'handelen en spreken' op. Handelen heeft slechts zin in de publieke ruimte, waar het voor anderen zichtbaar en hoorbaar is. Wil actie (Arendt gebruikt in het Engels het begrip 'action', in haar eigen Duitse vertaling 'Das Handeln', de Nederlandse vertaling kiest ook voor 'handelen', en mist daardoor de activistische echo die zeker hoorbaar aanwezig is in haar begrip) impact krijgen, dan moet er door anderen met bijval gereageerd kunnen worden. Ik betoog in dit hoofdstuk dat Arendts concept in feite een heel 'ruimtelijk' concept is. Om dat te verduidelijken zet ik Arendts lezing van de openbare ruimte naast Habermas' perspectief, dat ik eerder besprak. Centraal in Habermas' concept staat niet actie maar inter-actie, communicatie. Hoewel het in zijn voorbeeld van de cafés, salons en koffiehuizen om concrete gesprekken gaat, verliest dit gesprek al snel zijn realiteit en ruimtelijkheid. Dit gesprek wordt immers voor een groot gedeelte gevoerd op opiniepagina's van kranten, in tijdschriften, op televisie, op fora op internet en via sociale media. De rol van nieuwe media (in zijn analyse van de 18^e en 19^e eeuw dus de krant) spelen een belangrijke rol in zijn beeld van de openbare ruimte. Zij informeren het publiek met betrekking tot de actualiteiten, politieke en bestuurlijke zaken. Het gaat bij Habermas tenslotte om die 'publieke opinie', de tegen-macht ten opzichte van regering en markt, die gevormd wordt door de uitwisseling tussen het geïnformeerde publiek. Dat is in feite het meta-perspectief, waaraan alle lokale ontmoetingen, gesprekken en discussies bijdragen. Arendt tekent echter nergens zo'n meta-perspectief waaraan de ontmoetingen in de openbare ruimte moeten bijdragen. Ze houdt het juist klein en lokaal. Het gaat erom dat we aan elkaar verschijnen in woord en daad. Arendt noemt de publieke ruimte dan ook de ruimte van verschijning. De verschijning is niet zozeer gebonden aan onze lichamelijke gestalte, maar vooral aan de manier waarop we handelen en spreken. Niemand handelt en spreekt hetzelfde, hoe we dus aan de ander verschijnen is uniek. Publieke ruimte is volgens Arendt dan ook per definitie een plurale ruimte: ieder verschijnt op een eigen manier, op een eigen positie in die ruimte. Geen twee perspectieven vallen samen. Omdat dit handelen en spreken persoonlijk is, blijft Arendts beeld van de 'verschijningsruimte' concreet ruimtelijk, en dus ook aanleiding om dit binnen de architectuur te agenderen. Voor Arendt is verschijnen het doel, en pluraliteit het resultaat, al stelt ze meteen dat handelen essentieel is: handelen houdt de mogelijkheid open voor verandering. Als actie weerklank vindt, kan het onvoorstelbare gebeuren. Dat is ook de reden waarom deze ruimte onder druk staat: ze is oncontroleerbaar en onvoorspelbaar. De verschijningsruimte is echter niet gebonden aan een concrete, gefixeerde ruimte. Het is niet zo dat ze alleen maar plaats kan vinden op pleinen of in parken, die ontworpen zijn voor een dergelijk doel. In tegendeel: het staat of valt met mensen die bij elkaar komen en temidden van elkaar aan elkaar verschijnen. Dat is een bevrijdend perspectief, aangezien een dergelijke ruimte op zijn minst in theorie ook binnen enclaves kan ontstaan. Het verschil dat Arendt benadrukt is ook meer aan de persoon gebonden, dan aan de sociale klasse, ras, achtergrond, opleiding of anderszins, dat in het gangbare debat centraal staat. Waar laat dit perspectief ons echter met betrekking tot de architectuur?

George Baird heeft erop gewezen dat ons dagelijkse gebruik van de stedelijke ruimte ver weg staat van wat Arendt voor ogen heeft met haar begrip 'handelen'.¹⁴

We gebruiken ruimten intuïtief, op de automatische piloot en ervaren haar vaak niet bewust, laat staan dat we er zijn om in actie te komen. Hij maakt om deze gedachte uit te werken de stap naar reflectie op de architectuur, meer dan op de ruimte. Architectuur is de achtergrond van onze ruimtelijke activiteiten. Tegelijkertijd wordt het op één lijn gezet met de kunsten. Maar waar kunst (over het algemeen) om bewuste aandacht vraagt, daar is een dergelijke aandacht voor architectuur afwezig. Baird refereert hierbij aan de bespreking van architectuur door Walter Benjamin in zijn bekende artikel *Het kunstwerk in het tijdperk van zijn technische reproduceerbaarheid*.¹⁵ Waar andere kunstvormen de onverdeelde aandacht van de beschouwer opeisen, wordt de architectuur slechts als achtergrond ervaren, terwijl we gericht zijn op heel andere zaken. We zijn onderweg, zijn in een bespreking, zijn aan het werk, of aan het winkelen – architectuur is er altijd, maar onze waarneming ervan is onbewust. Architectuur kan mensen dus niet bewustmaken van de ruimte, van het publiek, van de ander, laat staan tot actie aanzetten – als dat al de ambitie van het architectonisch project was. Hij laat echter zien dat die actieve houding in de openbare ruimte zomaar tot stand kan komen. Een onverwachte gebeurtenis, een evenement of wat dan ook kan ons van het ene op het andere moment bewust maken van wat er om ons heen gebeurt. Hoe we aanwezig zijn in de openbare ruimte, is dan ook variërend op een spectrum van alertheid tot afleiding, van actief tot verstrooid. Baird komt met een drietal aspecten van ruimte die bijdrage aan het potentieel van de gebruikers om in actie te komen: zichtbaarheid, continuïteit en nabijheid – aspecten die overeenkomen met mijn analyse van *Parc de La Villette*. De verstrooide houding in de stedelijke publieke ruimte sluit aan bij wat Arendt stelt: een leven kan niet volledig in het publieke licht geleefd worden. Het verliest haar diepte, wordt een schaduw van zichzelf. Er is een private ruimte nodig waarin het zichzelf weer kan hervinden, zich kan voorbereiden om opnieuw aan de wereld te verschijnen. Arendt noemt deze private ruimte donker (in tegenstelling tot het licht van de publieke ruimte), niet vanuit een negatieve waardering, maar omdat ze hier verschijning en transparantie aan het publieke verbindt, en terugtrekking en bescherming (ook vanuit het zicht van de ander) aan het private. Die bescherming biedt ook de ruimte aan aspecten van het leven die niet uitgesproken kunnen worden, die met het natuurlijke te maken hebben: leven en dood, geboorte, liefde, pijn en verdriet. Dat zijn zaken die niet in het publieke kunnen komen, zonder hun wonderlijke diepgang te verliezen. Met andere woorden, de publieke ruimte kan niet zonder de private ruimte, en vice-versa. Arendt stelt immers ook dat een leven, volledig geleefd in de private ruimte, niet volledig tot haar recht komt. Uit deze overwegingen kom ik tot de conclusie dat de verschijningsruimte gaat om een moment en een beweging: het is het moment van de ervaring van het publieke, de ervaring van het publieke domein. We zouden het de ontologische ervaring van het publieke kunnen noemen. Arendts spreken over de verschijningsruimte heeft een meer fenomenologisch karakter. De ontologische ervaring, die dus opgeroepen wordt door de verschijning, is essentieel, stelt Arendt. Alleen waarin in gezamenlijkheid de wereld wordt ervaren, wordt ook haar realiteit duidelijk. Al die verschillende perspectieven op het ene object, die ene wereld, die allemaal vanuit de eigen positie iets van dat object blootleggen, verzekeren ons van de werkelijkheid, als ook van haar complexiteit. Het is ook beweging: verschijning is geen constante, het is letterlijk de overgang van het ene domein naar het andere. Van het private naar het publieke, van de ene publieke ruimte naar de andere. Die grensovergang is een aanknopingspunt voor een architectonische benadering. Immers, verschijnen is concreet, werkelijk en ruimtelijk – de ervaring van verschijnen, van de grensovergang, is daarom op zijn minst ook een architec-

15. Walter Benjamin, *Het kunstwerk in het tijdperk van zijn technische reproduceerbaarheid, en andere essays* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 1985)

16. Frampton, 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects', 26

17. Nicolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (Harmonstworth: Penguin Books, 1968), 15

tonische ervaring. Architectuur trekt grenzen en bepaalt hoe deze vormgegeven zijn. Ze kunnen flinterdun en transparant zijn, of dik en ondoordringbaar, ze kunnen ruimtelijk worden en een ruimte in zichzelf, het kan een serie ruimtes zijn en tezamen een sequentie vormen. De talloze mogelijkheden die de architectuur biedt, kunnen bijdragen aan die ervaring van verschijning in het publieke en de terugtrekking in het private domein. Arendt noemt dit overigens het pre-politieke van de architectuur. Op een van de spaarzame momenten omschrijft Arendt de publiek ruimte als voorwaarde voor het publieke leven en trekt daarbij de lijn naar de opvattingen over het publieke leven in de Griekse *Polis*. Deze ruimte moet 'zeker' zijn, alvorens de participanten handelend en sprekend erin kunnen verschijnen. Deze zekerheid wordt enerzijds geboden door de wetten, die het publieke leven regelen, maar anderzijds ook door muren die haar beschermen tegen gevaar van buitenaf. Deze 'bescherming' gaat aan het politieke handelen vooraf – wetgeving en architectuur zijn dus pre-politiek, volgens Arendt. Nu we tot de conclusie kwamen dat de drempel, de grens, het potentieel van architectuur is, naast dat ruimte natuurlijk haar essentie is, richt ik mijn blik in hoofdstuk 6 op architectuur (grens én ruimte) als 'object', als resultaat van 'werken'. Architectuur behoort immers, volgens Arendt althans, tot deze categorie. Architectuur produceert objecten (ruimten, structuren, tekeningen, maquettes) die een zekere permanentie hebben, weerstand bieden tegen de natuur. Ze vormen, letterlijk, een wereld, een gemeenschappelijk geheel. De eerdergenoemde architectuurhistoricus Kenneth Frampton onderscheidde in zijn lezing van Arendts *The Human Condition* een duidelijke parallel binnen het architectonisch veld tussen arbeid en werk enerzijds en bouwen en architectuur anderzijds.¹⁶ Bouwen en architectuur is een vrij algemeen geaccepteerd onderscheid binnen het architectonisch discours, een onderscheid dat verschil maakt tussen het alledaagse bouwen en uitzonderlijke gebouwen, gebouwen waarvan de betekenis niet verder reikt dan de eigen bestemming, en gebouwen waarvan de betekenis daar ver overheen reikt en op esthetische wijze aan ons appelleert. Het onderscheid is door de Britse architectuurhistoricus Nicolaus Pevsner op scherp gezet als het onderscheid tussen een fietsenstalling (bouwen) en Lincoln Cathedral (architectuur).¹⁷ Frampton laat zien hoe binnen het architectonisch veld sinds de 18^e eeuw inderdaad een onderscheid komt tussen de architecten die zijn opgeleid aan een ingenieursopleiding en architecten die opgeleid zijn aan een kunst-academie. De eerste gingen doelmatig te werk, de tweede waren voornamelijk bezorgd om het vraagstuk van schoonheid. De laatste school lijkt de slag te hebben gemist: tijdens het modernisme in de architectuur werd doelmatigheid (en een bijbehorende esthetiek, dat wel) het ultieme doel. Frampton laat echter zien hoe economische principes meer en meer de architectuur beïnvloeden. Voor Arendt behoort de economische wetenschap tot de organisatie van het huishouden, bij de categorie van het 'arbeiden' dus. Frampton heeft daar een sterk punt te pakken: hoe meer de economische principes hun werk doen binnen het veld, hoe minder architectuur gekenmerkt wordt door de *lange duur*. Opdrachten worden slechts in gedeelten aan architecten gegeven, of architecten krijgen zelfs slechts de verantwoordelijkheid over de gevel, of over de ontwikkeling van ideeën. De uitwerking wordt door aannemers zelf gedaan, of door bureaus die bekend staan om efficiëntie en kostenbewust zijn. De stap is logisch, maar het opknippen van verantwoordelijkheden desastreus voor de coherentie van de plannen en de mogelijkheden daadwerkelijk iets van publieke betekenis te maken. Inderdaad lijkt er dus een verschuiving gaande binnen het veld van 'werk' naar 'arbeid', waarbij ook binnen de gebouwde omgeving iets van 'omlooptijd' zijn intrede doet.

Ook Pier Vittorio Aureli benadrukt de toenemende invloed van economische theorieën op de stadontwikkeling. Sinds het uitbreidingsplan van Cerda voor Barcelona (het alom bekende gridplan), stelt hij dat in de stedenbouw het algemene en generieke centraal is komen te staan, in plaats van het letterlijk vormgeven aan het stadsleven. De stedenbouw is economisch gedreven geworden, waarbij slechts ruimte is voor architectonische uitzonderingen in de vorm van iconen, die de stad niet vormgeven, maar haar wel onder de aandacht brengen.¹⁸ Waar Frampton niet echt een duidelijke uitweg uit het door hem geconstateerde gevaar wijst (immers, de wereld zelf is in gevaar, als de lange duur ingewisseld wordt door omloopsnelheden), komt Aureli juist wel met een antwoord: een absolute concentratie op de vorm van het architectonisch project onthult de generieke en economische principes achter het ge-urbaniseerde landschap. In beide perspectieven is veel te vinden dat de aandacht vraagt, maar als reactie beargumenteer ik dat er geen onderscheid gemaakt zou moeten worden tussen het generieke en het afzonderlijke. Juist vanuit het idee dat architectuur blijvende objecten maakt (en toegegeven, ook een festivalpodium kunnen we tot het veld rekenen, ook al blijft deze soms niet langer dan een dag staan), en daarmee de wereld vormgeeft, niet alleen voor onszelf, maar ook voor hen die na ons komen, kunnen we niet een deel van het veld overgeven aan de ‘markt’ en ons vervolgens richten op de uitzonderingen. Elke opgave draagt immers bij aan de gemeenschappelijke wereld en heeft dus publieke betekenis. Die publieke betekenis wordt duidelijk als we hierbij Arendts begrip van ‘cultuur’ betrekken. Cultuur is in Arendts perspectief iets dat zich tussen ‘werk’ en ‘handelen’ bevindt. Arendt stelt dat de Grieken en de Romeinen beide een ander cultuurbegrip kenden. De Romeinen stelden ‘eerbied voor de getuigenis van het verleden’ centraal, terwijl bij de Grieken ‘de vervaardiging van kunst’ centraal stond. Het eerste perspectief legt de nadruk op ‘liefdevolle zorg’ enerzijds en ‘interventie’ gericht op de toekomst, anderzijds.¹⁹ Architectuur als cultureel verantwoorde omgang met de wereld, zo zouden we kunnen stellen, omvat beide perspectieven. Ze gaat behoedzaam om met het bestaande en tegelijkertijd maakt ze toekomstige ontwikkelingen mogelijk.

Vanuit Arendts reflectie op de menselijke activiteit van het ‘werken’ en met name haar bespreking van het kunstwerk, als exemplarisch product dat door werk wordt voortgebracht, zijn vervolgens ook lessen voor de architectuur te definiëren. Deze lessen hebben allemaal te maken met de ervaring en verbeelding van de werkelijkheid. Kunst is het ultieme resultaat van werken, omdat het geen ander doel dient dan zichzelf en haar eigen schoonheid. Het wordt niet verbruikt, raakt niet versleten en heeft dus een onbegrensde *lange duur*. Bovendien heeft kunst de capaciteit van verbeelding, van verstoffelijking, van condensatie en transformatie – aspecten die bijdragen aan het onthullen en bevestigen van de complexe werkelijkheid van de wereld. Kunst, met andere woorden, bevestigt allereerst de gemeenschappelijke wereld en onthult deze tegelijkertijd. Kunst bevestigt de gemeenschap. Maar daarvoor moet kunst wel openbaar gemaakt worden, ontsloten worden. Ze kan, in de meeste gevallen, niet simpelweg buiten getoond worden. Daarvoor is ze te kwetsbaar. Musea zijn nodig om de kunstwerken te ontsluiten. Arendt brengt hier de architectuur niet ter sprake. Ik beargumenteer echter dat ondanks dat architectuur wel verslijt en vervangen of vernieuwd moet worden, ook architectuur in dit perspectief hoge ogen gooit. Architectuur draagt immers op een alledaagse wijze bij aan de ervaring van de wereld. Ze hoeft niet ontsloten te worden, ze is daar gewoon, achter elke hoek in de stad, in elk landschappelijk perspectief. Opnieuw komen hier de drempels en wanden aan de orde: met name de overgangen tussen ruimtes prikkelen de zintuigen – en, zoals

18. Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, 7-9

19. Hannah Arendt, *De crisis in de cultuur: Haar sociale en politieke betekenis* (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1995 [1961]), 55-58

20.
Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*
(New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 50

21.
Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit
Dimension* (Chicago (Ill.): Chicago
University Press, 2013)

Arendt in haar latere studie *The Life of the Mind* stelt, het zijn juist die zintuigen die ons een sensatie van de wereld geven, die ons overtuigen van de werkelijkheid van de wereld, met name als deze een zesde zintuig ontsluiten, de common-sense, die Arendt niet zomaar omschrijft als algemeen inzicht, maar als een inzicht gebaseerd in de menselijk gemeenschap, een 'community-sense'.²⁰ Architectuur, zo concludeer ik, verbindt ons on-middellijk met de gemeenschappelijke wereld en de gemeenschap, zoals geen ander werk en culturele activiteit dat kan.

Deze dissertatie rondt tenslotte af met aandacht voor architectuur als activiteit. Tot hiertoe is het voornamelijk gegaan over architectuur als gebouwde omgeving (waarbij de architectuur gericht is op interventie en transformatie, het plaats maken voor andere programma's, veranderende inzichten en nieuwe kansen). Het ontwikkelen van die ideeën, het inzetten van verbeelding, van overtuiging en van het vermogen iets nieuws te starten, is het onderwerp van hoofdstuk 7. Ik betoog daarin dat architectonisch ontwerpen (om daarmee dit proces van idee-ontwikkeling tot daadwerkelijk bouwen te benoemen) voor een groot gedeelte 'werken' is, maar dat het ook raakvlakken heeft met 'handelen' enerzijds, en 'denken' en 'oordelen' anderzijds. Op zijn minst zal duidelijk zijn dat een gebouw niet slechts door de ontwerper geconcipieerd wordt. De opdrachtgever heeft minstens zo'n grote invloed, als ook de constructeur, de aannemer, de financier. De architect kijkt bovendien naar de voorkeuren van de gebruiker, naar de wensen (en vaak bezwaren) van omwonenden, de ambities van politici (en de geldende regels op een bepaalde plaats). Hoe hij deze input waardeert, hangt af van eigen ambities, van zijn architectuurbeschuwing. Met andere woorden: de architect wordt in het hele proces ook gevraagd positie te kiezen.

Het ontwikkelen en uitwerken van ideeën is allereerst werk – werk van handen, in directe verbinding met het oog en de reflectie. Klassiek is uiteraard het schetsen, het maken van talloze schetsen met slechts kleine veranderingen, die soms toch het oog kunnen verrassen. De hand gaat zijn eigen weg, de hersenen reflecteren op wat er voor het oog verschijnt. Hoewel de computer veel van dit werk overneemt en verandert, blijft deze essentiële vorm van ontwerpen in veel gevallen nog overeind. In dit proces komt het lezen van heden en verleden en de kracht van verbeelding van mogelijke toekomst samen, wordt het gespiegeld aan ervaringen, en verfijnd door het gebruik van kennis uit andere domeinen. Daarom is elke interventie en elk ontwerp in zekere zin een prototype. Er wordt getest en verder gesleuteld op basis van de ervaringen. Door die interventies (en door de oefening in het ontwerpen) wordt kennis opgebouwd – veel van deze kennis is praktische kennis, die overgedragen kan worden tussen ontwerpers onderling, bijvoorbeeld via de opleidingen. Een deel van die kennis is echter ongrijpbaar en niet overdraagbaar. Dat is de kennis die persoonlijk wordt opgedaan in de oefening van het ontwerpen. *Tacit knowledge* heeft de filosoof Michael Polanyi dat genoemd, persoonlijke kennis waarvan we ons nauwelijks bewust zijn.²¹ Het is deze kennis die onze handen aanstuurt als we aan het schetsen zijn – die daardoor als vanzelf de juiste verhoudingen op papier zetten –, die essentieel is om een opgave, een kaart, een tekening, een locatie te kunnen lezen, om de verbeelding aan de spreken, om voorstellen te kunnen tekenen voor mogelijke toekomst. *Tacit knowledge* is ervaringskennis die we verinnerlijkt hebben – het is de kennis die ontwerpers 'in actie' aanspreken.

De computer wordt soms ingezet om de subjectiviteit van de ontwerper verder terug te dringen. Een begrijpelijke ambitie, maar ik betoog dat het geen goede ontwikkeling is. Integendeel: een zekere subjectiviteit is onontkoombaar, en verbindt de architectuur juist met de 'wereld'. Daarmee betoog ik niet dat

de architect in het ontwerpproces centraal staat, maar juist dat als architectuur en haar bijdrage aan de wereld en haar inwoners de focus is van het architectuur proces, dat dan de subjectieve interventie noodzakelijk is. De wereld is van plaatst tot plaats en van tijd tot tijd verschillend. De architectonische interventie anticipeert daarop. Het verantwoord omgaan met verschil staat op gespannen voet met de poging het ontwerpproces te objectiveren. De ontwerper draagt persoonlijk een publieke verantwoordelijkheid, heeft een culturele roeping om zorg te dragen voor de wereld en haar inwoners, om daarin, voor zover noodzakelijk, in te grijpen. Deze ethische blik stelt dus dat alle andere ambities – van architect, opdrachtgever, politici – tegen deze achtergrond gewogen moeten worden. Het generiek maken van het proces, waarbij de ambities tezamen met allerlei randvoorwaarden worden omgezet in parameters om zo tot een ontwerp te komen, is in dit kader niet de juiste weg. Het ontnemt de ontwerper verantwoordelijkheden, terwijl deze juist vanuit de eigen verantwoordelijkheid voor de wereld en haar inwoners een publieke opgave heeft, waarop hij of zij ook aangesproken kan worden. Bovendien, stel ik vast dat de architectuur geen generieke wetenschap is. Waar andere vakgebieden kunnen uitgaan van algemeen herhaalbare processen, waarop geïnterveneerd en geanticipeerd kan worden, kan dat binnen de ruimtelijke interventie niet, juist vanwege die combinatie van wereld enerzijds en mens anderzijds. Elke locatie is anders qua geografie, topografie, geschiedenis, bewoning, culturele en politieke context, en elke opgave komt uit een andere behoefte voort, een behoefte die lang niet zeker is en juist door de zichtbaarheid en tastbaarheid van het ontwerp(proces) veranderen kan. Architectuur opereert op het snijvlak van on-mogelijkheden, het on-voorzien, het on-gedachte, terwijl de interventies zelf uiteindelijk voor lange tijd bepalend zijn voor stad, land en bewoners. Juist daarom behoort de architectonische interventie ook telkens opnieuw doordacht te worden. Niet dat daarbij aan ieders wensen recht gedaan kan worden. De ontwerper moet keuzes maken en zit daarom altijd in een onbevredigende en ongemakkelijke positie. Ik stel vast dat deze ongemakkelijke positie een vruchtbare positie is: de verantwoordelijkheid die de architect draagt is immers niet om het even, maar bepaalt de wereld en het leven van haar gebruikers voor langere tijd. Het is een politieke verantwoordelijkheid, die allereerst gevoeld mag worden, om deze vervolgens ook publiekelijk aan te kaarten.

Arendt heeft nooit het laatste deel van *The Life of the Mind* kunnen schrijven, het deel dat het denken verbindt met oordelen. Wel zijn na haar dood samenvattingen en aantekeningen van haar lezingen over dit thema gepubliceerd, waarin Arendt het esthetisch oordelen zoals de Duitse filosoof Immanuel Kant dit heeft beschreven, neemt als haar model voor het politieke oordelen.²² Oordelen, stelt Arendt met Kant, is niet hetzelfde als logisch redeneren dat ons vertelt wat we wel en niet moeten doen. Oordelen gaat ook niet over het blootleggen van ‘de waarheid’, maar over het ontdekken van het *aannemelijke*. Dat vergt allereerst het vermogen om vanuit verschillende standpunten te kunnen kijken, of beter gezegd, zich in die standpunten te verplaatsen, om vanuit dat perspectief te kunnen kijken (en zo de meerdere facetten van de werkelijkheid niet alleen te beseffen, maar ook te begrijpen). Ik zie hier een belangrijke parallel met het ontwerpproces. De ontwerper moet per definitie andere standpunten, wensen, ambities nagaan om er een antwoord op te definiëren, om het in het ontwerp te verwerken. Arendts beschrijving van oordelen gaat echter verder: men moet zich letterlijk verplaatsen in de andere positie om dat perspectief in de vingers te krijgen. Bovendien geldt zeker bij ontwerpen, dat de ontwerper zelf betrokken is in het proces en de

22.
Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*
(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992)

opgave: daarom moet ook het vermogen het eigen handelen onder de loep te nemen en te analyseren aangesproken worden. Een oordeel vellen is vervolgens niet uitkomen op het gemiddelde, maar het aanspreken van de kennis opgedaan in de andere posities en dit te combineren met architectonische kennis, om op basis daarvan een beslissing te nemen die aannemelijk is. Oordelen (en ontwerpen) vertrekt dus vanuit de diversiteit, heeft de ruimte van het reflectieve nodig en stelt voorwaarden aan de uitkomst omdat deze in ieder geval weer aan het publiek uitgelegd moet kunnen worden. Ontwerpbeslissingen, met andere woorden, zijn *publieke* beslissingen: ze moeten uitgelegd kunnen worden en kunnen zich niet verschuilen achter persoonlijke smaak en wereldbeeld. Ontwerpen zien als oordelen over het beschikbare materiaal, gezien vanuit zoveel mogelijk betrokken perspectieven, zorgt ervoor dat het persoonlijke niet achterblijft of ontkend wordt, maar wel dat erover gesproken kan worden (ook door niet-architecten) en dat het dienstbaar gemaakt wordt aan het publieke belang.

Architectuur – zo zou het antwoord op de fundamentele vraag, waarmee deze studie begon, kunnen zijn – draagt op cruciale wijze bij aan de ervaring van het publieke. Het is als culturele activiteit allereerst zelf een publieke aangelegenheid. Dit perspectief formuleert een ethisch kader voor de architect, waarin de wereld en haar bewoners de horizon zijn. Het doel van architectuur is dan het scheppen van een ‘thuis’ voor de mens in deze gemeenschappelijke wereld (die telkens aan verandering onderhevig is). In het kader van het ontsluiten van de gemeenschappelijke wereld is de essentie van architectuur om dit gemeenschappelijke zichtbaar en vooral ook ervaarbaar te maken. Hoewel architectuur geen ‘verschijningsruimten’ kan creëren, waarin bewoners van de wereld aan elkaar verschijnen, draagt ze wel bij aan de potentie van ruimte om verschijningsruimte te kunnen zijn en bovendien aan de ervaring van het verschijnen zelf. Die grensovergang, die essentieel is aan verschijning, is architectonisch potentieel – en daarmee articuleert de architectuur de werkelijkheid van de gemeenschappelijke wereld. Ook al lijkt het enclave-landschap en de gesegregeerde stad die voeling met het gemeenschappelijke verloren te hebben, er is in het ontwerp van deze artefacten zeker ruimte om er ook deze perspectieven in te brengen.

SUMMARY

Although the German-American philosopher Hannah Arendt never addressed architecture specifically, her writings very well can help us to rethink architecture as a spatial, cultural and political phenomenon and practice. Arendt's work after all is remarkable spatial: behind all of her writings is a particular concern about the 'world and its inhabitants' tangible. Arendt once used this phrase to describe the writings of her teacher, the German philosopher Karl Jaspers. His writings were spatial, she stated, not because they were bound to a particular space, but since they always were related 'to the world and its inhabitants'. The same thus counts for Arendt's writings, I argue. It is not bound to a particular situation, but it stresses 'the world and its inhabitants.' Arendt actually distinguishes the world from the 'earth'. Whereas the latter refers to the natural globe, the world refers to the human and cultural intervention in that earth – and intervention that is needed, in order to make the earth fit for human life. Important in this distinction is that the world always is 'in common'. Human life after all is living together with and amongst others. Arendt moreover stresses this world as permanent and durable (in opposite to the cycle of nature) – we have it in common not only with our contemporaries, but also with our predecessors and our successors. This world (and its inhabitants) therefore, for her was the ultimate aim of all political life: it is the world that not only literally brings us together, it also unites us together and conditions human and community life. This community life, in other words, is sustained by the permanence of the world.

This brief summary of one of the major premises behind Arendt's philosophical reflections actually urges architecture as a practice and phenomenon that actively contributes to the establishment of this world-in-common. Architecture as a phenomenon contributes to the permanence, whereas architecture as a practice intervenes in that world-in-common. There cannot be one other profession that is so powerful present as architecture in this regard. Architecture designs and constructs the everyday environment of people, more extensively than any other intervention in the earth or addition to the world. This study, called *At Home in the World*, stresses the field and profession of architecture against this background by simultaneously investigating the perspective of Hannah Arendt as well as investigating the world, as it is designed and constructed through architectural interventions. It starts with the question of the public space, a central question, of course in relationship to the commonness of the world, as it also has been a central theme in architectural discourses for about three decades now. Sparks of it already are evoked more than a century ago, with the establishment of a 'modern' approach to the city, but it particularly got attention through the 1989 English translation of a seminal book from the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, the 1962 *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*. In this book he explains how in the 18th century the bourgeoisie in Europe established a third realm in-between the market on the one hand and the state on the other. He describes it as the emancipation of the public from the feudal system: this third sphere,

the public sphere, was neither susceptible by the sphere of the government, nor by the sphere of the market. Both the state and the market had to relate to the public sphere in this new situation – it had to deal with the public opinion. Ideally, of course, since in the book he also describes the fall of this sphere in the 19th and 20th century, since it lost its independency. However, the core of the public sphere was, according to Habermas, people gathering together in cafés, coffeehouses, salons, discussing actualities, as they were made accessible by new media: the newspaper, that had the capacity to inform a large part of the public with the same information. These discussions, the reflections of the participants in the debates, their opinions somehow converge (on the meta-scale) to the public opinion, to which the other spheres had to relate. This thus is the image of the public sphere: a sphere of conversations, debates, exchange of opinions, that, taken together, have power against the market and the state. But Habermas's book was not simply celebrating this third sphere of power, it recognizes its decline throughout modernity. The public sphere was lost (or at least in a very poor condition) – the market had taken over.

The translation of Habermas's perspective, and particularly the description of the diminishing power of the public sphere, in English, and the publication particularly in America, somehow evoked a fierce debate amongst political theorists, a discussion that also came to the table of architectural and urban theorists. What Habermas described somehow was visible in the American cities and the countryside, where new urban and suburban artefacts, like the gated community and the shopping mall, were characterized by exclusive rather than inclusive (public) spaces. The suburbanized landscape, as well as the contemporary city had become strongly segregated, which makes it hard to imagine a well-functioning public space, where people of all different backgrounds together take part in public life, conversations, and exchange of ideas. This of course is not only the situation in America, it can be touched upon around the globe, even in much sharper tones. In America, however, the loss of public spaces found its theoretical imperative in the hypothesis of Habermas.

The first part of this study maps the contemporary suburban landscape (Chapter 2) and city (Chapter 3), parallel with a reading of the discourse in architectural and urban theory of the last three decades. The discourse is rather pessimistic: the public sphere has become a 'phantom', public space is 'dead'. The landscape and the city after all can be described as a world that falls apart in enclaves, worlds on its own. Even in the city, where diversity is sought and celebrated, processes of gentrification disturb the ideal image behind truly public spaces, spaces that are used by all, give room to exchange of ideas and perspectives. Such spaces after all are hardly imaginable in a segregated spatial organization as the contemporary situation. It thus is clear how 'spatial organization' contributes to (or has a negative effect on) the possibility of public life that needs to support the public sphere. The architectural debate on public space, as well as the philosophical debate on the public sphere seems to be stuck in this negative scope.

The second part of this study therefore investigates the other origin source of this debate on public space, a source that only in limited ways has entered the discourse on the city and architecture: Hannah Arendt (I extensively introduce her in by an intellectual biography in Chapter 4). Arendt, in her 1958 book *The Human Condition* introduces the idea of a public realm, a term that often is taken as synonymous to Habermas's term 'the public sphere'. Her reference, however, is not the early stages of modernity, but the establishing of the Greek and Roman

Polis, and their organization of its political life. Citizens of these city-states took part in public life through action and speech, Arendt states. They appeared in public, in public space, actively: they participated in public discussions and joint their words, their contributions, with actions. For Arendt this is an important figure. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt actually distinguishes between three human activities on earth: labor, work and action. The latter thus is bound to the public realm, it is the essential aspect of political life, and bound to the multitude and plurality of citizens of the city state. If any citizens was rendered the same, no action nor speech would be needed. The first two activities deal with the earth and the world, the notions we touched upon already previously: labor deals with the temporal and survival, the cycle of nature, while work creates the world that has a certain permanence, and therefore is able to house the human community on earth. The interesting perspective here is that this notion of the world is required before action is possible. In other words: there needs to be a permanent world that enables political life. Action and speech, Arendt argues, creates a web of human affairs that is sustained and supported by the permanence of the world. Participation in political life only makes, if this web of human affairs somehow is reified in the world. Yet, this political life is not simply only possible in and through the world, it vice-versa also has this world (and its inhabitants) as its objective. What unfolds here is discussed in Chapter 5, 6 and 7, in which I discuss Arendt's reflections upon action, the world, and political life and bring them to the current architectural discourses.

Chapter 5 discusses Arendt's notions of action and the public realm, particularly by emphasizing an important difference with Habermas's reading of the public sphere. For Habermas, the public sphere is characterized by inter-action, whereas Arendt's public realm is characterized by action. Arendt's notion of action certainly incorporates inter-action (speech, in Arendt's terms), but only insofar it contributes to and supports action. Speech is needed in order to explain action, in order to gain support and response. The argument that is unfolded here states that inter-action easily can become virtual and intangible (as in the columns of newspaper, the forums on internet) without any connection to the tangible. Action, on the contrary, needs bodies and spaces, needs others, a public that sees (and hears) and responds. It, in other words, stays real, needs real spaces. This argument, which thus offers a perspective upon the importance of reality and real spaces regarding Arendt's notion, even more is underpinned by another description Arendt offers of the public realm: it is the 'space of appearance'. Through this notion Arendt once again introduces a spatial perspective: we appear in public, amongst peers, through action (and speech). I qualify this 'appearance' as *moment* and *movement*: it is situated in space and time. It is a *moment* of revelation (Arendt argues that everyone acts differently, and that only through action the actor is disclosed, and thus fundamental plurality of men is revealed) of plurality as the very condition of the public realm. This of course, confronted with the reality of the contemporary city and suburb, is a critical perspective. In the enclave world, plurality is at stake. Arendt's notion however is hopeful here as well: her description of plurality is not so much differences between groups of people, but stresses the unique-ness of individuals. That means that even within the enclave, that seems to be inhabited by a homogenous group, there is a fundamental plurality. Therefore, even in the mall or the gated community, there is at least a tiny potentiality of appearance to one another. Plurality, however for Arendt is important, since only through plural views (from different positions) upon the world, the reality of the world is revealed. Without touching upon others,

the human being is stuck in his own perspective, which not simply is superfluous and virtual, but also limited and compelling. The space of appearance therefore also requires *movement*: to appear in public is to step out. It is to appear in a particular space from somewhere else. At this point, it is clear that Arendt has a strong distinction between the public and the private in mind: a life lived in public will lose its depth, while a life lived deprived from public appearance will never be fully human, she even states. It is, as previously seen, stuck in the private perspectives, and loses contact with the reality of the world. For Arendt, going back and forth between the public and the private, the public to participate in the world, and to the private, to recuperate in order to participate again, is important. This going back and forth, I argue, is an important movement, to which architecture, as the very profession that creates differences in the world, contributes extensively (or disturbs it extensively). Architecture creates spaces to appear, but it does not create 'spaces of appearance' per se. They after all are bound to the gathering of people, not to a particular architectural place. The nevertheless require space. What architecture does through its intervention in the world, therefore, is to contribute to or to disturb the potentialities of a space to become a space of appearance.

Chapter 6 then takes up Arendt's notion of 'work', and discusses the significance to understand architecture as part of Arendt's notion of work, as being distinguished from labor. The debate on public space takes here an ontological turn. Since work creates the world-in-common, it is a pre-requisite for political life. Work creates a durable world, that connects the now with the past and the future. It does not make sense to participate in public and to be engaged in a web of human affairs, if it is not sustained by a world that does not change overnight. Political life thus requires the world and its permanence as its stage. Arendt introduces the art-work as the human product that exemplifies this perspective, since the work of art is an end in itself, and therefore cannot be spoiled through consumptive processes (which is the case with all other objects produced, which together form this world). This chapter however particularly argues in what way 'architecture' contributes to the world. If permanence is reified in everyday structures, then it is through architecture. I take Arendt's understanding of the arts in order to see how this also is applicable to architecture. Art, after all, is understood by Arendt as not only the most permanent of all things on earth, it also contributes to our understanding of the reality of the world. Art, after all, transforms matter in order to challenge spectators to look differently, to open their eyes and senses, to step aside and to take other perspectives. In other words, it 'thickens' our understanding of the reality of the world by opening up different perspectives and offering particular experiences. These perspectives are a challenge to architecture too. Art, after all, often is hidden in particular art-spaces, while architecture is the context of our everyday life. Architecture therefore mostly is experienced in a distracted manner (contrary to art, to which one needs to decide to go). It nevertheless is not neutral how this everyday environment is designed: unconsciously it offers views upon and experiences of the 'world and its inhabitants'.

This chapter therefore argues that no distinction should be made between mere building on the one hand, and architecture on the other. Here I refer to a well-known distinction that sometimes explicit and sometimes implicitly is made within architectural discourses. The world is full of (mere) building, and architecture only is understood as the surplus of these structures. Those buildings that make a change, are technologically innovative or aesthetically attractive. Most

constructions today however seem to be simply the results of economic rules and construction efficiency, while only the striking and remarkable buildings are understood through a cultural perspective. The argument in this chapter is, however, that since all constructions intervene in the world, and therefore create a world-in-between the inhabitants of the world. Mere building and architecture, in this perspective, fundamentally are the same. No building therefore should be only the outcome of simple economic maths or private profit – each construction is politically charged. Architecture (like mere building) intervenes in the world-in-common, erect structures that will shape the world, not only now and tomorrow, but permanently. Architecture treats the world as we inherit it, it treats the past and transforms it in the world that will offer space for the needs of tomorrow and cater the space of appearance today. This therefore urges the designer to think beyond the actual intervention, program, ambitions, and understands each construction and intervention in the light of culture and community – or in other words, in the perspective of the establishment and maintenance of the world-in-common.

This brings us to the 7th Chapter, that takes up the question of design. If every assignment is politically charged and challenged by a public perspective, how can we reflect upon architecture as a profession? This perspective of course first is an ethical question. The work of architects does not shape a single building; it shapes the world that we have in common. Building never is only in the interest of a singular client. It after all impacts all of us. This chapter therefore introduces architecture as simultaneously work *and* action. Architecture reifies, which is the work-part. It however also actively creates spaces, new conditions, takes initiatives for change, which is the action-part. Work and action, however, needs to be supported by reflection, I argue. Reflection upon ‘what-he-is-doing’ distinguishes the craftsman from the amateur and profiteer. This notion brings us to another distinction Arendt offers, particularly in her latter writings: between thinking, willing and judging. This chapter finalizes then by offering the notion of judgment as model for design itself. Arendt’s notion of judgment strongly relates to the public. Judging, for Arendt, is to be able to think from different positions, not in order to come to the average, but to take knowledgeable decisions that are communicable to the public. It involves the public, but not to come to a singular public opinion, but in order to come to a judgment that is explicable to the the public. This perspective thus not simply urges ‘building’ as always affecting the world, but also stresses ‘designing’ these buildings as a public enterprise. It offers a perspective through which the very activity of design can be understood in the light of the world and its inhabitants.

Arendt’s ideas, since she does not explicitly address architecture, cannot be used 1:1 within the profession of architecture. There is a significant gap between reflections of the philosopher and their active use in architectural design. This study somehow bridges that gap, by investigating Arendt’s writings and consciously bringing them to the profession of architecture as well as the discourses on architecture and the city. This of course urges an important methodical issue, that also Arendt once challenged. In a reflection upon the writings of German philosopher and literature critic Walter Benjamin, who she met during her flight from Germany, via Paris, to America, prior to World War II, she describes his work as ‘pearl-diving’, or as a fragmented historiography. What Benjamin did was diving into the past, in order to bring valuable findings, pearls, from there to here, from then to now. But in this transition, the context of

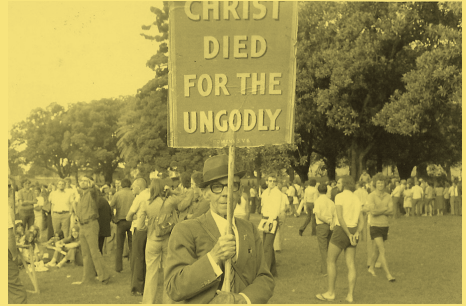
the findings is destroyed – they are brought to a new context. The pearls are taken from their natural habitat towards an artificial one. It nevertheless is significant to do, Arendt stated. Modernity already had cut this line with tradition, she states. The historical context already is destroyed – unreachable for our contemporary perspectives. Nevertheless, this perspective does not dismiss the past. Not at all, Arendt argues: the past still frames our experiences today. We need these pearls from the past, in order to understand today. A similar perspective also counts for this study: taking fragments from Arendt's writings towards the field of architecture means somehow to dive for pearls and to bring them to another context. By doing so, it never can fully describe and revive the original context. But by carefully taking them out of their place in the writings of Arendt, and placing it in the discourses on architecture and the city, new perspectives, new horizons, and new connections are established. Particularly her focus on 'the world and its inhabitants' offers a new understanding of architectural constructions and interventions, and even challenges architectural design and craftsmanship. It offers not simply new perspectives, but it also renews insights that were long forgotten or lived a hidden life. It challenges the significance of all aspects of architecture as it is related to the public.

Chapter 8 then finalizes by bringing a few of these lessons learned to the fore. It urges the significance of architecture, not only as a profession taking care of the 'beautification' of buildings, but as a profession that has responsibility over the world-in-common. It urges architecture politically, since it forms literally the experience of this world, even if it is an unconscious experience. Architecture enables (or disturbs) the experience of the world as it also can be the stage of public life. It intervenes in the world in order to make differences – differences that can create moments and movements that contribute to the potentiality of a 'space of appearance'. In other words, how these interventions are designed is significant. It cannot be left to the drawing boards of architects, nor to the maths of developers. It needs to get words and images that enables the discussions amongst architects, their clients, but also publicly in society. Architecture needs to have the public interest always in its scope, it after all maintains and establishes the world-in-common, and thus needs to think from the perspective of the 'world and its inhabitants'.

1.
INTRODUCTION:
ARCHITECTURE
AND THE PUBLIC



1.1 *The Public Experience*. Martin Luther King jr. speaking at a rally at Washington Mall, Washington DC, USA, August 28, 1963



1.2 *The Public Experience*. Several speakerscorners, London, UK, and Sydney, Australia, 1930-1970



1.3 *The Public Experience*. Parisians join the parade at the Champs Elysees, August 25, 1944, Paris, France



1.4 *The Public Experience*. Men playing checkers, Stanley Park, 1920s, Vancouver, Canada



1.5 *Suburban Culture*. Children playing on the sidewalk in a suburban neighborhood, 1962



1.6 Suburban Culture. Pleasant family shopping at Randhurst Center, Mount Prospect, Ill, USA. (Victor Gruen, 1962)



1.7 Room for Political Practices. Protests against president Rousseff's economic policy, March 14, 2015, São Paulo, Brazil - in front of and under the *São Paulo Museum of Art* (Lina Bo Bardi, 1968)



1.8 Architecture and Gentrification. *The New York Times* and the *Lonely Planet* present the Dutch city Rotterdam as one of the cities to visit, particularly because of the opening of outspoken buildings like the *Markthal* (MVRDV, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2015)



1.9 *The Temporalities of Architecture*. Aging structure of the Salk Institute (Louis Kahn, La Jolla/San Diego, CA, USA, 1965)



1.10 *Threshold Spaces.* The Public Interior of the Ford Foundation (Kevin Roche, New York, NY, USA, 1976)



1.11 *Threshold Spaces. The Museum of Modern Literature*
(David Chipperfield, Marbach am Neckar, Germany, 2006)



1.12 *Threshold Spaces*. 4th Avenue, Seattle. In front of the *Seattle Public Library* (Rem Koolhaas/OMA, Seattle, WA, USA, 2004)



1.13 *Making Architecture Public*. The Italian architect Giancarlo di Carlo in discussion with students during the 14th Triennial of Milan, Milan, Italy, 1968

1.1 A CONVERSATION WITH A BUS DRIVER

'How interesting! Interior or exterior?' Strikingly enough, this question often is the immediate response when someone hears I am an architect by profession. 'I do thresholds!' I intuitively respond, an answer that often rouses furrowed brows. However, if the conversation continues, the next question is often, 'Housing or offices?' 'Everything that can be designed, I will do.' This response is easily accepted, not so much as a statement on architecture, but as a business model. I can see them think, 'Of course, he is willing to do everything!' 'Actually', I then continue, 'do not think in such divisions about architecture! You can't separate interior and exterior; you can't design an exterior without also designing the interior too. And in addition to that, designing an office is not so much different than designing someone's house.' Admittedly, this is a statement that can be disproven by evidence. I nevertheless present it as the truth. 'No matter what program, architects do everything,' I continue to teach my interlocutor. 'Offices and houses, swimming pools and parking garages – to state it in terms of a famous Dutch book title, architects are equipped with an eagerness to design *Van stoel tot stad*, from chair to city.' 'And some architects also write texts', I finally add to the conversation. 'Writing actually is what I do at the very moment, as well as teaching. I quit practice for a while in order to think, write and teach.'

This last remark prevents the interlocutor often from starting to ask practical questions, although some want to have my opinion on the best way to improve the insulation of an existing house, or on the sense of installing solar panels on a roof scape that is not exactly south-facing. These questions are of course very specific and answering them is easy. I simply can't, since it requires another expertise than what I have available at this moment. Some people, however, do continue the conversation by asking 'What building do you like?' This question from the very beginning of my studies in architecture and urban design in Delft has puzzled me since it asks for a professional view on what I could say based on acquired architectural knowhow, different than to my underdeveloped personal taste. As a student, I therefore often quickly came up with one or another architectural highlight that impressed me, and I'd explain why it triggered my attention: an unprecedented concept, stunning use of materials, great spaces, monumental without being static, empty spaces, a complex routing, and so forth. However, I started to notice that whatever I did choose, and however I tried to explain the intriguing details, there was either no or very little recognition – although my explanation was appreciated and acknowledged. Nevertheless, the inquisitor often also revealed their favourite buildings. Depending if they had visited Barcelona recently it was the *Sagrada Familia* designed by Antonio Gaudi, still in construction today. Or the great Cathedral of Reims. An office building designed according to anthroposophical guidelines, a shopping centre recently built in neo-classical style, an imposing skyscraper. 'Oh yes, these are very interesting buildings', I honestly could respond. 'Very impressive, surely.' Did you, by the way, know how Gaudi designed these terrific forms? And that nobody was able to continue his work when he suddenly died? Very interesting!' The other examples evoked similar responses within me, highlighting some of the remarkable aspects or mechanisms beyond that indeed triggers my interest. This somehow then is the end of the conversation: stuck in two completely different buildings opposed to each other, two different appearances, two different views, without anything that seems to overarch these perspectives. What could we say about it? Through these conversations I noticed that architecture in the eyes of my interlocutors often is

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J.B. Bakema, *Van stoel tot stad* (Zeist: De Haan, 1964); in English this book is published as Jacob Berend Bakema, *From Doorstep tot City* (Zeist: De Haan, 1964). In this translation the broadness of the Dutch title actually is lost. In Dutch, it is not from the doorstep, but from the chair to the City. The English title stays within the 'regular' realm of architecture, since the doorstep is integral part of the building. A chair, however is quite different: it is furniture, is flexible and thus can easily be moved or replaced. In other words, where the doorstep obviously is part of the architectural project, the chair is not. As I will discuss later, I take architecture in an even more broad sense: from interior to landscape and from graphics to writing.

urged as something impressive and remarkable, often old (and therefore even more impressive – to construct a cathedral 500 years ago!), or if not, then built in a classical style. Big and impressive is beautiful. Quite a difference with the buildings which were presented, discussed, investigated, and which I learnt to love during my studies. I also recognized within myself that I avoided the simple categorisation of ‘beauty’ – not only in these cases where I actually don’t appreciate the appearance of the project that is pushed forward, but also in these cases that I emphasized myself. The word beautiful has been replaced by a phrase like ‘highly interesting’; a process that is intriguing in itself.

The questions put forward by my interlocutors obviously reveal something of the image of the profession in society, at least in The Netherlands, but I guess also more general, since I have had similar conversations in other countries too. Moreover, it is not only my singular experience: lots of colleagues confirm my experiences, recognizing these questions and how such a conversation develops. What these conversations reveal is at once the superficial idea of architecture, as well as the knowledge of architecture within the public eye. The superficiality is that architecture is simply imagined as the beautification of buildings – a beautification that actually seems to have no substance at all. It is linked to important buildings, but plays no major role in the everyday environment. This might not be that strange, the everyday environment after all is the everyday, and not the exception. It is this everyday environment that the public has a knowledge of that the architect does not have, since it is this environment that they experience. And although it is not often linked to architecture, that might not be the blind spot of the interlocutor. I, after all, also came up with explanations of architecture that stress the exceptional – these concepts, ideas, practices, approaches that attracted my attention (which were far away from the scope of the opponent as well). This limited public image of the profession of architecture thus certainly mirrors the reality of architecture today, which also has its impact on architectural practices. Architects today often get limited assignments and responsibilities. They are, for instance, simply asked to develop an idea for a particular building, which then, upon approval, is further developed into a ‘real building’ by the constructor. Or engineers already have developed a layout for a certain building, which most efficiently offers space to the required program and architects are asked to simply design the façade. This will define the appearance of the building abruptly, which can then be changed easily after a few years according to new standards and fashion. Or architects are asked to provide impressive buildings, which are seen as icons that can ‘brand’ a particular (part of the) city in order to create a positive image that attracts more visitors and businesses. Indeed, in all these cases architecture is limited to beautification.

There are at least three limitations beyond this small image of architecture. The first of course is the obvious limitation of architecture to buildings. Even the definitions in dictionaries and encyclopaedias offer that perspective. Architecture, one of the Dutch dictionaries states, is the art of construction. Architecture, however, as I will explain, is about space and the built environment, which ranges from landscape to building, and from road to toilet, and indeed from chair to city. A second limitation behind the question is the narrowing down of the profession to the activity of ‘design’, a narrowing down that fails to recognize architecture as a body of knowledge about the world and the built environment, about spaces and social practices. Architecture thus also includes the knowledge that is enclosed in reflections on the past and future of spaces, in drawings and writings in which space is evoked, challenged, appreciated, propelled, described, in conversations

and collaborations. Lecturing and teaching belongs to the profession, as does teaching and presenting. Indeed, for this limitation nobody is to blame, or it is the profession itself by limiting themselves to design. Design is central, definitely, but it stands upon the shoulders of the other activities. Thirdly, the questions reveal a limitation of architecture as the beautification of constructions, be it their exterior or their interior. This limitation probably is evoked by popular television shows on ‘pimping’ the interior of average houses, or by the popularity of magazines on interior design, by architectural projects that are mainly presented to the public by extravagant renderings of the exterior, or by generic warehouses with stunning Greek facades. However, although interiors can be pimped and exteriors can be polished, architecture is way more than that, and is about – I urged it already in the conversation – the relationship between interior and exterior, city, landscape and building, which is much more about structure and organization, texture and construction, the everyday and the exception, people’s lives and the life of the community – much more than only beautification. The shiny images and the temporality of interior design does not tell the public how the building actually needs to be a unity (although it can be in diversity). Behind the appearance, there is coherence (or contrast) from interior to exterior and back again, as well as from city to building and back again. And behind beauty there is structure and program, composition and texture, tectonic aspects and structural challenges, logic and surprise, plurality and coherence.

The deficiencies of the generally limited understanding of architecture painfully became clear due to the 2008 financial and economic crisis. By the enormous decrease of assignments, most of the offices suffered fewer turnovers, let alone profit, and either had to fire employees or went bankrupt. The unemployment rate amongst architects rocketed sky-high. In The Netherlands the job rate halved as did the turnover, while the number of offices doubled.² This crisis in architecture often has been explained as something happening outside of architecture – the world is in crisis – which immediately affects the market of the building industries. A decrease in future perspective immediately puts all building projects on hold, let alone all plans that were not yet turned into a project (and the ideas that were not yet a plan). Architects are thus the first to suffer from the crisis. But as the designer and writer Rory Hyde argues in the introduction to a marvellous collection of interviews called *Future Practices*, the crisis of 2008 also revealed ‘the crisis of relevance’ of architecture.³ Actually, a narrative of crisis has gained a certain pedigree within architecture after World War II. Again and again crises hit the world, which also and always impacted the field of architecture. Often crises however are experienced not entirely negatively, but also as (welcome) moments of change. The oil crisis, the financial crisis, the economic crisis and so on all urged architecture to once again reflect upon its position in the world, its focuses and aims, its goals and merits. Crises, in other words, urge architecture to reflect and to transform, sometimes to (radically) go in a different direction, to seek out its roots, or to acknowledge its transformative character. The crisis of modernism propelled architecture to withdraw from its social outlook and focus on its autonomy. The crisis of functionality urged architecture to look after complexity and ambiguity. The oil crisis of the 70s urged architecture to rethink its proliferation of resources. The disappointment with architectural autonomy urged some architects to celebrate architecture without architects.⁴ As did the 2008 financial and economic crisis: it urged architecture to once again rethink its specificities. To stay with this latter perspective, the 2008 crisis followed after a decade of architectural heights, propelled by wealth and prosper in the West. Architecture gained

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These Numbers are based on the situation in The Netherlands, via my former colleague in Delft Aljid van Doorn, who does extensive research to developments within the architectural offices as responses to market circumstances. The simple explanation is that the architects that had to seek for another job, as well as students fresh from the academies, had no other choice than starting their own practice

3.

Rory Hyde, *Future Practices, Conversations from the Edge of Architecture* (New York/London: Routledge, 2012), 17

4.

Architects have written in response to such crises, and proposed different directions to go forward. See for instance Victor Gruen, *Centers for the Urban Environment Survival of the Cities* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1973); Malcolm MacEwan, *Crisis in Architecture* (London: Riba Publications Limited, 1974); Bernard Rudofski, *Architecture without Architects. A Short Introduction to the Non-Pedigreed Architecture* (Garden City/New York: Doubleday & Compagny, Inc., 1964). For an overview of the disappointment with modernism, and how that affected a certain ‘withdrawal’ out of society into ‘radical architecture’ see the dissertation of my former Delft colleague Tahl Kaminer, *Architecture, Crisis and Resuscitation, The Reproduction of post-Fordism in late-twentieth-century Architecture* (London/New York: Routledge, 2011), 17-69

5.

The architectural critic of *Wall Street Journal*, Ada Louise Huxtable, for instance wrote on September 18th 1998: '[Why] are Dutch architects suddenly the hottest thing around, the darlings of the trend watchers, hailed as exemplars of the different the daring, and the new?' Ada Louise Huxtable, *On Architecture, Collected Reflections on a Century of Change* (New York: Walker & Company, 2008), 278; See also Bart Lootsma, *Superdutch, De tweede moderniteit van de Nederlandse architectuur* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 2000)

6.

'Architectural autism', the Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa states. Juhani Pallasmaa, 'Toward Architecture of Humility: On the Value of Experience', in: William S. Saunders (ed.), *Judging Architectural Value, A Harvard Design Magazine Reader* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 100

7.

cf Pallasmaa, 'Toward Architecture of Humility', 97: 'The widespread rejection of the Modernist doctrine, with its emphasis on social morality, has inspired impressive aesthetic diversity, but it has also produced a climate of arrogance, cultural incoherence, and narcissism. As the understanding of architecture as a social art has diminished, the idea of architecture as a form of studio art has intensified: contemporary "neo-avant-garde" works are presented today as products of individual genius. And yet paradoxically, artistic authenticity and autonomy of architecture are today being undercut by three cultural tendencies: the commodification of buildings, the self-defeating search of newness, and the hegemony of the marketable image. These cultural tendencies are supported by both commercialized architectural journalism and the voracious global entertainment and tourism industries.'

8.

cf Christoph Grafe, Madelaine Maaskant, Mechthild Stuhlmacher (eds.), *After the Party, Dutch Architecture 2005, OASE #67* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers 2005)

9.

cf Dana Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice* (Cambridge (Mass.)/ London: The MIT Press, 1992), 37

attention in the artistic sections of newspapers, design magazines, culture, business, technology, and lifestyle like *Monocle*, *Wired*, *Wallpaper*. Lots of books on architecture have been published in that period too, meant to show the unsurpassed possibilities of architecture today. Particularly Dutch architecture was at the heart of the architectural heights, gaining worldwide attention.⁵ The crisis, however, painfully made clear that architecture had become fun, and little more than that. Fun without fundament, a mere function of the economic principles beyond construction in a capitalist society. Despite architectural heights that I thus take ironically, is this the reason the profession has not been able to transcend its own significance to the public. Might it also be that because of this comfortable position, the single architect failed to understand 'what he was doing', his or her agency in the world? This at least seems to be confirmed by a public image of the architect as stubborn, arrogant, ignorant,⁶ characters that are tangible in ironic sayings that are commonly ventilated, like 'all good architecture leaks,' or 'good architecture does not require functionality.'⁷ After all, little more than one decade of the so called 'architectural heights', we might argue, urged architecture to become something special, heroic, and artistic.⁸ But in that scope, the everyday was removed from sight, as also was its broader social, political and cultural scope, while it is the everyday that is the daily experience of the public, and it is the broader scope that lifts this environment from the meaningless. Under the radar, as the crisis revealed, architecture slightly but surely moved to a marginal position in society as well as in the building industries, and no one could be blamed for that. With their focus on sheer beauty, with their love for exaggeration, and by accepting the mechanisms of the market, architects turned the field down.⁹ Even architects who emphasized a more critical approach to the market or to the cultural aspects of the profession also seemed not able to reach the public too. Their focus on the autonomy of the profession also failed to communicate the substance of architecture: what it might contribute to the world, society, and everyday life.

On a cold Saturday last November, I had to take a bus which replaced a train service due to planned construction work on the rail track. It was very early in the morning, and it just so happened that I was the only passenger taking that bus. The driver clearly liked to have a conversation, so after some this and that, after discussing his job and his travels around Europe, we also touched upon my profession. The conversation actually followed the pattern above, and also seemed to end with the question 'what building I actually liked.' This time the question somehow puzzled me even more. I really didn't know what to answer – I was literally looking around in order to say something. I felt alienated, being an architect but not able to mention one building I really liked. Partly this hesitation came from my wish to mention something the driver would know as well – but that wish just paralyzed me. What about this gap between architecture and the public? How can I explain aspects of buildings that do matter to me, besides something that could be called beautiful? At that moment, I experienced the 'crisis of relevance', I thought. If it is all about beauty, what does it matter? 'I actually don't know', I told the driver, who – as far as I could see – looked at me not really understanding. 'You know,' I continued, 'it does not matter what I really like in a building. For me the significance of architecture is beyond beauty. Aesthetics are important, surely, but for me, architecture should be more than that.'

The driver indeed looked at me in wonder. 'What do you mean by that?' 'Architecture is too often limited to sheer beauty,' I tried to explain. 'But if it

is only about beauty, then I ask myself what is the relevance of that beauty for society. The beauty of buildings is important, I think. Aesthetics is one of the aspects architects should be trained in. I even will offer it a central role in the process of ‘design’ – but the architecture of a building or a space, to my mind, cannot be limited to that. I love to think about it. I love to design myself as well, and to create something touching, something beautiful. I myself can be touched by architectural beauty, I can be moved by smart solutions to complex problems, I can be enthusiastic about futuristic perspectives or roused by architectural statements, I love to discuss these things too – but if it is only that, it does not satisfy me. That also is the reason why I am focused on writing today. I want to grasp what is beyond beauty in architecture. What is the relevance of architecture for society? For “the world and its inhabitants.”

The driver looked at me, nodding his head. ‘And, after these years of practicing, teaching and writing, as you told, did you find a perspective you can share with me?’ he asked. I actually wanted to avoid going further, but the question was so inviting that I continued.

“This “the world and its inhabitants” that I actually urged as focus of architecture is an important phrase for me. We also can describe it as “the public”. I told him. ‘In architecture, there is an extensive discourse about the relationship between the built environment and the public. This discussion actually is roused by the American landscape and cities. Have you ever been in the States?’

‘Yes – good memories!’ the driver answered. ‘I once visited Florida, you know, spent a couple of weeks there to visit the theme parks.’

‘Florida, I have never been, although I use the landscape around Orlando as an example in my reflections. My first visit to the United States was when I was still a student, and a fellow student and I visited another friend in Chicago – it really changed some perspectives for me. That visit was terrific, what a city! Great buildings, a great waterfront, lovely museums and a timid ‘Indian Summer’. But also: what a divided city. We visited some of the great architectural projects in the city, and since we had no car, we needed to do that via the subway – or The Loop, as it is called in the inner city of Chicago – and by foot. The huge division in society was tangible: the black and the poor on one side of a road, the white and wealthy just across it, and no interaction between these two worlds. We also once rented a car for a day in order to visit some well-known architectural projects in the vicinity of the city. This drive offered me the experience of endless suburbs, malls, gated communities. Again, rich and poor neighbourhoods were strongly segregated. Particular these recently ‘new’ urban figures as gated communities and shopping malls, these places are regarded to be exclusive. You can’t live in a gated community if you can’t afford it. The shopping mall only can be reached by car, so in order to go shopping and spend your time in the mall, you at least need to have a car. These are smooth exclusive environments, where you meet people alike.’ I look at the driver to look if he is still following. ‘Theme parks also are considered part of this new exclusive environment that is developing – what disturbs the ideal view is polished away. Everything is smooth and shiny.’

‘This of course is not only an American development,’ I added. ‘It can be touched upon around the globe, although in The Netherlands not yet on that scale as in the United States. Our urban spaces, squares, parks, shopping centres are what we call “public”: accessible by all. However, the crucial aspect in the debate is that this model of exclusive (sub)urbanisation leads to a tangible segregation in society, and that process also can be found in The Netherlands. In America, it is, however, more visible, this segregation between the haves and the have-nots: the rich live, work and spend their spare time in environments where they don’t bump

into others who cannot afford it. They step out of their house in a car, immediately drive to their destination where they can park their car in a secured environment, and do their thing in a secured, shiny and smooth space. The space in-between the destinations is left-over space, a non-place, where the poor – those that cannot afford a life in such exclusive environments – are dominant. In architectural theory, the emphasis is on the impact of this tangible and visible division in space upon the virtual realms of society. When the rich never bump into the poor, the white into the black, the Christian into the Muslim, society itself is at stake, theorists state. This, in other words, has implications for society. What should be a community in which the plural people work and live together now becomes a divided society where all sorts of groups live and work apart. This actually is a threat particularly for the Western democratic ideal, the theorists continue. The possibility to bump into someone else with a different view upon and experience of life and society, and to exchange perspectives and convictions, to discuss issues that matter, that is the very heart of democracy. Bumping into differences means to be questioned oneself: what do I think, and why? Where does it come from? How to value the perspective of the other, which previously was a stranger to me, but now becomes a person as well? So by bumping into others, you are challenged, which is, theorists state, an important aspect of democracy. It is a bit of a brief summary, definitely a short-cut that does not do completely right to the much more nuanced discourse...'

'I understand', the driver interrupts, 'but what does it have to do with architecture?'

'That is a very good question,' I answer, 'which kept me busy for years. Architecture of course is about the design of the built environment. So architects design the malls and walls, the neighbourhoods and other artefacts that together are the forms of this divided landscape. These environments shape the view of the inhabitants and users upon the world – it is not only that you don't touch upon 'the other', but also that the experience of the world is distorted. It offers an 'exclusive' experience of the world, which is quite a distortion of reality. In other words: the buildings somehow are the endpoint of a process, the reification of a trend in society. In turn, however, these building shape the worldview of the inhabitants as well. Where you are born, what sorts of environments you frequent, what people you meet extensively shapes your world-view. This seems to be an impasse, a downward spiral, which cannot be easily corrected, and certainly not by architects. In other words, this is somehow an ideological question, which stresses the political aspects of architecture, of building and planning. How do we value the need for interaction, of inclusive space (facing the longing for exclusive spaces, safety and certainty)? And second, what can we expect from architecture?'

'And?'

'I'm sorry for the monologue. It feels to me as lecturing...'

'A private lecture, this early in the morning. It's great!' the driver joked.

'Ok, a private lecture in a private drive!' I responded. 'However, my first response to these questions is that we cannot expect from architecture to change the trends in society. But the conclusion that architecture is political is true. It urges the significance of architecture, not only as a profession taking care of the beautification of buildings, but as a profession that has a certain responsibility over the world in which we live. How these spaces are designed is significant, important to be discussed amongst architects, their clients, but also publicly in society. This of course is a matter of architectural ethics: is this an assignment you want to be involved in? Architects can be critical, but the buildings are being designed and constructed nevertheless. The market just asks for them. Thus, the

first part of this relationship between the public and architecture is quite negative, if you agree upon that proposition of the importance of exchange between people in respect to Western democratic politics.'

'Do you?' the driver asks.

'Yes, yes, but in my research I also stress this moment of exchange, although I would call it "appearance". How can we render that today, in our mass society? I therefore used the writings of the American-German philosopher Hannah Arendt. Did you ever hear of her?'

'No, never.'

'No worries. She actually was Jewish by birth and had to flee from Germany in the 1930s. Her work is somehow a continuous investigation of what actually happened. One of the topics is this participation in public: she experienced by herself what it meant to be excluded from that participation. You know: Jews could not enter public parks, needed to go to particular shops, they could not teach nor study at universities, their writings were not taken seriously or even forbidden. So that is both real and virtual exclusion from public space. Quite heavy, right?'

The bus driver nods. 'But still,' he says, 'how can this address architectural form?'

'What grasped me in the writings of Arendt is on the one hand her rendering of this public participation, which she draws in quite sombre tones. But on the other hand, her image of public action and speech, which are the core activities of public participation, and seems to offer a less idealized image than what is regularly offered in the debate. For her, action and speech is bound to local communities, which are limited in size. Such focus on the local situation is closer to architecture and architectural design than the democratic ideal of exchange on the level of society. Arendt somehow brings the perspective closer to the field of architecture, without losing its significance. And secondly, she offers a view of how this participation relates to the tangible world, which – and that is what I state as an architect – is for its majority shaped by architecture. Arendt argues that public participation, which somehow is her model of politics, always requires engagement with the world. Therefore, the world needs to be durable. It does not make sense to participate in public and to be engaged in the world if this world changes over night. Politics requires a certain permanence, so to speak. This actually is one of the major significances of architecture: it offers structures that are quite durable. This of course also urges architecture politically. Architecture treats the world as we inherit it, and transforms it in the world that will offer space for the needs of tomorrow. To my mind, this urges architecture and is a call to architects. What architects do, does matter. It makes sense and therefore cannot be limited to aesthetics only. Aesthetics are important, but should be embedded in a broader scope of the public significance of architecture. The work of architects does not shape a single building; it shapes the world that we have in common. It is not only in the interest of a singular client; it impacts all of us. One last point that I will make questions what architecture actually does. To my understanding architecture creates conditions that offer room to enable the different activities of life, also for the activities of society. Architecture, if it understands its public calling, offers room for public life too. Spaces where people can gather and bump into each other. That is important: public space is the stage of public participation. And to design these spaces still is the work of architects. Or to state it with Arendt: to appear to one another. In her work, this 'appearance' is important. She describes it quite literally: as the moment one leaves the house and enters public space. Entering is active, it is a moment of stepping over the threshold. This is

why I stressed the significance of the threshold at the very start of our conversation about architecture. If I have to mention one element that requires attention, it will be the threshold.'

At that moment, we enter the village where I was born. I stop talking, and also the driver does not ask for any further explanation. He has to concentrate on some difficult roundabouts, and I am looking outside and wondering. In my mind, I somehow think further about the threshold. 'The public is not simply the public, it is always related to the private too. It is about interior and exterior – about the very relationship between the private and the public realm. But also about the relationship between different zones and networks. Where these overlap, threshold spaces exist. These are transition-zones where one can transgress the edges between the different groups in society. Therefore, it is threshold-spaces that potentially offer room for appearance.'

I am at the point of adding this perspective, but am captured by the spaces that are very familiar to me, although I have not seen them for about twenty years. I still recognize the exit of the highway, the circle at the end of this exit, the street where one of my best friends lived, the apartment building with the huge sign on top, another circle with concrete sculptures in the midst, and finally the area in front of the station. I am looking around in silence, noticing all these buildings I know so well from my youth. I realise that little changes do not so much impact the overall structure. Is the Italian architect Aldo Rossi right with his emphasis on the structure of cities as the most permanent aspects of the urban architecture? Surely he is – as he also is right that these urban spaces are full of (everyday) memories or inhabitants.¹⁰ Even though this village is not a monumental city, and even despite the lack of particularly good buildings and streets, also here the structure stays and offers recognition after about two decades.

The driver parks his bus at the front of the station. When I move to the door, I shake his hand in order to tell him how grateful I am for the terrific drive. 'Thank you for listening to my lecture,' I say. 'It actually is the briefest summery of my research I can give.' 'The pleasure is mine,' he states. 'Have a nice day!'



1.13 *Public Life*. Louisville Wharf, Louisville, KY, USA



1.14 *Public Life*. Shibuyan Crossing, Tokyo, Japan

1.2 AN OPTIMISTIC GUIDE AND A PESSIMISTIC DISCOURSE

1.2.1 Anchoring in an Age of Accelerations

In his book, *Thank You for Being Late*, the *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist, Thomas L. Friedman, writes that, ‘We are living through one of the greatest inflection points in history.’¹¹ Everything shifts, is adrift – particularly, he argues, since ‘the three largest forces on the planet – technology, globalisation, and climate change – are all accelerating at once.’¹² Accelerating indeed can be pinpointed as one of the common experiences of today’s times. Probably not only of today, acceleration somehow is a core experience of modernity, as lots of critics of modernity have urged in their writings. In the ‘20s and 30s of the last decade, the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, for instance, typified modernity as a machine that seemed to only accelerate. It could not be stopped.¹³ Similar experiences are at the core of *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, written by Marshall Berman in the 80s.¹⁴ The typical experience of modernity, which somewhere started with the printing revolution that preceded the Reformation in Europe about 500 years ago now, is this experience of change. Or better said, of continuous change. The late sociologist Zygmunt Bauman even speaks about ‘liquid’ times, which are propelled by ‘global liquid power.’¹⁵ Friedman states, although with some restraint, that the experience of today only is propelled by the experience 500 years ago, when everything was also adrift. Of course, we cannot be sure about this – other moments can be described with certainly the same experience of change. Some theorists distinguish different phases in modernity, as it comes to the fore in writings and art, philosophical and historical reflections.¹⁶ In the Romantic age, for instance, the experience of fragmentation became tangible – as well as the loss of a religious perspective that could offer some wholeness. Isaiah Berlin called the Romantic age a revolution: ‘the greatest shift in the consciousness of the West that has occurred.’¹⁷ The French Revolution as well as the start of the industrial age half way through the 19th century can be picked with equal reason: everything was adrift, from the cities to politics, and from the workplace to the home of millions of people in Europe and America. The 20th century came with unbelievable new machinery, culminating in unprecedented wars – World Wars. The fall of the Berlin Wall at the end of the 80s was welcomed as the culmination of processes in history, and even described as the ‘end of history’.¹⁸ Others trace a *Clash of Civilizations*, evoked by the generalizing trends that often are described as globalisation.¹⁹ Samuel Huntington, who wrote extensively on that topic, already published his first article stressing the hidden fire smouldering in 1993 – it somehow became the common experience (and received widespread attention) after 9/11.²⁰ All these perspectives seem to stress an entirely negative experience: they after all describe continuous change, liquid times adrift, clashes and fragmentation, and even what is solid melts into air. This of course is besides the actual experiences of modernity and globalisation, which also offered the accessibility and exchange of cultures, goods, knowledge, welfare and so on around the globe to an increasing amount of people. The experience of modernity always has two faces, the Flemish architectural theoretician Hilde Heynen argues: promise and loss.²¹ She actually stresses the complexity and ambiguity of this experience. Modernity brought at once welfare, prosperity, and personal development as well as the experience of loss of tradition, identity and authenticity. It is, in other words, a positive and a negative experience.

11.

Thomas L. Friedman, *Thank You for Being Late, An Optimist Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), 3

12.

Ibid., 3

13.

Johan Huizinga, *In de schaduwen van morgen, Een diagnose van het geestelijk lijden van onze tijd* (Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon N.V., 1951), 1, 10

14.

Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air, The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 17

15.

Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 12

16.

Matei Calinescu, for instance, distinguishes five phases: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch and Post-Modernity. These phases particularly are tangible in what he calls the faces of aesthetic modernity. He distinguishes actually strongly modernity as it becomes visible in the arts from the experience of modernity as a product of scientific and technological progress. Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 40

17.

Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (Princeton (NJ), Princeton University Press, 1999), 1

18.

Francis Fukuyama, *Het einde van de geschiedenis en de laatste mens* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Contact, 1992)

19.

Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996)

20.

The terrifying events of 9/11 actually showed the importance of public space, as *The New York Time* architectural critic Michael Kimmelman explains what happened in the city that very moment. ‘Anybody who can recall New York City on September 11, 2001 and during the days after will remember that hundreds of thousands of people went outside to gather in parks and squares and on the sidewalks. They didn’t just retreat online. They sought out public spaces to be with each other. Our human

Since 9/11 the experience of globalisation has been propelled, as not only has become clear in the several terrorist attacks around the world, but also in the impact of the crash of the housing market as the start of the financial and economic crisis in the United States first and around the globe thereafter.²² The Dutch philosopher René Boomkens defines in his book, *De nieuwe wanorde*, globalisation as the identification of the power of global capitalism as an unprecedented influential force on everyday life around the globe.²³ Boomkens' stresses the experience of globalisation in line with the previously defined experience of modernity. In his dissertation, which is published as, *Een drempepelwereld*,²⁴ he defines four moments of modernity: the childhood (19th century), adolescence (first decades of 20th century), the rather schizophrenic adulthood, from the 30s to the early 60s, and finally the crisis of modernity, the latter half of the 20th century, also described as post-modernity.²⁵ In *De nieuwe wanorde*, Boomkens presents Globalisation as the fifth moment of the experience of modernity – a rather negative experience in which all belief in the future seems to be diminished.²⁶ However, Boomkens also reveals how the global picture also awakens the significance of local infrastructure, identity and tradition.²⁷

The term globalisation, however, does not refer only to the economic system, although the experience of global financial markets and economic systems that sometimes seems to be much more powerful than national governments, certainly is dominant within this framework. This experience certainly is propelled by the economic and financial crises, that started in America with the Enron-scandal, and soon spread to other (Western) countries (although this example also shows how previously the markets also were intertwined, the economic crisis of the 30s and the oilcrisis of the 70s after all also had their global impact). Globalisation, however, can better be described as a situation in which the economic, political and cultural (as well as academic) systems are not limited to a country or nation, but are influential beyond any borders and globally intertwined. Instead of a system of national economic, political, technological and cultural interests, a more loose global system has emerged, a network of elites and firms that dominate the world market and structures and change local and global structures. 'Globalisation', the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai writes, 'has shrunk the distance between elites, shifted key relations between producers and consumers, broken many links between labor and family life, obscured the lines between temporary locales and imaginary national attachments.'²⁸ The sociologist Saskia Sassen on her turn stresses the effect of this global system as particularly destructive in respect to the realm of politics within a system of nationalities, which lacks authority facing the power of the economical global market.²⁹ Globalisation, in other words, could be understood as the process of a decreasing power and authority of (local) culture facing the increasing forces of global capitalism, culture and technology. The authority that previously was understood as resistant and critical did lose its power, specifically through deconstructing local and familiar ties and rootedness into a world.³⁰ Even nations today are pulled into the narratives of global capitalism. They have to compete with other nations to be attractive to global companies, and to relocate their offices and factories by offering severe local (tax) conditions. In this global market, the lack of power of national politics is almost tangible. Sassen renders this as a threat in respect to social and national issues concerning citizenship, which somehow also affects the trust of these citizens in the power and trustworthiness of their local and national politics.³¹ Clearly Sassen's concern described already at the end of the 90s of the last century has become the political landscape of the second decade of the new millennium, with all over Europe and America a tangible suspicious attitude

instinct is to come together. People occupied those parks and squares and streets, hanging ribbons and photographs on fences, concocting makeshift memorials, gathering in clusters to talk and, in a sense, prove to each other that they belonged to a larger community, a greater city, that this community and this city endured, and that there was a strength in numbers. They came together in public spaces to affirm solidarity in ways that online communication can't.' Kimmelman reflects. Michael Kimmelman, 'Foreword', in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA): New Village Press, 2012), xiii

21.

Hilde Heynen, *Architectuur en Kritiek van de Moderniteit* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 2001), 25

22.

The sociologist Saskia Sassen summarizes the impact of Globalisation as the loss of political power, the loss of autonomous sources of authority (like the human rights), competing countries on business condition, the weakening of citizenship by economic forces, the increasing immigration, the increasing gap between the poor and wealthy, alienation (or a renewed interest in local characteristics), and the change of the city in to an international space. Saskia Sassen, *Globalisering, Over mobiliteit van geld, mensen en informatie* (Amsterdam: Van Genneep, 1999), 29, 45, 67, 125, 129, 152

23.

René Boomkens, *De nieuwe wanorde, Globalisering en het einde van de maakbare samenleving* (Amsterdam: Van Genneep, 2006), 27

24.

René Boomkens, *Een drempepelwereld, Moderne ervaring en stedelijke openbaarheid* (Rotterdam: NAI Uitgeverij, 1998)

25.

Ibid., 426 [Although the book is written in Dutch, it has a brief English summary: A Threshold World, Modern Experience and the Urban Public Domain, 426-430]

26.

Boomkens, *De nieuwe wanorde*, 27; The subtitle of his book can be translated as 'Globalisation and the end of the malleable world' – in Dutch 'maakbaar', something that can be 'made', that is trustworthy created by our own hands. Boomkens urges the end of this perspective. There is no certainty about the future anymore – in other words, the experience is that we're not in control anymore, even not regarding our own future (33).

27.
Ibid., 107

28.
Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large, Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (Mineapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 9

29.
Saskia Sassen, *Globalisering*, 55

30.
Heynen, *Architectuur en kritiek van de moderniteit*, 21; cf also Boomkens, *Een drempelwereld*, 358

31.
Sassen, *Globalisering*, 45

32.
Ibid., 67, 125, 152

33.
Friedman, *Thank You for Being Late*, 20

34.
Ibid., 32; cf also Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 9, where he writes on speed itself as a force disorienting modern men in space.

35.
Friedman, *Thank You for Being Late*, 158

36.
Ibid., 357

37.
Ibid., 365

towards the political realm and the increasing distinction between the 'elite' and the general 'public'. The increasing forces of the globalized economic system of financial markets joins forces with a diminishing belief in local and national politics. It actually becomes tangible, as Sassen argues, in increasing amounts of people adrift, in the stream of refugees around the world, in the growing gap between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots, and in the experience of alienation and rootlessness.³² Although globalisation is certainly not limited to economics and financial markets, but also stretch to culture, politics, information and technology, the financial perspective seems to be in charge mainly.

Friedman urges globalisation as one just of three forces behind today's experience of the world adrift. Globalization, besides technology and climate change, sweep our everyday experiences towards unknown futures. Technology, indeed, in the last decade has shown an amazing pace of developments. Friedman himself enlightens the year of 2007, when Steve Jobs of *Apple* presented the first iPhone to the public, as pivotal, not only because of the presentation of this smartphone with touchscreen, but also as a year wherein internet went through another cycle and other technological improvements presented were about to reshape the world.³³ Friedman describes the ways globalisation and technology affects everyday life, and particularly urges citizens to adapt to the increasingly speeding accelerating life conditions, on the risk of disorientation.³⁴ The impact of climate change also requires quick adaptation. 'While the power of men and machines and flows has been reshaping the workplace and politics and geopolitics and the economy, and even some of our ethical choices, the power of many is driving the acceleration in Mother Nature, which is reshaping the whole biosphere, the whole global ecological system.'³⁵ The book of Friedman actually investigates how 'we' can 'survive' in this age of acceleration. He's quite optimistic, as already can be sensed from the subtitle of his book: *An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations*, and offers all sorts of reflections and (possible) responses and innovations to the contemporary condition. The book, however, actually ends with a reflection on what he calls the biggest assignment for the future. He does not know where the accelerating forces will bring us, he admits, but then he adds: 'I know where it has to start – by anchoring people in strong families and healthy communities.'³⁶ Thriving in a global world requires thus local anchors, he argues. In order to investigate this perspective, he, in the final chapter of the book investigates the possibility to 'innovate' in building strong and healthy communities. He therefore went back to the place where he grew up, a suburban neighbourhood of Minnesota – particularly of course since he remembers that very neighbourhood as a healthy community. It's quite sparkling what he tells about the community. The story of the neighbourhood, he explains, 'is the story of how an ethic of pluralism and a healthy community got built one relationship, one breakup, one makeup, one insult, one welcoming neighbour, one classroom at a time – from bricks and logs that were not automatically destined to fit together easily.'³⁷ What actually is remarkable in this description is that image of a healthy community as a process in time. A community only develops if it is built by 'bricks' and 'logs' in the words of Friedman, two elements that contain a particular locality as well as temporality. A healthy community is established over time, but also is bound to a particular place. Another important aspect is the very diversity of the community, contrary to what regularly is proposed. The plurality even can be described as an essential aspect of the community – it is plural in people, ethics and happenings. The members of the community all have different experiences – but what they share is that particular place that they call 'home'. In other words, the community

somehow is randomly gathered, but strongly united to the place, to a local area, a particular situation, in each other's vicinity. This is not easy, as Friedman urges – it is built over time, step by step. Pluralism is one of these figures that comes back in his description later in the chapter. It is essential, he argues, but it will not happen automatically. 'Real pluralism never comes easy,' he writes, 'because it has to be built not just on tolerance of the other but also on respect of the other, trust of the other.'³⁸ This only can be build up by real encounters, he argues, by really touching upon the other and by risking 'broken emotional bones.'³⁹ Friedman, in the stories he tells about his youth, describes real spaces as teaching ground of this plurality: the school, the basketball court, a local gas station, the public bus that connected the neighbourhood to the city of Minneapolis, the cinema in the inner city, a string of lakes around the city. These can be described as more or less public places, enabling the community to touch upon each other in simple everyday encounters. His experiences of course date from about 60 years ago, which, as he realizes, is not easy to compare to today. 'I realize what a relatively small distance we had to travel to bridge the economic and cultural gaps between us,' he admits. 'That is not true today. In this age of tightening global interdependence and intimate contact between more diverse strangers, the bridge of understanding that we have to build are longer, the chasms they have to span much deeper.'⁴⁰ Having said that, he once again urges the need of communities where the inhabitants feel connected, respected and protected. 'That only makes the need for community building and healthy communities that can anchor diverse populations much greater.'⁴¹ In the era of globalisation, of climate change, and of technology, home and community are increasingly important, Friedman thus argues. Anchoring, is his advice. 'You can go back home, and you should!'⁴²

38.
Ibid., 378-379
39.
Ibid., 379
40.
Ibid., 409
41.
Ibid., 409
42.
Ibid., 410

1.2.2 *The Unbearable Glance in the Eyes of the Other*

The 'optimistic guide' of Friedman and his trust in local communities somehow seems to be diametrically opposed to the rather pessimistic discourse on 'public space' as the locus of and the common ground behind such communities, which can be touched upon in architectural urban theory as well as in debates in political sciences, anthropology and social sciences. Globalisation certainly is the larger framework in which the discourse on public space emerges. It is the global-local tension that comes to the fore here, although the discussion on the city and public space first came to the fore rather hidden in the frame of a modern approach to space, and more clearly against the frame of post-modernity, as I discuss in the next Chapter. Most of the voices in these discourses on public space are quite pessimistic, addressing and stressing processes of individualization and segregation, of globalisation and renewed nationalism. Most of these narratives, even those in architectural theory, also are mainly concerned with political, societal, and philosophical ideas encircling the conclusion that the 'exchange of ideas' in society are increasingly threatened due to changes in political systems and laws, economic developments, capitalism and bureaucracy, and finally by everyday life itself. That latter remark refers to the increasing cocooning of life: it is lived within a particular bubble, in a segregated city or one of the many enclaves that dominate the suburb. The pessimism around public space is mostly concerned with the public sphere, the immaterialized realm of political exchange that somehow backs the democratic systems of Western countries. The materialised world is, despite some remarks, beyond the scope of most of the theorists. As an architect, I would render the everyday and material world as 'a blind spot' – of course not in the architectural contributions to the debate, which dwells upon the new enclaves in the

43.
Ibid., 365

44.
Ibid., 443

45.
Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1989)

46.
Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992); Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye, The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990)

47.
Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain, Analyse and Strategy* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2001), 10-12

48.
See for instance this urging fragment from the Birmingham Jail letters from Martin Luther King jr in 1963, where he writes: 'Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next,

urban landscape (the mall, the gated community, the theme park) and the increasing segregation in cities due to processes of gentrification. The withdrawal from the world, that is inherent in the first movement, and the exclusion of 'others' that is part of the second, is counter to the idea beyond public space, meaning allowing the accessibility of these spaces to all members of society. Behind the pessimism of the increase of exclusive (and excluding) spaces is the ideal of public space as the 'learning space of plurality' (which is the very characteristic of democracy), of 'making one out of many', like that which Friedman describes in his childhood experiences.⁴³ The actual experiences, meetings of others, are needed behind the democratic system, also Friedman urges. There is no other way to evoke 'trust' amongst the participants – and it is trust that is the very heart of democracy.⁴⁴ The distinctive discourses in several scientific fields urges the importance of such spaces, although they use different notions to pinpoint this ideal. Besides the 'public realm', the term I have used so far, also referred to as the 'public sphere',⁴⁵ public domain,⁴⁶ and 'the public' in the distinct fields of philosophy, sociology and political sciences. From all these notions, public sphere, is the most prevailing one. The different terms somehow all refer to the same phenomenon: the political unloaded perspective of the need for discussion, commenting, debating, meeting, the exchange of perspectives. This ideal that is connected to that mixture and is this learning-aspect that we've touched upon previously. Exchange of plural perspectives, once again, is at the basis of the democratic system – not only by searching for consensus and majorities amongst the inhabitants, but also for getting to know each other, in order to construct this experience of trust amongst participants. Although these different terms somehow refer to the same phenomenon, each notion nevertheless has its own slightly different accent. The combination of terms therefore does clarify what this is all about: public life in public(ity), which unfolds not only 'visibly' and 'finitely' (realm), but also 'invisibly' and 'infinitely' (sphere). Public space in this perspective thus is both tangible (as urban space, a square or a street), it however also is an ideal (the ideal of exchange, a debate accessible to all, of touching upon each other). The Dutch sociologists Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp has offered an intriguing definition of this ideal. In their essay, *In Search of a New Public Domain*, they describe the public domain – which is the term they use – as the place where society is formed. In other words, it is the space – or in their more strong terms: the arena – where the collective will is formed in regards to the future of society. In their image of the public domain, they talk about this exchange as the meeting of one with the 'proverbial other'.⁴⁷ In this image of the 'proverbial other', which challenges public space as a meeting space, it becomes clear that this theory also urges emancipation of minority groups or groups of citizens that previously were excluded from public participation.⁴⁸ In inclusive spaces, everybody gains the same rights of accessibility and participation. Exclusive space, on the other hand, keeps certain groups (particularly strangers, those that are different) out of sight. This actually is very tangible in the well-known prose poem, 'The Eyes of the Poor' (1864) from the French poet, Charles Pierre Baudelaire. In this poem, Baudelaire tells about sitting down on a terrace 'in front of a new cafe that formed the corner of a new boulevard' in Paris, just after city architect Georges-Eugène Haussmann had finished his famous operation: the construction of boulevards, cutting through the dense city fabric of Paris. This operation, meant to make the city better accessible for military aims of control, opened previously enclosed neighbourhoods, simply by cutting through its dense urban fabric with these large boulevards. Could the city be seen before as a collection of close together enclaves (rich and poor, dirty and clean, and so on), but without being connected, the

boulevards brought the city towards unity: the boulevards connected the enclaves, opened them to each other. The boulevards quickly were occupied by the upper class, enjoying life in cafés and on terraces – but now also suddenly confronted with the citizens from other, and of course, very different neighbourhoods. In ‘The eyes of the poor’, Baudelaire describes the confrontation of a begging family that arrives in front of their terrace. It is not only the confrontation of a human being with the upper class and one of a lower class, it also is a confrontation between the dazzling atmosphere of the cafe, and the poignant situation of the beggars, the opportunities of the rich and the desperate future of the poor. Baudelaire not only describes the asking eyes of the beggars, he simultaneously describes the very different response of him and his accompanying lover: a response that unfolds a distance between them. She thinks these eyes are unbearable and asks Baudelaire to go and ‘tell the manager to get them away from here.’ These eyes however had grabbed Baudelaire as well, but differently – their glance is unbearable. He felt ‘little ashamed of our glasses and decanters, too big for our thirst.’⁴⁹ The latter response can be seen as the ideal of the public sphere: to be confronted with other lives, other positions, other perspectives, other ideas, other convictions and beliefs, other circumstances, and to be questioned about your own perspectives, ideas, convictions and beliefs. The confrontation with the ‘proverbial other’, as Hajer and Reijndorp calls it, or with the ‘Other’ as the Jewish-French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas writes, is to be asked fundamental questions that cannot be ignored – and it is a *spatial, tangible, physical* occurrence.⁵⁰

The quest of the public realm, I would emphasize, essentially is a *spatial* question. The public realm addresses the very reality, spatiality and physicality of the meeting with this ‘proverbial other.’ That at least is the very reason also to discuss the idea of the public realm through the eyes of architecture too: it is about real space – about developments in real space, in reality, not only in political systems or philosophical stances, neither in social processes nor in individual preferences, but simply in our everyday environments, around the corner or in our streets, in the city and in the landscape, in all these spaces that – although unperceived – heavily influence us. It is this perspective that is urged in architecture. Particularly in the past two decades architectural and urban theorists joined the discourse. They understood urban public spaces, like streets and squares, parks and public buildings as providing room for exchange amongst people. This particularly is the merit of urban spaces, since cities are densely populated, and have the broadest range of inhabitants. As seen previously, in the definition of Hajer and Reijndorp, the perspective of the public sphere was understood as a political ideal beyond urban public spaces: space accommodating the participation of, and existential exchange of ideas between (groups of) people in society. And to continue by doing so, in bringing people together, public space establishes amongst and from within a people a certain identity and a commonly shared experience which is a need for society. In this perspective diversity is accepted – moreover, it is embraced as a positive aspect of the nowadays society – as is the very basis of the nowadays economical perspective on cities as we touched upon earlier. But ‘accepting diversity implies sharing public space – the streets, buses, parks, and schools – with people who visibly, and quite possibly vehemently, live lives you do not approve of,’ writes the urban sociologist Sharon Zukin.⁵¹ This has actually implications on the rendering of the city, the self-awareness of citizens. She writes: ‘Cultural institutions, such as art museums, which were assumed to enhance a city’s reputation for civility, have been challenged as ‘elitist’ and are in the process of being ‘democratized’ or redefined. At the same time, the wealth of these insti-

and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you go forever fighting a degenerating sense of “nobodiness”—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience. http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/resources/article/annotated_letter_from_birmingham [accessed April 26th, 2012]

49. via Boomkens, *Een drempelwereld*, 67-68; See also: Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air*, 148-155; and David Harvey, ‘The Political Economy of Public Space’ in: Setha Low and Neil Smith (eds.), *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 23

50. Emmanuel Levinas, *Het menselijk gelaat* (Baarn: Uitgeverij Ambo, 1969); cf Alain Finkielkraut, *De wijsheid van de liefde* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Contact, 2004), 24

51. Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Malden (Mass.): Blackwell Publishing, 1995), VIII

52.
Ibid., VIII

53.
Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1989)

54.
Christine M. Boyer, *Cyber Cities, Visual Perception in the Age of Electronic Communication* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996); Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear, Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999); Marc Augé, *Non-places, Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London/New York: Verso, 1995); Bruce Robbins, (ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Michael Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park, The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992)

55.
Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear*, 365

tutions is praised by public officials for strengthening a city's competitive position in relation to other cities. When we look at a painting by Van Gogh and see tourist dollars, when we think of social class differences in terms of 'cultures,' when we design a downtown shopping center as Disney World – we are walking through the contradiction of the cultures of cities.⁵²

Despite the positive embrace of diversity, which is tangible in discussions about the future of cities today, the spatial consequences are treated in architectural and urban discourses in a much more pessimistic perspective. Distinct theorists as Christine Boyer, Mike Davis, Mark Augé, Bruce Robbins and the architect, Michael Sorkin have urged the pessimistic future perspective in their books and other writings. Remarkably only one of these authors has not originated from the USA (which is not just caused because of my selection of writers that I mention here): most of the books on the public realm are published in North America. This, of course, does not have to surprise us. The radical change in the form, structure, and use of public space as well as the cities itself, certainly can be described as an American phenomenon, although it has been spread today around the Globe. As I will argue, the particular American voice in the debate on public space was evoked by the 1989 English translation of the 1962 book, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, written by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas.⁵³ The presentation to the American reader surely has evoked a stream of recognition. The fragmented landscape of America in the last decade of the 90s certainly was fertile ground for this book. The mentioned authors share a quite negative perspective on the future of public space as part of the public sphere in regard to developments in society, which of course is influenced by the also negative analysis of Habermas, since he stressed the 'end of the public sphere' and described its bankruptcy. The titles and subtitles of their books already reveal how they respond to the developments and how they render its consequences for the built environment. Titles like, *Cybercities* (Boyer, 1996), *City of Quartz* (Davis, 1990), *Ecology of Fear* (Davis, 1992), *Non-places* (Augé, 1992), *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Robbins, 1993), and *Variations on a Theme Park* (Sorkin, 1994),⁵⁴ enlighten, for instance, the consequences of emerging new forms of media on the concrete realm, the impact of anxiety on urban places, the effect of consumerism on public and urban life, the impact of efficiency and infrastructure on public space, and the political aspects of (new) architectural and urban typologies. The increasing emphasis on (personal) safety, properness, and *fun* in the nowadays consumerist society reduces the possibilities of public life, moreover the possibility of political life – and therefore the possibilities of the exchange of ideas between different groups of people. The New York based architect and critic, Michael Sorkin, for instance, understands the new urban spaces – in his introduction he is referring specifically to the growing importance of shopping malls and theme parks in daily life and the city fabric, but in the collection of essays that he has included in his, *Variations on a Theme Park*, urban sprawl and projects of city redevelopment are also discussed, as well the changing importance of the city-centre – as a treat for the democratic system itself. The 'new' figures of urban planning: urban sprawl, suburban living environments, shopping malls and gated communities are excluding strangers – no accidental and unforeseen, as well as, organized and foreseen exchange of ideas will take place. The American urban theorist, Mike Davis, even describes, in a publication published three years before 9/11, our nowadays circumstances as 'the ecology of fear': the concept that shapes our environments nowadays is anxiety. Anxiety shapes the way we live, work, shop, recreate, travel, even our everyday lives.⁵⁵ According to Davis, this fear is an anxiety for the stranger, for the unknown and unpredictable. In its essence, it

is a fear for disasters – for obstacles – in the individual strive for the ‘pursuit of happiness’. Strangers – everything that is odd – are treated as a danger, generally in society as well as in the daily environments of neighbourhoods. Nowadays political movements have a problem to set up a convincing narrative dealing with different cultures, religions, races positively. And on the local level residents are concerned about their neighbourhoods; strangers are distrusted, especially in respect to children. Davis’ analysis shows that in contemporary (sub)urban spaces Jacob’s ‘eyes on the street’ are formalized: camera surveillance, a guard, or even safety firms took over.

56.
Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, 17

57.
Ibid., 34

The notion of the public sphere, we can imagine at this point, is urged as one of the most important and central ideas in respect to the modern Western politics and societies. It is not only issued due to the increase of concrete spaces that are to be described as exclusive, but also because of the developments Friedman describes. Globalisation shows the power of capitalism, not only on the global scale, but also affect local communities and their public spaces. Climate change does not just affect the biosphere; it also highly impacts the everyday environment of citizens. Technology is not just a matter of great phones and unlimited cloud storage; it also immediately changes public life. The accelerating forces disorient people, whereas the willingness to participate in public life seems to be replaced by leisurely activities, isolation and private interests. ‘As the modern public expands,’ Marshall Berman writes, ‘it shatters into a multitude of fragments, speaking incommensurable private languages; the idea of modernity, conceived in numerous fragmentary ways, loses much of its vividness, resonance and depth, and loses its capacity to organize and give meaning to people’s lives.’⁵⁶ It is not public space that organizes the public life, but commercial space seems to be the only form of public life that survives. The market place seems to be the only space left to the public in Western capitalism. But as is clear, commercial space is programmed and controlled, which leaves barely any room for unpredicted and unprecedented happenings. Even new opportunities of communication – webpages, weblogs, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and so on – does not likely seem to offer conversations, but rather offers the opportunity to ventilate opinions (or to curse against opposing opinions). ‘The eclipse of the problem of modernity in the 1970s, has meant the destruction of a vital form of public space. It has hastened the disintegration of our world into an aggregation of private material and spiritual interest groups, living in windowless nomads, far more isolated than we need to be.’⁵⁷

1.2.3 *Go Home!*

The term has figured in the debate on the city and architecture for about two decades now and it slightly but surely has found its way to the core of this discourse from the moment that it emerged in the beginning of the nineties of the last century. Nowadays no report on cities can be written, no master plan can be drawn, no future perspective can be presented, no public building or space can be designed without reference to this term. It has turned into a marketing-slogan on buildings and spaces. Vivid public spaces! Projects are accompanied by shiny images full of people wandering around, talking to each other on a terrace, or sitting on stairs that slowly descend to a former dock or are curved into an amphitheatre. It surely can be argued that the term ‘public realm’ slightly has turned into an obsolete ideal. It has lost its power and perspective and politically spoken has become an empty figure. It has become a ubiquitous fashionable

of Victor Gruen, the architect that developed the model of the shopping mall in the USA during the 50s, already in 1973: 'How can one explain the phenomenon of the ever-growing attractive power of cities, especially large conurbation, in light of the undeniable fact that our cities are steadily deteriorating with respect to the quality of human life and living conditions? The city attracts and will continue to attract people because it has one inherent quality: it offers choice, and choice is an ingredient of individual freedom. Only in the city, and especially in the large one, is there a wide choice of working places, of educational opportunities, of goods, a choice of cultural, spiritual, and entertainment experiences. The city offers choices as far as the people as far as the people one wants to talk with, live with, work with, and fall in love with. It offers a choice between sociability or anonymity and privacy. It allows choice in one's personal style of living as "conformist" or "nonconformist" because the unusual is more easily accepted in the city than in the village. It is the city which offers exposure to different people, different impressions, different experiences. The chances for human personality to unfold and develop are greatest in the cities.' Victor Gruen, *Centers for the Urban Environment, Survival of the Cities*, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1973), 9

term, economically preferable, a tool for the promotion of new developments. On the one hand, this shows that the concept of the public realm has an ideal that is idealized as it simultaneously is captured by the market. It has become utopian as well as a preferable image, which – in both cases – simply is over the top. It never will be reached as imagined. It neither can fulfil its political promise, as being a common ground for the exchange between *all* inhabitants of a particular community, nor can it fulfil its imaginable promise, as a safe, smooth and cosy environment where the enjoyments of (community-)life is celebrated. We might agree to some degree that its widespread use nowadays is proof of the growing emptiness of the term itself. In most cases it just can be understood as lip service to the contemporary fashionable perspectives in the field.

With equal right we however can argue how important it is to once again redefine the notion of the public realm. Despite the renewed interest in cities and plurality,⁵⁸ democratic societies still seem to be on their way to harsh divisions and fragmentation. Today it is city against suburb, higher educated against the lower educated, rich against the poor, the progressive against the traditionalist, the cosmopolite against the nationalist. New media affects the public space, as well as the political arena. The accessibility of the public realm and the possibility of exchange belongs to the heart of Western Democracy. Particularly these aspects are threatened in the evaporation of public space. It therefore is part of an ongoing debate – a very much needed ongoing debate. Democracy never is a stable state; it needs to be rethought, reissued and discussed in response to actualities. The relationship between economy, politics and the public realm is in a continuous change too. There thus is a need to redefine these notions continuously. The public realm somehow withdraws itself again and again from our knowledge, understanding and common practices, and thus needs to be re-thought and reissued again. This continuous process or re-imagination has to be seen as a power of Western societies: it is the need of a continuous reflection on what is going on and its own self-understanding – not to say its own vitality. A society never can be seen as a perpetual mobile, a construct that can function without adding new energy. On the contrary, without rethinking and redefining its own values and its constituting parts, a society will stagnate. To state it differently, it belongs to the very essence of the democratic system that such fundamental questions and its premises need to be investigated again and again.

In architectural and urban theory this notion of the public realm thus is introduced as an attempt to reach beyond the tangible, concrete public space, an attempt to stress the inherent but hidden meaning, significance and urgency of urban figures as the street, the square and the park. It nevertheless also is clear that architectural form and intervention cannot establish a public realm. The ideal of the public realm is bound to the people using a space, particularly in a certain openness. It thus is a matter of the people themselves and their social practices. Architecture can provide elements in these spaces that increase the comfort and the likeliness of use: benches, tables, trees, playground elements, a chess board. Architecture, in other words, does not create a public realm – it creates the possibility of it, it makes it more likely that the space can be regarded as the public realm. A space to meet and greet *strangers*, although these strangers can be neighbours too. That actually is tangible in the final perspective of Friedman, where he urges the home and the local community as the eye of the hurricane, the stable entity in a work adrift. The home as a point of quietness and steadiness in a world adrift, offering moments of pause in the ongoing bombardment of information and development. So are local communities – if vital they are

welcoming, offering a learning model of plurality and exchange of differences in unity, or unity in differences, of propelling moments and connectedness. A couple of aspects are here at stake. Friedman urges the local community as balancing between protection and stimulation, between connectedness and privacy, between respect and togetherness. As we touched upon before, such a balance is not established overnight, but it takes bricks and logs at a time. Although he does not address these ‘bricks’ so much, the tangibility of the local community certainly is important. The local community is graspable, it can be found somewhere – we can travel back home and we should! This certainly is opposed to virtual communities on Facebook or Instagram, but also to the way more intangible community that can be imagined on a meta level of society but that never will offer the same tangible balance between the singular and the multitude, protection and respect. People need to be ‘anchored’ in local situations, he somehow seems to argue. In his reflection, however, he does not have much eyes for the ‘bricks’ of the local community and the home, the physical aspects of a neighbourhood.⁵⁹ As stated, he mentions the basketball court and the bus, the school and the gas station, but not so much as tangible figures. He is focused on what happened on that court, in that shop or that bus. Tangible things, however, are important too, as can be read in between the lines of his reflection on a project the bottom-up volunteering council of the neighbourhood started. ‘It only works if you start with a “dining room table”,’ one of the participants tells Friedman. ‘You get then all together around a dining room table, and they leave realizing, “There are other leaders in the community who want the same things that I do.’⁶⁰ The dinner of course gathers the guests, but it is the table that enables them to relate to each other and to have a conversation. Some of the significance of tangible ‘things’ also comes to the fore in the very last page of the book, when he returns to the street where he most of his childhood had lived. It offered him the experience of a familiar environment – even the former house of his parents, he writes, is still the same light-blue colour after all these years. The people certainly had changed, but the neighbourhood stayed the same. Only one thing puzzled him – it was slightly darker in reality than in his memories. What caused this unfamiliarity, he questioned? Only after a while he understands: the trees had grown quite a bit, covering the street with its leaves.⁶¹

Despite the recognition he experiences while visiting his former neighbourhood, it can be questioned whether such ‘back to home’ movement can answer the serious alienation that is evoked by modernity, globalization and the rapid transformation of our lives and environments. A ‘home’ that is filled with memories and rituals, shaped by our daily life and routines, certainly offers a place that can be inhabited, an anchor in a rapidly changing world, a connection with a local community. It can be argued, however, that alienation is not a modern experience at all, only evoked by the rapid transformation of the world. Alienation – the loss of ‘home’, paradise, connection with the Lord or the ‘gods’ – after all is a fundamental notion in religious systems and philosophical theories prior to the first traces of modernity in the history of the human race.

Nevertheless, this study discusses architecture precisely at the point where Friedman’s optimistic guide emphasises the home, the community and the pessimistic discourse about public spaces as well as alienation intersect. The loss of public space often is stressed in quite abstract ways, as a threat for the Western idea of democracy. Rightly so, but this is not just a matter of abstract ideas on the level of the political realm, it certainly also affects also the possibility of being at home in a local community. The loss of public space is not so much the narrative

59.

His focus on the home and the neighbourhood nevertheless is in line with for instance Jane Jacobs and her important and well known book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. It also echoes Hannah Arendt’s preference of local councils as basis of political life. Both perspectives will be addressed later in this study. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Book, 1992)

60.

Friedman, *Thank You for Being Late*, 441-442

61.

Ibid., 452

of the great, central and symbolical spaces, those spaces that regularly are the locus of protests and demonstrations, but it is particularly tangible where architecture touches upon the soil, at the heart of local communities, in the everyday spaces of inhabitants, at the corners of their streets. In other words, when the eye of the hurricane, as Friedman calls it, is the home and the healthy community, this also means something for the shape of such spaces, of the architecture of the home as it is related to the design, structure, and lay-out of public spaces. If public space becomes obsolete, this will affect communities falling apart by losing their common ground, their obvious meeting places, their ways of life wherein the meeting with neighbours (and strangers) is obvious. It becomes tangible in the relation between the home and the situation – how houses are connected to streets, related to other houses. Architecture in its most basic agency gives form to this everyday realm: the architecture of the home, the network of streets, the sequence of public spaces, and the relationship between all these elements. To state it differently: Architecture shapes the *thresholds* between interior and exterior of the home, the edges between public space and private space, between the mall and the parking lot, the street and the playing field. ‘Historically,’ the Canadian theorist Alberto Pérez-Gomez argues, ‘it was the architect’s job to make you feel at home in the city, to intensify your sense of purpose and belonging in public, through the institutions that framed daily life. Indeed, this was the part of life that truly mattered, as it involved our social body, our being with others that reflected back a sense of purpose through our actions.’⁶²

The title of this study, ‘At Home in the World’, certainly evokes this image of ‘being at home’. It evokes the material picture of the house in the world, the anchor that, for a while, can be experienced as solid and stable within the rapid transformation of the world today. However, it also, as we will see, evokes another picture. It challenges also the Heideggerian emphasis on alienation and homelessness within modernity through the much more positive reading of the ‘world’, as pictured by the philosopher Hannah Arendt, who is the central figure in this study. World, for Arendt, always means common-world, world-in-common. For Arendt this is a positive perspective. We’re not alone on earth, we are together with our fellow human beings, with which we share the world. We, we might argue, only can be at home in the world, if we value the commonness of the world. In the light of contemporary political discussions in Europe, it is important to emphasize this combination of ‘at home’ at one side and ‘in the world’ on the other. The longing for home in actual politics is often understood as a longing for ‘authentic’ identity, often exclusively related to a particular tradition, landscape or even race. The close ties between ‘home’ and ‘world’ in redirects this view, not to a past, but to a present, not to a specific group, but to the plurality of all men sharing the world. The world, in Arendt’s vocabulary, never is common to a specific group, it is the common ground to all. ‘At home in the world’ actually can be read as the project behind Arendt’s reflections on politics, on action, on the human being, society, the arts, and so on, and so forth. That aim also is behind architecture, I actually argue.

Understanding this from a perspective of architecture, as I will argue, means to value the world as a material in-between that is a common ground for the community both at large as well as in its very local circumstances. That material world is largely the matter of architecture: it requires attention, maintenance, intervention to continue to fulfil its role as common ground. This certainly is a local issue, but immediately has a larger impact on the greater community. This perspective, however, also enables me to argue that while the world is matter for architecture, vice versa architecture matters for the community.

1.2.4 *A Journey in Circles*

The conversation with the bus driver can be read as the briefest summary of the perspective developed in this study, which in itself is a journey through the field of architecture, craving for the relationship with the public and the public realm, with society and the political realm, or what I finally have called the ‘world and its inhabitants’. It literally can be read as a journey: the text goes in circles, investigating different viewpoints, that again and again stress the central topic from different angles, in order to slowly but surely come closer to the essential perspectives at the very heart. The main question beyond this study is herewith given: against the background of modernity and globalisation, the narrative of the loss of the public sphere, it investigates the significance, relevance and urgency of architecture. It questions what architecture can do politically (or better said, in respect to the world and its inhabitants). It therefore also questions the role of the architect: designing, which is at the heart of architecture, always means the personal involvement of the designer. How should we value that aspect, facing this context of the ‘world and its inhabitants’?

This journey starts in the next chapter with a trip through the American landscape of Florida, touching upon the ‘new’ urban figures that dominate this landscape: suburban neighbourhoods, gated communities, shopping malls, infrastructure, airports, theme parks, and historic districts. It offers a view upon the landscape and some of the forces behind it. The suburban neighbourhood somehow represents the image of paradise on earth, but it also – with the song ‘Big Yellow Taxi’ of Joni Mitchell – is destroyed in the same vain;

‘Don’t it always seem to go /
That you don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone /
They paved Paradise /
And put up a parking lot.’⁶³

The third chapter then brings us in the city itself, which somehow seems to offer more optimistic perspectives. Cities are popular again and somehow increase their inhabitants again after years of decreases. Cities are at the heart of the new theory about the creative industries, which only will be successful, their promoters argue, when diversity is acknowledged. This perspective upon the city and its essential plurality also addresses the different protest-movements that have entered the streets in the West (the occupy movement) as well as in the Middle East, the Arab Spring. The essential characteristic of democratic public space, after all, some argue, is the possibility to gather and to protest. Protest needs public space – it has to become tangible, visible in public. Despite this picture, it also is clear that the flourishing of cities has a backside: it propels segregation. Again a new threat upon the plurality of public spaces. However, these two chapters gain insight in the discourses in different scientific fields upon public space and the ideals behind. It nevertheless turns out how difficult it is to also address architecture through this perspective. It clearly is related, but what can we say about this relationship. It also is clear that no fixed amount of ‘forms’ that would guarantee ‘success’ by intervention in public space are available – whatever can be defined as ‘success’ in public space. These two chapters conclude with a thorough examination of a particular public space: the *Parc de la Villette* in Paris, a design by the French-American architect, Bernard Tschumi, from 1986. It offers a few perspectives upon architectural means that propel diversity in space. However, it also concludes that architecture, although important, is not decisive. Particular public practices require particular publics, and occupy spaces that somehow

63.

Joni Mitchell, *Big Yellow Taxi*, 1970.
See also Friedman, *Thank You for Being Late*, 173

fit these practices. In other words, the conclusion taken from these chapters is that the debate on public space somehow is in an impasse, as it only offers a few guidelines to design. To my mind, part of this impasse is because the view upon public space is dominated by the perspective of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. His idea, to my mind, offers a too high ideal of public space, which somehow paralyzes the debate. In the fifth chapter I then compare Habermas's ideas with these of Hannah Arendt – whose life and thinking I previously present in Chapter 4. Her view is present in the discourse, but in a rather limited sense. Indeed, I conclude in Chapter 5, taking her perspective certainly to enhance our understanding of public life and public space and how it is related to the field of architecture (as well as to the private realm). In my journey through her writings I however came to understand that her view rather would mean a shift in the debate. Arendt, although some argue that her perspective introduces an idealizing model, nevertheless keeps her model quite open and hopeful, as she also offers other starting points to also address architecture in this perspective. Chapter 5 not only takes her model of 'public space' and investigates it in the light of the field of architecture, it also addresses Arendt's concept of the public realm as what she calls 'a space of appearance,' which, as I will stress, includes an important role for the private realm – the home, so to speak. The next chapter then takes up her notion of the 'world', a frame through which Arendt urges the importance of objects and artworks. This chapter takes her reflections and introduces architecture as one of the most important forms of world-building the human-being has at hand. It thus develops a perspective upon the political significance of architecture in which the tangibility of the architectural object plays a central role. Chapter 7 finally investigates architecture as a 'craft' by using Arendt's notions of 'work', 'action', 'thinking' and 'judging'. It urges the importance of design as a world-constructing activity, but it also questions how the public is or can be related to the activity of design and imagination, which after all is often understood as a limited, personal and subjective activity. The very final and concluding chapter brings the previous discussions together: addressing the relationship between architecture and the public (realm), between the public realm and the world, between the world and the work-of-our-hands, and thus urges architecture as the very agency of the experience 'to be at home in the world'.

This study, which has to be seen as a contribution to the discourse of architectural theory in the first place, but also hopes to provide a different perspective for adjacent professional fields as philosophy and political sciences, is based on the conviction that this physical appearance, its materialized existence, and its imaginative power is of utmost importance for society. The notion of the public realm not only is a Western contemporary narrative of public behaviour, its political relevance, and its philosophical consequences, of an immaterialized sphere, but also is a perspective on the material structure of society – and vice versa. The 'vice versa' is important in this respect: architecture is a central aspect of the reality of the public realm, on its turn the public realm is a major narrative regarding architecture nowadays.



1.15 Hannah Arendt

1.3 SOME REMARKS ON THIS STUDY

1.3.1 *A Reciprocal Relationship*

Until this point, it might already be clear that architecture in this study is understood in relation to other fields of sciences, cultural, political and social practices. Architecture, of course, deals with space. It shapes space, as it also offers space to certain functions, programs. It offers space to be appropriated, occupied, inhabited, used, damaged, reworked. Space, for architecture, is a crucial term, wherein material matters and social, economic, cultural and political practices join forces. From the architectural point of view, space not simply is seen as the the spatial and material frame that offers room for a particular function (or). Architecture has a certain instrumental outlook: it is eager to intervene in space, in order to change the possibilities of use and adaptation. Although architecture thus is an agency in space, time, society, it is not a sole intervenor, nor is architecture independent. Architecture is part and parcel of society, and thus depends upon economic, social, political forces, technological and material developments. Architecture therefore does not simply represent itself, but also reflects the current society. This reflection upon the field and agency of architecture has a clear methodical implication for this study. Architecture here is addressed not on its own, but as part of a larger whole. Moreover, the lens particularly is taken from outside the field, in order to investigate the public aspects of architecture. This ‘outside’ perspective is needed in order to value the meaning of architecture. This study is not strictly architectural in that it searches for the internal rationales of the profession. There certainly are such rationales: over the ages of the humans dwelling upon earth, the art of building has developed its ‘own’ discipline. This study takes that into account, but will reflect upon these logics always in combination with views from outside the field. In this sense, this study also is not historical, nor practical, but instead rather theoretical. It aims to challenge architectural thinking, open up new reflective perspectives upon the matter of architecture and the question how architecture is of matter for the world. This of course also has methodological consequences: it studies literature and confronts that with literature from within the field, as it also takes literature from within the world and mirrors that with a reflection upon the developments in the world, in the everyday environment. It does not study architecture (or they everyday environment) through precedent-study, plan-analysis or close reading. The very character of architecture places this study not only in-between different scientific fields (from architecture to philosophy to political sciences and to sociology), as it also is located in-between different scientific branches. The material aspects of architecture after all are addressed through the natural sciences mainly, whereas its atmospherically qualities are part of the social sciences, as space and objects certainly contribute to the well being of the human being and functioning of the human community. Moreover, these spaces and object reflect that very society, and thus also are challenging the studies addressing the humanities. As is clear by now: it is neither pure mathematics nor pure philosophy, it is neither solely a technical, nor solely an organizational, morphological or geographical issue.

The previous sections offer a clear premise behind this study, and somehow opposes the ‘school’ in architecture that urges the autonomous path of the field.⁶⁴ Within this line of thoughts architecture is urged to find its material – and with that its meaning – from within the discipline, from the history of architecture and the body of knowledge that has been accumulated over time (in

64.

For a clear introduction to this perspective, see *OASE #62*: Pnina Avidar, Filip Geerts, Christoph Grafe, and Mark Schoonderbeek (eds.), *Autonomous Architecture and the Project of the City*, *OASE#62* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2003).

buildings, in practices, in drawings, in texts). Stating that architecture depends upon other fields does not mean to deny the specific architectural knowledge, tradition and histories. In time, through practices, expertise is gained, shared, propelled. It has become a body of knowledge that is embodied in buildings, shaped in typology, and captured in formal elements. Architecture certainly has its own treat, a certain resistance to other influences – and surely withstands the forces of time and temporalities, of changing functions and fashions, and the storm of actualities. The understanding of architecture as a developed field of its own offers the possibility to see and interpret architecture ‘as a language consisting of defined and comprehensible elements,’ and ‘as a craft, as a system of rules for the composition and ordering of elements; rules which have been endlessly tested throughout the history of the discipline.’⁶⁵ Although I am aware that architecture is a practice that can build upon a history of examples that are characterized by a particular knowledge – each building being built contributes to that body of knowledge. It also is true that this body of knowledge is heavily influenced by adjacent fields, particularly in the everyday practice of architects. It is not an independent profession, nor an independent body of knowledge. Opposed to the conviction of autonomy, I thus urge the position of a depending profession, which obviously does not diminish the architect as a professional – on the contrary, it requires even more professionalism and inhabitation of architectural knowledge to act within this dependent position, as I argue in Chapter 7. It agrees with the brief explanation of this viewpoint by architect and writer Jeremy Till: ‘architecture at every state of its existence – from design through construction to occupation – is buffeted by eternal forces. Other people, circumstances, and events intervene to upset the architect’s best-laid plans. These forces are, to greater or lesser extent, beyond the direct control of the architect. Architecture is thus shaped more by external conditions than by the internal processes of the architect. Architecture is defined by its very contingency, by its very uncertainty in the face of these outside forces.’⁶⁶ That might seem a dramatic viewpoint for an architect, seemingly not in charge in the design of the building. But as stated above: this position requires professionalism, knowledge, craftsmanship. It however admits that a design depends not only on the architect, but that the client is in charge too, as well as the contractor and even the user. That economic principles shape the building, besides the traditions within the architectural profession. Often, the construction method (partly) defines the shape of the building, which depends on the knowledge and possibilities of the constructor, on the possibilities of the particular site, and so on. Unforeseen actualities shape the design, as do political and economic processes. Even ‘fashion’ and *stimmung* are influential in the design process, like popular concepts and worldviews.⁶⁷ Both seemingly opposing visions on architecture, autonomy on the one hand and the depending position on the other hand, are clearly not addressing the same thing. The first addresses the knowledge that is hidden in the built environment, in architectural drawings and models, in architectural reflections and manifestos, and that all together definitely shapes the way architects think and act. The second view engages with the design-process itself, in which lots of other forces can also be recognized, influencing the outcome of the design process. We therefore might argue that the second view precedes as well as incorporates the first: all the forces shaping the built environment somehow contribute to the knowledge that is accumulated within the profession, educated at universities around the world, can be learned from publications, and that is a force in itself, shaping the architect’s thinking and acting (and through the architect also the built environment again). Architects dealing with the forces within the design process, incorporate it in the

65.

Pnina Avidar, Filip Geerts, Christoph Grafe and Mark Schoonderbeek, ‘Autonomous Architecture and the Project of the City’, in: Pnina Avidar, Filip Geerts, Christoph Grafe, and Mark Schoonderbeek (eds.), *Autonomous Architecture and the Project of the City*, OASE#62 (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2003), 2; the first quote summarized the point Aldo Rossi made on the autonomy of architecture, which leave room for a more autobiographic ‘use’ of architectural knowledge, the second represents the perspective of Giorgio Grassi, which somehow seems to be more dogmatic.

66.

Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: MIT Press, 2009), 1

67.

cf Geoffrey Scott when he, in his well known book *The Architecture of Humanism* discusses the three elements of good architecture according to Vitruvius: ‘Architecture requires ‘firmness’ ... The inherent characters of marble, brick, wood and iron have moulded its forms, set limits to its achievement, and governed, in a measure, even its decorative detail. ... Architecture requires ‘commodity’. It is not enough that it should possess its own internal coherence, its abstract logic of construction. It has come into existence to satisfy an external need. That, also, is a fact of its history. Architecture is subservient to the general uses of mankind. And, immediately, politics and society, religion and liturgy, the large movements of races and their common occupations, becomes factors in the study. These determine what shall be built, and, up to a point, in what way. The history of civilisation thus leaves in architecture its truest, because most unconscious record. If, then, it is legitimate to consider architecture as an expression of mechanical laws, it is legitimate, no less, to see in it an expression of human life. ... And architecture requires ‘delight’. For this reason, interwoven with practical ends and their mechanical solutions, we may trace in architecture a third and different factor – the disinterested desire for beauty. This desire does not, it is true, culminate here in a purely aesthetic result, for it has to deal with a concrete basis which is utilitarian. It is, none the less, a purely aesthetic impulse, an impulse distinct from all the other which architecture may simultaneously satisfy, an impulse by which architecture becomes art. ... Here, then, are three ‘conditions of well-building’, and corresponding to them three modes of criticism, and three provinces of thought.’ Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism, A Study in the History of Taste* (New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 18-19

68.

See for instance the first chapters of Alain De Botton, *Architectuur van het geluk* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Atlas, 2006)

69.

sir Winston Churchill in a speech in the *House of Commons*, October 28, 1944

70.

cf Ian Borden, *Skateboarding, Space and the City*, *Architectuur and the Body* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2001), 177-228

71.

The Italian-Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi once even argued that 'Until a person enters the building, climbs its steps, and seizes the space in a "human adventure" that develops in time, architecture does not exist.' quote taken from the lecture notes 'Arquitetura e movimento', Slavador, August 11, 1958 – cited via Zeuler R.M. de A. Lima, *Lina Bo Bardi* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2013), 84

design, and in professional knowledge, which – by sharing it with others, and through his designs – becomes part and parcel of the field and expertise of architecture. We might summarize this as architecture as a profession that is simultaneously dependent (as a daily practice in society) as well as autonomous (as an academic field, reifying and transmitting the body of knowledge).

This summary however does not satisfy yet. It simply states something of the field itself, of how buildings are conceived, designed and constructed. It is focused on the profession only, stressing its internal and external forces. But then, it seems to acknowledge the built environment in a static way: as a collection of buildings, and the accumulation of architectural knowledge. Architecture however is not simply a limited moment of making plans and constructing buildings. Buildings have a lifetime of their own, they are used, occupied, adapted, demolished, reconstructed. There is, in other words, a relationship with users, society, culture, events, happenings – should we not incorporate that as well in our view? In other words, after being designed and constructed, the built environment at least also 'gives back' to its context, to its clients, and to those that by chance occupy (parts) of the building. This relationship is nevertheless not one way, life shaping buildings, but also the other way around: the building shapes lives, societies, cultures.⁶⁸ This of course rephrases the famous quote of Winston Churchill: 'First we shape our buildings, thereafter they shape us.'⁶⁹

We might challenge this point a bit further: there is evidently an intensive relationship between architecture and its users, which cannot be limited to those that really occupy a building, but also to those that visit it irregularly, and those that appear in its vicinity. This relation thus starts with the program a building houses. Architecture, buildings as well as other urban structures, offers room to programs and activities by creating proper conditions. A firm needs office spaces; a family, a dwelling. They need a building in order to do their businesses, to dwell. But this relationship is sometimes also more temporal, and less bound to the particular program that is housed in a building: teenagers are seeking specific places to race their bikes, others are looking for a table to play chess. A group of musicians do need a room to practice their performance. A concrete staircase in front of a building attracts skaters skateboarding, a playground in a park attracts children with their au pair. In other words, the architectural feature that makes this particular space attractive to use (and to gather, as a group) is its great acoustics (or the cheap rent), the steepness of a ramp, the toughness of a staircase. What happens in space cannot be detached from the architecture itself, from the spatial qualities of a certain place, although it also has a 'life' and 'will' of its own.⁷⁰

If we would have to define the heart of the profession, we might summarize it at this point that architecture creates room through material interventions in space. Or should we state, it creates *places* as opposite to infinite space? This space, this 'room' that is created, which if loosely or sharply defined, makes things possible. Or impossible. Buildings, walls, doors, windows, streets, squares are offering room to particular programs. Architecture and program are inter-related⁷¹ – and although different programs can be housed in the building over time, the building needs to be adapted (sometimes extensively) over time to make this possible. Architectural elements are making activities possible simultaneously connecting and separating people, spaces, environments. Built structures are protecting and opening space at once. By protecting, however, specific atmospheres and comfort can be conditioned: regulating fresh air and a comfortable climate, by framing perspectives, and so on. Through its intervention in infinite space, architecture is providing room for initiatives and activities. It has

to be immediately said as well: this architecture in most cases is not independent of these activities and initiatives, but often reifies what already is there. Architecture is not only creating place for activities of a particular ‘community’, it also simultaneously is the spatial and material answer to processes in that community. It is not an ‘either-or’ relationship, it holds a reciprocal relationship which somehow is divided in time. It is commissioned, but after being built, it offers space, also to activities that were not foreseen. And while offering space, giving room to activities, these activities in turn (can) reshape the building. Between buildings and activities, in other words, there is a reciprocal relationship. Architecture is not simply produced by architects; it is produced through time by those occupying the space and shaping it to their needs. This not only means that representation, experience and also production of architecture is insoluble, it also makes clear that the production of space is forced beyond the intention of the designers. The city consists of the daily experiences and the continuous reproduction of its spaces by reordering knowledge, restructuring the spatial, reconsidering the cultural and appropriating places.⁷² The importance of emphasizing this view is that it enlightens the – in some sense obvious – fact that actual *lived space*, a term coined by the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre,⁷³ is not detached from its inhabitants. It is not only their background or everyday environment (which of course has influence on their lives), but moreover, it is also their product.⁷⁴

We need to understand this interdependency and the reciprocal relationship even on a higher level: architecture is the tangible result of developments in society. Architecture creates room for society, whilst society requires concrete and tangible spaces; architecture. Therefore, it also is true that whatever happens in society, sooner or later has its impact on concrete spaces, on roads and buildings, on cities and squares. Developments in society – the change of ideas on how we live and work, where to recreate and relax, how to teach in schools and treat the kids, how society or the government is organized, what can be expected from as well as is needed to offer a community, and so on – always have their impact on the built environment. Schools need to be redeveloped, as well as office spaces, industrial areas and neighbourhoods due to changing ideas and progressive insights.⁷⁵ City centres change continuously, as does the landscape. Architecture, therefore, offers a tangible narrative on society and its organization, on contemporary human life as well as its past. It moreover also represents its dreams through the designs that are made and the building projects that are planned and announced. Architecture is the reification of everyday life of a changing society and a political organization, rather than the individual oeuvre of an architect or the outcome of autonomous processes within the field – although (and here we are back at the beginning of this reflection upon the very characteristics of the architectural profession) these new ‘experiences’ in design certainly contribute to the body of knowledge that can be stressed as the autonomous core of the discipline.

It is this perspective behind this study that urges us to understand the relationship between architecture and the public, particularly regarding public space, not as a line, a vector, but as a matrix, that simultaneously, dialectically, and sometimes also paradoxically, addresses the physical, the social, the perception, the representation, the production, and the appropriation of space. The architectural project somehow bridges the complexities of this matrix. As a matter of fact, the notion of public space gains depth, reality, and tangibility when understood through such a layered approach, that I here symbolize through the figure of the matrix. This matrix, actually, is not limited to what regularly and intuitively is

72.

Iain Borden, Jane Rendell, Joe Kerr, and Alicia Pivaro, ‘Things, Flows, Filters, Tactics’, in: Iain Borden, Joe Kerr, Jane Rendell, with Alicia Pivaro (eds.), *The Unknown City, Contesting Architecture and Social Space* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 2001), 18

73.

Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 38-39

74.

Borden, Rendell, Kerr, and Pivaro, ‘Things, Flows, Filters, Tactics’, 20

75.

cf. Owen Hatherly, *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain* (London/New York: Verso, 2011), VII

understood as public space: the streets, plazas, squares and parks of cities. As we will see, the definition of public space is rather vague, we sometimes experience space to be public, that in some respects aren't, while on the other hand, public spaces are experienced to be privative. Therefore, the matrix is more about 'spaces' generally, although some aspects indeed address the 'public' aspects and can be found in 'public' spaces vigorously.

The matrix however certainly starts with concrete spaces, whether accessible by the public or not, owned by the public or not, appropriated by the public or not – spaces that provide room (make things possible as well as impossible), have a surface, borders, and surroundings. These spaces are physical. Their reading gains depth, contrast, tangibility, and presence, through an understanding of the tactile qualities of the construction, and the textures of the materials.

Secondly these spaces have a particular history that did produce the space: initiatives by public authorities, developers, inhabitants, owners, planners, politicians, they are drawn and designed by architects and urban planners, and built by contractors, carpenters, plumbers, and so on. But space cannot be limited to the designed and constructed edifice.

Public spaces, thirdly, also are inhabited by people, and appropriated by the public (or not, which is meaningful too) – they play a role in the everyday life of inhabitants, of visitors and neighbours, of citizens and tourists. However, this immediately means that the spaces, as well as their meaning, changes over time, is (re)produced by the everyday uses. Public spaces are experienced and perceived differently by distinct social groups, depending on the context, the use, the connections, even on the specific visit, the memory, the meeting, the weather. Space is not fixed; let alone the interpretation of space. This not is just the case through the temporality of use, of what happens in public space, it also means that the architecture (the physical artefact) changes over time. Structure, networks, fabrics are temporal, as is the perception of the representation of the architectural project (which of course has a much shorter lifespan).

Fourthly, public spaces also are, as theorists have unfolded in their substantial and significant explorations of the contemporary situation, the result of, or do initiate, actual social processes in space, society and neighbourhoods, like economic transformation, social appropriation, inhibition, colonization, and gentrification, and therefore are, in their form, structured and impactful - not neutral. Therefore, public spaces also represent something of the processes beyond society, the economic power and the (political) ideologies that are granted. The spaces thus also are symbolical or even iconographic. Meaning they inhabit space – although space cannot be reduced to meaning (and the meaning is flexible).

Finally the spaces not only are the product of forces beyond space, they also are socio-cultural producers themselves. In the recent history of architecture, the notion of social change, for instance, was associated with architecture. Over time, however, it has been lost to view. Nevertheless, it still is taken for granted that actual spaces, specifically giving room to meetings, are significant for the human being. It thus is the experience of space, this temporal perception, that also is reproductive – it makes the distinct levels of space immediately present. Summarized, space here is understood as a 'stage' that offer room for social processes. This stage is not simply a décor behind a certain practice or a box around a certain use, nor a *receptor* of social, economic or cultural processes solely, it also is understood as *instrument* to evoke such social processes, practices, uses.⁷⁶ In other words, while understanding space as a stage, it is an agency in itself. It not only stages a certain action, it also enables this action, by

offering it a 'space of appearance'. Particularly the idea that space has an agency on its own, an agency that was fuelled by the design of it, has played a central role in the history of Modern architecture. Prominent architects and urban designers like Bruno Taut, Ernst May, and Le Corbusier, were convinced about the positive affect new way of organizing the city, and the new design of dwellings would have on social and cultural life of the citizens and inhabitants.⁷⁷ However, the history of architecture also has revealed how such expectations were never fulfilled. The intended goals never were reached.⁷⁸

1.3.2 Architecture: From Nail to Trail

Next to the heteronomous character of architecture and the notion of space as stage, the second premise that certainly already is tangible in this text, is the use of the term 'architecture' in an expanded way. In everyday language, architecture is used to describe particular designs of singular buildings, or to describe the (academic or cultural) field (of knowledge) concerned with the design of buildings. In this text, however, we already discussed public space, contemporary cities and landscapes, streets, squares and parks – and we all have addressed this as 'architecture'. In other words, the notion here is used in reference to 'the built environment', and how that is experienced, used, described, evoked and imagined (this as summary of the specific knowledge of architecture), as well as how we define, design, propel interventions in this built environment (the act of design, that is at the heart of the profession).⁷⁹ This thus means that when the word 'architecture' is used, it includes the related fields of urban design, and landscape architecture, building management and construction, like other fields that contribute to the whole process of planning, developing, constructing and maintaining the built environment. It ranges from the planning of cities to the cultivation of the landscape, from interior design to the development of buildings, from the design of furniture to regional planning. This close connection between architecture, urbanism and landscape architecture (and with them also the fields of interior design and construction, building technology, planning sciences, geography) can be understood in the light of a common concern: spatiality, although on different levels. In other words: those three professions are directed towards the knowledge of space and its materiality as well as the spatial and material intervention in the 'man-made world', to state it with a term of the philosopher Hannah Arendt, who plays a major role in this study.⁸⁰ For sure, technically seen, these professions do use specific knowledge of construction, structure, and planning, of mathematics and models, which certainly is the reason for the nowadays division in profession and education. I however thus argue that no division should be made between those professions. In other countries, the division between architecture and urban design seems to be less prominent. Particularly The Netherlands has a history of differentiation, where urban design already for about 100 years is distinguished from architecture. Urban design is limited to the planning and structure of the city and the design of urban public spaces, landscape architecture deals with the structure of the landscape and the design of urban and suburban green spaces, and architecture is limited to the design and construction of (singular) buildings in the city as well as in the landscape. These distinctions in contemporary practices are actually blurred: landscape architectural offices also design buildings, architectural offices also design squares and parks, offices for urban design strongly prescribe the architecture that needs to fit in their plans, etcetera. Particularly in the case of the city plan, its streets and squares, its public spaces and its private parts, this division is lethal. 'To truly make good public space,' the

77.

Heynen, 'Space as Receptor, Instrument or Stage', 347; cf George Baird's article "'La Dimension Amoureuse" in Architecture', in which he investigates the perspectives that are the *gesamtkunstwerk* that characterizes the works of Eero Saarinen, as well as the more 'open' organization of the works of Cedric Price. Both utterly different directions are nevertheless two sides of the same coin, he argues. They are evoked by an utilitarian worldview, Baird recognizes with the help of Hannah Arendt's critique upon utilitarianism. George Baird "'La Dimension Amoureuse" in Architecture', in: Charles Jencks and George Baird (eds.), *Meaning in Architecture* (London: Barrie and Rockliff: The Cresset Press, 1969), 97' cf also Paul Holmquist, 'Towards an Ethical Technique: Reframing Architecture's "Critical Call" through Hannah Arendt,' in: *The Plan Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2016), 18

78.

Heynen, 'Space as Receptor, Instrument or Stage', 347

79.

cf Jonathan Hill, *Actions of Architecture, Architects and Creative Users* (London: Routledge, 2003), 2

80.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 173-174

81.

Liz Diller, 'A Giant Bubble for Debate'; lecture at the design studio TED2012, http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/liz_diller_a_giant_bubble_for_debate.html [seen June 1st, 2012]

82.

Guy Debord, *Reflections sur l'architecture*, Paris 2006, Gallimard, cited from Anthony Vidler (ed.), *Architecture between spectacle and use*, VI

83

quote via Peter Trummer, 'The City as an Object, Thoughts on the Form of the City,' in: *Log #27* (New York: AnyCorporation, winter/spring 2013), 51

84.

cf Alexander D'Hooghe, *The Liberal Monument, Urban Design and the Late Modern Project* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 13

American architect Liz Diller, one of the designers behind New York's newest park, the well-known and very popular, *High Line*, states, 'you have to erase the distinctions between architecture, urbanism, landscape, media design, and so on. It really goes beyond distinction.'⁸¹ Spatial design, I would stress, is particularly concerned with thresholds (this perspective I develop in Chapter 5 and 6), which connects the distinctive domains of the city, particular buildings and the urban fabric and so on. What thus needs to be at the core of attention actually is, if a strong division between professions is made, at the very edge of the assignment and the particular responsibility of the designer involved (and often also literally at the very edge of the paper, the screen, the model, the view). Spatially and culturally seen, however, there is no need for this division. Understanding interiors, buildings, cities and landscapes as a continuous chain seems to me a convincing perspective, at least in the light of the public realm which is central in this study. Or, as the French writer and theorist, member of the *Situationists International* Guy Debord wrote in 1959: 'the problem of architecture is not to be seen from outside, nor to live inside. It is in the dialectical relationship interior-exterior, at the scale of urbanism (house-street) and at the scale of the house (interior-exterior).'⁸² This is the underlying conviction of this study as well, it is concerned about the artefact in its context, the buildings in its surroundings, the streets in its network, the city in the landscape, the room in the house, the corridor in the office building, the entrance in the street, the window facing the street – and all this interrelated with each other, which somehow is tangible in the well-known quote of Alberti: 'A building' can be seen as 'a small city and the city as a building.'⁸³

While architecture thus has to be seen as the concrete spatial and material artefacts in their environment – be it urban or rural – on the one hand, and as field of design, planning and building of these artefacts on the other, the indissoluble relationship between both sides of this description needs to be stressed more clearly. The expanded notion of architecture does not simply urge the knowledge hidden in the reality of the built environment, but also urges the activity behind this built environment, processes of design and construction, occupation and imagination. This simply means that architecture is not a regular field of sciences, but that within the field, at its very core, is the will to intervene (and the need to maintain, as I will stress in Chapter 6). Architecture is not simply the expert of (existing) space, it moreover is driven by imagination and besides that it describes the world as it is, it also stresses the world as it should (or can) be.⁸⁴ It is important to keep both sides of the profession tied together. Architecture is design and project, is reality and imagination, is the paper drawing and the lived environment. The spatiality of our 'man-made-world' is produced by practices that by itself are spatial as well. This spatiality actually is not left in the hands of the designer: it is transformed by appropriation of its users. It is important to underline this relationship since it means that the production of space, and with that also its representational aspects, is related to both the design and construction as well as to our daily practice and the experience of spaces. Architecture is a field bridging politics, environment, people and culture of a place and attempts to create spaces that do good, meant to contribute to the 'world and its inhabitants.'

1.3.3 Why Arendt Matters

'The world and its inhabitants' as the ultimate aim of architecture is a notion I develop and discuss in Chapter 6. It is a phrase that comes from the German-

American philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), when she reflects upon the writings of the German Philosopher Karl Jaspers,⁸⁵ who had been her supervisor while she wrote her dissertation on the concept of love in the writings of Saint Augustine.⁸⁶ Although this study is focused on architecture, Arendt is the central figure in this study. Her writings are used as a lens to discuss architecture, to crave through the field in order to understand its relationship with the public and the public realm. This choice, to use Arendt's writings as a lens, needs some explanation. It might be clear that regarding the premises above, this study challenges the field and practices of architecture by inhabiting the 'thresholds' between distinctive realms of the built environment, society, culture, and politics, between the fields of architecture and philosophy, as well as sociology and the arts. Although Arendt never addressed the notion of the public realm as an architectural question, nor investigated the merits of architecture featuring society, the assumption behind this study is that her writings offer a framework that helps to understand architecture, indeed as a question regarding the public realm as well as within the broader scope of society. Arendt in that sense is different than other philosophers, like Jean Baudrillard, Jeremy Bentham, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Martin Heidegger, Bruno Latour, Henri Lefebvre, Arthur Schopenhauer, Roger Scruton, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, that seem to be more obvious to study, since they, be it in the margins of their writings or (remarkably enough) even in practical exercises, have dwelled upon architecture (and public space). The point of entry here is indeed no stunning reflection on architecture, but it takes its starting point in the notion of the public realm (or public sphere), which as a discourse briefly is addressed above - a discourse that will be investigated further in Chapter 2 and 3.

Arendt is one of the fundamental sources behind the discussion on the public realm within the fields of philosophy and political theory, particularly because of her 1958 book, *The Human Condition*, in which she stresses the condition of the public realm within the Modern Age. The book, often understood as her main work, is published more than half a century ago. It nevertheless is still relevant and actual to questions upon the public, which again and again are at the forefront of discussions and concerns about contemporary Western societies and their political structures. Moreover, after a period of less attention, Arendt's oeuvre is currently the focus of study in quite different academic fields. Some of her books are on the list of current bestsellers (particularly after the election of Donald Trump to president of the United States). Her books and articles are being reprinted (and translated: in the Netherlands, almost all of her writings have become available in Dutch translation over the last five years) and numerous introductions to and books about her work are being published. But this current popularity of her work is not the reason to consider Arendt relevant for the field of architecture as well – my preliminary interest in her writings was evoked during my final thesis project at the *Delft University of Technology* in 2002-2003, studying the theme of architecture, heritage and landscape, in which also the question of public space was at stake. A little reference to *The Human Condition*, and particularly the remark that Arendt defines a realm in-between the public and the private, the social, challenged me to study her work.⁸⁷ That it is much more relevant to actual and core-topics of architectural thinking in our time, I discovered literally by diving into her writings, definitely propelled by the opportunity to write this study at the Delft University of Technology (for which my stay at the *Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities at Bard College* in 2009 was decisive). This study is the sediment of that exploration. By starting the journey with her reflections on the public realm, in order to connect that to

85. Hannah Arendt, 'Karl Jaspers. A Laudatio' in: Hannah Arendt, *Man in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 79

86. Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996)

87. Jan Heeling, Han Meyer, John Westrik, *Het ontwerp van de stad-splattegrond* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 2002)

public space, I travelled around and found out that her larger frame is the world-in-common, in which public space is essential. But with that larger frame, she also offered a much more ontological understanding of the relevance of architecture as intervention in this world, as she also offered a perspective upon the activities beyond that intervention: design, construction, conversation, and reflection. In other words, the question of public space brought me much more to the heart of the profession than I expected – although it is simultaneously in the end a much more theoretical reflection than it initially intended to be.

Even though Arendt reserves a complete chapter of *The Human Condition* to address aspects of the human artifice, she does not specifically address architecture (nor the built environment) as part of this human artifice. She invigorates on objects and things, dwells on the role of the work of art, but overlooks, I would state cautiously, the importance of the everyday environment, of houses and buildings, of schools and hospitals, of streets and squares. Part of this study challenges that gap, by connecting Arendt's writings with perspectives from within the field of architecture. It has to be clear that the aim of this study is not to comment on Arendt's work, nor to redraw her work in an architectural sense. What is intended is to follow her line of thoughts, especially her most thorough explanation on the notion of the public realm, and use that as a lens to reflect upon public space, the architectural project, and architecture as agency. This study is thus not the (re)construction of whatever Arendt's view could be on the field of architecture. Her perspective will not offer the final answer to the problems and issues raised in this study. Her writings, in other words, are used as an instrument facing these questions and issues, to open up new perspectives, new directions to go. Philosophical ideas after all cannot be redrawn architecturally 1:1, but require translation and thus transformation, which certainly is a moment of interpretation and evocation.

We nevertheless can describe this study as a trial to construct a bridge between the writings of Arendt and the concrete and tangible aspects of architecture. A bridge, if we can use that metaphor – I depend here on the way the philosopher Martin Heidegger uses this metaphor in order to describe what architecture does by intervening in a particular place⁸⁸ – allows not only one-way traffic, from one shore to the other. It importantly connects the shores at once, that is: it is a two-way relationship. It brings together two shores, which thus means that the two shores are influencing each other. In other words, a bridge changes both sides of the stream. This study aims to offer and recalibrate architecture through the writings of architecture, but this also means that in reverse it attempts to recalibrate in reverse and shine a (different) light on the writings of Arendt as well. It thus is the assumption behind this study that an architectural reading of Arendt's concept of the public realm will provide as well insight in the field of architecture, the role of the architect and urban designer, and finally the role of the design, against the backdrop of the context of the contemporary city and society, as well as an addition to the philosophical perspectives and responses on the work of Arendt and philosophical narratives urging the public sphere.

Architecture, in its broadest sense, is an important representative of the 'material structure of society', and thus of the public realm. Although Arendt had little attention for the merits of architecture, her writings do reveal a great awareness of the significance of the materiality of the world. They therefore made it into architectural theory only to limited heights (particularly by the effort of Kenneth Frampton, George Baird, Kristiaan Borret and Pier Vittorio Aureli) – certainly

because of the lack of explicit thorough reflection upon the field. This nevertheless surprises me (of course only a bit), particularly since she has been a student in Heidelberg of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who with his 1951 lecture 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' gained enormous response in the field of architecture.⁸⁹ Arendt obviously builds her approach to the world partly on Heidegger's philosophy, but offers a few important twists (mainly evoked through her intensive collaboration and conversations with the previously mentioned philosopher Karl Jaspers). These shifts never made it to the field of architecture and architectural theory. To my mind these shifts are pivotal, specifically for reflections upon the act of architectural design (which I discuss in Chapter 6).⁹⁰ However, a few architects and theorists – (amongst others: George Baird, Kenneth Frampton, and recently, Pier Vittorio Aureli) – have developed substantial perspectives on (aspects of) *The Human Condition* and other writings of Arendt, of which I gratefully make use.

There are at least three reasons to use the work of Arendt as our lens in this study. First – as mentioned, she is one of the philosophers who has extensively discussed the issues regarding the public realm. Moreover, she is to be seen as an original source in this discourse, besides her fellow German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, upon which we already have touched. In moments of confusion, like our contemporary times, it is valuable to get back to the original sources, in order see what the views previously developed and still inspiring the debate actually have to offer. In this case, we even might state that we go back to an original source that not yet made it fully extensively to the debate in architecture, since that debate, to my mind and as I will discuss in Chapter 2 and 5 is dominated by the perspective that stems from Habermas' reflections. In the meantime, the world has changed drastically. It thus is the challenge to read Arendt against the age of acceleration, the pessimism about public space, the confusion about contemporary politics, the new urban segregation – these contexts all requires to rethink ideas and draw them anew.

The second reason to take Arendt as a lens to discuss architecture and the public realm is the remarkable spatiality of her writings and concepts she propels. Her texts are full of spatial, architectural and artistic references and metaphors – they even can be called 'architectural' in their structure and compositions.⁹¹ There certainly is no doubt that the idea of the public realm (also in the work of Arendt, but even more central in the writings of Habermas) first has to be seen as a virtual 'space', urging society and politics on a meta level. It is the dialogue in society regarding the world, the political realm, the (im)possibility of exchange, which can take place anywhere and everywhere. The discourse also addresses the formal aspects of the issue (although slightly): the political institutions and spaces, the town hall meetings and the political addresses, human rights and public institutions as the freedom of expression and religion, which somehow in the Western world are the tangible aspects and the guarantees of the plural character of society. The public realm also addresses virtual 'spaces' where people exchange perspectives: newspaper columns, writings on the opinion pages, magazines, internet forums, weblogs and vlogs, social media, and so forth. However, the public realm also has a concrete spatial and tangible dimension, that often is overlooked, but actually cannot be ignored. In the writings of Arendt this spatial and tangible aspect is present again and again – it even is rendered a prerequisite for the moment of appearance and exchange, of action and speech (in Arendt's terms, as we will see). However, she never linked it to a concrete contemporary urban spaces – not even to the Mall in Washington, Alexander Platz in Berlin,

89. Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking'

90. see for a brief overview: Hilde Heynen, *Architectuur en Kritiek van de moderniteit* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 2001), 26-38; see also: Jacques De Visscher and Raf De Saeger (eds.), *Wonen, Architectuur in het denken van Martin Heidegger* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 1991)

91. Rudy Visker, *Lof der zichtbaarheid, Een uitleiding in de hedendaagse wijsbegeerte* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SUN, 2007), 27; it is the political theorist Patchen Markell that argues that The Human Condition has an architectural structure. It is a 'meaningful joining together of parts,' he argues, particularly joining and relating lots of distinctions: public-private, world-earth, labor-work-action, and so on. Patchen Markell, 'Arendt's Work. On the Architecture of *The Human Condition*', in: *College Literature*, Vol 38, no.1, Winter 2011

or Hyde Park in London. Nevertheless, the spatial and tangible frame in which Arendt addresses her concept of the public realm is her emphasis on this realm as a 'space': the space of appearance, which can hardly be imagined as a totally virtual or abstract space. This spatial dimension becomes more and more clear in her historical sketch of the public realm in which Arendt refers to archetypes of public space as the Agora in the Greek *Polis* and the Forum Roman City states. She stresses their functionality and accessibility and the importance of its circumscription by a wall (and private properties).

The final argument to push Arendt forward once again and in my view most important reason to do so, is that the focus of the writings of Arendt always are directed towards the 'world and its inhabitants', the phrase I stated previously. It is intersecting the human being as living on earth amongst others – and how that living amongst others requires a world in common, and a realm in which one another can appear to one another. In this reflection Arendt particularly has an open eye to human activities, and particularly to the subjective aspects of human agencies. It leaves room for diversity, and even argues that diversity is the very characteristic of the world. This also is the very characteristic of her writings, as we will see later: it can be characterized as stubbornly opening up perspectives, craving back in history, challenging developments, trying to understand what had happened and what happens today, without aiming to develop a theory, a closed system in which all answers will be given. In other words: her writings are open-ended. This means something important for this study too, particularly in its address to architecture. This study is not meant to develop generic instruments to (re)design public space, nor a toolbox that can be applied to architecture in order to make it 'more public' (although that was intended but naïve idea behind this study at the very start). It will not develop practical and appropriate methods that can be applied in the (complex) design-processes of our days, nor will it develop a specific design-approach, let alone to suppose 'forms', which would have been properly applicable to face the investigated contemporary circumstances and which maybe could be the outcome of an empirical study on public space (although I am not sure that results of such a study still can be called architecture at all). Specific forms, which only can be proper answers towards concrete singular questions. No general method can answer the questions that are on the table, as we will see in Chapter 8. Much more can be expected from personal approaches, artistic talent and individual awareness of the public. Facing the idea of the public realm and its inherent diversity, there are no final answers, no methods and instruments that can create public space and public realm at once. Central in Arendt's book *The Human Condition* is the question what actually 'we are doing' on earth.⁹² This question is urgent to architecture too, and, looking backward, also is the central question of this study. This research investigates 'what we', as architects and urban designers and all other involved in the construction of the built environment, 'are doing'.

1.3.4 *Diving For Pearls – Methodical Reflections*

The reason that the writings of Arendt did not fully reach the heart of the architectural discourse might also be found in the perception of her work as nostalgic and melancholic, an idealisation of the past, if not a conservative perspective. Architectural theory somehow is pre-occupied with progression and the avant-garde, the new and the advanced – reactionary perspectives hardly get a foothold within its narratives. However, this classification of the work of Arendt in terms of nostalgia is clearly caused by an imaginable but superficial reading of her

work, although this will not come as a surprise. Arendt after all does not base her analysis on contemporary references, nor on instances of the recent past – although her writings address contemporary issues and are evoked by ‘recent’ experiences. She uses, as we have seen and moreover in tangible admiration, Classical sources: the functioning of Greek and Roman city-states. Classical forms of democracy and especially the explanation of this by Aristotle, the writings of Plato, the conversations of Socrates and all sorts of other Classical stories and writings. We nevertheless should reject this categorization of Arendt, at first since Arendt herself rejected any categorization. She was neither conservative nor liberal, left wing nor right wing, neither progressive nor reactionary, she stated: ‘I don’t fit’. She once said of herself, ‘I suppose I never had any such position. You know the left think that I am conservative, and the conservatives sometimes think I am left or I am a maverick or God knows what. And I must say, I couldn’t care less. ... I don’t belong to any group. You know the only group I ever belonged to was the Zionists. This was only because of Hitler, of course.’⁹³

Actually, her work can be seen as rethinking again and again this last sentence, her most important life-experience: being excluded from the public realm (as a Jew in Nazi-Germany previous to World War II). So if we indeed can conclude that Arendt ‘idealizes’ Classical sources, then we have to understand that this is not *theory* for her, but personal experience of having no place to stand in, let alone to participate in, and that she tries to understand how this has happened. So if there is any idealization, it is an intentional idealization, to develop an understanding of the meaning of the public realm and public life, and to grasp a place in the world for the ‘humanity of human beings.’ This actually is the second reason not to reject her attempt too quickly. Arendt actually uses these sources as a ‘mirror’ to understand what actually happened to Europe, the World and her own life during the 20th century. In order to grasp today, Arendt uses the past since it mirrors what has been lost and what is actually new today. This use of the past – and we can underline use here, is certainly not celebration only – one can actually find its source in Arendt’s view upon modernity. Modernity, Arendt argues, has caused a gap between the past and the present that is not anymore bridged by tradition or religion, philosophical systems or any other perspectives. In other words, the gap between the past and present is not so much new, it is the loss of a bridge to overcome that gap and to act today, is lost. Arendt argues that everybody, contrary to before the Modern Age, has to bridge the gap on their own.⁹⁴ This however, does not mean that history is not important anymore. It is quite the opposite. ‘To acknowledge the “accomplished fact” of the break,’ the political theorist Dagmar Barnouw reflects on Arendt’s position, ‘does not mean to be done with the past but rather to acknowledge the challenge of giving it new meaning for a new cultural beginning, in order to show a way out of the present confusion in political thought and action.’⁹⁵ For Arendt, this means that she is not stuck in pessimism, not about the loss due to modern developments, but that she actively searches in history to those aspects that still can help us act today. Moreover, her work actually is drenched with hope beyond pessimism: she stresses human life as characterized by its natality (rather than its mortality), which means the ever-present possibility of taking new initiatives by human beings.⁹⁶

Arendt’s intentionality in the use of history, her intention to rethink fundamental examples regarding actual deficiencies somehow also is a model behind this study. It is important to stress this aspect, since it informs methodically how I approached this research. According to the American political scientist Seyla

93. Hannah Arendt, ‘On Hannah Arendt’ in: Melvyn A. Hill (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martins Press inc., 1979), 333-334

94. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 1

95. Dagmar Barnouw, *Visible Spaces, Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience* (Baltimore/ London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 186

96. This of course is one of the pivotal of changes of perspective within Arendt’s work, that have to be seen as a response to Martin Heidegger’s philosophical outlook, as stated previously.

97. Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 88

98. *Ibid.*, 88

99. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 42-43

Benhabib, Arendt continuously tries ‘to break the chain of narrative continuity, to shatter chronology as the nature structure of narrative, to stress fragmentariness, historical dead ends, failures, and ruptures.’⁹⁷ Arendt somehow opposes the German philosopher Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, who stresses history as an unfolding narrative. That idea, Arendt somehow praises him, had some ‘revolutionary’ aspects, although she completely disagrees with understanding this narrative as a more or less straight line from the past to the future. Such a perspective irrevocably leads to the idea of happenings and phenomena as inevitable necessities, which are plausible and even can be understandable.⁹⁸ This perspective leads towards the idea of ‘*Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*’ (world history is the judge of the world): today only can be judged afterwards. Arendt opposes that perspective strongly, since it leaves no role for the actor today to face current happenings. In her study *On Revolution* Arendt writes:

‘Politically, the fallacy of this new and typically modern philosophy is relatively simple. It consists in describing and understanding the whole realm of human action, not in terms of the actor and the agent, but from the standpoint of the spectator who watches a spectacle. But this fallacy is relatively difficult to detect because of the truth inherent in it, which is that all stories begun and enacted by men unfold their true meaning only when they have come to their end, so that it may indeed appear as though only the spectator, and not the agent, can hope to understand what actually happened in any given chain of deeds and events.’⁹⁹

Arendt herself on the contrary tried to make room for action, room for human interventions in what can be seen as the chain of history. As we will see, this room for action, as well as the possibility of judgment, are crucial concepts in the writings of Arendt. However, in response to the linear idea of history, Arendt claims room for ‘new’ experiences – experiences that have no predecessors in the history of the world. The totalitarian political systems of Nazism in Germany and Fascism in the Soviet Union, were Arendt’s first topics to address after her experiences of being excluded from the public realm and after World War II had ended, and are understood by her as such kind of novelties. Both systems were ‘new’ experiences on the stage of the world, an experience of drastic change in the balance between the public and politics, between the private and the collective, between the individual and the social, between the individual and the government, without predecessors. According to Arendt, this completely new experience was not that of dictators, but the development of bureaucracy, of unrecognizable responsibility and unknown technical opportunities with their effects on thousands and thousands of human beings. Through her writings she tried to understand these new experiences. But since these were novelties, according to her, she obviously could not grasp back previous experiences. She had to construct these understandings by herself. There was no ‘history of the public realm’, nor a narrative on the relationship between the public and the political, although both were needed to understand the contemporary condition. And that is what Arendt wanted to construct, to enlighten the issue, in order to explore what was evident in the past. She investigates these issues quite *punktlich* in order to unfold a perspective on the roots of the ideas – ignoring somehow contemporary ideas, since those, according to Arendt, have to be seen as polluted during the time passed by. That is the very reason to go back towards the sources of our Western civilization: not to be nostalgic, neither because of melancholic reasons, nor because of a conservative world-view, but simply to understand the origin of

what we experience as loss today.¹⁰⁰ Although we experience a loss of tradition, we are still nourished by it, she states. ‘The good things in history are usually of very short duration,’ Arendt writes, ‘but afterward have a decisive influence on what happens over long periods of time. Just consider how short the true classical period in Greece was, and that we are in effect still nourished by it today.’¹⁰¹

There is another challenge within the work of Arendt, which is connected to the above rendering of conservatism and idealization of the past. Arendt is not a historian, which craves for ‘real facts’. As she stresses herself, her method of approaching history is much more to be seen as a ‘forceful, purposely selective dealing with the past.’¹⁰² Sometimes critics have blamed her that her image of the past isn’t true, that she quotes sometimes carelessly. To some respect this criticism can be imagined, but it simultaneously is a misunderstanding of the characteristic of her work. She somehow even admits that the past cannot be described as factual. Her aim, she states, is not to investigate certain phenomena in an empirical matter, nor does she strive for a literally historical description of the development of this phenomenon during a certain amount of ages. Arendt actually opposed such aims. She rendered it impossible to analyse the past objectively. The position of the reader does influence the texts that are read. Facts always need interpretation. Historical text and facts are always read and rethought against the contemporary background of the reader, a conclusion that also is underlined by the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer in his study on hermeneutics. Despite the effort the reader does in order to understand the ‘facts’, we nevertheless always presuppose our own framework and the questions of our time. We read texts and facts always within our own horizon and scope.¹⁰³

Arendt clearly did not pretend to write the final answer on a clear question; moreover, it seems to be her goal firstly to crave for the proper questions that are raised by modernity and the on-going actualities of her time. In other words, she did not deliver a historical overview on certain developments, neither did she develop a logical construction of meaning of a certain issue. Arendt was not interested in a closed system of meaning, neither in a historiography of certain developments, nor in a recovery of certain ideas. This of course had to do with her view on modernity as a gap between past and present that has to be bridged without the help of tradition. Arendt actually was ambivalent about this gap: to get rid of tradition seems to free people. According to Arendt, it offers the possibility to look backwards with ‘new eyes, unburdened and unguided by any traditions, and thus to dispose of a tremendous wealth of raw experiences without being bound by any description as to how to deal with these treasures.’¹⁰⁴ Arendt nevertheless also understood tradition as the ‘medium of remembrance’. We even, Arendt states, are not only in danger of losing traditions, but also of losing the past itself.¹⁰⁵ Without the past and traditions, she continues, we have no frame against which we can judge new actualities. We will forget what has happened and what is important.¹⁰⁶ This of course was roused by the actual experience of the 20th century totalitarianism, which not only made her aware of this lost frame through which we can judge the contemporary developments, but also that it is impossible to recover ideas of the past, or to restore tradition in some form and to think that it is resistant to the ongoing processes of modernity. However, Arendt also argued that we are not liberated from tradition. Concepts of the past without their original context actually can turn in even worse tyrannical figures. ‘While we are throwing them out of the window as dogmas’, she once said, ‘we have got to know where they came from.’¹⁰⁷ That is why it is important to investigate the past

100. Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 15

101. Hannah Arendt (and Adelbert Reif), ‘Thoughts on Politics and Revolution, A Commentary’ in: Hannah Arendt, *Crisis of the Republic* (San Diego/ New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1969), 204

102. Barnouw, *Visible Spaces*, 11

103. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London/New York: Continuum Books, 2004)

104. Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 12

105. *Ibid.*, 12

106. Arendt, *Man in Dark Times*, 195-196, emphasis in original

107. Arendt, ‘On Arendt’, 306

108.
Dana R. Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger, The Fate of the Political* (Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press, 1996), 8

109.
Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 118

110.
Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations, Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007)

111.
Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 193

112.
Ibid., 199-200

113.
Ibid., 200

114.
Ibid., 202

115.
Ibid., 205-206 [emphasis in original]

116.
Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism*, 88

continuously, to remind society again and again what has been lost, in order to mirror the nowadays deficiencies.¹⁰⁸

In her work Arendt renders herself as simply ‘digging in history’, looking for interesting fragments in order to remember, rethink, reconsider, and re-appropriate what apparently is lost. Through this approach and her reflection upon it, it is clear that she did not strive for a coherent systematic philosophy. She even no longer ‘thought it either desirable or even possible.’¹⁰⁹ Therefore, Arendt’s work actually is strongly related to the ‘fragmentary historiography’, which was developed by the writer Walter Benjamin, which Arendt met during her stay in Paris, after she had to flee Berlin in 1933. Arendt actually has written a fascinating biographical introduction to *Illuminations*, a volume collecting in English translated texts of Benjamin regarding issues of literature, that she helped publishing in America in 1968.¹¹⁰ In this introduction – that also was published in her collection of essays on people she admired, *Men in Dark Times* – she, with obvious respect, explores his way of working. ‘Walter Benjamin’, she writes, ‘knew that the break in tradition and the loss of authority which occurred in his life-time, were irreparable, and he concluded that he had to discover new ways of dealing with the past.’¹¹¹ Benjamin found his way in a form of collectorship, states Arendt. On his wanderings through Paris, as a *flâneur*, he collected actualities: everything that was odd, quotes he found in magazines or books, everything that touched him. A collector however, Arendt writes, ‘destroys the context in which his object once was only part of a greater, living entity, and since only the uniquely genuine will do for him he must cleanse the chosen object of everything that is typical about it.’¹¹² This work of destruction, Arendt adds, is not needed anymore today: modernity had done that part already. It destroyed the context of contemporary life. Modernity ‘had already relieved [the human being] of this task of destruction and he only needed to bend down, as it were, to select his precious fragments from the pile of debris.’¹¹³ So, the main writings of Benjamin, according to Arendt, ‘consisted in tearing fragments out of their context and arranging them afresh in such a way that they illustrated one another and were able to prove their *raison d’être* in a free-floating-state, as it were.’¹¹⁴ Arendt calls this the method of a pearl diver:

‘who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the right and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depth and to carry them to the surface, this thinking delves into the depths of the past – but not in order to resuscitate it the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages. What guides this thinking is the conviction that although the living is subject to the ruin of the time, the process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization, that in the depth of the sea, into which sink and is dissolved what once was alive, some things ‘suffer a sea-change’ and survive in new crystallized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living – as “thought fragments”, a something ‘rich and strange’ and perhaps even as everlasting *Urphänomene*.’¹¹⁵

It is important to understand that through this method of fragmentary historiography the act of ‘remembering and re-thinking’ is seen as a *creative* act. Although this re-thinking should be seen as an intentional intercourse with fragments of the past, it nevertheless is not enslaved by it, in particular not by ideas of ‘historical necessity.’¹¹⁶ According to Arendt, the goal of this on-going dialogue with the

past through fragmentary historiography is to feed the imagination and power to judge, without being stuck in post-modern arbitrariness and relativity. This approach aims to feed new, un-thought-of and unfilled perspectives on contemporary issues.

I see this study on architecture and the public in the same perspective – it has largely the same characteristics. I am going back to original sources of the debate on public space, mainly the reflections of Arendt, which I sometimes mirror with Habermas' perspective. I particularly crave through the work of Arendt, in order to bring some fragments to the fore in order to fit them into the lively debate on architecture and urbanism, on the city and politics, on society and public space. The result – although I did attempt to make it a whole – does not offer a closed theory. It is fragmented in a way that it uses particular perspectives from Arendt in order to open up perspectives upon the built environment and the profession of the architect, as well as to pinpoint particular characteristics of architecture. It is fragmented in the sense that it dives for pearls, although in this study also secondary literature on Arendt is used, mainly from the field of philosophy and political theory, besides of course the many conversations with others about Arendt and her writings, particularly during and after my visit to the *Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities* at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson (NY) and attending several conferences, in order to grasp the broader perspectives and the fundamental assumptions behind Arendt's writings. However, this study also is understood as a creative act, by grasping thoughts and re-thinking them within a different context. It is an intentional reading, by bringing it to the discourse on public space (mainly focused on the American discourse) within architecture, for which I also went back to the original sources that mainly were published in the early 90s. During the studies, it however became clear that I needed to widen the scope also to other debates in architecture that are related to the political, social and public aspects of architecture. Arendt's writings had much more to offer – it urged me to take other aspects of architecture and bring it closer to the debate on public space.

I thus will develop a dialogue between Arendt's texts, (more contemporary) secondary texts on Arendt, and (contemporary) architectural theory and reflections upon practices, bringing in even site-analysis (particularly of Parc de La Villette in Paris). The dialogue is explicitly feeded and challenged with personal experience - experiences that I deepen, develop, mirror with Arendt's writings and architecture-theoretical reflections. In other words, I am the pearl-diver here. I dive for pearls in the work of Arendt, which I will bring to the surface of architectural theory, the city, the landscape, and architectural practices, in order to rethink, reconsider and re-appropriate those pearls. I will particularly review them within an architectural context from different perspectives and present them in all their facets. As stated above: this is an intentional reading, particularly positioned within the contemporary realm of architecture. To phrase it like this reveals that there is a double leap behind this project. The questions discussed in this study are foremost contemporary architectural and urban questions – although these questions are even as old as *The Human Condition*, if not older, and although I argue that they are relevant for the fields of philosophy and the political sciences as well. The first leap of course is to bring Arendt's texts to the light of today – texts that are sometimes more than half-a-century old. The second leap is that I bring it to a different field, where other questions, perspectives, emphasizes, are at stake. How I deal with the text is fuelled by my own experiences in the field, my experiences in teaching, in discussions with students

(and their responses through analysis and design proposals), particularly in The Netherlands, and other scholars from around the world. This position within the discussion cannot be eliminated from the writing of this study.

The ‘danger’ behind this double leap indeed is to ask questions and draw conclusions that have to do more with our own questions, opinions, and perspectives, than with the read and reinterpreted texts. The perspectives presented in this study therefore never can offer a ‘how-would-Arendt-think’ perspective, nor a finite frame of interpretation, although careful study helps to bring it to what can be called a common-understanding, which makes the proposal accessible and ready to discuss, challenge, critique, reject or accept. However, by taking Arendt’s ideas towards the field of architecture, it does not only enlighten architectural practices, it also shines a light backward on Arendt’s writings too.

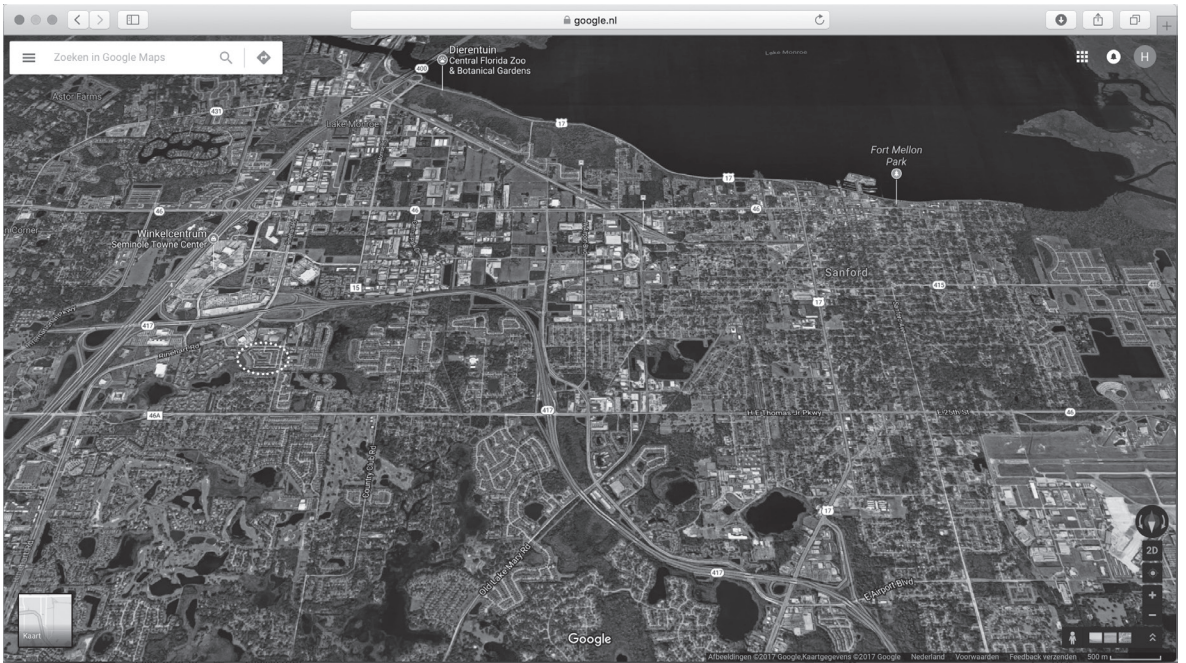
Certainly, this method will not lead to ‘one unavoidable answer’, let alone a single conclusion. Not only Arendt’s method and work provides it such framework, also the field of architecture does not fit with such an ambition. Architecture is meaningful as a subjective practice, as I argue in Chapter 7. The world differs from place to place, as it is shaped through time by human hands. This means that the care for the world as well as the intervention into the world, that I define as the heart of the practice in Chapter 6, requires again and again not a generic but an exceptional approach. Architecture, in its essential characteristic, deals with complexities and differences, contradictions and paradoxes, preservations and ambitions. In that sense, architectural thinking can open a severe perspective, stress awareness and emphasize consequences of spatial projects or particular attitudes. But it never will be able to give the one and only and unavoidable answer (nor solution). This study is about thinking, critical reflection, and raising questions in accordance with spatial projects. It does not offer in the end a particular and closed theory, offering a specific direction we – as a people, as architects, as commissioners – have to go, nor have to behave, nor – as architects – have to design. It also does not offer a particular toolbox, that can be applied to all sorts of assignments of public space. This study will conclude with a couple of statements, stressing the relationship between architecture, public space and the political realm. These statements together do not form a closed loop, but are open-ended reflections. They are invitations to the reader to think and reflect about ‘what we are doing’. In other words, there is a certain parallel with what Arendt states in her prologue to *The Human Condition*: ‘This book does not offer an answer,’ she writes. ‘Such answers are given every day, and they are matters of practical politics, subject of agreement of many, they can never lie in theoretical considerations or the opinion of one person, as though we dealt here with problem only one solution is possible.’¹¹⁷

Although there might be no single answer - there certainly is a single scope. It is the scope that also is behind Arendt's writings: the strive to be at home in the world.

2.

LANDSCAPE. THE HARD
EDGE OF POSTMODERNITY

One of the most central issues of today is the question of public space, not only in architecture and urbanism, but also in society. Questions of the character of public spaces, of control with cameras; to enter public space with a burka on the one hand or barely clothed on the other, to walk hand-in-hand, the possibility to gather and to demonstrate, are debated amongst the public, by politicians, in newspapers, in the café continuously. Public space after all – and this is simply reasoned – unites differences. If we regard the street a public space, it unites neighbours. If we regard the square or park a public space, it brings together people from the surrounding streets. This certainly is plain, technically speaking. Ideally – or at least, ideally from a perspective of Western democracy – these spaces offer more: a meeting of plurals, where the individual experience the communal, encounter differences, and are challenged by this otherness. Some spaces easily fulfil that perspective: they accommodate use by different users, and even accommodate the possibility of getting in touch with each other. Theoretically we therefore might state that public space corresponds with the human being as a social being: it accommodates, gathers, and assembles large groups of inhabitants, provides the possibility to meet, to set up social contacts, to get to know and to be known, which results in – and this can be urged as the most important ideal – the experience of community, to live life amongst others. This ideal, however, is threatened within the contemporary city, town and village. Public space vanishes with the increasing amount of enclaves in a suburbanizing city. The common neighbourhood is detached from the city – sometimes literally by walls and gates, but often simply by sheer distance. Within these enclaves, more or less public space is being controlled, made exclusive and particular, leading to the decreasing possibility of gathering in public space, the exclusion of particular groups from these spaces, the restriction of behaviour in space, and the lack of possibilities to appropriate a place. This is not simply a symbol of the actualities of contemporary society, but, in turn, impacts the same society through the experience of the public, the presence of inhabitants, and the expectations of citizens. This chapter investigates the current (sub)urbanized landscape, strongly focused on the United States of America. In order to grasp the situation, this chapter follows the journey of one particular landscape. Only by being immersed in a landscape, is one able to describe the (isolated) urban and suburban artefacts and to understand their immanent networks. Although one of the characteristics of the enclave is its detachment from the soil on which it sits, it is embedded in the world through the networks of the users. As is discussed, the increasing amount of enclaves strongly affects the landscape. The in-between becomes an unknown area, the enclaves the destination, and the car, this private cocoon, the connector between. This chapter starts with a particular case-study, urged by the shooting of a teenage boy within one of these enclaves: the tragic death of Trayvon Martin in a gated community in Sanford, FL in 2012. This shooting somehow shows how paranoid the current situation is, not only in Sanford and this particular gated community, but beyond life in gated communities in general. This paranoia also threatens public space, as we will see.



2.1 Google Maps image of the urban landscape of Sanford FL. Encircled *The Retreat at Twin Lake*



2.2: Entrance to *The Retreat at Twin Lake*, Sanford FL.

2.1 THE RETREAT AT TWIN LAKE (2012)

Oregon Avenue, Sanford, Florida, behind *Kohl's* Department Store. It is a beautiful day: the sky is nicely blue, dotted with small, soft white clouds. On the left, the huge parking lot of the department store, fenced to the street with hedges, grass, trees, a pedestrian path and a second band of grass. A bit further down the road is Bentley Elementary School, again surrounded by parking lots, and again, heading towards the street, hedges, trees, grass – only twice interrupted by the entrance and exit of the parking. The right side is also flanked by grass, a hedge, and trees. Here a pedestrian path as well: concrete slabs poured in the grass. Behind the hedge brick walls that every now and then steps backwards to give room for a couple of trees along the street. And behind this wall: houses. Many houses, all of the same design: estimated two stories high, plus a rooftop, about four or six houses together sharing one roof. The façades of the houses are painted yellow, the balconies white, their roofs are clad in dark brown tiles. Outsets and columns articulate each row, providing shadows and shelter from the sun. Despite these outsets, the appearance of each housing block is quite superficial. The architecture itself is not articulated at all. The rows, although almost symmetrical, seem to lack composition or conceptual pronunciation – they even lack an articulation of each individual dwelling. Possibly this is due to the design of the windows, which fail to support the facade's appearance at all. The windows, especially on the upper floors, are small, painted white, and without texture and detailing. Some are divided horizontally, others vertically, but no matter how, it is just a mere window – a hole in the facade. Most of these, by the way, are closed, the curtains and veils down, as if the houses are abandoned, empty. A closer look reveals the opposite: the closed windows are a sign of occupation – even the only sign of life you can see, besides the parked cars in the parking lot of *Kohl's*: this is Florida, the morning glory of a hot summer day, where sunlight needs to be excluded from the interior in order to prevent the home from heating.

The neighbourhood is a recent development. At the corner of the road, parcels can be seen not yet being built. The trees along the road and behind the wall are not that high, the brick-wall is still perfectly in shape; as are the yellow facades of the houses: perfectly yellow – no weathering has touched these surfaces, nor degeneration. It probably is this image of a 'perfect' neighbourhood that gives the area a certain tranquillity. The road itself is as empty and as calm as the neighbourhood. No car is around, or people walking down the street.

Somewhere in the middle of the plot, the wall rounds inwards, creating a symmetrical entrance to the neighbourhood. 'The Retreat at Twin Lakes' is written proudly on both corners of the entrance. It is two carriageways broad, one to be used for inward traffic, one for outward, divided by a small belt. A *stars-and-stripes-banner* marks both sides of the entrance, proudly. Although the porch is open – and in its layout appears like the entrance of a park or a vacation centre: a green steel porch between brickwork pillars – we are not allowed to take a look at the other side of the wall. Strangers are prohibited to enter the area: 'no trespassing', one sign tells us. Others: 'no loitering', 'no soliciting'. Although it cannot be seen, there is the suggestion of a camera controlling the area. Huge lamps suggest the illumination of the entrance during the night. Indeed, we are facing a gated community.

Through the porch we can see a glimpse of one building with a different layout, although constructed with the same architectural elements: yellow facade,

1.
<https://www.google.nl/maps/@28.796445,-81.3296379,1566m/data=!3m1!1e3>
[Accessed May 20th, 2012]

2.
Almost a year after my trip around *The Retreat*, I touched upon a review by Allard Jolles of the book of Doug Rickard, *A New American Picture* (New York: Aperture, 2012), in which this photographer explores urban America as well through Google Streetview. He has discovered another remarkable trait, Jolles writes. While searching for the real poor area's in the American cities, he finds out that he just has to Google for streets named after dr. Martin Luther King. Jolles writes: 'King, as long death as Rickard lives, seems to be changed in just 50 years from a symbol of hope into a 'marker' of the most worse parts of the city.' [transl. HT] <http://www.archined.nl/recensies/2013/januari/de-echte-wereld-komt-via-via-pas-echt-hard-binnen/> [accessed, January 21st, 2013]

white balconies, brown roof, outsets and columns. It is what the residents call 'the clubhouse', a central building host to some collective facilities – such as a pool in the backyard of the building – discovered via the satellite view of the building offered by *Google Maps*.

The whole description in the paragraphs above, actually, is based on a look at *Google Maps*. I just strolled around *The Retreat* by making use of the *Satellite* and *Streetview* options of the program.¹ Actually, this Streetview option is a remarkable tool. Through the maps and images, you can discover areas you will never experience in reality, and you get to know information you simply wouldn't discover whilst walking around in reality. Of course, you can't grasp an area in its full essence without also experiencing it in reality, since perception includes all physical evidence: a touch of the senses that consists of the feeling of the heat of Florida, the smell of the trees alongside the road, the touch of the asphalt and concrete underfoot, the sound of the cars of the highway around the corner, and probably the taste of coffee on your tongue. That is to grasp space: to see, smell, touch, taste, and hear. Nevertheless, through *Google Maps* we immediately know that in the elementary school at the left side of Oregon Avenue the *Reality Community Church* is organising their services on Sundays. And by clicking the link that pops up on the screen, we are taken to the website of this church and get to know their mission: 'Finally a Church that I can understand and people that I can relate to', reads a quote by a church-member, 'authentic, vibrant, relevant'. Turning back towards the street we see a woman buying a table at the *Kohl's*, as well as an appraisal of the method and teachers of the school, preparing kids for their next step in life. A bit further we see a strange stripe of asphalt in the greenery – what is it? A relic of a former road? A photo added to *Google Maps* shows an image of an arty billboard mentioning the name of the greenery: Derby Park. Above the sign a model of an old racing car: Is this a racing track? A growing curiousness drives me googling the name of the park – I learn I need to be more specific about the racing car; it is a 'soap box racing car', and the Derby Park is the home of the *CFSBD*, the *Central Florida Soap Box Derby*. Ah, that's why it's Derby Park: the park is a track for 'gravity' cars, youngsters between 7 and 18 years are challenged to build their own car, a car with which they race across the slope of the racing track. As *Google* teaches me, soap box racing turns out to be quite a popular hobby in the USA.

Back to Oregon Avenue. Around the corner an advertisement pops up: 'Goodman Air Conditioning, a brand built up since 1982'. Strange, I don't see an office or warehouse. The *Streetview* option is most remarkable in areas like this, around Oregon Avenue, almost only consisting of gated communities. As users of *Streetview* know, while adding the *Streetview* icon to the map, the roads that you can drop in to light up. Here, in this specific area, you immediately see that some neighbourhoods and streets are not covered by the *Google* database. The reason is simple: like every other stranger, the *Google-Streetview-car* is not allowed to drive through these areas. You thus immediately get an image of the percentage of the built environment that is not generally accessible, those parts of the city that are walled and are inaccessible to even the virtual stranger. It is an amazing experiment and eye-opening act (to foreigners like me) to just put the icon on the map elsewhere, from LA to Las Vegas, and from New Orleans to Chicago, and find out the number of gated communities and the percentage of enclosed areas in these different cities, districts and neighbourhoods.²

Via *Google Maps* and the *Streetview* icon, *The Retreat at Twin Lakes* appears to be part of a range of gated communities around a lake, which indeed is called Twin Lake. To get an idea of the environment, I strolled around this range of neighbourhoods around the lake – most of the time finding the same pattern on my screen: hedges, brick walls, an entrance, banners, facades, roofs, an empty road. The only difference is the density of housing in these communities: sometimes row-housing like in *The Retreat*, sometimes quite big villas and bungalows. The only neighbourhood around Twin Lake that is accessible virtually, as in reality, is located southeast, below *The Retreat*. This neighbourhood also consists of only one entrance road to a neighbourhood that is organized internally through a double road ring, the perfect layout for an area that is looking for control. In order to get an image of the neighbourhood I ‘strolled’ down the road and ‘walked’ into this neighbourhood. It consists of typical wooden bungalows along a curving road, one story high, amidst grassy yards, entrance paths, trees and mailboxes. Some residents have put pots and plants along the road, others have hung out the Stars and Stripes. It appears to the visitor as a quiet and peaceful environment. But here again: no cars on the street, no pedestrians on the footpaths. Suddenly, a novel experience: a rare car on the street. It disturbs the tranquillity of the images, and approaches quickly. Strangely enough, even if you sit, like me, behind your desk, you feel threatened by the car and feel the urge to step aside. Virtual reality.

Of this range of neighbourhoods around the lake *The Retreat* seems to be the densest. It is located at the north-eastern part of the lake, and consists of two strings of roads encircling a small pond. Housing blocks face the street, and only around the clubhouse and the pond can some open green space be found. The satellite map shows that these houses only have a very small backyard, and a slightly larger front yard, of which almost all are paved in order to park a car (or two). Between the houses are strips of grass, with some concrete cut-through paths for pedestrians. The map also shows that the area in the northeastern part of *The Retreat*, still empty in the *Streetview* frame, have now been built.

I, of course, had a special reason traveling virtually to this place: the shooting of the Black-teenager Trayvon Martin by a 28-year-old Neighbourhood Watch volunteer called Robert Zimmerman on February 26th 2012. The shooting got worldwide attention and has – from the perspective of this chapter, aiming to introduce the ‘question of public space’ – a remarkable background. Martin just had bought some drinks and *Skittles* in a *7-eleven* nearby, during the halftime of an NBA All Star game – it was also the night of the Oscars on television, actually – and was on his way back to his father’s girlfriend’s house in the southeastern part of *The Retreat*. Reconstructions show that he might have entered the community either via the main entrance or via an unfenced section that often was used by residents as a shortcut.³ Zimmerman, who lives in the southwestern part of the community, followed the 17-year-old boy in his car, informing the police that he had seen someone suspicious. Meanwhile Martin called a girlfriend, telling her he was being followed by a man. Although the police instructed Zimmerman to wait upon their arrival, he stepped out of his car when Martin took a cut-through between two rows of housing. It ended up in a fight, during which Zimmerman shot the unarmed Martin at 7.16 pm, just one minute before the Police arrived. This sad tragedy became a nation-wide scandal because Zimmerman was relieved only a few hours later, claiming self-defence. Eventually he was charged for the murder, but it took more than a month and ‘thousands of people gathering for vigils and demonstrations across the country.’⁴ The public, struck by this event,

3. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/04/02/us/the-events-leading-to-the-shooting-of-trayvon-martin.html?ref=us> [accessed May 20th, 2012]

4. Jenna Loyd, ‘The Fire Next Time: Rodney King, Trayvon Martin, and Law-and-order Urbanism’ in: *City, Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action*, 16 1-2 (Spring 2012). I quote the excerpt on the website of the magazine: <http://www.city-analysis.net/2012/04/28/the-fire-next-time-rodney-king-trayvon-martin-and-law-and-order-urbanism/#fn-3837-2> [accessed May 20th, 2012] I wrote this part of the chapter in 2012. Afterwards we can state that the Martin-case was the first in a range of shootings around the US, where black people were victims unnecessary (they were shot, without having arms themselves), particularly of police violence that was experienced as discriminating. The Martin case urged the establishment of the ‘black-lives-matter’ movement, which particularly in 2015-2016 organized lots of protests against racial police-violence. See <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/> [visited June 11, 2017]

5. see Ellen Dunham-Jones, 'Capital Transformations of the Post-Industrial Landscape', in: Marcel Musch and Eireen Scheurs (eds.), *Re: Generic City, OASE#54* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 2001), 23

6. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 244

7. Mike Davis, 'Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space' in: Michael Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park, The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 154

8. While writing this passage, King was found dead at the bottom of his swimming pool in his garden [June 17th, 2012]. An autobiography of his life was just published – a story that shows how much he still was in trouble, although having peace with what had happened to him in the spring of 1991. See the somehow shocking interview of Kurt Streater with King in the Los Angeles Times 'The past still grips Rodney King' of April 23rd, 2012: <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/apr/23/local/la-me-riot-rodney-king-20120423-1> [accessed June 19th, 2012]

9. see for instance the necrology on Rodney King of The New York Times of June 17th 2012: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/18/us/rodney-king-whose-beating-led-to-la-riots-dead-at-47.html?pagewanted=all> [accessed June 19th, 2012]

understood the murder and the delay in charging the killer not as an incident, but as part of a series of acts of racial violence, even connected to the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and the Rodney King case in Los Angeles twenty years ago.

I am not aiming to reconstruct the shooting here, or to discover the truth about what really happened the night of the killing. Some features at the background of the case, however, attract attention. Hearing of this shooting – almost one month after the accident it appeared in a short news message in the Dutch press – I was immediately intrigued by the fact that the shooting took place in the midst of a gated community. Gated communities are of course meant to keep the threat out there, outside the surrounding walls, in order to secure the living environment of the residents. This aim is quite clear in its layout, even in its typology, the space within its walls frames a good and pleasant life for its inhabitants. Most communities share a pattern inspired by neo-traditional perspectives of *New Urbanism*;⁵ a revival of the classical neighbourhood layout and its image of collectiveness. The different houses, with their traditional architecture, face collective spaces which are nicely landscaped: ponds, hills, and football courts. Although the layout of *The Retreat* is a bit more dense and generic than generally found in gated communities, it still aims for certain collectiveness and cosiness, as we have already seen. Despite this peaceful image of perfectly maintained laws, paths and the pond, the good life depends on the surrounding wall, the fences and porches, and even sometimes guards at the entrance. Whoever is out should be kept out: we 'now live in fortress cities,' Los Angeles based urban theorist Mike Davis writes in his 1990 *City of Quartz*, 'complete with encompassing walls, restricted entry points with guard posts, overlapping private and public police services, and even privatized roadways.'⁶ The composition and aim of this neighbourhood typology is thus clear: securing a peaceful and pleasant life for its inhabitants, a (collective) cosiness and a pretty life, the tools to achieve this aim: a wall, surveillance, guards. Everything in its layout supports this image: its patterns, designs, landscaping, architecture, infrastructure, detailing, overview, walls and courses, its porches and fences, it's clear distinction of 'us' and 'not us', between what belongs and what does not. However, it is the border, the fenced distinction between inside and outside, that is crucial to this image. The wall and the porch are a very visible intervention in space, not only literally securing access into the community, but also acting as a visual message, communicating what is inside and outside, who is welcome and who should not even try to enter. The wall thus shows a specific image of the good life and of collectiveness: a life without disturbances, troubles, within a space that is distinct from its surroundings. *Paradise lost, paradise regained.*

'The defense of luxury has given birth to an arsenal of security systems and an obsession with the policing of social boundaries through architecture', Davis writes two years later in an article called 'Fortress Los Angeles, The Militarization of Public Space'.⁷ The article is published a few months before the riots that spread all over Los Angeles after the violent arrest of Rodney King.⁸ This arrest, and the following riots, appeared to be a catalyst for urban planners and homeowners to go to even further lengths to protect their properties and neighbourhoods. Fear has redrawn the map of Los Angeles – the layout of the streets, the pattern of neighbourhoods. Not only were newly built environments designed as fortresses in a militarized landscape, existing neighbourhoods also redesigned their relationship to the urban fabric and hired private policing services. Although generally the riots were seen as a clash of races,⁹ Davis states that it should be seen much

more as a clash of classes. The riots concerned race, but were caused by class differences and economic despair. It was the rebellion of the poor. ‘The masses of Mid-City concentrated on the prosaic needs of life like cockroach spray and Pampers’, he writes.¹⁰ Fear of difference, specifically of the poor and lower classes, is the new driving force in city planning, he states. The response to this fear is an even more extreme and explicit strive for isolation, for excluding difference. ‘Is there any need to explain *why* fear eats the soul of Los Angeles? Only the middle-class dread of progressive taxation exceeds the current obsession with personal safety and social insulation.’¹¹ Neighbourhoods and private homes develop as secure islands in an ocean of dangerous possibilities: trespassers, burglaries, violence and threatening strangers that all need to be excluded. The city itself has become a no-go area. Almost all affluent neighbourhoods ‘contracts its own private policing’, writes Davis already in 1990. Residential security increasingly ‘depends upon the voracious consumption of private security services’,¹² whilst the police are expected to control urban spaces ‘out there’. Nevertheless, many of these public spaces are not only designed to exclude the poor and the weird, but are also privatised, fenced off from the street and only connected through secured connections to the city, and once again controlled by private security companies¹³ – which all act to ‘further erode the already fuzzy boundary between public and private policing.’¹⁴ The urban realm thus gets ‘divided into “fortified cells of affluence” and “places of terror” where police battle the criminalized poor.’¹⁵

But here, in Sanford, Florida, the gated community itself failed: the ‘poor’ have entered this community. Both the *New York Times* and *The Miami Herald* in their analysis of the accident at *The Retreat* define the financial crisis, that hit Florida extremely hard, as an underlying cause of the accident. ‘*The Retreat* was being built just as Florida’s housing bubble was about to burst,’ writes the *New York Times*. They spoke to David Johnson, an official property appraiser, who tells the newspaper that ‘they were selling in the vicinity of \$250,000,- ... [but] now ... “are selling for about half.”’ *The Retreat* faced a significant number of foreclosures, he adds, which ‘have prompted investors to buy the properties at a discount and then rent them out.’ *The Miami Herald* spoke to Frank Taaffe, a former ‘block captain’, who admits that these ‘foreclosures forced owners to rent out to “low-lives and gangsters.”’ This caused “a lot of activity in and out of there,” Mr. Johnson told *The New York Times*. “Maybe you don’t know the neighbor,” he adds, “because the one who was there before, maybe they got foreclosed on.” Strangers had started showing up, the gated community no longer felt safe. ‘Taaffe sounded chagrined when he noted that the complex is now majority-minority,’ writes *The Miami Herald*. ‘Census figures show *The Retreat at Twin Lakes* is 49 percent white, non-Hispanic, 23 percent Hispanic, 20 percent African-American and 5 percent Asian.’ Mr. Taaffe also spoke to *The New York Times*, clarifying that not just any stranger showed up, but “there were Trayvon-like dudes with their pants down.”¹⁶

It is a downward spiral. Threat entered *The Retreat* due to the effects of the financial crisis on the housing market. Instead of isolation behind the walls, the neighbourhood became mingled and the familiarity with neighbours decreased. On top of that, residents were experiencing the ‘result’ of the presence of strangers in the area – every now and then bikes, grills and other equipment was going missing. *The Retreat* is a quite small neighbourhood, only 260 units big, and so couldn’t afford a private company to guard the place. Instead, the home-owners-association started a ‘Neighbourhood Watch’ in August 2011, of which

10. Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear, Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 374

11. *Ibid.*, 363

12. Davis, *City of Quartz*, 244

13. Davis, *Ecology of Fear*, 366

14. *Ibid.*, 383

15. Davis, ‘Fortress Los Angeles’, 154

16. <http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/03/17/v-fullstory/2700249/trayvon-martin-shooter-a-habitual.html> and <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/02/us/trayvon-martin-shooting-prompts-a-review-of-ideals.html?pagewanted=all> [both accessed May 20th, 2012]

17.
Davis, *Ecology of Fear*, 388

18.
www.usaonwatch.org [accessed May 24th, 2012]

19.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/us/trayvon-martin-death-spotlights-neighborhood-watch-groups.html?pagewanted=all> [accessed May 24th, 2012]

20.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/us/trayvon-martin-death-spotlights-neighborhood-watch-groups.html?pagewanted=all> [accessed May 24th, 2012]

21.
<http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/03/17/v-fullstory/2700249/trayvon-martin-shooter-a-habitual.html> [accessed May 24th, 2012]

Zimmerman was a coordinating volunteer. Such initiatives are fairly common in the United States, there is even an official program promoted by the National Sheriff's Association (NSA), which started in the aftermath of the 1965-1971 cycle of unrest in South Central and East Los Angeles. These programs were meant to 'increase local solidarity and self-confidence in the face of crime'.¹⁷ A brief look on the website of the NSA immediately shows what is meant: a pretty but private life in a clean, healthy and secure environment. We see images of the happy faces of families standing before their front door or playing in the grass of their neighbourhood, the smiles of agents keeping an eye on the surroundings, cycling around or watching from their car. The main page also shows images of a notebook, of a fingerprint and of a stamp – the message is: be on the lookout, watch, register, prevent, protect, and be secure.¹⁸ In the States about 25,000 Neighbourhood Watch groups are at this moment officially active, and many more unofficially, like this particular one in Sanford.¹⁹ Although the Neighbourhood Watch at *The Retreat* was not part of the official program that is sponsored by the NSA, nor serviced by a private company, a volunteer coordinator of the local police nevertheless explained the do's and the don'ts of the Neighbourhood Watch. Of course, wearing a gun is not part of the program, and neither is driving around. "Watch groups are not even supposed to make the rounds [in Sanford]. That is the job of another kind of volunteer organization, Citizens on Patrol, whose members are selected and trained by the police and who drive the streets in a specially marked vehicle", the volunteer coordinator of the local police told *The New York Times*.²⁰ But Zimmerman did both. Neighbours afterwards told the journalists who covered the story that Zimmerman was taking his job very seriously, not only driving around and around in the neighbourhood, but also ringing the bell at every house in order to ask people to close their windows or simply to be aware. Some of them mention that he asked them to look specifically for black youngsters who appeared to be outsiders. He himself had called the police 46 times between 2004 and 2012, reporting open windows, break-ins and other incidents, in nine of which he referred to seeing someone suspicious. According to a neighbour, he was actually responsible for preventing many crimes. Zimmerman, however, was not the only one reporting suspicious persons. The official police reports published after the shooting mention 50 calls in the past year reporting suspicious persons at *The Retreat at Twin Lakes*. *The Retreat* was not as safe as you would expect for a Gated Community: the authorities were called 402 times between January 2011 and the shooting in February 2012. Among the reports there were eight burglaries, nine thefts and one other shooting. In other words, this secured community was not experienced as secure at all anymore. It is thus not particularly strange that some reports suggest vigilantism as the true cause of the shooting. When Zimmerman called the police in order to report his suspicions, he might have said, according to one newspaper article: "Hey, we've had some break-ins in my neighbourhood, and there's a real suspicious guy at Retreat View Circle. This guy looks like he's up to no good. ... These a--holes always get away"²¹



2.3 Seminole Towne Center, Sanford FL., prior to redevelopment in 2015

2.2 THE QUEST OF PUBLIC SPACE

2.2.1 Room for Appealing Experiences

As stated by Mike Davis in his *Ecology of Fear*, fear has rewritten the map of the city.²² *The Retreat*, of course, is only one of the types of suburban artefacts that develop out of citizens' increasing anxiety, one part of a rewritten (sub)urban landscape. Davis offers insight in this rewritten landscape through a description of recent Los Angeles, the city in which he lives. He first shows the material appearance of this landscape, followed by a rendering of the impact of this material landscape on daily urban life. Through an intriguing diagram, drawn on the basis of the so-called Burgess diagram, Davis shows the spatial transformation of Los Angeles. The Burgess diagram was a model developed by the Chicago sociologist Ernest W. Burgess in the 1920s in order to provide a general reading of cities. The diagram distinguishes five zones: from the inner core (the central business district, called by Burgess after Chicago 'The Loop'), via an area of manufacturing, the single family dwellings of the residential area inhabited by the industrial and immigrant class, towards the Bungalow Section in the Commuter Zone. The Burgess diagram, in other words, is a rough interpretation of the social construction and composition of the city based on distance to the core, life(style) of inhabitants, and typology of buildings. Davis in his diagram also links the different zones and their distance to the core with an interpretation of inhabitants, not accompanied by the distinct typologies of buildings in the different zones, but by the possibilities, instruments and actions to *secure* these zones from criminal threats. The diagram thus takes safety and security as a method of reading the city and its construction. In his model, Davis distinguishes a core which is left over for the homeless. This core is surrounded by the Business District, the Inner City with its 'Drug Free Zones' and 'Prostitution Abatement Zone', surrounded in turn by Blue Collar Suburbs with 'Neighbourhood Watches' and 'Gang-Free-Parks', then the Gated Affluent suburbs with their 'Child Molestation Exclusion Zone' and 'Edge Cities', before a Gulag Rim consisting of a number of Prisons.²³ Through his diagram, Davis shows that the excessive contemporary focus on safety impacts the appearance, organization, and construction of the city extensively. This is not neutral, Davis states. He describes, for instance, the 'new' business district in the core of Los Angeles, Bunker Hill, as a radical privatization of public space: the open space is controlled, not only through camera and physical surveillance by the police or private security companies, but also through the very material differentiation of space and surface. The open space is elevated in this area, and only rarely connected to the existing surrounding city fabric. These spaces, therefore, are only accessible via stairs or ramps, located at particular places, which obviously increases the possibility of controlling the area: it becomes easy to control who is able to enter and who should be kept out. 'Traditional pedestrian connections between Bunker Hill and the old core were removed,' Davis writes, 'and foot traffic was elevated above the street on "pedways" ... access to which was controlled by the security systems of individual skyscrapers.'²⁴ In this example the physical design and layout of open space, its sectional relationship, participates strongly in a regime of surveillance. The particular layout and the physical construction of public space literally plays a major role in creating a 'safe' and 'secure' environment, claims Davis: through its design this space is easily controllable and can easily be turned into an exclusive outdoor space meant for the office workers and tourist visitors, eating their lunch outside or looking around for some inner-city-fun. Through design interventions in physical space these users are prevented

22. Davis, *Ecology of Fear*, 363

23. Ibid., Chapter 7 – the two diagrams, Burgess' Chicago School diagram and Davis' Los Angeles map are presented at pp.364-365. See for Burgess diagram also Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion*, 7. Probably as the thesis of Ehrenhalt is, Burgess diagram as well as Davis' diagram does need revision, since nowadays 'democratic inversion' do change both neighbourhoods in the innercity as well as in the outer area's of cities.

24. Ibid., 366

from 'criminal threats' and from the strangers associated with such threats: the homeless, junkies, and tramps.²⁵ Bunker Hill's 'public' space thus doesn't accommodate the public generally, it is only accessible for specific publics with a specific behaviour: consumption, entertainment, and recreation. The search for safety is at the expense of the very 'publicness' of public space: accessibility is restricted, and behaviour is prescribed or even scripted, decreasing the possibility of simultaneous use of space by distinct social groups of inhabitants. Since it is happening in the very centre of the city, it urges the question of public space. Public space in vernacular language, after all, evokes images of the heavily used urbanscapes of streets, squares, and parks, images of the Ramblas in Barcelona, Piazza del Campo in Siena, and Hyde Park in London, spaces that host a variety of visitors. The urban centre historically is understood as the heart of the city, the core of an area.²⁶ It is busily used, because of the concentration of (public) services, business, shops, and so on, on a daily basis by a variety of social groups of citizens, ranging from the local inhabitants to single day visitors, from the proverbial laborer to the landlord, all making use of the urban public fabric. But here, in Los Angeles, and in many other cities in the US and around the world, the core is transformed into an area for the white-collar-public with a specific program: office workers gathering during office hours, as well as tourists spending their savings in the theatre, the museum, the pub, and the casino. Even beyond specific uses, Bunker Hill in Los Angeles is a telling example of what happened to the centre of Detroit. Images showing emptied buildings, theatres that have been turned into parking lots (the grandeur of the theatre, the stage, the stairs, and the balconies providing an unexpected backdrop to a few parked cars), stations into wastelands and so on, are widely known today. The centre now is the territory of addicts and the homeless, and is avoided by the inhabitants of the city. But as Davis shows, it is a wider phenomenon, not limited to the urban centres. Also in the zones surrounding this very centre, in the 'White Colar Zone' as well as the 'Blue Colar Zone', marginal groups are removed from the streets, the neighbourhoods and the parks. Compared to the Business District, spatial interventions are more on the 'soft'-side: behaviour in public space is organized through laws and restrictions. Extra penalties are added to crimes committed, for instance, within a radius around public institutions, like public schools, where prostitutes and tramps are literally removed. The 'police apparatus' becomes visible in signs that announce the prohibitions and warnings. In the 'Gated Affluent' ring, this outer zone of the city, anxiety again manifests itself in the concrete, physical, and tangible. This is the area of *The Retreat*: walls, porches, cul-de-sac-lay-outs of neighbourhoods, guard surveillance on the roads, checkpoints at the entrances, signs, camera surveillance, and other interventions in space create a 'safe' and exclusive area in threatening surrounding.

The *Martin Case* immediately shows what a paranoid environment this anxious city is, with suspicious wanderers everywhere, even in the safe-zones. Through his diagram, Davis shows the impact of this paranoia on the city, specifically on its public structures and private places. Privative trends are applied on public space: expanding and fencing the private, protecting the immediate surroundings, controlling the public. Fear erects both virtual and real walls between the here (and now) of the 'lucky few' and the there of the poor, the weird, those at the margins of society. The search for safety, in other words, increases the distinction between the public (that which is freely accessible) and the private or collective (that which is controlled, only accessible by a few, a specific group, upon invitation or else). The search for safety privatizes public space: it introduces privative

25.

This not only is a particular American, let alone Los Angeles' example, but fits in a range of layouts of public space around the world, where height differences are used to control safety in space, both criminal safety and the securing from speed. The most apparent example in The Netherlands of course is the particular layout of Amsterdam Zuidoost, The Bijlmermeer. The radical plan for the public space consists of a landscaped ground level for pedestrians and bikers, and a lifted network of streets, parking lots and the entrances to the high-rise apartment buildings in a particular honeycomb slab type. The aim was freeing the landscape from the speed of car traffic in order to safeguard the low-speed pedestrians and bikers, the loitering, reposing inhabitants in the park, the play of children in public space. This layout immediately turned to be very problematic and unsafe in respect to criminal treats.

26.

Using the metaphor of the heart as an image of the city center, which is quite commonly done, even in vernacular language, of course is telling. The changes that become visible in the heart therefore means that it has greater impact than solely the center itself. The heart impacts the whole organism. See the dissertation of my colleague Leonardo Zuccaro Marchi, *The Heart of the City, Continuity and Complexity of an Urban Design Concept* (Delft: Delft University of Technology, 2013)

27.
cf Christine Boyer, *Cyber Cities, Visual Perception in the Age of Electronic Communication* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 126, 153, 229

28.
Jan Gehl, *Life Between Buildings, Using Public Space* (Copenhagen: The Danish Architectural Press, 2006), 15, 21

29.
Ibid., 29

30.
Ibid., 11

31.
Ibid., 13

32.
Ibid., 13

33.
Ibid., 13

traits within public space, transforming public spaces into collective spaces, even sometimes fortresses. This affects other parts of the city, which become left-over spaces – often understood in this safety-preoccupied times as ‘no go areas’.²⁷

The concern Davis brings to the fore, alongside a range of other architectural scholars and urban theorists, is a narrative that specifically originates in the Western society (or even more specifically, Northern American society) with its particular cultural and political history. It challenges the social and political context of public space, which is regularly understood as ‘social space’. In his book *Life Between Buildings*, that since its publication in 1971 has gained a status as one of the major publications on public space, the Danish architect Jan Gehl immediately connects these spaces with the human ‘need for contact’ and the ‘need for stimulation’.²⁸ ‘Life between buildings,’ he even writes, ‘seems in nearly all situations to rank as more essential and more relevant than the spaces and buildings themselves.’²⁹ Gehl’s book, like Davis’, stemmed from a growing concern with ‘recent’ developments, described by Gehl as responsible for a transformation ‘from living to lifeless cities and residential areas’. This is a trend he associates with the Modern approach to the city, developments in technology and the increasing wealth of the Western world – processes of industrialization, segregation of city-functions, and the emergence of the car.³⁰ Cities increasingly consist of area’s characterized by poor qualities, he states, where only ‘strictly necessary activities’ can occur. What is lost in these spaces are the modest types of social activities, the passive contact on the street, ‘seeing and hearing a great number of unknown people.’³¹ Even these activities can be very appealing, Gehl then adds, revealing his idea what public space should offer. ‘To see and hear each other, to meet, is in itself a form of contact, a social activity. The actual meeting, merely being present, is further more the seed for other, more comprehensive forms of social activity.’³² His book looks to define places of good quality, in order to propose design-possibilities and recommendations that give room to these comprehensive activities through the possibilities of ‘a broad spectrum of human activities,’ ranging from the necessary to optional activities that in turn leads to the ‘resultant’ activities –the social activities of greeting, conversation and discussions.³³ Public space, in other words, corresponds with the human being as a social being: it accommodates, gathers, and assembles large groups of inhabitants, provides possibilities to meet, to set up social contacts, to get to know and to be known, which results in – and this can be urged as the most important ideal – the experience of community, to live life amongst others. Certainly, it is this social aspect that Davis’ renders as highly threatened through the processes of fear. The contemporary urban layout limits this ‘life amongst others’: in private and collective spaces (ranging from home to work, from leisure to education, as well as all forms of transportation in-between) consists of others that are similar, rather than different. This concern of both Davis and Gehl, despite their very distinctive approaches to the idea of public space, reveals how the social dimension of (urban) life and concrete (urban) space are intertwined. Gehl’s emphasis on and Davis’ concern with the actual design of public spaces and the layout of cities shows that public space is not simply the background of public life but the backbone: it creates – literally – room for social activities that fundamentally establish society. The transformation of public space, the decreasing possibility to gather in public space, the exclusion of particular groups from these spaces, the restriction of behaviour in space, and the lack of possibilities to appropriate place are not just symbol of contemporary society, but, in turn, impact the same society through the experience of the public, the presence of others, and the expectations of citizens.

Through Davis and Gehl, the narrative is clear. Public space, understood as social space, is vulnerable: the Modern approach does not offer attractive public spaces, and therefore does not offer lively spaces, whereas the (new) emphasis on security fails to offer inclusive spaces, rejecting the diversity that is part and parcel of public life. This narrative can be discussed in abstract theories, shining light upon the processes behind such ‘threads’, but only gain sharpness and tangibility through an understanding of the actual spatial situation of daily life. This also works the other way: we cannot discuss public space as mere spaces, without also addressing the intertwined political questions of the so-called ‘public sphere’ and ‘public realm’. Whilst I will discuss the meaning of these terms later in this chapter, for now it is important to know that from here on these terms are used to infer Gehl’s description of public space as ‘social space’. This is due to the fact that in political theory, as well as in most architectural reflections on public space, the concepts of ‘public sphere’, ‘public domain’ and ‘public realm’ are used, rather than that of ‘social space’.

34.
Karl Schlögel, *Im Raume Lesen Wir Die Zeit, Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2001)

In the following paragraphs, I will continue the reading of the American landscape and city, a journey that began with the investigation of the *Retreat at Twin Lakes* gated community in Sanford, FL. The aim of this journey is to understand the contemporary status of public space in the United States, and to explore urban and architectural discourse that reflects upon these concrete spaces. This exploration is both background, backbone and preparation for reflection on the field of architecture, the architectural project, and how this specific field of knowledge, practice and craftsmanship is related to political realm, a perspective that I will propel in the preceding chapters through a dialogue with the work and ideas of the German-American philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906-1975).

The choice to explore the *particular* landscape of Sanford FL is taken by chance: it is only because of the *Martin Case* that we landed in these surroundings. In other words, it is not an argued choice: it was not chosen because of its outstanding facts, any sort of sophisticated architecture or urban design or for the novelties that have been erected in these surroundings, nor for the specific characteristics of inhabitants or a certain paradigmatic or symbolic image of this specific urban area. The random nature of this choice is important. Although an image will unfold of this particular place, it is also clear that it narrates a story that can equally be recognized elsewhere.

But before immersing ourselves in this landscape, at least four major aspects must be stressed: (1) the specificities of a journey through landscape as a form of exploration, (2) today’s cultural context as a frame beyond the discourse, leading to (3) a preliminary investigation of the discourse on the public, and finally (4) the Western, specifically Northern American locus of this discourse.

2.2.2 Landscape as a Figure of Archaeology

This choice to investigate a *landscape* – our first aspect to address – is essential. It embraces the idea that *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit*, as the title of a book by the German historian Karl Schlögel reads.³⁴ Through spaces that are inhabited, created, and constructed, something is revealed of the convictions and cultural value systems of today (or yesterday). As has already become clear, contemporary convictions and value systems challenge the distinction between public and private, as public space is replaced with collective space, exemplified in urban artefacts such as gated communities and shopping malls. In the investigation that follows, such artefacts are not mere illustrations of a certain concern, but

35.

See the distinction Hilde Heynen urges in her review article 'Space as Receptor, Instrument or Stage'. This view on landscape as described here particularly stresses the 'space as receptor' aspect. It after all wants to understand the spaces themselves, as well as the mechanisms behind. Hilde Heynen, 'Space as Receptor, Instrument or Stage: Notes on the Interaction Between Spatial and Social Constrellations, in: *International Planning Studies*, vol. 18, no 3-4 (2013), 343

36.

Jan Kolen and Ton Lemaire, 'Landschap en archeologie', in: Jan Kolen and Ton Lemaire (eds.), *Landschap in meervoud, Perspectieven op het Nederlandse landschap in de 20ste/21ste eeuw* (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Jan van Arkel, 1999), 361; Kolen and Lemaire emphasize in their article that archeology as a profession is essentially intertwined with the processes of modernisation. First it was the interventions in nature and landscapes that revealed the cultural heritage hidden in the ground. These findings roused the eagerness to understand the past and also the structure and reason of the contemporary appearance of the landscape. Secondly the the dynamics of modern society, the increasing ability to intervene in the landscape and adapt the surroundings for contemporary use roused the need for archeological approach with its inherent ability and eagerness to describe, explain, and preserve the landscape. But finally, it also was modernity that provided the archeologists ability to do their job, to construct the images of the pre-modern society by the increase of scientific knowledge and the development of concepts, insights, and methods, however concerned about the past nevertheless essentially 'modern'. (363-364)

37.

Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape, Places, Paths and Monuments* (Oxford/Providence: Berg, 1994), 11

38.

I quote here both Wirth and Mumford via Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped, Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 37; see also Ed Taverne, Sebastian Dembski, Len De Klerk, and Bart Ramakers, 'Greep op de stad, Nieuwe wendingen in het stadsonderzoek', in: Ed Taverne, Len de Klerk, Bart Ramakers, and Sebastian Dembski (eds.), *Nederland Stedenland, Continuïteit en vernieuwing* (Rotterdam: nai010 Uitgevers, 2012), 10

39.

Rem Koolhaas, 'Generic City', in: Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1998), 1264

are founding element of the analysis. We will touch upon these examples not so much as isolated artefacts, but through the investigation of the *landscape* they are part of. In other words, the everyday landscape is understood as an underlying figure that connects the different artefacts. This is an important imperative: it positions these artefacts as the daily environments of inhabitants and users. The networks of these inhabitants and users, their 'web of relationships', somehow connects these artefacts. This landscape in turn is understood as the materialization of this 'web of relationships', all aspects of daily life coming together into a manifold, layered and multivalent structure. The public-private distinction that is challenged today is first and foremost constructed through the patterns of this everyday life.

To take a 'journey' as the method, places us into the position of the 'archaeologist' who ploughs the surface to look for traces of past inhabitants and use. It takes 'space' as a receptor of social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances.³⁵ An important part of the work of the archaeologist is not only describing the objects found but also describing the site of these findings and their exact location, the (historical) landscape as a spatial frame for events and activities.³⁶ This also counts for this exploration; in the trail through the urban landscape, we literally visit the local *morphology* of the landscape. *Morphe* in Greek actually does not only mean the outer appearance, the forms in which the landscape appear to us, not only it's scheme and structure, but also means its essence – and this essence is not just form and location, but also the contextual relationships of actual surroundings and infrastructure, as well as the political, economic, historical, and cultural context. In other words, the artefacts that we touch upon are not just urban facts, not just spatial edifices, mere forms of contemporary urbanity, but are essentially produced within a specific context. The essential characteristic of a landscape, in other words, is that it is a socio-spatial figure, produced by everyday life and extraordinary interventions. These traces reveal patterns of public and private, both socially and spatially, as well as architecturally. Space and trace, in other words, belong together: through the traces of life, the use and meaning of public and private space, of urban and architectural artefacts come to the fore. Spaces are not independent and abstract, and neither is architecture. It is a social production: produced in a specific context in relation to human agency, action and interventions. Space is not a meaningful term in itself, as archaeologist Christopher Tilley claims in his *A Phenomenology of Landscape*: 'the meaning of space always involves a subjective dimension and cannot be understood apart from the symbolically constructed lifeworlds of social actors.'³⁷

This social-spatial dimension is enclosed in the term 'landscape' itself. Until this point, I have used the terms 'landscape' and 'urban landscape' quite intuitively to circumscribe the very character of these (sub)urban surroundings of *The Retreat*. These are the 'suburban neighbourhoods' of the city of Sanford, which in turn is part of the Greater Orlando Metropolitan Area. Although intuitively I did not chose to call the area 'urban environment' or 'city', 'metropolis' or 'metropolitan area', the term 'landscape' fits the aim quite well. The contemporary urban area cannot be judged on the same terms as the city in a classical sense of the word, at least not in the sense proposed by Louis Wirth, for whom the city was 'a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals', nor by Lewis Mumford, who described the city as a 'point of maximum concentration for the power and culture of a community'.³⁸ 'It's over', the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas wrote as the final sentence of his extensively discussed essay 'Generic City': 'It's over. That is the story of the city. The city is no longer.'³⁹ The story Koolhaas urges in these two words is that of the

decline of the city in the European tradition, the loss of unity in the city-fabric, the power of the centre, the social construct of the inhabitants, and the empowerment of history and identity. It is 'a fuzzy empire of blur', Koolhaas later added to his observation 'it fuses public and private, straight and bent, bloated and starved, high and low to offer a seamless patchwork of the permanently disjointed'.⁴⁰ Koolhaas thus recognizes a new urban environment appearing, another form of 'distribution of inhabitants', a postmodern urban area without a centre, a continuous sprawl of suburbia and subcentres, a superposition of fragments, infrastructure, landscape, detached from the specific local geography and morphology, detached even from the local circumstances. This is also emphasized by Thomas Sieverts about fifteen years later, with his concept of the *Zwischenstadt*: neither landscape nor city.⁴¹ Sieverts doesn't coin the word in order to warn against the loss of the classical European compact city as an organizing figure of life, but to recognize the design challenges that are to be found within this new urban condition whilst avoiding falling into the trap of false idealism.⁴² The Italian architect Vittorio Gregotti, about fifteen years earlier, stressed this new urban condition as *territoire*, a landscape: an ensemble of human interventions.⁴³ An understanding of the new urban condition as a landscape was also brought to the fore during the nineties in debates on the situation in Northern America, specifically in discussion on the future of urbanism and urban design within this condition. Landscape, as it is emphasized in *Landscape Urbanism*, a term coined by the Harvard Professor of Landscape Architecture Charles Waldheim, is the figure that delivers new *common ground* to cities falling apart.⁴⁴

Besides these design-objectives and perspectives,⁴⁵ through which slightly also the idea of 'space as an instrument' enters the debate,⁴⁶ there are other reasons why I prefer to use the term 'urban landscape'. I interpret this urbanized area, somewhere in-between the classical European *compact* city and the *open* or *rural* landscape, as a landscape in itself. The traditional vernacular use of the term 'landscape' is bound to a certain opposition to the city, as in Sieverts's use of the term. Landscape is understood as oppositional and resistant to the cultural primacy and transforming power of the city, even as oppositional to culture, to modernity, and to technology.⁴⁷ Landscape emphasizes the 'natural' aspects of these areas, the countryside and forests. Yet, I would argue that this is a too narrow understanding of the term.⁴⁸ Landscape has both a more specific and a broader meaning, which can be distinguished by three perspectives.

Firstly, narrowly interpreted in its vernacular use, the term, besides the aforementioned oppositional aspects to the city, also refers to the physical appearance of a part of the globe. It is not just nature, but also ordered nature. In that sense, despite the opposition of 'nature' and 'culture', landscape renders both – culture actually above nature. It emphasizes 'earth' as well as 'part of the earth', the first the natural aspect, the latter emphasising cultural traits. To distinguish 'parts' is an act of human and cultural intellect. The earth itself thus consists of landscapes, which can be distinguished along more or less clear lines of interpretation and reflection: unity and assembly of patterns, structures, fabrics, forms, edifices, functions, organization, interventions, elements, and edges. Thus, it is clear that a city can also be a landscape, as can a suburban environment. Landscape can refer to the countryside, a forest or river delta, but also a railroadtrack or the technological landscapes of industrial bioindustries. The term, in other words, emphasises the characteristics of a certain surface and its boundaries. Culture and nature thus merge in the term landscape, it is much more an aspect of civilization than of 'natural circumstances'.⁴⁹ Moreover, since in the term landscape

40. Rem Koolhaas, 'Junkspace', in: A. Krista Sykes (ed.), *Constructing a New Agenda, Architectural Theory 1993-2009* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 137

41. Thomas Sieverts, *Cities Without Cities, An Interpretation of the Zwischenstadt* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3

42. *Ibid.*, XII

43. Vittorio Gregotti, 'The Form of the Territory', Tom Avermaete, Klasko Havik, Nancy Meijsmans, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *On Territories, OASE#80* (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2009), 11

44. Charles Waldheim, 'Landscape as Urbanism', in: Charles Waldheim (ed.), *The Landscape Urbanism Reader* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), 37

45. Together with my former Delft colleague Johan van der Zwart, I developed a comparable perspective in Hans Teerds and Johan van der Zwart, *Levend landschap. Manifest voor stad en land* (Amsterdam: SUN Publishers, 2012). In this book, that we called a 'manifest', we argued that the specific local imaginary, construction and structures are not only the distinctive characteristics that can deliver distinguished appearances in environments that continuously transform, but also that the historical roots and specifically the public appreciation, indeed are possibilities of new common grounds in contemporary society. This perspective values the existing structures and appearances, but also suggests that just preserving the existing landscape is not sufficient in order to keep both the city and the countryside lively and vital.

46. Heynen, 'Space as Receptor, Instrument or Stage', 343

47. cf James Corner in his introduction to James Corner (ed.), *Recovering Landscape, Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 7; the origin of the word 'country' in English actually stems from 'contrast'; see also James Corner, 'Terra Fluxus', in: Charles Waldheim (ed.), *The Landscape Urbanism Reader* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), 24

48. I rather see this misunderstanding as quite dangerous for these area's that in vernacular language are depicted as 'landscape', the very historical or 'natural' landscapes. In landscape

both aspects of culture and nature coincide, and landscapes only will 'survive' if the balance of both is considered. See also Teerds, Van der Zwart, *Levend Landschap*

49.

As we will see in chapter 4, Hannah Arendt distinguishes between earth and world, the earth is the natural, the globe, whereas the world consists of the human interventions in that natural atmosphere, in order to make human life and community life possible. Landscape thus is world rather than earth.

50.

The 'discovery' of 'landscape' therefore is generally ascribed to the monk Petrarch, who climbed the Mont Ventoux in Southern France at the end of the thirteenth century, an event that also is understood as the end of the Middle Ages and the emerge of individuality. What was new about his climbing this barren mountain – today dreaded by competitive cyclists – is that he only did because of the view. He had no religious reasons, although he was quite diffident about this act and constantly pored over religious texts. He recorded his journey in a diary: a new look at the human environment, which in time became an entity on its own. Ton Lemaire, *Filosofie van het landschap* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Ambo, 2007), 17

51.

John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1984), 3

52.

Lemaire, *Filosofie van het landschap*, 71

53.

Ton Lemaire, *Met open zinnen, Natuur, landschap, aarde* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Ambo, 2002), 39; This also becomes quite clear in recent daily use of the word for abstract fields and spheres in society, as for instance in the phrase of the 'financial landscape', that is heard often recently during the financial crisis, or the 'political landscape' and the 'cultural landscape'. Within these phrases of course landscape is a symbolic term, a social image, that suggests recognizable patterns, rhythms, edges, characteristics that through overview and distance can be understood as a 'unity' with specific (infra)structures, relationships, marks. This 'social image' indeed places the observer outside the universe of the studied material, and renders the landscape symbolically.

54.

Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage books, 1996), 10

55.

An appealing overview of the history of landscape, divided in five distinct phases of this emancipation, as it is

the physical environment joins actual human observation, it is an 'active' concept: it depends upon both the traveller and the observer. It places the emphasis on human activity and on human capabilities: the definition of differences and the human capacity to differentiate. This aspect of 'activity' can be found in the origin of the term: stemming from the landscape genre in painting developed during the Italian Renaissance and by the Dutch painters during the 17th century,⁵⁰ the word initially did not mean the view, but the *picture*, grasped by the eye at once.⁵¹ The painters, however, mapped the landscape through patterns and fabrics, edges and connections – most of these artefacts in fact comprise traces of human intervention: infrastructure, dykes, canals, bridges, buildings, farms, windmills, a village at the horizon with the typical landmark of the church. Paintings somehow create an overview over the landscape by the introduction of the horizon. Landscape painting shows that an elevated viewpoint is essential for the observation of patterns, fabrics, and edges, by which mere 'land' or 'surface' is turned into 'landscape'. Only through the overview, can unity be discovered and differences identified.⁵² The Dutch cultural philosopher Ton Lemaire, who has written extensively on the idea of landscape, argues that it is therefore man who creates the landscape through demarcation and framing. It is the *action* of the observer that turns a section of the earth's surface into a landscape, an action that requires distance as well as insight.⁵³

A second aspect pushes this perspective further. The term landscape inherently has a call for 'action', which is more than just the act of the observer, recognizing the distinct mathematic physical elements of rhythm and rhyme. The landscape painting is not just 'observation', but moreover is a form of 'active' reflection on the relationship between man and his surroundings. From the end of the Middle Ages, slowly but surely, the genre caused the emancipation of the ordinary and the everyday. Although still the everyday environment of people, of farmers and laborers, it also became the object of paintings, articulating in particular human intervention on the land. According to the well known British-American historian Simon Schama the essence of the Dutch School of painters in the 17th century is that they took the extraordinary development of techniques and human interventions to withdraw land from water in the Low Countries as their objective; the windmills and docks, the dikes and locks.⁵⁴ The paintings somehow articulated man and his successes as establishing a profane space.⁵⁵ The term landscape, which not only addresses this particular strain in painting, but affects our understanding of landscapes in the real world, thus immediately implies the action of cultivation, creation and adaptation: man actively ordering, arranging and structuring his environment. Every 'landscape' contains traces of this process of civilization and is therefore a cultural and historical 'document' of human civilization. In other words, landscape is not just 'what you see', the physical appearance of order and unity, but also the *biography*, to use a term that the Dutch historian Jan Koolen coined in order to draw attention to the human subject vis-a-vis the transformation and appearance of the landscape.⁵⁶ Naturally, these appearances are not 'stable': landscape is always undergoing a process of transformation, since cultivation and adaptation will never reach a final stage. Landscape, therefore, is essentially layered: it documents how people have dealt with the earth through time. Developments in the social, economic and political context of society leads to new plans, to the adaption of the landscape to the demands of new eras and new needs. This is how the policy maker, politician, developer and designer contribute to the 'document'. Landscape is essentially an accumulation of lieux the *mémoire*,⁵⁷ present, and perhaps even future (if only in those billboards

that announce what will be built). Thus, the actual landscape is a document in which the entire history of the country (including its origins) can be read.⁵⁸ Put another way, the landscape, as a construction of distinct rhythms, artefacts and patterns, is a construct in time, in which layers of history can be unearthed. It is the product of the cultivation and adaptation of nature, the reflection of the experiences, knowledge and know-how of successive cultures, a historical record of the collective memory of a society.⁵⁹ This more active definition of landscape becomes clear when we venture into the area of linguistics. The English word 'landscape', like – and seemingly based on – the Dutch word *landschap* places the emphasis on human observation and perception of order, unity, rhythm and distinctness. This word in English, therefore, can also be used in an active sense, as in the phrase 'a landscaped garden', in which landscape is literally linked to the activity of design, of bringing order, structure, and system in the more or less natural environment. This connection is also made in French. The French word for landscape, *paysage*, places heavy emphasis on human intervention in nature: it alludes to a *designed* country or area. The German *Landschaft*, on the contrary, stands for a restrictive space, a territory – originally indicating an area so sparsely populated that it cannot be governed. In German language the term thus has political and administrative connotations. The American 'landscape', finally, combines the German and English definitions.⁶⁰ The distinct languages show that the term landscape is about the active relationship between man and his (natural) environment, combining intellectual observation and cultural and political intervention. The human condition makes it necessary to adapt this environment to the needs of man (however much man also adapt to his everyday environment). To put it another way: the relationship between man and his environment is essentially one of cultivation. God created the earth, so to say, that in turn is cultivated by man into a world, into landscapes.⁶¹

There is one step left in this perspective, the final layer I want to stress in order to arrive at the actual inhabitants and their everyday experiences. With its emphasis on observation and cultivation, as derived from painting, the above exploration of the term landscape pays little attention to an idea of the world as the everyday setting of our activities. It is therefore important to add the *perceived* and *experienced* landscape as a scope of observation. Locals have access to the landscape in a manner quite distinctive to the observer. For locals, the landscape offers narratives, memories of the past, and stories of the future. The landscape acquires meaning not because we rise above it and can see its limits and order, but because we live in, enjoy and experience it. A collective memory comes to the inhabitants through familiar stories and local narratives, probably imagined through yearly events and festivals. In other words, the landscape acquires meaning locally, since we are biographically connected with it, argues the archeologist Christopher Tilley in his book *A Phenomenology of Landscape*. The inhabitants have a particular knowledge of the landscape, which is gained through their very familiarity with it. It is through this personal familiarity that we learn to read its details (and, indeed, to differentiate them). Landscapes, according to this perspective, are therefore not simply 'objects for contemplation, depiction, representation and aestheticization'.⁶² With this we have abandoned the primacy of distance as a definition of landscape: we need both distance and inhabitation to fully understand the actualities of a particular landscapes. This perspective of the local, of the 'accessibility' and 'familiarity' of landscape actually emphasizes the social practices and constructions of the inhabitants.

revealed through painting, is given by the Dutch philosopher Ton Lemaire in his previously mentioned *Filosofie van het landschap*: Italian Renaissance, Dutch Landscapes, Romanticism, Impressionism, and finally Surrealism

56.

Jan Kolen, 'De biografie van het landschap, Naar een nieuwe benadering van het erfgoed van stad en land,' in: *Vitruvius*, no1, (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij Educom October 2007), 15

57.

The term stems from the French historian Pierre Nora, who published four volumes of collections of essays of a range of authors on the history of France that in French was titled *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), in English translated as *Realms of Memory* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1996). See also Jan Kolen 'Landschap en historisch bewustzijn' in: Jan Kolen and Ton Lemaire (eds.), *Landschap in meervoud, Perspectieven op het Nederlandse landschap in de 20ste/21ste eeuw* (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Jan van Arkel, 1999), 283; and Jan Kolen, 'Het historisch weefsel, Over de transformatieve van de region en de omgang met het verleden in de 21ste eeuw', in: Erik A. de Jong, Jan Kolen, Jos Bazelmans, and Iwan Baan, *Perspectief, Maakbare geschiedenis* (Rotterdam: Stimuleringsfonds voor Architectuur, 2007), 57,62

58.

Anne Whiston Spurr, *The Language of Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 15

59.

Adaptations can of course occur thoughtlessly, without consideration for the structures and elements that are already present. Contemporary society has the technology to wipe out the entire landscape and start from scratch, which also mostly is the preferable option as emerges out of a capitalist system. By doing so, it of course is a document that in extreme manifests a historical, cultural situation: contemporary ignorance to the past, the actual status of technology, politics and capitalism. Cf. Sharon Zukin who calls landscape a compromised product of society, which therefore is 'a potent tool for cultural analysis'. Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power, From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 16

60.

Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 10; Kenneth R. Olwig, 'Recovering the Substantive Nature of Landscape', in: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 86, no 4, (Londen: 1996), 630-653

61.

See for example the definitions from the field of archaeology in Matthew Johnson, *Ideas of Landscape* (Mal-

den (Mass.)/Oxford: Wiley, 2007), 3; compare also with ook Whiston Spirn, *The Language of Landscape*, 16

62.
Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, 26

63.
Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 16 [emphasis in original]

64.
Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991)

65.
Heynen, 'Space as Receptor, Instrument or Stage', 343

The landscape, with all its specificities, is somehow the material outcome and symbolic representation of relationships, societal structure, community organizations, and economic systems, as Sharon Zukin states in her book *Landscapes of Power*. 'In a narrow sense,' she writes, '*landscape* represents the architecture of social class, gender and race relations, imposed by powerful institutions. In a broader sense, however, it connotes the entire panorama that we see: both the landscape of the powerful – cathedrals, factories and skyscrapers – and the subordinate, resistant, or expressive vernacular of the powerless – village chapels, shantytowns and tenements.'⁶³

The landscape-term, thus, does not just depict a matter of geography, but merges the physical with the perception of that geography, with the narratives that inhabit and the powers that produce the space, stated with a reference to the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre.⁶⁴ Landscapes merge observation from a distance with the experience of proximity and synchronicity, the common with the specific, the generic with the resistant. Landscape comes into being through the human capacity to differentiate and establish, to cultivate, create, and adapt, as well as to remember, to celebrate, to dedicate, to familiarize, and to narrate.

The use of the term 'urbanized landscape' in this text implies that the journey through this metropolitan area is not simply a search for particular examples of urban artefacts, for clear examples of the loss of public space, or the physical appearances of paranoia. The journey-approach acknowledges that this urbanized landscape is a complex construction of spatial structure, built form, historical relics and traditions, as well as social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances, 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' initiatives, mental imaginary, daily practices, appropriation, design, and particular aims. It is space understood as stage, as Hilde Heynen would argue.⁶⁵ In other words, since both perspectives of distance and proximity are inherent in the term landscape, it mediates both symbolically and physically between what is perceived and its history, between what is beyond and what is inherent, what is the structuring power and everyday practices. That is why an exploration of landscape is more than just a mapping of what is touched upon, a registration of what is seen: it is a tool of cultural analysis, the simultaneous construction of social context and physical environment. A journey through the landscape, means investigating these aspects beyond the physical form. To quite literally take a trail through the urban landscape and investigate the artefacts touched upon accords with the very fluidness of everyday life of the inhabitants of this particular place. Via the concrete artefacts intercepted along this route, the trail itself adds literary insight into these differences and perspectives, as driving through a landscape does: sometimes opening views, sometimes closing them, sometimes delivering the possibility to look back, sometimes to get an overview. This journey is meant to meander through the landscape and look after the various perspectives that are opened up, before us and behind us – and, if possible, beyond. As such a journey does, this delivers a sort of morphing of the discourse on the public and private dichotomy.

2.2.3 (Post-) Modernity and The Threat of Fear (and Fun)

The second aspect that needs to be addressed before actually immersing ourselves in the Florida landscape, is the aspect of *fear* that, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter, appears to be an important mechanism behind the contemporary urban condition. We have already taken the first step in our trail through the landscape, investigating the very question of why the landscape is what it is.

Something of human appropriation and attitude is tangible in that landscape, we concluded above.

The urban landscape that we dwell upon here has of course undergone the striking growth of the city, and the simultaneous process of the city falling apart, the loss of every aspect that gathers the built environment and forms it into a 'city'.⁶⁶ Indeed, intuitively spoken, the city is transformed into a fragmented landscape, somehow tied together by highways that cut through a vast fabric of neighbourhoods, articulated at points by landmarks, malls, edge-cities, and inner-cities. That is this urbanized landscape, a fabric of loosely arranged fragments, that together still forms a whole, an urban region, a metropolis, but that *on the ground* is experienced as a series of coincidences, accidents, happenings. As Mike Davis argues, fear is shaping this landscape. The aim to secure the environment of the city, by the use of different instruments, is not only at the expense of the accessibility of public space, it also impacts the very idea of the city as a coherent and interdependent spatial entity, both physically and socially. In-between areas are being built, buffer zones left open, roads closed and paths removed. Fences are erected, with porches, camera-surveillance and guards.

'In cities like Los Angeles,' Davis concludes in his 1992 essay 'Fortress Los Angeles', 'on the hard edge of postmodernity, architecture and the police apparatus are being merged to an unprecedented degree.'⁶⁷ The urban layout and architectural design is not neutral, he thus states. With the phrase 'on the hard edge of postmodernity', we understand Davis' observations as not just interesting and intriguing, a unique presentation of changing neighbourhoods and contemporary urban design. Here Davis looks beyond the physicality of the urban landscape, an important presupposition of the architectural and urban discourse more generally: that the physicality of cities, landscapes, and interiors, as well as of cars, smartphones, and other consumer goods show something of the ideas, convictions, and aims that produce them. As the theorist John Archer states in his study into the history and meaning of suburban neighbourhoods: the ideology of a society is closely connected to its material apparatus, to the very material construction and organization of daily life.⁶⁸ In other words, in the architectural history and presence of (public) spaces, the construction of urban neighbourhoods and metropolitan inner cities, the layout and section of urban landscapes, one is able to read shifts in the *spirit* of a society. The urban map not only shows a specific plan of an area, but also unfolds a cultural map of its community. The artefacts, the designs of architects and urbanists, can therefore be seen as a materialisation of the cultural practices of society, and understood as tangible touchstones of a society's convictions and (mostly blurred) self-image. Specifically, the different appearances of public space 'reflect who we are as society, as well as the quality of life that we promise our citizens,' since these spaces are the locus of civic life.⁶⁹ These spaces therefore show societies' political and social deficits, as well as the 'conflictive principles' beyond the societal structures, convictions and aims. We thus, as the urban theorist Sharon Zukin writes in *Landscape of Power*, 'owe the clearest cultural map of structural change not to novelists or literary critics, but to architects and designers. Their products, their social roles as cultural producers, and the organization of consumption in which they intervene create shifting landscapes in the most material sense.'⁷⁰ Obviously this relationship between the physicality of a particular cultural map and a societies' ideological stances is always a complex interdependent narrative: the city changes through distinct approaches that are fundamentally related to perspectives on humanity, economy, and ecology, whilst these approaches and the ideas that drive them may change in the face of the concrete reality of their

66.

As we touched upon previously in the definitions of Louis Wirth and Lewis Mumford, see Sprio Kostof, *The City Shaped*, 37

67.

Davis, 'Fortress Los Angeles', 155

68.

John Archer, *Architecture and Suburbia, From English Cilla to American Dream House, 1690-2000* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), XVI

69.

Thomas Balsey, 'POPS, out of the shadow', A Designers Perspective', in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA): New Village Press, 2012), 352

70.

Zukin, *Landscape of Power*, 39; this of course simultaneously is to be seen as an assignment as well, an architectural task that of course also is the very frame of this research project on the public, the political, and the field of architecture as well. As the Spanish architect and urban design Manuel de Solà-Morales writes: 'This is the task for the public designers in the modern designing of the city: to do of these intermediate places – neither public nor private but all the opposite – not sterile spaces, not only left to marketing and profit, but as stimulating parts of the multiform urban tissue. And to move the Keynesianism of the 'welfare city' – subsidized urbanity – to more slippery, less evident, more interesting area's. ... Do not read this as a neo-liberal song to the private autonomy. ... I believe that the fight for the quality of these collective spaces – simultaneously private and public, public and private – is the best task of the architect in the city.' Manuel De Solà-Morales, 'Public Spaces, Collective Spaces', in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (Amsterdam: SUN publishers, 2009), 89-92

71.

Ulrich Beck, *De wereld als risico-maatschappij*, Essays over de ecologische crisis en de politiek van de vooruitgang (Amsterdam: De Balie, 1979); Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990)

72.

The threat of the atomic bomb actually was a topic in architectural and urban design as well. See Tom Vanderbilt, *Survival City, Adventures among the Ruins of Atomic America* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), specifically Chapter 3, 'The Domestication of Doomsday': 'Architects were suddenly on the front lines of defense. In the Cold War, all architecture was military architecture. ... It was presumed that architects, as traditional providers of shelter, would find the ways to help the country "survive best.'" (100-101); 'The construction of fallout shelters never expanded beyond a limited audience, but their presence in the American imagination far outweighed their actual numbers. The home fallout shelter was a new kind of space, one that tied the home to a hypothetical global confrontation – and to a new way of life, where the suburban nuclear family, relying on the ingenuity of industry, the doctrines of "preparedness," and their own strength as a social unit, could wait out Armageddon in stylish, if Spartan, comfort.' (108)

73.

Beck, *De wereld als risico-maatschappij*, 50

74.

On the contrary, due to changes in climate and ecological system, natural threats increase, whereas the 2011 tsunami in Japan show, although obviously not caused by the changing ecological system, these nature disasters are a direct threat for the late capitalist society.

75.

Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition Postmoderne, Rapport sur le Savoir* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979); Jean-François Lyotard, *Het postmoderne uitgelegd aan onze kinderen* (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1982), 26; In an impressive series of lectures, that I as a student assistant to the late prof. Wiek Rölöng organized in 2000, the Delft professor of philosophy Joop Doorman investigated the history of philosophy since Kant. A major role in his lectures was bound to Friedrich Nietzsche. The French origin of postmodernity, he stated, was caused by the translation of the works of Nietzsche in French, of course in combination with a certain Zeitgeist: a decline of the believe in the project of modernity, the bankruptcy of modernism. The French philosophers took Nietzsche's stances into their extreme position, Doorman stated.

aims. Changes to the physical urban environment lead, in turn, to changes to the everyday life of inhabitants. This works vice-versa too: due to changing everyday practices, the city itself again may change. How to live, where to buy, where to go to school, to recreate, to work, how to travel, who to meet, how to vote. All this somehow is interrelated to the physical and tangible structures of life. Urban artefacts are produced out of a complex and reciprocal process of adaptation and adoption, of intervention and invention, in daily practices, mental premises, intellectual ideas, spatial experiences, and societal thought.

With his understanding of fear as the driving force behind the contemporary city, Davis offers a pressing example of the attitude towards the world and to society in the context of what distinct sociologists as Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens call the 'risk society'.⁷¹ Nowadays, Western society, they state, can be characterized by a particular and strong focus on the future, which is perceived and experienced through the very insecurity that is inherent to all future perspectives. Future, after all, it is depicted by probability: 'what may be gained', but also, and in the last couple of decades surely more strongly, 'what may be lost'. Uncertainty about these possibilities and probabilities drives the 'risk society' into a state of common anxiousness, concerns for personal and 'metaphysical' safety resulting in a cynical preoccupation with personal risk regarding individual life and property. This anxiousness is fuelled by concrete experiences, ranging from the personal to the communal, from accidents and experiences of criminality within everyday life to threats on the level of politics and society: such as the threat of the atomic bomb during the Cold War.⁷² Recent experiences in the West have shown that all utopian claims of progression, declarations of an increasing capacity to control nature, of the possibilities of technology, even the optimism on the very nature of the human being, should be regarded false. What has become clear to Western societies during the last decades is that technological disasters and ecological catastrophes are not to be seen as 'unwanted side effects' of modernization, but as its very product, Beck states.⁷³ Life, mankind, technology only can be controlled to a certain extent.⁷⁴ Both Beck and Giddens refer to the catastrophic nuclear accident of the Chernobyl disaster (1986) to emphasise this 'risk society' as intrinsically connected to the very idea of modernisation itself: the incapacity to control risks is bound up in the process of modernization. Beck and Giddens wrote their respective analysis before the recent experiences of terrorism, like the event of 9/11 (2001) and onwards in the West and the Middle East, the destructive forces of nature, like the hurricane *Katrina* around New Orleans (2005), the terrifying tsunami in Japan that caused serious problems for the nuclear plants of Fukushima (2011), and hurricane *Sandy*, that hit New York in 2012.

The anxious risk-society, therefore, is closely related to what Davis called 'the hard edges of postmodernism'. Regularly, postmodernism is described by a phrase taken from *La condition postmoderne*: the 1979 seminal book of one of the most prominent protagonists and interpreters of postmodernism, French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard: 'the end of meta-narratives'.⁷⁵ Initially this 'end of all meta-narratives' was experienced with joy and relief, especially in the fields of art and architecture. Soon, however, it turned into pessimism and even cynicism. As the term *postmodernism* shows, modernism was one of these 'meta-narratives' that had lost its attractiveness, along with, according to Lyotard, Christianity, The Enlightenment, and science. Lyotard shows how the far-fledged aims of such 'meta-narratives' – the idea that the human being can know everything through science, the idea that history is a narrative of progression, the future possibility of

'absolute freedom', expectations that all accumulate in the modernist worldview – had lost their uniting power. The experience of catastrophe in relation to new technologies, as stressed by Beck and Giddens, challenged this utopian narrative.

Modernism, as it is well known, originated in the rapidly developing processes and revolutions of modernization during the nineteenth and twentieth century, a period of innovation and invention in the technical, social, economic, and psychological spheres of society. This process impacted patterns of everyday life and transformed the realms of dwelling and working, as well as the public, private and collective spheres. Specifically, processes of 'normalization' and 'rationalization' changed relationships, impacting on the very form of society and reforming existing communities into newly constructed networks. In other words, modernization transformed everyday life, turning it upside down.⁷⁶ Urban theorist Marshall Berman in *All That is Solid Melts into Air* describes the experience of this turnover as 'modernity', a term that is used often, but with a variety of meanings.⁷⁷ The description Berman delivers is rather useful here. Modernity, in his view, is described as a dialectical experience: simultaneously uncertainty and choice, loss and progression, melancholy and hope.⁷⁸ Beyond the resulting changes to everyday life – a seemingly accelerating processes of transformation⁷⁹ – modernization also influenced the 'self-understanding' of the western world; philosophical, teleological, and theological reflection on Western society and politics and on the Western human being. This newly constructed self-image is called modernism, which can be understood as a cultural, artistic and intellectual transformation of society, caused by the processes of modernization, into a *project* of progress, rationalization, emancipation, and welfare. This is highly visible in the field of architecture, specifically in what is regularly called the Modern Movement. *Postmodernity* therefore can be understood as the experience of the failure of this *project* of modernism.⁸⁰ It is the experience of modernity, but reduced to its negative tones: the loss of hope, of progression and even of freedom. The bright and thrilling aims and their initially encouraging and inspiring results – the development of technology, of insights in psychology and philosophy, the improvement of life and the circumstances of life – were in the 70s understood as merely a failure. High ideals contrasted with 20th century reality: experiences of war and terror, of concentration camps, of political totalitarianism, the increasing importance of economy understood in its capitalist form, a lack of control of development in the fields of technics and healthcare, the loss of political influence, and the aforementioned on-going threat of the Cold War, criminal threats, technological and natural disasters. Far from evolving progress, increasing the possibility of freedom, the accessibility of knowledge and diminishing poverty, modernization brought new relationships of power and repression, of poverty and exclusion, and, as emphasized by the 'risk society', the threat of uncontrollable catastrophes.

As is the case with modernity, there is also no agreement on the precise meaning of the term postmodernism, 'except, perhaps,' as the urban theorist David Harvey writes, 'that "postmodernism" represents some kind of reaction to, or departure from, 'modernism'.'⁸¹ The disagreement on postmodernism not only increases confusion about its essential characteristics, but shows the broad scope and impact of postmodernity. As a critical response to modernism and its linear idea of progress, absolute truths and rational approach of philosophy and social order, postmodernism embraces heterogeneity and differences, discontinuity, fragmentation, indeterminacy, pragmatism, polymorphous correlations, chaos theory and fractal geometry.⁸² This ambiguous appearance, a rejection of modernists purity, first appeared in literature and architecture.⁸³ In the case of architecture,

76. cf Atke van der Woud, *Een nieuwe wereld. Het ontstaan van het moderne Nederland* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2013), 27-32

77. Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air, The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 15

78. Ibid., 15: 'To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perceptual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, "all that is solid melts into air."'

79. Which is a reason for the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman to call modernity even 'liquid modern' – 'Liquid modern,' he writes in *Liquid Life*, one of the books that addresses this condition, 'is a society in which its member act change faster than it takes the ways of acting to consolidate into habits and routines. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 1

80. René Boomkens, *De nieuwe wanorde, Globalisering en het einde van de maakbare samenleving* (Amsterdam: Van Genneep, 2006), 35

81. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity, An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge (Mass.)/Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 7

82.

Ibid., 9; It can be argued that nowadays world rather lives in a time of Globalisation, as a next phase following postmodernism, as philosopher René Boomkens does in his book *De Nieuwe Wanorde*. I partly join him with his emphasis on capitalism, but would suggest that the loss of the residue of the project of modernism, the project of the self, is questionable.

83.

René Boomkens, *Een drempelwereld, Moderne ervaring en stedelijke openbaarheid* (Rotterdam: NAI Uitgeverij, 1998), 35

84.

Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1978) 8-9; 127-132

85.

Robert Venturi, *Complexity and contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 16

86.

Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, 8; See also Boomkens, *Een drempelwereld*, 331

87.

Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, 16

88.

Boomkens, *Een drempelwereld*, 323

the moral aesthetic narrative of modernism can be summarized in the famous quotes 'Form follows Function' (Louis Sullivan, 1896) and 'Less is More' (Ludwig Mies van der Rohe). In its rejection of this aim of purity, postmodernism in architecture becomes anti-modernism, seen in slogans like 'Less is a Bore', coined by the American architect Robert Venturi. The American architectural critic Charles Jencks, in his book *The Language of Post Modern Architecture*, renders this as an 'anti-purist' and 'anti-elitist' revolution in architecture, in favour of a populist and eclectic approach.⁸⁴ Purity, in his view, lacks the possibility to bear meaning, to be appropriated by and embedded in the broader public. Moreover, as Venturi writes in his book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*: 'Architects can no longer afford ... the puritanically moral language of orthodox Modern architecture'.⁸⁵ Jencks proposes an eclectic approach to architecture: architectural design as a blending of existing elements into a playful mixture. Whilst modernism was understood as a universal approach to architecture, of form being directly related to or even originating in the function of an object, the future of technology, and the rejection of ornament, post-modernism rejected this universal approach focusing instead on the local, the traditional, the historical. Through such an approach, Jencks states, architecture can once more address the public, which he understands as its fundamental task.⁸⁶ Venturi agrees on that perspective. 'I am for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning', he writes in the 'Gentle Manifesto' that opens his book. 'I prefer "both-and" to "either-or", black and white, and sometimes grey, to black and white. A valid architecture evokes many levels of meaning and combinations of focus: its space and its elements become readable and workable in several ways at once.'⁸⁷ The book is an attempt to show that this approach is rather common in the history of architecture; modernism is the exception, not the standard, he argues. Postmodernism in architecture from this perspective seems to be the playful liberation of an 'oppressive' and 'moral' narrative in exchange for a narrative of freedom, but this – as it unfolds in a formal, critical and sometimes even cynical approach to architecture – is actually just a marginal aspect of the post-modern narrative and its materialization within the urban environment.

Venturi's contribution to the debate can be understood as stressing the 'problem' of purity, in combination with the rejection of history as a projective device within the architectural approach. As the title already reveals, Venturi calls for a much more ambiguous position, where history has an operative role in the process of analysis (of particular problems) and design. Although in later post-modern approaches to architecture and the built environment, Venturi's approach seems to be replaced by a rather superficial limitation to façade-design and the application of history, Venturi's designs offer much more layered examples of the complexity he recognizes in reality. This also counts for his approach for accommodating the public, particularly in the range of 'internal streets' he designed in several of his projects.

The reality of the urbanized landscape is far more complex and anxious, as we have already seen. The outburst of riots and uproars in Los Angeles after the beating of Rodney King in 1992 is seen as a pivotal moment in the history of the city.⁸⁸ The American sociologist Nathan Glazer and the political scientist Mark Lilla, in their 1987 investigation into the 'public face' of architecture, already state that 'although there is an excitement in the actual presence of our fellow human beings, ... there is a new concern: crime and disorder. There is always the fear of disorder when great crowds gather, but the decline in the power of common rules and in the homogeneity of the population inevitably increases

these fears.⁸⁹ The result is an increasing eagerness to defend public gatherings – sports and political events – and public spaces on the one hand, and the private spaces that contain the suburban dream on the other. The desire of security is thus beyond the contemporary urbanized landscape, causing a ‘militarization of the urban landscape’, as described by Davis. The increase in gated communities, malls, themeparks and conventions centres (in both amount and size), largely contributes to the postmodern experience of urbanity. Remarkably enough, as this list of artefacts of the urbanized landscape already shows, in this postmodern environment fear and fun are closely related. ‘The ecology of fantasy is used to master the ecology of fear,’ the Dutch philosopher René Boomkens analyzed.⁹⁰ This fantasy-landscape however can only exist at the cost of a residual, distinguished by ‘hard edges’. The Northern-American philosopher Frederic Jameson, who, like David Harvey, has written extensively on the effects and affects of postmodern culture, presents these fantasy-landscapes as a threat in themselves. He argues that they depend upon images that are to be seen as a pastiche.⁹¹ They *replace* reality. Jameson reads the post-modern approach to architecture in the same way: an articulation of the fantasy landscapes of the individual, which at first sight may appear to be an enjoyment of freedom, fuelled by prosperity and welfare beyond imagination and materialized in kitsch and luxury. But for Jameson, like Harvey, the reality is far more sombre: these images are regularly not just a parody, not only temporally replacing reality, but are essentially rejecting the social context of the individual, and therefore rejecting the (social) reality, real landscapes, and, in respect to the cultural field, their very societal possibilities.⁹² In other words: these are empty figures, essentially utopian.⁹³ But in their emptiness – and this is the point I want to emphasize – they accommodate and propel capitalism. Rather than being critical, postmodernity has become a vehicle of late capitalist consumer culture, the ‘logical extension of the power of the market over a whole range of cultural production.’⁹⁴ Or to state it differently: capitalism is probably the only ‘grand explanatory narrative’ that has survived the critical attitude towards such narratives, even after the financial and economic crisis of 2008.⁹⁵ Economic principles and models are (still) the driving forces in the organization of the human environment today. It is the economy that rules the city, an economical approach that drives the promotion of security, privacy, investment, efficiency, and entertainment in political issues, in private concern, and specifically in all questions concerning space.

Postmodernity as a rejection of the societal relevance of cultural artefacts and simultaneously a vehicle of consumer culture, has had an enormous impact on the city and the countryside. As Jameson, in an almost dazzling rhythm, writes:

‘at some point following World War Two a new kind of society began to emerge (variously described as post-industrial, multinational capitalism, consumer society, media society and so forth). New types of consumption; planned obsolescence; an ever more rapid rhythm of fashion and styling changes; the penetration of advertising, television and the media generally to a hitherto unparalleled degree throughout society; the replacement of the old tension between city and country, center and province, by the suburb and by universal standardization; the growth of the great networks of superhighways and the arrival of automobile culture – these are some of the features which would seem to mark a radical break with that older pre-war society in which high modernism was still an underground force. I believe that the emergence of postmodernism is closely related to the emergence of this new moment of

89.

Taken from the introduction to Nathan Glazer and Mark Lilla (eds), *The Public Face of Architecture, Civic Culture and Public Space* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), xiii

90.

Boomkens, *Een drempeelwereld*, 351 [translation HT]

91.

Frederic Jameson, ‘Postmodernism and Consumer Society’, in: Frederic Jameson, *The Cultural Turn, Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983-1998* (London/New York: Verso, 1998), 1-3; In his emphases David Harvey cites the literary critic Terry Eagleton, who states: ‘The typical postmodernist artefact is playful, self-ironizing and even schizoid, ... it reacts to the austere autonomy of high modernism by impudently embracing the language of commerce and the commodity. Its stance towards cultural tradition is one of irreverent pastiche, and its contrived depthlessness undermines all metaphysical solemnities.’ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 7-8

92.

Jameson, ‘Postmodernism and Consumer Society’, 5; The postmodern response to modern approaches of culture, art, philosophy, and political theory is tangible in the embracement of pop culture, the rejection of the distinction between high and low forms of culture, and the loss of specific approaches of philosophy in favour of widespread range of a ‘theoretical discourse’, of which the works of the French philosopher Michel Foucault is exemplary. In the field of architecture postmodernism became very visible, for instance through the seminal 1972 publication *Learning from Las Vegas*, from Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour (1972) was a crucial year in architecture, as Harvey writes: ‘Charles Jencks dates the symbolic end of modernist and the passage to postmodern as 3.32 p.m. on 15 July 1972, when the Pruitt-Igoe housing development in St Louis (a prize winning version of Le Corbusier’s ‘environment machine for modern living’) was dynamited as an uninhabitable environment for the low-income people it houses. Thereafter, the ideas of the CIAM, the *Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne*, Le Corbusier, and the other apostles of ‘high modernism’ increasingly gave way before an onslaught of diverse possibilities, of which those set forth the influential *Learning from Las Vegas* by Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour (also published in 1972) proved to be but one powerful cutting edge. The point of that work, as its title implies, was to insist that architects had more to learn from the study of popular and vernacular landscapes (such as those of suburbs and commercial strips) than from the pursuit of some abstract, theoretical, and doctrinaire ideals. It was time,

they said, to build for people rather than Man.' Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 39-40

93. Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', 1-3; This is in line with the danger Jameson understands behind postmodernity: it is not only being-freed from the metanarratives, but it has nothing to offer to fill the gap that is left by these lost narratives. There is no ideal that goes beyond the individual-as-a-project.

94. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 62

95. cf Hans Achterhuis, *De utopie van de vrije markt* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij Lemniscaat, 2010), 7; Achterhuis describes capitalism as a hidden utopia, which became clear to him particularly through the financial and economic crisis and the responses to that crisis by for instance Alan Greenspan, the president of the Fed, the American Reserve Bank, until 2006.

96. Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', 19-20

97. Which is remarkable, since otherness is highly appreciated in the postmodern theory. However, otherness in late capitalism is regarded drastically different: a threat – and as capitalism thus takes the lead in urban development, otherness is threatened.

98. Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', 11-14

99. Ibid., 5

100. Davis, 'Fortress Los Angeles', 155

101. This city fallen apart only comes together at 'security', as Rem Koolhaas somehow confirms Davis' observation in his essay, 'Junkspace'. 'Fragments come together at "security" only, where a grid of video screens disappointingly reassembles magical frames into a banalized, utilitarian cubism that reveals Junkspace's overall coherence to the dispassionate glare of barely trained guards: video-ethnography in its brute form.' Koolhaas, 'Junkspace', 146

102. Davis, 'Fortress Los Angeles', 154

103. Ibid., 154

104. Beck, *De wereld als risicomaatschappij*, 52; The 'risk society' clearly is characterized by extensive regulations from the government and preventative provisions, as well as the tenden-

late consumer or multinational capitalism. I believe that its formal features in many ways express the deeper logic of this particular social system.'⁹⁶

The postmodern approach to the city has changed the urban environment drastically, in a manner remarkably comparable to the modern approach: it propelled both the cleaning of the landscape and the simultaneous destruction of 'heterotopias' – a term coined by the aforementioned French philosopher Michael Foucault to render the rare, vague, elusive, and distinct spaces of *otherness*.⁹⁷ Simultaneously, it also established a wide range of enclaves in the urban landscape: 'postmodern hyperspaces' that are 'worlds in itself, total spaces, comprised miniature cities.' Both developments, in turn, threatened the unifying nature of the urban structure, its binding together of urban fragments into the urban territory of the 'city', in the classical meaning of the term. Postmodernity on the level of the urban environment thus causes the loss of spatial coherence, the loss of nearness, the loss of a larger social community – the loss of the very narrative of cities themselves.⁹⁸ The initial 'fragmentation of cultural products', Jameson writes, is simply the 'foreshadow of deeper and general tendencies in social life as a whole.'⁹⁹ In late capitalist culture, in which economy has turned towards highly flexible modes of capital accumulation, society is dominated by capitalist approach, an 'exchange society' of commodities, services, and images, where consumption is linked with the production of highly individual and mainly temporal images and identities, everything is understood as commodity or image and there is no room outside the (financial) market. Everything is seen in terms of competition and rivalry – even in the built environment the accumulation of capital has turned into the driving force behind development, change, transformation, and decline. Neighbourhoods, shopping malls, business districts, recreation zones, theme parks, and university campuses need to compete, to be splendid in order to attract attention. Better said, in order to attract consumers and increase the market value of the area, the edifice, the commodities, the consumer goods. Every single part produces signs, images, and identities. In this process all spatial hierarchy and social homogeneity is lost. The city makes tangible the emerging social distinctions conferred by possessions and appearances. The city, consisting of competing parts, falls apart into distinct worlds. This is also what Mike Davis sees: the city falling apart, both spatially as socially. 'The old liberal attempts', writes Davis, 'at social control, which at least tried to balance repression with reform, have been superseded by open warfare that pits the interests of the middle class against the welfare of the urban poor.'¹⁰⁰ A warfare that can be seen as a limitless process of exaggerating the edges through militant interventions, intended to protect the individual particularity, properties, possessions, and surely also perception from the threat of the 'other' out there.¹⁰¹ Davis even states that this 'militarization' of the urban landscapes 'has supplanted hopes for urban reform and social integration.'¹⁰² And adds, 'We do indeed now live in "fortress cities" brutally divided into "fortified cells of affluence" and "places of terror" where police battle the criminalized poor.'¹⁰³ This is literally the 'hard edge of postmodernity.'

Back to the analysis of Beck and Giddens: at the heart of the 'risk society', which depends extensively on the experience of postmodernity, is the strive to exclude risks, almost at all costs and with all means, both at the level of the individual human being and of the collective structures.¹⁰⁴ As the sociologists emphasize, this is mainly a question of who is in control: who decides what kind of risks are reasonable to whom, at which costs, and who is responsible in cases of actual

catastrophe.¹⁰⁵ The increase of enclaves like *The Retreat*, the increase of Neighbourhood Watches within these enclaves, the increase of private camera surveillance watching over individual property, are all signs of a distrust in public, collective, and social structures in this respect. Large groups of citizens feel the need to protect themselves and their properties, even with ultimate means.¹⁰⁶ 'The old liberal attempts at social control,' Davis also states in the quote we touched upon previously, 'which at least tried to balance repression with reform, have been superseded by open warfare that pits the interests of the middle class against the welfare of the urban poor.' Beck thus confirms Davis' analysis through a comparison between contemporary society and the previous 'industrial society'.¹⁰⁷ The 'risk society', according to Beck, is less concerned with the distribution of wealth, as was the case in former forms of society, in favour of the distribution of risks. In other words, societal concern has moved from the 'distribution of goods' towards the 'distribution of bads'.¹⁰⁸ Gated communities can thus be seen as a spatial manifestation of the contemporary battle to secure ones own environment through the exclusion of 'bads' – better said, by excluding the probable 'bad guys'. The narrative of the gated community is a distrust in strangers and an eagerness to exclude the living environment from otherness, in order to secure both family life and individual property.¹⁰⁹ One *Retreat* next to another, distinguished by their surrounding walls, create 'safe' worlds on their own. The experience of a lack of control over what the future may bring does not lead to 'adaptation' to uncertainty, but, on the contrary, evolves into a new form of 'survival of the fittest' through eagerness to control personal space and time. The *Martin Case*, as well as other spatial examples presented by Davis within the Los Angeles urban landscape, literally show this city of rivalry.

As stated above, the emphasis on safety and the re-distribution of risks has consequences beyond the single neighbourhood and living areas of the happy few: it also impacts the space that is in-between these communities, the 'out there'. The emergence of enclaves changes the city itself: its appearance, the concrete planning of physical spaces and objects, the materialization of the city-fabric and neighbourhood patterns, the layout of streets and the design of public spaces, the mutual interdependence of the parts. That which is in between, regularly understood as 'public space', is rendered as dangerous. In order to avoid these threatening (public) areas, one even can download smartphone apps, Microsoft's 'Avoid Ghetto App' for instance, which gives a warning on entering a no-go area.¹¹⁰ Or the 'Offender Locator', an app that searches through state-run websites in order to find sexual offenders (the app will alert the user if a offender moves nearby).¹¹¹ In other words, public space has lost the power of the production of community, of creating citizenship – it has lost the quality of creating a larger narrative that is able to bind the distinct parts together.¹¹² This leads to the end of the city as a coherent spatial and social community. What is lost is the larger structure that binds distinct neighbourhoods together and gathers citizens in public space. As Marshall Berman writes: 'The eclipse if the problem of modernity in the 1970s has meant the destruction of a vital form of public space. It has hastened the disintegration of our world into an aggregation of private material and spiritual interest groups living in windowless monads, far more isolated than we need to be.'¹¹³

The *Martin Case*, with Zimmerman as the central figure, is the sad actuality of this narrative of the city falling apart through radical struggles, through a process

cy to claim compensation (specifically huge amounts of money) when regulation has failed or organizations doesn't meet expectations. This of course is a negative spiral as well: the probable acclaims do lead to new, far fledging measurements, provisions, regulations, prohibitions and law-enforcements. These 'interventions' do set a new image amongst people, and Therefore also give reason for new acclaims (since risks, accidents, human faults can't be controlled), which in turn gives reason to a new layer of measurements.

105.

Ibid., 94

106.

Which is an argument that nowadays still again and again pops up in the debate on the construction and constitution of society in the U.S., for instance vis-à-vis the proposals of then president Obama to reform the gun laws after the mass shootings in Newtown Ct.; Just two examples, first the proposal of the president: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/16/us/politics/obama-gun-proposal-to-look-beyond-mass-shootings.html?pagewanted=2&_r=0 [accessed January 20th, 2013], and second the response of the National Rifle Association on the second inaugural address: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/23/us/politics/wayne-lapierre-of-nra-has-angry-response-to-obama.html?ref=nationalrifleshootings> [accessed, January 23rd, 2013], and finally the topic during the 2013 Union State Address of the president: <http://www.nytimes.com/video/2013/02/12/us/politics/10000002062350/obama-calls-for-gun-reform-in-address.html> [accessed February 14th, 2013]

107.

Davis, 'Fortress Los Angeles', 155

108.

See for instance: Beck, *De wereld als risicomaatschappij*, 109

109.

As I will argue later, the presence of strangers in space is the characteristic of the (urban) public space, according to both urban activist Jane Jacobs and the sociologist Richard Sennett. The well known writer J.B. Jackson, who intensively has written about the American landscapes, even calls it the characteristic of roads, not only in the urban environment, but also in the landscape. John Binkerhoff Jackson, *A sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1994), 6

110.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/19/micro-soft-avoid-ghetto-ap_n_1217398.html [accessed December 21st, 2012]

111.

The offender app was announced in *The New York Times*, Wednesday September 2, 2009

112.

This actually is a major point of loss beyond public space, a problem at the very basis of Western democracy in respect to the desire of security. As the political theorist Francis Fukuyama writes in his first major publication after the well-known *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), *Trust, The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (1995) at the very foundation of every political system is the virtue of trust. No political system can be arranged amongst people that distrust each other.

113.

Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, 34

114.

See in this respect also the urban sociologist David Harvey, who follows the art historian T.J. Clark in seeing the origin of this loss in the 19th century transformation and modernization, specifically in the Haussmannian intervention in Paris: 'Haussmannization was an attempt to put an image "in place of a city which had lost its old means of representation." What had been lost was the idea of the city as a form of sociality, as a potential site for the construction of utopian dreams of a nurturing social order.' David Harvey, 'The Political Economy of Public Space,' in: Setha Low and Neil Smith (eds.), *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 23

115.

cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *The Art of Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 46; see also what Glazer and Lilla write in their introduction to *The Public Face of Architecture*: 'the need to protect... introduce additional unease', Glazer and Lilla (eds), *The Public Face of Architecture*, p.xiii

116.

cf. Hans Boutelier, *De veiligheidsutopie Hedendaags onbehegen en verlangen rond misdaad en straf*, (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom Lema, 2006)

117.

Which is emphasized by Hannah Arendt in her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which we will discuss in Chapter 4; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968)

118.

Neil Smith and Setha Low, 'Introduction: The Imperative of Public Space', in: Setha Low and Neil Smith (eds.), *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1

119.

Smith and Low, 'Introduction: The Imperative of Public Space', 1

of anxiousness, through new forms of the distribution of risks informing actual politics, through a vanishing belief in the community, increasing distrust in the public, and the loss of (bodily) experience of inhabiting a common world.¹¹⁴ This is what Davis shows as well: an expanded paranoia that immediately reveals the fatal consequences of an emphasis on safety and security, of protection and control. Moreover, it shows the double failure of such secured urban environments: the search for a safe environment turns into a dangerous quest in itself. The negative spiral of fear shaping the everyday living environment is characterized by even greater interventions in daily life, privacy and the freedom to live life personally.¹¹⁵ In the case of the gated community: it starts with the wall with controllable gates. Soon camera control will be added. If possible, it will be expanded further with guards and Neighbourhood Watches. Some communities now have armed police guarding, 24/7 control, and are screening and balloting new residents. The race for safety is thus never over, and will again and again request new interventions, new ways of excluding the strange, distinct and threatening, since it is fuelled by every accident and every proposition for new facilities to secure, every new provisions to protect. But no matter how many barriers and layers of protection are being erected, riskless life is an illusion, even in a world that has lost public space. The aim to secure public space is utopian:¹¹⁶ slowly but surely it will turn into the dystopian figure of totalitarian control. Only 'totalitarian' structures – be it political, commercial, or technical – are able to secure the environment, solely by excluding the very publicness of the world.¹¹⁷ Moreover, the (visual) interventions in public space fuel the feeling and the experience of insecurity by the inhabitants, visitors, and users, which in turn requests new interventions. Therefore, in a society where fear shapes the urban environment, public space is both in 'danger' and 'dangerous', it is threatened as well as a critical notion.

2.2.4 On the Public

Here we arrive at the third perspective that we need to address before continuing our journey in the urbanised landscape around Sandford, FL. Clearly the events of 9/11 have had a propelling impact on the reflections upon public space, as the urban sociologists Neil Smith and Setha Low write in their *The Politics of Public Space*: 'From city parks to public streets, cable and network news shows to Internet blog sites, the clampdown on public space, in the name of enforcing public safety and homeland security, has been dramatic.'¹¹⁸ This 'clampdown', due to anti terrorist policies, the 'far reaching effects of the U.S. Patriot Act and related legislation', became highly visible and tangible in 'multiple closures, erasures, inundations, and transfigurations of public space', initiated by both the 'state and corporate strategies'.¹¹⁹ Although 9/11 has propelled this 'clampdown', this is not a new attitude towards public space, as seen above. Smith and Low frame this attitude from a neoliberal political perspective, very influential in the United States since the eighties, but finding its roots in the seventeenth and eighteenth century works of Adam Smith and John Locke. Regarding public space, their stress on private property is of particular importance. This articulation of private property challenged the traditional figure of the commons,¹²⁰ common land within the community to be used publicly. These commons were not always owned by the collective but could also be owned privately – the collective nevertheless were allowed access or even rights of use. At the basis of Smith and Locke, however, private property was understood as a 'natural right', which gave the owners arguments against the access and use of their properties by others. These changes greatly influenced the envisioning of the collective, even propelling a

new understanding of the common good: own interests and private property were understood as the pillar beneath the common good and the interests of the collective (and particularly the marketplace).¹²¹ This new, liberal perspective opened up the aim of security, not only as mode for securing private property, but for securing the marketplace itself. The ‘two preoccupations’ of Western society today that impact on public space, defined by the urban sociologist Sharon Zukin as security and shopping, promote this perspective. Through her investigation of shopping, it becomes immediately clear that contemporary consumption culture has incorporated aspects of fear. ‘Public parks,’ she writes, ‘that are now managed by private conservancies and shopping areas that are governed by Business Improvement Districts do enjoy cleaner streets and greater public safety. But we pay a steep price for these comforts, for they depend on forces we cannot control – private business associations, the police bureaucracy, and security guard companies – signalling that we are ready to give up on our unruly democracy.’¹²² Consumption, in other words, requires governance of consumerist spaces; the spaces of consumption need to be controlled. Consumption will only flourish in spaces that are clean, smooth, comfortable, and secure. The consumer culture flourishes by controlling the public, both in its assembly as in its behaviour. It is thus shopping and security, fun and fear, those two vast aspects of contemporary life, that are both shaping the city and impacting daily life, simultaneously understood by many theorists, as threats in respect to ‘public space’.¹²³

The term ‘public’, and its immediate counterpart private, differs from discourse to discourse. The different uses in daily language come to the fore in the discussion on safety in contemporary Western society. Take the debate that is roused by the exposing of the practices of the NSA, the American National Security Agency, by former employee Edward Snowden.¹²⁴ The practices of this American governmental organization are discussed immediately in terms of ‘public’ and ‘private’: a public institution investigating the actions of the inhabitants. This gathering of knowledge and information about inhabitants in order to control or predict their future actions, rouses immediate qualifications like ‘totalitarian’ or ‘dictatorial’. ‘1984 has become true’, people refer to the famous title of George Orwell’s novel on state control. Big Brother is Watching You! The debate rightly questions not only the contemporary possibility of collecting telephone call logs, but for actual eavesdropping, saving and researching social-media data, hacking phones, collecting information about internet use, and opening the e-mails of a broad range of individuals. It raises the question of how legal it is for the (democratic) state to survey its inhabitants, and to what extent they can intervene in the private sphere of the individual. Should the state not respect the ‘privacy’ of its inhabitants, critics question? While the state – here, the then president Obama – defends the NSA with the argument that ‘modest encroachments on privacy’ were ‘worth us doing’ to protect the country.¹²⁵ I specifically use the term ‘defend’, since that is what happens. The government needs to defend itself and its practices vis-à-vis ‘the public’. The subsequent public is divided in this case – most people do not mind (I don’t have to hide something, let them see!), while a select group (often journalists and activists) strongly questions these practices for the sake of privacy. It might be not ‘the’ public, but still ‘a’ public that urges the ‘state’ to respond and through their writings, questioning, and voting, enforce the state to at least be careful in their aims and actions.

The Snowden-case is just another example of the aim of safety affecting public space. The activities of the NSA are driven by their search to secure the safety of

120.
cf. Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons. The Evolutions of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); David Bollier and Silke Helfridge, *The Wealth of the Commons, A World Beyond Market and State* (Amherst (Mass.): Levellers Press, 2012)

121.
Smith and Low, ‘Introduction: The Imperative of Public Space’, 2

122.
Sharon Zukin, *Naked City, The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xi

123.
To take just one: Diane Ghirardo, who teaches architecture at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles writes in her *Architecture after Modernism*: ‘Perhaps one of the most significant developments of the late 20th century has been the interpretation of public space in two related ways: as spaces for consumption, and as spaces to be segregated in highly specific ways, to be monitored and controlled.’ Diane Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2006), 43-44

124.
See for a discussion on the matter of privacy and his position in this case this interview with Edward Snowden: Edward Snowden with Peter Maas, Ann Lauterbach and Roger Berkowitz, ‘Why Privacy Matters,’ in: *HA, The Journal of the Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities at Bard College*, vol. 4 (2016)

125.
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/08/us/national-security-agency-surveillance.html?_r=0 [visited January 7, 2014]

126.

Roger Scruton, 'Public Space and the Classical Vernacular', in: Nathan Glazer and Mark Lilla (eds.), *The Public Face of Architecture, Civic Culture and Public Space* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 15

127.

Jeff Weintraub, 'The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction', in: Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (eds.), *Public and Private in Thought and Practice, Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1997)

128.

Abram De Swaan, 'Unauthorised Urban Thoughts, Private and Public Practices within Urban Space,' in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Into the Open, Accommodating the Public, OASE#77* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2008), 35; cf. John R. Parkinson, *Democracy & Public Space. The Physical Sites of Democratic Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 53

the country: so that the inhabitants can live safely in their homes, feel secure on their work, in the playground, the mall, and so on. These are regular expectations of the state. However, the same gesture threatens the very 'freedom' of the public by the aim to control public space, which means not just the freedom of use and movement, but also of behaviour, action, and even of thought.

Actually, even this short but exemplary case shows at least three different uses of the term 'public' in everyday language, all explicitly or implicitly connected to ideas upon the political realm. It shows that 'public' and 'private' are terms that are essentially political, and in that sense are essential 'to a full understanding of the human condition,' as the British philosopher Roger Scruton writes.¹²⁶ The example started with the idea of a 'public institution' investigating the actions of inhabitants in their 'private lives'. From this perspective, the term thus addresses the government and its services as that which the inhabitants – that is, private individuals – share. The state is thus seen as a 'public authority': who serve the inhabitants regardless of position, location or background. These 'private' individuals, in turn, collectively form a public (not: the public, as I will discuss later) that are somehow able to agree, oppose or to accuse the state (and the market) and its behaviour. In the third, and final, part of the example, it is again the state versus the individual, but now the state in a 'repressive' and controlling role over what may be *done* 'in public', intervening in *public life* through scrupulous investigation of behaviour and convictions (specifically: their relationship).

These three different conceptions of what 'public' and 'private' might be, at least show that an idea of the public is a relative term, since it cannot exist without its opposing term. Public and private are interdependent, a dichotomy, political theorist Jeff Weintraub states in an article in which he discusses four different conceptions of the public/private distinction.¹²⁷ He even calls it the 'grand dichotomy' of Western thinking, although it is better to call it a 'relative dichotomy', particularly when it comes up to physical spaces. The public and private indeed might be two interdependent entities, but their edge is rather blurred in our everyday experience. Within the urban fabric or suburban neighbourhoods, it is sometimes impossible to grasp what is actually public or private (space). Public and private are essentially a continuum, as the Dutch sociologist Abram de Swaan writes: 'this space cannot be reduced to binary oppositions... The spectrum of reduced public accessibility runs from the street to the department store (where you can wander without being accosted), from there to the waiting rooms at stations, institutions and bank branches, and on to the shop (where the question "do you need help?" forces you to explain your presence among the shelves), the reception area's in offices, and then to the consultation rooms of doctors and lawyers, and finally the residential home, the most private space.'¹²⁸ If we indeed stick to the perspective of the city and actual spaces, what is called public and what is rendered private is ambiguous, and it changes from time to time. This fluidity also affects not only the edge between these two entities, but also the very meaning of the entities themselves. There is no definition that once and for all describes what is meant with public on the one hand and private space on the other. It depends on what kind of perspective is inhibited: it can be understood along the lines of property, along the lines of accessibility, of politics and issues of laws and rights, prohibitions and offerings, of possibilities to be seen and heard (as is the case in Arendt's definition, as we will see), of the will to share or to capture. All these perspectives will change and have been changing over time, between (sub)cultures, and societies, between ideologies and (scientific)

fields. In each of these different fields, the terms inhibit distinctive values, but nevertheless, as Weintraub states, render again and again two fundamentally opposing values: the multitude versus the singular, what belongs to the collective versus what affects individual interests, and what is open versus what is hidden.¹²⁹ As the complexity that came to light in the Snowden-case reveals, besides the mutually dependent relationship of the terms public and private, there is also the simultaneous existence of contradictory perspectives and interpretations through a differentiated frame of values. Inhabitants are simultaneously public and private people, and the state simultaneously represents the public as well as being countered by the public. Weintraub has managed to draw a line through these different aspects by showing four different fields of attention in which the public/private distinction is prominent, which are important to briefly introduce here.

The first public/private distinction Weintraub introduces is the liberal economic perspective which uses terms such as ‘public sector’ versus the ‘private sector’. Private sector in this case represents the market, whereas the public sector offers ‘public goods’, goods that ‘the public’ understands as prerequisite for the good life of the collective: public transport, supply of gas, water and electricity, telephone and post services, schools and hospitals. The public/private distinction here means the distinction between governmental and non-governmental organization, as well as between the state and the individual. Individuals are understood to pursue their self interest freely, voluntary, and efficiently, while the state organizes the framework within which the good life can be lived.¹³⁰

A second perspective Weintraub distinguishes comes to light in the movement of feminism. Whereas in the other distinctions the public is dominant, in this perspective the domestic or private is the starting point. In feminism, the private is understood as the realm of the family, the domestic sphere. In this perspective obviously gender distinctions play a role: it challenges the traditional concept of the private realm as the sphere of women and children, as well as emphasizing this as unacceptable. This not only is challenged vis-à-vis the limited and inferior role of women, as the name suggests, but also emphasizes other homebound problems: child-abuse, and violence – all the things that remain hidden within the walls of the home.¹³¹ What therefore becomes absolutely clear in feminist theory, as well as in everyday language around this topic, is the connotation that is inherent to the term ‘private’: ‘to be deprived’ of ‘participation’ in public, where the public renders the realm of possibilities – the possibilities to freely fulfil the personal ‘pursuit of happiness’, specifically by developing a career.¹³² As Weintraub states: in this perspective ‘the market economy has migrated from the heart of the “private sector” to the heart of the “public realm”’.¹³³

These two first distinctions between public and private already show the ambiguity of the terms: in everyday language often the terms are unconsciously mixed. What is understood as the public changes from context to context – and even the valuation of public and private changes. In the Snowden case the public threatens the private, that is: the public eye threatens personal freedom, whereas in feminism the private is literally privative, it limits the freedom of those bound to the domestic sphere. This layered-ness – or ambiguity – becomes even more tangible and visible in the two other distinctions that Weintraub makes, and that are – in intertwined ways – the concern of architectural theory regarding public space, and, as such, have been prominent in my writings so far. Firstly, Weintraub distinguishes the model of citizenship as it is rooted in the Greek and Roman polis: active participation of ‘equals’ in public matters and collective decision making. Public in this perspective means ‘political’, that is ‘a world of discussion,

129. Weintraub, ‘The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction’, 5

130. *Ibid.*, 8

131. *Ibid.*, 29

132. Also Hannah Arendt takes the private in this meaning of ‘to-be-deprived’. Only a life that also engages with the world, appears in public space, can be understood as fully human, according to her. Arendt nevertheless does not stress the point of gender-differences. Although she stresses the importance of the private realm as a realm of recovery and recuperation in order to enter public space again, as we will see in Chapter 5, she does not address the problem of the home as a probably violent space. See Anita L. Allen, ‘The Declining Significance of Home: Privacy “Whilst Quiet” and of No Use to Artist or Anyone’, in: *HA, The Journal of the Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities at Bard College*, vol. 4 (2016)

133. Weintraub, ‘The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction’, 33

134.
Ibid., 11

135.
cf. Scruton, 'Public Space and the Classical Vernacular', 16: The wild countryside may be open to unlimited human movement, but it has no point of contact with the private world, no point at which to announce its public purpose. It is "unbounded", not because it goes on forever but because its perimeter has no mark. Lacking a boundary, it lacks the character of public-ness, for it lacks social stigma altogether. Nature is neither private nor public, but merely beyond society.'

136.
Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Neuwied/Berlin: Luchterhand, 1962); Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1989)

137.
Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 25

debate, deliberation, collective decision making, and action in concert' within a particular community.¹³⁴ Private in this perspective also means to be deprived from this public conversation, deprived from the presence of 'others'. As we will see in Chapter 4, this is the category that Hannah Arendt has explored in her writings. The question that I thus will stress, particularly in Chapter Five, is how this relates to the final category that Weintraub distinguishes, which is the concrete realm of urban public spaces.

Weintraub describes his final distinction as the sphere of sociability. This most concretely refers to urban public spaces, and specifically to what happens in these spaces. Public space, in this perspective, is by definition related to urban environments: only the city offers space that is clearly circumscribed, that offers possibilities of different uses, discovery and appropriation. Spaces that, in other words, give room to truly public life, in all its visibility that makes the public life also tangible to outsiders, spectators, strangers.¹³⁵ Public life here is understood as contradictory to domestic life, which is hidden. Note that Weintraub does not address the property-question. This distinction is not so much about ownership, but about accessibility and visibility.

What architectural and urban theory has addressed so far mainly stresses the latter two distinctions, that I have also stated as the challenge of my own reading of the writings of Arendt, to be investigated in Chapter 5. Political gatherings need public space and their capacity for social gatherings. The political will only have its proper meaning and achieve its full potential when embedded in the wide range of public life in everyday spaces. But before I address this challenge, let us briefly point to the regular narrative within architectural and urban theory, which actually does not so much grasp back to the model of citizenship as distinguished by Weintraub, but to the Public Sphere as it comes into being during the 18th century. The term Public Sphere is a term that immediately is linked to the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, specifically due to his 1962 book *Der Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, published in English in 1989 as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.¹³⁶ In Chapter Five I will stress the perspective Habermas develops, and compare it to Arendt's perspective, who indeed grasps back to the political gatherings in the Greek and Roman Polis. For now I will briefly discuss Habermas's point, as I assume that his view in particular has influenced the reflection upon actual urban developments.

Habermas understands the public sphere as 'a forum in which private people come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion.'¹³⁷ Habermas originates this description upon 'new' public spaces of the 18th and 19th century cities: the salon (in France and German), the coffeehouse (in Britain), the café (in France), where the newly found class of the bourgeoisie met in order to discuss the news. These were somehow 'open' meetings, which is the very meaning of the German word *öffentlichkeit* – meetings 'in the open', visible and even accessible to everyone. This 'everyone' should not be taken too literally in Habermas's original examples: these salons, coffeehouses and cafés were quite restricted spaces. The early advent of modernity in the 18th and 19th century becomes tangible in the rise of a new social class, that of the bourgeoisie. Since the Middle Ages, communities were organized through a feudal system, based upon kinship, which were characterized by complete absence of the public sphere. Or, better said, the ruler themselves were the representative of the public sphere: 'they represent their power "before" the people, instead of "for" the people'.¹³⁸ A long process of polarization, as Habermas states, broke these authorities – that is: the church,

princes and the nobility – apart. Through modernity, as it became tangible in the reformation and the Enlightenment, the relationship between the authorities and the ‘public’ changed drastically. The position of the church changed with the reformation, the economical system with the advent of the stock exchange, the position of princes and nobility with the revolutions, while society was characterized simultaneously by an increasing awareness of and attentiveness to the self, as a private individual. This change is mostly described as individualization, fragmentation, differentiation and rationalization, the eroding of an existing and historically rooted community of people and instead an increasing emphasis on the individual self. Society, be it a social, religious, or family community, was characterized by a dense sociability and traditional patterns of rights and duties, expectations and restrictions. Due to modernity those forms of *Gemeinschaft*, as the German sociologist Fiedrich Tönnies calls them, were demolished. Individual human beings generally were no longer able to give ground to their fundamental principles, convictions, beliefs, views, stances, and behaviour via an authority outside themselves (be it tradition, the community, or God). In other words, modernity caused the disappearance of traditional forms of organization and a community of people and gave rise to new forms of societal organization. Or, to refer again to Fiedrich Tönnies, instead of traditional forms of *Gemeinschaft* (community) life now had to be organized through forms of *Gesellschaft* (civil society). The difference, according to Tönnies, is that a *Gemeinschaft* is organized organically and is based on a fundamental connectedness. A *Gesellschaft* on the other hand is based on contracts and abstract rules.¹³⁹ The process from *Gemeinschaft* towards *Gesellschaft*, of course, delivered a glance of individual freedom, liberation from tradition and other authorities and the possibility of self-realization. The Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, however, showed that this process also and indissoluble caused the loss of the known world, that is the security of a shared community, with tacit and shared opinions, as well as trusted social ties. The individual no longer was part of a larger social community by definition, but a sole entity. Belonging to a group or community became a matter of choice, of preferences and considerations – as everything in life has become a choice. Simultaneously, this involvement in a social group is temporal – as every involvement and engagement is understood to be temporal, since preferences can change, as well as needs and priorities. Bauman thus concludes that the condition of modern life has to be considered as a state of continuous ambivalence: the sole human being has to reinvent and reconsider their own self continuously. In this state of ambivalence, the individual needs to organize not only his own life, but also his connection with other people.¹⁴⁰ Society thus changed drastically. Instead of *Gemeinschaft* based upon kinship, it turned into a *Gesellschaft*, based on contracts and abstract rules. Generally speaking, in modernity society needs to be much more actively defined. Its borders, its principles, its rules, its identity, its culture, its history, its monetary principle, its convention, the rights and duties of its inhabitants, even whoever can be seen as an inhabitant – all need to be discussed and defined, to be reified in laws and institutions. In other words: society needed to be organized strictly in the form of what has become known today as the nation state. Behind this organization lies the distinction between ‘who’s in and who’s out’, who is seen as an inhabitant, and who is excluded from the rights that are applied in their inhabitants. In such a system, it is the ‘nation’ that connects the people, although this connection is organized via a ‘contract’.¹⁴¹ As Bauman stresses, this contract never comforts the individual: instead, this new situation is a condition of social ambivalence. Although the nation state delivers rights to its inhabitants,¹⁴² the society that develops within this state causes the

138.

Jürgen Habermas, ‘The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)’, in: *New German Critique*, no.3 (autumn, 1974), 51

139.

I follow here the introduction to Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Architectural Positions, Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (Amsterdam: SUN Publishers, 2009), 22

140.

Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 61,62

141.

For instance, the famous contract social, as coined by the Romantic philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau in his book *Du contrat social ou principes du droit politique* (1762), which had a major influence on the French constitution of 1793; cf Scruton, ‘Public Space and the Classical Vernacular’, 14; Scruton takes the contract as the medium through which people relate to one another in public space – a perspective I disagree with.

142.

Arendt actually criticises the nation state precisely on this point: who's providing and defending the rights of the state-less persons? As the post-WorldWar II situation clearly makes visible – and as we can see today in the number of asylumseekers around the world – the human 'right to have rights' is a great ideal, but the nation state is not able to guarantee this to all human beings.

143.

Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 7

144.

Weintraub, 'The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction', 13

145.

Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 26

146.

Weintraub, 'The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction', 14

147.

Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 27

ambiguity. Within modern society, the role of the individual is never clear and stable, not only as every human being is in a continuous process of self-definition, but also as the social realm itself is in an ongoing process of organization and reorganization. However, in spite of engaging with ambivalence, society tends to exterminate every ambiguity. According to Bauman this aim of exterminating ambivalence should be understood as a 'typically modern practice, the substance of modern politics, of modern intellect, of modern life',¹⁴³ which become tangible in the eagerness to secure space and ensure life, the emphasis on security and predictability as we touched upon before.

However – one step back in time – what Habermas traces in his investigation is the advent of a new social class of the bourgeoisie in the 18th and 19th century. He specifically emphasises the advent of the stock exchange as a crucial development in this respect. This new economic system led to the development of trading organizations that slowly but surely gained political power. In other words, the emerging capital organization of society, that replaced the feudal system, gave room to two 'institutions' that were in control: the state and the dominant economical class. As capitalism developed, a new – bourgeois – class of doctors, lawyers and scholars emerged, which in the end established another realm of political power, in-between the state and the market, the public sphere – a realm of debate and rational reasoning, of developing *öffentliche Meinung*, public opinion, formally and informally affecting the organization of society. Increasing welfare enabled this new class to spend free time in coffee-houses, organizing salons, and other opportunities to discuss and debate. This development created room for the 'recovery' of the notions of citizenship and sovereignty as they originally sprang from the Greek and Roman organization of the city-states and empire. Over time, these notions have become institutionalized in general laws and institutions. One of the terms that is developed vis-à-vis these terms is the idea of a Civil Society, particularly addressed in the works of the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who render it as 'the social world of self-interested individualism, competition, impersonality, and contractual relationships – centered on the market'.¹⁴⁴ It is in response to this liberal idea of the private market and the free individual that 'sovereignty' also gets its new meaning in the advent of the state as an administrative authority. Somehow, that which can be understood as 'public life', the meetings in the coffeehouses and salons, fuelled the consciousness of the public as being citizens – a public – that powerfully opposed the state and its administrative function, as well as the market and its 'free' trade.¹⁴⁵ The public increasingly understood its sovereignty, not to be captured in the relationship between state and inhabitant or between market and consumer. The public sphere in this respect was understood as 'above all a realm of participatory self-determination, deliberation, and conscious cooperation among equals'.¹⁴⁶ Or as Habermas writes: 'the bourgeois public realm may be conceived above all as the realm of private people who come together as a public; they soon claimed the public realm regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatised but publicly relevant realm of commodity exchange and social labor'.¹⁴⁷

As Habermas makes clear, this both depends upon the emerging of the bourgeoisie, specifically by members of that class free to enter these spaces and spend their time in these discussions – free to participate in public, to act as a participating citizen. They were 'free from the necessities of life', so to say – freed from the care about their livelihood, property and family. The public sphere secondly depended upon the development of the press, newspapers and novels,

that recorded these discussions, delivering them into a shared knowledge. Only upon the basis of this common knowledge could the public sphere as a forum occur and survive. The importance of this public sphere, as emphasized by Habermas, is that it established a third mode of societal integration – or better said: a possibility of societal integration – in between the spheres of both the state and the market economy.

The explanation of Habermas' idea of the public sphere by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor helps increase an understanding of the myriad forms and structure of public spaces. Taylor understands Habermas' public sphere as a meta-space, a space transcending all different local spaces that are turned into *common* spaces through meetings and debates, through gatherings and rituals, through events and happenings. These actual meetings somehow construct a 'common perspective', 'collective will' or 'public opinion' that thus can be seen as a third perspective in-between the state and the market: not emerging from the perspective of the government, nor from the perspective of the economy, but through local encounters between citizens. This common perspective, this 'public opinion', significantly contributes to the larger debate on the common good and the future of society.¹⁴⁸ Although these public debates initially were only attended by a narrow segment of the population – a bourgeois public that was able to read, to visit libraries and to gather in cafés in order to discuss political matters – over the years the public sphere expanded to include more and more participants. The emerging printed media was not only important in delivering the actualities that needed to be discussed and debated, it also helped to spread the opinion of the bourgeoisie class to the general public, as well as elevating local debate and opinion to the meta-level of the public sphere. According to Habermas, this public sphere was 'without historical precedent': it was based on 'people's public use of their reason'.¹⁴⁹ Habermas concludes that this new 'public sphere' is to be seen as an essential aspect of both the freedom of inhabitants and the new democratic character of politics: status no longer determined by decisions but through rational debate and arguments. This public body, however, could only be developed through the tangible space of the coffee house, salon and table societies organized in one or other sitting room, through concrete meetings, as well as through the possibility of spreading news through newspapers. It is through actual meeting and discussion in public space that public 'opinion' developed. In this perspective the public sphere thus is understood as a touchstone in respect to the democratic system and the freedom of the people.

Habermas actually was only indirectly concerned with actual political organization. Moreover, his emphasis on the public sphere develops the public sphere as a counter-active public 'body' in between the state and the market, in-between the power of the rulers and that of the economics. This image of the single body is criticized at length.¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, this emphasis on the tripartite distinction between the state, the market and the public emphasizes the 'power' aspect of this 'public sphere'. Only as a collective can the public resist the powerful forces of the market and the state. As Habermas concludes, this new 'public sphere' is to be seen as an essential aspect of both the freedom of inhabitants and the new democratic character of politics. When the public body begets an important and powerful voice, preconceived positions or kinship can no longer completely inform the decisions of the state and the organization of the market. Moreover, this public body is not just a gathering of public, the public 'body' only emerges through discussion on what is read in the paper in public space – in these same

148.

Charles Taylor, *Moderniteit in meervoud, Cultuur, samenleving en sociale verbeelding* (Kampen/Kapellen: Uitgeverij Klement/Pelckmans, 2005), 92

149.

Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 27; Habermas, 'The Public Sphere', 52

150.

See also the response of Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge that I discuss in the next chapter. They emphasize that one of the essential aspects of the public sphere is that it always evokes a *Gegegenöffentlichkeit*, a counter-public sphere. While the bourgeoisie public sphere consists of white men solely, also other public spheres came into being: the proletarian, plebeian, female, and so on. As both Fraser, Negt and Kluge thus argues, there never is a single body-public, there are only different bodies-public. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward and Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993)

151.
cf. Scruton, 'Public Space and the Classical Vernacular', 13

152.
Weintraub, 'The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction', 23; understood from a pure accessibility or ownership perspective, the latter two examples actually are not a 'truly' public space, described from public life, they certainly are public.

153.
Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain, Analyse and Strategy* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2001), 11

154.
Paul Scheffer, *Land van aankomst* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2007), 79

155.
Weintraub, 'The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Distinction', 23

156.
cf. Parkinson, *Democracy & Public Space*, 54

157.
cf. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 30; Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 17

158.
Lyn H. Lofland, *The Public Realm. Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory* (New York: De Gruyter, 1998), 9

159.
Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain*, 12

160.
Ibid., 8

salons, coffeehouses and table societies. This position in-between market and state immediately raises questions regarding the very idea of the 'public' – what I call here the 'public body'.

The last distinction made by Weintraub, brings the discourse on the public as close as possible to tangible space, the social gatherings in public space. When this category is understood as what happens in public space, one may define public space as planned and – more emblematically – unplanned encounters, specifically between the unknown, as seen previously in the reading of Jan Gehl.¹⁵¹ What happens in the public sphere then, described by Weintraub as 'participatory action', in the process of decision-making presented by Habermas as the figure of 'public opinion', is thus interrelated to this image of public life. The danger, however, is to understand the last category as meaningful only when it contributes to the previous one: to see public space only through the political perspective. To urge public space as only 'public' when, literally, political processes can take place: demonstrations, discussions and debates, an exchange of ideas and convictions. The image of public space is on the contrary linked to everyday life: an image no better visualised than by the well known urban activist Jane Jacobs and what she calls the 'intricate ballet' of the sidewalk. Public life, in this sense, emphasizes what actually happens in the public space of the street, the park and the plaza, as well as in the bar and café.¹⁵²

Nevertheless, as we will see, this political ideal fuels most readings within urban and architectural theory. This is, after all, what can easily be understood as the 'democratic' value of public space (particularly facing a multicultural society): offering room to and even actively gathering people regardless background, conviction, race, sexual orientation, and so on. This democratic space can then be understood as an unrestricted environment, 'freely accessible for everyone'.¹⁵³ Through this accessibility and sheer diversity, it teaches the basics of democracy: living and working together with differences.¹⁵⁴ Public space, in other words, gives room or even express diversity: it can generate solidarity, or at least make diversity 'manageable'.¹⁵⁵ In this picture, the possibility for 'strangers' to enter a particular space is essential: someone or something unknown or unacquainted.¹⁵⁶ This is often stressed as a particularly urban perspective: strangers depend on urban environments as much as urbanity depends upon strangers.¹⁵⁷ This perspective, how urban public space and the public sphere are thus related, seems to be rather clear. As the urban sociologist Lyn Lofland writes in her book *The Public Realm* (instead of public sphere, she uses public realm to describe that democratic ideal): 'The public realm is made up of those spaces in a city which tend to be inhabited by persons who are stranger to one another or who "know" one another only in terms of occupational or other not personal identity categories', adding, 'in the city, when one leaves private space, one moves into a world of many unknown or only categorically known others, ... many of whom may not share one's values, history, or perspective'.¹⁵⁸ The Dutch sociologists Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp support this perspective by introducing the notion of the proverbial 'other'. The public domain, they write (again introducing another term to describe the same issue), 'is the sphere where we encounter the proverbial "other" and where we must relate to "other" behaviour, other ideas and other preferences'.¹⁵⁹ In the very first pages of their book *In Search of a New Public Domain*, they admit that they 'tend to think that the public space fulfils an important role in increasing the 'social cohesion' in society',¹⁶⁰ and thus is able to bring different social groups in proximity, nearness. 'We define "public domain"', they write, 'as those places where an exchange between different social groups is

possible and also actually occurs'.¹⁶¹

The actual meeting of the proverbial other is important in two ways. Firstly, it is only through such confrontation in 'public' that, for instance, 'homeless people or other marginalized groups remain visible', as urban sociologist Don Mitchell writes. 'Only in public spaces can the homeless for example represent themselves as a legitimate part of "the public"'.¹⁶² Secondly, it is through exchange, through the confrontation with other perspectives, worldviews, approaches, behaviour and appearances, that our own stances and beliefs are questioned, they state. Exchange between people is thus essentially seen as the probability of (ex)changing minds and thus an awareness of the very locality of specific ideas, convictions, beliefs, views and opinions. The addition of the notion of the 'proverbial other' by Hajer and Reijndorp to the very idea of the public sphere is remarkable, since it reveals that the public domain – in their terms – is always the opposite of a sophisticated, calm and peaceful space. Through this meeting with the 'other', the individual is questioned, even criticized, at every inch. The public sphere, in other words, is the possibility to be questioned and criticized. This means that public space gives room to the 'battle of meanings' that needs to be fought out in society.¹⁶³ Public space urges the visitors (or better said: participant) to take a position vis-à-vis what is met in public. The city, as the sociologist Richard Sennett argues, has an educational aim. 'The value of witnessing both difficulty and diversity', he writes about the Classical Greek city-state, 'was thought to be that through exposure to the world the individual gradually found his or her orientation, found how to keep a balance. ... A city ought to be a school for leaning how to lead a centered life. Through exposure to others, we might learn how to weigh what is important and what is not. We need to see differences on the streets or in other people neither as threats nor as sentimental invitations, rather as necessary visions. They are necessary for us to learn how to navigate life with balance, both individually and collectively'.¹⁶⁴

In other words: the public sphere is often understood as an urban perspective, bound to the city, its public spaces, and its diversity. It is regarded as pivotal to the realm of politics and decision-making, as well as offering social cohesion in societies that are essentially plural, as well as personal, since the individual is challenged through the meeting of sheer otherness, not to forget the marginalized, the poor, the homeless, the stranger, the refugee, the distinct. This public sphere therefore is not established through shared beliefs and convictions, nor through a single ruler (being a single man or a party), neither through kinship, but through the actual gathering and meeting of people and exchange in space between the different groups that inhabit the society.¹⁶⁵ As we will see, and as may already be clear, in a city that is dispersed and scattered, this perspective on public spaces as part of the public sphere is highly challenged. Fear – the perspective developed by Mike Davis, and which opened up this debate on public spaces for us – reifies anxiousness for 'public space', since these public spaces play host to the stranger, to the unknown, the alien. What is rare, distinct or strange is threatening. Fear, therefore, as a leading principle of city planning, aims to reduce the free accessibility of space and increase control on both who is able to enter and what one is able to do in 'public' space, in order to give room to a group of 'generic' citizens – whoever that might be.

161.

Ibid., 11

162.

Don Mitchell, 'The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy', in: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol 85, No.1 (March 1995), 115

163.

Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain*, 13

164.

Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye, The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), xiii

165.

The philosopher Michael Sandel urges at this point the perspective of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), who argued in his well known book *On Liberty* (1859) that a lively debate within society is important, particularly to overcome the danger within democratic societies of the 'tyranny of the majority'. Michael Sandel, *Rechtvaardigheid. Wat is de juiste keuze?* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Ten Have, 2010), 62

166.

Harvey, 'The Political Economy of Public Space', 18

167.

See for instance the recent example in Guatemala: Paseo Cayala, a 'private city' in the outskirts of Guatemala City. The *Huffington Post* wrote an article on this 'private city' with the well chosen header 'Guatemala Builds Private 'Cayala City' For Rich To Escape Crime'. See: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/08/paseo-cayala-guatemala-private-city_n_2434644.html?utm_hp_ref=world#slide=1958266 [accessed January 11, 2013]

168.

Ashley Dawson, 'Geography of Fear: Crime and the Transformation of Public Space in Post-apartheid South Africa,' in: Setha Low, and Neil Smith, *The Politics of Public Space* (New York/London: Routledge, 2006), 124

169.

The slum somehow is the other side of the coin in the consumerist city. Mike Davis writes in his *Planet of Slums*: 'The price of this new urban order [by which he means that the number of inhabitants of cities nowadays have outnumbered the inhabitants of rural areas, growth that specifically takes place in the 'third world', HT], however, will be increasing inequality within and between cities of different sizes and economic specializations.' Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London/New York: Verso, 2006), 7

170.

<http://www.detail-online.com/architecture/topics/the-10-biggest-shopping-centres-in-the-world-018606.html> [accessed February 25, 2013]

2.2.5 A North American Question

It is very important – and this is the fourth and last aspect that I need to address before we actually start our journey around *The Retreat* – to note that it is a Northern American perspective that dominates the contemporary debate on (the decay of) cities, urbanity, and public space. That of course is understandable: it is about gated communities, shopping malls, theme parks, as we already have seen, 'new' suburban typologies that can now be found all over the world, but have their origins and can be seen most commonly in the United States. This Northern American perspective, also hovers over the debate on the political perspectives. We can argue that the domination of this perspective is interrelated with the transformation of the actual landscape, cities, and neighbourhoods of Northern America. As the aforementioned urban sociologist David Harvey argues, the physicality of urban public space and the political realm of the public sphere are interrelated, even dependent on each other. 'We do not, after all', he writes, 'experience the city blankly, and much of what we do absorb from daily life in the city (be it the long drag of the commute, the jostle of subway crowds, the blandness of the shopping mall, the elegance or grandeur of certain forms of urban architecture, the panhandlers on the sidewalk, or the peace and beauty of an urban park) surely has some kind of influence on how we are situated in the world and how we think and act politically within it'.¹⁶⁶

Without doubt the changes to the Northern American urban environment, the decline of downtown and the vast suburbanisation of the landscape, can be categorized as paradigmatic. As many theorists emphasize, this transformation depends on the specific accessibility of the American landscape and society for the neo-liberal worldview, as is stressed in the perspective of Seta Low and Neil Smith, which moreover turned out to be fertile soil for the postmodern dynamism of late capitalism. The American urban environment has changed sharply, visibly, and tangibly – first with the shiny artefacts of economic welfare and prosperity, and then with the reverse due to the crisis: the shrinking neighbourhoods and cities with their abandoned houses and vacant lots, and urban districts that are acknowledged as no-go-areas. Of course, these contemporary kinds of (new) urban types are not limited to the United States and Canada, but can be found around the world, in even more radical forms, specifically in a world that earlier was depicted by the 'Rise of the West' but today is characterized by the 'Rise of the Rest'.¹⁶⁷ As Ashley Dawson, who teaches English at the City University of New York, but also is characterized as an urban activist, argues in his 2005 article 'Geography of Fear', the rapidly growing cities of the world, the 'global South', show that 'the model of the consumerist city' which 'finds its paradigmatic expression in the zoned, gated, and sprawling cities of North America', is explored abroad as well.¹⁶⁸ Specifically, this is the case of what is rendered in the West as the Third World, where the incredible growth of cities settles down into an elusive and segregated landscape of gated communities besides slums, poverty near luxurious shopping malls.¹⁶⁹ After 23 years of being the biggest shopping mall in the world, *The West Edmonton Mall*, in 2012 is now ranked number ten, behind malls in China, Philippines, Malaysia, Dubai and Turkey.¹⁷⁰ However, although the building typology can appear to be alike, being a gated community, a shopping mall or an iconic landmark building, the very use and meaning can differ from country to country. The inhabitants of Jakarta, for instance, use a shopping mall in distinct ways to the ways in which roughly the same one is used by the Los Angeles' inhabitants – it plays a different cultural and social role in daily life of distinct groups in society. Nevertheless, the sharp and radical ways these contemporary forms of urbanity emerge abroad sometimes show 'the

underlying contents' of the Northern American 'society in a particularly stark light'.¹⁷¹ Specifically this is the case in the spatial development of the South African urban landscape, as Dawson argues. Both countries share a parallel history of 'foundation', of 'controlling the movement of its racialized populations' and of a formal abolishment of apartheid during the 20th century, which nowadays seems to be replaced by informal practices of segregation. Securing neighbourhoods and public spaces from criminal threats is in both countries a leading aim in the development of the urban landscape.¹⁷²

Despite these comparable histories and despite the radicalized image of the South-African landscape compared to the Northern American landscape, another reason should be mentioned regarding the paradigmatic image and its domination of the discourse. Apart from the participation of mostly Northern American voices, like Dawson himself,¹⁷³ it is not only the tangible changing landscape, but specifically the cultural, political and historical background that simultaneously has made the landscape accessible for the neo-liberal and the late capitalist approach, as well as arousing the fierce debate evoked by its very transformation. The appearance of the exterior landscape, of the world, is only accessible through the perspectives that are provided by culture, both literally and symbolically,¹⁷⁴ as is the case vice-versa: culture can only be understood as inhibited in the landscape. Landscape is formed through cultural practices – it is a product of a specific culture. Similarly, culture is shaped by the landscape. The particular context of the American landscape is first to be found in certain 'opposition' to the old continent of Europe. Symbolic to the American strive of independence, the historian Simon Schama writes in his book on the history of America, referring to the *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) from French-American author Jean Hector st. John Crèvecoeur, is the importance of individual landownership – a piece of land of one own.¹⁷⁵ The National Survey of 1785, which projected onto the landscape the famous American Jeffersonian grid,¹⁷⁶ was also based on the ideal of the rural landowner. As the critic of the American landscape J.B. Jackson writes in a 1955 article on the distinction between the 'distrust of the city' of the 'Founding Father' and the third U.S. president Thomas Jefferson and the writer Henry David Thoreau: 'The National Survey of 1785 was not merely inspired by Jefferson, it was a clear expression of the Jeffersonian dislike of a powerful government, centralized in cities, and the emphasis on the small rural landowner. The survey permitted and even encouraged the forming of townships with the school section in the center, townships with their own local government; but it made no provision for cities.'¹⁷⁷ This particular perspective is not at all negative on the political dimension of space. On the contrary, it is an almost entirely political imagining that is beyond the National Survey, emerging from an idea of freedom that was felt as opposite to the possibilities in Europe: the freedom of individual possession intertwined with the freedom of initiative. Although Jefferson changed his opposition against cities slightly during his career (he understood that cities were an indispensable element of American life in order to survive global changes), he still regarded urban environments as depriving citizens of human nature.¹⁷⁸ However, this image of the 'American Dream' of the individual landowner as the origin of the process of suburbanization that has transformed the American landscape and today threatens public space, is also emphasized by Archer. 'Already in the 1920s,' he writes, 'the notion of the American dream became melded with a very different ideal, that of the single-family house.'¹⁷⁹ The 'self made man' understood, in other words, the acquisition of a single-family house 'as an instrument in respect to realize 'the American dream',¹⁸⁰ which of course is one of the major reasons behind the rapid suburban-

171.

Dawson, 'Geography of Fear', 124

172.

Ibid., 124; Despite the similarities with developments in South Africa, the American landscape remain paradigmatic, I would argue. Specifically facing the appearance of some recent urban practices that will change the future of the urban landscape, as we will touch upon in this chapter. Therefore I still focus in America to describe the changing landscape as the reasonable background of this investigation of architecture and politics.

173.

Not only most of the prominent voices that can be heard in this debate, and of which some already popped up above, originate from the United States, but also seminal contributions from abroad, like those from Low Countries, as for instance the already mentioned Dutch urban sociologists Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, the Flemish philosopher Lieven De Cauter, the Dutch philosopher René Boomkens can be read as 'in dialogue' with the 'American' perspective

174.

cf. Antoine Picon, 'Architecture and the Virtual: Towards a New Materiality', in: A. Krista Sykes (eds.), *Constructing a New Agenda, Architectural Theory 1993-2009* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 271

175.

Simon Schama, *De Amerikaanse toekomst, Een geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Contact, 2008), 269

176.

As the American architect and educator Stan Allen notes: 'The rectilinear grid is one of architecture's oldest and most persistent organizing devices. From the outset, the grid supports a double valence: at once a simple and pragmatic means to partition territory or standardize elements and at the same time an emblem of universal geometries, with potential metaphysical or cosmological overtones. Hence the Jeffersonian grid, projected unconditionally over the open territories of the western United States is at once a symbol of democratic equality and an expedient means to manage vast quantities of territory: an attempt to impose measure on the immeasurable. But as Colin Rowe has remarked in a different context, in America, the pragmatic tends to win out over the universal. Paraphrasing Rowe, we note that in this context, the grid is "convincing as fact rather than as idea". Stan Allen, 'From Object to Field', in: *Architecture after Geometry, Architectural Design* 67, no 5-7, (May-June 1997), 27 [reference to Colin Rowe: Collin Rowe, 'Chicago Frame', in: *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (Cambridge MA., MIT Press, 1976), 99]

177.

John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Landscapes, Selected writings of J.B. Jackson* (Amherst (Mass.): University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), 4

178.

He writes in 1823 in a letter to William Short: 'A city life offers you indeed more means of dissipating time, but more frequent, also, and more painful objects of vice and wretchedness. New York, for example, like London, seems to be a Cloacina of all the depravities of human nature. Philadelphia doubtless has its share. Here, on the contrary, crime is scarcely heard of, breaches of order rare, and our societies, if not refined, are rational, moral and affectionate at least.' Quoted via Morton White and Lucia White, Lucia, *The Intellectual versus the City, From Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press/MIT Press, 1962), 19

179.

Archer, *Architecture and Suburbia*, XIX

180.

Ibid., XVI

181.

Jackson, *A sense of Place, a Sense of Time*, 5

182.

Schama, *De Amerikaanse toekomst*, 270

183.

Lewis Mumford, *The South in Architecture* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1967), 44: 'It calls attention to the fact that he was the rounded man, the man of well-developed capacities in a variety of fields, who was the object of humanist education at its best. The description also points to the fact that his strength lay equally in the arts of building, agriculture, and government.'

184.

Jackson, *Landscapes*, 5

185.

Joel Garreau, *Edge Cities, Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 15

186.

Lewis Mumford already in his 1924 overview of the American Architecture *Sticks and Stones* adds besides the grid as accessible for speculation, also the zoning-laws were: 'Now, to increase the population of a town and to raise the nominal values in ground rents is almost a moral imperative in our American communities. That is why our zoning laws, which attempt to regulate the use of land and provide against unfair competition in obtaining the unearned increment, almost universally leave a loophole through which the property owners, by mutual consent, may transform the character of the neighborhood for more inten-

ization of the American traditional city. The American landscape is characterized by the individual fulfilment of the American Dream, Jackson also states.¹⁸¹ As the Crèvecoeur emphasizes, this is opposite to the possibilities of Europe, where the landscape is ordered and cultivated through hierarchical structures of power and surveillance, leaving the citizens, and even the rural landowners, with limited freedom. On the other hand, and this is to be seen as the other side of the coin, of the context that both caused this transformation and the critical approach of this transformation, Schama adds to the importance of individual property and landownership, the political implications, as highlighted by writer Crèvecoeur: an understanding of this small parcel of privately owned land as the smallest entity of democracy.¹⁸² This was also the perspective of Jefferson, according to Lewis Mumford 'one of the last true figures of the Renaissance'.¹⁸³ Individual property and private freedom, was initially understood in respect to politics, in the perspective of the community. To cite Jackson again:

'If, in terms of design, our cities are little more than extensions of a village grid, the village itself – except in the older parts of the country – is in turn little more than a fragment of the regional grid: an orderly arrangement of uniform lots frequently focussed about a public square with no particular function and unvarying dimensions. The block, whether in Chicago or New Paris, Iowa, remains the basic unit, and the block is nothing more than a specific number of independent small holdings. For all its monotony, the Jeffersonian design has unmistakable Utopian traits: it is in fact the blueprint for an agrarian equalitarian society, and it is based on the assumption that the landowner will be active in the democratic process. The grid system, as originally conceived, was thus a device for the promotion of "virtuous citizens."¹⁸⁴

Despite this 'utopian' background, the grid was also susceptible to abuse by speculators, which seems to be the narrative of the contemporary transformations. In other words, 'the search of utopia [is] at the center of the American dream.'¹⁸⁵

This search, however, is not so much a perspective on society, but encircles the private life and particularly the freedom of the individual. This also has impacts on the approach to (urban) planning and development of the landscape. Within this perspective, combined with the grid, which offers the opportunity to simply develop plot by plot, there is no tradition of making development plans for larger areas, for cities and landscapes. Every development is piecemeal, limited to the individual prospects and ambitions. This means that the outcome of this process is a pattern of seemingly unrelated developments, worlds apart. There is no common structure or common plan that stitches these singular developments into a larger whole, an entity in time, a spatial continuity.

The changing political circumstances during the 20th century, the increase of land speculation causing rapid transformation of the landscape¹⁸⁶ and the postmodern dynamics of capitalism, are all in increasing contrast with the ideals behind the (European) political and spatial realm, which was therefore fertile soil for the mentioned 1989 English translation of the German Philosopher Jürgen Habermas' *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*. Even for those not concerned with the city, public space, villages, and rural areas, but rather with the political, economic, and social development of society, the tangible transformation of the – possibly their own – everyday living environment without doubt helped

to evoke concern about the public sphere, as recognised by Habermas. Actual space makes visible and tangible that which is at stake in these social realms.¹⁸⁷ As Bruce Robbins, who teaches English Literature and Cultural Theory at Columbia University in New York, explains in the introduction to *The Phantom Public Sphere*, the translation of Habermas' book was preceded by a number of other books (by intellectuals, on education) that had roughly narrated the same story: of 'a quality we once had, but now have lost.'¹⁸⁸ *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* indeed also is a story of decline. It starts, as said, with the emerging 'public sphere of the bourgeoisie' in the 18th and 19th century, due to a reconstitution of the private sphere as the realm of ordinary life and economic activity on the one hand and revolutions in the 'world of letters' on the others. This a perspective that is particularly promoted in the second part of his book, in which he investigates a certain 'decay' of the public sphere. While the public sphere is understood to be intrinsically interwoven with the advent of modernity and the rise of capitalism, it is simultaneously a notion in danger as a result of this modernity. The increasing number of participants – of lower social classes, with lower levels of education and lower cultural experiences and interests – affected the quality of the public debates. Civic organizations and institutions, originally informing and educating the public in order to 'ready them' before their participation in public, became interwoven with either the market or the state, and thus lost the independent and critical position of in-between. Later, consumerism, mass media, and the expansion of private space, both in reality and virtually, have threatened the public sphere – more or less the same forces that originated the public sphere are now also responsible for its decline. Undoubtedly, concern with the decline of public sphere was immediately linked to the changing urban areas. The book, therefore, was not only embraced by political theorists, but also investigated and incorporated by urban theorists and architectural critics who recognized Habermas' concern as the narrative of contemporary public space, a narrative of contemporary development that threatens the very nature of public space.

This also is the argument that the sociologist Richard Sennett constructs in his 1974 book *The Fall of Public Man*, regarding the decline of public space. He, like Habermas, argues that the changing private sphere (as was the case in the 18th and 19th century) affected the public sphere.¹⁸⁹ He writes:

"The history of the words "public" and "private" is a key to understand this basic shift in terms of Western culture. The first recorded uses of the word "public" in English identify the "public" with the common good in society. ... "Private" was used [here] to mean privileged. ... By the end of the 17th century, the opposition of "public" and "private" was shaded more like the way the terms are now used. "Public meant open to the scrutiny of anyone, whereas "private" meant a sheltered region of life defined by one's family and friends.' ... To go "out in public" ... is a phrase based on society conceived in terms of this geography. The older senses are not entirely lost today in English, but this 18th century usage sets up the modern terms of reference.'¹⁹⁰

In Sennett's 'history' the coffee houses of the 18th century again play a major role. 'Public', he continues, focussing on the 18th century bourgeoisie society, 'came to mean a life passed outside the life of family and close friends; in the public region diverse, complex social groups were to be brought into eneluctable contact. The focus of this public life was the capital city'.¹⁹¹ In the 18th century, the capital

uses and higher ground rents. All our city planning and more and more our architecture itself, is done with reference to prospective changes in the value of real estate.' Lewis Mumford, *Sticks and Stones, A Study of American Architecture and Civilization* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 226

187.

cf. David Brain, 'From Public Housing to Private Communities: The Discipline of Design and the Materialization of the Public/Private Distinction in the Built Environment', in: Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar, Krishan (eds.), *Public and Private in Thought and Practice, Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 239

188.

Bruce Robbins, 'Introduction: The Public as Phantom' in: Bruce Robbins (ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), vii

189.

Sennett uses the term public domain in stead of Habermas' public sphere. He therewith shows, I would argue, slightly more attention to the very spatiality of the public sphere. On the spatiality, I will come back extensively in Chapter 5, where I compare Habermas's perspective with Arendt's ideas.

190.

Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 16

191.

Ibid., 16

192.
Ibid., 12

193.
Ibid., 267; Compare also Camillo Sitte's remark on the emptied spaces of the urban center of the 19th century city. As early as 1889 he opens his well known book *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* with the analyse: 'Thus the significance of an open place in the middle of the city (a forum or a market square) has become an essentially different one today. Nowadays plazas seldom harbor great popular festivities, and they see less and less daily use. [...] How different in ancient times! In those days the main plazas were of primary importance to the life of every city because such a great deal of public life took place in them.' Camillo Sitte, *City Planning According to Artistic Principles: A Contribution to the Solution of Modern Problems of Architecture and Monumental Sculpture especially with Regard to the City of Vienna*, in: Camillo Sitte, George R. Collins and Christane Crasemann Collins, *The Birth of Modern City Planning* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc. 1986), 143

194.
Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 295

195.
Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye, The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York/London: W.W. Norton, 1992), 83

196.
Ibid., 111-114

197.
Although also within the Western conception of democracy there is no single perspective – there are multiple traditions of thought as well as different ways to organize it practically. I refer mainly to the basic assumptions behind the American and Western-European tradition, which is the involvement of the people themselves in the organization of politics.

198.
It is remarkable that both Habermas and Arendt share an European, or to be more specific, German background. Their ideas however were introduced into urban sociology, architectural theory and urbanism particularly by Northern American Scholars.

199.
Probably also the spatial difference between the old world Europe and the new world USA should be mentioned as well. In Europe urban environments are dominated by numerous historical inner cities, which still are attractive, both for visitors as well as inhabitants, both for shopping, working, leisure, as well as dwelling, and therefore accommodate still a quite plural public. The process of suburbanization has been developed

offered spaces where strangers could meet in urban parks, on streets that were fit for pedestrian strolling, and in coffee houses, cafes, and opera houses. The latter three urban spaces are even defined by Sennett as the 'social centres' of the city. Nevertheless, this also is a story of decline. The contemporary city, Sennett states, no longer offers such social spaces. 'Public domain is abandoned as empty', he writes, 'On the most physical level, the environment prompts people to think of the public domain as meaningless.' And: 'the street level itself is dead space,' he states in an outline analysis of the first 'pure International School skyscraper' built after world war II in New York, Gordon Bunshaft's *Lever House*.¹⁹² This change in conception of the public domain, from a vibrant social sphere towards this emptiness, this abandoned realm, becomes apparent through the analysis of the changing city-life. The change he detects is the increasing importance of the private realm. In the 19th century city, the public domain became quiet, a sphere of 'spectators' in stead of 'actors',¹⁹³ whereas in the 20th century an intimacy emerges in urban life, which he concludes from the strive for unity that becomes visible in both politics and urban planning. The search for safety in public space is one of the outcomes of this process: anxiety for what is distinct, odd, and chaotic.¹⁹⁴ Sennett retakes this perspective in *The Conscience of the Eye*, in which he again discusses the aim of unity and wholeness regarding actual diversity, which is the ideal behind the Enlightenment and beyond ideals of Bildung that dominated the late 19th and early 20th century.¹⁹⁵ In urbanism and architecture this aim has had a major impact and has lead to more extreme forms of singular buildings (of which the skyscrapers of Mies van der Rohe are an sublime example), he writes, which further decreases the possibilities of a sympathetic public space, and increases the quietness of public life.¹⁹⁶

In this respect, I would argue that it is a specifically Western conception of politics and democracy¹⁹⁷ and its inherent notion of the public sphere as an ethical ideal behind actual public space that fuels the debate, and that it is the specific history and situation of the changing urban environment in the United States that evokes this concern.¹⁹⁸ Although both the origins of the public sphere and the theory of this sphere originates in the 'old' continent, it was absorbed and sharpened theoretically by the American cultural critical movement of the 1990s. Surely, also in the 'old' continent forms of 'gated communities', shopping malls, outlet centres, iconic buildings, no-go areas, have gained locations within or at the edges of the city. And also in a European context, the specific room for 'otherness' in public space, also understood as a defining characteristic of the public sphere, has diminished. Nevertheless, it is within the American discourse and context that the narrative of the decline of the public sphere gained its urgency.¹⁹⁹ Generally speaking, the distinct ideas of 'the good life' between Europe and the Northern America's are obvious, which brings us back to Archer and his understanding of suburbanization in America as the proliferation of the 'American Dream'. Ideas on the 'good life' always depend on the valuation of the balance between private and public life, between private property and the political realm. Despite Jeffersonian emphasis on the 'virtuous citizens', the contemporary image of the good life in Northern America is more influenced by the ideals of privacy and personal freedom, whereas the European perspective still – although this is increasingly threatened – consists of a somehow balanced approach to the private and the public, between the family and participation in society.²⁰⁰ However, due most probably to the echo of Jefferson, Habermas's book gained widespread attention amongst political theorists in the United States, who in turn urged designers, theorists, architects and philosophers to rethink public space and urban

structures, raising issues and discussion on the loss of ideas and ideals behind public space in their work and explicitly connecting it to the urban environment.

The discourse on the changing urban environment in architectural theory is hence a largely Western debate on the political ideas and ideals of democracy that lie behind public space, against a backdrop of recent changes in space. This discourse particularly comes to the fore in the work of Northern American theorists, directly related to the actual transformation of the landscape and urban artefacts in the United States, which, in comparison to other Western countries, is sharp, tangible and visible. It, finally, is characterized by a negative tone: it is a narrative of decline, the debate is burdened with ideology (public sphere as prerequisite for 'real' democratic politics), and the conclusion is pessimistic in regards to its future state.

Thus: what about the actual urban landscape?

in the US with lesser restrictions than in Europe. The US, on the other hand, is dominated by the opposite, the suburban area, which more or less divide social groups and classes, instead of merging them into a public. However also in the contemporary American landscape historic sites become increasingly important, as well as the original core of cities, they nevertheless much more are part of a new 'heritage industry', which comes without the complex urbanity that still dominates the cities of Europe. Cf. Sieverts, *Cities Without Cities*, IX, XIII; and Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*, 151; and Bernard Colenbrander, *De verstrooide stad* (Rotterdam: NAI Uitgevers, 1999), 31

200.

cf. Bauman, *The Art of Life*, 91



2.4 Historic District (Downtown) Sanford, FL.

2.3 IMMERSED IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

2.3.1 *Growth – Business – Home*

The term public space and its relationship to the distinct notions of the public sphere, public realm, and public domain, thus has a quite specific definition, bringing physical space into the scope of not only urban sociologists, but also of political theorists. However, for a while I will suspend this definition and all its theoretical implications, in order to investigate the contemporary Northern American landscape. For now, it is enough to roughly describe public space as the open spaces that are regularly experienced by the public as ‘public’ – in the sense of not-private. This definition, of course, consists of interdependent parts, and is just an intuitive and loose description, in order to postpone for a moment the political aspects of the term. In my exploration of the landscape, I will first and foremost develop a view of the actual circumstances. In the next chapter, I will then sharpen the definition of public space with respect to the threads that are mentioned by Mike Davis, Sharon Zukin, Richard Sennett, Don Mitchell and many other theorists, before widening the definition in pursuit of an architectural approach as a cultural practice producing public artefacts.

In order to do so, let's move back to the Florida landscape of Sanford. As I did above in the exploration of the surroundings of *The Retreat*, I again visit this landscape like a tourist, a visitor – a visitor from a distance, as I travel via *Google Maps*, *Google Streetview*, a reading of maps and satellite images, photographs that are taken by users and uploaded to *Google Maps*, the links to websites I encounter. It is an experiment to virtually walk or drive around as much as possible, to immerse myself in a landscape via the screen. Of course, to really understand the urban landscape and spatial artefacts, their function and meaning, one has to *live* in that particular place. The buildings, the neighbourhoods, the shopping centres, the infrastructure, are not just spaces, or program, or location, or images, but are closely related to everyday life, to public and private lives, to daily routines and specific activities, as I have already shown. That is quite a different experience to that of the visitor or the tourist, for whom the landscape is totally new, and the tour is all but routine. The view of the visitor is driven by curiosity, wonder, and awe. However, I will every now and then compare my investigation of the landscape with some of the investigations of (Northern American) theorists on public space, in order to deepen the understanding of what I have seen.

Zooming out in *Google Maps* at the point we left our investigation of *The Retreat*, reveals that this gated community is part of the western suburban neighbourhoods of Sanford, a small town in the middle of Florida, located at the banks of Lake Monroe just above the city of Orlando. Without the need to draw an extensive and complete history of suburbanisation of Florida, it is clear that contemporary sub-urbanism can better be understood as an anti-urbanism. Suburbanism, as Mike Davis emphasized, is defined by anxiety for ‘urbanity’ and public space, those characteristics of urban life such as openness, publicity, mobility, diversity, experiment, heterogeneity, instability, uncertainty, speed, density, and so on.²⁰¹ Suburban neighbourhoods explicitly fuel a withdrawal from the ‘city’ (understood as differences united in an urban structure) into ‘worlds apart’. Indeed, suburbanism is rooted in a distrust of cities and a certain longing for the countryside (or nature),²⁰² propelled by increasing welfare, the

201. Boomkens, *Een drempelewereld*, 388

202. of the statement of the philosopher Ton Lemaire, arguing that the longing for nature runs parallel to developments in technology. It is interrelated with modernity, which, as we have seen previously, can be understood through this paradoxical experience of hope and loss simultaneously. Lemaire, *Filosofie van het landschap*, 40

203.

Lewis Mumford, *The City in History, Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects* (San Diego: Harcourt Inc., 1989), 483

204.

Ibid., 483

205.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Overpeinzingen van een eenzame wandelaar* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Uitgeverij L.J. Veen, 2006), 19; Note that before the landscape could offer this escape from the hustling and bustling city, the landscape has gone through major changes as well, at least offering a road network that accommodate the wanderer in the fields. See for instance: Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*, 7

206.

Archer, *Architecture and Suburbia*, 70

207.

quote via Jackson, *Landscapes*, 1; compare with White and White, *The Intellectual and the City*, 13-14

208.

Jackson, *Landscapes*, 1

development of the car, the availability of gasoline, as well as the increase of mass production and consumption. These developments offered broad groups of inhabitants the possibility to flee the city and to settle in its outskirts, even miles away from the city – thus changing the American landscape and city drastically. The ideal of countryside life has its origin long before modernity changed everyday life in urban environments. Lewis Mumford, in his book *The City in History*, even states that the ‘suburb becomes visible as early as the city itself, and perhaps explains the ability of the ancient town to survive the insanitary conditions that prevailed within its walls’.²⁰³ As one such example of suburban life in ancient times, he describes the Jewish Feast of the Tabernacle. During this feast tents are built outside the walls of the city for a week, in order to remember the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt and their wanderings through the desert for about eighty years before settling down in Canaan. As Mumford argues, the construction of these tents perhaps aimed ‘to guard the crops overnight when they were ready to pick, but doubtless also to refresh the soul, weary of the baked bricks and the foul smells of the city itself’.²⁰⁴ Such perspectives on the enrichment of the soul, the liberation of the mind, the healthy environment of the countryside, have been issued throughout history, as for instance in the Romantic period. Exemplary are the diaries written by the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), in which he describes his hikes through the outskirts of Paris, the quality of the countryside as quiet and healthy, which he strongly contrasts to the bustling and chaotic city. The impression of the landscape stimulates the mind and opens the senses, he writes.²⁰⁵ The Romantic age also plays an important role in the history architectural historian John Archer sketches in his book *Architecture and Suburbia*. Archer takes as his starting point the emerging culture of individualism evoked by the Enlightenment. This culture led to forms of privatism, an emphasis on private property, ownership and the family. According to Archer, this trait of privatism is to be read ‘oppositonality’ to the city, in which a particularly pastoral image of the rural landscape, as echoed in the words of Rousseau, played a major role. Romanticism, Archer argues, demanded the spatial separation of the ‘burden of business’ from the ‘pleasures of the home’.²⁰⁶

The suggestion of the rude city versus a polite and respectable rural environment is also the figure beneath the earlier mentioned National Survey that was influenced by Thomas Jefferson’s distrust of the concentration of political power within the city. ‘Cities,’ Jefferson writes in his 1785 *Notes on the State Virginia*, are ‘sores on the body politic’.²⁰⁷ J.B. Jackson, a French-American writer (1909-1996) who has extensively reflected upon the American landscape, fills in: ‘places of useless luxury, corrupt wealth, and political exploitation’.²⁰⁸ This distrust of cities is a characteristic stance of 18th century America. Intellectuals, writers and poets, ranging from Ralph Waldo Emerson to David Henri Thoreau, and from Edgar Allan Poe to Herman Melville, wrote fierce pieces against the city. This distrust was certainly fuelled by the emergence of the industrial city in the second half of the 19th century, particularly the effects of electrical lighting and other features of early modernization on the conditions of everyday urban life and the circumstances of labor within the city. Life in the city was increasingly experienced as artificial, unhygienic, polluted and poor, whilst life in the countryside was rendered as in balance with nature and the natural. Nature – and here we are again in the Romantic age – became the very ideal of life. This longing for the countryside, however, was surpassed by the ideal of ‘back to nature’, exemplified by the famous withdrawal of David Henri Thoreau into the woods of Walden (Mass.), described in his 1854 influential book *Walden, or Life in the Woods*. This withdrawal was more than just a rejection of the city: it involved

society as a whole. In what J.B. Jackson describes as Thoreau's 'final testament', his essay 'Walking', Thoreau writes: 'I wish to speak a word for nature, for absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and cultural merely civil – to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of nature, rather than as a member of society'.²⁰⁹

Thoreau's perspective had extensive reverberations, not only amongst intellectuals, writers and poets, but also in the work of America's most famous architect of the early 20th century, Frank Lloyd Wright. With the help and order of newly developed machines, the escape from the (old) city and the longing for a connection with nature got a new impulse through his work early in the 20th century, Lewis Mumford states in his 1956 book *Sticks and Stones*.²¹⁰ Specifically in his project *Broadacre City*, that he studied from 1935 even until the 1950s, Wright 'yearned for a system in which all men fled the evils of big capital, big authorities, big cities – troglodytes of every stripe – for a connection with nature, the earth, the ground.'²¹¹ Wright himself declared in a lecture: 'We can go to any place anywhere then and happily be ourselves. But in the overgrown village called a metropolis, now, we have to watch our step, dodge cars, literally take our lives in our own hands to get from somewhere to anywhere – wasting all of our nervous energy and half our time merely to get there and get back again – get back again maybe – keeping up this senseless urban concentration.'²¹² The origins of suburbanisation thus simultaneously lie in a desire to flee from the pollution, poverty, unhygienic circumstances and artificiality of the city, and an attempt to construct a life in balance with nature, an increasing eagerness of privatism, and the increasing opportunities (and need) to start anew.²¹³ Once again Mumford, in a wonderful quote: 'To be your own unique self; to build your unique house, mid a unique landscape, to live in this Domain of Arnheim a self-centred life, in which private fantasy and caprice would have license to express themselves openly, in short, to withdraw like a monk and live like a prince – this was the purpose of the original creators of the suburb.'²¹⁴

The process of suburbanization was propelled after World War II due to a combination of factors. Construction and extension of the cities, for instance, had been at a standstill during the war, and therefore a backlog had to be processed. The city and government specifically invested in city extensions. Welfare slightly increased, war technology improved processes of production (specifically mass production) and the technology available for society. Cars became in reach for the average citizen, as did gasoline, after the restrictions of the war.²¹⁵ This of course had an enormous impact on the (possible) layout of urban extensions. As the American scientist Francis Bello writes in his contribution to the 1957 volume *The Exploding Metropolis*: 'The motorist is not "strangling" the city – as a matter of fact he drives in and out a lot faster than he thinks. But he is changing the fundamental character of the metropolitan area – and many planners fear, for the worse'.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is not just the car that changes the environment. As the economist Richard Florida remarks: 'Its rise was so inexorable because it was an inextricable component of the complex workings of the high Fordist economy, which was driven by the mass production of goods that were destined to be consumed by the very workers who produced them. As people ... settled down in their suburban houses, their purchase of washers, dryers, television sets, living room sofas, carpets, and automobiles stimulated the manufacturing sector, creating still more jobs and still more homebuyers'.²¹⁷ This process of suburbanization, characterized by an incredible increase in home ownership, from 45 percent of Americans owning single-family homes in 1940 to over 60 percent by

209.
quote via *Ibid.*, 2

210.
Mumford, *Sticks and Stones*, 54; Wright defines organic architecture as 'Organic architecture knows architectural values as human values. All are true not only to nature but as true to humanity as nature or not valuable! So a good modern building is organic integration rising as the needed organic city will rise, enemy to all forms of imitation or centralization imposing or ompinging upon manhood. Neither building nor city is longer to be tolerated as structure. Buildings, like people, are sun children, sun growth from the ground, sun acceptance, or they are not organic. Both building and city may be ore truly devense against time, against the elements, or against an enemy than they ever were before in all history. Architecture will again be true shield for whatever aspiration, glory, or privacy humanity desires.' Frank Lloyd Wright, *When Democracy Builds* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 58

211.
Garreau, *Edge Cities*, 10

212.
Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Organic Architecture, The Architecture of Democracy, The Sir Watson Lectures of the Sulgrave Manor Board for 1939* (London: Lund Humphries Limited, 1970), 12-13

213.
As of course also is the inherent message of the well known 1942 child-book of Virginia Lee Burton, *The Little House* (Boston (Mass.): Houghton Mifflin Co., 1942). See also the wonderful Pixar animation *Up* (Pete Docter and Rob Peterson, 2009)

214.
Mumford, *The City in History*, 485-486

215.
Alan Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion, And the Future of the American City* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 8; see also Victor Gruen, *Centers for the Urban Environment, Survival of the Cities* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1973), 18

216.
Francis Bello, 'The City and the Car', in: William H. Whyte jr. (ed.), *The Exploding Metropolis* (Garden City (NY): Doubleday & Company inc., 1958), 32

217.
Richard Florida, 'The Fading Differentiation between City and Suburb', <http://urbanland.uli.org/Articles/2013/Jan/FloridaSuburbs> [accessed February 14, 2013]

218.

Mumford, *Sticks and Stones*, 229

219.

Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 17

220.

Ibid., 18-19; the philosopher Roger Scruton offers a clarifying analysis of what actually happens when 'nature' becomes the image of public space: "There has emerged a very important idea of public space. According to this idea, which has been extremely influential in modern planning, a public space is primarily a substitute for nature. Under the baneful tutelage of Ebenezer Howard, Lewis Mumford, and Le Corbusier, the park has become accepted as a paradigm; it is the area in the heart of a city where the citizen can walk freely. Behind this idea is a peculiar view of civil association: our primary civil need, it is supposed, is to escape from the pressures of others, and in the park we become free, by becoming free of others." Scruton 'Public Space and the Classical Vernacular,' 17

221.

Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 22

1960, was propelled by the active involvement of the government in assisting war veterans to build their own home, realising their 'dream of a free-standing house with a garden'. The emergence of suburbs, the emergence of the social masses and the Fordist mass production are all intertwined: the suburbs cannot exist without the availability and accessibility of masses of products: cars, televisions, vacuum-cleaners, fridges, where the development of the suburbs themselves propelled the emergence of mass production, and mass production in turn fuelled the masses.

Already in 1924, Lewis Mumford criticized the suburbanization of the landscape. The new suburban figures can hardly be seen as 'a city', he argues, which has consequences for society itself. 'A city, properly speaking, does not exist by the accretion of houses, but by the association of human beings. When the accretion of houses reaches such a point of congestion or expansion that human association becomes difficult, the place ceases to be a city.'²¹⁸ Mumford's critique upon the suburbs is repeated in several perspectives over the years – several of which have been touched upon previously. The suburbs, the sprawling of houses into the landscape, the new enclaves that are established, are all symbols of the destruction of the city and the loss of meaningful public spaces. It is of course in a way too simple, to blame the *American Dream* for the 'destruction' of the city and the loss of public space. It is actually in Europe, when the effects of the Industrial Revolution became tangible in cities, that other models of villages, cities, and urban plans began to be developed. In her preface to *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* urban writer, critic and activist Jane Jacobs, for instance, critically investigates one of these models, the concept of *Garden City* by Ebenezer Howard in 1898. After valuing the social perspective of this model, particularly facing the problems of that time, she condemns his ideas as 'city-destroying'. 'Howard was not planning cities,' she writes, 'he was not planning dormitory suburbs either. His aim was the creation of self-sufficient small towns, really very nice towns if you were docile and had no plans of your own and did not mind spending your life among others with no plans of their own. As in all Utopias the right to have plans of any significance belonged only to the planners in charge.'²¹⁹ Some paragraphs further on, she continues: 'he defined wholesome housing in terms only of suburban physical qualities and small-town social qualities. He conceived of commerce in terms of routine, standardized supply of goods, and as serving a self-limited market. ... He was uninterested in the aspects of the city, which could not be abstracted to serve his Utopia. In particular, he simply wrote off the intricate, many-faceted, cultural life of the metropolis.'²²⁰

Howard's ideas have had a great impact on the thoughts of city-planners and with that on the development of cities worldwide, particularly on the Modern approach to architecture and urbanism, as for instance in the radical ideas of the well known Swiss-French architect and artist Le Corbusier. Also in his case – especially his radical proposal *Radiant City*, in which the whole city is imagined as huge skyscrapers in park-like open space – Jacobs blames Le Corbusier not for designing a physical environment but for planning a social utopia. 'Le Corbusier's Utopia was a condition of what he called maximum individual liberty by which he seems to have meant not liberty to do anything much, but liberty from ordinary responsibility.'²²¹ Using Jane Jacobs here as a view on the history of city-development, and with that on the public life of cities, is not to blame modernism in architecture. Rather, it is meant to show what specific quality she applies to the urban fabric and public life. In her comments on Howard, Le Corbusier and all other 'modern-orthodox' approaches to planning, we glimpse of what she promotes as the key importance of cities and city-life: the right and opportunity

to take initiatives and to invent the new, the possibility of differences and of interactions. Despite a lot of nicely landscaped open green space in both *Garden City* and *Radiant City*, there is a lack of a lively *public life*, according to Jacobs, a lack of diversity itself as well as of the possibility to give room to diversity. She assigns this lack of liveliness to the aim for controlled space and emphasis on security in neighbourhood planning. The functional perspective is a perspective deeply rooted in the wish to control space. The hustle and bustle of traditional cities, with their mix of uses, functions and activities, withdraws from control, whereas areas of single-use are susceptible to control, since what is strange, or behaves differently, attracts attention. This of course is what many urban theorists have argued: in controlled space, behaviour is restricted and the stranger is seen as a danger to the established security. For Jane Jacobs, as well as other urban critics like the sociologist Richard Sennett, the *stranger* is the essential characteristic of urban space, and with that of the liveliness and vitality of the streets and squares of the city. Cities, Jacobs states, 'are, by definition, full of strangers. To any one person, strangers are far more common in big cities than acquaintances. More common not just in places full of public assembly, but more common at a man's own doorstep. Even residents who live near each other are strangers, and must be, because of the sheer number of people in small geographical compass.'²²² Or as Richard Sennett writes in his definition of cities: 'a city is a human settlement in which strangers are likely to meet.'²²³ In certain ways, the underlying argument made here is that within cities, an attractive, lively and meaningful public space can only exist if it is open and accessible for everyone.

222. Ibid., 30
223. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 39
224. Boomkens, *Een drempelewereid*, 247
225. Jackson, *A Sense of Place*, 3-4
226. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/07/weekinreview/the-nation-the-endless-city-vs-its-closing-frontier.html> [accessed January 11, 2013]

But let's return to suburban America, and see how the actual environment has become what it is. About 80% of spatial development after World War II was bound to suburban developments. Although today more than half the population of the world now live in cities, in America, more than half of the city population lives in suburban areas.²²⁴ The model of suburbanization first was to fill the typical grid plan of American cities and landscape²²⁵ with the single-family house on its own yard. The grid, of course, could easily be extended to the surrounding landscape. The result of this model is the endless sea of houses that has conquered the American landscape. Particularly, the city of Los Angeles is symbolical in this respect. Los Angeles, as many other North American cities, has a relatively small centre with high rise buildings that mostly consists of offices and other businesses, a few theatres, restaurants and bars. Hardly any dwellings can be found in the centre. Most of the people live in single-family dwellings, a sea of houses that stretches far into the desert. Los Angeles always has been the 'most private' of cities: it is the city that is most extremely shaped by the American dream. Attracted by Southern California's temperate climate, it was first the wealthy Americans that moved to the city to built their country houses, their manors, and their retirement homes. The city represented the good life. Due to this attractiveness and the specific character of city growth, Los Angeles was already suburban before suburbanization took place in the rest of America: in the 1920's, developers built close to 3,200 subdivisions and 250,000 detached homes and in 1930 about 94 percent of dwellings in Los Angeles were single-family homes.²²⁶

The American dream of a 'free-standing house with a garden' is now spread endlessly over the landscape, not only in Los Angeles but all over Northern America, making the question of the quality of these environments an urgent one. At the end of the fifties, William Whyte challenged the quality of these areas. 'Huge patches of once green countryside have been turned into vast, smog-filled deserts that are neither city, suburb, nor country, and each day – at a rate of

227.

William H. Whyte jr., 'Urban Sprawl', in: William H. Whyte jr. (ed.), *The Exploding Metropolis* (Garden City (NY): Doubleday & Company, inc., 1958), 115

228.

Mumford, *The City in History*, 485-486

229.

quote via Frampton, 'Towards an Agonistic Architecture', https://www.domusweb.it/en/opinion/2013/10/03/_towards_an_agonistic_architecture.html [accessed November 22, 2013]

230.

Above mentioned facts are taken from the Canadian documentary *Radiant City* (Gary Burns and Jim Brown, 2006). *Radiant City* can be watched online via <http://topdocumentary-films.com/radiant-city/> [accessed January 9, 2013]

231.

Dunham-Jones, 'Capital Transformations of the Post-Industrial Landscape', 9

232.

'Modernization had a rational program: to share the blessings of science, universally. Junkspace is its apotheosis, or meltdown ... although its individual parts are the outcome of brilliant inventions, hyper technical, lucidly planned by human intelligence, imagination and infinite computation, their sum spells the end of Enlightenment, its resurrection as farce a low grade purgatory.' Koolhaas, 'Junkspace', 136

233.

A great source on cultural depiction of the suburbs can be found in Archer, *Architecture and Suburbia*; see for an extensive discussion on literature (novels, and finally film as well) and suburban life: David Hamers, *Tijd voor suburbia. De Amerikaanse buitenwijk in wetenschap en literatuur* (Amsterdam: Van Genneep, 2003). Specifically his conclusion (Chapter 7) that originates from a reading of the film *American Beauty* is provocative.

234.

Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 28

235.

As for instance the American Douglas Morris in his *It's A Sprawl World After All*. See <http://www.itsaspawl-world.com> [accessed January 10, 2013]

236.

Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge (Mass.), MIT Press, 1972)

237.

cf. <http://radical-pedagogies.com/search-cases/a14-new-haven-de>

some 3,000 acres a day – more countryside is being bulldozed under. You can't stop the progress, they say, yet much more of this kind of progress and we shall have the paradox of prosperity lowering our real standard of living.²²⁷ Only a few years later Lewis Mumford writes about the irony of suburban growth: 'In the mass movement into suburban areas a new kind of community was produced, which caricatured both the historic city and the archetypal suburban refuge: a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless pre-fabricated foods, from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to a common mold, manufactured in the central metropolis. Thus the ultimate effect of the suburban escape in our time is, ironically, a low-grade uniform environment from which escape is impossible.'²²⁸ The growth of the suburbs, despite Mumford's remark, hasn't stopped. On the contrary, over the years the amount of suburbs has grown unparalleled. 'There are no cities, in fact, anymore. It goes on like a forest,' the German-American architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe concludes during the fifties.²²⁹ The growth of suburbs, is however, paralleled by the growth of the average size of single developments, from about 800 sqft in 1950, 1500 sqft in 1970 to 2266 sqft in 2000. Compared with 'older' medium density towns, suburban areas use two to four times as much land.²³⁰ These new neighbourhoods, these widely spreading housing areas, that later were combined with 'low density clusters of office parks, apartment complexes, strip centres and regional malls' soon were called 'urban sprawl', the urban theorist Ellen Dunham-Jones writes.²³¹ Or in the words of the architect Rem Koolhaas: 'the residue mankind leaves on the planet', *Junkspace*.²³² This suburbanized America, this urban sprawl, immediately renders a specific image, an image that is formed as well as questioned through a wide range of cultural artworks, like novels, photographs and movies – to stick to the latter, amongst others (very arbitrarily chosen here) are the *Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998), *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999), *The Virgin Suicides* (Sofia Coppola, 1999) and *A Serious Man* (Ethan Coen, Joel Coen, 2009).²³³ The image that emerges from these films is not just the endless monotony of single-family houses, lawns and carefully designed streets, but the 'replacement of city streets and squares as social centers,' as Sennett writes, 'by suburban livingrooms.'²³⁴ Or to state it differently, emptied outdoor spaces, a lack of public life, an emphasis on family life and intimate spaces that characterizes the suburb and simultaneously heavily impacts traditional urban cores. The intimate sphere absorbs the public.

Indeed, the suburbs have conquered the countryside, but is it also true that it 'turned the dream of every American into a nightmare' as critics state?²³⁵ In 1971, the American architect Denise Scott Brown and her partner Robert Venturi, upon whom we touched previously, started a studio at Yale, reflecting upon the suburbs by propelling a close reading of Levittown, PA. Although their work remained unpublished (contrary to their previous studio, which dealt with Las Vegas),²³⁶ their attempt was broadly discussed. Through their close reading, they were able to show how the inhabitants appropriated their spaces: how they personalized their front doors and changed their lawns. They compared their findings with popular images of the suburbs in the media – from car advertisements to television commercials, and from strips to home journals. The studio raised much critique, particularly because of this use of popular 'literature' as a method for the analysis of the built environment – the post-modern attempt to value popular culture.²³⁷ Venturi et al nevertheless were able to challenge the debate, and partic-

ularly the critical approaches, in order to acknowledge these (new) suburban spaces as the very everyday environment of their inhabitants (although the critical voices remained at the forefront of the discourse on suburbs). The 2006 Canadian documentary *Radiant City* (Jim Brown, Gary Bruns), which follows the life of a (fictional) family in a new development on the outskirts of Toronto, somehow perfectly renders this image of suburbs on their poster: ‘Politicians call it growth, Developers call it business, The Moss family calls it home.’²³⁸ The choice not to follow a ‘real’ family settling down is discussed at the end of the film at length. The filmmakers explain that it is an attempt to mirror the numerous advertisements and images of perfect family and community life that are on screen today. None of them true, all of them artificial. The Moss family depicts the deficiencies of such neighbourhoods: the lack of facilities, the endless car or bus journeys to malls, school, piano class, gymnastics, even a 10 minutes’ drive by car to get coffee, the difficulty of planning, the need for two cars per household, the mundanity of the neighbourhood, the barrier of roads, the lack of public space, the lack of community. Every year, the average North American driver spend 440 hours in the car, the documentary tells, in suburbs traffic injuries as well as fatal accidents are three times more common than in the inner cities, and the average suburban adult is 6.3 lbs heavier than the average urban adult.

Sanford is a small town at the borders of Lake Monroe, located about 35 miles above the bigger and known city of Orlando. Sanford spreads over almost 60 km² and has a population of about 54,000 people.²³⁹ 45 % of the Sanford population are ‘whites – non hispanic’, American social data office *Census* tells. In Seminole County, which is the county Sanford is the main city of, 34.2% of the people are non-whites (exclusive Hispanics) in a population of 425,000 – which tells the distinction between Sanford and the smaller communities around. Homeownership rates are lower than in Florida generally, 56.2% versus 69%, as also is the case of ownership of houses that are part of a housing complex: 29.9% versus 34.2%. The average value of these houses is also lower than in Florida generally: \$ 156,000 versus \$ 168,000.²⁴⁰ The image we get through this ‘virtual’ landscape: Sanford is amongst the poorer areas of this region. The very topographical conditions in the area of Sanford have helped to create neighbourhoods not too large, although the identity of the distinct neighbourhoods merge through the architecture of the houses. The houses just offer what people want: preferably Mediterranean style single-family houses with verandas, gardens, garages, in a mono-functional development. Despite the layout of the plans – these cul-de-sacs that suggests a certain community in a neighbourhood - such collective spaces actually lack collectiveness, as the Canadian architect Marc Boutin stresses in *Radiant City*. The houses are seen as a ‘container’ in which life is lived, distinct from the surroundings. This container is connected to the world via media: television, internet, smartphone, PDA. Even in its architecture this mediated connection with the ‘world out there’ becomes clear: these suburban houses – not only here in *The Retreat*, but almost in every suburbanized area – seem to lack a connection with the surrounding collective space, let alone public space. The actual appearance in the world only is through the car, of which the garage that is prominently built in front of the house is the symbol. However, such housing schemes already show in their outer form that no one in the house actually looks at the street: these houses turn their back to the street, the garage literally blocking the view towards the collective domain. No inhabitant is involved in the collective seems to be the message, Boutin states. Even more strongly envisioned: the garage is the most direct connection between street and house, the car thus

nise-scott-brown-robert-venturi-learning-levittown-yale-school-architecture/ [visited June 20, 2017]

238.

The title, *Radiant City*, is, I guess, a reference to a passage taken from the first chapter of *The Geography of Nowhere* from the novelist James Howard Kunstler. In the documentary he almost literally cites this passage himself: ‘Ever-busy, ever-building, ever-in-motion, ever-throwing-out the old for the new, we have hardly paused to think about what we are so busy building, and what we have thrown away. Meanwhile, the everyday landscape becomes more nightmarish and unmanageable each year. For many, the world *development* itself has become a dirty word. Eighty percent of everything ever built in America has been built in the last fifty years, and most of it is depressing, brutal, ugly, unhealthy, and spiritually degrading – the jive plastic commuter tract home wastelands, the Potemkin village shopping plazas with their vast parking lagoons, the Lego-block hotel complexes, the “gourmet mansardic” junk-food joints, the Orvellian office “parks” featuring buildings sheathed in the same reflective glass as the sunglasses worn by chain-gang guards, the particle-board garden apartments rising up in every meadow and cornfield, the freeway loops around every big and little city with their clusters of discount merchandise marts, the whole destructive, wasteful, toxic, agoraphobia-including spectacle that politicians proudly call “growth”.’ James Howard Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere, The Rise and Decline of America’s Man-made Landscape* (New York: Touchstone, 1993), 10 [Emphasizes in original]

239.

<http://www.orlandosanfordairport.com/pass.asp> [accessed January 8th, 2013]

240.

The Census facts of Sanford, FL., 2011, can be found at: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/12/1263650.html>; the Census facts of Seminole County, 2011, can be found at: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/12/12117.html> [accessed January 4th, 2013]

241.

As the previously mentioned study of Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, together with students of Yale University, on Levittown PA shows, this might be exaggerated. Lawns and frontdoors are appropriated, and therefore connect (and represent) private life to the collective. Beyond that, also within collective spaces, neighbourhood boards, collective events and particular moments, there certainly is collective life within such neighbourhoods. In chapter 5, I will discuss reframe the possibilities of collectiveness that even the gated community offers.

242.

As we will see in the next chapter, this is one of the major aims of the New Urbanism approach, which has had extensive influence on suburbanization in the last two decades. In *The Retreat*, this of course is tangible in the lawn and the community house, close to the entrance to the neighbourhood.

243.

Jackson, *Landscapes*, 6

244.

I will come back on this reflection in the concluding paragraphs of this chapter

245.

Or with so-called 'edge cities', a much more urban than suburban figure, offering a mixture of programs, but without the tension of the public spaces in the former inner cities. The emergence of a range of such cities is described by the journalist Joel Garreau, who mentions Irvine as one of the examples of the range of 'Edge Cities', Garreau, *Edge City*, 5

the vehicle to appear in public.²⁴¹ Actually, these kind of neighbourhoods, such as *The Retreat* and other 'cul-de-sac' developments, are the triumph of Thoreau over Jefferson. Whereas Jefferson in his distrust of cities aims to create the rural environment for 'natural' man as a social being, a political creature, inevitably involved in the world, Thoreau strives for solitude and closeness to unspoiled nature, a withdrawal from the world. These gated communities and cul-de-sac suburbs, despite their contemporary aim to create a collective space,²⁴² can thus not only be seen as Thoreau's rejection of the Jeffersonian grid of the *National Survey*, not only the rejection of the rural attitude in favour of the strive for a 'balance with wilderness', but moreover the complete rejection of society in favour of 'a total commitment to a natural, solitary way of life', of the political in favour of a process of privatism.²⁴³

2.3.2 *Infrastructural Landscapes*

As Davis stated: it is fear that depicts the organization of these neighbourhoods. Every spatial element, especially in the gated communities, has a function vis-à-vis securing the inhabitants: the walls and the porches, the internal street profiles, the perfectly mown lawns, the concrete paths between the houses, even the architecture of the homes, the appearance of the buildings, all create literal borders as well as a particular identity, a wholeness. The enclave, we might state, is supported by a range of interventions in space to create borders that can be controlled and an image that can be 'branded', sold to particular groups of inhabitants.²⁴⁴ Of course this 'hardware' needs 'software': signs, camera surveillance, lighting during the night, burglar alarms, guards at the entrances or driving around the neighbourhood 24/7, attendants and gardeners during the day, and Neighbourhood Watches (and surely also AEDs around the corner – the threat is not only criminal, actually, also health is a risk nowadays). The controllable area needs actual control. The sight of cameras, the light of spotlights around entrances, the wandering around of guards, all increase the *feeling* of security. With these aspects of 'soft and hardware', *The Retreat* thus is just one example of the impact fear has on shaping the built environment. However, it is not only the neighbourhoods that change by an increasing emphasis on (personal) safety in society, it is the city as an urban entity that changes. It loses its social cohesion and morphological continuity. We therefore should travel further and see what the urban landscape of Sanford offers. As the map immediately shows, parkways and (Interstate) highways cut through the suburbia. The parkways, sometimes called boulevards, seem to belong to an older grid structured road system, subdividing the landscape in large squares, which here and there are filled with small neighbourhoods and (gated) communities, those we touched upon along Twin Lake. Everywhere the same type of plans: small size communities consisting of curving roads around a collective space, similar housing typologies, all connected to the parkways with just one or two access roads. Thoreau over Jefferson again, romantic deprivation over rational community. The parkways in turn connect the subdivisions with a larger structure of highways, and over the highway the urban centre, shopping malls, industrial parks, and recreation areas.²⁴⁵ If Davis describes 'fear' shaping the urban environment, it starts with the very location and planning of a neighbourhood. Even if it is not a gated community, as is the case in the south eastern part of Twin Lake, the location, how it is connected to the larger network of the urban landscape, to (urban) functions, facilities, and services, the distance to other neighbourhoods, urban cores, and so on, are all crucial. Distance matters. As the walls of a gated community show, the search for (personal) safety

in neighbourhoods is driving the need for control and the exclusion of strangers (while at the same time, of course, emphasizing the character of ‘community’ that is formed through the walls and porch, as well as through the landscaping of the surface and the architecture of the buildings, their common shape, colour, and ordering). Order, today, is understood as a lack of bodily contact. Therefore much effort is done to minimize and even avoid conflict²⁴⁶ and bodily sensations. This fenced world, living a smooth but deprived life, is rendered as the perfect image of the good life.

Of course, the exclusion of strangers in the neighbourhood starts with its very location: the suburban landscape is mono-functional and not easily accessible from other parts of the urban landscape – only the car connects the neighbourhood to the larger environment. The large access roads that provide drivers easy and immediate access to the suburbs, malls, leisure centres, and so on, seen from the eyes of the pedestrian or the cyclist, are barriers in the landscape. These big infrastructural figures are literally detached from the landscape, separated from the grid structure of the National Survey that, here in Sanford, is still traceable in different roads that now have a dead end or break near the highway. This is the appearance of the ‘automotive society’, as the Northern Americas can be called. The Interstate Highway System that covers the United States was started in 1956, by 1961 already 41,000 miles had been built, and in the fifty years that followed, a further 6,000 miles were added. Through the construction of the freeways, part of the governmental investment to overcome the crisis of the 1950s, inhabitants experienced new forms of modernity: the possibility of speed, individualism, technology, a balance of excitement and fear.²⁴⁷ The highway also brought the inhabitants new possibilities of living, working, and recreation. As the architectural historian Iain Borden states in *Drive*, his exploration on cars, the landscape and the representation of driving in film, this governmental project helped people spread all over the country, also to areas without public transport, which in turn fuelled the demand for cars.²⁴⁸

Borden explores the ‘delight’ of driving itself – an almost communal experience although executed in the private cell of the automobile. As is the case with urban sprawl, the road has become a ‘natural’ backdrop to everyday life, driving a daily practice, and therefore is also rendered in a wide range of movies – Borden has analysed over 450 films – like *Kalifornia* (Dominic Sena, 1993), *Speed* (Jan de Bont, 1994), *Matrix Reloaded* (Larry and Andy Wachowski, 2003), *Taxi* (Tim Story, 2004), *Collateral* (Michael Mann 2004), and *Little Miss Sunshine* (Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, 2006).²⁴⁹ How the highway appears in film of course differs from picture to picture, as J.B. Jackson writes: ‘A favourite episode in novels and movies and television shows laid in the American heartland is that lonesome ride through the night landscape: an occasion for remembering other times.’²⁵⁰ The automatic handling of driving on the endless highway leaves the skilled driver room for thoughts and memories – suddenly seeing mistakes, wrongdoings, gaining new knowledges, insights, seizing new paths, chances, opportunities. The stops deliver new directions, a talk with the gas oil seller, a meeting with a hitchhiker, a chat in a burger restaurant, or by being trapped. The route along the road becomes the contemporary rite, the passage to the past or the future, the next phase in life.

Remarkably enough, it is the very narrative of the animated (child) film *Cars* (John Lasseter and Joe Ranft, 2006) that shows the impact of the freeway system on the countryside, the in-between landscape. The movie starts with the pleasure

246.

Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone, The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 19

247.

Although it actually is published only one year after construction of the highway began, the famous book *On the Road* of Jack Kerouac of course is a seminal example of the renewed experience of modernity – the experience of traveling, of ‘being on the road’ from one county to another, from one state to another, from one city to another, from the East coast to the West, somehow is the alter ego of forms of liberation of the individual, fuelled by the acquaintance of new forms of music, the meeting with persons from distinct (sub)cultures, the possibilities of new discoveries in technology, the experience of social liberation and emancipation movements

248.

Iain Borden, *Drive* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2013), 123; Or as Mumford writes: ‘The change of scale and the scattering of dwellings raised an older rural problem that of isolation; and to achieve any degree of social advantage, it magnified the need for private vehicular transportation, since, again, the very dispersal of dwellings made any more public systems of transportation for short hauls prohibitive.’ Mumford, *The City in History*, 490

249.

Borden, *Drive*, 15, cf. also Boyer, *Cyber Cities*, 216–220

250.

Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*, 152

251.
cited via Borden, *Drive*, 128

252.
Marc Augé, *Non-Places, Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London/New York: Verso, 1995), 105

253.
Sennett, *Flesh and Stone*, 17-18

254.
Donald Appleyard, Kevin Lynch, and John Randolph Meyer, *The View From the Road* (Cambridge (Mass.): Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1964)

of driving the freeway, this endless and continuous architectural space, solely designed for high-speed traffic, stitching together distinct and overwhelming landscapes – from hills to valleys, from the wilderness to the desert – the rhythm of separated intersections, access-roads, signage systems, service facilities, the continuous movement of traffic. Cars on the move, looking forward – literally. But as the film unfolds, the narrative flips. Whereas roads are embedded into the landscape, both in the morphological and social (and economic) structure of the country, the freeway cuts through and is divorced from the countryside, towns and villages. From the highway, the landscape is decor (if it even is seen from the driving position), that even changes by the very speed of the movement: from the new economics along the road, seen by the perpetual rhythm of billboards, to the deterioration of the actual countryside. Radiator Springs, the rural village featured in *Cars* has been turned in economic crisis. Vacancy and decay dominate the image, scaring the car couple that have taken the wrong exit and are desperately seeking their way out. It is as sociologist Richard Sennett states: ‘the driver wants to go through the space, not to be aroused by it.’²⁵¹ The highway has changed in this picture. Although still the endless, overwhelming, yet thrilling architectural space, it now has turned simultaneously into an uncanny environment of on-going traffic, with its similar gasoline stations and motel chains, the few access traffic signs and shadowy parking lots, literally cutting through the hills of the fantastic desert around Radiator Springs. It has turned into a ‘non-place’, as the French anthropologist Marc Augé argues, a notion that he defines in relation to ‘transit-spaces’, the spatial realm of the traveller and driver, from the gasoline stations and the highway bound motels, to airport waiting lounges and underground stations. Although these spaces may be designed with care, despite their architectural appearance – some even may look like medieval cities – and despite that they may offer all the comfort you could possibly desire, they cannot be called ‘places’, for they lack fundamental characteristics of a place: ‘identity’, ‘social relationships’, ‘history’ and ‘appropriation’; the authenticity and contrariness, the diversity and the scope for the unexpected we can find in the street, in the square and in the park.²⁵² Augé warns that ‘authentic’ urban spaces are transformed through the emergence of non-spaces, as the terms of judgement change into efficiency, design, and safety, which in turn change actual space. We now look to urban space enslaved by ‘the powers of motion’, the sociologist Richard Sennett adds, and measure them ‘in terms of how easy it is to drive through them, to get out of them ... : the driver can drive safely only with the minimum of idiosyncratic distractions; to drive well requires standard signs, dividers, and drain sewers, and also streets emptied of street life apart from other drivers. As urban space becomes a mere function of motion, it thus becomes less stimulating in itself; the driver wants to go through the space, not to be aroused by it.’²⁵³ What he therefore understands is that through the experience of motion, the bodily sense of tactile reality is weakened. However, this perspective stresses the negative aspects of speed and technology, and does not acknowledge what for instance the urban designer Kevin Lynch and other researchers brought to the fore in their book *The View From the Road*. From Lynch’s investigations, it is clear that the new mobility evokes a new need for particular landmarks along the road. Particularly when driving long and far, moments of recognition are essential.²⁵⁴

The 417 heads east just at the other side of the *Kohl’s* department store, and curves southwards in the direction of Eastern Orlando through a green corridor of the town. Grey tarmac, two lanes south, two lanes north, a hard shoulder on both sides, green separation of the roads, a crash barrier at the border – that is

the image of this continuous space. Access to the road only is possible by passing a toll booth. Within Sanford some of the neighbourhoods can be seen. The freeway is soon surrounded by the trees of Lake Jarup, crosses over the lake, and enters the flatlands below: numerous suburbs under high skies. The 400, with which the 417 has an intersection near *The Retreat*, differs in its appearance extremely: it is elevated. At both sides of this highway huge warehouses, industrial parks, and shopping malls are located. The highway cuts through a 'shedland', but since it is elevated, drivers overlook these warehouses and industrial zones – although their advertisement signs are a regular identifying marks along the road. Since the drivers even look over the trees, it is once again remarkable how flat this Florida landscape is. Despite its urbanized character, there is no sign of *landmarks*, no sign of a city centre nearby. Only the energy plant west of Lake Monroe peeks over the trees.

2.3.3 A World of Shopping

The south side of the intersection 400/417, is characterized by a dozen parking areas around 'sheds': car dealers, outdoor shops, (fast food) restaurants – a range of so called 'big box retailers' of which *Kohl's* department store occupies the very eastern edge. Above the intersection a series of malls are visible: a curved road, stretched parking lots, huge warehouses, and in the middle a green space that seems to be a fallow – here the old Jeffersonian grid structure still is visible (despite the roads having been removed). The structure is super imposed by the shopping mall structure – which a designer has tried to give a touch of cosiness through the meandering form of the access road. A note on *Google maps* tells that it's the *Seminole Towne Center*, the adjacent mall is called the *Marketplace @ Seminole Towne Center*. Other marks give insight in the shops and facilities that can be found here: from the *Walmart* to *Macy's*, *Sears* to *Sports Authority*, *JC Penney* to the *H&M*, *Toys'R'Us* to a *foodcourt*, and from the *Seminole Cinema* to the *Spring Hill Suites Orlando* – the latter praised with 'high speed internet, hot breakfast, mini refrigerator and central mall.' The *Seminole Towne Centre Malls* certainly can be categorized as so-called regional malls.

As previously discussed, the development of mass production (and mass consumption), and the accumulation of goods, can be seen as one of the important mechanisms behind suburbanisation. Suburbanisation, in this respect, could not take place without the establishment of malls, or better said, the development of a new type of shopping environment, made fit for suburban life. In her contribution to Michael Sorkin's *Variations on a Themepark* the architectural theorist Margaret Crawford makes a distinction between neighbourhood centres, community centres, regional malls and super-regional malls. It is all about the size and scale of the mall, she writes: 'the minimum number of potential customers living within the geographical range of a retail item to enable it to be sold at a profit.'²⁵⁵ Regional Malls are defines as housing at least two department stores and a hundred shops, and attract customers from as far as twenty miles away. The super-regional mall (five department stores and up to 300 shops) serves an area within a hundred-miles radius. Within these developments²⁵⁶ the influence of the Viennese architect and urban designer Victor Gruen is beyond doubt.²⁵⁷ Gruen's contribution is widely recognized by its impact on functioning of cities. Cultural philosopher Frederic Jameson writes that 'the mall was his brainchild', clarifying that our contemporary experience of American spaces is the outcome, not of a 'weird accumulation of market-historical accidents' but 'that someone had the idea for all this.'²⁵⁸

255.

Margaret Crawford, 'The World in a Shopping Mall' in: Michael Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park, The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 7. Although Crawford has reflected upon this article as to much pessimistic – based upon her fieldwork in Los Angeles – I still think it can be used as a reference upon the developments regarding 'shopping', and the impact of the mall. For her reflection upon this article and her changed perspective, see: Margaret Crawford, 'Blurring the Boundaries: Public Space and Private Life', in: John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kliski (eds.), *Everyday Urbanism* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1999)

256.

The shoppingmall is seen as typical American, although the type has spread over the world and despite the broad historical predecessors, as for instance is suggested in the *Guide to Shopping*, the second volume of the Koolhaas/Harvard *Project on the City*: either the 7000 BC foundation of trade commodities in the city of Catalhöyük, the invention of retail trade in Lydia in the seventh century BC, Walter Benjamin's nineteenth century arcades, or the establishing of the modern department store at the end of the 19th century, as mentioned by Frederic Jameson, 'Future City', in: Sykes, A. Krista (eds.), *Constructing a New Agenda, Architectural Theory 1993-2009* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 251, 253-255; The development of the mall over the years from the small neighbourhood shopping strip to the Super-Regional Mall, these categories distinguished by Margaret Crawford, of course is due to the invention of technical supplies, transforming the huge buildings in safe and comfortable environments – most important of them, as is proposed by the mentioned exploration of Koolhaas and his studio at Harvard, are the aircondition and the escalator, the skylight and the sprinkler system. The Dutch architect and educator Lars Spuybroek comments: 'In the end, all the aspirations of the arcade are completely buried in the contemporary shopping mall, that vacuum-sealed world without doors in which one moves about without being woken up, guarded by security officers and their German shepherds, surrounded by vast parking lots like tarmac lakes with shoppers strolling along like latter-day flaneurs who, as Koolhaas has so acutely observed, encounter no obstacles, not even when they change floors, thanks to the invention of the escalator.' Lars Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things, Ruskin and the Ecology of Design* (Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/NAI Publishers, 2011), 327-328

257.

Victor Gruen (1903-1980), actually born as Grünbaum, had studied

architecture at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, and had worked at the office of Peter Behrens. In 1933 he had opened his own practice, that soon became well known in Austria because of its shop-designs. He nevertheless escaped Vienna because of the annexation of Austria by Germany in World War II and needed to flee to New York, where he changed his family name. In New York he started as a draftsman, but soon also had success with designs for some leather goods, which in turn brought him the commission to design shops as well, of which the branches of Grayson's are best known. In 1941 he moved to Los Angeles, where he erected his architectural office Victor Gruen Associates. In his designs for shops he gave special attention to the interaction between the interior and the exterior of the shop. 'In the arcades of his Viennese and New York shops,' the architectural critic Alex Wall writes, 'pedestrians could step from the flow of sidewalk traffic to pause, consider, enter and perhaps buy, that is, Gruen understood how to create space and mise-en-scene. His shopping spaces were an interface between private commerce and urban public life.' Alex Wall, Victor Gruen, *From Urban Shop to New City* (Barcelona: Actar, 2005), 12. 'A public critic, Gruen questioned the role and responsibility of the architect in a mass society. In his lifetime he was known variously as the "pioneer of the shopping center," the "saviour of the downtowns," and the "architect of the environment." At the height of his career he was called a "new urbanist", and Fortune described him as having "shown the skill of a surf-boarder when it comes to riding the waves of the future, moving nimbly from store design, to shopping centers, and the city planning." (in 1962!); Wall, *Victor Gruen*, 11

258.

Jameson, 'Future City', 257

259.

Wall, *Victor Gruen*, 11

260.

Gruen, *Centers for the Urban Environment*, 13-14

261.

Ibid., 18

262.

Wall, *Victor Gruen*, 14

263.

Gruen, *Centers for the Urban Environment*, 15

264.

Wall, *Victor Gruen*, 12

Architectural theorist Alex Wall refers to the *American Heritage* magazine in his intriguing interpretation of Gruen's architecture, in which Gruen was presented as being, in hindsight, 'one of the ten people who have changed the course of our daily lives'.²⁵⁹ Gruen's approach of the mall was quite similar to his initial designs for shops and shopping facades in Vienna and New York, giving specific attention to the exterior appearance of the store. Gruen writes 'As long as the public environment, that is, the streets with their sidewalks, public places, and squares, are safe and agreeable, the efforts of the individual merchant in the area of showmanship can be concentrated on the appearance of the exterior of his store, on the show windows and their display, and on the achievement of a pleasant shopping atmosphere and an effective display of the merchandise inside and outside the store.'²⁶⁰ In a certain reflective text on his contribution to the sprawling of the city (in America) Gruen writes: 'As far as trade was concerned, great opportunities arose. The shortages of the war years were over, and though nobody in the United States had starved because of the war, the "nice things of life," as symbolized by nylon stockings, had been scarce and were suddenly in abundant supply and demand. Yet though there was certainly a high demand for shopping goods, the stores, and especially the department stores, had lost physical contact with their customers, who had escaped to suburban and regional developments many miles distant.'²⁶¹ It was indeed Gruen that recognized the 'need' for local malls in these suburban neighbourhoods – he was the first to actively propose the development of these malls. In an investigation into the work of Gruen, the architectural critic Alex Wall writes: 'He was not, as he said himself, one of the great "form givers" of his era, nor even among its most original thinkers. His brilliance lay, rather, in his ability to synthesize a commercial practice with a philosophy of urbanism; his willingness to engage compromise; his ability to identify what could get built; and, finally, the urgency with which he addressed the question, What kind of city do we want?'²⁶²

Gruen thus was the first to recognize the need for malls even in suburbanized landscapes (later he also develops the concept of the regional mall). It is in the famous 1943 issue of *Architectural Forum* called 'Architecture 194X' that he comes up with the idea. The editors of *Architectural Forum* invited a number of architects to answer the question of what would happen to the city after World War II ended. His proposal actually showed an awareness that even the new suburbs need forms of centrality and public space, simultaneously acknowledging the future automobile development. Gruen writes in his 1973 reflection: 'I contributed an article on the "Shopping Center", illustrating it with sketches and drawings reflecting the concepts of separation of pedestrian and automobile traffic, of the creation of pedestrian areas and of the "one stop" shopping environments.'²⁶³ Although separating car traffic and pedestrian spaces, in this initial proposal the neighbourhood shopping mall is still embedded within the (sub)urban fabric of streets and paths by just filling one of the blocks of the surrounding grid. Parking is largely concentrated on the backside of the block, whilst in front of the shops, with their large windows, Gruen introduced a landscaped plaza and patio, that, of course, was connected to the immediate streets and sidewalks. This spatial connectivity is largely lost in the development of the mall, which is increasingly defined by a search for a balance between the shopping experience, the problem of parking, and the addition of public space. 'Gruen,' Alex Wall writes, 'wanted his centres to offer not just commercial but community and cultural space in the emerging suburban landscape.'²⁶⁴ The commercial aim of the spaces could only be a success, he argues, if it is embedded

in a social structure, a pleasant atmosphere. The effort of the designer should 'be concentrated on the appearance of the exterior of his store,' he wrote, 'on the show windows and their display, and on the achievement of a pleasant shopping atmosphere and an effective display of the merchandise inside and outside the store.'²⁶⁵ This atmosphere, however, was more than just the façade of the shop. Also in his latter malls, from the small local malls towards the huge regional malls, he specifically draws attention to the 'public' space, still mostly offered as nicely landscaped collective areas, even sometimes designed as a 'fabric of *old-fashioned shopping streets*', a reference to old inner city streets, as is the case in the intriguing 1948 proposal Harvey Park, Los Angeles. In this proposal, Gruen's goal was to create a central space. In the presentation of the project in the monthly magazine *Chain Store Age*, he argued that regional shopping centres also needed to 'serve as social and cultural centres – the basis for community building in the new landscape of suburban subdivisions.'²⁶⁶ Gruen's proposal consists of two crossing streets that were stretched from the edges to a middle-point, tenant store buildings with colonnades to protect the visitors from the climate, numerous kiosks, and at the centre a cylindrical department store that functioned as a landmark in the urban layout, while parking was solved between the shopping streets. In the centre, was also room for cultural and social functions, including a movie theatre and auditorium, branch offices for the municipality and medical offices. As Gruen wrote: 'It is the aim of our scheme to impress the center's facilities deeply into the minds of the people living in a wide surrounding area. The center shall become to them more than just a place where one may shop – it shall be related in their minds with all the activities of cultural enrichment and relaxation: theatre, outdoor music shell, exhibition hall.'²⁶⁷ As Wall concludes: Gruen looked to design an idea of community.

Although Gruen developed innovative approaches of the difficulties of the parking lot, like in his 1947 project for Milliron, a department store with part of the parking area on the roof, built in the commercial area of a new district in Westchester, over time and through their increasing scale, the malls lost their spatial connection with the surrounding city fabric, specifically with the pedestrian routes. Once embedded in the suburban neighbourhoods, the malls turned into one of the loose fragments that are now characteristic of this urban landscape, super imposed onto the Jeffersonian grid, slowly but surely becoming disconnected to the local structures, and instead almost directly connected to the freeway-network, loosing even the possibility of reaching the mall from the immediate surroundings by foot. This, of course, should first be ascribed to the urban planning offices and departments of cities, since through their zoning plans the suburban area turned into segregated zones of commerce, shopping, living, and recreation. Gruen nevertheless had a major role in the development of the mall into a separate world, distinct from the city and the local neighbourhoods. In his mall-designs he emphasized the atmosphere of the mall, the need for entertainment, attraction and charm in respect to the planning, layout and architecture of the mall and its economic success. Gruen was quite clear about the aim of these spaces: since they first and foremost were meant for shopping and entertainment, for consuming and producing, they should be safe and threat-less. 'Whenever the public environment becomes hostile,' Gruen writes, 'then merchants are forced to band together and to create, separated from the hostile public environment, a more pleasant and sympathetic environment, a more pleasant and sympathetic environment for trade. As examples serve the open markets of antiquity, the agora of Athens, the Roman forums, the bazaars in the cities of the Orient, and in the nineteenth century the great arcades and galleries all witnesses of the

^{265.} Gruen, *Centers for the Urban Environment*, 13-14

^{266.} Wall, *Victor Gruen*, 70

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 71

268.

Gruen, *Centers for the Urban Environment*, 13-14

269.

Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism*, 64-65

270.

Rem Koolhaas, 'Atlanta', in: Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1998), 841

271.

Ibid., 843

necessity of overcoming the disturbing characteristics of an unattractive, "hostile public environment."²⁶⁸ In other words, there are commercial considerations to creating a 'shopping-world', a (shopping) enclave, firstly as 'hostile' environments effect the purchases of the visitors, and secondly as this 'world apart' propels consumption through the creation of a 'sphere of consumption and pleasure', a place people enjoy and will return to.

The *Seminole Towne Centre Malls* actually do show two types of malls, whereas the *Marketcentre* just consist of a row of small and huge shops facing onto the parking lots. The *Seminole Towne Centre* is the next step in the shopping experience: the shops are facing an interior corridor, that at specific points is accessible from the parking lots around the mall – a huge enclosed box amidst an asphalt sea of parking. The entrances, invitingly designed in a Mediterranean style, and demarcated by an architecturally profound figure, huge signs, nicely paved stoops, at the front, curved bushes and palm trees offer the shade that one urgently needs in this hot and stony environment. On both sides of the entrance, the wall is simply closed. Images of the interior of the mall, presented on its webpage – of the exterior of the building, the website only shows the entrances, of course – shows an almost mile-long corridor in the middle of mall building, white coloured atriums in the middle of the mall, white bridges covering the cores, wooden benches on the ground floor, and a 'jump system' and other play systems in one of the cores, meant for attracting visiting kids. The corridor is divided over two levels, the major department stores, the *Macy's* and the *Sears*, are on both sides of the mall. It is a standard layout: a contrast between a blank exterior and an articulated interior,²⁶⁹ as well as the two main stores on each side, connected via an atrium.

After writing *Delirious New York*, his well known 'retro-manifesto' on Manhattan, Rem Koolhaas moved his attention from New York to Atlanta, to the contemporary patterns of (sub)urbanization. One of the features he recognizes as important in the new (sub)urbanized landscape is the 'atrium'. 'Since the Romans,' he writes, 'the atrium had been a hole in a house or a building that injects light and air – the outside – into the center; in Portman's [Koolhaas refers to the Atlanta based architect and developer John Portman, HT] hands it became the opposite: a container of artificiality that allows its occupants to avoid daylight forever – a hermetic interior, sealed against the real.'²⁷⁰ According to Koolhaas, the renewed introduction of the atrium in architecture, especially in huge building blocks, is part of a strive for control via self-sufficiency and independence from the surroundings and surrounding buildings, which is disastrous for a coherent and correlated *landscape*, and, no less important, for the 'rootedness' of the building in its environment. 'The new atrium became a replica as inclusive as downtown itself, an *ersatz* downtown. Downtown's buildings are no longer complementary; they don't need each other; they become hostile; they compete. Downtown disintegrates into multiple downtowns, a cluster of autonomies. The more ambitious these autonomies, the more they undermine the real downtown – its messy conditions, its complexities, its irregularities, its densities, its ethnicities. With atriums as their private mini-centers, buildings no longer depend on specific locations. They can be anywhere.'²⁷¹

A strong resemblance to this quote can be found in the article 'Generic City', in which he describes the consequences of the loss of such physical and historical roots for a city. This loss is not only assumed to impact the singular building, but may also have effects on the city as a whole, both in geographical and in a historical sense. According to Koolhaas, who primarily based his ideas on recent

developments in African and Asian cities, the contemporary city ‘is held together, not by an over-demanding public realm ... but by the *residual*.’²⁷² Public life itself does not take place in this residual, according to Koolhaas, public life is confined to interior spaces, it is turned into a *happening*.²⁷³ This leads Koolhaas to state ‘the street is dead. That discovery has coincided with frantic attempts at its resuscitation. Public art is everywhere – as if two deaths make a life. Pedestrianization – intended to preserve – merely channels the flow of those doomed to destroy the object of their intended reverence with their feet. The Generic City is on its way from horizontality to verticality. The skyscraper looks as if it will be the final, definitive typology. It has swallowed everything else. It can exist everywhere: in a rice field, or downtown – it makes no difference anymore. The towers no longer stand together; they are spaced so that they don’t interact.’²⁷⁴

The webpage of the *Seminole* shows a row of signs that announce that you can loan strollers as well as wheelchairs during shopping in the centre. There is also a kindergarten, a baby changing station, a bus stop, a pavilion with interactive television. Shopping bags are also available and there is an AED in the mall, as well as the possibility to exchange money. How amazing, there is even an explicit sign that this mall houses a *Coca Cola* reseller. On Monday mornings and Sundays, the mall is opened for Mall Walking – although the shops are closed, the mall is used for exercise by people that prefer to walk inside rather than outside.²⁷⁵ Which is a sign, as Margareth Crawford writes, of the mall as a community and social centre in the suburb. The mall cannot withdraw from the community, it needs to settle down and find its place in the social environment (the physical one, as Koolhaas shows, is much harder to solve). ‘Repacking the city in a safe, clean, and controlled form gave the mall greater importance as a community and social center,’ Crawford aims. ‘The enclosed mall supplied spatial centrality, public focus, and human density – all the elements lacking in sprawling suburbs. The mall served as the hub of suburban public life, and provided a common consumer focus for the amorphous suburbs.’²⁷⁶

2.3.4 Welcome to the Past

The Retreat, near the intersection 400/417, has excellent accessibility via these highways. However, looking again at the map of Sanford, it becomes clear that the same Highways disconnect these neighbourhoods from other parts of the town, specifically what seems to be the centre of Sanford, which is located north-east of *The Retreat*. It is 5.5 miles, (14 minutes drive) distance from *The Retreat* Google tells. Or a 42 minutes journey by public Transport. The bus stop is near the *Seminole Town Center*, across the 417, a 17 minutes walk – besides that it only has a one hour service. The centre is of course reachable by foot, or bike, although there are no direct connections, no direct bike lanes or specific pedestrian routes crossing the highway (making it difficult to cross). *Google* counts 1 hour and 46 minutes’ walk, warning: ‘Use caution – This route may be missing sidewalks or pedestrian paths.’ By bike it would take the cyclist only 29 minutes, although *Google* warns and asks for help from the public: ‘Use caution and please report unmapped bike routes, streets that aren’t suited for cycling, and other problems’.

The plan of the centre of Sanford is immediately recognizable through the densification of the typical Jeffersonian grid of streets and parcels, the names of the streets, density of the buildings, and the ‘urban facilities’: a hospital located at the very west edge of the fabric, near to an *Amtrak* ‘auto-train-station’. The grid fabric spans between *Orlando Sanford International Airport* to the south,

272. Koolhaas, ‘Generic City’, 1252

273. *Ibid.*, 1261

274. *Ibid.*, 1252-1253

275. <http://www.simon.com/mall/seminole-towne-center> [accessed January 3rd, 2013]; This actually is a hint that the mall means more for people than just the possibility of shopping, or at least that the mall management tries to present the mall as more meaningful than just a building for shopping. Frederic Jameson, the cultural philosopher and literary critic, in a discussion on Koolhaas/Harvard *Project on the City*, cites from the second volume *Guide to Shopping* that this was confirmed by Supreme Court as well: ‘In a New Jersey Supreme Court case regarding the distribution of political leaflets in shopping malls the court declared that “shopping malls have replaced the parks and squares that were ‘traditionally the home of free speech,’ siding with the proesters ‘who had argued that a mall constitutes a modern-day Main Street.’” Jameson, ‘Future City’, 255

276. Crawford, ‘The World in a Shopping Mall’, 23

277.
Jackson, *Landscapes*, 118

278.
Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 5

279.
Bello, 'The City and the Car', 46

and the borders of Lake Monroe to the north. The layout of the centre of Sanford is as Jackson renders the average American town: 'Aided by the state and Army engineers,' he writes, 'the city father back in the seventies [of the 19th century, HT] surveyed and laid out the new metropolis. As a matter of course they located a square or public place in the centre of the town and eventually they built their courthouse in the middle of the square; such having been the layout of every county seat these Western Americans had ever seen. Streets led from the centre of each side of the square, being named Main Street North and South, and Sheridan Street East and West. Eventually these four streets and the square were surrounded by a gridiron pattern of streets and avenue's – all numbered or lettered, and all of them totally oblivious of the topography of the town.'²⁷⁷ In a local difference, Sanford shows at the connection of the main streets, where Park Street meets First Street (which is the axis along West First Street turns into East First Street), a cluster of pubs, bars, restaurants, shops, warehouses, church, revealed by zooming in to the map, as well as a crowded harbour, the *Wayne Densch Performing Arts Center*, the City Hall and the Sanford County Court. A dead-end rail track and disused station can be seen from the satellite photo. The southern part of the grid has a typical infill of small one story high wooden houses with a lawn, mostly accompanied by a garage. It is remarkable how many plots are open, as well as the character of of the houses: they look like sheds – they sometimes even are fenced with industrial fences. Even through the eyes of *Google* this environment narrates deprivation. The asphalt grid streets lack pedestrian paths, and compared to the accessible neighbourhoods around *The Retreat*, the houses lack sign of care or treatment that renders 'the good life'. The south-eastern part doesn't much differ to that of the western part – although there are more trees and the houses look a bit more detailed than in west. How different is the centre of Sanford, along Lake Monroe – although spatially so near, physically worlds apart, a landscape of decline and a landscape of progressive consumption.²⁷⁸ The inner centre consists of 11 blocks – as can be concluded from the pavement, the buildings, the terraces, the stoops, when zooming in on the map. *Google Streetview* shows that the streets in this inner centre have been recently repaved with bricks, laid in nice patterns. Those streets are presented as 'city-streets' hosting 'city-life'. These are streets for pedestrians. This is obviously a large improvement to such an environment. Even in the mid-1950s, Victor Gruen pleaded for the pedestrian to be prioritized in the urban centre in his masterplan for Fort Worth, in which he applied all the popular features of the suburban mall to the existing urban fabric. By keeping out the cars, the city was turned into a pedestrian mall. In Fort Worth he goes so far that he proposed not just six huge parking garages about three or four minutes walking distance from the centre, but even banishing all the delivery trucks underground. Slow moving electric cars would offer those unable to walk their connection to the shops. Noise, fumes, and traffic lights would not waste the valuable space of the ground floor. 'Just throngs of happy people, making and spending money' would colour the streets.²⁷⁹ Stanford is of course not of this size – but the effort to re-store the inner centre is tangible in every detail. The stone buildings are three to five stories high. They house shops and bars in the basement, offices, apartments or hotel rooms above, with some terraces spilling out onto the street. The newly laid pavement is a sign of a renewed interest in 'historic districts' in the United States. 'City after city', urban theorist Christine Boyer states, 'discovers that its abandoned industrial waterfront or outmoded city centre contains enormous tourist potential and refurbishes it as a leisure-time spectacles and sightseeing promenade. All of these sites become culinary and ornamental landscapes through which the tourists – the

new public of the late twentieth century – graze, celebrating the consumption of place and architecture, and the taste of history and food.²⁸⁰ City centres are rediscovered as environments for leisure and recreation. Beyond leisure, Boyer states, these historic districts are also a sign of the ‘uprootedness, this sense of nonplace’ that is roused by the contemporary urbanised and fragmented landscape.²⁸¹ Here in Sanford, a *Welcome Center* at East First street, welcomes visitors to stroll down to the lake (indeed, a new walk trail has been constructed), or along ‘the hundreds of turn of the century homes, adorned with hundred year old oaks that whisper the secrets of the past (recently revitalized)’.²⁸² Through the re-paving of the streets, the city-centre becomes almost pleasant: the bricks of the street, the brick facades of the accompanying buildings, the terraces, the nicely landscaped small squares between the buildings, the harbour with its yachts and palm trees – how nice to enjoy life in a historic district. In its layout it suggests a classical urban environment, although without urbanity.²⁸³ Hardly any people walk the corridors, only a couple of people are seen on the terrace and at the pier down the harbour. Behind the buildings, huge parking lots remain empty. The ‘density’ of First Street depends on the emptiness of Second Street – even the axis between the harbour and its restaurants, the boulevard at the border of Lake Monroe (which is the location of the City Hall and the Court), on the one hand First and Second Street with their many shops, pubs and bars, on the other the empty spaces of parking lots. These empty lots are symbolic: this town is car-traffic tailored, from its very centre to the shopping malls, from the living environments in the grid to the gated communities around Twin Lake. But it is also a sign of another aspect of the revitalized downtown. As the American-Dutch journalist Tracy Metz writes in her observations on the American landscape: it is ‘physical proof that the new downtown is not yet an integral part of the city, but a project. Within the property lines the care and maintenance are maximum, outside they are non-existent.’²⁸⁴

2.3.5 *Fun: Next Exit*

Tourism, leisure, recreation and entertainment seem to be the subject of public space in the built environment.²⁸⁵ The key to discovering the local ‘places to be’, is the website of the local airport, that of course offers a list of locations in the environment that the traveller is recommended to visit. Airports, by the way, are increasingly important for urban and metropolitan regions and their development.²⁸⁶ The airport increasingly offers, besides the direct airport facilities, a range of urban functions. The airport has turned into an airport-city, complete with squares, parks, hotels, museums, libraries, cinemas, events, and so on. The transport hub has turned into a destination.²⁸⁷ Return to the local airport of Sanford, which is officially called *Orlando-Sanford-International-Airport*, and is far too small to call an airport city. It lacks the facilities to be a ‘destination’ in the local or regional networks. This is the cheapest air facility in the region, operating alongside the huge *Orlando International Airport*, which is near to the city of Orlando itself and home to a range of national and global carriers. *Orlando-Sanford-International-Airport* is located near the to the centre of Sanford, between 25th street and the Airport Boulevard, which could have equally been called 31st Street. Compared to the city, the size of the airport is quite big. It has four paved runways, two terminals, and about 12 gates. *Fun: Next Exit*, reads the slogan: the airport is mainly used by ‘holiday carriers’, charter flights as well as scheduled services, handling 1,577,307 travellers a year (2011). The main carrier that operates the scheduled services at the airport – up to 52 destinations within the USA and Canada, the website states – is *Allegiant*, the airline

280.

Christine Boyer, ‘Cities for Sale’, in: Michael Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park, The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 189

281.

Boyer, ‘Cities for Sale’, 191

282.

http://www.sanfordwelcomecenter.com/?page_id=11 [accessed January 9, 2013] Even in this description the ‘visual’ gaze of the tourist dominates the environment. The addition: recently revitalized even more shows the difficulty within tourist environments to also show the ‘dark sides’ of life, in this case: the imperfection of what resides from history, processes of decay, and so on. In this perspective the photograph or snapshot is dominant, reduces the urban environment to a particular image. Cf. Urry, ‘Sensing the City’, 77

283.

cf. Jan Kolen, ‘Het historisch weefsel. Over de transformatie van de region en de omgang met het verleden in de 21ste eeuw’, in: Erik A. de Jong, Erik A., Jan Kolen, Jos Bazelmans, and Iwan Baan, *Perspectief, Maakbare geschiedenis* (Rotterdam: Stimuleringsfonds voor Architectuur, 2007), 57. Kolen takes here a notion of the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk: ‘pamperspace’, ‘where not is thought “in terms of scarcity and needs, but in terms of choice.” Yet a heritage that promises that much to so many people inevitably will shape the image of the past more flat and cheap.’ [translation HT – the quote of Sloterdijk is taken from Peter Sloterdijk, *Het Kristalpaleis, Een filosofie van de globalisering* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SUN, 2006), 226]

284.

Tracy Metz, *On the Ground, Observations from Harvard* (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura, 2007), 12

285.

In his article ‘Domus and the Megalopolis’ the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, upon who we touched previously, signifies the development of the city as follows: ‘The city spends centuries, millennia slowly gnawing away at the domus and its community. The political city, imperial or republican, then the city of economic affairs, today the megalopolis spread out over what used to be the countryside. It stifles and reduces res domesticae, turns them over to tourism and vacation.’ Jean-François Lyotard, ‘Domus and the Megalopolis’, in: Neil Leach, *Rethinking Architecture, A Reader in Cultural Theory* (London/New York: 1997, Routledge), 272

286.

Koos Bosma and Abdel El Makhloufi, ‘De ruimtelijke metamorfose van Schiphol, Van polderdorp tot nevelstad’, in: Ed Taverne, Len de Klerk,

Bart Ramakers, and Sebastian Dembski (eds.), *Nederland Stedenland, Continuïteit en vernieuwing* (Rotterdam: nai010 Uitgevers 2012), 7

287.

Iris Burgers, 'De verbeelding en verbouwen van een luchthavenstad, Schiphol's airport city in architectuur en beeld,' in: Ed Taverne, Len de Klerk, Bart Ramakers, and Sebastian Dembski (eds.), *Nederland Stedenland, Continuïteit en vernieuwing* (Rotterdam: nai010 Uitgevers 2012), 225

288.

The airport praises itself with a quote taken from the New York Times, April 6, 2011: 'Orlando Sanford International Airport is among the 10 most competitive priced small airports'. http://www.orlandosanfordairport.com/documents/banner2/NY-Times_2011.pdf [accessed, January 9, 2013]

289.

<http://www.orlandoedc.com/About-Metro-Orlando/factsrankings.shtml> [accessed January 8th, 2013]. Another indicator is the statistics of Orlando International Airport: in 2012 they operated 3.7 million international passengers, and over 31.6 million domestic passengers. <http://www.orlandoairports.net/press/2012/20121107.htm> [accessed January 8th, 2013]

of an American travel agency. Small companies connect the airport with Brazil, while *Icelandair*, the national carrier of Iceland, is the only 'regular' airline that has a daily service on workdays, connecting the airport with Reykjavik and their European network. During the summer period more international flights are hosted: even Amsterdam, The Netherlands, can be reached by a direct flight with holiday carrier *TUI Fly*. The airport didn't choose the name *Orlando-Sanford-International-Airport* for nothing: Orlando, after all, is the US-region of fun, entertainment, holidays. The popularity of the region for tourists is obvious: besides the temperate climate it fully depends on the nearness of Disney World and other theme parks around Orlando, the beaches of the Atlantic Ocean near Daytona in the North-East, and Cape Canaveral, the NASA spaceship base (where the *Google Streetview*-figure changes to an astronaut) in the South-East, respectively a 35, 20, and 40 minutes drive from Sanford's airport, according to the website. This airport is the cheaper choice²⁸⁸ in the region: all main carriers of the USA are operating flights to Orlando International Airport, which is located South of Orlando, a 37 minutes drive from Sanford.

A broader look on Google maps shows that the landscape between Sanford and Orlando is almost completely 'suburbanized'. Sanford, although being the main town of Seminole county, is part of the larger region of Metro Orlando. This urbanized region, consisting of the counties Seminole, Orange County, Lake County, Osceola County and the City of Orlando, ranges about 20 miles south and 45 miles north, about 25 miles wide, taken from the inner city of Orlando. The municipality itself, however, only has a population of 243,000, whilst the 'metropolitan region' houses over 2 million. Due to, amongst other things, the numerous theme parks on its outskirts, the city is the destination of over 55 million visitors each year.²⁸⁹ The area is thus urbanized, although typical landscape conditions have prevented the area to turn into an endless sea of single-family houses. The fairly flat landscape is cut into by a river delta of the St. Johns River, and is dotted with numerous lakes and ponds. These lakes, some small, some big, are used in the contemporary situation to structure neighbourhoods (as is the case around Twin Lakes) or to create (city) parks, whilst the embankments of the river delta and some bigger lakes provide state parks - natural preservation and conservation areas and forests: floating green fragments in the urbanized landscape. A few highways now cross the landscape, attached to them stretching areas of industrial parks, office parks and shopping malls. Interstate highway 4 (*400*) is the main north-south axis, crossing through the centre of Orlando. Two parallel highways form the west and east edge of the area: the *429 west*, the *417 east*. The east-west axes are formed by both the State Highway *50* and *528*.

As a destination in the region, the airport operator of *Orlando-Sanford-International-Airport*, alongside the theme parks and beaches, mentions the centre of Orlando and a couple of malls, of which *Florida Mall* is the biggest. *Florida Mall* is under the same ownership as the *Seminole Towne Center*. Although the websites of both malls look alike, the photos tell a different story. *Florida Mall* has been recently extended, its appearance is relaxed and welcoming: small squares, small and exclusive shops, nicely landscaped gardens, palm trees. The mall houses over 250 shops at 179,778 m², including the *Apple Store* and the *Microsoft Store*, *Armani Exchange* and *Victoria Secret*, a *M&M's world* and a *Saks Fifth Avenue*. *Google maps* even shows a hotel, a pool, and, of course, an endless sea of parking lots, almost directly connected to the *528* and *91* Toll Roads that intersect near the mall. Within the scheme of Margaret Crawford,

referred to above, this mall is amongst the Super-Regional Malls. In attractiveness *Florida Mall*, however, is surpassed by another shopping experience in the surroundings: the *Mall at Millenia*, located South-West of Orlando city centre with a direct connection with the 4. The Mall is praised by the authorities of the *Orlando Metropolitan Region* as ‘Orlando’s newest and most luxurious mall that transforms shopping into a multi-sensory experience. Fashion is taken to the highest level in a dramatic, eight-story Grand Court ... Ambiance aside, the mall deliver the goods – and exquisite goods at that. It offers a dazzling selection of over 150 stores.’²⁹⁰ Images of the mall indeed shows a ‘dramatic’ space, a glazed corridor, reflective floors, shiny walls, comfortable benches, a glazed tower at the entrance with art and fashion images whirling down, many palm trees in front of the entrance which are spectacularly lit up at night – and at the background the shops, all attractively designed as well. A clean, perfect, bright environment. ‘Great Fashion Needs a Beautiful Form’, the website reads.²⁹¹ From *Marketplace @ Seminole Towne Center*, via *Florida Mall*, to this *Mall at Millenia*, we can observe the development of the mall. From neighbourhood services, to just shopping, to a ‘shopping experience’, from efficient organization to a shiny and new environment that people want to visit, revisit, and spend time in, from citizens with needs, via consumers that want to be satisfied, to tourists that need to be entertained.²⁹² The mall has grown into an artificial world, specifically designed to attract people and to conquer other tourist destinations. Actually, the regional mall is not only conquering other malls, but also other leisure destinations: the theme park, the historic district, even the museum and the preservation parks – destinations of a totally different order to the shopping mall, but equally dependent on claiming a position in the economic ‘market’ of leisure and free time. This position on conquering the ‘market’, fuels the development of the mall and an increasing emphasis on the actual experience of the visitors. New features are introduced, more luxury, glamour, comfort, a kindergarten, entertainment facilities, beauty arrangements, events, services, where the visit can be extended over days through the addition of spas and hotels, bars and restaurants. Malls increasingly need to be distinguished from other parts of the city, rendered as a world apart, both geographically and architecturally, as well as in terms of surveillance and safety. This controlled, governed, and ‘overdesigned’ interior world apart, perfectly illustrated by the images of the *Millenia*, is the perfect tool of consumer-sciences. It is a known effect that in attractive environments even the most regular commodities get stimulation. Regular products sold in an exclusive environment or presented besides dissimilar objects are more attractive, since in this decontextualized environment they gain an unexpected aura.²⁹³ A *Coke Light* at the *Malls at Millenia* can be sold for twice the price than in the *Marketplace @ Seminole*, a plain white bowl sold here is much more glamorous than the same sold at the *Walmart*. This insight, of course, is at the heart of every mall, not only these regional ones, but also the small strips and smaller local malls of the very urbanized and plural areas, for instance around Los Angeles. ‘Korean malls’, the already mentioned architectural historian Margaret Crawford writes in ‘The world in a Shopping Mall’, ‘have blue tile temple roofs, Japanese malls combine Zen gardens with slick modernism to attract both local residents and touring Japanese. Minimal developers in Los Angeles style their malls according to location: postmodern in the affluent Westside, high-tech in dense urban areas, and Spanish in the rest of the City.’²⁹⁴ Although the *Malls at Millenia* may not appear as ‘architecturally’ outstanding²⁹⁵ – whatever that may be – the very mall-design is used to create distinctness, which of course is used both as a marketing-tool in the presentation of the mall to consumers, and in order to

290.

<http://www.orlandoedc.com/Data-Center/Quality-of-Life/shopping.shtml> [accessed January 9, 2013]

291.

<http://www.mallatmillenia.com> [accessed January 9, 2013]

292.

cf. Bauman, *Liquid Life*, Chapter 5, 80-115; see also Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), Chapter 1, 25-51

293.

Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 144-145, see also: Crawford, ‘The World in a Shopping Mall’, 15

294.

Crawford, ‘The World in a Shopping Mall’, 27

295.

Sometimes developers contract designers that not only have gained position in respect to the experience with the design of shopping centers, but also within the cultural field of architecture as well. The Studio of Daniel Libeskind, for instance, designed the Crystals at City Center in Las Vegas (2009), Rem Koolhaas’ OMA was commissioned to design the Koopgoot II in Rotterdam (forthcoming 2018), what actually can be seen as the extension of the Beursplein project of The Jerde Partnership (1996). Architecture in this case is used in its cultural quality, needs to set the brand of the mall. This of course is not only a trend in mall design. Architectural design also recently got much attention in respect to the ‘branding of cities’ or even in the process of ‘refurbishment of cities.’ The Guggenheim museum in Bilbao designed by Frank Gehry in of course is the most well known example, setting a trend in ‘branding cities’ through architecturally outspoken cultural centers.

296.

This development does remind of Guy Debord's *société du spectacle*, in which he warns against the development in a society based upon consumption, which is replacing tangible reality with glamorous imaginery. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Berkeley CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2014)

297.

Cultural philosopher Frederic Jameson calls Jerde the 'contemporary auteur, who is the garish or mass-cultural equivalent of all these loftier aesthetic projects, ... a true phenomenon in his own right.' Jameson, 'Future City', 258

298.

John Adams Jerde, 'Visceral Reality', in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (Amsterdam: SUN publishers, 2009), 307-308

299.

As Sharon Zukin points out, historically seen Jerde's point is legitimate. Place and marked once belonged together. Both the produces sold on the market, that were grown or produced in the environment, as well as the experience of the market itself – probably a montly or festival market – increased the experience of habitation, of community. However, market and place did fall apart over time, starting in the second half of the 19th century, already, when industrialization dictated the market, and even shaped and structured 'places' by market norms, being the labor market or the housing market. Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 6-8; One probably can state that the nowadays situation in the West, turned from a industrial to a service society, the situation has turned: the 'market' follows the 'place' (to be), those authentic and attractive (urban) places where the creative class, to use the term of Richard Florida gather, and where the large companies follow, in order to be attractive as an employer and to strike the creativity that is needed in order to be competitive on a global scale. However, this still is not the merge of market and place, I would argue – and moreover, the shoppingmall with its dynamic experiential language as the Jerde Partnership proposes, as I argue in the following paragraph, is actually opposed to his 'authentic space' that is looked after by the creative class.

300.

Jerde, 'Visceral Reality', 312

create particular spheres, to create a visitor experience distinct from other environments, to make them feel 'special', by the addition of bright and shiny luxury and comfort.²⁹⁶

One of the most experienced offices in this 'market of mall design' is *The Jerde Partnership Inc.*, established by Jon Jerde in 1977.²⁹⁷ The office that has built striking malls, hotels, casino's, leisure centres across America, from Los Angeles (as for instance the mentioned *Universal City Walk*, 1993) to Las Vegas (*Treasure Island*, 1993) and from Atlanta (*New World of Coca-Cola*, 2007) to New York (*East Harlem City of Dreams*, 2006), as well as around the globe, from Dubai (*Dubai Festival Waterfront Center*, 2007) to Osaka (*Namba Parks*, 2003), and from Rotterdam (*Beursplein*, 1996) to Istanbul (*Kanyon*, 2006), present themselves with a design-philosophy that they summarize as 'place making'. Every project aims to create 'communal places with heightened experience.' In a 1998 monograph on the office, Jerde presents this aim as a strategy against a 'contemporary desperate need' of 'authentic urban experiences'. 'We design', he explains, 'the appropriate vessels for a renaissance of the human communal scene – communal settings that renew a public life of richness and complexity. We create vast meeting places for a humankind that has been split apart into fractured, yet kindred souls who are beginning to participate in a global movement towards unity. ... Today market forces require that ... evolutionary processes acting on space are completed in a decade. Participants in the global economy no longer have time for slow growth. Our landscape and environments are now designed as instant worlds. The creation of authentic community is not an automatic result of the globalization process. ... Fortunately', he adds, 'communal experience is a designable event. The challenge is to inspire – to trigger – unity out of the dismembered, disassembled parts of the once-cohesive city, within the abbreviated time frames of our fast-paced world.' Having said this on the possibilities and power of design, he adds some notes about strategy, explaining the offices' tendency to create spaces with a 'wow-factor': 'We have designed a deliberate urban script, a conscious creation of communal urbanism. ... We design our projects ads nodes of intensity within the larger city fabric. We work on large sites, ... areas with enough urban substance to activate a full set of complex experiences. We make them places, which are more identifiable in their signature characteristics than an anonymous cityscape or typically alienating suburban environment. They have a consistency of intention, but at the same time contain an infinite set of possibilities.'²⁹⁸ Design, thus, as a method to create identity through the recognition of tension in program and possibilities. The strategy here is the addition of lots of program, from shopping and entertainment to apartments and hotels. These distinct functions are super imposed, confronting each other, and bringing tension in the spaces of the project, whereas the designerly approach of the office united this tension through the dynamic form of the public routing. What Jerde aims for with this approach, of the actual areas and spaces, is an experiential architecture that reintroduces the experience of place and communality. Shopping, he adds later in the article, is the last place left in American society that somehow renders the idea of community, as retail, after all, is meant for everybody. Jerde writes this without irony, adding that shopping centres today are too functional, too rational.²⁹⁹ They lack perspective on the commonly shared need for shopping. 'Our projects use the shopping center as a catalyst – drawing a crowd of people, who, once there, experience a stimulating environment to connect to and share with those around them.'³⁰⁰ It is not difficult to see that this aim plays a role in the works of the Jerde Partnership. Looking

through the works of the office, this aim of a 'heightened experience' can be seen in the sculptural forms of their interior mall-spaces, which all aim to create architectural tension: variation of daylight, artificial light, and even darkness, fluid spaces of small paths and 'squares', water and fountains, hanging plants, crossing bridges, stairs, tribunes, moving escalators and elevators, curling balconies and overhangs creating surprising perspectives, opening up and closing the views at eye level. The dynamics of the space can even be felt just looking at photographs. The office, in other words, is extremely capable and experienced in creating spaces to amaze. Amazement, where the ordinary becomes extraordinary, creates a sense of identity in the vast sprawl of the suburbanized landscape, even 'citizens, not just consumers', by its capacity to 'engage the human spirit'.³⁰¹ For huge masses of visitors, the mall has become their public space, an environment not only in which to shop and to be entertained, but also to meet and greet – although still in the mall the primacy of consumption defines the space.³⁰² But despite Jerde's emphasis on the specific context of each projects – he writes that every project starts with gaining information from the environment – and despite the projects' aim to be catalysts for urban renewal within the city – bringing people back to the very centre of cities in order to create new communities – he overlooks the bigness of the projects, their aim to attract not just a local public, but a regional one.³⁰³ Contrary to his statements, the actual projects show a different language: even the projects in urban environments highly depend on the creation of an 'interior world', be it internal or external. The buildings face this space that is created within the project, rather than interacting with the surroundings, to the adjacent streets. Sometimes the buildings literally stand with their backs – large blind walls, sometimes the zone for transporting and undocking goods – to the surrounding city-fabric.³⁰⁴ Urban access immediately runs into a parking garage or is in other ways distinguished from the surroundings. Even the addition of a square in front of the mall, as is the case in the *Kanyon* in Istanbul, does not disguise the sharp boundary between the mall itself and the large blind walls that face the adjacent neighbourhood, as well as the fact that it surely aims to draw the people out of the plaza and into the interior of the mall.³⁰⁵ The curves of the interior space, visible from the outside apartments and office buildings that sit top of the mall in the same curve, articulate the mall as 'world apart'. And this interior world, although experiential for the visitor, again and again is rendered by images of 'shiny happy people', photographs of a public of leisure – shopping, shopping, enjoying life, and shopping again.

What is distinct, however, is that the imagery of malls has another effect. As Crawford writes on the development of the mall: 'The enclosed mall compressed and intensified space. Glass-enclosed elevators, and zigzagging escalators added dynamic vertical and diagonal movement to the basic horizontal plan of the mall.'³⁰⁶ This interior world³⁰⁷ is obviously controlled, perfectly planned and governed. And this control starts with selection: who is allowed in and who must stay out, even probably thrown out. Such control starts with the walls, doors and entrances, the visible thresholds at the edges of the area – at *Millenia*, the nicely lit palm trees, the bright yellow cladding of the walls in natural stone, the perfectly maintained stoops, the glazed tower with its twinkling interior. The message is clear, inside and outside are different worlds. Inside: richness, expense, and exclusiveness. Outside, what is left over. But even before the walls can express their message, the very location of the mall has selected its public – as also is the case at *The Retreat*. *Simohole Towne Center*, *Florida Mall*, *Mall at Millenium* all have immediate access to the main highways via direct intersections, enormous parking lots and access roads. Bike paths, let alone pedestrian paths, are rare.

301.
Ibid., 312

302.
Christopher Matthews, a financial journalist, somehow suggests the same relationship between the commercial and the common as a root of American culture. He wrote in an article on the recent decline of Mall developments that was published in *Time Magazine* 'America is and has always been a commercial culture, for better or for worse. Shopping is a cultural activity for us. It's how we come together, interact and socialize. The goal for brick and mortar retail is to figure out how to capture that desire for interaction and socializing and turn it into sales.' <http://business.time.com/2012/08/10/reports-of-the-shopping-malls-death-have-been-greatly-exaggerated/> [accessed April 11th, 2013]. This last remark, of course is very remarkable, to turn the desire for interaction and socializing into sales! That is the primacy of consumption and consumerism that define the space: consumption as the only true public activity. Although contemporary malls, as well as the initial malls designed by Gruen and others emphasize the mall as social space, it is argued that these 'social spaces' – the nicely landscaped cores and trajectories, terraces, videos, and so on – fails to turn into public space.

303.
Scale, actually is an important issue in regards to the idea of 'citizens', as I will touch upon in Chapter 5 in regards to Arendt's reading of the Greek and Roman *Polis*. The regional scale of the projects make it impossible to create this sense of 'a commonly owned world', which is at the very basis of citizenship. In combination with the aim of experiential architecture, which depends highly on temporal experiences, the Jerde projects rather deliver individual experiences of diversion and segregation than the expanding experience of politics and society. Yet also the emphasis on the 'wow' factor is questionable. As Zygmunt Bauman writes: 'In a consumer existence smarting under the tyranny of the moment and measured by pointillist time the facility to join in and to leave at will gives that experience of the phantom, ad hoc community a clear advantage over the uncomfortably solid, constraining and demanding 'real thing'.' Bauman, *Consuming Life*, 112

304.
These malls still are characterized by the highly articulated interior and the relative blank exterior, as Ghirardo the regular mall describes. Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism*, 65

305.
cf. Mitchell and Staeheli, 'Clean and Safe?', 147, on the Horton Plaza Mall of the Jerde Partnership in downtown San Diego

306.
Crawford, 'The World in a Shopping Mall', 22

307.
It can be the latest insight in fashion advertisements and photographing, the magazine that is published by the Millennium Mall also shows something very characteristic of the mall itself. The magazine, for course, is full of advertisements of the most exclusive fashion, perfume, jewellery, and watch brands, besides advertisements of hotels and resorts in the surroundings. The magazine reports on a fashion show, the 10 less travelled holiday destinations, trend spotting, and exclusive gifts (it's the end of the year 'holiday 2012' magazine that I looked upon). What actually is remarkable in the magazine is that almost all of the images has a 'neutral' background: the perfect models in their perfect, attractive, tempting, robes, trousers, jackets, both male and female, are sitting on a bench, walking in front of a mirror, standing before a wall, but all of them without any suggestion of a outer world – a city, a street, a house – in which life is lived (besides the even more surreal images of the recommended holiday destinations, of course). <http://www.millenniamag.com> [accessed January 9, 2013]

308.
Landscaping, by the way, is already an important aspect in the design of the very first shopping malls. See for instance the design Victor Gruen and Elsie Krummeck made on invitation of *Architectural Forum* in 1943 for their famous issue called *New Buildings for 194X*. See M. Jeffrey Hardwick, Mall Maker, Victor Gruen, *Architect of an American Dream* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 84-85

309.
Crawford, 'The World in a Shopping Mall', 27

310.
Ibid., 27

311.
Ibid., 23

312.
Davis, *Ecology of Fear*, 393

313.
Crawford, 'Blurring the Boundaries', 35; I will come back on this 'appropriation of space in Chapter 5

314.
Jameson, 'Future City', 256

The buildings are detached, despite their nicely landscaped surroundings.³⁰⁸ 'Such imagery treads a thin line between invitation and exclusion' Crawford observes.³⁰⁹ Whilst the intentions of the developer and designer may be honest, the malls draw lines, distinctions, images, appearances that all affect the accessibility, both literally and mentally, tangibly and virtually. The architecture of the mall – and here we're back to the observation of Davis' as well, that architecture plays a role in the policing of cities – besides their distance, disconnection and visible warnings, one of the tools that are used to create 'worlds apart', to control and predict what is happening inside versus what is kept outside the borders of the enclave. Nevertheless, to cite Crawford again: 'The assurance of safety implied by the mall's sealed space is no longer adequate.'³¹⁰ The aim of security increasingly gains visibility: behind glazed screens security guards monitor the mall, while colleagues wander through the streets and squares. At airports, and also elsewhere, militarized police officers even have a gun in their hands, ready to shoot. The guards will intervene, at all costs, the message: 'Think twice!' Simultaneously this is a warning not to disturb the smooth sphere of the mall or the inviting image of the theme park: stick to the rules and do not behave differently. This space is meant for fun, shopping, entertainment, and happiness. The governance, in other words, within these postmodern enclaves, not only aims to create a safe environment for its visitors and inhabitants, it also aims to create a smooth environment, reified by shiny tiles on the floor, expensive natural stone on the interior façade, mirrored glass railings on the upper floors – be it for shopping or traveling, for recreation or entertainment, for sports or leisure. Behaviour is restricted to consumer behaviour. When entering a mall you can find lots of warnings: 'no groupings allowed!' 'No loitering.' Or even: 'Private space'. Crawford, in her essay, quotes a mall manager from a Pennsylvania mall: 'We simply don't want anything to interfere with the shopper's freedom to not be bothered and have fun.'³¹¹ This is not only restricted to these commercial areas, as can be understood from a quote that Mike Davis notes. An employee of Universal Studio tells him in an explanation as to why their *City Walk* is so popular in Los Angeles: 'The city is not fun anymore'.³¹²

Recent investigations in Los Angeles, however, urged Margeret Crawford to reject the pessimism about public space behind the book *Variations on a Theme Park*, edited by the New York architect Michael Sorkins, to which she contributed her article 'The World in a Shopping Mall.' In another essay 'Blurring the Boundary', she states that a close reading of neighbourhoods in Los Angeles showed her the creativity of inhabitants, even using their garages as (new) sales-locations. Particularly within such processes of appropriation of space and the reclaiming of public space, there is no reason to be negative about the potentialities of these spaces with regard to the issue of the public sphere.³¹³

Although landed on by chance – by *The Retreat* shooting – in the Orlando region, the city is famous of one thing: its theme parks that attract large groups of tourists not only from the Americas, but from all over the world. Specifically *Disney World* attracts its millions – we need to explore the specifics of this theme park, as the cultural philosopher Frederic Jameson marks in 'Future City': 'For no study of any innovations in this area [Jameson means the development of the shopping mall and its impact on the city, HT] can be complete without a comprehensive recognition of everything – all the various things, from a new urbanism to a kind of shopping, a new kind of globalization, a new kind of entertainment industry, even a new kind of Utopia itself – that Walt [Disney, HT] invented.'³¹⁴ It actually turns out to be an immense area of different entertainment spots, ranging from

the famous theme park with its *Castle*, *Main Street* with its train station,³¹⁵ *Fantasyland*, *Space Mountain Experience*, *Lagoon*, another theme park, with a *Lakeside walk*, *Ferry Trips*, *Experience Center*, and again, another theme park, *the ESPN World Sports Centrum*, spas, golf courses, *Hollywood studios*, a Convention Center, a *Fairy Tale Wedding spot*, ship rental, a driving experience, a heliport, and all this surrounded by an enormous range of resorts, with hotels and vacation villas on all sorts of themes, connected through a monorail track and surrounded by a sea of parking lots – besides the huge ‘backstage’ spaces for maintenance, training, offices, organization far greater than one can ever imagine. It dazzles me, looking at it via my laptop. 30 million people a year visits Disney World – a 40 square mile area. 40 square miles, about 104 square km, nearly half of the surface of Amsterdam!³¹⁶ From *Google Streetview* it is hard to get an image of this immense area. Surely, the *Streetviewcar* was not allowed to drive through the theme park, and only a few roads that cut through the area, in between the distinct ‘landscapes’, are public. These roads, however, are fenced with trees and bushes, or endless parking lots. Glimpses of the park can be seen behind these trees and parkings – but it is nothing more than some flags at the entrances, a pond, the elevated track of the monorail. Only the *Future World* attraction at the *EPCOT* theme park, the famous bowl, is highly visible from the road, as are fragments of the famous hotels with their post-modern architectural language, designed by Michael Graves, the *Dolphin* and the *Swan*. The castle, used by the company as the very logo of *Disney World*, can’t be seen, although every now and then the passersby sees the world-famous fireworks above the castle, I suppose. Nevertheless, even being near *Disney World* virtually, seeing the parking lots and reading the possibilities that are offered, already evokes the desire to enter into this Fantasyworld and let ‘dreams come true.’ Is this ‘the warmth that the whole Disney experience gives’, as Graves refers to in respect to his designs?³¹⁷ Or does it evoke a deeper longing, a longing for *utopia*, which is at the very origin of the Disney’s theme parks – the strength of the engineer (in Disney’s world actually called ‘imagineers’)³¹⁸ to indeed fulfil the promises of images spread all over the world. Or better said, to create these ‘perfect worlds’. Sharon Zukin cites one of Disney’s engineers: ‘What we create is ‘Disney realism,’ sort of Utopian in nature, where we carefully program out all the negative, unwanted elements and program in the positive elements.’³¹⁹ Whereas *Disneyland*, Disney’s first themepark in Orange County, California, is based on the historical image of Main Street USA, the Orlando branch *Disney World* – which in size dwarfs the already large *Disneyland*³²⁰ – is dominated by an image of the future (although not lacking Main Street USA, of course). *EPCOT* actually means the *Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow*, somehow intending to scale down futuristic visions to domestic consumption. Although the initial idea was to establish a utopian residential community, an image of how the city of tomorrow should be according to Walt Disney, where entertainment values and motifs of social control would merge, the very futuristic and utopian image still remains in the resort colony that it has become.³²¹ Zukin describes the imaginary landscape of Disney as a ‘utopia’ of consumption, based on three motifs: mobility, populism, and social control – meaning with this term utopia as an illusionary ideal. The ‘warmth’ of this utopia is the populist and recognizable narrative that combines selected fragments of the past, with future elements that are known through the Hollywood stories. The desire of the tourist for recognising both the nostalgia of *Main Street* and progress of *Futureland* (and thus remarkably avoiding the now) – even sometimes playing the card of the myth of domination – merges with the desire for security into a ‘perfect’ vernacular landscape, which is highly planned, prescribed, and

315.

This actually is the feature that Walt Disney had in mind when he established his own theme park. As Sharon Zukin writes on Disney World: ‘He wanted to project the vernacular image of the American small town as an image of social harmony. ... Disney’s peculiar vision was based on a highly selective consumption of the American landscape. Anchored by a castle and a railroad station, Disneyland evoked the fantasies of democracy and illicit mobility that were found in the vernacular architecture of southern California. The castle and the station were joined on an axis by “Main Street USA,” an ensemble of archaic commercial facades. This mock-up in fact idealized the vernacular architecture Disney remembered from his childhood in Marceline, Missouri, before World War I. But Disney had not had a happy childhood. The son of a disappointed utopian who drifted between factory jobs and small business ventures that always failed, Disney designed Disneyland by abstracting a promise of security from the vernacular.’ Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 222

316.

Suddenly I understand why people, even from Europe, travel to Orlando, stay in one of these resorts for a week, and only enter Disneyland day by day, not exploring the city of Orlando, neither the nature reserves around, nor the coast of Cape Canaveral (as I overheard in a conversation in the train last year). Holiday in a cocoon, prescribed by Walt Disney.

317.

Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 228

318.

Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism*, 53

319.

Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 222

320.

Ghirardo writes: ‘Although Disneyland is large (76 acres/31 hectares), the epic scale of Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida dwarfs it. There the Magic Kingdom alone covers 100 acres (40 hectares).’ Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism*, 49

321.

Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 224, 227; actually the Disney Company later developed a residential community as well, the famous Orlando suburb Celebration, which I discuss in the next sub-chapter. Compare also Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism*, pp.51-52, where she writes that Walt Disney ‘imagined a community that would “take its cue from the new ideas and new technologies that are now emerging from the creative centers of American industry.”’ Ghirardo follows what this actually meant for Disney: ‘In his vision, it would never be completed, but rather would continue testing,

introducing and demonstrating new materials and systems, a “showcase to the world for the ingenuity and imagination of American free enterprise.”⁷ This patriotic impulse was to be expressed in a new town with 20,000 inhabitants in which new technologies would be used for everything from the watstedisposal to sewer and telephone systems. Although destined to be outfitted with schools and cultural facilities, it would differ from typical American communities in certain key respects. Residents would not own land and therefore would be unable to exercise control by voting; there would be no slums; and only working people would be eligible – therefore no elderly, either.’ The death of Disney in 1966 actually stopped the planning of the community, changing the residential community into a resort with temporary residents – ‘a resort with a futuristic themepark connected to it,’ as Ghirardo circumscribes.

322.

Reported by Paul Goldberger in an article called ‘Mickey Mouse teaches the Architects,’ published in the New York Times Magazine, 22 October 1972. Quoted here via Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: MIT Press, 1983), 45

323.

Boyer, ‘Cities for Sale’, 200-201

324.

cf. Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism*, 48: ‘Pure consumerism drives Main Street, for the only activities possible entail spending money on food or trinkets.’

325.

Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 231

326.

By the way, a history of advertising might be another track to discuss aspects of the public realm and its meaning politically and socially. cf. Boyer, *Cyber Cities*, 153: ‘Since the early 1970s, the private market has penetrated deeply without the slightest struggle, into every aspect of American lives. In fact, advertising in the public realm and marketing images now appear to be the only mechanisms that offer isolated individuals in the decentered non-place of the American city access to meaning and well-being, albeit through the form of consumption.’

327.

Boomkens, *Een Drempeelwereld*, 345

328.

Crawford, ‘The World in a Shopping Mall’, 22

controlled. ‘Disney World is nearer to what people really want,’ the architect Robert Venturi stated once, ‘than what architects have ever given them’.³²² But, as Christine Boyer writes: ‘Symbolically, whatever path the traveller may take, the voyage begins and ends at Main Street USA, where the tourist shops lie. Hence Main Street becomes the centre of Disneyland’s story, a shrewd commercial tale that tells of consumption American style.’³²³ It is both nostalgia and a longing for progression, both remembrances and futuristic experience – essentially designed to encourage consumption.³²⁴ This image in reverse, warns Zukin, also effects the world outside the themepark: it fuels the expectations of society for a perfect, secure, entertaining ‘real world’, that are increasingly developed and shaped by the power of capitalism, by large global corporations, in a simultaneous gesture of withdrawal from local responsibility, the loss of political power and the involvement of the public.³²⁵

Surprisingly enough, the *Google Streetview car* was able to enter the nearby themepark of *Universal Studios*, which is located a bit closer to the centre of Orlando, and to cover the themepark itself. It drives over the pedestrian routes in the park and shows all attractions: the roller coasters, the movie-scenes, the theatres, the landscaped ponds with their terraces, and, to my surprise, a ‘fantasy version’ of the *Universal City Walk*, a Los Angeles Mall that is modelled after an original Los Angeles famous shopping street by the Jerde Partnership, rebuilt on top of a parking garage. The *Universal City Walk* – at least in Los Angeles – is publicly accessible (after parking the car in the car park) without having to enter the theme park, but despite its appearance as urban shopping street, with its plural and specific architectural forms, distinct shops (actually just filled with lots of fast-food restaurants and other chain stores like *McDonalds*, *Starbucks*, *Gap*, *Hard Rock Café*, *Quicksilver*, *Harley Davidson*), casinos, entertainment halls and an ‘indoor flying attraction’, lots of neon and advertisements,³²⁶ it is an example of shopping as a tourist attraction, with the emphasis on food, drinks, terraces. The postmodern architectural forms suggest an urban environment, but it is without urbanity. Firstly, because the ‘public space’ is only a loop, not interwoven into the urban fabric, in the adjacent neighbourhoods. It is a décor on top of a parking garage, a balloon that is immediately pierced at the edges and at the public toilets, where the thinness of the façade is revealed. One step through the décor is entering a regular shed efficiently designed for its purpose, or entering the driveway where taxis are waiting to bring you to the other events you want to visit. Secondly, the lack of urbanity is felt through the public itself. It is a street without inhabitants, there is no neighbourhood, no people living close by, no homeless on the streets, no strangers around the corner. Nothing should disturb this image of the perfect urban street.³²⁷ This is an environment of fun (and beer). And indeed: while looking around, only tourists wander around, in their typical outfits and their positive state of mind. But this definitely is not the perfect image of an urban street, this clearly is not the utopia that is shown in the corporation’s flyers and folders. Nicely dressed slender women, charming kids and sympathetic dads populate these images under blue skies and in a joyful soul. Sorry to say, but what a contrast with reality. However, *The Universal City Walk* is, as Crawford writes, the next step in Mall design: ‘Architects manipulated space and light to achieve the density and bustle of a city downtown – to create essentially a fantasy urbanism devoid of the cities negative aspects: weather, traffic, and poor people.’³²⁸ Some people, the Dutch philosopher René Boomkens adds, only dare to enter public space in such environments: covered, controlled, temperate, homogenised spaces, directly accessible through parking garages. It is as Gruen had written: ‘But when the public environment becomes, for one reason

or another, plagued by conflicts and disturbances and therefore hostile, then the merchant is forced to call on the help of planners, urbanists, and architects to create environmental conditions which, separated from the hostile overall public environment, will give him a chance to survive.³²⁹ The *Universal City Walk* is the merge of shopping and theme park, the very outcome of a movement that creates perfectly predictable environments, only aiming to fuel consumption.³³⁰ ‘Public life’, as Ghirardo writes on Disneyland, ‘is conceived as passive, guided movement through controlled spaces, where the only arenas of active choice are the selection of foods and shopping.’³³¹

The *Walt Disney Corporation* plans to bring this aim of ‘consumption’ to new levels: they experiment with visitors wearing bracelets enhanced with RFID chip radio frequency identification, a system they called *MyMagic+*. For consumers it will become easier and more pleasant. The bracelet, which is called the *MagicBand*, combines room key (of a hotel or resort), park ticket, ‘FastPass’ and credit card, so that the visitor no longer needs cash, or to swipe their cards, any moment they want to buy something or to enter in to another level of the park: money is immediately transferred on entering the park, buying food, souvenirs, whatever. The bracelet will even contain personal details so that the park employees can easily deliver a more ‘personal’ service: ‘Now – if parents opt in – hidden sensors will read MagicBand data, providing information needed for a personalized greeting: “Hi Angie,” the character might say without prompting. “I understand it’s your birthday.”’³³² At the same time, the Disney Corp is also able to get more information on the park’s use and visitors, their behaviour and experiences, what they like or dislike what they do and what they don’t. A happier guest will spend more money, they suppose.

However, beyond Disney’s aim to capture the behaviour of people in the park in order to specify the bids they can offer to customers, it is also an additional layer of surveillance, of controlling of the park, that already lies at the very basis of the park’s design.³³³ Through the bracelet, the corporation can trace perfectly who’s in and who’s out, where one hangs around, behaviour can be traced, and in case of ‘emergency’ can directly be intercepted by the park managers. One can be redirected to another parts of the park, entrance for some parts can be refused for a while, and so on. The bracelet is an example of control ‘no longer [is] territorialized or historicized’, as the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard stated. ‘It is computerized.’³³⁴ Surveillance today is a layered process in which the obtaining of information on the specific behaviour of large groups in society, as well as of an individual, is a crucial figure.³³⁵ Internet-use, use of smartphones, social media, camera-registration, and so on, is a rich source of information – acquired without request, or by making use of facilities and services impossible without accepting the ‘small letters’, the terms and conditions; there is no such thing as a free lunch – and lots of large companies and governmental organizations spend lots of effort and pay lots of money to gain this (private) information (from *Google*, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*), on your web-behaviour in their online-shop, your online habit on forums and other websites, data of wifi-connections, and so on – firstly because of commercial reasons, secondly for reasons of security.³³⁶ The line between what is public and what remains private is extremely thin, at this point,³³⁷ specifically threatened through the ‘war on terror’. As Smith and Low write in a quote already cited above: since 9/11 ‘the clampdown on public space, in the name of enforcing public safety and homeland security, has been dramatic.’³³⁸

In his extensively discussed essay ‘Generic city’, Rem Koolhaas states that the city of today is ‘liberated from the captivity of center, from the straitjacket of identity.

329. Gruen, *Centers for the Urban Environment*, 14

330. Boomkens, *Een Drempelwereld*, 347; The shoppingmall, although some predict the ‘death of the shoppingmall and the resurrection of downtown’, as I will dwell upon in the last part of the chapter, seems to be the major figure in capitalism. Every airport is transformed into a shoppingmall, the philosopher Frederic Jameson writes, as are museums and the city itself. Jameson, ‘Future City’, 255

331. Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism*, 51

332. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/07/business/media/at-disney-parks-a-bracelet-meant-to-build-loyalty-and-sales.html?pagewanted=all> [accessed January 18, 2013]

333. cf. Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism*, 48: ‘By contrast with Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, the control on Disney’s Main Street is far more subtle, guided by sophisticated marketing and crowd control techniques, by the surveillance is just as pervasive – and just as particular.’

334. Lyotard, ‘Domus and the Megalopolis’, 275

335. This of course not only counts for the surveillance of the theme park. This counts for society as we whole, where on different levels and with distinctive means control and surveillance is applied. The French philosopher Michel Foucault speaks about ‘regimes of surveillance’. Michel Foucault, *Discipline, toezicht en straf* (Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij, 2010)

336. See for a discussion of the threat of social control, ‘big brother is watching you’: Achterhuis, *De erfenis van de utopie*, 311-318

337. See for an example of specifically commercial interest: http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-505124_162-57569867/google-privacy-issues-in-forefront-again/ [accessed March 26th, 2013]

338. Smith and Low, ‘Introduction: The Imperative of Public Space’, 1

339.
Koolhaas, 'Generic City', 1250

340.
Peter Blake, *God's own Junkyard, The Planned Deterioration of America's Landscape* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1979)

The Generic City,' he writes, breaks with this destructive cycle of dependency: it is nothing but a reflection of present need and present ability.'³³⁹ This Greater Orlando Metropolitan Area seems to be moulded according to this template (although Koolhaas apparently never wrote 'Generic City' as a template, more as a survey of contemporaneity, a sharp observation on unfolding and inevitable powers and appearances). There is no single centre nor history left that has the power to perform, to 'captivate', to determine the identity of this urbanized region. Globally seen, the region is known because of its theme parks, but besides the weather of the Florida region, these parks actually do not depend on the local geography or morphology in any way.

There is, however, an 'inner-city' left, obviously recognizable through a couple of high rise buildings (mainly hotels and offices), but without the specificity that brings any form of identity to the region. For a metropolitan area, the inner-city is quite small: as part of the continuous grid, only about five blocks wide, eight blocks high. Immediately around this, rectangular low rises start – fragments of expensive villa-neighbourhoods, as well as some poorer areas, according to the image that *Streetview* delivers: the regular wooden two story high city-houses in their own yard. It is remarkable how many leftover spaces the city, immediately outside the centre, contains. A view from the road shows that the urban fabric consists of broad streets of two times four lanes, an exclusive bus lane, as well as smaller, secondary ones. At the south-west corner, the City Hall is located, in the south-east corner a new *Center of Performing Arts* is being built this very moment. The images show that this Center will also offer a huge publicly accessible outside space at the front of the entrance, something in-between a park and a square. At the edges of the Center two large church complexes, a couple of schools, and a fairly large car park is located.

The inner-city of Orlando is located in the 'armpit' of the intersection between Highway 4 and the 408 – which here highly rises above the urban fabric on its viaducts. Beneath the highway an old railway station is located, including a steam engine, that with the help of volunteers every now and then can be booked for a trip. This is probably the oldest part of the city, Orlando's own historic district – with nicely renovated buildings, streets without traffic, two storeys high brickwork with nice details, the station with decorated steel columns and bridges. History located right down under the highway viaduct – *Gods Own Junkyard*.³⁴⁰

At the other side of the highway, the *Amway Center* is located, 'a sports and entertainment venue in the DownTown Area' that in volume conquers the viaducts of the highway. It is home to both Orlando's NBA Basketball Team *Orlando Magic* and the local ice hockey team, *Orlando Solar Bears*. The *Amway Center* also organizes other sports events, like a kickboxing competition, besides pop concerts, circus performances, and other entertainment shows.

Although the inner city – this Central Business District of Orlando – does offer a range of offices and luxurious hotels with spas, ballrooms, outdoor rooftop bars and pools, executive lounges, and presidential suites, as well as the City-Hall, some schools, lots of cafés, pubs, bars and parking lots, it remarkably doesn't offer shops: neither a chain department store or a local fashion shop, nor any housing. It is like the historic district of the small town of Sanford, where again hardly any store can be found. Inner cities are indeed meant for either business and offices or tourism and leisure. Dwelling is programmed out to the suburbs, and shopping is concentrated in malls that are located near highway exits, on the outskirts of the city, or at the heart of the theme parks. The more people that live in the suburbs, however, the more the city centre has become a 'leisure playground': the inner city

is a destination of global travellers, and for locals that are going out to dine, for festivals that attracts a crowd and for daily visitors that are seeking fun.³⁴¹

California of course is not Florida, and Los Angeles not Orlando, Malibu not Sanford. Elevated public space, as described by Davis, is rare in Orlando, or it should be the highway. Nevertheless, the very image of the centre shows the same strive that Davis revealed in the centre of Los Angeles: ways to control public space in order to exclude the tramps, the addicts and the homeless. Indeed, not in the extreme manner of Bunker Hill, but still through the layout of spaces and – although not seen through the eye of the *Streetview* car – through surveillance as well. Lets have a closer look at the public space. Generally speaking, the spatiality of the streets is important: sidewalks, the facades, shops, and entrances of the buildings. From *Streetview* one is able to get an image of the square in front of the *Regional History Center* (the larger square), the stairs in front of the City Hall (the formal public space), and of the park around Lake Eola – an empty recreational area in the north-eastern part of the center. Although the streets in Orlando are busy with cars, taxis, buses, the sidewalks are empty. Even the pedestrian environments in central Orlando, around the historic district, feel deserted. Remarkably, only a few people are wandering around: a businessman waiting for the traffic lights at the crossings, some people enjoying lunch underneath the trees on the square. In front of the City Hall some tourists wander around: prepared with a backpack on their back and mountaineering boots on their feet, sunglasses for their eyes, looking to the camera-car (as everyone does when the car drives along). Around the historic district, no people are seen on the streets. Is it due to the time of the *Streetview* car took its images – it could be too early, too warm, or the wrong season to attract people outside? Or is it due to the badly designed ‘plinth’ of these high rises - a base without public functions, besides a couple of (hotel) bars and restaurants? Or is it because of the perfection, the lack of damage and danger. All public spaces are nicely shaped and paved, and perfectly maintained, well planted with (palm) trees, and adorned with benches, fountains, lampposts and pergolas, moulded by differences in height, short stairs and ramps, and divided by flower boxes and banks. They are clean, undamaged, and safe – as public spaces are appreciated today. But where are the people that really inhabit the streets and that are expected to wander around the very centre of a city? The youth, the shoppers, the strollers, and even the homeless, who together construct the hustle and bustle connected to the inner city experience? Are there actually homeless people in Orlando? This is a crucial question in respect to public space, as I will investigate later in this chapter. Of course, there are. *Google maps* shows that there are actually homeless shelters at the other side of the Highway, and in the northern part of the city. Nevertheless, the *Streetview* car spotted no-one, as far as I could discover. Is it prohibited to beg in this area, as it is the case in other city centres around the world?³⁴² Is it possibly even forbidden to wander around? Central urban space, clearly the message of this information, is meant for business, leisure, entertainment, and tourism: this is the urban landscape of today, an image of consumerist culture, of late capitalist society, which can’t be disturbed by addicts, homelessness, and poverty. Some critics state that this is the effect of the ‘perfect’ image of shopping malls and theme parks: ‘Disneyland and Disney World have shaped the perspective from which the real landscape is viewed,’ Sharon Zukin writes. ‘For many consumers, the self-conscious production of the imaginary landscape is what they perceive as real.’³⁴³ Decay is disturbing this perfect image, literally material decay: unoccupied shiny buildings, vacant lots, offices, shops, damaged commodities,

341.

See the first chapter, ‘Tourist in my own city’, of the journalist Tracy Metz’ book *Fun!*. Although her European example – Amsterdam – is way more explicit turned into the ‘leisure domain for shopping and strolling, for eating out and going out’, as she writes, as Orlando in this case, mainly since shopping is not largely present in the inner cities in the USA as it is in Europe. Tracy Metz, *Fun! Leisure and Landscape* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 91

342.

This is not just the case in cities our countries that are somehow known about their ‘clean’ inner cities. Also in the Dutch cities of Rotterdam and Amsterdam it is forbidden to beg.

343.

Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 230, 231; or as a Samsung TV set runs now: ‘Reality. What a letdown.’ Quoted via Evgeny Morozov, ‘The Perils of Perfection’, in: *The New York Times*, March 2, 2013. See: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/03/opinion/sunday/the-perils-of-perfection.html?pagewanted=2&_r=5 [accessed March 26th, 2013]

Picon discusses in his article 'Anxious Landscapes' the fridges of cities, those landscapes of infrastructure, former industry and docklands, the shadowy periphery, and questions why those landscapes, although much more potentially poetic, gained the image frightening scenes by citizens. To answer this question, he reads these areas in contrast with their cultural and urban context, the consumerist city. On the consumerist city he writes: 'The landscape of the city paces itself more and more to the rhythms of mass consumption. At the same time it takes on a definite functional coloration. ... That while works wears itself out and stops being useful. And everything wears itself out, or almost, in the cityscape of today. Metal oxidizes, plastic yellows and cracks. The idea of functionality goes hand in hand, Therefore, with that of obsolescence. ... Why does rust frighten us so while the ruin is adorned with a reassuring character? ... The ruin ... restores man to nature. Rust, on the other hand confines him in the middle of his productions as if within a prison, a prison all the more terrible since he is its builder. ... The biggest fear suggested by the contemporary technological landscape is that of the death of humanity in the midst of the signs of its triumph over nature.' This argument, of course, not only is applicable to the fridges of the city, but also can be understood as a reason why decay in the very core of the consumerist city, the inner cities as well as the shopping malls, the theme park as well as the recreational area is avoided, almost to all costs. Antoine Picon, 'Anxious Landscapes: From the Ruin to Rust,' in: *Grey Room*, Vol. 01, (Cambridge (Mass.), MIT Press Journals, Fall 2000), 76-79

empty space, all are counter productive to the consumer culture, do not encourage consumption, and offer consumers a feeling of physical and metaphysical discomfort and anxiousness, as architectural historian Antoine Picon writes.³⁴⁴



2.5 Entrance to *Disney World*, Orlando FL.

2.4 AN ENCLAVE WORLD

345. Boyer, 'Cities for Sale', 191

346. Arnold Reijndorp, *De 'Rise of the Creative Class' en het einde van 'Organization Man', De veerkracht van de stad* (Rotterdam: Rotterdam-Maaskantprijs, 2012), 22

347. An intriguing perspective on this 'enclave-city' is developed in Tom Wolfe's 1987 novel *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. See also the blog of Sam Roberts on the changes in the city (especially the boroughs of The Bronx and Manhattan) during the 25 years after publishing the novel posted on the New York Times City Room website, 'Tom Wolfe Would Hardly Recognize The Bronx Today': <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/12/09/bonfire-by-roberts/> [accessed December 20th, 2012]

348. Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere*, 10

349. Michael Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park, The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992)

'To travel through American cities,' Christine Boyer writes in her contribution to *Variations on a Theme Park*, 'is to sense that these gigantic urban regions are disintegrating into unrelated groupings of shopping centres, special zoning districts, and housing tracts, all caved up by highways and multilevel traffic interchanges.'³⁴⁵ The Greater Orlando Metropolitan Area is such a disintegrated landscape, consisting of a range of enclaves: gated communities (as well as other suburban cul-de-sac developments), shopping malls, newly built commercial areas, theme parks, and state parks. Even the newly redeveloped city centres, business districts and heritage areas and in some of the older neighbourhoods that were previously part of the continuous spatial fabric, have turned into enclaves,³⁴⁶ although these are mainly less clearly physically demarcated than the contemporary suburban enclaves.³⁴⁷ Suburbanisation, as the American writer James Howard Kunstler writes in his book *Geography of Nowhere* has been 'a process that, instead of blowing up the world, has nearly wrecked the human habitat in America':³⁴⁸ it meant the disintegration of the 'city' into a landscape of urban artefacts, a world of enclaves.

Despite being different, distinct worlds of living, shopping, working, transportation, traveling, education, entertainment, leisure, and tourism, every enclave in itself is essentially based on the same suburban figure: a solid distinction between outside and inside. This distinction is often both reified in the edge, as well as articulated in the overall appearance. This strong inward emphasis immediately excludes the world outside. Every enclave has the same pattern: an inward oriented world: space de-localized, re-framed and re-formed. Enclaves thus create interior worlds by (design) effort – by defining the edge (the wall) and by articulating the interior (identity). The interiors are precisely planned, attentively designed, well governed, highly controlled, and extensively safeguarded.

The enclave is a template for the creation of an ideal world, and thus creates an imaginary environment. The walls and fences of the enclave exclude the outside world in order to create, secure and maintain a fantastic interior world, theme park like, perfectly fit for sole use. A nicely landscape surrounding, evoking the sphere of the Mediterranean, made fit for living the good life. Shiny materials that create the experience of luxury, of exclusivity. The perfectly mown lawns of a university campus communicate the quietness of intelligence and meditation. The blatant architecture of the theme park promises enjoyment. Worlds *an sich*, stand alones, without a visible and tangible relationship to other parts of the urban landscape, let alone with the very geography itself.

Although from the very beginning of the processes of suburbanisation, critical voices have questioned these new environments, a pivotal publication was certainly the collection of essays *Variations on a Theme Park*, edited by the New York architect and critic Michael Sorkin and published in 1992.³⁴⁹ The essays, three of them used in the reflections above – the reflection on the mall by Margaret Crawford, the reading of the Historic Tableau by Christine Boyer, and Michel Davis stressing the militarization of the urban landscape - discuss the new urban and suburban spaces against a background that Sorkin in his introduction sketches in sombre colours: the demolition of public space as caused by these (new) artefacts, or better said, the loss of a democratic ideal related to public space. I regard this publication pivotal; although it does not discuss with many words the ideals that the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas promoted

in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, which became available in English about 3 years prior to this publication (1989), it certainly can be understood as the translation of Habermas' philosophical perspective in the field of urban reflections and architectural theory. The book, after all, was the first important book in a range of publications, books and articles, that somehow addressed concerns about public space in relation to the public sphere.

Sorkin, in his introduction to the 1992 collection of essays *Variations on a Theme Park*, distinguishes between three characteristics of contemporary American cities, and the 'destruction' of the city itself in favour of detached enclaves. Let us use these three characteristics here, to reflect upon our journey through the American landscape, by way of a conclusion on our findings. The first characteristic Sorkin puts forward is an alienation from the very local and cultural geography of the urban artefacts, as discussed in the paragraphs above. Malls, as well as suburban communities, entertainment parks and even historic districts have become detached from local circumstances, history and culture. He even calls it dissipation: today, urban artefacts *celebrate* the final loss of the connection to time and place in the human environment.³⁵⁰ Enclaves are detached by choice.

Secondly Sorkin emphasizes the obsession with security that we have covered extensively. What is important in respect to the enclave landscape is what Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens showed above: this obsession leads to new forms of segregation. Sorkin adds: 'throughout America, city planning has largely ceased its historic role as the integrator of communities in favour of managing selective development and enforcing distinction'³⁵¹ between the different enclaves as well as from the surroundings. However, although these recent urban typologies are independent urban figures (if not isolated), they are complementary to other enclaves simultaneously. Inhabitants of this landscape of enclaves are continuously traveling between enclaves, in their very individual capsule, the car, from home in the gated community, to work in the business district, via the drive-through of the *Starbucks*, after work to the shop in the shopping mall, via the drive-through ATM, and from the mall to the historic district in order to attend a bar or restaurant, before finally driving home, through the safe walls of the gated community secured from the outside world, finally letting the blinds go down and putting the television on to look back to the world, the smartphone to share some opinions. Each of these spaces that are frequented – even those in between the actual destinations: in the car, on the highway, at the filling station and the parking lot – are controlled by different regimes of surveillance: by guards, cameras, porters, gates, fences, barbed wire, police posts, urban layouts, even the architectural appearance. The contemporary citizen is able to choose from a range of destinations, neighbourhoods to live in, shopping malls to shop, theme parks to be entertained – and will choose the locations that correspond to their expectations, not so much on accessibility of nearness, but certainly on what is offered by the shops, and a perception of safety of the area, a recognizable public (to which one wants to belong), and outstanding service.³⁵² In other words, the contemporary American city is re-written through individual composition and construction: an assembly of well considered destinations that are chosen because of their function and program, their distinguished image, the perception of safety, the offerings of enjoyment and leisure, as well as visited by peers of the same social class and racial background.³⁵³ Christine Boyer even calls this, in her contribution to *Variations on a Theme Park*, the individually constructed 'city', 'a map of tourist attractions', a map of sites with a specific aim, exclusivity, public, and appearance.³⁵⁴ This of course not only affects the landscape, it also impacts the very experience of the inhabitants, passing from enclave to enclave, without

350.

Michael Sorkin, 'Introduction: Variation on a Theme Park', in: Michael Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park, The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), XIII; In his well known essay 'Generic City' Rem Koolhaas justly suggests that the rapid population growth as well as the increase of welfare highly forces into such alienation. There simply is too less history, 'authentic context' to share, to dwell upon or amidst. Identity, he writes, as 'derived from physical substance, from the historical, from context, from the real, we somehow cannot imagine that anything contemporary – made by us – contributes to it. But the fact that human growth is exponential implies that the past will at some point become too "small" to be inhabited and shared by those alive.' Koolhaas explores this idea of the loss of physical rootedness of the contemporary city, when he explores identity, as derived from the physical, historical, context. Koolhaas, 'Generic City', 1248

351.

Sorkin, 'Introduction: Variation on a Theme Park', XIV

352.

cf. Boomkens, *Een drempelwereld*, 335; the Dutch philosopher René Boomkens describes the new citizen as decentralized and individualized commuter.

353.

Ibid., 340

354.

Boyer, 'Cities for Sale', 192

356.
It actually is a double leap, we touch upon here. The freedom of not needing to steer is filled with the screen, that predicts what to see, where to look and what to think. This does remind of the notion of freedom in the writings of Arendt, which we will discuss later. However, also Arendt does connect the term freedom to the public space. First, she states, the aim of public space is freedom. Freedom is needed, in order to participate in the world. Arendt, like Mumford, however, was concerned about the newly gained freedom – free evenings, weekends, holidays: this freedom immediately needed to be filled with leisure. Arendt's notion of freedom, however, is a double leap as well: One needs to be free from (labor) in order to be free for participation in the world. That latter is the ultimate aim: being freed from in order to be free to participate in public.

357.
Sociologist Richard Sennett writes on the emerge of Smart Cities, New Towns that are with the help of smart computer programs are planned – two actually are being built, Masdar in the Middle East, and Songdo in South Africa, a completely different topic, but still very insightful: 'The city [Masdar] is conceived in "Fordist" terms – that is, each activity has an appropriate place and time. Urbanites become consumers of choices laid out for them by prior calculation of where to shop, or to get a doctor, most efficiently. ... "User-friendly" in Masdar means choosing menu options rather than creating the menu. Creating your own, new menu entails, as it were, being in the wrong place at the wrong time. ... Songdo represent the stupefying smart city in its architectural aspect – massive, clean, efficient housing block rising up in the shado of South Korea's western mantains, like an inflated 1960s British housing estate – but now heat, security, parkign and deliveries are all controlled by a central Songdo "brain." The massive units of housing are not conceived as structures with any individuality in themselves, nor is the ensemble of these faceless buildings meant to create a sense of place.' After this description he adds a plea: 'Technology is a great tool, when it's used responsibly. ... But the city is not a machine; as in Masdar and Songdo, this version of the city can deaden and stupefy the people who live in its all-eficitne embrace. We want cities that work well enough, but are open to the shifts, uncertainties, and mess which are real life.' Richard Sennett, 'No One likes a City that's too Smart', published December 4th, 2012 in *The Guardian*: <http://guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/dec/04/smart-city-rio-songdo-masdar> [accessed December 13, 2012]

touching the in-between zones. The emphasis on the interior of the enclave leaves the surrounding landscape 'left-over-space', or: space that is inhabited by leftovers, strangers, which should be avoided at any time. The enclave world is a narrative of an outside that consists of strangers and other dangerous species, which should not only be kept out, but also avoided whilst going elsewhere. This is not only a matter of the wall and the gate, distance and disconnection are means within the strategy to exclude strangers and other threatening aspects of the surroundings outside. But although the enclave frees the inhabitant of the obvious dangers of urban-life, 'the end product is an encapsulated life, spent more and more either in a motor car or within the cabin of darkness before a television set: soon, with a little more automation of traffic, mostly in a motor car, travelling even greater distances, under remote control, so that the one-time driver may occupy himself with a television set, having lost even the freedom of steering wheel,' as Lewis Mumford writes in his 1961 *The City in History* on suburban life.³⁵⁵ Mumford obviously could not foresee how much this has become true in the contemporary suburbs, and only recently with the experiments with of driverless cars. What is remarkable is that he connects this encapsulated life with a lack of freedom³⁵⁶ – the freedom not to follow what is prescribed, predicted, determined, and dictated,³⁵⁷ which is both characteristic of the television screen as well as the enclave. The public space is walled, as well as the private space: living in a gated community, working in a business district, shopping at a mall, entertained in a theme park – and traveling in between those enclaves by their car, without once meeting another person by chance. Life today is lived in a capsule: a private life in a capsular society, as Belgian philosopher Lieven De Cauter calls it.³⁵⁸ But as part of the citizens freely withdraw from the world, this immediately means that all the other citizens are excluded – they live in a ghetto too, unwanted.

This, perspective brings us to the third remark of Sorkin: simulation as a characteristic of the contemporary city, which of course is prominent in the adaptation of Main Street as a central figure in the theme parks of *Disneyland*, amongst other examples. Simulation, in this respect, is essentially a tool in a capitalist redrawing of everyday life. As I previously argued, the only grand narrative left in post-modernity, is the all-encompassing and promising narrative of Capitalism. Whilst we might discuss whether we today still live in a post-modern era, or if we live in 'globalisation' (as the Dutch philosopher René Boomkens argues), or in a period of 'super-modernity' (as is argued by the aforementioned anthropologist Marc Augé and the Dutch architectural critic Hans Ibelings), we are still witness of the power of Capitalism (as the crisis of 2008 has shown). It might not surprise us therefore that most of the critics that we have used above in order to sketch the peculiar character of the urbanized landscape have a background in Marxist thinking. However, this perspective of simulation, which relates to a very Capitalist approach, as we will see, starts clearly: a shopping mall is designed in a way that consumption increases, as is the theme park. The living enclave is nicely landscaped, its layout is carefully planned, and the houses perfectly fit in – together forming a narrative of nostalgia or progression, of the Mediterranean or of the high plains, of Texas or Norway, in order to deliver the perfect image to attract homebuyers, who, in turn, present themselves as property-owners of the 'good life' with taste and wealth. Even the living enclave is over-designed and determined as well – as Zukin remarks above, highly influenced by images of the fantasy worlds of theme parks and their inherent rejection of 'reality'.³⁵⁹ Although enclaves are worlds apart, distinct and complementary. But as distinctive elements in the landscape, they also highly influence each other. Newly built housing neighbourhoods, despite their suburban or urban location, are today

branded like shopping malls.³⁶⁰ The architecture of the house is designed to fit in this peculiar narrative, as is the ground plan, the landscape, and even the bricks of the surrounding walls and the fonts at the gate on the name of the development. The reconstruction of historic districts is approached as being a theme park, the (old) mall is (re)developed like an old city, the neighbourhood is drawn like a holiday park.³⁶¹ Enclaves, in other words, are perfectly fit for branding. Their image and identity can be controlled and sold. Which somehow relates back to Sorkins first characteristic, as Boyer argues: ‘That peculiar American place, the historic tableau, proliferating in the centres of ... deconstructed cities, is an attempt to arrest this uprootedness, this sense of nonplace, this decomposition into bits and pieces.’³⁶²

This perspective of simulation, as it is intertwined with economic perspectives, actually urges a final point: this simulation also affects the experience of the citizen of the world. Physically the range of enclaves constructs a fragmented experiences of interior worlds floating amidst the spaghetti of connecting roads and leftover landscape. The contemporary city evokes an experience of disintegration. It has lost its ‘common’ character, both physically and socially. The physical appearance influences extensively social perception in three ways. It starts with an increasing emphasis on the interior as a perfect world. In the satisfying image that these worlds offer, there is no room for the dark side of perfection. ‘The awareness of highways in disrepair,’ Boyer states, ‘charred and abandoned tenements, the scourge of drugs, the wandering homeless, subway breakdowns and deteriorating buses, visual litter and auditory bombardment – all are erased and ignored in the idealized city tableaux set up before the spectator’s eyes and presented as an entertaining show.’³⁶³ There is no room for decay in the enclave world, no room for development over time, for the inscription of life, as Lyotard states.

Secondly the range of enclaves that are the personal composition of these interiors as the everyday environment are spaces that attract the same kind of people, sharing a recognizable background, social classes, education, convictions, and political perspective. From the Business District to the Grand Café, and from the Shoppingmall to the Gated Community people live amongst others that do not differ too much from themselves. The image of perfection, again, cannot be spoiled by other social classes, specifically the poor, the misfits of the earth. There is no room for the strange, nor for the stranger, no room for poverty, or for the poor, no room for decay or decline – the image of perfection must not be spoiled.³⁶⁴

This actually fuels a contrast between the inside and outside world, which is the third aspect in the way in which social perception is influenced. The composition of a city as a range of precisely governed, highly controlled, and perfectly safeguarded interiors, increasingly contrasts with the world ‘outside’: leftover spaces that, of course, lack this level of perfection, safety, control, and governance and therefore are subject of anxiety and avoidance. This world is designed as a ‘stronghold against heterogenous experience’,³⁶⁵ moreover, it ‘suppresses the continuous order of reality, the connecting in-between places, and imposes instead an imaginary order of things’ as Boyer argues.³⁶⁶ As I will discuss later, this is one of the major points Arendt also stresses: only participation in a plural public reveals the reality of the world. At this point, regarding the experience of the world, we can conclude with Boyer that the spectator, hopping from enclave to enclave, loses touch with reality, lacks an image of the urbanized whole, ‘in all its uneven development; attention is directed to those sites that are perceived as productive or useful, or are engineered to satisfy desires.’³⁶⁷

358.

Lieven De Caeter, ‘The Capsule and the Network, Preliminary Notes for a General Theory’, in: Marcel Musch and Eireen Scheurs (eds.), *Re: Generic City, OASE#54* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 2001)

359.

Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 231

360.

cf. Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of a New Public Domain*, 37

361.

Metz, *Fun!*, 94; and Boyer, ‘Cities for Sale’; cf also Jameson, ‘Future City’, 255

362.

Boyer, ‘Cities for Sale’, 191

363.

Ibid., 191

364.

see Picon, ‘Anxious Landscapes’, 77; cf also Kimberley Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real, Aesthetic Experience and Arendtian Politics* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 3-5, where she describes three kinds of enclaves that affect the political landscape in late modernity: the free trade zones in second-world and third-world countries that are completely out of sight of the inhabitants of the first world, the increasing gap between poor and rich in the first world itself (by the increasing eagerness to live, work and recreate in gated areas), and finally the treatment of criminals, which she describes as a ‘radical form of forgetfulness’. (5)

365.

Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real*, 4

366.

Boyer, ‘Cities for Sale’, 192

367.

Ibid., 192

368.

See for instance Robert D. Putman, *Bowling Alone, The Collapse and Revival of American Society* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000)

369.

Bellah, 'Is There a Common American Culture?', http://www.robertbellah.com/articles_6.htm [accessed May 16, 2014]

370.

As we will see in Chapter 6, these sensible aspects of space are, according to Hannah Arendt, the very instruments of the human body to relate to the world, grasping the reality of the world.

This loss of touch with the whole, the larger picture, is the object of much discussion in Western society today, of course evoked by increasing differences in political preferences, cultural backgrounds and world-views. Sociologists, political theorists, cultural critics, philosophers, and theologians, in their reflection on society, express concern about a culture of 'expressive individualism' that suffers the vanishing image of a cohesive social structure and is absorbed by the self.³⁶⁸ American sociologist Robert N. Bellah, from whom I took the notion of 'expressive individualism' in this respect, also urges the everyday environment, the objects surrounding us. In a short address delivered in 1996 at a conference on the developments of religious life in the United States he comes up with a very interesting analysis of the individual versus the collective. There are still two referential frames, he argues, that are intrinsically present in each citizen's life: the state and the market. Both affect the citizens beyond their cultural, racial, religious, or any other background, through their 'agencies of socialization': the state with its influence on education, and the market through the powerful mediums of television and Internet, yet the market more influential than the state. Their presence is so strong, that Bellah suggest that it bind the citizens together through the shared experience of a common cultural understanding of the world. 'Our cultural understanding of the world,' he writes, 'is shaped every time we enter a supermarket or a mall.'³⁶⁹ Of course he here consciously evokes an image of consumerism and capitalism that impacts everyday life and perspectives in the Western world extensively: huge shopping areas filled with everything you could ever want, to experience, to explore, actually want to *be* (for those who can afford). We in fact need to stretch this image a bit further than Bellah surely means: from the commodities to the actual space. Space is pre-existent: it is 'a-priori', a fundamental condition of our human life on earth. But this space is not neutral, even when we are not aware of the spaces we are using (which is most of the time). Space consciously and unconsciously affect our understanding of the world. Our view is not just shaped by the moment of entering the mall, through its commodities, already the road to the mall influences us: it unfolds the world and how it is ordered. The moment we enter a mall, supermarket, a gated community, theme park, business district, historic site, or travel on the highway, wait for our plane at the airport (I take these here, but I also could choose other spaces, that in discussions on the city and its future have a less negative imaginary), our understanding of the world is shaped. Our senses are urged and stimulated immediately – that is: directly and without any mediation – by the smells and views, the sounds and touches.³⁷⁰ Most of it of course is visual: the luxury of commodities, signs of advertisements and other mechanisms of temptation. But also the public – their clothes, their faces, their backgrounds – tell an immediate story, as do the instruments of of control and security, the fences and cameras, the guards and hosts. But it also is mental: why you are there, how you came to be there, is it the mall of your choice, if you live there or are just a guest, if you paid for it or not.

It might be ridiculous to expect the urban fabric to form the social fabric, as seems to be the assumption behind many claims on and complaints about public space. Social practices certainly are spatial practices, but that does not mean that space itself evokes the practice. Physical space only offers the possibility of social practices, but surely the form of the space has an influence on these possibilities, and the appearance of the space on the invitation of these practices. The skate ramp is distinct from the alley in its possibilities, as is the park compared to the parking lot.

The narrative behind this chapter, we can state here in hindsight, suggests that the urban fabric once offered forms of space that quite naturally provided space for social practices amongst a plural public, while the emergence of new (sub) urban types of neighbourhoods and buildings do not offer the type of spaces that offer the same possibilities. The question of course is if this can be ascribed to the particular design of these spaces, or if society itself has changed. Bellah of course urges the economic worldview that determines society, which seems reasonable. We have long lost the modernist expectation of a one on one relationship between architecture and social practices. However, to admit this changing cultural and societal context does not dismiss the importance of space in this respect.

This certainly is an ethical statement: the urban fabric should not be taken as merely the necessary physical and tangible spaces or connectors between buildings and urban blocks, urban districts and boroughs, and between cities and the surrounding landscape, neither solely as the concrete space that offers room to social structures (it's possibilities, problems, and limitations simultaneously), but as the very expression of the social fabric of a certain culture, whose expression in turn influences society. The urban fabric, the sequence of spaces are both tangible infrastructure, public sphere (social structure), and cultural expression (material culture): this threefold perspective is the horizon of architecture. Architecture here is at stake as the profession that plans, designs, organizes, and constructs – and often even deconstructs – concrete urban space, the everyday environment of the citizen that, although often unconsciously but so importantly, affects its experience of the world. This architectural perspective, however, is not limited to the desk of the architect, but is publicly relevant. When culture today is determined by consumerism and capitalism, this affects actual spaces (their appearances, their forms, their materials, the possibilities they offer to be appropriated by users, and so on), which in turn affects people's experiences. That is what the social geographer David Harvey also suggests when he writes: 'We do not, after all, experience the city blankly, and much of what we do absorb from daily life in the city (be it the long drag of the commute, the jostle of subway crowds, the blandness of the shopping mall, the elegance or grandeur of certain forms of urban architecture, the panhandlers on the sidewalk, or the peace and beauty of an urban park) surely has some kind of influence on how we are situated in the world and how we think and act politically within it.'³⁷¹ These aspects, public space as public sphere as well as the immediate and tangible experience of a common world, are challenged by actual changes in the urban fabric (that surely narrates the changing society itself). It, as might be clear, is a pressing ethical question not only for designers, but also for planners, developers, politicians and others responsible for the development, design and maintenance of cities, neighbourhood, landscapes, buildings.

The question at this point is whether this narrative on the urbanized landscape in Northern America is the only perspective upon society and its actual spaces to be told. Certainly not: when we extend our journey in Florida, as we will do in the next chapter, for instance to the inner city of Orlando, another narrative develops. Where fear rewrote the suburbanized landscape (of the recent past), now renewed enjoyment of plurality seems to shape the future of the (inner) city. Some inner cities develop – after large periods of vacancy and neglect, into lively neighbourhoods again, where new apartments, offices, theatres, museums, and restaurants are being built, where terraces are attractive again, people are sunbathing in a park, or working in a coffee shop.

3.

CITY. THE GEOGRAPHY
OF PLURALITY

One day prior to the birth of our eldest son, we moved from the city centre of Amsterdam to a neighbourhood in the eastside of the city. We until that moment lived in an apartment less than 30 m², perfect for the two of us, but too small for the prospect of becoming a family. The apartment was located in the beautiful medieval area, in sight of a canal and the oldest church in town, in Amsterdam's famous red-light district. The area attracts lots of visitors and thus was always crowded, especially at the weekend (although it was surely busier in the tourist-season, from Easter until mid-October). Apart from the inhabitants of this particular area, it is not a destination for locals. Some would call it a theme park, containing the most beautiful environment with the worst of Dutch culture. However, from our new location in the city, the centre still was easily accessible. Almost every destination could be reached within a twenty minute's bike-ride or a quarter by tram. From our perspective in the east, we have experienced the fuss in Amsterdam city-centre growing extraordinary. The increase of visitors is not limited to downtown. It slowly but surely also entered our new neighbourhood. Around the corner a hostel was opened, a former hospital was turned in a four-star hotel, and, with *AirBnB* becoming increasingly present, the tourists also entered our street. But the increasing fuss obviously is not limited to foreign visitors, nor to any season: it also includes expats and the increasing student population in the city, recently graduated job hunters, young couples, and families that stay, which are attracted by the buzz of new cafés, coffee bars, pizza restaurants, bakeries, and even more coffee bars. We were part of the new urban revival – the city was attractive again.

This revival certainly was almost diametrically opposed to the stories we heard while living in the city-centre. We lived at that moment in a community, which was started in the fifties, when huge parts of the historic city were in decay, and lots of the properties were vacant. The community survived during even more vacancy and decay in the neighbourhood around, until the eighties, from when the inner city slowly but surely attracted new citizens. The revival was also opposed to the stories we heard while doing, alongside our regular jobs, volunteering work with homeless people, the prostitute-neighbours, and illegal citizens. Their broken lives, their stories somehow revealed a different reality, then others who we touched upon as well, being part of these groups of people that certainly can be called 'new urbanites'. In our daily life, we experience the segregation of realities, that seemed to increase day by day. Even during the economic and financial crisis, that brought The Netherlands in a downward spiral from 2008 onwards, the appeal of living in this city remained. It fuelled housing costs and increased the cost of living in the city, and thus propelled the segregation between the 'new' and highly educated inhabitants, and the original inhabitants and other newcomers, that cannot compete with them.

Whereas the concluding remarks in the previous chapter offered a sombre perspective – the urban fabric has lost its connecting power (if there actually is such a thing that we can expect in physical form) – this chapter deals with the recent turn in stories on the city, in which plurality, proximity, and even risk, play an important role. Some inner cities develop in lively neighbourhoods again, where new apartments are being built, terraces are full, people are sunbathing in a park and work on their laptops in a coffee bar. Although this seems to develop a promising and positive perspective upon physical space as a space of meeting and exchange, behind this appreciation of diversity a process of further segregation comes to the fore. Whereas the enclaves, as described in the previous chapter, are concrete spaces of withdrawal, what happens in the city seems to be the other way around: while the knowledge workers turn to the world, others seem to be

excluded within the same moment and movement. This chapter discusses the new valuation of urban life, and how it is related to public space. Via the riots in London and Paris, in 2005, that some theorists understand as related to the increasing segregation within cities, we also touch upon the revolutionary protests of the *Arab Spring* as well as the *Occupy Movement* in 2011. These events in public space stress the political dimension beyond these spaces. If the possibility to demonstrate is the very ideal beyond public space, what does that mean for actual spaces? Or better said, how can we, that is, architects, 'form' them in such a way that the diverse events of public and political life can take place, can occupy the place for a while. This perspective thus challenges the design of public spaces - a perspective that, finally, is addressed through a close reading of *Parc de la Villette* in Paris, a very much debated design of the French-American architect Bernard Tschumi from 1986.



3.1 Press photo's of the opening of the exhibition
Children of New York at Park 51, September 21, 2011



3.2 'Edge City' Cumberland (foreground) of Atlanta, GA
(downtown visible in the background)



3.3 Jasmine Street, Water Street, Celebration Boulevard, and Market Street, Celebration, FL.



3.4 New Investments in Los Angeles (Downtown)

1. Cathedral of the Lady of Our Angels (Rafael Moneo, 2002)
2. Walt Disney Concert Hall (Frank Gehry, 2003)
3. The Broad Museum (Diller Scofidio + Renfro, 2016)
4. Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Peter Zumthor, forthcoming)



3.5 The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
(Frank Gehry, Bilbao, Spain, 1997)



3.6 Rotterdam, November 1st, 2017, 10.00 am

3.1 THE REDISCOVERY OF URBAN PLEASURES

3.1.1 *Park51*

The space is white. Very white: even the floor is coloured light, a bit greyish. On the walls are images: a series of photographs placed in a varied pattern. A group of musicians are sitting in front, playing their violins, flutes and cellos. All musicians, men and women, are wearing black: a suit, a dress or another sophisticated outfit. People are all over the space, easily recognizable as modern citizens: young, rich, and successful, sipping their glass of wine or water. A few of the people are listening to the music; others investigate the photographs on the walls. Most of them just gather together, enjoy a conversation, looking around for other interesting opportunities, nice people to meet. It is like the first scene of *By Nightfall*, the novel of the New York based author Michael Cunningham, the opening of a gallery, and exhibition.¹

There might be a difference, even in the lively New York cultural scene. Behind the people with the trendy suits, sophisticated dresses, naked shoulders, high heels and fashionable shoes, turbans and scarfs can also be seen. Some men even have beards (and these pictures are taken before the beard made its comeback on the faces of urban hipsters). It is clearly what is termed a multicultural public. Amongst the public, television cameras and photographers are also seen, recording the event. That many cameras is quite rare for one or another opening of an exhibition in a gallery somewhere in New York. There are simply too many openings; only a few will attract the journalists and reporters. And even more rare: this series of photographs capturing the event have reached the newspapers and internet sites around the globe.^[IMAGE 3.1]

Indeed, an opening it is: the varnishing of the exhibition of the *New York Children Project*, an attempt of the photographer Danny Goldfield to photograph one child of every nationality that lives in New York. His photos are sharp and touching – these little kids in a big city.² The photos deliver a clear insight into the current population of the city, the enormous diversity not only in backgrounds but also in circumstances. A nice project, but certainly not the reason the images of the opening were being published worldwide. And moreover, not the reason that a police officer is posting in the street, keeping an eye on the front door, which is shown in one of the last images of the series as well. A hint is given through one of the turbans in the images: it is decorated with the American *stars and stripes*. The turban and the American sensibilities: this *New York Children Project* is the first exhibition in the gallery of *Park51*, the opening is the very first public event in what has become known as the ‘Ground Zero Mosque’.

About a year before this opening, this very first public event, the initiative to establish *Park51* was the object of a huge controversy – with demonstrations, advertisements in newspapers, on television and even on New-York-City-buses, public speeches, websites for and against, articles in newspapers as well as columns, and so on. A public debate, so to say: hot, emotional, and vigorous. Even the then mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg had to react, as well as then president Barack Obama.³ The controversy encircled the question of whether Muslims should be able to establish a Community Centre, including a prayer room for 1,500 visitors, on a two-minute walk from *Ground Zero*. It was of course the nearness of this latter place of the former Twin Towers and the 9/11 happenings that fuelled the debate. *Park51* after all was not the very first Muslim community established in Lower Manhattan. Two other groups have their prayer space in

1. Michael Cunningham, *Bij het vallen van de avond* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2010), 13-15

2. <http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2011/08/02/nyregion/20110802-park51-ss.html?ref=park51> [accessed January 2nd, 2012]

3. The speech of mayor Bloomberg on tolerance has widely been published on the internet. See for instance: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-bloomberg/mayor-bloomberg-on-the-ne_b_669338.html [accessed January 4th, 2012]; see for a video on Obama's support: <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/08/13/obama.islamic.center.support/index.html#fbid=qlMj9FlaYim&wom=false> [accessed January 4th, 2012]

Lower Manhattan as well, *FactCheck* wrote during the arousal. The website aimed to clarify facts in the controversy, since it obviously was dominated by emotions, rumours, and even twisted or misrepresented facts, today called alternative facts (as for instance the rumour that the Centre would open its doors on September 11th, 2011, exactly a decade after the attacks on the Twin Towers).⁴

The *Park51* community established their gathering space (in Park Place 45, two blocks from Ground Zero) in May 2009 and from this very start their ambitions were clear: to start a Community Centre modelled after the Christian YMCAs in the city and the Jewish Community Centre on the Upper West Side. *Park51*'s ambition was to be 'a vibrant and inclusive community', 'inspired by Islamic values and Muslim heritage', 'serving New York City with programmes in education, arts, culture, and recreation' as their website reads.⁵ By doing so, the organization states, they 'foster cooperation and understanding between people of all faiths and backgrounds'.⁶ It is their ambition to be one of the spots in the city where people, with different origins and convictions, meet, discuss, learn and exchange. In order to achieve their goal, they create room for this meeting, through their programme as well as through the spaces they add: the gallery and the auditorium, the café and the education rooms.

In May 2010 concrete plans were presented at the Local Community Board by the board of *Park51* and a developer. The existing buildings at Park Place 45-51 were bound to be replaced by a fifteen storey high building, which would house the exhibition space and the prayer room on ground level. On the upper floors other facilities would be added: at least a swimming pool, childcare, a library, an auditorium and a restaurant. As is also the case with the YMCA and the Jewish Community Centre, all facilities are meant to be open to the public – believers or not. A few months later the New York architectural firm *SOMA* presented two preliminary sketches of the new façade – architecturally speaking indeed preliminary, a rather superficial trial to transform middle east figures and patterns in a contemporary image, a façade structure that would allow wider openings as well as more closed sections where needed. The images actually didn't say much about the building and the ambitions of the mosque, but the Local Community Board nevertheless approved the plans almost unanimously later that month, as did the Landmark commission in August 2010 (and with that latter approval, they were allowed to demolish the existing buildings).⁷ It is around this final formal announcement that controversy arose – at the looming of US Midterm elections on November 2nd, 2010. Despite the public criticism, the community elaborated on their initiative: they started fundraising in the fall of 2010, and opened a preliminary exhibition space on September 21th, 2011 with the varnishing of the mentioned exhibition of the *New York Children Project*.

The *Park51* controversy was obviously only one of multiple public conversations in New York during the fall of 2010, yet it attracted lots of global attention. Not only since it was the hottest debate, with lots of participants, it was also the most precarious and most far reaching, since it dealt with a grievous past of the city in which lots of people felt involved, as well as with the very fundamentals of the open Western society and political democracy: the freedom of conviction and religion, the freedom of gathering and the freedom to establish businesses, communities, and associations.

What had happened was beyond imagination and 'real life' seen on television worldwide. The planes hitting the towers, the suicide of desperate people on the upper floors of the towers, the collapse of these towers – nobody could believe what happened, and almost everybody felt perplexed. It changed not only

4. <http://www.factcheck.org/2010/08/questions-about-the-ground-zero-mosque> [accessed January 2nd, 2012]

5. <http://park51.org/vision> [accessed January 2nd, 2012]

6. Ibid.

7. <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/p/park51/index.html?scp=1-spot&sq=park51&st=cse> [accessed January 5th, 2012]

8.
http://archrecord.construction.com/news/newsmakers/1109_Libeskind-Looks-Back.asp [accessed January 2nd, 2012]

9.
See on symbolic spaces, Pier Vittorio Aureli and Martino Tattara, 'The City as Political Form', in: Christine De Baan, Joachim Declerck, and Véronique Patteuw (eds.), *Visionary Power, Producing the Contemporary City* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2007), 20; One might argue that the site already was symbolic, which of course was the reason that specifically these towers of the World Trade Center were the targets of these attacks. The towers were symbol of Western Capitalist society, as also the other targets symbolized other aspects of the Western world: the Pentagon Building and the White House, both in Washington DC, respectively the military dominance of the USA and the heart of the American society and politics. It is clear that the symbolic aspect of these buildings almost completely depend on the function, and that the design, the concrete building, only is the physical wrapping around it, an image that makes it recognizable. For the towers, one might say that the quite brute design and urban setting, it's very materiality and its height, contributed to its symbolic character as the representation of Capitalism.

10.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wqu_eB_gga8 [accessed January 2nd, 2012]

11.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-bloomberg/mayor-bloomberg-on-the-ne_b_669338.html [accessed January 2nd, 2012]

12.
Ibid.

13.
Ibid.

the world generally, but also how the world is perceived. The architect Daniel Libeskind, who won the architectural competition for the World Trade Centre site that was organized after 9/11, states in an interview with *Architectural Record*: 'This is now a site that has memory in it. This is a site where people perished. This is a site which forever has altered how we view New York and the world.'⁸ The site, in other words, had turned into a *symbolic* space.⁹ Libeskind had won the competition with a design that was completely rooted in this symbolism, simultaneously picturing the grievous history, as well as challenging national pride for the country, showing the world that the city was able to recover from the strike and to develop into an even stronger city. The *Park51* controversy however showed other layers that apparently were alive and vivid in the city and around the world as well. It pressed the question how the city needed to deal with its painful history, with the tangible injuries and scars in concrete space. Could the city proceed here, in this area, as it would do elsewhere? Each move the city would make, could be explained as a victory for the terrorists, actually.

Most of the opponents of *Park51* were not against Muslims establishing community buildings in New York generally, but establishing a mosque in this area, they emphasised, could be understood as 'a slam in the face of everybody involved'. An advertisement on the New York buses in the autumn of 2010 asks: 'Why there?' Other opponents go even further: as if the project right here is finally a sign of Islamic triumph. This actually was the very message of the speech that Dutch controversial politician Geert Wilders delivered at a demonstration against the project on 9/11, 2010. Ground Zero, he said literally, was 'holy ground' of which Islamists should be kept away. 'No Mosques here!' he yelled in his speech, and the crowd repeated.¹⁰ The speech of course is a rhetorical tour de force, but it elicits an emotional response to developments around this specific site. The proponents on the other hand emphasised that forbidding the mosque to be built here would be a victory for the terrorists as well. The city and the Western world after all were built upon tolerance and freedom: the freedom of gathering, of initiative, of conviction and religion, of protest, and of participation. Forbidding the community to erect a building here, forbidding the community to gather here, would violate the essence of the Western world. In his speech Bloomberg explicitly referred to this essence of Western democracy. 'Should government,' he stated, 'attempt to deny private citizens the right to build a house of worship on private property based on their particular religion? That may happen in other countries, but we should never allow it to happen here. This nation was founded on the principle that the government must never choose between religions, or favor one over another.'¹¹ According to Bloomberg such freedom is not only rooted in its very foundations of American society and particularly the city of New York, it also was and is its strength: 'This is the freest City in the world,' he stated literally. 'That's what makes New York special and different and strong.'¹² New York is an attractive city – an attractiveness that is reciprocal. The city is attractive for people from all over the world, not only to visit, but also to inhabit. It is attractive, since it attracts lots of people, different people, which gives the city its form and substance. In other words, the attractiveness is strongly related to its diversity, a diversity that is at the very foundations of the city: 'New York City,' the mayor said, 'was built by immigrants, and it is sustained by immigrants - by people from more than a hundred different countries speaking more than two hundred different languages and professing every faith.'¹³

With this speech Bloomberg not only emphasizes the foundation of this particular city, as well as the United States of America and Western society generally, but also addresses the attractiveness of the city by stressing the power

of diversity. With this emphasis on diversity he is in line with what has become the dominant narrative on cities in about the last one-and-a-half decade: the diversity of the public is the strength of cities. I can't describe the value of this diversity and the tone of the debate on cities more beautifully than Thomas L. Friedman did in his column in the *New York Times* during the *Park51* controversy:

‘...the sheer creative energy that comes when you mix all our diverse people and cultures together. We live in an age when the most valuable asset any economy can have is the ability to be creative – to spark and new imagine new ideas, be they Broadway tunes, great books, iPads or new cancer drugs. And where does creativity come from? ... It comes from being exposed to divergent ideas and cultures and people and intellectual disciplines ... The resistance to diversity, though, is not something we want to emulate ... Countries that choke themselves off from exposure to different cultures, faiths and ideas will never invent the next Google or a cancer cure, let alone export a musical or body of literature that would bring enjoyment to children everywhere.’¹⁴

Friedman here thus supports the ambition of the community as an initiative that enriches public life of the city and society. And *Park51* literally can be seen as a facility gathering together a diverse public through setting up programmes and organizing events.

It is the size of New York City that enables its diversity: it has enough ‘critical mass’ to support and join a diverse range of businesses, possibilities, initiatives and happenings. In one evening a theatre has a premiere, a film is launched, a museum organizes a lecture, a restaurant is serving a new menu, a famous musician performs at a concert hall, a company presents a new service, a Community Centre organizes a varnishing day for their very first public exhibition – and there is a public that is interested and able to attend these events. And around the corner of course the coffee shops are open, as well as bars, restaurants, swimming pools, fitness clubs, supermarkets, laundries. A school is organizing evening lessons in painting, dancing, writing; a church organizes voluntary work in one of the homeless shelters. There is yoga in the elevated park, music at the metro station, *IKEA* is still open, ice skating on the rink. This on-going amalgam of activities is an important image of the city and the metropolis: collections of multiple happenings, events, actualities, taking place on the streets, squares, parks and in its buildings, in the galleries as well as in the theatres, on the river as well as in the drainage canals, in the city hall as well as in private clubs. It is the range of possible activities that makes the city attractive to inhabitants and visitors, tourists and expats, yuppies and artists. This seems to be a virtuous circle: the sheer size and diversity of the public enhance the possibilities to organize diverse initiatives, and vice versa. *Park51* itself thus adds diversity to the city, because of what it is and what it offers in particular spaces and programmes (as it also might be able to attract a plural public itself to attend their activities). City and Community Centre thus have a reciprocal relationship as well.

3.1.2 *Time is Changing Again*

This emphasis on the reciprocal relationship between plurality and the city embodies a positive narrative on the future of cities that has attracted attention in the past one-and-a-half decades. It mainly is fueled by the research and books of Richard Florida, specifically his *The Rise of the Creative Class* from 2002.¹⁵

14. Thomas L. Friedman, ‘Broadway and the Mosque’, in: *The New York Times*, August 3, 2010

15. Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class, And How it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, & Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002)

16.
Jane Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 30
17.
Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 30
18.
Anthony Flint, *Wrestling with Moses, How Jane Jacobs Took On New York's Masters Builder and Transformed the American City* (New York: Random House, 2009), 22
19.
Ibid., 24
20.
Lyn H. Lofland, *The Public Realm Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory* (New York: De Gruyter, 1998), 10-12
21.
Jacobs, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations, Principles of Economic Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985)
22.
Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 41

Florida in turn admits to be influenced by Jane Jacobs, the famous critic of the modernist city and urban activist from the 60s onwards, upon which we already touched. Jacobs rendered this plurality of the city as visible in street life as attractive instead of 'noisy' and 'dangerous'. 'Great cities,' she writes in her famous book *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), 'are not like towns, only larger. They are not like suburbs, only denser. They differ from towns and suburbs in basic ways, and one of these is that cities are, by definition, full of strangers. To any one person, strangers are far more common in big cities than acquaintances.'¹⁶ Strangers not only are present in the city, they dominate the space. Even up to 'a man's own doorstep', as she adds.¹⁷ Jacobs thus emphasizes strangers and public life as essential aspects of the city. She urges this against the background of the urban renewal in her days, which roused her attention and opposition. Urban renewal at that time was mainly imagined as demolishing existing buildings, to be replaced by new building-configurations that were based on suburban models, introducing air and light as well as simultaneously removing the clutter and the fine grained street life (together with the streets itself).¹⁸ Jacobs described everyday public life on the streets – people collecting their post, walking their dog, strolling to the bakery, wandering with their child, and even overlooking the street through their (kitchen) window – as important for the livability and attractiveness of urban space. It was through these different 'eyes on the street', or the possibility that someone overlooks the street from the house, that safety is secured. For Jacobs however it is not the safety that counts first, it is the community that is formed through street life. In an early address at the Architectural School of Harvard University (1956) she stated that 'planners and architects are apt to think, in an orderly way, of stores as a straightforward matter of supplies and services ... but stores in city neighbourhoods are much more complicated creatures, which have evolved a much more complicated function. Although they are mere holes in the wall, they help make an urban neighbourhood a community instead of a mere dormitory.'¹⁹ Jacobs here describes the city in what we can call 'parochial' perspectives, to use a term coined by the sociologist Lyn Lofland.²⁰ By the very use of services in the neighbourhood, by kids playing on the streets, by sitting on a bench in front of the house, neighbors learn to know themselves, as they somehow appropriate the streets, make it their own. These streets in the city, although occupied, differ from the streets in the village or town, since it is still a space where strangers, as we have seen above, belong to that everyday environment, rather than outsiders in a particular scene. However, in her latter book *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* Jacobs investigates the importance of cities and their very diversity for a country economically – and with that study she indeed is a pioneer of the current debate on cities.²¹ The very plurality that Jacobs emphasizes as the essence of city life is now seen as the sheer economic strength of cities, and much urban policies are encircling this topic, searching for ways to be attractive to new inhabitants, and economically vital for the future.²²

Traces of the renewed interest in cities and diversity could of course already be found in the suburbanized landscape before Richard Florida and others brought them to economic formula, for instance in what is called by the journalist Joel Garreau 'Edge Cities' and the initiatives of the *New Urbanism movement* to break through the monotony of the suburbs.^[IMAGE 3.2] Garreau, in his book simply called *Edge City*, presents his topic as a third wave after first the post-World War II movement of the homes to the countryside, secondly the movement of marketplaces out of downtown to where the people actually live, and thirdly – or 'today', as he writes, – 'we have moved our means of creating wealth, the essence

of urbanism – our jobs – out to where most of us have lived and shopped for two generations. That has led to the rise of Edge City.²³ Garreau describes these ‘Edge Cities’ as ‘real cities’, but without the frightening things of the ‘old’ cities. Garreau cites the cultural historian Leo Marx, who argued that these areas represented ‘an escape from the negative aspects of civilization,’²⁴ but not as a withdrawal from the city, but by catching the best of both worlds. A city, but without all its restraints. Garreau suggests that the ‘Edge City’ combines the joy of the landscape with aspects of the urban figure of downtown – a mixture of functions: offices and shops intertwined with apartment buildings and restaurants, bars, cinemas, and theatres. This downtown image is stretched in order to embed the automobile as the agent of movement. Garreau actually understands this third move as another trial to establish the American Dream in a particular balance between landscape, nature, neighbourhood, homeownership, freedom, and community. The strict mono-functional suburbs and malls didn’t fulfil the expectations, whereas ‘Edge City may be the result of American striving once again for new, restorative synthesis,’ he argues. ‘Perhaps Edge City represents Americans taking the functions of the city (the machine) and bringing them out to the physical edge of the landscape (the frontier). There, we try once again to merge the two in a newfound union of nature and art (the garden), albeit one in which the treeline is punctuated incongruously by office towers.’²⁵ This new form of ‘city’, despite the concentration of services near the residential areas is however still preoccupied by the prevention of ‘congestion’.²⁶ Edge Cities are organized by the strive for safety, car-accessibility, and cleanness, whereas the tool again is segregation of functions (and inhabitants as well), with its ‘landmark structure’ of the ‘celebrated single family detached dwelling, the suburban home with grass all around.’²⁷ Garreau’s Edge City is not simply a new model in which the suburban spirit merges with the merits of urbanity. It articulates first the replacement of investments from the inner city towards other locations, particularly located in the periphery, as well as secondly the new form of the megalopolis, which is not organized along a single core (as the classical city), but is an urban landscape or territory with multiple cores.

The second example of dissatisfaction with the monotony of the urbanized landscape, the *New Urbanism* movement on the contrary does not go back to the inner-city-model (with skyscrapers, offices, shopping, leisure) but comes up with proposals to apply lessons learned from Jacobs within the suburban model of the neighbourhood. *The New Urbanism* approach was developed during the eighties of the last age, when architects and urban designers joined forces in their dissatisfaction with the results of the processes of suburbanisation. They critiqued the suburban typologies that spread over the country without hierarchy, without collective entity, even without identity, highly depending on car-infrastructure. In other words, they put forward the loss of clearly recognizable neighbourhoods and the strict mono-functionality of suburban developments. In 1993, a group of architects and urban designers founded the *Congress for the New Urbanism*, organizing annual conferences in different American cities. During the 1996 conference a ‘charter’ was ratified, in which the group put forward their ‘design philosophy’, which is rendered by ‘return to a more traditional, compact, town-planning strategies intended to slow down people (and cars), connect to existing conditions and emphasize enduring building types and place-based characteristics,’ as the architect Ellen Dunham Jones, vice-president of the Congress, writes.²⁸ The charter starts with a short statement on the contemporary urbanised landscape, that is described as ‘disinvestment in central cities, the spread of placeless sprawl, increasing separation by race and income, environmental deteri-

23. Joel Garreau, *Edge City, Life on the New Frontier* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 4

24. quoted via *ibid.*, 12

25. *Ibid.*, 14

26. In his ‘retroactive manifest’ for New York, the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas argues that ‘congestion’ is the hallmark of urbanity. He comes up with this statement after analysing the organization of Manhattan through its famous grid and zoning law, turning each block ‘in a self-contained enclave’, which ‘implies an essential isolation: no longer does the city consist of a more or less homogeneous texture – a mosaic of complementary urban fragments – but each block is now *alone* like an island, fundamentally on its own.’ Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 79. According to Koolhaas this has led to a *Culture of Congestion*, which he defined as the essence of the city. Each block, and within this block each floor gives room to different lifestyles and ideologies, whereas the city as a whole consists of the superimposition of all these differences. It might be argued that not only the life within the buildings and blocks but even more street life and culture is highly influenced by this superimposition of differences. There is a conquest between blocks and floors, but none of them really proclaims universality or independency. They still interact with each other. Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York, A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994), 123-125

27. Garreau, *Edge Cities*, 4

28. Ellen Dunham-Jones, ‘Capital Transformations of the Post-Industrial Landscape’, in: Marcel Musch and Eireen Scheurs, (eds.), *Re: Generic City*, OASE#54 (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 2001), 9

29.

Congress for the New Urbanism, 'Charter of the New Urbanism', in: A. Krista Sykes (eds.), *Constructing a New Agenda, Architectural Theory 1993-2009* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 64

30.

Ibid., 64-65

oration, loss of agricultural land and wilderness, and the erosion of society's built heritage', which is rendered as a challenge of community-building.²⁹ Immediately after this statement the charter reveals the goals of their approach, focussing on the creation of 'real neighbourhoods' that are 'diverse in use and population', 'designed for the pedestrian', structured by 'physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions' which are 'framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice', offering therewith a 'supportive physical framework' for 'economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health'.³⁰ This introduction is followed by recommendations for distinct levels of the urban design, the region, the neighbourhood, and the block, which addresses the planning, the layout and the architecture of the community, emphasizing the aspect of 'community' and 'identity' through urban and architectural design.

The manifesto seems to offer a gentle agenda as a response to the deficiencies of suburban developments. The outcome of it, however, has led to even more divided landscapes, an increase of enclaves, wherein these principles were implemented, but still failing to be part of a larger urban, suburban, or landscape fabric.

The *New Urbanism* initiative did not emerge out of nothing; in the preceding examples, movements of 'idealists' that built their own 'utopias', this threat of the enclave, to describe it in negative terms, is already visible. Most well-known is the 'planned city of Irvine' in Los Angeles that was designed early in the sixties by William Pereira in collaboration with the *Irvine Development Company*. Pereira divided Irvine in townships that were separated by access roads. Every township was proposed to consist of houses in a similar design, commercial centres, schools, church-buildings, and quite a lot of greenery. Specific to this development also is a certain emphasizes on safety: citizens were even screened before they were allowed to live in these villages. Parts of Irvine are actually still functioning as proposed. However, such 'idealized' and planned cities are the first signs of both the critique on the endless urbanization of the landscape, as well as simultaneously the first appearances of gated communities in the urban landscape – as fear shaping the urban landscape. The influence of *New Urbanism* on the development of new suburban neighbourhoods is beyond doubt. Most of the newer developments are structured along crescents and cul-de-sacs, curling streets and collective spaces, however most of them without the addition of facilities for shopping, eating, recreating, as well as without the differences in 'building typologies' as the 'New Urbanists' plead for.

It's worth a *Google* detour, to once again travel back to the Florida landscape that I explored in the previous chapter in order to travel through on of the most well-known examples of this *New Urbanism* movement, to the community of *Celebration*, just southwest under the shadow of *Disney World*.^[IMAGE 3.3] *Celebration* is actually well known since it was the first 'real world' neighbourhood developed by the *Disney* concern that took the initiative in the early nineties. The *Disney Development Company* asked well known architects to contribute to the development of this 20 km² plot. The architect Robert A.M. Stern supervised the urban plan together with Jacquelin Robertson. He modelled the town after an early 19th century American town separating two mainly residential areas and a central neighbourhood, where businesses? and dwellings are mingled. These three neighbourhoods are separated by fragments of the original landscape. Stern also delivered the design of the hospital. Michael Graves was asked to design the tiny Post Office, while Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown were busy with the Suntrust Bank, Philip Johnson delivered the design for the Town hall (a pyramid

roof on a dazzling number of columns), adjacent to the Post Office, and Cesar Pelli was asked to design a cinema.

The afore mentioned aspects of *New Urbanism* – emphasis on the neighbourhood, diversity in use, pedestrian oriented, accessible public spaces, and attention to architecture – are well recognizable in *Celebration*. Today the community is inhabited by almost 7,500 people (amongst them 447 veterans) with a median age of about 39. About 1,200 of these inhabitants are ‘foreign’ born, 4.1% of the inhabitants live under the poverty line (median income in the area above \$92,500,-, whereas the high school rate is at the height of 97.5%. To compare with Orlando city, with a population of 238.000, the high school rate is at 86.7%, people living under the poverty line 17.3% (median income is \$42,755,-).³¹ The statistics thus show a prosperous neighbourhood, as does the image from *Google Streetview*. Surprisingly, *Celebration* is well covered by the *Google Streetview* Car, and shows immediately its distinctness in comparison to other neighbourhoods in the surroundings. The mixed use neighbourhood is located in the middle – one can find there a *Celebration* school, and the *Celebration* ‘centre’, complete with shops, terraces, a pub, a tavern (but where’s the church?),³² apartment buildings, all facing the *Celebration* pond, and built in ‘traditional’ architecture. Quite characteristic of this central neighbourhood, as well as the two adjacent ones, is the ‘perfection’ of every street, the architecture of the houses, the well maintained gardens, the attention to the public spaces, the landscape in-between. There are lots of differences – within the residential area not only can family-houses be found, but the edges of some plots also offer room for apartment buildings, some office-buildings and the local hospital. In between the neighbourhoods, which seem to be cut out of the original wetlands, golf courses are created, as well as other recreational areas. The two residential neighbourhoods consist of white painted wooden houses (in different sizes) with verandas and stairs, in front of perfectly mown lawns, black tiled roofs, white painted fences. The centre has slightly green painted townhouses, with black painted fences. Nice trees accompany the streets, which are well maintained. Broad sidewalks indeed offer room for pedestrians, while pools with fountains make the stroll nice. A grass strip is emptied in the middle of the plan of one of the neighbourhoods – collective spaces all over the place.

I have to admit that I expected *Celebration* to be a gated community. And I thus was surprised to find out there were no walls around it, nor guards at the entrance, or even a porch that could be closed. Surely, the very location and the limited entrances to the neighbourhood(s) are signs of control and limited access; it is still a community on its own, only slightly embedded in a larger infrastructural network. Despite the lack of a ‘gate’, through its location, accessibility and *image* it still has characteristics of a gated community – specifically the image of perfection, that is set by well painted buildings and fences, as well as the well maintained public space, displays identity and control. It is the suburban enclave with a façade (in the middle part) of urbanity, although again – like in the Edge Cities – without everything that can disturb the image of perfection.³³

Both the *New Urbanism* movement as well as the emergence of Edge Cities somehow can be seen as a sign of a more or less recent change of perspective towards the suburban developments around American Cities, specifically of the mono-functionalism and the experience of a certain loss of ‘community’. Both attempt to establish new spatial and organizational forms of urban environments, but without the negative aspects that are associated with cities: the danger, the dirtiness, sloppiness, and deprivation. Their charter directs the designers to

31. All data found through the American FactFinder, http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml [accessed April 17th, 2013]

32. There are six religion-communities announced on the website of the neighbourhood, ranging from Jewish to Presbyterian segregations. Their buildings are not located in the very center, but at the edges or in-between the different neighbourhoods. <http://www.celebration.fl.us/town-info/directory/worship/> [accessed April 17th, 2013]

33. cf. René Boomkens, *Een Drempeleereld, Moderne ervaring en stedelijke openbaarheid* (Rotterdam: NAI Uitgeverij, 1998), 253

34. Vincent Scully jr., *Modern Architecture, The Architecture of Democracy* (New York: Georg Braziller, 1989), 11

35. Roger Scruton, 'Public Space and the Classical Vernacular', in: Nathan Glazer and Mark Lilla (eds.), *The Public Face of Architecture, Civic Culture and Public Space* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 18

36. David Harvey, 'The Political Economy of Public Space', in: Setha Low and Neil Smith (eds.), *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 33

37. This not only is the case in the United States, but also in the European landscape this increasingly is tangible. Even in the Flemish region, with its dispersed cities and culture of single family-houses people move back to the inner cities. [see Tom Avermaete and Karina van Herck (eds.), *Wonen in Welvaart, Woningbouw en wooncultuur in Vlaanderen, 1948-1973* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2006)]

38. Victor Gruen, *Centers for the Urban Environment, Survival of the Cities* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1973), 11

re-introduce pre-modern urban forms, like the street and the square, sidewalks and parks, as we have seen. This pre-modern approach, according to the architectural historian Vincent Scully, treats the organization of the city, the neighbourhood, as a sequence of enclosed spaces (enclosed by buildings), whether the modern approach is concentrated on the buildings as objects in space – where the buildings can even become sculptural by themselves.³⁴ The British philosopher Roger Scruton supports the emphasis on the street as the principal figure of urban design: 'People can live without parks,' he states, 'but not without streets, they can live without greenery, but not without accessible windows and doors. The street is the most important of open public spaces, and the task of constructing a street is the most important that any planner may face.'³⁵ The urban sociologist critic David Harvey however judges the trials of New Urbanism as empty gestures: 'No amount of "new urbanism" understood as urban design, can promote a greater sense of civic responsibility and participation if the intensity of private property arrangements and the organization of commodity as spectacle (of which Disneyfication is the prime example) remains untouched. Empty gestures of this sort with respect or the organization of public space abound.'³⁶

However, these trials to overcome the deficits of the suburbanised city are surpassed now by the contemporary embracement of plurality, as I touched upon above, in which even the negative aspects of the city are accepted if not engaged. It specifically is the dependency of the inhabitants on the car that wrecks the development of the suburban landscape, one might state, and the renewed interests in city and city-living might be evoked by bottom-up initiatives to overcome this dependency. Traffic jam and travel time have been increased enormously in the past decades, which now rouses a movement back into the city again.³⁷ The building of a new *performing arts centre* in the inner city of Orlando, which we touched upon in the previous chapter, is a tiny hint of these 'times they are a-changing' again, a fourth wave that needs to be added to Garreau's distinctions within suburban movement after World War II, a sign that 'Edge City' is not the final phase in the process of civilization of the landscape. There is a renewed interest in downtown developments, new (public) downtown investments, and a new narrative on cities that gets rooted today. In his 1973 book *Centers for the Urban Environment*, Victor Gruen is amongst the first to recognize the old inner cities as spaces that need to be re-conquered and re-designed in respect to both the economic vitality of urban areas, as well as concerning environmental and contemporary social problems. 'By interweaving', he proposes, 'all expressions of human life within the urban tissue, we can restore the lost sense of commitment and belonging; we can counteract the phenomena of disorientation, isolation, and lonesomeness and awaken a sense of identification and participation.'³⁸ Gruen again was ahead of his time – only at the end of the last century, downtown has made it to the drawing boards of architects, urban planners, and urban developers. Even in Los Angeles – this city of fear, as we have seen in the previous chapter – this idea now fuels urban planning and downtown developments. In 2002, the Cathedral of our Lady of the Angels, designed by the Spanish architect Rafael Moneo, opened its doors. One year later, two blocks away the *Walt Disney Concert Hall*, designed by the American architect Frank Gehry, opened. In 2016 a new art museum, The Broad, housing the Broad Art Foundation and its collection, opened, the building designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, that also are the designers of the New York High Line, and to be completed at the end of 2013. A proposal for the extension of the LACMA, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, by the Swiss architect Peter Zumthor bridging Wilshire Boulevard roused a

fierce public debate during the last five years. ^[IMAGE 3.4] In the meantime, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – in the USA responsible for protection against flooding – approved a plan to revitalize parts of the LA River: it will be widened, wetlands will be added, as well as access points and bike trails between Griffith Park and Downtown Los Angeles.³⁹ That is remarkable news: a range of urban and cultural interventions that can be very well understood as investments ‘beyond’ the Bunker Hill development that we touched upon in the previous chapter, besides the initiatives by other parties to invest downtown again.⁴⁰

Critics have warned about horrible scenarios regarding downtown areas facing the initial phases of urban sprawl after World War II, later suburban trends and recently also the increasing digitalization of daily life. Downtown would be immersed in a downward spiral that would lead to an emptied core over time. This has indeed been the case in lots of cities, of which Detroit is the most well-known, particularly illustrated by a beautiful theatre building used as a parking garage, surrounded by huge empty apartment buildings and a vacant train station. In the previous chapter we touched upon the ‘left-over’ space, in-between enclaves, depicted by decay, vacant lots, and deterioration, unsafe environments, inhabited by the homeless, addicts and other ‘drop outs’ – downtown was such a left-over space.⁴¹ This narrative on the future of downtown, coloured by loss and despair, has changed nowadays due to two different developments. First is the aforementioned trend that citizens increasingly are moving to locations closer to their work, in order to be less dependent upon their car(s). Traffic jams are an issue, as well as the time spent in the car, while also the worrying scenarios about climate change and other environmental issues get rooted in the minds of particular groups of people. The local situation is increasingly important: the idea to arrange life (including the production of food) as much as possible around the own domicile started in a limited sense, but increasingly got attention and succession now by new groups of urban inhabitants. This change in preferences of the own residential environment and daily life is accompanied by the second change: an emerging different economic theory that has gained attention over the last decade, and that has offered new perspectives to cities and their planners and politicians. This theory emphasizes the ‘knowledge workers’ and ‘knowledge economy’ as the key to economic growth in the ‘first world’. This theory binds ‘knowledge economy’ (and that is the distinctive change), close to the urban milieu. ‘Creative people’, the previously mentioned Richard Florida writes, ‘don’t just cluster where the jobs are. They cluster in centres of creativity and also where they like to live.’⁴² The city, Florida then refers to Jane Jacobs, can be a place of creative ‘gravity’, as it not only caters for a single industry but is a place of diversity. In other words, the city and its possible plurality is the very locus of this new economic perspective – possible, since cities of course had to change their mind, redirect their focus from the monotony of the suburbs to the diversity of central places. Florida’s point is not just a nice theory – his book is the articulation of a development he saw happening in places like Seattle, Austin, Toronto and Dublin, while cities like Buffalo, Grand Rapids, Memphis and Louisville remained behind.⁴³ This also counts for the other aspect of our contemporary times that was feared previously: the age of the digital media that accompanies, or better said, is intertwined with this new economy. Digitalization has not led to less need for physical contacts, but, despite the expectations, has further fuelled the eagerness to meet and greet physically, to actually see and tangibly experience what is projected on a screen. It ‘raises the importance of central functions’, as urban sociologist Saskia Sassen analyses,⁴⁴ specifically to a few global cities that span the

39.

See a first exploration of the opportunities of this newly discovered landscape <http://www.citylab.com/politics/2014/07/navigating-the-future-of-the-la-river-by-kayak/374248/> [visited August 12th, 2014]

40.

See also the reflection of LA Times architectural critic Christopher Hawthorne on what is happening in the city today: ‘A new L.A. identity takes shape in 2013 as city embraces urban life’, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-los-angeles-identity-architecture-hawthorne-essay-20131222,0,3245365-story#axzz2qMBhT3Qb> [visited January 14th, 2014]

41.

Christine Boyer, *Cyber Cities, Visual Perception in the Age of Electronic Communication* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 162

42.

Florida, *The Rise of The Creative Class*, 7; cf. Ed Taverne, Sebastian Dembski, Len de Klerk, and Bart Ramakers, ‘Greep op de stad. Nieuwe wendingen in het stadsonderzoek’, in: Ed Taverne, Len de Klerk, Bart Ramakers, and Sebastian Dembski (eds.), *Nederland Stedenland, Continuïteit en vernieuwing* (Rotterdam: nai010 Uitgevers, 2012), 12

43.

Florida, *The Rise of The Creative Class*, 7; Florida’s book turns these developments in larger framework, a theory, which has had huge influence amongst urban developers

44.

Saskia Sassen, ‘Scale and Span in a Global Digital World’ in: A. Krista Sykes (eds.), *Constructing a New Agenda, Architectural Theory 1993-2009* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 182

45.

This notion comes from John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze, Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 2000). Urry three years after the completion of the Guggenheim Bilbao counted over 700 new British museums of the last two decades (!), of course not established by themselves, but mostly the result of a particular village policy that develop museums around certain places with a cultural historical value. See Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, *In Search of a New Public Domain Analyse and Strategy* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2001), 37

46.

Jacobs even starts her *Cities the Wealth of Nations* with 'The Great Leap Forward', that Mao Tse-Tung declared, as well as with Khrushchev announcing the increase of the Soviet Economy meant to 'overtake' Western domination on the economical markets, as well as the idea within America, in Britain and in the rest of Europe itself that everything was under control and strong enough to compete with these upcoming countries. Time, actually, she states, has shown that the scheme could fail, that depressions and recessions could not be excluded from the economic systems. It is in this context that she draws attention to the city, as the origin of economic growth maintenance of prosperity. The reason for Jacobs to emphasize the city in this respect is a difficult relationship with the larger framework of the nation. 'Cities are the open-ended types of economies,' she writes, 'in which our open-ended capacities for economic reaction are not only able to establish "new little Things" but also to inject them into everyday life. Unfortunately, given the deadly interplay between nations and their cities, we human beings are doomed to spurt of economic development only – sporadic and relatively brief episodes, now here, now there, followed by stagnation and deterioration. This must continue unless and until we drift into means of overcoming that deadly interplay itself. In this sense, we human beings are still in a primitive stage indeed of using our capacities for open-ended creation and development.' Jane Jacobs, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations*, 224-225

world and that are understood as strategic sites, providing resources, creativity, and innovation.

Los Angeles's new and remarkable (public) buildings need to be understood from this perspective. It is the unthought-of turn in previous processes, wherein downtown areas either became office-parks, leisure areas or had to suffer decay and vacancy. In Los Angeles the downtown area was mostly rendered as office-park, whereas the new additions somehow stretch to the realm of culture (and leisure). These cultural venues are part of the new economic narrative on cities, as is the outspoken character of the architecture of the church, the concert hall, the museum, and the theatre. Particularly architecture has become a means to present the city to the world outside. Not simply as a tourist destination, but also to attract attention of firms, businesses and new inhabitants. Architecture, in other words, is used in the process of city-branding, by establishing an image of renewal, prosperity, diversity. Frank Gehry's famous design for the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao (Spain) can be seen as the predecessor of this development.

[IMAGE 3.5] As is the case in his design for the Los Angeles's *Walt Disney Concert Hall*, the Bilbao design is attractive and sculptural, and consists of an astonishing skin of titanium-cladded forms that seem to be frozen in the midst of a dance. The Bilbao Guggenheim museum attracted a lot of visitors to what was before a dump and almost bankrupt Spanish harbour town. Only by huge investments in public transport (a new subway) and public space (particularly in the downtown area) the economic downward spiral could be stopped. The Guggenheim was the almost final investment in that range of structural enhancements of the inner city, but depicted from its very initiative until today as the image of the city. It is not exaggerating to emphasise architecture here as the means to attract attention. Gehry's design offered something special, astonishing views and sharp contrasts, which attracted attention from around the world, as well as thousands of visitors to the city. The Bilbao story soon turned into a model that other towns, villages, and even cities and metropolises copied in order to change their image and attract people. New downtown developments require architecture as a tool in order to 'brand' the city. It needed to be attractive, spectacular, an icon, an eye catcher in *the tourists's gaze*.⁴⁵

During the last fifteen years the debate on downtown areas and cities has thus significantly changed. Recent insights in the current economic circumstances of the Western World *vis-à-vis* the emerging economies in the South and the East re-appropriated the perspective that was developed by Jane Jacobs during the sixties in her well known publications as *Death and Life of Great American Cities* and *Cities the Wealth of Nations*. Once again, central in this new theoretical frame is the assumption that urban plurality is a powerful source of creativity, and that it is particularly this creativity that is needed to compete with the emerging economies elsewhere around the globe.⁴⁶ The perspective behind is of course that in the Western society the economy has transformed from largely production to services, development and innovation, from labor-oriented to creativity-driven. This process of course is propelled by the emergence of the global network society and 'information-based' economics, which in turn, according to Saskia Sassen has led to a new type of city. She starts her book *The Global City* by emphasizing the four aspects that show the increasing importance of major cities around the world – she dwells upon New York, London, and Tokyo, but also mentions Frankfurt and Paris as examples, whereas she probably today also would have mentioned an additional Chinese example, like Hong Kong.⁴⁷ First these cities function as concentrated spaces of organization of the world-wide economy. Secondly these

cities house the financial institutions that are accommodated, as well as, in their slipstream, specialized service firms. Thirdly they are ‘sites of production’, specifically the production of ‘innovation’ in leading industries. And lastly, these cities are markets as well, markets for the innovation that are produced within the city itself.⁴⁸ This somehow thus is an upward cycle: an accumulating concentration of institutions and businesses that are dependent on the availability of highly educated and skilled employers, as well as on other institutions and businesses, while these employers in turn require a rich cultural, creative environment, interesting institutions and businesses to work for, and vice-versa. It is the city and its physical and virtual networks that offer both sufficient employers, as well as – from the perspective of the employers – the challenging jobs and opportunities.⁴⁹ To attract knowledge workers as new inhabitants therefore seem to be pivotal – Florida at least argues that today, firms follow employers, rather than the other way around.⁵⁰

Richard Florida in his perspective on the city concentrates on the aspect of innovation. The city, he states, is the stage of innovation and creativity, since in cities diversity is a main characteristic.⁵¹ Florida thus pleads to redirect investments from the suburbs to the city itself, and emphasises a cultural and mental shift in respect to daily city life. Florida emphasizes the importance of plural urbanity, and public structures (of public spaces, buildings, services) and cultural venues that can accommodate and attract a distinct groups of inhabitants, specifically the offerings of a broad range of restaurants, coffee shops, bars accompanied by cultural hotspots as libraries, concert halls, and museums, as well as sports playgrounds, football courts, runway paths, and fitness rooms, as well as a meaningful range of events, concerts, discussions, in public spaces or within these public buildings. Whereas in the enclave city ‘public’ space mainly is limited to leisure (and shopping), in Florida’s plea public space is seen as a productive space. Although offering room for leisure, it is immediately productive in its attraction of a plural public. Cities offer public spaces where people meet and organize happenings where people are brought together, known and unknown, strangers and alike. Cities need to create places, Florida formulates as the future-agenda for cities, where people can be ‘on their own’, as well as ‘amidst others’.⁵² That is fertile soil for creativity, the meeting, planned or by surprise, of others that are distinct – a sphere of possibilities, hustle and bustle of urban neighbourhoods. In such society, the laborer does not follow firms, but firms follow the sources of creativity, and therefore settle in cities with a highly populated ‘creative class’, as Florida calls it.⁵³ After years of a lack of political will to invest in public spaces (and leave that to the market), Florida called upon politicians to take responsibility again. And indeed, cities (and their governing structures) increasingly understood the need to be attractive to plural groups of inhabitants, and started to invest in the downtown areas, public amenities and cultural venues. ‘We have taken a step toward the urban diversity and tolerance that prevailed in Paris a hundred years ago,’ the journalist Alan Ehrenhalt states in his book *The Great Inversion*, in which he analyses this new urban turn.⁵⁴ ‘People with widely different backgrounds and modes of living come together on the sidewalks of Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and a growing number of other cities in ways that would have been unthinkable in 1980. American cities are also returning to diversity of use: The idea of zoning for segregation of uses is slowly dying in America; virtually every city planning official is now looking for ways to promote mixed-use zoning, perhaps not the chaotic jumble of the old Paris, but a mixture of uses nevertheless.’⁵⁵ In order to be attractive for inhabitants and visitors cities have started to reinvest public money in the liveability of the inner cities, investing

47. Saskia Sassen, *The Global City, New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001)

48. *Ibid.*, 3-4

49. See Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age, Economy, Society And Culture* (Malden (Mass.): Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 415-416

50. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 6

51. *Ibid.*, 223

52. Florida distinguishes three aspects that the ‘creative’ city should inhibit: Technology, Talent, and Tolerance. *Ibid.*, Chapter 14; Since Florida is educated as an economist, his account of course is driven by economic perspectives, not political. It is – again – economic processes that impacts the city, first its fall and now its rise as well. That makes suspicious to this view. Does this economic process need the public, or is the public only treated as reservoir of creativity? It is as the sociologists Nathan Glazer and Mark Lilla write in their 1987 introductory notes to *The Public Face of Architecture*: ‘If the occasions of our public gatherings have changed, so have our purposes. They have, over the centuries, become less political, more commercial – to buy, to sell, to display, to bargain. We are a commercial republic, and it is not surprising that we allow the creation of our public space to be dominated by commercial interests.’ Nathan Glazer and Mark Lilla (eds), *The Public Face of Architecture, Civic Culture and Public Space* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), xiii

53. Florida’s definition of the ‘creative class’ actually is quite broad: he counts all the inhabitants with higher education to the creative class, which seems to hollow actively the very idea of distinguished creativity and innovation. Also his emphasize on ‘class’ do immediately suggest a highly segregated urban landscape, whereas the creatives, ranging from composers to architects and from artists to scientists, even from PHD-students till researchers (in his case) of course are spread over different social classes (and urban environments). Some therefore argue that the perspective Charles Landry develops in his book *The Creative City, A Toolkit for Urban Developers* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2012) might be more meaningful, since it is less broad, more concrete, and is immersed in the cultural aspects of creativity and the city as well. See for this point: Klaske Havik, *Urban*

Literacy, Reading and Writing Architecture (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2014), 221; We also can argue that the broad definition Florida uses indeed directs us to the wrong direction, and that we better can call his 'create class' the 'knowledge workers', as I used previously.

54.

Alan Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion, And the Future of the American City* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 38

55.

Ibid., 38

56.

Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Malden (Mass.), Blackwell Publishing, 1995), 9

57.

Richard Florida, in later writings, connect the slightly growing inner city with the 2008 financial and economic crisis. One of the turns in society due to the crisis, he writes, 'is the resurrection of our cities. In the 1960s and 1970s, our urban cores had been all but left for dead. ... But what a change there has been. For the first time in decades, American cities are growing faster than the suburbs. ... Disproportionate numbers of the new urbanites are 20- to 34-year-olds—who are delaying marriage much longer than their parents did—and since 2008, they have been dealing with the effects of the economic contraction. Urban living provides them with thicker job and dating markets, opportunities to share rent with roommates, and plenty of things to do in their off hours, from bar-hopping to attending graduate school.' Richard Florida, 'The Fading Differentiation between City and Suburb', <http://urbanland.uli.org/Articles/2013/Jan/FloridaSuburbs> [accessed February 14, 2013]

58.

Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion*, 6

59.

Which of course also is because of the increasing amount of singles or un-coupled within the urban environment, but even families with children are seeking a more compact, less sprawling, less car-dependent way of life.

60.

<http://grist.org/people/sims-city-urban-america-as-seen-by-obamas-former-hud-boss/> [accessed, January 18, 2013]; see also: Michael Sorkin, *Twenty Minutes in Manhattan* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 18

61.

Also the *New York Times* architectural critic Michael Kimmelman emphasises the relationship between the 'healthy city' and public space. 'A healthy city,' he writes, 'has a robust diversity of public spaces: it needs destination places like Central Park,

in public infrastructure, from tangible urban spaces of parks and squares to public buildings, like museums, *centres for performative art*, concert halls, pop stages, football stadiums. With these investments the city is focussing on being attractive for the 'knowledge workers', the creative class, as was suggested by Florida. Historically, culture, in a strict sense of the word, comes after times of economic surplus, when there is sufficient prosperity, as the sociologist Sharon Zukin writes, 'to fund sacrifices for the temple, Michelangelo's for the chapel, and bequests to art museums in the wills of robber barons,'⁵⁶ nowadays this process seems to be inverted. The investment in the cultural sector foregoes the attractiveness of the place to the 'creative class' as a living environment. The investment in culture, accompanied by attractive commissions to world-wide known architects, therefore has a function in marketing processes of image-building and city-branding, in order to show the world, and specifically the creative class and the global firms that something is going on in the city, that the city offers plenty of possibilities of things that can be done, be experienced, enjoyed, even during a regular weekday evening.⁵⁷

3.1.3 Coffee Will Save Downtown

Recent Census data indeed initially show a change in the process of (sub)urbanisation. Besides that, cities are investing in their urban neighbourhoods, their cores, first by building those cultural amenities as a performing arts centre, also the downtown areas are increasingly inhibited again. The vibrant city and the hustle and bustle of urbanity is 'rediscovered' as a thrilling living environment, even for families with kids. Increasingly people inhabit the downtown area, even statistics show that a movement can be recognized from the suburbs back into town. The data gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau, the state office that monitors the social circumstances of the American landscape, show that downtown areas grew faster than suburbs in 27 of America's 51 largest metropolitan areas between July 2010 and July 2011, which was the case in only five metropolitan areas before. Although this development slowly but slightly emerged in the last decade, it is propelled by the financial crisis that hit the Western economy in 2008. Recently the American journalist Alan Ehrenhalt in his book *The Great Inversion* presented this 'fourth wave' of (sub)urbanisation after World War II as a major demographic shift.⁵⁸ Inhabitants now don't move away from the city, but move back to inner cities. One of the minor reasons of the movement back to town, he writes, is the concern about environmental issues. It fits in a green and clean lifestyle. The major reason is the dissatisfaction with suburban life, Ehrenhalt states. City-inhabitants do use their cars less, they live in smaller apartments.⁵⁹ Also healthcare issues do play a role, not only amongst citizens, but also in the policy of the government and city councils. Former boss of the Department of Housing and Urban Development of the United States, Ron Sims, states: 'We realized that we could predict life outcomes of children, health outcomes of adults, by the zip code they live in. If you have a park a quarter a mile from your home, your children are not going to be obese. If it's half a mile away, you begin to see the early signs. But if a park is a mile or more away from a residence, obesity will be a problem. How a neighbourhood is designed determines health outcomes.'⁶⁰ Sims thus urges a relationship between the availability of public spaces and health issues, in which proximity is the key word in this new perspective upon the urban environment.⁶¹ A renewed interest in living in cities with their well-developed physical and virtual infrastructure thus is tangible, as well as simultaneously a new policy of investing and improving this physical and virtual infrastructure of

cities. New York houses are specifically some of the success stories in this respect, besides the embankments of the Hudson River, also the High Line, Fresh Skills Park at Staten Island and the opening of Governors Island as a park.⁶² In an article in the *Sunday Review* of *The New York Times* the journalist Frank Bruni writes ‘Whenever you doubt that the future can improve upon the past or that government can play a pivotal role in that, consider and revel in the extraordinary greening of New York. This city looks nothing – nothing – like it did just a decade and a half ago. It’s a place of newly gorgeous waterfront promenades, of trees, tall grasses and blooming flowers on patches of land and peninsulas of concrete and even stretches of rail tracks that were blighted or blank before. It’s a lush retort to the pessimism of this era, verdant proof that growth remains possible, at least with the requisite will and the right strategies.’⁶³ This indeed is a narrative that is quite well understood amongst policy makers in other cities. As Bruni continues: ‘The New York story is a national one. In the centre of Oklahoma City a revitalized park complex, Myriad Botanical Gardens, recently took root. In downtown Houston, there’s Discovery Green. Dallas is building a park on a deck over a downtown freeway, and Los Angeles is looking at how to gussy and green up an old concrete river bed.’⁶⁴ The contemporary development, wherein the city increasingly is popular as a residential and working area,⁶⁵ thus can also be seen as re-appreciation of public space. Although the new inhabitants will ‘feature elaborate security systems,’ in their houses, they ‘will not be walled off from the street. They will want to be in contact with the street.’ Ehrenhalt states.⁶⁶ ‘People do not move to the center of cities,’ he writes as a conclusion, ‘merely to be able to get to and from work a quarter of an hour faster. They are settling in cities – those who have a choice – in large part to experience the things that citizens of Paris and Vienna experienced a century ago. Round-the-clock street life; café sociability; casual acquaintances they meet on the sidewalk every day.’⁶⁷ This renewed interest in cities indeed becomes very visible in the increasing amount of coffee houses, both the chain stores of *Starbucks* as well as the increasing amount of local speciality bars that pop up in the slipstream of the chain stores in the neighbourhoods around downtown.⁶⁸ The coffee house, somehow *again*,⁶⁹ is the stage in which the urban economy and the urban area as living environment mingle.⁷⁰ The urban creativity that Florida emphasizes as the essential to the future of cities is depicted by the space of such environments. The distinction between personal and professional life fades in the post industrial city, and the coffee bar is the perfect environment in which work-life and private life come together, specifically for smaller businesses and the increasing amount of free lancers, who are ‘footloose’, of course due to the rise of portable electronic devices and telecommuting. Professional meetings on the spot alternate with staying around, reading newspapers, tasting fabulous coffees, bumping into others by chance. The quality of the coffee, as well as the innovation of new sorts of coffee (beans, roasting, grind, brewing, and preparing), of sweets and sandwiches, of amenities (WiFi, newspapers, bulletin boards, power outlets), of seating, light, tables, arrangements, the ‘sphere’ (organic, vintage, hipster, crafts, bikes), as well as extra organized activities are increasingly important for the new urbanites – not just as an environment of socializing, but increasingly as a spot for working, reading, writing, in other words, for productivity.⁷¹

In this new future-perspective for cities, public space and urban design is understood as a prerequisite for (economic) development. Besides investments in social factors as public health and education, this also means large investments in the demolishing of cheap social housing and restructuring public spaces, in the

but these don’t touch the daily life of most people the way neighbourhood square do. ... To the extent that the city has become more liveable and humane in recent years, the improvement is attributable to the improved quality of the parks and the spread of public space along the waterfront and elsewhere. Public health and public space go hand in hand.’ Kimmelman, ‘Foreword’, in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA): New Village Press, 2012), xvi

62.

see on the ‘greening of New York’, an extensive major programme that former mayor Bloomberg strongly controls, for instance on the opening to the public of the piers and promenades along the Hudson River, the shores along the coast of the Hudson Bay Area, the creation of a Park at Governors Island, and so on: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/plany2030/html/home/home.shtml> [accessed April 29th, 2013]

63.

Frank Bruni, ‘Our Newly Lush Life’, *New York Times, Sunday Review*, July 14th, 2012. Read via <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/15/opinion/sunday/bruni-in-urban-parks-our-newly-lush-life.html> [visited November 1st, 2012]

64.

Frank Bruni, ‘Our Newly Lush Life’, *New York Times, Sunday Review*, July 14th, 2012. Read via <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/15/opinion/sunday/bruni-in-urban-parks-our-newly-lush-life.html> [visited November 1st, 2012]

65.

Cities particularly welcome an increasing population of 20 to 34 year old’ inhabitants. See Richard Florida, ‘The Fading Differentiation between City and Suburb’, <http://urbanland.uli.org/Articles/2013/Jan/FloridaSuburbs> [accessed February 14th, 2013]

66.

Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion*, 19

67.

Ibid., 236

68.

Ehrenhalt writes: ‘One can meake fun of the ubiquitous presence and the uniformity of *Starbucks*, but the fact remains that just twenty years ago, the idea of coffeehouses in urban centers seemed a quaint vision of the vanished past. Now one can walk into a *Starbucks* in the center of any large American city at ten in the morning or eight in the evening and find clusters of coffee drinkers deep in conversation, many of them lingering as much to talk as to consume. It is not going too far to say that *Starbucks* resurrected the

coffeehouse experience in present-day America: small independent cafés have returned to the street along with it.' *Ibid.*, 38

69.

Ehrenhalt also sees this parallel with what the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas describes in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1989), upon which we touched in the previous chapter. The 'public' discussion as the core of Habermas recognition of the coffeehouse as an essential space of the public sphere surely has changed. But what Habermas doesn't dwell upon in his discussion on the coffeehouse, was the than 'belief [in Vienna] in culture and entertainment as the core of life in their community', as Ehrenhalt writes. He cites the memoirs of the novelist Stefan Zweig, who writes: 'The first glance of the average Viennese into his morning paper was not at the events in parliament, or world affairs, but at the repertoire of the theater, which assumed so important a role in public life as hardly was possible in any other city.' Ehrenhalt then adds: 'Taking the family to a play early in the evening and then out for a late supper on the Roinngstrasse was not a special treat; it was a routine part of urban living. The Ringstrasse had a place to spend much of one's day, conversing on subjects that ranged from the upcoming whether to the state of Western civilization. Every café had its regulars, who spent three or four hours a day there, but also a steady supply of smart and talkative strangers.' And then Zweig again: 'It is a sort of democratic club ... to which admission costs the small price of a cup of coffee. Upon payment of this mite every guest can sit for hours on end, discuss, write, play cards, receive mail, and above all go through an unlimited number of newspapers and magazines.' *Ibid.*, 31-32

70.

In what follows, I make use of an intriguing blogpost of the Amsterdam based urban critic and sociologist Mark Minckjan, writing about the coffee bar I also regularly frequented: <http://citybreaths.com/post/21714324986/how-coffee-revitalizes-the-city> [accessed April 17th, 2013]

71.

See for a discussion about these aspects for the coffeehouse as a social space, actually remarkably without the requirement of good coffee, Rachael A. Woldoff, Dawn

repaving of streets and redesign of parks and squares, those places to meet. Cities of course do help the regeneration of urban neighbourhoods actively also through the subsidizing of the settlement of new business, offering cheap ateliers for artists and even by stimulating private developers to invest, a process that today is generally called gentrification.⁷²

Whereas the global coffee-chains establish in already settled neighbourhoods, privately owned coffee houses emerge in the neighbourhoods around the centre, of course in need of cheap retail prices, but also near their 'market', since the 'creative class' initially also can't afford the affluent housing prizes in the very centre. Setting up a coffee bar therefore contributes to the liveability of the urban environment. It attracts people and businesses, changes the image of the surrounding, and, by doing that actually creates slowly but surely room for a process of gentrification – the process of changing demographics in a neighbourhood (although it can be discussed what's first, the initial phase of gentrification, or the coffee bar and other amenities servicing the new population).⁷³ Retail prices increase, social housing decreases, housing prices increase, schools improve, new urbanites come in and the 'original' population is forced out to neighbourhoods with worse public spaces and amenities, job opportunities, education, and meaningful societal networks⁷⁴ – this is the backside of the above mentioned success story of the renewed investments in the city and public spaces.⁷⁵ Cities themselves of course also contribute to processes of gentrification by actively taking initiatives, participating and investing in projects of urban renewal, or even sometimes by designating certain areas as extraordinary, as 'historic districts' (upon which we touched in the previous chapter), a 'label' that, in most cases, will raise the prices of the properties.⁷⁶ Despite all good intentions of investments in public health and education, urban policies are mostly focused on economic circumstances and economic growth, which is helpful for the economic and financial strength and vitality of urban neighbourhoods, as well as for the safety within these neighbourhoods,⁷⁷ these investments however simultaneously propel the process of gentrification.⁷⁸ This process, however, not only disperses the original inhabitants, in the long run, it also makes living in that place impossible for the new urbanites. Rents for houses, ateliers, shop-spaces will increase – and since the environment is established, another group of inhabitants will be attracted, with even more money to spend. The question though is how to value this process of gentrification. Lance Freeman, professor of urban planning at Columbia University in New York, simply states that it is an 'inevitable consequence of capitalism.' As long as real estate properties are regarded as market commodities, gentrification is part of the – by definition continuous – process of urban transformation.⁷⁹ Others, like the former Columbia professor of Urban Planning Peter Marcuse, however, urge the development of different policies regarding this process. The displacement caused by gentrification, actually by abandonment and decline as well, should be halted, he states. 'Neighborhoods in danger of either abandonment or gentrification,' he writes, 'must be given control of their own destinies. Resources must be made available to them adequate for that purpose. Public policies dealing with housing (including the control of private actions, particularly speculative ones) must have as their clear objective the elimination of all displacement in all its forms, whether by abandonment or by gentrification.'⁸⁰

Although the renewed attractiveness of the inner cities and public spaces regularly is celebrated positively, it thus has a backside that is increasingly tangible in cities like New York, London, Amsterdam. These cities increasingly become

unaffordable, not only for the ‘original’ inhabitants or the new urbanites, but also for the middle class. Prices of properties and rents rise, as do other costs of living. It has been argued widely that Florida’s theory on the future of cities and the creative class thus has a huge backside: although it celebrates diversity, in the long run it propels processes of gentrification and of segregation. In his last publication, he admits this perspective – he even calls it (with the title of his book) *The New Urban Crisis*.⁸¹ This crisis somehow is inherent in the individual and sole economic perspective that supports his view. The city and its public spaces, in Florida’s image, is a means towards the development of the individual, to challenge creativity, to propel ideas. Compared to the view of for instance Lewis Mumford, about four decades previously, this is a limited scope of public space. Mumford understood urban encounters as propelling ‘man’s conscious participation in the cosmic and the historic process. Through its own complex and enduring structure,’ he argues, ‘the city vastly augments man’s ability to interpret these processes and take an active, formative part in them.’⁸² For Mumford the essence of the city thus is the ability to participate in public, in something beyond the individual, which has a longer pedigree and a particular permanence. Although in Florida’s perspective the city and its economic prospects is the frame, it is nevertheless all understood through the individual, his needs, his possibilities, his wishes. This focus on individual prosperity requires again smooth areas, hipster bars with cocktails, and expensive coffees.

Since Florida is so clearly focussed upon ‘knowledge workers’ and their assumed need for a plural cultural climate, he overlooks the actual – very stubborn and even more awkward – forms of plurality, that always have been part of the urban culture, and that have been (and still are) important to attract the urban ‘pioneers’. Even in the city of Los Angeles this form of plurality has never disappeared. Berkeley professor of Architecture Margaret Crawford, analyses this plurality, and poses it versus the negative stories on cities and their future. Based in research in Los Angeles, she states that the city is continuously redefining the very terms ‘public’ and ‘space’ through lived experience.⁸³ This is a process that does not specifically happen in the designated area, on streets and squares, but can pop-up everywhere and unexpectedly. The ‘continuous re-definition’ of spaces is part of the everyday space – that is ‘the connective tissue that binds daily lives together, amorphous and so persuasive that it is difficult even to perceive.’⁸⁴ That it is so difficult to read is also the reason that only the main narrative of loss, deeply bound to the ideal images of public space of the street and square, is emphasized over time, she states. ‘In spite of its ubiquity, everyday space is nearly invisible in the professional discourses on the city.’⁸⁵ But by looking closer – that is not only better, but also closer to the circumstances in the neighbourhoods itself, the continuous process of appropriation and re-appropriation of space becomes slightly visible in the street vendors and garage sales, in the often illegal demarcation of specific uses, in temporal events, and so on. These spaces continuously change meaning, it is continuously reorganized and reinterpreted by users (obviously even the seasons do affect this).⁸⁶ ‘Individual garage sales’ Crawford states, ‘might not in themselves generate new urban politics, but the juxtapositions, combinations, and collisions of people, places, and activities ... create a new condition of social fluidity that begins to break down the separate, specialized, and hierarchical structures of everyday life in Los Angeles.’⁸⁷

Marie Lozzi, and Lisa M. Dilks, ‘The Social Transformation of Coffee Houses: The Emergence of Chain Establishments and the Private Nature of Usage’, in: *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, Vol. 1, no2, (Beaverton (Or.), Redfame Publishing, October 2013)

72.

See for an introduction in and overview upon these processes of gentrification: Stefaan Metaal, ‘Gentrification, An Overview’, in: Prina Avidar, Klaske Havik, and Bart Wigger (eds.), *Gentrification, Flows and Counter Flows, OASE #73* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2007)

73.

The former professor of Urban Design at Columbia University Peter Marcuse actually states that the existing policy in the United States is based upon the assumption that gentrification only can be seen as a realistic cure for the problem on the other end of the spectrum: abandonment. ‘Gentrification improves the quality of housing, contributes to the tax base, and revitalized important sections of the city,’ he summarizes the assumption. ‘The displacement it causes (if any) is trivial. Therefore, a policy of encouraging gentrification, through tax benefits, zone changes, or whatever other means are available, should be pursued.’ Peter Marcuse, ‘Abandonment, Gentrification, and Displacement, The Linkages in New York City’, in: Neil Smith and Peter Williams (eds.), *Gentrification of the City* (Boston Unwin Hyman, 1986), 153 In his article he actually tackles this assumption. ‘Far from being a cure for abandonment,’ he writes, ‘gentrification worsens it. Both gentrification and abandonment have caused a high level of displacement in New York City.’ Marcuse, ‘Abandonment, Gentrification, and Displacement’, 154

74.

cf Florida, *The New Urban Crisis*, 59-78

75.

As Ehrenhalt writes: ‘The word “gentrification” was actually invented in 1963 by the British sociologist Ruth Glass to describe the “invasion” of working class urban neighbourhoods by the wealthy.’ Over the years the idea of gentrification has been ‘at the center of urban ideological debate, with those against it arguing that the return of affluent white residents to city centers was unfairly displacing impoverished minority renters, and those in favor of it insisting that it was gradually restoring the economic and social vitality of cities as a whole. Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion*, 232-233; The Meatpacking district in Manhattan is a striking example of this process of gentrification – it has roused attention from all over the world, specifically through the opening of an abandoned elevated railway track as a new urban public

park, the highly celebrated *High Line*. The process is initiated by particular initiatives, as for instance this project of the High-Line, which today is amongst the top-destinations of visitors to New York, which impacted the surrounding area, Chelsea, formerly a bleu collar working class neighbourhood, by the transformation into an upper-class living environment, an area of galleries and expensive shops, organic food markets and excellent dining. See Jeremiah Moss, 'Disney World on the Hudson', in the New York edition of the *New York Times*, August 21, 2012; http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/22/opinion/in-the-shadows-of-the-high-line.html?_r=0 [accessed April 29th, 2013]. Compare also what Reinhold Martin writes in his article 'Occupy: The Day After' on the aim of these transformations in the perspective of the city at large: 'The Bloomberg administration has made significant use of ... public-private instruments in its campaign to rebrand New York as a nexus of culture and capital, a project begun by the mayor's predecessor, Rudolph Giuliani. At that nexus are civic amenities like the architect-laden redevelopment of Ground Zero ..., the High Line, and Brooklyn Bridge Park – not to mention an underfunded public school system and an under-maintained public housing system that is constantly warding off privatization or demolition threats. In other words, the increased tax base generated by speculative real estate investment does not lead to economic or social equity; on the contrary, its proceeds are selectively reinvested in order to

attract more capital.' <http://places.designobserver.com/feature/occupy-the-day-after/31698/> [accessed April 29th, 2013]

76. A very nice example of such proposed designation was clearly exposed in its pro's and contra's amongst the inhabitants in *The New York Times* upon the Bedford-Stuyvesant area in Brooklyn – 'an extraordinary well-preserved late-19th-century streetscape', as the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission states. The pro's of course emphasize that they now are rewarded for their continuous 'faith' in the environment, even during the hard times when crime and drugs affected street life. The contra's underline the increasing costs for living: besides the rent, also the prices of food and other stuff in the area will rise, following the affluence of the new inhabitants. See: Constance Rosenblum, 'Argument Over a Brownstone Neighborhood, The Case for and Against a Bed-Stuy Historic District', in: *The New York Times*, February 21, 2014; http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/23/realestate/the-case-for-and-against-a-bed-stuy-historic-district.html?_r=0 [accessed March 27th 2014] Compare for this latter remark also Marcuse, 'Abandonment, Gentrification, and Displacement', 157

77. See for instance the decreasing crime rates proudly presented by the New York Police Department: on November 28th 2012 New York City even experienced a day without violent crimes 'for the first

time in memory': http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/28/new-york-city-goes-one-day-without-murders-shootings-stabbings-one-whole-day_n_2207088.html [accessed November 29th, 2013]. Sometimes the weather helps in making the city less dangerous: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/26/nyregion/cold-wave-cut-murders-in-new-york-city-significantly.html> [accessed February 16th, 2013]. This not only is about the experience of safety, as Florida states. It also is an indication of the state of a neighbourhood: 'Although the data are spotty and while correlation does not imply causation, my analysis found gun-related homicides to be lower in metros with higher levels of human capital, more knowledge-based economies, and greater concentrations of high-tech industry. On the flip side, I found gun-related murders to be hither in metros with higher poverty levels, higher levels of inequality, more blue-color working class economies and higher shares of commuters who drive to work alone (a proxy for sprawl, among other factors).' Richard Florida, <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/jobs-and-economy/2012/12/how-economic-development-changing-geography-urban-crime/4187/> [accessed, January 18th, 2013]

78. Paul Scheffer, *Het land van aankomst* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2007), 92

79. See: Justin Davidson, 'Is Gentrification All Bad?' in: *New York Magazine*, February 2nd, 2014;

<http://nymag.com/news/features/gentrification-2014-2/> [accessed March 27th, 2014]

80. Marcuse, 'Abandonment, Gentrification, and Displacement', 174

81. Richard Florida, *The New Urban Crisis. How our Cities are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class – And What We Can Do About It* (New York: Basic Books, 2017)

82. Lewis Mumford, *The City in History, Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects* (San Diego: (1961), Harcourt Inc., 1989), 576

83. Margaret Crawford, 'Everyday Urbanism', in: in: Philipp Oswalt, Klaus Overmeyer, and Philipp Misselwitz (eds.), *Urban Catalysts, The Power of Temporary Use* (Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2013), 151

84. *Ibid.*, 151

85. *Ibid.*, 151

86. *Ibid.*, 152

87. *Ibid.*, 154



3.7 May Day Protests in Seattle, May 2nd, 2017, in front of Seattle Public Library (Rem Koolhaas/OMA, 2004), 4th Avenue, Seattle, WA, USA, May 2nd, 2017



3.8 Occupy Wall Street Protests in front of the Stock Market, Wall Street, New York, NY, USA, 2011



3.9 Police clearing the Taksim Gezi Park, using tear gas and water cannons against the protesters, Istanbul, Turkey, June 15th, 2013

3.2 THE STRUGGLE FOR PUBLIC SPACE

3.2.1 Some Notes on the Situation in Europe

This ability of people to occupy and appropriate public spaces with their own businesses (in a broad sense of the word) might also offer a lens to investigate the suburbs. Ehrenhalt, in his discussion of the renewed interest in cities, after all urges that the future of the suburbs and their monotonous developments is an urgent urban problem.⁸⁸ Ehrenhalt holds the new demographic movement actually as a process beyond gentrification. It is not about the change of a neighbourhood, but about the complete change of the city itself. The whole urban model is turned upside down. And ‘gentrification is a too small word for it’, he writes.⁸⁹ What he means is that the recent development in the American city is not just a process of the white residents returning to city centres, the biotope of the blacks. It is not the affluent displacing the poor in the downtown area. It literally is demographic *inversion* of the whole city, he states. It is the transformation of downtown *and* the suburbs simultaneously. The appearance of the city rearranged, where inner cities do increasingly attract the affluent people, and those who can’t afford living within the city have no choice but to live in the suburb, far away from the inner city. This model, that he somehow also recognizes in the European cities with their *banlieus* is common in the developing world too. ‘Perhaps more dramatically,’ he states. ‘Mumbai, Cairo, and Rio de Janeiro all consist of central districts where tourists and rich locals congregate, surrounded by shantytowns populated by newly arrived urbanites who have left zones of rural poverty to try to make a fresh start amid the chaos of a mushrooming metropolitan population.’⁹⁰

The contemporary urban situation in Europe – to move a bit away from the American perspective that is very dominant in the discourse on public space and my writing until now – can be described in distinct ways, depending on what is the focus of the aim. The already mentioned German architect Thomas Sieverts calls the urban condition as ‘Zwischendsstadt’, neither city nor landscape, the result of the aim to both address an urban and a rural ideal.⁹¹ In *OASE #89*, that aims to cover the Contemporary European Urban Condition, this form of urban development is described as the domination of the mid-size city (besides of course the only true Metropolises of London, Paris, Berlin, Madrid, Moscow, Istanbul), which they describe as being slightly invisible in the discourse on urbanity and cities because of its self-evidency. The mid-size city is a place, the editors write, ‘where the desire for a ‘temperate’ urban experience is the object of urbanism and architecture.’ But ‘once the centre of its own surrounding territory, the mid-size city is more than even part of an urban network in which the opportunities and problems of contemporary urban society are concentrated.’⁹² This network condition in turn is described by the Dutch sociologists Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp as ‘a field’ – their word for what I call ‘a landscape’ in the previous chapter. They state that this field consists of ‘an undifferentiated ‘urban sprawl’: a random collection of a few old urban cores, villages, in the midst of suburban residential areas, shopping centres, airports, brainparks, educational institutions, motorways, hotels, railway and metrolines, nature areas, motorway services, discos, museums, amusement parks, recreation areas, country estates, stadiums, golf courses, distribution centres, ‘leisure’ facilities, multiplex cinemas and so on.’⁹³ Although this field is less ‘cocconed’, less separated in distinct enclaves, as is the case in America, yet it is heavily segregated as well. It even can be called ‘ghet-

88.

The dissatisfaction of suburban everyday life also comes to the fore in what is called the ‘Death of the Mall’, a term that regularly pops up in the media, where it is used to describe the old malls, that cannot compete with the more profound new malls, but also with the changing patterns of shopping, the emergence of digital shopping. See Frederic Jameson, ‘Future City’, in: A. Krista Sykes (eds.), *Constructing a New Agenda, Architectural Theory 1993-2009* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press 2010), 254

89.

Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion*, 233

90.

Ibid., 39

91.

Thomas Sieverts, *Cities without Cities. An Interpretation of the Zwischenstadt* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 7

92.

Michael Dehaene, Klaske Havik, and Bruno Notteboom (eds.), *Medium, OASE #89* (Rotterdam: NAI010 Publishers, 2012), 3

93.

Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of a New Public Domain*, 29

94.

quoted via Scheffer, *Het land van aankomst*, 72. Scheffer refers to the study Maurin, Eric, *Le Ghetto Français, Enquête sur le séparatisme social* (Paris: Editions due Seuil, 2004)

95.

Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age, Economy, Society And Culture* (Malden (Mass.): Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 432

96.

Tracy Metz, *Fun!, Leisure and Landscape* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2002), 96

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97.
cf <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/09/opinion/take-back-the-streets.html> [accessed June 14th, 2012]

98.

Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of a New Public Domain*, 24

99.

cf. Sieverts, *Cities without Cities*, 70; cf. also Arnold Reijndorp, *De 'Rise of the Creative Class' en het einde van 'Organization Man', De veerkracht van de stad* (Rotterdam: Rotterdam-Maaskantprijs, 2012), 13

100.

Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 432

101.

Ibid., 432

102.

Ibid., 433

103.

Ibid., 433; Castells wrote his book initially in 1996 and revised it in 2000. The trend of xenophobia in Europe was slightly visible at that moment specifically in Flanders, France and Austria. Over the years after the publication of this book, however, surely propelled by the terrorist 9/11, Madrid and London events as well as in the Netherlands the murder of Theo van Gogh, the popular rightwing parties has gained position in a lot of European Parliaments, as the Front National in France, Vlaams Belang (earlier Vlaams Blok) in Flanders, the PVV, Partij voor de Vrijheid (of Geert Wilders) in The Netherlands, the Fremkrittspartiet in Norway, the Danske Folksparti in Denmark, the Sverigedemokraterna in Sweden, the Lega Nord in Italy, and the FPÖ/BSÖ in Austria.

104.

Scheffer, *Het land van aankomst*, 74

105.

Also Scheffer refers to these revolts. The unrest specifically came visible in the burning of vehicles, about 1,000 – 1,500 per night. In a regular

toisation', as the French sociologist Eric Maurin concludes in a 2004 study on French cities. His research shows that segregation along the lines of class and race increasingly took place in the past twenty years. He even talks about the simultaneous establishment of ghettos of the upper class and ghettos of the lower class. The elite settles down in the urban core, the middle class moves to the suburban neighbourhoods, attracted by family housing, while the lower class is stuck to the high rise environments of the *banlieu*.⁹⁴

As the sociologist Manuel Castells states in his extensive study to the impact of the rise of networks in society, in Europe (central) cities indeed are still shaped by their history. Particularly in the last decades, the elite has settled down in the well preserved historic area's in the city-centre, 'truly exclusive residential areas [that] tend to appropriate urban culture and history',⁹⁵ which actually today also are appropriated by the global economy of tourism.⁹⁶ These urban cores are used today to attract visitors actively, by the organizing of festivals, exhibitions, and other events, which of course immediately rouses tension between the city's ambitions and the inhabitants of these areas.⁹⁷ Such investments in downtown, as the Hajer and Reijndorp state in their study *In Search of a New Public Domain*, the attempt to save the city centre controversially treats the very urban characteristics of the core and its public spaces itself. Urban planners use strategies of the periphery, specifically homogenization and theming, in order to organize the inner city and make it 'fit to the requirements of wealthy house-hunters and consumers who want a safe, controlled and segregated environment.'⁹⁸ However, despite the dissolution of old social class structures in favour of variable lifestyles, as some sociologists claim,⁹⁹ the European city and periphery is thus still strongly segregated along the lines of social classes. The European suburbs are, in contrast with the American situation, much more the stage of 'socially diversified space; that is, segmented in different peripheries around the central city,' as Castells suggests.¹⁰⁰ As one of these segments he also mentions the ghetto, 'where new immigrant populations and poor working families experience exclusion from their "right to the city"'.¹⁰¹ There are also the traditional working-class neighbourhoods, that nowadays – in times of gentrification – 'becomes the battleground between the redevelopment efforts of business and the upper middle class, and the invasion attempts of countercultures.'¹⁰² Specifically this latter aspect of transformation seems important. These neighbourhoods, Castell writes, 'often become defensive spaces for workers who only have their home to fight for, being at the same time meaningful popular neighbourhoods and likely bastions of xenophobia and localism.'¹⁰³ These demographics somehow tell a story of renewed or increasing segregation, a divide between the haves and the have-nots, the rich and the poor, those with and without opportunities, the white-collar workers (Florida's creative class) and the blue-collar workers. As the Dutch sociologist Paul Scheffer writes in his 2007 extensive study on migration, *Het land van aankomst*, these sharp lines of segregation in cities even can get to a 'culture of poverty', a growing isolation, and the increasing threat of the outburst of frustration in daily trouble or even sudden revolts.¹⁰⁴ This remark on riots of course evokes the urban riots of the sixties in Los Angeles, Detroit and Newark, as well as the Los Angeles riots of 1992, but also to the more recent situation in Europe, the 2005 French revolt in the *banlieus* of major cities as Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, and Bordeaux,¹⁰⁵ as well as the civil unrest in the boroughs of London that from there on spread throughout Great Britain in 2011. Both these civil unrests in Europe are understood as fuelled by the poor and desperate social circumstances of the protesters – although interviews with protesters in the London revolt show that

even 'affluent people' with affordable jobs joined the protesters, even in their looting of shops and setting them on fire. The situation in London was slightly different from the Paris situation, depending on the very location of the *banlieus* in Paris and other French cities quite a distance from the centre, that function much more like a ghetto – 'a permanent crisis,' Dutch architectural historian Wouter Vanstiphout writes, 'lived by millions but neglected by tens of millions.'¹⁰⁶ In London the eruptions were much closer to the urban core in even (very) rich urban neighbourhoods as amongst others protests occurred in Tottenham, Hackney, and Brixton.¹⁰⁷ In response the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman connected the riots with the consumerist society and the culture of consumption. 'This are no hunger or bread riots,' he writes, pointing to the pillaging of luxury shops.¹⁰⁸ These are riots of defective and disqualified consumers.' In other words, in the culture of consumerism has become a means not to fulfil our practical and physical needs, but also has a mental dimension: 'The fullness of consumer enjoyment means fullness of life.'¹⁰⁹ Due to the increasing segregation in society, the gap between knowledge workers and blue-collar workers, between the centre and some suburbs, the haves and the have-nots, the last ones literally feel like 'defective consumers'. The riots are the outburst of dissatisfaction about being disclosed from contemporary 'normality', he states. In other words, Bauman sees in the plundering of shops the have-nots taking what they wanted, not simply since they cannot afford these luxury goods, but they feel excluded from these goods. Others, like the sociologist Richard Sennett, approve the view of Bauman that the riots have to be seen as outburst of have-nots.¹¹⁰ Processes of gentrification, fuelled by often ambitious intervention in local structures, have dispersed to deliver a feeling of exclusion. But this is not just a tension between haves and have-nots, a classic tension between classes, the rich and the poor, it is also a tension between the global and the local. According to Manuel Castells this precisely was the critical factor in urban processes. He writes on the European city, although it is also the case elsewhere, 'urban space is increasingly differentiated in social terms, while being functionally interrelated beyond physical contiguity.'¹¹¹ The biggest challenge of the European city is the balancing of the global economic functions of cities with the local and cultural roots of urban society.¹¹² But that is what actually happens today: the accumulation of capital in the urban centres, which fuels the gap between surrounding neighbourhoods. It is symbolized by huge investments in the urban cores, in new office towers and apartment buildings (today even from foreign countries like Russia, Saudi Arabia, China) and a seemingly lack of investments in poorer areas – despite good endeavours behind regeneration processes in the latter neighbourhoods (and thus of investments), they sometimes even fuel the dissatisfaction amongst the inhabitants.¹¹³ Seen from this perspective, the European city is not so much distinct from the American or the Asian examples, where huge investments in the city centre and far less investments in other areas fuel the increasing gap between the upper class and the lower class. Here again symbolized by the exorbitant-expensive apartment towers and penthouses that are being built, often acquired by 'foreign' capital. This process, however, also means that the middle class thrives out of the urban areas: the lower classes don't have any other options, the upper class only can afford the urban cores, for the middle class it is hard to find a place in the city, and thus they are expelled to other places.¹¹⁴

situation, the architectural historian Wouter Vanstiphout mentions in his reflections on the Paris and London unrest, about 163 vehicles are set on fire – 'what is normality to a French banlieu?' he questions rhetorically. And answers: normality is the police even dares to stand still and is eager to leave the banlieus before dusk. Vanstiphout, 'Back to Normal', published in *Building Design*, <http://www.bdonline.co.uk/news/analysis/back-to-normal/?5023012>.article [accessed April 23, 2013]

106.

Ibid.

107.

See the blog of the British urban and architectural critic Owen Hatherly, 'Something has snapped, and it has been a long time coming' published on the website of Verso Books, August 12, 2011: <http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/660-something-has-snapped-and-it-has-been-a-long-time-coming> [Accessed April 23rd, 2013]

108.

Bauman, 'The London Riots, On Consumerism coming Home to Roost.' Published 9/11/2011 on *Social Europ Journal*. <http://www.social-europe.eu/2011/08/the-london-riots-on-consumerism-coming-home-to-roost/> [accessed April 23rd, 2013]

109.

Ibid.

110.

quoted on the website of the Architects Journal: <http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/riots-sennett-rykwert-till-de-botton-and-tavernor-on-why-britain-is-burning/8618373>.article [accessed April 23rd, 2013]

111.

Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 433

112.

Scheffer, *Het land van aankomst*, 94

113.

Vanstiphout, 'Back to Normal' [accessed April 23rd, 2013]

114.

Florida, *The New Urban Crisis*, 155-166

115.

An intriguing example is the Library building of the University of California in San Diego, of which is said that it is designed and constructed to prevent riots. See Tom Vanderbilt, *Survival City: Adventures among the Ruins of Atomic America* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 107)

116.

As the sociologist David Harvey wrote in 1989, such riots – he actually reflects upon the French revolt in Paris after the loss of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870-1871 – are part of ‘an all too familiar and dismal story of the ghettoization and segregation of a city, in this instance almost entirely according to class interests and sentiments.’ These Paris’ uprisings actually created room for a range of political decrees that were incorporated in the ‘complex politics of the Paris Commune of 1871’, but that moreover challenged the distinct classes in society. ‘As the dance halls and cabarets became the loci of public meetings on political topics after the liberalization of empire in 1868, and as political meetings proliferated throughout working class Paris, so bourgeois hegemony over the right to the rest of the city was challenged. Seeping outward from their own symbiotic fashioning of public, commercial, and private spaces, popular forces more and more asserted a public and collective presence on the boulevards of bourgeois Paris. The image of hordes of workers descending from the working class district of Belleville and pouring out onto the public spaces of the city, even, on one occasion in 1869 getting as far as the new Opera House, struck political fear into the bourgeoisie. The boulevards became spaces of political expression, albeit ephemerally, for those whom they were supposed to exclude or control’; Harvey, ‘The Political Economy of Public Space’, 23

117.

Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear, Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 363

118.

The American Urban theorist Allan Jacobs visiting Rotterdam participate on a seminar about the design and use of public space, asked on a certain moment: ‘Are you allowed to demonstrate here? No? Than it is not public!’ Quote via Matthijs De Boer, *Binnen in de stad, Ontwerp en gebruik van publieke interieurs* (Amsterdam: Trancity*Valiz, 2012), 25

119

Michael Sorkin, ‘Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park’, in: Michael Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park, The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), XV;

3.2.2 *The Power of Visibility and Tangibility*

Riots are threatening, of course: the images of yelling youth, burnings cars, looted shops, and so on, rouse fear. An imminent sphere enters the streets and squares, as well as the newspapers, the journals, and the social media during riots. In turn public authorities do aim to intervene, in order to safeguards space, properties, and citizens – often by taking far-reaching decrees, like rough policing of the area, prohibition of gatherings, a curfew, and preventative arrests. Sometimes even architectural design anticipates the possibility of riots, by turning buildings into bunkers and public spaces in a ‘vandal-proof’ environment.¹¹⁵ The possibility of riots in public space is therefore also a threatened image itself: this possibility should be excluded, or at least anticipated. Not only at the very moment and in the very place of the event, but moreover also on the forehand (and afterwards) and elsewhere, by regulations, planning, and specific designs.¹¹⁶ As Mike Davis shows in his book *The Ecology of Fear*, the increase of segregation and demarcation in the contemporary urbanised landscape was highly propelled by the Los Angeles riots of 1992.¹¹⁷ It is not simply the added laws that treat public space, it is moreover threatened by forms of design, by patterns of mobility and neglect. Although threatening, some theorists see riots as an inherent and emblematic possibility of all truly public spaces.¹¹⁸ Public space than is presented as the very room of revolt, revolution, and change.

Riots of course are excessive in the range of distinct protests. The New York based architect Michael Sorkin in his introduction to *Variations on a Theme Park* takes the slightly less violent but even more political term ‘demonstrations’ as the ultimate characteristic of ‘truly public spaces’. Main street in *Disney World*, he states, can’t be seen as a public space, since demonstrations are prohibited. ‘The theme park presents [a] happy regulated vision of pleasure – all those artfully hoodwinking forms – as a substitute for the democratic public realm. ... In the “public” spaces of the theme park or the shopping mall, speech itself is restricted: there are no demonstrations in Disneyland.’¹¹⁹

Such a ‘criterion’ for ‘real’ public space obviously cannot be the sole perspective to judge public space, as similarly also the political perspective of democracy – or more generally stated: the political perspective – cannot be reduced to the right to gather, assemble and protest. The democratic right to protest is a limited part of a broader political structure – but it is a crucial part, surely. Two remarks have to be made here at least. It is during ‘urban disturbances’ that the ideas and image of public and private are challenged, as we have seen in the paragraphs above. From this perspective a reflection of Margaret Crawford on the 1992 riots in Los Angeles is intriguing: ‘During the riots spaces formerly devoted to the automobile – streets, parking lots, flea markets, and strip malls – were temporarily transformed into sites of protest and rage, into new zones of public expression. The riots underlined the potent ability of everyday spaces to become, however briefly, places where lived experience and political expression come together.’¹²⁰ In other words, spaces are never by definition or forever public or private, nor do they guarantee the ‘experience of public domain’, in the words of Hajer and Reijndorp, the experience of exchange and challenge.¹²¹ Public and private spaces are continuously questioned and challenged, are turned into other spaces, appropriated and occupied. As Crawford continues to reflect:

‘This realm of public life lies outside the domain of electoral politics or professional design, representing a bottom-up rather than top-down restructuring of urban space. Unlike the normative public spaces, which produce the existing ideology, these spaces help to overturn the status quo. In different areas of the

city, many generic spaces have become specific and serve as public arenas where debates and struggles over economic participation, democracy, and the public assertion of identity take place. Without claiming to represent the totality of public space, these multiple, temporary, and simultaneous activities construct and reveal an alternative logic of public space.¹²²

It is, in other words, and that is the second aspect we need to address, important to note that the challenge of the public is not only limited to the formal spaces, but even stronger (but less visible, and often overlooked) is connected to everyday spaces as well, although protests are more evident in 'symbolic' spaces like Washington Mall or Times Square. Speaking of symbolic spaces, the spatial structure of democracy is essentially widely ramified. There is a diverse inventory of public spaces, spaces that can be distinguished by character, size, purpose, appearance, location, history, and so on. Some of these spaces play a crucial role in the local setting of people's life and are, somehow, much more influential for their everyday lives and the life of the community than the big and famous public spaces that, indeed, are the locus of demonstrations and riots. Therefore, before judging the very 'publicness' of public space generally along the lines of the right to protest, one needs to ask what kind of demonstration would one organize at a certain spot – say (to follow Sorkin) on Main Street Disneyland?¹²³ One can imagine a protest of employees on the firm's wages, structures, services, and so on – and of course, *Disney* would immediately try to stop these protest: they after all disturb the image of perfection that carefully is constructed within the park. Probably also a single figure will put up a sign at Main Street, in order to complain about the firm's vision and approach of business, sustainability, or to protests against consumerism, or to get attention for other social questions. For such questions, Main Street Disneyland is *symbolically* attractive, although we might expect such protests take place in front of the main entrance, rather than behind the entrance of the theme park. But for larger demonstrations, demonstrations that addresses issues beyond *Disneyland*, Main Street indeed is not the place where it will get room, as it also certainly is not the obvious location of assembly. Local questions will be fought out in front of town halls. Spaces in front of embassies will be used in order to show dismissal of the foreign country's politics. At the doorstep of an office tower, often the headquarters of a company, one will gather in order to put specific businesses in question. The streets near the UN Headquarters, specifically during a general assembly, will give room to protests that aims to gain attention to Human Rights generally, to poverty, or crimes against humanity. Ground Zero still is the locus for protestors that call for 'truth' about 9/11.

Clearly the right to protest, to criticize, even somehow to revolt, belongs at the heart of the democratic political system, as most political theorists would state. Although the right to protest first is a matter of voting, participating in a discussion at the town hall, writing letters to governors, or publishing an opinion forming an article in a newspaper, it is also of utmost importance that these democratic rights need room in physical space as well, not just in the periphery but in the very centre of a community. Only by becoming tangible in public space, protest movements get attention and gain power.¹²⁴ It is therefore that these rights to protest and demonstrate are actively allowed in spaces in the heart of the political arenas or other spaces that play a symbolical role in (the history of) a community: Washington Mall, Paris' Place de la Bastille, and London's HydePark.¹²⁵

This of course also is beyond Diane Ghirardo's description of Main Street USA in Disney's theme parks, which actually can be seen as a template for other artefacts of consumerist spaces: 'Main Street lacks industry, poverty, and, most of all, political life. It does have private police and laws, however unobtrusively they are inserted. As private terrain, the Disney Corporation can and does forbid political activity, just as it enforces a dress and comportment code on its employees, for whom disobedience means dismissal.' Diane Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2006), 48

120.
Crawford, 'Everyday Urbanism', 151

121.
Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of a New Public Domain*, 11

122.
Crawford, 'Everyday Urbanism', 151

123.
To start with, there of course is a thin line between the riots and demonstrations. Later in this Chapter I briefly will discuss the occupy movement, the protests of the Arab Spring, and all the protests that have been shown to the world after that, from the Ukraine to Hong Kong. Hannah Arendt has written quite a lot on protests, specifically in her book *On Revolution*. According to her, a revolution 'spells the end of an old political order and brings about the birth of an entirely new one'. Therefore Arendt values the American Revolution above the French one – that latter did change the figures on the stage, but not the stage itself. It is not my goal to investigate the contemporary revolutionary movements. Let me only add this distinction that Arendt makes an stages of revolution. It starts with a first transitory phase driven by people's desire for liberation from oppression, the second stage aims for the formation of a new body politic. See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 26, 29-33, 35-36, 141-150

124.
Hannah Arendt offers this definition on power: power is what people gain together and only can possess together with others. Arendt distinguishes power from strength, force and violence, which are in the hands of the single man. Power is held together in a web of human interaction and is based upon a shared world. Power only is sustained through interaction with other people. (Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 200-203) Power is therefore superior to strength and force. The consequences of power cannot be undone. 'Popular revolt against materially strong leaders ... may engender an almost irresistible power even if it

foregoes the use of violence in the face of materially vastly superior forces. To call this "passive resistance" is certainly an ironic idea; it is one of the most active and efficient ways of action ever devised, because it cannot be encountered by fighting, where there may be defeat or victory, but only by mass slaughter in which even the victor is defeated, cheated of his prize, since nobody can roll over dead men.' (Arendt, *Human Condition*, 201) The continuation of power depends upon those spaces of interaction. Political relevance of public space as the 'space of appearance', where people appear to each other and interact.

125.

As the American architect Liz Diller tells during a TED-presentation on their proposal to construct an extension to one of the adjoining museums to the Mall. The Mall is 'the most revered space in America,' she tells her public. 'The Mall is a symbol of American democracy. And what fantastic is, that this symbol is not a thing, it is not an image, it is not an artefact, it actually is a space, and it is just defined by a line of buildings on either side. It is a space where citizens can voice their discontent and show their power. It is a place where pivotal moments in American history have taken place. And they're inscribed in there forever. Like the march on Washington for Jobs and freedom and the great speech that Martin Luther King gave there. The Vietnam protests, the commemoration of all that died in the pandemic of aids; the march on women with productive rights, right up until almost the present. The mall is the greatest civic stage in this country for descent, and it is synonymous with free speech, even if you are not sure about what you have to say. It is a place for civic consideration. Liz Diller, 'A Giant Bubble for Debate'; lecture at the designs studio TED2012, http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/liz_diller_a_giant_bubble_for_debate.html [seen June 1st, 2012]

126.

John R. Parkinson, *Democracy & Public Space, The Physical Sites of Democratic Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 148

127.

Karen A. Franck and Te-Sheng Huang, 'Occupying Public Space, 2011, From Tahir Square to Zuccotti Park', in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zuccotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA): New Village Press, 2012), 5,6

128.

Parkinson, *Democracy & Public Space*, 148

129.

Franck and Huang, 'Occupying Public Space', 4,5

The year 2011 made very clear that even if not allowed – in societies that are not democratic at all – inhabitants understand the importance of physical tangibility by intuition, as do the authorities. Even by risking their life by appearing in public, they take over and occupy symbolic spaces in order to protest: from Tahrir Square in Cairo to Pearl Square in Bahrain, to mention two of the recent places that has become known worldwide because of the 'Arab Spring' demonstrations – stages for recent political *revolutions*. The governments often did everything needed to diminish these demonstrations, and empty the spaces. However, these squares or parks of course indeed are the stage for demonstrations not by chance, but because of their symbolical character in a community, largely because of their role in the political realm or because of the facing symbols of the nation and authority.¹²⁶ Although Tahrir Square is much more an infrastructural artefact than a square or plaza, it nevertheless has already been the stage for political protests numerous times: 1919, against the British rule as well as in 1946 and 1951; 1977 against rising food prices; 2001 in sympathy with the Palestinian Intifada; in the same year against the U.S. invasion in Iraq; 2006 as a response to the Israel attack of Lebanon.¹²⁷ In 2011 no less than three hundred thousand demonstrators appropriated the square, that thus regularly is a huge traffic circle and a transit hub for metros, busses and cars in the heart of the city – 'the traffic helps define these squares as the hub around which the nation revolves'¹²⁸ –, surrounded by both vacant lots or construction sites, as well as some of the most significant buildings of the city: the headquarters of the Arab League, Mubarak's National Democratic Party, The Hilton Hotel, the Omar Makram Mosque, and the Egyptian Museum around the corner.¹²⁹ Somehow opposed to the French and British riots, the Arab spring protests had clear political aim: regime-change. The protesters actually had to protect themselves from the pro-Mubarak forces. The public authorities intervened hard in the protests, even sending the army to knock down the protesters. In order to participate in the protest, courage was needed, since it actually meant taking significant risk of injury, of being arrested and brought to jail, even risking death. In Bahrein the public authorities allowed the protests after first a bloody knock down for almost a month. However, after being bulldozed by the Defence forces and military forces, the authorities immediately redesigned and reconstructed the huge roundabout that was the stage of the protests, even flooring the iconic Pearl monument that was a remembrance to the first meeting of the Gulf Corporations Council in Bahrein. In the new design of the area, any space that was free of cars was eliminated; even the square's name was replaced by Al Farooq Junction.¹³⁰ The authorities, in other words, were eager to wipe out the recent narratives that tell the story of a square celebrating an authoritarian symbol into the very locus of a people's movement.

In other words, demonstrations have a locus: they need 'symbolic' spaces that are related to the aim of the protests, as well as bound to temporalities: happenings, meetings, assemblies, events – occurrences against which is protested or whose attention it would attract and support it would gain. These spaces are physical spaces, without exceptions. Protests, demonstrations, and other gatherings need physical space. It can be organized from the kitchen table through social media, the protesters themselves nevertheless need to go outside, gather in a central point – most often near the actual buildings of a government – to get visibility and tangibility, to get attention and gain power.¹³¹ [IMAGE 3.7, 3.8, 3.9] In that sense public space that allows protests and demonstrations indeed are vital to democratic societies, we need to admit to Sorkin *et all*. But, added to that perspective, we should also acknowledge that political action is so much more than protests and demonstrations alone. Protests and demonstrations as

the ultimate aim (of public space) is limiting the scope to the very monumental and rhetorical appearances of action. Although those in power can intervene in demonstrations, everyday actions (or action in everyday situations, between a couple of people) are less susceptible to control.¹³²

Less explicitly this locus of a nation or community also reflects national tradition and/or aspiration, at least recognition by the people, since they embody local or national heritage and today's pride. The buildings of parliaments evidently share highly symbolic meaning. As the British architectural critic Deyan Sudjic tells in his book *Architecture and Democracy*, the storming of the Reichstag on May 2nd 1945 was deemed so important it was re-enacted for Soviet cameras days later.¹³³ This symbolic aspect of architecture refers to another architectural and physical expression of political systems, democracy not excluded: the formal monuments of the past besides the concrete buildings of the government. Particular constructions and statues are erected in order to celebrate existing (political) structures or remember a (shared) history, event, situation that are important in the history of a community. Often these spaces – specifically squares that have played a role in the history of a country, like the Tahir Square in Cairo, the Taksim square in Istanbul, or the Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kiev, to mention a few that in very recent history have provided space for long protests against the government, are the locus of demonstrations as well as, as said, parliament buildings. Again, these edifices and spaces often use monumental or otherwise outspoken architecture in order to deliver this experience of the common history and future. Take for instance this description of the architectural critic of *Vanity Fair* Paul Goldberger on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the Mall in Washington DC, designed by Maya Lin: 'At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial,' Goldberger writes, 'monumentality creates a true public realm, public not only in the sense of ownership but also in that of intellectual and emotional connection. The memorial is public, people feel, because it is about them, and its physical form touches their souls. This memorial has the power to move people of startlingly different backgrounds and political views, and it performs this difficult task of making common experience when society seems infinitely fragmented. This work of architecture provides common ground.'¹³⁴ The capacity of this architectural figure surely depends upon its form and materiality, upon the inscriptions of names in the wall that can be touched by fingers, as well as by the slow descending path along the wall – spatial and bodily experiences bound together in a monumental though modest form. Nevertheless, what helps to set this feeling of 'common ground' of course is the specific history that is remembered through the monument. Even non-native Americans feel the sacredness of such a monument, such a place of remembrance – the amount of names shown makes impressively visible the loss of the country and is even able to rouse feelings of sadness. However, this 'common experience' of course is not limited to these tragic events of the past. Political regimes now and then have used and do use architecture and edifices to deliver a kind of commonness amongst their inhabitants (often probably better stated as: impress the citizens). Lots of these buildings and constructions today are destinations of world travelers and tourists surely because of their particular *grandeur*, which earlier was a privilege of the elite – *Vedi Napoli e poi muori!* To see Naples and die! It is like the German writer and poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe writes in his *Italian Journey*, his diary of his journey along the Italian highlights of art and architecture, on the amphitheater of Verona: 'Well, the amphitheater is the first important monument from antiquity that I examine, and so well preserved! ... But only in the earliest time the amphitheater fulfilled its full effect, since the nation was a people, more

130.
Ibid., 4-5

131.
cf. Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas, The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2017). Tufekci offers an intriguing reflection, also on the not-succeeding of lots of Arab-Spring-protests. Today protests can be organized more easily through social media, but that the structure and tactics of the protest-movement thereafter has been weakened over time.

132.
cf. George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Penguin Books, 1950)

133.
Deyan Sudjic and Helen Jones, *Architecture and Democracy* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2001), 9

134.
Paul Goldberger, *Why Architecture Matters* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2009), 19

135.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *De Italiaanse reis* (Amsterdam Uitgeverij Boom, 2005), 37 [translation, HT]

136.

cf. Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, and Jeremy Till, Jeremy, *Spatial Agency, Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2011), 31

137.

Paul Zucker differentiates different types of public space, one if it is the 'dominated square', the square that offers room for and direction to a particular monument or public building. Paul Zucker, *Town and Square* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959)

than today. Such amphitheater after all aims to impose the people by themselves, as well as to entertain them.¹³⁵ This example of course emphasizes the role of architecture in order to embed, celebrate and encourage structures of power. However, to a certain point this example also shows the architectural capacity to act upon or against existing structures and to affect not only the daily users but also the public in general (and as an entity in itself).¹³⁶ This capacity to affect the public, in this example specifically through imposing people by monumental structures, always has been understood as an important feature of architecture by very different structures of power in society. Palaces represent the royal power, churches the clerical power, parliaments the political power, arches the military power, and so on. Architecture has been used regularly to represent power relations, moreover, to communicate the power structures as well as affect, not to say impose, a people. Close reading of these buildings and monuments that represent the power in their immediate surroundings does show that of course it is not only the construction solely that has the ability to provide in majesty, monumental or grandeur, it depends upon specific ensembles of building or groups of buildings and the surrounding public space: parks, squares, boulevards, promenades, axes, and streets 'act' together, only revolving in certain climaxes of buildings and monuments. Intricate relationships between the building and the public space support the tale of power: the balcony on which those in power can emerge hovering above the heads of the people, the space of the square where military parades can be at display to the rulers, spectators, and the world. Often these public spaces and surrounding buildings are directed to the single construction, or to put it differently in the words of the German-born architect Paul Zucker, are dominated by the specific public building or monument.¹³⁷ These constructions thus are not only representations of (political) power; they are power structures themselves as well. They 'direct' and 'dominate' space, attract attention and diminish the surroundings to its background or subject – and the viewer to a subject. Within democracies one of course can question the role of such spatial ensembles. Are these structures-of-power and power-structures solely suppliers of suppressing (political) structures (in contemporary capitalist society they might represent the actual power of the economy), or do they contribute to the experience of the public sphere? In this respect we might understand such 'societal' edifices of celebration and remembering as pivotal constructions between the necessary formal buildings and spaces of a democracy – the parliament, governmental buildings, and so on – and the physical public spaces like the square and the street.

3.2.3 *The Democratic Ideal and Public Space*

Although every society thus has 'fixed' symbolic spaces that are rooted in the heart of its political history, we also can state that every space potentially can turn into a symbolic space, once, depending on the occurrences in space. Nevertheless, in the range of public spaces, these symbolic spaces are only the top of the pyramid – and moreover, rare and distinct. This spectrum of formal public spaces on the one hand and everyday public spaces on the other is to be seen as a continuum. The importance of such a continuum is evident: in a democracy the ramification of public and political space is essential. They need to be intertwined. Opposite to autocratic and surely totalitarian regimes, where cohesion is delivered by the single ruler, through a party, through shared convictions or by kinship, in the democratic organization of society the different groups need to work together and establish together a community that not only is workable or livable, but is also of a

shared value and experience. As Aristotle writes in his *Politics*: ‘A city is composed of different kinds of men; similar people cannot bring a city into existence.’¹³⁸ More important thus is what happens at the bottom: the everyday spaces of streets, squares, parks, that gives room to a local public realm – everyday unexpected and unplanned meetings. The debates in the formal spaces – between formal representatives, formally organized as well – are senseless when not fed through actual and coincidental meetings and discussions amongst citizens in everyday public space, both virtual and real. As the sociologists Hajer and Reijndorp in their *In Search of a New Public Domain* understand urban space as symbolic space as well, ‘as a space where a battle of meanings is fought out.’¹³⁹ This surely also counts vice-versa: the debates amongst citizens, the formation of ‘public opinion’, finally need to be stretched towards the formal spaces and debates in order to get ‘decision-making-impact.’ Better said: the informal discussions that are hosted in public space are counterforce to the two dominating powers in today’s society: the market and the government. This of course urges the importance of the informal debates to become tangible, visible in public space, in order to affect opinion.

Although the formal political space of the parliament in democracies somehow formalizes the differences, it is in the everyday spaces that the diversity is experienced (or, as I will argue in Chapter 5 based upon a reading of Hannah Arendt’s reflection upon public space, should be experienced). We thus might conclude that if architecture has the capacity to affect people, as we touched upon before, it does not have to be the power in charge. It very well can evoke the experience of common-ness and other-ness at once, the experience, of a shared world, hopefully at least evoking awareness of one another, of other bodies in space.

This might be described as the democratic ideal beyond public space. This ideal, however, is not only continuously challenged in reality, it also needs to be approached carefully. I will discuss this ideal extensively in Chapter 5, at this point it is good to once again look more closely at some examples of protests in public spaces, as they are the ultimate democratic challenge. Again 2011 is a remarkable example, in this respect. That very year seemed to be a revolutionary year, with not only the Arab Spring movements in, amongst other countries, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, and Tunisia, but the happenings on Tahir Square also evoked the assembly of people in the Western world, specifically in New York, as well as in Brazil, what became known as the Occupy-movement, and that from New York onwards spread all over the world to distinct cities and villages, a protest against existing economic and political structures.¹⁴⁰ ‘We are the 99%’, the protesters put forward, accusing the leaders of the banking and financial sector, as well as their financiers, the participants in the stock markets, of greed – at the cost of the regular property-owner, the employee, the average citizen and specifically the poor. It is at the heart of the financial crisis, September 17th, 2011, that a group of protesters occupy Zuccotti Park in Lower Manhattan, erecting a camp in order to demonstrate and launch marches to, amongst other destinations, Wall Street, City Hall Park, and Times Square. The square is a privately owned space, the result of ‘a specific permission from the New York City Planning Department to add additional floors to the building beyond the existing height restriction’ by also constructing a public accessible space in front, bordered by Broadway, Trinity Place, Liberty Street, and Cedar Street, on a stone’s throw distance from Wall Street.¹⁴¹ The space was not specifically symbolic, probably chosen because of the nearness of all these destinations, although the awareness of these kind of privately owned public spaces

138.

Quote via Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone, The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994), 56

139.

Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain, Analyse and Strategy* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2001), 13

140.

Anne Norton, ‘Occupy Wall Street and the Liberal Democracy’, in: *HA, The Journal of the Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities at Bard College*, no 2, (Annandale-on-Hudson (NY), 2014), 32

141.

Franck and Huang, ‘Occupying Public Space’, 8

142.

See: http://www.spur.org/publications/library/report/secretsofsanfrancisco_010109 [accessed April 29th, 2013] and also <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/neighborhoods/2012/12/how-make-privately-owned-public-spaces-truly-open-public/4168/> [accessed December 18th, 2012]

143.

<http://apops.mas.org> [accessed April 29th, 2013]

144.

Kalden, Jerold S., 'Meet Me at the Plaza', published in the New York edition of *The New York Times* October 20, 2011. See: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/20/opinion/zuccotti-park-and-the-private-plaza-problem.html?_r=3& [accessed April 29th, 2013]

145.

Michael Kimmelman, 'Foreword', in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zuccotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA): New Village Press, 2012), xv

146.

Kalden, Jerold S., 'Meet Me at the Plaza', published in the New York edition of *The New York Times* October 20, 2011. See: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/20/opinion/zuccotti-park-and-the-private-plaza-problem.html?_r=3& [accessed April 29th, 2013]

147.

Kimmelman, 'Foreword', xv

148.

Martin, Reinhold, 'Occupy: The Day After', in: *Places*, December 08, 2011. <http://places.designobserver.com/feature/occupy-the-day-after/31698/> [accessed April 29th, 2013; emphasis in original]

149.

Martin, Reinhold, 'Occupy: The Day After', in: *Places*, December 08, 2011. <http://places.designobserver.com/feature/occupy-the-day-after/31698/> [accessed April 29th, 2013]

has raised attention in the years before the occupy movement. In San Francisco, for instance, SPUR (San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association, an institution already originated from 1912 onwards, first aiming to improve the housing quality, later the 'urban quality', drew a map of these privately owned spaces, accompanied by an app that can be downloaded on smartphones that offers routes, descriptions and public rights to these POPOS, as they called it: Privately Owned Public Open Spaces.¹⁴² Also in New York such a map is offered by the 'Advocates for Privately Owned Public Spaces' (APOPS) – in New York 'slang' these spaces are called POPS.¹⁴³ In an article in the *New York Times* in the heydays of the occupy-movement the Harvard professor of Urban Design Jerold S. Kalden, the founding president of the mentioned 'advocates', writes that over the years since 1961 more than 500 of these POPS have been established (offering the developers to construct about 20 million square feet extra residential and office floor space). Generally speaking, the quality of these spaces, he states, are however abominable, over 40% is 'actually useless, with austere designs, no amenities and little or no direct sunlight. Roughly half of the buildings surveyed [in a survey he had executed in 2000, HT] had spaces that were illegally closed or otherwise privatized.'¹⁴⁴ The *New York Times* critic Michael Kimmelman adds that most of these POPS are 'token gestures by developers in turn for erecting bigger, taller buildings. Think of the atrium of the I.B.M. tower on Madison Avenue and countless other places like it: "public" spaces that are not really public at all but quasi-public, policed by their landlords, who find a million excuses to limit their accessibility.'¹⁴⁵ Zuccottini Park actually is amongst the better examples of POPS, he states. The owner installed trees, lightening, benches, and even art in the past decade – as well as renamed the place (from Liberty place) after one of its co-chairman. According to Kalden the occupy movement showed the inadequacy of rules regarding these spaces. 'Other than the requirement that this space remains open 24 hours a day,' he writes, 'the owners were left to promulgate their own rules; the only limit is that they be "reasonable."¹⁴⁶ Already during the protests the *Real Estate Board of New York* asked the city to endorse rules in order to prevent the privately owned spaces in the future for such protest encampments again. Kimmelman in turn: 'Zuccotti as an exception, revealed just how far we have allowed the ancient civic ideal of public space to drift from an arena of public expression and public assembly (Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park, say) to a commercial sop (the foyer of Time Warner Centre). City officials are forever closing streets and parks for celebratory events – parades and street fairs – but try getting a park or street closed for a political protest.'¹⁴⁷

What makes public space public, the architect and Associate Professor of Architecture at Columbia University Reinhold Martin writes in an article reflecting on the occupy-movement after police officers had removed the occupiers on November 15th, is not that it is 'universally available and accessible' to all, but 'is the very fact that' these features are 'contested' continuously, not only in these POPS, but also in legal public spaces. Martin suggests in his article that one thing is left to activists, that is: 'continue to reclaim spaces and artefacts, such as foreclosed houses, on behalf of the common interest harbored in the term *public*.'¹⁴⁸ Although economical and governmental structures, public and private partnerships seem to construct 'closed circles of capital accumulation', he suggests that 'these circles are never complete, and the spaces they enclose are full of holes.' These 'holes' enable occupation 'by bodies and practices at odds with the hegemonic world system.'¹⁴⁹

Through the success of the 'occupy Wall Street movement', that got a response in cities all over the world, occupying squares and parks, it becomes utmost clear

how important the visibility is of such demonstrations and occupations. The occupation of a *physical* site increases the tangibility of the protests, as well as simultaneously creates room for the crucial exchange of ideas beyond the attempts and discussions on the future and the past of the movement, and other attempts that help to understand, declare, and disseminate the message, amongst participants.¹⁵⁰ Only what appears in public gets tangibility, visibility, gains presence and ultimately exists.¹⁵¹ Specifically in a global world, the very visible struggles, revolts, demonstrations are inherent, not to say a necessary. ‘Street struggles and demonstrations are part of our global modernity. The uprisings in the Arab world, the daily neighbourhood protests in China’s major cities, Latin America’s *piqueteros*, and poor people demonstrating with pots and pans – all are vehicles for making social and political claims.’¹⁵² Again: only what becomes visible and tangible – in the real world, in public space – gains recognition and response, and by that increases in power, requires responses.

Somehow that is also pertinent in the quote of Michael Sorkin I cited above: ‘The theme park presents [a] happy regulated vision of pleasure – all those artfully hoodwinking forms – as a substitute for the democratic public realm. ... In the “public” spaces of the theme park or the shopping mall, speech itself is restricted: there are no demonstrations in Disneyland.’¹⁵³ Sorkin links here public space, public realm, and the possibility of demonstrations – and there is reason to, as we have seen. He actually adds as a conclusion to a sentence that rouses interest at this very moment: ‘The effort to reclaim the city is the struggle of democracy itself.’¹⁵⁴ Public spaces, public realm, demonstrations, the city and the political democracy somehow are intertwined, according to Sorkin – and by losing the city (into a landscape of enclaves, or through segregation), means losing a solid basis for democracy. Democracy somehow is characterized by a continuous effort to ‘reclaim’ the city.

That very idea also comes to the fore in the 2011 revolutionary spirit that occurred in public space as well. In another article on the occupy movement the Associate Professor of Landscape Design of the University of Washington Jeffrey Hou goes one step further than the idea that physical public spaces helps to creates a ‘space of appearance’ (a term often frequented by Hannah Arendt, as we will see) by adding that the actual occupation of the space not only was taken or reclaimed but was also immediately transformed into ‘sites of action, meaning and possibility’.¹⁵⁵ That means that the occupation not only suggests the capacity to act, but also the agency to transform and modify structures of the city and society, specifically the capacity to ‘mobilize ... the very notion of the “public” in public space,’¹⁵⁶ which enables a different story on the future of public space. Despite the pessimistic aim in the past decades about the loss of public space, the different movements around the world in 2011 and thereafter seem to suggest a new narrative – a narrative of local involvement and participation, a grass-root struggle on the reclaim of both space and public.¹⁵⁷ That does not mean, according to Hou, that it is simultaneously also a movement of increase of privatization of public space that can be seen in North American cities, as is the response mentioned above by the Real Estate Bond of New York making clear, which is evidence, Hou writes, of ‘a political and institutional crisis – the privatization of our democracy through unequal taxation, institutional loopholes and the overpowering influence of multinational corporations.’ This however cannot be addressed or even corrected by simply adding ‘more public spaces’ or even by turning the existing ones into ‘more inclusive and accessible’ spaces. It moreover needs ‘the attention and intervention of a much more active and engaged public, a

150. Franck and Huang, ‘Occupying Public Space’, 16

151. This is one of the major points Arendt stresses, which I will discuss in Chapter 5. For now, a pressing example of this ‘existence’ the case of the squatting of an abandoned church in Amsterdam in the winter of 2012-2013 by a group of protesters in order to house a group of asylum-seekers that in other ways would need to live on the streets. Because of their actual status no shelter was offered for them. The church not only was a more humane form of housing this group of refugees, it also increased the tangibility and visibility of the group, draws attention to their problem and the troubles there are within the Dutch system of migration and immigration to the public at large, the political parties, and the media, as well as giving strength to the group itself as a whole by sharing pasts, troubles, anxieties, and hope, help, strategies. The group protested with the slogan: ‘we are here’, which shows awareness of the problem of invisibility and intangibility to society at large in other cases. See <http://www.devluhtkerk.nl>

152. Sakia Sassen, ‘To Occupy’, in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA): New Village Press, 2012), 68

153. Michael Sorkin, ‘Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park’, in: Michael Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park, The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), XV

154. *Ibid.*, XV

155. Jeffrey Hou, ‘Making Public, Beyond Public Space’, in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA): New Village Press, 2012), 91; Roughly the same article, with a slightly different title, ‘Beyond Zucotti Park: Making the Public’, was also posted September 24, 2012 at *Places*: <http://places.designobserver.com/feature/beyond-zucotti-park-making-the-public/35658/> [accessed April 29th, 2013]

156. *Ibid.*, 91

157. *Ibid.*, 93-94

158.
Ibid., 97

159.
The very appearance and tangibility of this public involvement has distinct faces, as is shown in an inspiring collection of photographs shown at the website *Places*: <http://places.designobserver.com/feature/detroit-syncopating-an-urban-landscape/14288/> [accessed April 29th, 2013]

160.
See for instance, amongst others: <http://greeningofdetroit.com>, <http://detroitagriculture.net>, <http://www.miufi.org>, and <http://www.cskdetroit.org> [accessed April 29th, 2013]

161.
<http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/12/10/vast-land-deal-divides-detroit/> [accessed April 29th, 2013]

162.
Florida, Richard, 'Detroit Shows Way to Beat Inner City Blues', in: *Financial Times*, April 9, 2013. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/7c1692b6-9c71-11e2-ba3e-00144feabdco.html#axzz2RslZiMQe> [accessed April 29th, 2013]

163.
Sorkin, 'Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park', XV

164.
Ibid., XV

public willing and capable of speaking up and mobilizing politically to change the system.¹⁵⁸ This revolutionary spirit sometimes is roused by an event, festival or happening.

Recently in the city of Detroit this ability to involve a crowd in a grass-root movement has shown its extraordinary power of change. The active involvement of residents, architects, artists and activists in the shrinking city show the local possibilities of each neighbourhood, with respect to the environment, and even awareness of the societal problems.¹⁵⁹ Once a city that was known because of the 'emptied centre', suffered even the failure of the American automobile industry, as well as the financial and economic crisis from 2008, but now has switched the narrative of decline into that of a successful grass root (standardize) movement, specifically of urban farming on the increased numbers of vacant lots – although this could not prevent the cities bankruptcy in 2013. Facing these enormous problems that the city deals with, this actually is a remarkable development. The 'success' of local residents was first formalized by non-profit organizations that aimed to 'green the city', mobilize the public, even had educational goals.¹⁶⁰ Today this even attracted businesses that now have bought and exploit vacant lots professionally – in the midst of the urbanized landscape of the city.¹⁶¹ Richard Florida recently wrote on the development Detroit that the city now even has the chance to attract 'general businesses' again. 'With its fraying social fabric and the imposition ... to cope with its collapsing finances, it would be argued that a city that was a global centre of carmaking and musical innovation 50 years ago has passed the point of no return. Easy, yes; but wrong. Detroit's days as a manufacturing powerhouse – like those of many industrial cities in America, Europe and elsewhere – are irrevocable. But its downtown is rebounding, thanks to the kind of central location, affordable property, improved efficiency and productivity also bringing people and businesses back to struggling former industrial hubs such as Cleveland and Pittsburgh.'¹⁶²

What actually is remarkable about Sorkin's conclusion, however, is his emphasis on 'reclaiming the city' and democracy. Slightly before his conclusion he had circumscribed this reclaim as 'a return to a more authentic urbanity, a city based on physical proximity and free movement and a sense that the city is our best expression of a desire for collectivity,¹⁶³ an aim that seems to be very formal. Although most political theorists will follow Sorkin in his emphasis on the relationship between public space, public realm, the right to demonstrate, and the ideal of democracy, the statement that a 'more authentic urbanity' and 'physical proximity' should be seen as essential would rouse discussion. Sorkin in the quote above presented the opposite of this 'more authentic city', the theme park and its image of pleasure, as a 'substitute for democratic public realm', specifically because of – and I left this part of the quote out above – 'it does so appealingly by stripping troubled urbanity of its sting, of the presence of the poor, of crime, of dirt, of work.'¹⁶⁴ In other words, Sorkin suggests that there are two images of public space: first renders the open spaces in the theme parks and shopping malls, that are used by huge crowds, but that essentially are exclusive and bound to the aim of consumption. The other image of public space – and that is what he describes as more authentic urban – is open to all, and therefore even aims to include the threatening aspects of the world: poverty, homelessness, strangers, even crime, dirt and risk. It is clear that Sorkin opts for the second image. Despite the imagery of the Malls, Parks and Communities, that in their very form and appearance emphasize 'community', only the spaces that give room to the

poor, crime, and other threats is the 'best expression of a desire for collectivity.' Geography professor Don Mitchell also distinguishes between two images of public space in respect to the political ideal of democracy, somehow parallel to Sorkin's aim.¹⁶⁵ First can be described as the political space, an 'unconstrained space within which political movements can organize and expand into wider arenas,' the second is roughly stated the 'open space for recreation and entertainment, subject to usages by an appropriate public that is allowed in.'¹⁶⁶ The crux, in this perspective, thus is the accessibility and use of space, and Mitchell therefore also, as Sorkin does with the poor and everything else that can disturb the quiet – and safe – image of public space, emphasises the homeless as the 'icon' of the differences, the key to understand public space. The second conception of public space doesn't allow the homeless to enter, while in the first perspective the fundamental idea is that those groups that live in the margins of a community only through participation in space, only through visibility and tangibility, can gain room in society – both politically and socially.¹⁶⁷ The first perspective thus understands public spaces as places where the rights of citizenship needs 'to be expanded to the most disenfranchised segments' of society, whereas the latter stresses the need of the users of public space to feel safe and comfortable, in order 'not be driven away by unsightly homeless people or unsolicited political activity.'¹⁶⁸ The public realm – this connection with democracy – as emphasized by Sorkin therefore is part of this first perspective on public space: public space as essentially space of confrontation with diversity, plurality, and otherness, as well as inherent risks, crime, and other scary threats. Every endeavour to exclude this confrontation does impact the very 'publicness' of public space, deepening with the same gesture the gap between both spaces, and by doing that pushing the first space in an even worse and deplorable state, since it leaves the regular 'open space' as left-over-space that in the end is only inhabited by the marginal groups in society.¹⁶⁹

Public space as public realm is a space of possible riots, revolts, revolutions, risks and threats, of unexpected meetings and life-changing events – actually of society-changing-events.¹⁷⁰ As David Harvey writes on the uprisings in Paris 1830, in mind of course the well-known poem of Baudelaire on *The Eyes of the Poor*: 'The public spaces of Paris were transformed toward the end of empire into sites of geopolitical struggles between warring factions in ways that were intensely symbolic of clashing ideologies in the public sphere of politics. The eyes of the poor would not be averted. Nor could they be sent away. The anxiety of the bourgeoisie was justified. The spectacle of the commodity may mask, but it can never erase, the raw facts of class relations.'¹⁷¹ As became clear in the previous chapter, it is this risky environment that scares people and institutions, both public authorities and private owners, who regularly aim to provide 'safe and clean' spaces.¹⁷² Their regular argument should be valued: the aim to remove 'criminal elements' and 'inappropriate activities' – 'small-time drugs dealers, street people, and the homeless' – in order to make room for others, for students, for the middle class, for families with kids, that otherwise would have been excluded.¹⁷³ 'Safe havens' and modest spaces meant to accommodate the affluent people. However, the aim to exclude threats and risks, as came to the fore in this chapter, specifically by commodification of the space and by taking control over space, is a risk in itself, for instance for the very publicness of public space. Clean and safe often means 'dead public space' – a term coined by Richard Sennett, regarding the empty plazas often surrounding the modern office towers.¹⁷⁴ Or it means a space that actually encourages consumption, the 'downtown development

165.

This distinction in two kinds of space originates actually from the distinction that the French Philosopher Henri Lefebvre draws between 'Representational Space' and 'Representations of Space,' as Mitchell states in his article. The first he understands as appropriated, 'lived' space, whereas the second is depicted by control, order, planning. However, most spaces has an origin as representation of space, for instance a park or a plaza, but transform into representational space, a space that is part of everyday life, is appropriated by citizens – spaces in use. Don Mitchell, 'The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy', in: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol 85, No.1 (March 1995), 115

166.

Ibid., 115

167.

Ibid., 123

168.

Ibid., 115, 117

169.

Rumours say so – often emphasized by movies as well, like in the Johannesburg case the film *Totsi* (Gavin Hood, 2005)

170.

It is not only the possibility of demonstration that is able to change society, although the value of demonstration of course is that they show 'decision-makers the sheer scale of public displeasure, and that campaigning organizations still go to enormous lengths to create, stage, and publicize physical events – 'actions', as many call them – aimed at attracting large numbers of participants and media coverage.' Parkinson, *Democracy and Public Space*, 64

171.

Harvey, 'The Political Economy of Public Space', 23

172.

Which of course is a perspective deeply rooted in modernism. See for instance a quote of George Will that Mitchell cites in his article 'The End of Public Space?': 'Society needs order, and hence has a right to a minimally civilized ambience in public spaces. Regarding the homeless, this is not merely for aesthetic because the aesthetic is not merely unappealing. It presents a spectacle of disorder and decay that becomes contagion.' Mitchell, 'The End of Public Space?', 118; However, this also holds true in respect to the power of public authorities. The participatoire public space actually also is a threat in respect to the established forms of power, as once again is seen in the Arab Spring movement. Mitchell, 'The End of Public Space?', 124

173.
cf. The argument of the University of California on Peoples Park in Berkeley: Mitchell, 'The End of Public Space?', 110; cf also the processes in Down Town San Diego, as described in Don Mitchell, and Lynn A. Staeheli, 'Clean and Safe. Property Redevelopment, Public Space, and Homelessness in Downtown San Diego', in: Setha Low and Neil Smith (eds.), *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 155

174.
Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 12

175.
Mitchell, 'The End of Public Space?', 119

176.
It very well can be described as 'too idealized': *Ibid.*, 121

177.
cf. Scheffer, *Het land van aankomst*, 74

178.
Hou, 'Making Public', 91

179.
Ibid., 91,92

180.
Ibid., 91

181.
Ibid., 92; see also an article of the architectural critic Michael Kimmelman in the *New York Times* on the developments after the Arab Spring in Egypt afterwards. Kimmelman, 'Who Rules the Street in Cairo? The Residents who built it', in: *The New York Times*, April 28, 2013; <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/28/arts/design/in-cairo-rethinking-the-city-from-the-bottom-up.html?pagewanted=all> [accessed April 30th, 2013]

182.
Kimmelman, 'Foreword', xvi

183.
Ibid., xv

areas, the malls, and the festival marketplaces', where control, order, and surveillance perfectly collaborate with the expected increase of consumption.¹⁷⁵

It surely can be discussed whenever 'publicness' is a perspective that should be strived for,¹⁷⁶ although the debate, both in the field of architecture as well as in the adjacent fields, is coloured by the wish to create truly public and democratic spaces. Therefore, also a vice-versa process can be acknowledged. In spaces where people are urged to participate, are welcomed to be involved, spaces that can be appropriated, and where everyday people can take responsibility, these spaces increasingly turn public, even those privately owned or thoroughly designed and publicly maintained. The 'safe and clean' spaces can be enjoyable: the sphere can be cosy and quiet, or lively and vital. It can be a perfect destination on hot summer evenings – nice spaces to celebrate life and let the kids play. But it won't serve the proximity of plurality and differences, neither the confrontation between classes, the clashes that are at the bottom of democracy. The first are spaces of segregation, whereas the public spaces somehow contribute to urban life as a continuous training in democratic values.¹⁷⁷ The earlier mentioned Jeffrey Hou follows the urban sociologist Don Mitchell and the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre in his distinction between two different approaches to public space, but he slightly moves the attention from ownership and accessibility to involvement and participation. He writes that he distinguishes between two kinds of public space: 'institutional public space and insurgent public space. Institutional public spaces include typical parks, plazas, squares, streets, and some civic buildings, as well as privately owned public spaces that are defined and produced by governments and corporations.'¹⁷⁸ On the other hand 'in contrast, insurgent public spaces are those created or initiated by citizens and communities, often outside or at the border of regulatory and legal domain. Insurgent public spaces are frequently brought into being by those who appropriate, reclaim or occupy a particular space to gather, express opinions and engage in various cultural practices. They include guerrilla gardens, flash mobs, "third places," street vending, street theatre and protests.'¹⁷⁹ Hou thus suggests that it is not only a matter of allowance by the owner, a range of inclusion to exclusion, but that it is about the participation of a public, even in the very establishing of the spaces. The institutional spaces 'are by nature codified, regulated and institutionally maintained; usually they presuppose a fairly generic public that may be served by these spaces, but for the most part is not engaged in their making,'¹⁸⁰ whereas 'the very idea of insurgent public spaces argues that the making of public spaces is not the exclusive domain of institutions; it can involve a broader range of actors – and thus reinforce the fact that "public" is not just an adjective but more broadly an active body of citizens.'¹⁸¹ In other words, only when the public is involved and participates in specific spaces and places, these spaces can be turned into 'truly' public spaces. *New York Times* critic Michael Kimmelman writes; 'Public spaces ... must be "enacted" – occupied, used – for it to be truly public. It is this act of using it that makes it public, that makes it a real place.'¹⁸² He adds to this perspective a suggestion. 'One answer is that we need ambiguous spaces, multiuse spaces. Access to space breeds a feeling of ownership; ownership of empowerment, as Paul Broches has put it. But more than access, openness – or what Broches and others lately have taken to calling "sloppiness" – is the key to useful public space. From a design perspective, this means intentionally incomplete, and at least partly unplanned spaces that are completed in different ways by different users. But how do we create them?'¹⁸³

3.2.4 A Pressing Question to Designers

'But how do we create them?' This question on the production of space indeed seems to be the remaining question after this journey through the contemporary landscapes of America and Europe and snapshots of places elsewhere vis-à-vis the quest of public space that I discussed in this and the previous chapter. Slightly, of course, also the 'production' of these spaces has been touched upon, to start with the statement that this urban landscape, the relative dichotomy of public and private spaces, has to be seen as the outcome of a cultural, economic, and political cultural condition – that it is a social-political construction. Nevertheless, these spaces of course don't come into being automatically, but are planned, designed, and constructed as well. Moreover, most of these contemporary spaces as we have seen, like the shopping mall, the theme park, the gated community, and even the historic district, are carefully designed, constructed, planned, imagined, and – finally – marketed as vivid and meaningful spaces. But still, what is lacks from the journey above is a specific take on this design – moreover, it lacks a thorough vision on what architecture actually means in respect to this urban landscape. The path after all delivered perspectives from different fields touching upon this quest – perspectives emerging from anthropology, political sciences, philosophy, geography, economy, history, and social sciences. It also delivered reflections upon everyday practices, the contemporary urban and landscape condition, the political realm, as well as views upon concrete (public) spaces, from the highway to the POPS. This question of concrete space, of design, and of imagination often is overlooked in the adjacent scientific fields. That sounds remarkable, although it is even more remarkable that even architects and architectural theorists themselves also fail to come up with perspectives that draw specific architectural narratives. It shows that it is not easy to construct an architectural perspective regarding public space and the public sphere, a perspective that emerges from within architectural practices and that unfolds the specificities of projects, buildings, constructions, planes, sections, designs, materials, texture, and so on vis-à-vis the public sphere, leaving a gap in our physical understanding of the architectural project and public space. This somehow also depends on the recent history, specifically due to the influences of a critical-theoretical approach, the field of architecture has been positioned in the midst of the perspectives of adjacent fields, like philosophy, sociology, history, and so on, aiming that architectural projects cannot be understood without reflections from these fields.

Additionally, architectural theory then should be understood as occupying and appropriating the insights of these adjacent fields, applying them into an architectural narrative. This has actually caused an overlooking of perspectives from the inside, even failing to come up with perspectives from within the field of architecture.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, specific architectural insight, knowledge and understanding will deepen and enhance the perspectives upon this question of the public realm. In the same run, the question of creation and design indeed belongs to the heart of the field of architecture, it is nevertheless simultaneously only a small aspect of what a specific architectural perspective can add to the quest of public space. Architecture after all is not only about creation – the choice of the right forms, the nicest materials, the most spectacular or unspectacular routes, stunning dynamics, or silent façades. Despite the lively debate on the public sphere, the term thus is actually badly rooted within the spatial practices itself: for a concept that is at the core of the architectural and urban discourse it is striking that the ideal doesn't address the form, structure, organization and materiality of the space and objects. On the contrary, it mainly focuses on the 'fourth' dimension of space, on the social practices of people. In other words, it is an immaterialized narrative,

184.

cf. Albena Yaneva, *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, An Ethnography of Design* (Rotterdam, 010 Publishers, 2009), 20-27

Besides the complexity of design (process) itself, actually – which also is a complex trajectory, a collaboration of designers, their employees, commissioners, engineers and other advisers, politicians, planners and so on. In the architectural design process, it actually is 'difficult to keep the architect in focus', writes Dana Cuff in her investigation in the very practice of architecture. The 'master-architect', today the 'starchitect' – as is the image, for instance, in Ayn Rand's famous novel *Fountainhead* – largely is a myth. That of course disturbs the smooth investigation of the architectural project and its coming into being as well. Dana Cuff, *Architecture, The Story of Practice* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1992), 4

not only in philosophy and political sciences, but also in architectural theory.

Certainly one of the reasons (I will briefly offer 4 reasons) for the lack of actual architectural perspectives upon public space is the lack of an answer to the critical-theoretical narratives that are adopted within the field of architecture. There simply is no single architectural answer, no particular form, neither a specific material, nor any other way to treat public space that solves the questions posed by theorists and activists. Or do we have to say, there is no answer that actually works period. As we have seen, the New Urbanism movement has formulated concrete answers to surpass the monotony of the suburbs, and stresses the importance of the community and its collective spaces, offering particular suggestions and directions to design these spaces, but as we needed to conclude, the examples that follow these rules simply are the next enclaves, only more nicely designed. There is no singular answer, that once and for all can be repeated. Luckily, we might add. It belongs to the very essence of architecture that each case needs a particular answer, as we will see.

A second reason for the lack of pure architectural answers to the pressing question of public space might be the unclear role of architecture and urban planning in contemporary landscapes. It can be argued that social practices have more impact on spaces than architects, planners and designers would admit:¹⁸⁵ changes in the everyday practices of a society and developments in its political structure, which is the context of the discourse in philosophy, sociology and political sciences, always have concrete consequences and become tangible in the built environment, as for instance in the gated community and the shopping mall. These types only could become popular, not because of their specific designs, but because they fulfil a need of people, they form an answer to changing social and spatial practices of citizens. Planning and designing in this respect are understood as just creating room and providing the design in answer to societal or economic processes. If formulated like this, architecture simply follows society, rather than challenging it, which is not strange, particularly in a situation of developers as commissioners of architectural design. This of course is too negative – I will come back to the role of architecture and the architect in Chapter 7.

For now, in the frame of what has been written previously, starting from the double failure of the strive to exclude risks towards the conclusions that risks are deeply inherent in public space, as come to the fore in the riots and revolutions as potentially inherent in public space, it is right to understand that most of the concerns and perspectives that are addressed facing public space indeed deal with the everyday practices of people, or 'dream' about what their practices should look like ideally, compared to the ideal of the democratic society and the public realm. Public realm is actually a narrative dealing with the use of these spaces, not with the architecture of these spaces. This is the third reason explaining why it is difficult to answer the quest of public space architecturally. It is clear that the spatial practices do need physical spaces. The changing practices urged the development of new urban types, sometimes they became successful, commercially, sometimes badly surviving. But all of these urban types urge the question: how is the field of architecture involved in all this? Is this only a manner of planning, of urban layout, of location? Does 'design' have an impact on what actually happens? Certainly it does: the figure of the enclave differs from the figure of the grid, as does the cul-de-sac development from the organically grown European downtown, all impacting the daily practices within these environments. And surely, it matters if a mall is constructed from concrete stones or is clad with shiny polished natural stone. But again, although we can investigate

public spaces and the behaviour of the crowds, the involvement of architecture vis-à-vis these anthropologic, philosophical, sociological, and political processes, meanings, and developments, is hard to make. It is easier to make this connection the other way around. Within each architectural project, as I will argue in Chapter 6, political aspects are at stake. What about the specific materiality, the spatial quality, the imaginative elements, the projective qualities – does that impact the uses of space, the everyday practices of people, the stability and coherence of society? What is the specific role of the architect in this respect, and what kind of architectural knowledge needs to be embodied in these architectural projects? That doesn't seem to be clear at all. Or as Thomas Sieverts writes: 'Sometimes I get the impression that our guild has forgotten how to think politically and to draw distinctions between social changes, movements and forces – which we, whether we like it or not, have to recognise as preconditions for planning because we can change hardly anything about them – and such developments as we can influence and structure. However, only if we can do that, will we be able to get involved with any prospect of having an effect.'¹⁸⁶

The fourth aspect addresses the difficulty of developing a specific architectural narrative in the virtual character of the public sphere. Rather than a spatial question, it surpasses the question of space. The ideal of the public sphere is the Western idea of a 'participating' democracy. This of course is a provocative ideal: it values and simultaneously calls for participation, for action, for taking risks, and initiatives. This of course is first a matter of 'pre-political' rules that needs to be formulated in order to erect and sustain the public realm: freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of religion, freedom to establish political parties, the distinction between state and church, as well as between state and market, and so on. It only secondary also provokes architectural questions. The architectural narrative that is regularly constructed on this matter is the suggestion that such a participatory democracy also needs room, not only virtual (being the societal debate) but also physical space, where citizens gather and appear amongst peers, where their voices can be heard and acts can get proper responses, where people are involved in public interests, where the exchange of ideas is possible, and finally where decisions are taken and agreements are constructed. Even in the age of social media, this is still a matter of concrete space – although this public realm is not limited to concrete public spaces, as well as vice versa: not every public space, square, street, park, belongs to the public realm. As Hajer and Reijndorp state in their *In Search of New Public Domain* it is about '...places of shared experience by people from different backgrounds or with dissimilar interests. In principle, such places can also be found beyond the traditional urban space of streets, parks and squares. They can even be spaces that are not public in the strict sense, for example privately managed collective spaces that still function as public domain.'¹⁸⁷ In other words, these places of shared experience are not fixed spaces, even are not limited to the symbolic spaces in society – those public spaces in front of city halls, governmental buildings, that are understood as the heart of society or an urban environment, but that most often are dominated by commerce and tourism, which often disperse the differences in the use of space, and with that the opportunity of exchange between different groups of users. Public sphere is only a temporal condition, actually limited to the meeting of people itself, and only a few times turn into a stable and symbolic place of recognizable, distinct, and shared use and exchange. The crucial insight therefore is that public realm is not a matter of architecture: it is a matter of use, of accessibility, of programme, of locations and connections, of the environment and functions, of the organization of events – in other words, it is a matter of inhabitants and users

186.
Sieverts, *Cities without Cities*, XII

187.
Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain*, 11

188.

This actually is one of the few perspectives Arendt offers regarding the field and agency of architecture.

189.

Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large, Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Mineapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 10

themselves, their willingness to participate, to sit down and look, to be involved in local opportunities – which sometimes is a matter of unforeseen accidents, happenings. Admitted, architecture and urban design create the very possibilities, it can accommodate these opportunities, or – in a negative perspective – is able to prevent these possibilities. This architecture is important: it can help to propel the experience, or it can disturb the potentials of such experience. Essentially, however, the public sphere emerges everywhere where people bump into each other, open up new perspectives, form new opinions, exchange perspectives. But since most ‘pre-cooked’ meetings don’t happen to be really meaningful – except from the political meetings of the parliament and government, that take place in the specifically designed and very symbolic spaces of government buildings and city-halls – a well-functioning public realm doesn’t depend on specific architectural design of the space. It is first and foremost a matter of social practices. An architect therefore is not even required, even in the worst designed spaces meaningful meetings can take place – moreover these meetings can’t be planned, let alone be designed. It therefore indeed can be questioned whether the public realm should be a topic of architectural discourses. Architecture, in this perspective indeed yet provides a framework in which the public realm can emerge – opportunities that need be occupied and appropriated by the citizens themselves. Architecture in this sense operates on the same level as human rights, institutions, the newspaper, and *Facebook*: it creates a somehow accessible and stable platform for exchange.¹⁸⁸ However, the distinctive aspect is the very tangibility of architecture. Public spaces, like streets, squares, parks, of course potentially are in the public realm, specifically within the urban cores, since the city consists of a large and somehow homogeneous population living closely together – it is the city that is dense and durable enough to create a political realm: dense enough to bump into each other, dense enough also to urge the need to communicate, to join forces, to construct this political realm, which is, of course, why the urban sociologist Lyn Lofland called the ‘the quintessential social territory’ of the city, as the subtitle of her 1998 book *The Public Realm* reads.

The importance of concrete and tangible public spaces is simultaneously unquestioned. Rules, rights and restrictions are needed, of course – they establish a stable space for the public debates and create room to speak freely, to understand each other, to set up a meaningful exchange of ideas and convictions. Newspapers, internet and other media are important as well – they actively create the debate itself, through articles and their responses. They also obviously became more and more important as a counter sphere to the political realm, as came to light in the revolts and demonstrations in the Arab countries in the 2009 till 2012, after the Sichuan earthquake in China in 2010, and so on. As the philosopher Arjun Appadurai writes: ‘the diasporic public spheres that such encounters create are no longer small, marginal, or exceptional. They are part of the cultural dynamic of urban life in most countries and continents, in which migration and mass mediation constitute a new sense of the global as modern and the modern as global.’¹⁸⁹ The difference, however, is rules and rights are the preconditions of the public realm, the media and institutions are the platform for the debate, both however are immaterialized realms. They actually are in need of concrete space as well. The virtual meeting needs the concrete appearance as well. Concrete (urban) spaces on the contrary – here seen as part of the pre-conditions as well as the platform – are concrete, tangible, touchable, visible, a physical appearance of the public realm. A political community, however, needs room, not design, one would summarize.

This firm summary however does not satisfy; it immediately needs to be nuanced and urges despite the difficulties the development of a specific architectural narrative. At least also four perspectives can be mentioned along which lines an architectural contribution can be developed. The first perspective of course is the very obvious need of design in a political community, which immediately comes to the fore in respect to the *symbolic* spaces that have gained their place in every society. The distinction in appearance, aim, design, and planning between the Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest, the Capitol in Washington, the Reichstag in Berlin (specifically after the renovation and extension by Norman Foster in 1999), the Congresso Nacional in Brasilia, and the House of Assembly in Chandigarh, is obvious – as well as the distinction between the Tianan Square, the Washington Mall, and the Dutch Dam Square.

Secondly, although the less symbolic public and collective spaces, even if they are understood as the product of the changing public, spatial, political, and economical practices, still are designed, planned, constructed by architects, planners and designers. The design, planning, and constructing of new public spaces, public buildings, squares and plazas, landscapes and monuments, are the daily practices of architectural offices, urban planners, landscape designers. Their drawings have impact – as of course evidently is seen in the work of Gruen and his envisioning of the future of shopping. In this respect the plea for attention to liminal spaces, border zones, the connection between public and private spaces, the roles of fences and other hard edges, the need of ambiguity, of openness, of accessibility, of inclusion, of the possibility to be involved and participate, the need of benches, of sunlight, of comfort, of sports fields and playgrounds, of artworks, of intermediate and logical connections, of embedded structures, of urban context, of acceptable dangerousness, a bit of anarchy, and even of programme, of festivals and events are valuable, although none of them guarantee the establishment of a public realm.¹⁹⁰ Architectural *products*, in other words, literally form the public spaces.

Thirdly, the emerging virtual public realm – as comes to the fore in social media – ever more presses the need for concrete space and *tangible* public appearance. One can easily argue that the appearance on the public stage, which is, as is seen in the protests in the Arab world as well as in the occupy movement, still in the stable and central urban spaces, is ever more valued today. The discourse on the public realm therefore calls attention to the questions of materiality, thingness, centrality, spatiality and stability, which are inherent in the field of architecture.

This actually also brings us back to the urgent question of production and creation of the common world, which is the fourth perspective that need to be addressed. ‘For social existence to enable self-production and self-determination,’ the philosopher Henri Lefebvre writes, ‘– so that people make lives for themselves, not simply surviving and adapting to the natural circumstance to which they are born or projecting life from idealized sources – consciousness and experience must form concrete elements.’¹⁹¹ This actually becomes more important when we emphasize the role of architecture in its vice-versa relationship with society. As stated before it can be understood as the pre-condition as well as the result of processes in society. This doesn’t downplay the role of architecture, when we understand architecture both as a field of *imagination* (on the future needs and objective of society) as well as the production of collective tangible and touchable elements and spaces in respect to current developments in society. Architecture from this perspective thus inherently has the capacity to evoke the future and

190.

These mentioned pleas come to the fore in, amongst others, Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain*; Quentin Stevens, *The Ludic City, Exploring the Potentials of Public Spaces* (London: Routledge, 2007); Signe Nielsen, ‘Designed to be Occupied’, in; Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA): New Village Press, 2012); Balsley, ‘POPS, Out of the Shadows, A Designers Perspective’, in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA): New Village Press, 2012); Ron Shiffman, ‘Developing the Public Realm, A Conversation with Jonathan Rose’ in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA): New Village Press, 2012); and Ron Shiffman and Anastasia Fisvak, ‘Programming Public Space, A Conversation with Carlton Brown’ in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA): New Village Press, 2012)

191.

Cited via Iain Borden, Jane Rendell, Joe Kerr, and Alicia Pivaro, ‘Things, Flows, Filters, Tactics’, in: Iain Borden, Joe Kerr, Jane Rendell, with Alicia Pivaro (eds.), *The Unknown City, Contesting Architecture and Social Space* (Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 2001), 9

192.
Sanford Kwinter, *Requiem for the City at the End of the Millennium* (Barcelona/New York: Actar, 2010), 26-27

193.
Ibid., 24-25

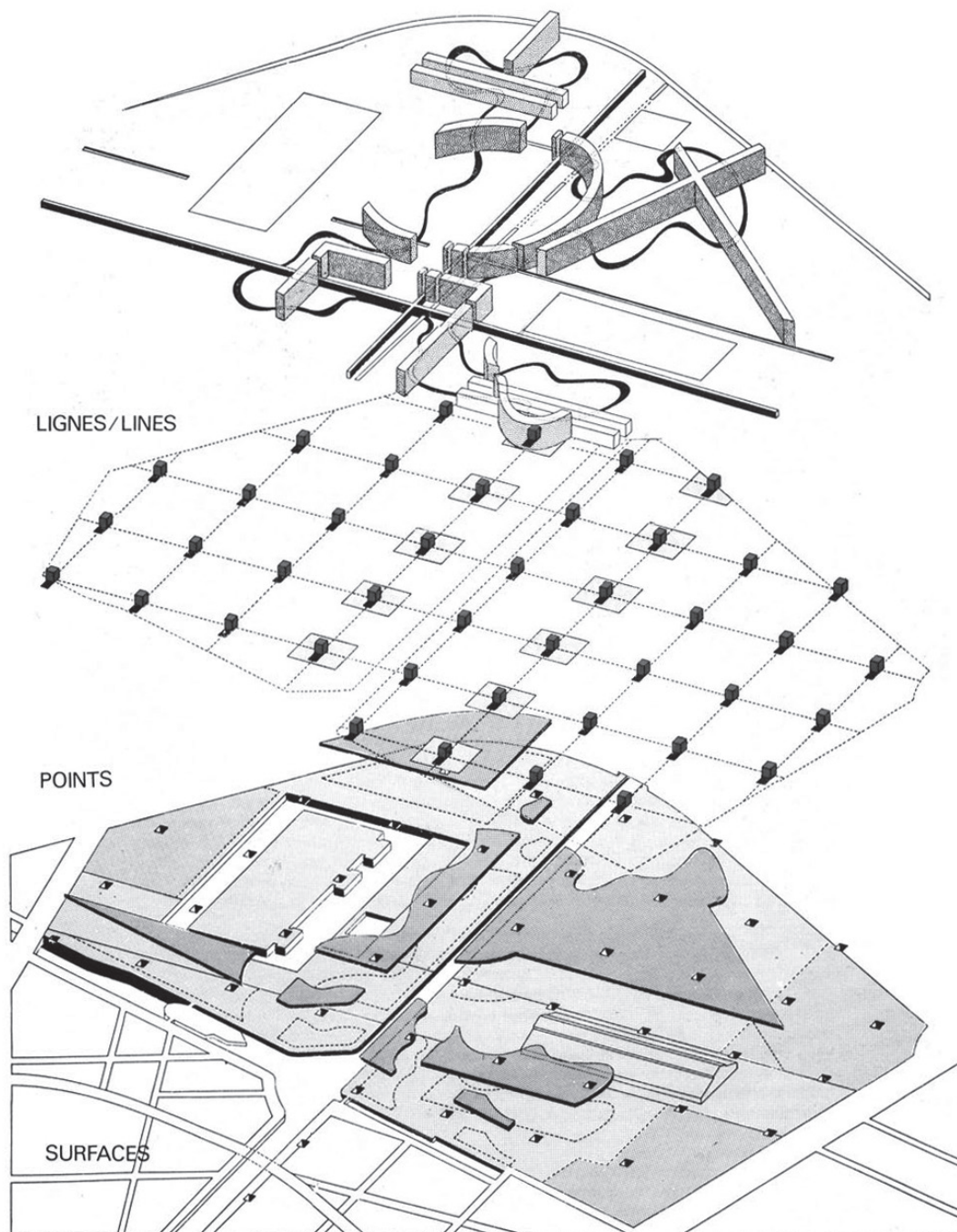
194.
Ibid., 24-25

make the present apprehensible – through imagination it shows what the future might be, and through confrontation, even in the everyday environment, it makes clear the ‘vast and remote forces that produce our world today’, as the architectural theorist Sanford Kwinter writes,¹⁹² which of course again urges the political relevance of architecture today. This capacity of the field of architecture is even more important nowadays, since society and culture ‘no longer stores its history primarily in words and texts, but in images.’¹⁹³ Architectural theory and design are not only able and used to communicate in images, but moreover, are also able to address the ‘non-linear, non-dimensional and even qualitative aspects’ of our contemporary culture, as Kwinter adds. According to him, architectural thinking and design thus ‘assumes a newly privileged role’: it has to be seen as a critical practice addressing contemporary questions in society and culture.¹⁹⁴ I would add that this specifically is what is needed in the debate on the public realm. This world apart, the renewed interest in urban public spaces, the anxiety that we touched upon – it all also needs to be addressed from the perspective of the very material and imaginative structure. That is what needs to be investigated, facing the ideas and ideals of the public realm, therefore is the field of architecture as a public act, as a public art, and as a public project – architecture as a field of local involvement and initiatives and global connections, a field of imagination and creativity, of sensory perceptions and physical tangibility.

In respect to these perspectives the question of ‘how to create?’ should be expanded: how to create, build, construct, discuss, inhabit, design, imagine, and appropriate public spaces *architecturally*? And – less actively, since architectural theory also needs to construct a frame in which this assignment can be understood – how to understand these spaces, the thresholds, the ‘relative dichotomy’ of public and private architecturally? And finally also vice-versa: what is actually the meaning of architecture of the urban-landscape-artefacts, of the urban environment, the city, the suburb, the shopping mall, the theme park, and public and private space? What is the field of architecture, the profession of architects, the practice of architectural offices, specific architectural knowledge able to contribute to the discourse on public space and the process beyond its production? Moreover, how can it contribute to enhance public space, create common space – not to say common ground? What is actually the role of architecture, of the process of design and construction, of architectural objects, vis-à-vis public spaces and the ideal of public sphere?



3.10 Canal de l' Ourcq, *Parc La Villette* (Bernard Tschumi, Paris, France, 1998)



3.11 Points, Lines, Surfaces; Exploded view.
Parc La Villette (Bernard Tschumi, Paris, France, 1998)

3.3 PARC DE LA VILLETTE

3.3.1 *Giving Room for Things to Happen*

A few years ago my wife attended a conference that was hosted by the *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie* in Paris, France, located in the Parc de La Villette. I immediately decided to join her for a few days. The possibility to stay near this park, to see it a few days on a row, I definitely felt was an opportunity. The park is located on the edge of Paris's inner city, right up against the *Boulevard Périphérique*, on the site of a former *abatoire*, slaughterhouse. Parc de La Villette is one of these remarkable stepping-stones in the recent history of architecture and urban design – one of these crucial moments in architectural history that, once spoken, appears to shift paradigms. From the very start of the initiative to transform a site into a park, the park has attracted attention amongst architects, urban designers and planners, not least because of the sophisticated visions developed by the initiators that were translated in a competition brief.¹⁹⁵ This competition aroused attention worldwide: about 400 submissions were urged by the call to rethink the concept of a park within the contemporary urban context. 'The French cultural authorities wanted a new type of urban park,' the French-American architect Bernard Tschumi, winner of the competition, reflects about twenty years later in his talks with Enrique Walker, 'and had asked the advisers and various committees to prepare a brief. It was a very complex brief since it aimed to address everyone: the old and the young, the active and the passive, the working class and the young elite, the rich and the poor, a reflection of the young socialist government then in power.'¹⁹⁶

The park is an intriguing departure in order to answer the question proposed in the previous paragraphs: 'but how to create?' In his presentation of the park, Bernard Tschumi emphasises the design with the abstract term 'superimposition' – a term that is fuelled specifically by a particular drawing of the different layers of the design, *points, lines, planes*, in an exploded view.^[IMAGE 3.11] To a wider public, the park is surely known because of the 26 red *folies*, as Tschumi calls the little red buildings 'without program.'¹⁹⁷ Together these little buildings – a few actually got a stable programme in the end: restaurant, information point, or cafeteria – form a grid of squares, measuring 70 by 70 metres, the points-layer (as Tschumi calls it) of the park. Indeed, it is these *folies* that strongly influences its appearance. My wife and I booked a hotel at the northern edge of the park, near the *Cité des Sciences*. Our room didn't have a direct view on the park itself, but was facing the street on the other side. A lively street, very much Parisian: a small supermarket, some cafés, restaurants, pizza-bars, lots of terraces on the pavement, where the public gathered in the evening to watch television and see their soccer team perform in the Italian Soccer World Cup Finals. From the staircases of the hotel, however, I had a finite overview: a stony plaza in front of the huge building of the science institute, stairs descending to the metro station, at the right four of the *folies* were visible (a small one on the square, a composition with an old tower bell, one with a fast-food restaurant, another with a temporary annex that housed an exhibition). The view further offered a gallery that leads into the park, covered with an undulating pergola and accompanied by a long bench, trees as a background, and above these trees apartment blocks with their rhythm of windows, balconies, and chimneys. During the day, lots of people were out on the plaza: sitting and walking around, some by bike, others pulling luggage, looking at a map or reading a *guide to Paris*. Lots of tourists wander around here, entering

195.

Parc de La Villette actually was one three parks that were proposed after a survey of the Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme (APUR), the planning offices of the city. In their survey they criticized the character of existing open spaces in the city as to technocratic and to less identifiable or culturally relevant. They therefore proposed the creation of urban parks on the former industrial sites at the edges of the innercity, parks that now are known as, besides Parc de La Villette, Parc André Citroën and Parc de Bercy. See for the context in which these parks, and specifically Parc de La Villette are constructed: René Van der Velde, 'Tracing the Development of Contemporary Park-City Relationships: Parc de La Villette, Paris', in: Roberto Cavallo, Susanne Komossa, Nicola Marzot, Meta Berghauer Pont, and Joran Kuijper (eds.), *New Urban Configurations* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2014), 924

196.

Enrique Walker, *Tschumi on Architecture, Conversations with Enrique Walker* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2006), 49

197.

On the term folie Tschumi explains Walker that he, at that time, was reading himself into psychoanalysis in order to see what parallel can be found. The results of this investigation was written as "Madness and the Combinative," published: / folie therefore is the combination of 'folle', which literally means 'small building in a park' and the French word for madness, fool. Walker, *Tschumi on Architecture*, 59

the *Cité des Sciences* and the temporary exhibition, or leaving the area to take the metro, some musicians on the stairs.

Even the only four *folies* that I could see from the hotel stairs – indeed because of their colour they were very prominent – suggest repetition and continuity, which of course is emphasized through the fixed distance between the buildings and three of these positioned in a row that more or less follow the gallery, as well as through the design: not the same buildings, but immediately recognizable as part of a family, a series of possibilities. The *folies* and the gallery therefore suggest a world that I could not yet see from the staircases, but that surely was hidden around the corner, or better said from this perspective, behind the trees and the huge building of the *Cité*. Although the map of Paris colours the park (even this plaza in front of the *Cité*), it immediately at first sight seems like another type of park. It appears from this view as quite stony, full of built structures, with different pavements and distinct routes, and only a few trees at the back. It already suggests complexity and diversity. This becomes even clearer when entering the park itself: the row of *folies* turns into a grid, a curling path starts, a bridge crosses the Canal de l'Ourcq towards the old Grand Halle, and along the gallery a sequence of different views, planes, fields unfold before the eye. This gallery and the canopy runs straight from the Northern entrance to the Southern entrance, from the Avenue Corentin Cariou to Avenu Jean Jaurès, only interrupted in the middle by the stairs and bridge that crosses the canal. ¹¹ In some senses, the Canal that cuts through the park is less visible, but it nevertheless creates openness in the middle of the park, as well as rootedness to the site, specifically since it links the site, especially via Canal Saint-Martin and the characteristic Basin de La Villette (that runs into the very centre of Paris through an impressive tunnel, even underneath the Place de la Bastille), with the Seine, and in the other direction with the suburbs of Paris, and further on with the wider landscape. Every now and then a barge appears from the lock, and turns through the park in the direction of Pantin, whereas a tourist vessel regularly heads over the Canal Saint-Martin to the Seine. The canal itself is accompanied by open fields, pedestrian and cycle lanes that connect the neighbourhood of Pantin, across the *Péripherique*, with the city centre, again accompanied by a wavy canopy. In addition to these straight walk-and cycle-routes through the park, other paths, *allées*, connect the different corners with other spots within the park. The planes in between in turn consist of various gardens and lawns, each with its own atmosphere: large lawns, alternating with tree-dotted playgrounds, a bamboo garden, a climbing facility, and so on. Some of the planes feature a clear programme: there is a playground, a conference centre, grand museums – the aforementioned *Cité des Sciences*, but also in the Southern part, the *Cité de La Musique* – and the conservatoire along the edges of the park, lots of pavilions and theatres, an IMAX cinema (La Géode), a concert arena (Zénith), the philharmonic, and many other functions, which of course attract many visitors from all over the city as well as tourists to this site. All of these places somehow are tied together through the meandering internal route that takes the visitor to the furthest reaches of the park. It starts at the lock that navigates the difference in height between the Canal Saint Denis, which is the Western edge of the park, and the Canal de L' Ourcq, which runs through the park east-west. The path curves around the *folies*, disappears behind the trees that are at the left, and emerges again a bit further along the gallery, to turn again to the left to run all the way to the submarine, that is behind the *Cité*, to the bamboo garden, stepping over the canal at the East side, curling along the gardens and the playground to the Southern entrance of the Park. Its path is random, as Tschumi emphasises – it is

the only element that has an inherent randomness, and therefore is distinguished from all the other elements that are ‘super-positioned’ into this site. ‘Randomness, by definition,’ Tschumi explains to the architect Enrique Walker, who conducted a couple of reflecting interviews with Tschumi, ‘is vulnerable to change; it’s very difficult to maintain in architecture since it can’t be justified and goes against any sort of logic in terms of construction or cost. At a conceptual level, randomness can be better applied to events, actions, and programmes than to physical form itself. So at La Villette the system of physical forms is there to allow the random – the event – to take place.’¹⁹⁸

This emphasis on the event is frequent in Tschumi’s writings. It somehow is a simultaneous rejection of the revival of historicism and formalism, as he writes in his article ‘Spaces and Events’,¹⁹⁹ as well as giving account of the increasing instability of programmes and functions today, as he for instance emphasizes in his lecture ‘De-, Dis-, Ex-’. To start with the latter, in this lecture Tschumi challenges what he calls the crisis of representation and meaning of architecture. ‘In no way’, he writes, ‘can architecture today claim permanence of meaning. Churches are turned into movie houses, banks into yuppie restaurants, hat factories into artists’ studios, subway tunnels into nightclubs, and sometimes nightclubs into churches. The supposed cause-and-effect relationship between function and form (“form follows function”) is forever condemned the day function becomes almost as transient as those magazines and mass media images in which architecture now appears as such a fashionable object.’²⁰⁰ The programme, Tschumi thus argues, has become too fluid to deliver meaning permanently as well as form generative rules for the design of buildings, which would be the physical representation of the programme. The British architectural historian Adrian Forty has, in his excellent book *Words and Buildings*, shown that the idea of ‘Form Follows Function’ has been only established by looking back critically, by questioning and criticizing the dictum during the seventies and eighties. The dictum was always understood in multiple ways and trajectories, never as a simple design-law or receipt. Nevertheless, the recognition of the instability of today’s programme has been at the core of the debates in post-modernism. But whereas architects like the Italian Aldo Rossi and the American Peter Eisenman plead for an autonomous understanding of architecture²⁰¹ – form and meaning emerge from within the profession, its histories and practices – Tschumi’s research, writings and designs can be understood as a trial to redefine the relationship between ‘what happens within a space’ and the space itself through the notion of ‘event’. ‘Our work argues’, he writes in the aforementioned article ‘Spaces and Events’, ‘that architecture – its social relevance and formal invention – cannot be dissociated from the events that “happen” in it.’²⁰² Inherent in the notion of event is its temporal and fluid character. Spaces are not formed through static programmes, but are as it were produced by events, by the movement of bodies in space. In an earlier article, ‘Violence of Architecture’, Tschumi emphasizes this relationship between body and space affecting one another even more extensively.²⁰³ Violence here is used as a metaphor, emphasizing the strong and intense relationship between the body and space,²⁰⁴ and vice versa. ‘Any relationship between a building and its users is one of violence,’ Tschumi states, ‘for any use means the intrusion of a human body into a given space, the intrusion of one order into another.’²⁰⁵ The body disturbs the order of the architectural space, as well as the other way around: the architecture influences the body. Tschumi suggests narrow corridors and large crowds, strange desires for vistas, steep and dangerous staircases, as intruding on the human body. The physical presence of architecture forces itself upon the body, so

198.

Walker, *Tschumi on Architecture*, 59

199.

Bernard Tschumi, ‘Spaces and Events,’ in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1996), 139. Adrian Forty in his discussion on the term ‘function’ in architecture states that this not only opposes Krier’s nostalgia but also Peter Eisenman’s ‘pro-form and anti-function views.’ Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings, A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 194

200.

Tschumi, ‘De-, Dis-, Ex-,’ in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1996), 216-217

201.

Forty, *Words and Buildings*, 194; The position of Eisenman and Rossi of course differ, the latter actually is not mentioned in this respect by Forty. However, the difference can be summarized by a concentration on form (Eisenman) and on type (Rossi).

202.

Tschumi, ‘Spaces and Events,’ 139

203.

Tschumi, ‘Violence of Architecture,’ in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1996), 130

204.

Tschumi adds here in order to clarify: ‘The argument is not a matter of style: modern architecture is neither more or less violent than classical architecture, or than fascist, socialist, or vernacular variations. Architecture’s violence is fundamental and unavoidable, for architecture is linked to events in the same way that the guard is linked to the prisoner, the police to the criminal, the doctor to the patient, order to chaos. This also suggests that actions qualify spaces as much as spaces qualify actions; that space and action are inseparable and that no proper interpretation of architecture, drawing or notation can refuse to consider this fact.’ *Ibid.*, 122

205.

Ibid., 122

206.
Ibid., 125

207.
Ibid., 132

208.
Ibid., 126

209.
Ibid., 134

210.
Quoted via Tom Avermaete and Klaske Havik, 'Accommodating the Public Sphere, Bernard Tschumi's Dynamic Definition of Architecture,' in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Into the Open, Accommodating the Public, OASE#77* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2008), 55-56; This article offers a great reading of Tschumi's approach to architecture in relationship to ideas about the public. The quote from Edward Casey comes from: Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place, A Philosophical History* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1998), 313

211.
Bernard Tschumi, 'Abstract Mediation and Strategy', in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1996), 203

to say, according to Tschumi cannot be denied nor always brought to pleasure or comfort. The text actually pleads for openness to such violence, not since 'the love of violence, after all, is an ancient pleasure,'²⁰⁶ but moreover since the architecture violating existing orders, like any violence, contains the possibility of change and renewal.²⁰⁷ Tschumi therefore pleads for subtle relationships between event and architecture. When rituals become paths, when architects dream of purifying the transgressions of body and space, everything immediately turns into frozen forms, institutes of order,²⁰⁸ and loses its quality of the possibility of change, giving room to something new.²⁰⁹ The philosopher Edward Casey takes that as the very essence of Tschumi's argument. 'In the case of architecture and event', he writes in his *The Fate of Place*, an event 'is not only something that takes place; it also gives place (*donne lieu*), gives room for things to happen ... Architecture, then, does not occupy a place but provides places ... and in so doing occurs as an event that 'there is'.'²¹⁰

During the few days I was in the park I was able to attend, besides the regular programme of the park, several temporarily organised events, ranging from the open-air cinema in the evening that is still organized by the park during the summer months, to a music festival, specifically giving the floor to groups of foreigners. I could participate in a small walking event, visit an exhibition, enjoy the music (sounds?) of lots of musicians that try to conquer the loud music of the festival. I could drink coffee from a pop-up coffee-car or eat ice cream a few steps ahead. I saw how locals occupied spots to celebrate a birthday, enjoy the fresh air with a cake or a picnic, take a nap on a lawn or meet with friends, a bottle of wine always to hand. The park was also filled with non-locals, which you could see from the guides they were holding and their language. They came to wander over the paths, walk along the canal, visit specific sites, and have a short break and eat their lunch after visiting a museum. I thus could see how the lawns and the *folies* are used, moreover are occupied by locals and *Parisiennes*, by tourists and congress-attenders, and turn it for a few moments into their own place in space. The *folies* actually appeared to be multi-purpose, and thus approved Tschumi's aim of physical form that allow events to take place. They were actively occupied, sometimes just for a while to enjoy the view from above, then by a group of youngsters to do some skating practice, while others go and sit there for a picnic – a romantic spot with a view, just for two. The music festival has turned one into the stage. The open-air cinema uses one as the position for the projector (the really huge screen is held up in the air by a hoisting crane). Through the design, 'La Villette promotes programmatic instability,' Tschumi writes. 'The Park's three autonomous and superimposed systems and the endless combinatory possibilities of the *Folies* give way to a multiplicity of impressions. ... La Villette is a term in constant production, in continuous change; its meaning is never fixed but is always deferred, differed, rendered irresolute by the multiplicity of meanings it inscribes.'²¹¹

3.3.2. *Density, Heterogeneity, Conflict, and Contradiction*

It surely can be argued that *Parc de La Villette* is the 'frozen understanding of urbanity' by Bernard Tschumi (and certainly also by his commissioners). That is the fate of architecture, it always offers form, which is fixed. Even those architectural practices that try to establish formlessness, or mobile architecture and even moveable architecture, in the end need to come up with construction, structure, material, form, which somehow fix its material possibilities. Nonetheless, the

forms that are offered, the spaces that are demarcated, can create openness. Even more, they can provoke *action, happenings, events, occupation* as Tschumi states in the quote I already cited, ‘Randomness can be better applied to events, actions, and programmes than to physical form itself. So at La Villette the system of physical forms is there to allow the random – the event – to take place.’²¹² Tschumi even claims that this specific superimposition (of structured layers) has created spaces formed by accident, which are better equipped to offer unpredicted possibilities of use. These residual spaces thus are loosely defined, not by (design) form, neither by programme, which makes them open, according to him, for occupation, appropriation, and unexpected use. These are the places that embody the possibility of change, giving room for something new.²¹³ This openness is therefore opposite to the atriums of malls and the open spaces of theme parks, which are so well organized in order to predict movement and behaviour, and which have been a template for a range of (re-)design plans of urban areas – from historic districts to (thematized) suburbs.²¹⁴

Although Tschumi would reject the *folies*, due to their colour, repetition, and appearance, simultaneously binds together these diverse layers, paths and possibilities, the density and the emptiness, the dynamics and the diversity, as well as providing the park’s identity. The latter Tschumi of course cannot reject, the first however is presented differently, as it is suggested that the *folies* are only one of the three layers that autonomously and independently are superimposed. Nevertheless, the grid surely is the *invention* of his park-design. Besides its power of bringing together the very diversity of sites, locations, appearances, spheres, events, activities, programmes, functions and so on, strongly uniting the complexity that is the outcome of the superimposition of the different layers. It also suggests a certain limitless character of the park.²¹⁵ The grid however also, as he recognises, mediates between the existing and the new. ‘I already knew [since he had taken part in the earlier 1976 competition on the site as well, HT] that any attempt to be contextual, either with the visible elements (the canal, the highway, the neighbourhood) or the invisible ones (the hidden nineteenth-century composition of the Masonic star or the old city walls) was the wrong starting point. The grid was a way to get rid of “context,” but at the same time it provided mediation between the old and the new. ... the strength of the project and of the park comes from the relationship between some of the existing nineteenth-century buildings and the repetition of the *folies* themselves.’²¹⁶ The contextual aim, ‘to get rid of context’ as well as ‘mediation between the old and the new’ therefore can be better understood as the reverse process of ‘contextual’ design: instead of adjusting the new additions to the context, the context is adjusted to the new layers that were superimposed on it.²¹⁷ In his drawings he consistently extends the *folies* to the existing urban fabric, specifically along the canal and Basin de La Villette. In hindsight, in the interview with Enrique Walker, Tschumi is more specific about what actually this strength is. ‘The galleries,’ Walker questions, ‘adjust to existing conditions; that is, they follow the canal and join together the two entrances.’ Tschumi reacts: ‘Both are lines of coordinates, but adjusted slightly according to the site. This was a very self-conscious strategy. For example, the Grande Halle is not a rectangular building; it’s slightly trapezoidal. Since the grid was absolutely rigorous, accepting the two-degree deviation meant that the line of movement was breaking away from the point grid. In fact, this resulted in occasional collisions between the lines of movement and several *folies*. These collisions created a specific architectural condition. So at the time, our argument was that the architecture of the park was the result of the conflict of collision of its different autonomous systems.’²¹⁸ That firstly, I would argue, means that the

212. Walker, *Tschumi on Architecture*, 59

213. Tschumi, ‘Violence of Architecture’, 134

214. Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism*, 48; cf. also Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain*, 104

215. Tschumi reflects upon that idea of continuation and endlessness: ‘At one time I suggested that the *folies* be continued beyond the park, into Paris as well as beyond it, simply by following the line of the existing eighteenth century canal bisecting the site. La Villette, like many of my projects during that period, had no boundaries. It had no beginning and no end; it potentially could continue endlessly. This eventually created a “political mini crisis” because conservative officials in the city of Paris didn’t like the idea of continuing the *folies* along the canal at all. (When I presented the project at a symposium soon after the opening of the park, Bernard Huet, then a city planner for Paris, stood up, declared it an outrage, and walked out of the room.’ Walker, *Tschumi on Architecture*, 53-54

216. Walker, *Tschumi on Architecture*, 55-57

217. See Tschumi, ‘Abstract Mediation and Strategy’, 200, where Tschumi states: ‘The Park rejected context, encouraging intertextuality and the dispersion of meaning. It subverted context: La Villette is anti-contextual. It has no relation to its surroundings. Its plan subverts the very notion of borders on which “context” depends.’

218. Walker, *Tschumi on Architecture*, 62

219.

I explicitly replace the word 'context' here in favor of 'situation'. What I mean is not the historical, cultural, social environment, but limit the idea to the existing physical environment, which I would argue also is what is meant by Tschumi here as well. See for a very insightful history of the term 'context' in the architectural field the previous mentioned book of Alan Forty, *Words and Buildings*, 132-135

220.

The *Cité des Sciences* was executed in the same period as the construction of the Park, and was opened about a year before the Park was finished. This building, however, is another story. Through the very design of this enormous building, actually designed by Adrian Fainsilber and Peter Rice, and through the positioning of the building amidst water – a sort of deep castle moat – the building withdraws from its environment, from the park. Its perspective seems to be inward, it doesn't contribute to the park, and rather can be seen as alienated from the park. Although water is highly celebrated these days in respect to urban design, which indeed often can be confirmed and valued, this is an example of a highly problematic form of the use of water, creating an extra boundary to the immediate environment.

221.

Ibid., 195

222.

Ibid., 198-200

223.

Ibid., 51

224.

Ibid., 53

225.

Ibid., 51

226.

Ibid., 53

227.

Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 12

existing situation,²¹⁹ the canals, the lock, the Grand Halle, and even the edges of the site have been treated as another layer in addition to the formal layers of the design, the layers of the points, lines and surfaces.²²⁰ The situation thus, in other words, is not treated as a *tabula rasa* in which the design simply could be drawn, which is suggested by the idea of the 'anti-contextual', nor is accepted as limiting conditions of the site that even compel the intervention, the addition, and the appearance of the new. It is moreover part of the design itself, not of the pre-conditions: it is the very material of the project, besides the given programme, requirements, and the aims that were offered in the competition brief.

Conflict and collision are the very outcome of the superimposition of the different layers. In his 1987 article 'Abstract Mediation and Strategy' Tschumi explains the strategy of superimposition: 'Each [layer], he writes, 'represents a different and autonomous system (a text), whose superimposition on another makes impossible any "composition," maintaining differences and refusing ascendancy of any privileged system or organizing element.'²²¹ And a few pages later he adds: 'The Parc de La Villette project had a specific aim: to prove that it was possible to construct a complex architectural organization without resorting to traditional rules of composition, hierarchy, and order. The principle of superimposition of three autonomous systems of points, lines, and surfaces was developed by rejecting the totalizing synthesis of objective constraints evident in the majority of large-scale projects. ... One of the goals at La Villette was to pursue this investigation of the concept of structure, as expressed in the respective forms of the point grid, the coordinate axes (covered galleries) and the "random curve" (cinematic promenade). Superimposing these autonomous and completely logical structures meant questioning their conceptual status as ordering machines: the superimposition of three coherent structures can never result in a supercoherent megastructure, but in something undecidable, something that is the opposite of a totality. ... the independence of the three superposed structures thus avoided all attempts to homogenize the Park into a totality.'²²² Tschumi again and again emphasizes this rejection of the park as a totality, a coherent or even a homogeneous place or structure. In his talks with Enrique Walker he positioned this rejection against the homogenizing approach of cities and urban places by architects like the Luxemburg architect and critic Léon Krier, who has become well-known because of his rejection of a modern approach in favour of a Classical approach to architecture and the city, which we will discuss in Chapter 6. Krier also had joined the 'pre-competition' in 1982 on La Villette. In his reflection Tschumi states 'At the time, the ideology of a futuristic utopia had been discredited and [Krier's] project was the beginning of the now well-known discourse on memory and historical constants.'²²³ In his proposal he wanted 'to break that pattern', Tschumi admits.'²²⁴ His refusal of Krier's approach goes further than a critical response to the 'nostalgic return to the past', as Tschumi qualifies these plans,²²⁵ but rather fundamentally questions the understanding of the urban environment, public space and (landscape) architecture. 'What exactly did you mean,' Walker asks him, 'in using the term urban to qualify the park?' And Tschumi answers: 'I meant density, heterogeneity, conflict, contradicting. ... Thus, the only particularity of La Villette was deep density, since it was introducing the heterogeneous. That notion was key to a different type of city – a city of activities rather than a city of forms.'²²⁶ This actually is not only a fundamentally different perspective in regards to the Krier proposal, it is also quite distinct from the traditional approach of landscape architecture. Although exaggerated, it can be argued that Tschumi has applied the very notion of the public *square* – in the words of the sociologist Richard Sennett: 'to intermix persons and diverse activities'²²⁷ – to the park's design. These notions

are somehow contradictory to the obvious notions that are often associated with parks in high-density urban areas: bringing nature, quietness, and retreat to the very heart of cities. Parks have been treated so far as spaces of rest, reserves of nature, even of wilderness in the urban context – a counter space, opposite to its surroundings. But here, in La Villette, the urban heterogeneity has been taken as its very starting point, and the cities hustle and bustle is the very characteristic of the *appearance* of the park.

Therefore, being a clear example of post-modern architecture, *Parc de La Villette* can be very well described as a public space that strongly opposes the ‘public’ spaces that are the outcome of the enclave-like landscape I traced in the previous chapter. But whereas the ‘public spaces’ of the Mall, the theme park, the historic district, the airport, all these post-modern ‘new’ spaces, can be characterized as smooth, efficient, safe, and unambiguous, *Parc de La Villette* on the contrary celebrates struggle, conflict, tension, and provocation – it is therewith closer to the other post-modern perspective, as it comes to the fore in Robert Venturi’s plea for ambiguity – complexity and contraction – in architectural design.²²⁸ Through its very construction, with a mixed – ‘super posited’ – programme, spaces that don’t have a clear single aim and thus are ambiguous and can be occupied temporarily, the connecting routes that cut through the middle of the park, the park-space almost literally represents urbanity, specifically understood as the possibility of encounters with others; that is, strangers by chance. Whereas postmodernity has led to the smooth spaces of controlled areas, which is a commercial extrapolation of the aim of hygiene, air, security, and control that was inherent in the project of modernity, it has also led to a counter approach, the critical emphasis on collision, conflict, contradiction, which might be seen as a hyperbolic embracing of urbanity beyond the anti-urban modernist treatment of urban environments.

3.3.3 Preliminary Lessons for Designers

Public space, as we have seen, is essentially an urban term. The city, as the urban sociologist Louis Wirth has stated, is a permanent and dense concentration of a large population that socially is heterogenic.²²⁹ Cities therefore, Jane Jacobs for instance emphasized, ‘are, by definition, full of strangers. To any one person, strangers are far more common in big cities than acquaintances. More common not just in places full of public assembly, but more common at a man’s own doorstep. Even residents who live near each other are strangers, and must be, because of the sheer number of people in small geographical compass.’²³⁰ And Richard Sennett in his definition of cities: ‘a city is a human settlement in which strangers are likely to meet.’²³¹ These statements somehow suggest that the previous reflections upon the political (or democratic) perspective beyond public space is bound to the city. Such urban public space will only be attractive, lively, vital, and meaningful if it is accessible for everyone, especially for strangers. It is in the city that the space of streets, squares, parks, supermarkets, post-offices, potentially houses the political exchange that is beyond the political perspective – space where people bump into each other, can touch upon strangers. However, when we ask ‘how to create’ such public space, *Parc de La Villette* can teach us important lessons. It is not too difficult to analyse the features of design, planning, and architecture that contribute to this quality – although, as we will see, that will only show a specific appearance of what we understand today as being public space. Although Tschumi suggests that the design is nothing more and nothing less than imposing layers, it is somehow bound together by the *folies* as I argued.

228.

Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977)

229.

Louis Wirth, ‘Urbanism as a Way of Life,’ in: *American Journal of Sociology*, vol.44, no.1 (July 1938), 8

230.

Jane Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 30

231.

Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 39

Even in the construction of the folies, Tschumi emphasizes uncertainty – the number of folies even was not clear on the forehand, for instance. Even the number of folies was not clear, till he stated ‘enough’.

It is made a whole, despite the different fragments that it is constructed of. There is design-effort beyond it, yet Tschumi emphasizes the character of uncertainty, unpredictability and chance of the final result.²³² Obviously the strategy of superimposition strengthens the appearance of ‘heterogeneity, density, conflict, and contradiction’, these notions Tschumi calls ‘urban’. Common sense reasoning and analysis afterwards – since Tschumi himself never has presented his design as such – shows at least five aspects that evoke these notions of the urban, specifically attracting a diverse public to the park, bringing diversity and density into the same spatial environment. However, before presenting these five features, it should be said that the park of course can never be a template that heedlessly can be used somewhere else. In architecture essentially no receipts are available, specifically no receipt for what a ‘good public spaces’ might be. The same design that fits here will be a misfit if applied somewhere else. In this case, one needs to admit that the park is of course heavily backed by the surroundings, the enormous density of the Paris city fabric, the small (and dark) apartments without outdoor space: surely no gardens, but not even balconies. The citizens thus need to go out for a bit of fresh air. Having said that, it is also fair to recognize the contribution of this design that clearly shows some features that enhance the wide range of possibilities of use and therefore the heterogeneity of visitors and users.

The first obvious important feature is the routing, which includes the galleries that are part of the greater structure of Paris urban fabric, and link the surroundings of the park through the midst of the park (and not along the edges) to the inner core of the city. Cyclists frequently use these galleries, especially the one along the canal. The internal routes, like the scenic route and the *allées*, cross these galleries several times. As a result, the park is part of the urban fabric, part of a meaningful whole (which is the city), as well as contribute to it with a unique setting. Route and structure, in other words ensure unity across the site and connection with the surroundings. A balance is always needed between internal routes, which turn an area into a (perceptible) whole, on the one hand, and are intersected by going-through-routes on the other. This ensures a mixed public with different destinations and objectives (the cyclist heading home, the neighbour wandering with a dog, a family on their way to kindergarten) within the same complex spatial system, it brings the passer-by in contact with the ‘ordinary user’.

The second element that helps extensively increase the diversity of public in the park is the heterogeneity of the programme in scale level, definition and temporality. Programming is everything, even if there is no programme, we can argue. Part of the success of La Villette is a number of large-scale functions on the one hand, like the Cité des Sciences and the Cité de Musica, and a busy festival schedule on the other. There is always something to do and something new to see – each programme, furthermore, brings its own public to the park. The park, within the same spatial system, houses functions for the local area and for the entire city. Apart from these long-term and temporary functions, the un-programmed and un-defined space can very well be even more important. This is the space that can be appropriated, and where ‘action’ is possible. It only becomes interesting, however, once there are people in it. The importance of this, again, is that it brings together those for whom the park is an everyday setting and those for whom it is a special space.

The third element is the superimposition itself, which makes the space open to multiple interpretations. Various sections of the population and individuals can feel at home there and occupy the space, identify with the park, and even transform the space by adding personal elements: vanes, a table and a chair, a tent, a barbecue set, candlesticks, and so on. The park thus offers ‘something for

everyone': panoramic vistas, or an intimate setting instead, secluded or with other people in sight, an individual spot or open and exposed, next to a playground or close to a stage, along the canal or in the romantic atmosphere of the bamboo garden.

The fourth feature is the re-use of a few of the old elements that remained from the former slaughterhouse, most prominent, of course, is the Grand Halle, which is quite important in the appearance of the park (more than for instance the really huge building of the *Cité des Sciences*, I would argue, which appears much more as being at the edge of the park). Historical imbedding and respect for the past is not the same as a nostalgic or historicizing outlook, this park shows. But nevertheless, the few historical buildings as well as the canal and the barges that sail through the park on this canal, together with the red follies, lend the park an authentic atmosphere, a historical rootedness that is attractive to visitors. It is moreover precisely that confrontation between old and new, the unyielding grid of follies versus the imperturbable old building structures that has become the park's identity.

The final aspect is actually the combination of the preceding and making them a 'unified' whole: the structure of the *folies*. For it is by bringing together the different routes, programmes and atmospheres in a structure (although one is open to multiple interpretations) that scope is created for meaningful encounters among the diverse public. These encounters need not be taken literally. Watching and being watched is already something, can in fact be provocative, planting the seed for enhanced social interaction.²³³ Cohesion is imperative, but this does not mean everything has to be uniform. Let alone themed. Tschumi's design, at first glance, seems a banal collection of different fragments of park, in which die-straight routes frustrate the meandering paths. Yet this layered-ness is essential. The park as a whole, in its multiplicity and especially its ambiguity, has nonetheless been given clear cohesion, first of all by the grid of red follies and then, actually, by the routes that cross it.

3.3.4 *Competing Public Spaces*

But now we have learned these lessons, it is also time to deconstruct them again. Ever since I was a little boy I have been interested in inland shipping – the intriguing sight of barges slowly navigating along the rivers, lakes, canals, and harbours. This interest, as I see now, is a combination of an interest in this figure of the water-landscape of the Delta of where I grew up, as well as the business that these ships represent – a business that is about movement, but not about speed. The whole industry of shipping of course is dominated by the landscape, but nevertheless also vice-versa can dominate it. The whole network of rivers and lakes connects landscapes: strings that meander from the very mountains upwards down to the sea, in the meantime forming the very landscape by the very processes of streaming, grating, polishing, flooding, inundation and sedimentation – processes that have no end. At that point, men came in with their handcraft, horsepower, wind-power, steam-craft, diesel-engines, nuclear-power, sun-power in order to construct canals, cutting in straight lines through the landscape, constructing artworks like viaducts, tunnels, harbours, docks and locks, barrages, even ship-lifts, and by doing so again transforming the landscape, connecting places and constructing networks. And then the barges come in, slowly sailing upriver, or a bit quicker down the river, bringing with them goods that are transported around the world to their definitive destination, of just to a first stop in their journey around the world. Finally the slowness of sailing, often seen as

233.

See: Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of a New Public Domain*; Gehl, *Life Between Buildings*, 13

its weak point in respect to other possibility of transportation, embeds even the single ship to the landscape.

However, the actual use of the canal within the *Parc de La Villette* by the small barges right through the midst of this public and urban area every now and then thus attracted my attention. I decided to walk along the canals out of the park in order to see where the ships came from or where they go, to see if there are still plants so near the city centre that are still in use. I started my journey along the *Canal Saint-Denis*, starting at the lock, from where you can walk under a few bridges into a more open environment of the industrial zones on the other side of the *Boulevard Périphérique*. On the left side a row of trees accompanies the canal, the parcel of land beyond it seems to be fallow. A person sits between the cane fishing, I see. I walk on the right bank, which is in appearance a different story: enclosed boxes of businesses – plumbing firms, building firms, a depot of sand, gravel and grit, a few offices. All around here there is the sound of heavy trucks driving up and down the road. At a distance I indeed see some cranes that still are loading or unloading barges.

A man approaches me, but since I don't understand the French language fluently, I don't understand his question. A few moments later, another man walks up to me, and also asks me something. I can't hear him well, but it evokes curiosity. Only after a period of time, and having seen more men wandering around slowly and looking after me, I realise that this canal zone is not just an industrial area but also what is called a 'cruising' area – an informal meeting area of gays, looking for contacts. This use doesn't have to surprise me: the site is near the business of the city-centre, very accessible, but still peripheral and not visited enough to give room to this very practice. By touching upon this practice, I finally understand clearly that however openly accessible and unrestricted the park is, it doesn't give room to all particular practices. At least this practice requires a different context than that of the public park. Some human and 'public' activities need less business, less openness, less accessibility, less control than the park offers. For this practice, the park can also be too accessible, too successful. This example easily shows that 'public spaces' despite its initial meaning of freely accessible space, does not mean that the space attracts *all* group of people and give room to *everything* that might be possible. Here in *Parc de La Villette* surely the public management has its rules, but particular practices in particular places also develop quite 'spontaneously': the specific position in the neighbourhood and the extensively used area by a variety of groups, automatically excludes certain activities and therefore also select groups of city inhabitants. A playground attracts families, but keeps away couples without kids. A dance festival will attract youngsters, but will be neglected by the elderly. *Burger King* attracts locals, but it is not worth a detour for other citizens of Paris. Sure, all these groups can enter these specific places, but they are of no interest for them. So also for the men seeking contact and sexual pleasure, for them it makes no sense to wander around subtly inviting other man for a liaison. This place is too crowded in many senses: it is not clear who enters the space for the same reason, it is too busy to recognize like-minded visitors, who can be approached and who can't. This specific practice needs such distinctive places like the canal-zone, needs the periphery and isolation, not to be disturbed by others – it therefore cannot take place in the midst of such crowded places as the park. In other words, I thus suddenly realised that both spots had distinctive 'publics', actually both avoid one another.

This experience in the periphery actually reveals a specific characteristic of 'public space'. The peripheral experience in actual urban politics is usually not

acknowledged as a regular part of public space. Discourses on urban development amongst local politicians, developers, citizens, but also architects, are surely dominated by images of ‘established’ social behaviour. ‘When asked about their desires’, Tschumi states, they ‘generally repeat the established codes of spatial use and design – the doxa of social use.’²³⁴ Or as Ghirardo writes: ‘Almost completely ignored ... is the wide range of temporary or provisional claims on urban areas for such things as teenage cruising (in automobiles in American cities and small towns, on *Vespas* or on foot in many European cities); garage sales and other temporary street vendors; demonstrations, marches and parades; block parties and other urban and suburban festivals. None of these depend upon massive mechanisms of control, and none of their success depends upon well designed public spaces. On the contrary, often the less hospitable and more bleak a setting, the more successful the ephemeral event. Because of this, these activities are typically ignored by architects and urban designers.’²³⁵ Not neglected by Tschumi, one could argue, with his emphasis of the importance of the temporal event and ambiguity of space, and his reading of the urban in terms of heterogeneity, density, conflict, and contradiction. One nevertheless simultaneously needs to conclude that after about twenty years, *Parc de La Villette* has become part of the accepted *doxa* of social use and public spaces, it is appropriated and occupied by the inhabitants of Paris (the festivals, of course, attract them), specifically of those living in the immediate neighbourhood (for which it is an everyday environment). Although its appearance is completely different to the historical examples around, such as the nearby *Parc des Buttes Chaumont*, it is turned into an ordinary environment – probably only architects and urban planners (or those slavishly following the *Lonely Planet* from highlight to highlight) will come along in order to investigate the *difference* and *extraordinary* design. It has become an established area, giving room to appropriation and occupation to a certain extent. It is therefore in the fringes of the park that other users? that are excluded from the established praxis can be found.

That the canal-zone and its blunt uses are on the other side of the *Route Peripherique* surely is not just symbolical – cruising belongs to the practices that not only need peripheral space, but also that are pushed into the periphery of society. It is a practice most people want to avoid. The ‘proper’ location of certain human activities in public of course is highly dependent upon urban planning and all political and public processes beyond. The difficulties of human life that in cities much more are exposed to the public than in villages are nevertheless often threatened, pushed away out of sight. Sometimes clearly by regulations like prohibition of begging in shopping streets, or a ban on youngsters gathering near playgrounds, or skate-boarding on the stairs in front of a town-hall, sometimes invisible, through the specific design of streets and squares, the addition of speed bumps, cameras, street lights, benches one cannot lay down on, shiny paving and expensive coffee-corners in order to attract a specific public, and so on. Often urban design indeed is used to smooth public space, thereby wiping out decay and deterioration, images of places that are experienced as threatening by the crowd. On a higher level the urban planning itself of course also redraws the map of the city. By developing expensive apartments in socially poor neighbourhoods, the planning of public transport connections, leisure facilities, and so on, specific places in the city fabric are gentrified, change from inhabitants, the public and use. ‘What is characteristic of our city-building’, as the sociologist Richard Sennett writes about contemporary urban planning, ‘is to wall off the differences between people, assuming that these differences are more likely to be mutually threatening than mutually stimulating. What we make in the urban realm are therefore bland,

234. Tschumi, ‘Urban Pleasures and the Normal Good’, in: *Assemblage*, 25, 1995, 10

235. Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism*, 44

236.

Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye, The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), xii

237.

Ghirardo, *Architecture after Modernism*, 44

neutralizing spaces, spaces which remove the threat of social contact: street walls faced in sheets of plate glass, highways that cut off poor neighbourhoods from the rest of the city, dormitory housing developments.²³⁶ That of course is not to blame Tschumi, this is simply how urban environments develop (although this can also be the other way around, from established design into peripheral atmosphere). Some of the practices need peripheral location, sphere, and environment, anyway. Design proposals and urban planning often, not to state always, violates this sphere and turn it, although unwanted, into an environment that in subtle ways is excluding, pushing the peripheral praxes out – which therefore always are on the run, searching for the new fringes of the urban fabric.

These two faces of ‘public’ space, the park versus the canal-zone, the established spaces versus the sharp edges, show at least two things. Firstly that, as the architectural critic Diane Ghirardo states: ‘there is not “a” public, but competing publics, often in conflict with one another and with their own venues for action, indeed, their own definitions of action,’²³⁷ and secondly that the role of actual design is questionable. Does a public gather due to or despite of its physical environment? That latter question is central in all the following chapters. I however am convinced that an answer is enclosed in this notion of ‘action’ that Ghirardo brings to the fore. Public space as the locus of ‘action’ will bring us to the work of Hannah Arendt, who indeed has put forward ‘action’ as the very activity of the human being in public space. Her concept of action, that indeed is bound to public spaces, however, is related to other forms of human activity: labor and work. This larger framework will help us to connect architecture even more closely to public space, not just as means to form, design, control public spaces, but also in a more fundamental way, by delivering it meaning, permanence and commonness. Arendt’s writings thus will offer another framework regarding public space, in which the very character of architecture, amongst them these aspects of intervention, transformation, and (re)construction, play a significant role.

4.

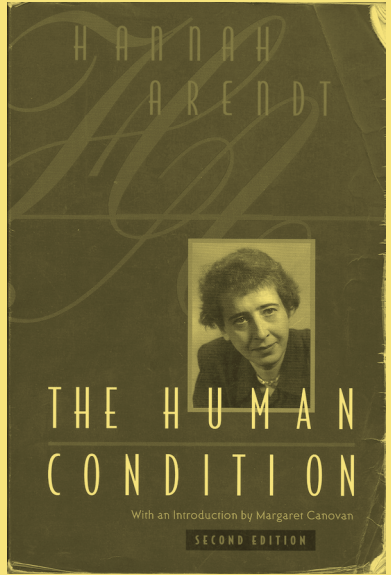
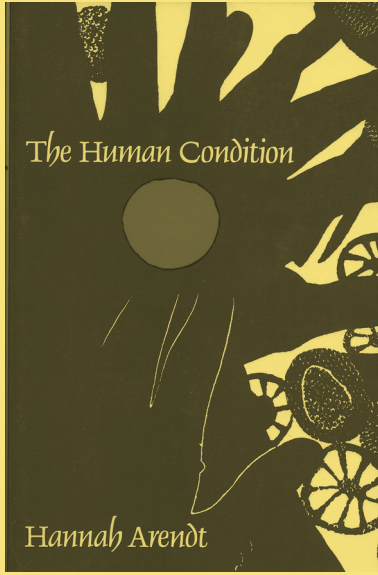
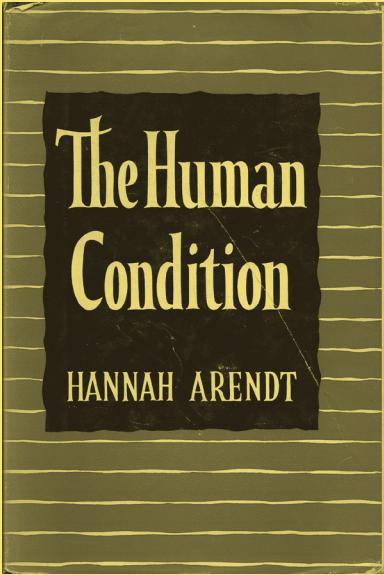
HANNAH ARENDT.

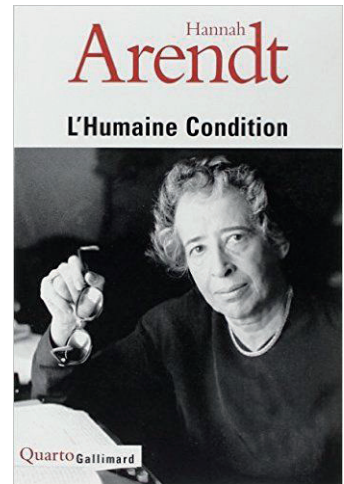
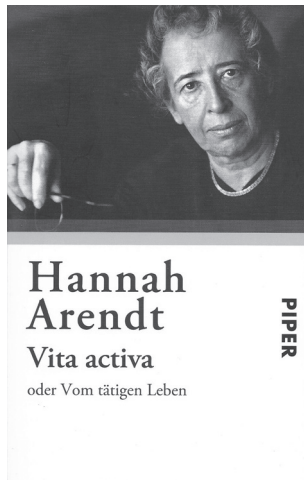
A READING

How architecture can be related to the political ideal that in one way or the other is tangible behind the question of public space within the contemporary urban condition is a question that is not easily answered. The previous chapters revealed this condition: on the one hand a scattered landscape of suburbs and city-centres, malls and business districts, defined by a longing for security and comfort, while on the other hand a particular strive for plurality in order to create an environment of creativity, but which in turn also seems to evoke gentrification and similarity. This condition thus prevents public spaces from playing a central role in the life of all inhabitants of society, preventing it from turning into a public sphere. The somehow liberal ideal of the public sphere, to briefly summarize, is the meeting of different people, the exchange of ideas, to be provoked and challenged not to grant the own perspective and to dismiss other perspectives too easily. It is the space of the meeting of all members of society, no matter their race, class, gender, and worldview. As became clear in the previous chapters, this view largely depends upon the 1962 book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, which only in 1989 was translated into English. Behind the debate, another origin-source are the writings of the German/American philosopher Hannah Arendt, although her thoughts garnered a sparse scholarly response. Arendt's notion of the public realm is slightly different than Habermas's concept of the public sphere. To my mind, these differences offer another – and more clear – view upon the relationship between this political term of the public realm (or public sphere) and concrete public spaces, which are the object and subject of the architectural project. In this chapter I therefore introduce the life and work of Arendt, so that, in the next chapters, I can go in-depth in this relationship between the political and the architectural, the public realm and public space.

I start this chapter with challenging the need to re-read Arendt. It after all might be questionable why architects need philosophers to gain insight in 'what they are doing', in the meaning of architecture. There certainly is a huge gap between the theory and practice of architecture, and the reflections and writings of philosophers. The (recent) history of architecture has shown how difficult it is to bridge that gap, without being struck in superfluous actions, proposals, manifestoes. Nevertheless, thinking about the public, and how that might be related to architecture, to the political and how that is related to public space, is not simply a question that can be covered only within architectural reflections. It needs a conversation with other scientific fields, other experiences – but in that conversation, an important perspective can be unfolded, in order to build an understanding of the meaning of architecture, also in the relationship to the contemporary culture and urban condition. After these reflections, this chapter offers the reader an intellectual biography of Arendt's life and work. It starts with stressing the particularity of Arendt as a thinker, who is, somehow stubborn and not easily captured in a single perspective. Arendt herself after all distances her from the method and position of the philosopher, as she also does not regard herself as a political theorist. She is devoted to actualities, puzzled by what actually happened in the modern age in the Western world – with a marvelous knowledge of the past, the Classical tradition, and cultural references, she sets out to understand these developments, without falling into existing patterns and following existing analysis. She wanted to understand by herself. This stubbornness, this eagerness not to be placed in a particular stream or perspective, is an important figure. What Arendt offers as reflections never is brought to a formula. Arendt keeps away from defining a theory, but instead opens up new questions, and even is not anxious to leave paradoxes and contradictions in her

work. These preliminary remarks on Arendt's attitude opens up the narrative of her life and a brief reflection upon her ideas, which are, as will become clear, are interrelated. Arendt is personally involved in that question of public space – although she does not extensively dwell upon her own experiences, these experiences nevertheless urged the questions that she investigates. The chapter finalizes by enlightening two major theoretical concepts, that are fundamental to her thinking, and which are important to continuously keep in mind during the reflections thereafter.





4.1 Covers of various versions of Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*

4.1 THE NEED TO BRIDGE

1. Michael Kimmelman, 'Foreword', in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth, (eds.), *Beyond Zuccotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA): New Village Press, 2012), xv

2. *Ibid.*, xvf

The whole trajectory of the last two chapters through the urbanized landscape, the suburbs, the strive to secure spaces and places, the exclusive environments, the re-appropriation of the city and the re-valuing of diversity, simply reveals the elusive complexity of physical spaces. It becomes even more elusive when these spaces are stressed through ideas about the public sphere, and thus are mirrored against political ideals of a Western Democratic worldview. How does concrete (public) spaces relate to these ideas and ideals that largely are rendered on a meta-spatial level, if not addressing a virtual realm beyond public space. The question of how architecture contributes to that relationship, which somehow is at the heart of the debate on public space within architectural theory, therefore is not easy to answer. There is no formula on architecture, no toolbox that can be applied to assignments on public space, in order to enhance public space and turn it into a public sphere. Surely, architecture (in)forms literally (public) space, and (public) space (might) offer(s) room to meet others, offer(s) room for strangers to come close, for the exchange of ideas and debate about the future. Public space also offers room for protest and demonstrations, which often are presented as the touchstone of the relationship between public space and the realm of politics. However, there is no law beyond such possibilities of space, no recipe for a successful architectural intervention which unlocks these potentialities. This journey therefore finally came down to the pressing question the *New York Times* architectural critic Michael Kimmelman, urged in his reflection on the Zuccotti Park protests: 'But how do we create them?'¹ How can we today create spaces that are able to bear political meaning? Kimmelman urged this question on the *design* of spaces specifically by his conclusion: these demonstrations, these political activities, took place in 'intentionally incomplete, and at least partly unplanned spaces that are completed in different ways by different users.'² Political happenings, like protests and demonstrations, arise largely in unplanned ways, and take over space regardless of its architecture. The proper question therefore even might be if architecture has any relationship with the public sphere whatsoever. Does architecture matter? Occupy occupied Zuccotti park, a well-defined and well-designed 'public' space, not because of its design, but because of its very location (near Wall Street) and, secondly, because of its status as *privately owned public space*. This of course, first and foremost, urges the suggestion that the public sphere is bound to unplanned events, rather than to specific spaces. Indeed: is architecture at stake? Does architecture have something to offer? Is there even a need for architecture?

These questions actually do not only stress the relationship between actual space and a certain ideal of a political realm that is related to these spaces, which is developed through actual meetings and happenings that take place in that space. Kimmelman's question also suggests two other aspects of architecture as bound to the realm of politics – these two aspects are related to the two sides of architecture itself. Architecture first is an artefact in the world. It shapes the world, and through that, it also shapes our everyday life. The form of this artefact is political, as I will stress in Chapter 6. However, these artefacts are also tools to intervene in the world. Design is a tool of intervention – and since it is related to the world, this always means political intervention. Beyond every space is a moment of 'design', a moment of making decisions and judging upon the world, as I investigate in Chapter 7. Architecture, as we will see, thus always is political. However, despite this dimension of architecture, to shape the political

and offer room for politics to happen, is not evident, as can be concluded from Kimmelman's question.

As a start of an answer to the question of Kimmelman I investigated the design of Parc de La Vilette in Paris, designed by the French-American architect Bernard Tschumi. The park, as I stated, is an exemplary project, in which the relationship between the planned and the unplanned is at the core of the design. Tschumi often emphasized his design as an attempt to accomplish ambiguity, to leave room for the unplanned appropriation of the actual spaces. His main instrument in Parc de La Vilette for this ambiguity is the layered-ness of the design. Of course, such a statement cannot be taken for granted, and therefore I investigated the park itself: not only how it is designed (which is the agency of the architect) but also how it is appropriated (the agency of the public). Through this investigation I thus expanded already the focus of the question from specifically 'architectural design' to a broader understanding of the project of architecture. Architecture is not only about architectural agency through the design of spaces and objects, but also about the artefacts itself and how these evoke imagination, stress representation, and allow appropriation. However, although the park offered insight in most of these categories – and in the daily use indeed is able to offer room for broad and unplanned practices, is open for occupation and appropriation – it nevertheless also showed (again) the often limited agency of architecture (and the architect). In the case of the park, it's public character mainly depended upon its sheer location within the dense urban fabric of the Paris city centre and the need for open and accessible spaces in the immediate environment of the park, the different programs that were added to the park, the infrastructure (that already previously was there), and so on. The architectural project here, as I stated, was a smart way of recognizing the possibilities of the site, and to connect the different elements of the existing location and the requirements of the program brief. The design actually can be described as the articulation of the possible connection between the elements, although the strategy of juxtaposition does not seem to define all aspects into detail.³ The case also showed that the ideal of gathering all groups of people within the same space, this ideal of the public sphere, in the end seems to be beyond reach. As all also will acknowledge: the grid, the follies, the red colour, the paths and routes are important, but they never can be a recipe to be used anywhere else, besides that this design sometimes feels worn out already. It is of another era, out of fashion and outdated.

So what? Are we stuck here, at this very point? The 'how' question of Kimmelman in itself seems unanswerable, period, which might be the reason that most of the writings on architecture and the public sphere, from Michael Sorkin to Sharon Zukin, really remain centred on the level of descriptions of urban and social practices, the lament of loss of these practices by the emergence of new (sub)urban spaces, but fail to address architecture as artefact and agency that somehow relates to these urban and social practices. In these writings architecture often is depicted as the décor of things to happen (which is, admitted, a relationship too), but it does not define any other agency than being the décor of these things happening (or not-happening). But architecture is not simply the counter form of these practices, as is also not the case the other way around: architecture does not predict what happens. But that does not mean that the relationship between these two sides cannot be addressed. Architecture offers room for things to happen: it excludes as well as connects, it offers spaces for events, activities, uprisings, debates, as well as that it deprives, disturbs, violate them within the same gesture.⁴ It has agency and power, although it also is steered by powerful forces beyond its agency, as we've seen previously. It is the manifestation of

3.

It can be argued that, although Tschumi's imagination always will be surpassed by actual practices after a project is build. Architects imagine the future of a situation and its possibilities. The reality, however always is different, and cannot be prescribed in advance. Projects nevertheless start with this imagination of possibilities – otherwise no interventions will be activated.

4.

See Bernard Tschumi, 'Violence of Architecture', in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1996)

society as well as the representation of it. It is the reification of a collective, as well as the private intervention within that collective. It is the outcome of market-driven-processes, as it also defines the market and its processes. The discussion on the relationship between architecture (and its agency) and the public sphere, I would argue, stays too much on the level of social sciences, of political, anthropological, and sociological reflections, and too little addresses architecture itself. What to conclude about architecture then, if in the end the matter of concern is actually a social question – a matter of social practices, and thus of areas architecture can't control, challenge, nor form. This debate thus places architecture indeed in an impasse. If it fails to recognize the relationship between architecture and the social and political practices, there indeed is no way out for the designer. What can he do? There is no way out for the philosopher or sociologist too: since where they will touch upon, specifically in the flow of Habermas's argument on the formation of 'public opinion', is the decay of the public sphere, as it is dominated today by polarizing forces, fake news and alternative facts. The power of public space to gather a plural public seems to be vanished – this does not only count for concrete public spaces, but also for the (new) media, the opinion pages in the newspaper, Twitter feeds, and Facebook pages.

The question of Kimmelman thus cannot be answered once and for all by a particular approach to the design of public spaces, nor by a toolbox of architectural forms that can be applied to the city, which will offer public space in a way that it can be appropriated by the users, or stop the decay of public space politically spoken. There is no univocal architectural answer that can cover all aspects of the pressing question by Kimmelman, period, let alone a particular form, a set of forms, a specific design-strategy, or what else to answer it, period. This does not mean that the question does not make sense. On the contrary, it makes reflection upon the question more urgent. How to understand public space as a matter of plural people, ambiguity, unplanned coincidence but simultaneously also as a matter of architectural design? The question therefore is how we can develop another view upon public space and the field of architecture, which acknowledges today's fundamental changes in public space and how we can understand these as related to the realm of politics, but also acknowledges the fundamental proposition of architecture as an answer-less field (since it is rooted in the fluid conditions of space and time and deal with the human capacity of imagination). Responding to this question means to balance between the realm of social (and political) practices and the realm of architecture, it means to reason from within the practices and to apply to these practices the specific *worldliness* of the profession. When we are able to clarify the relationship between the public and its public practices on the one hand, and the realm of architecture from artefact to agency, and from project to occupation, this not only will help the field of architecture reinvestigate itself, it will also conversely offer new insights to those fields investigating the public sphere: the humanities, philosophy, sociology, political sciences, anthropology and so on.

It is at this point that I want to introduce a chain of thoughts that can be derived from the writings of Hannah Arendt in the debate. Well, to introduce – I have to be precise here, since I am certainly not the first to introduce this political thinker into discourses on architecture – the public and public space. Particularly in the philosophical debate on the public sphere, Arendt's perspective has been discussed extensively. However, this discussion only in a limited sense arrived at the discourse on architecture and the public sphere. Only a few architectural

scholars, historians, critics and designers have reflected upon theme's Arendt have stressed. Most important to be named are both the British-American architect and historian Kenneth Frampton and the Canadian architect and theorist George Baird. Frampton specifically discussed ideas of Arendt in his 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects', an article that has first been published in 1969, and has been republished several times afterwards – particularly as the opening of his collected writings which were published in 2006.⁵ The article therefore certainly can be understood as foundational for his view on architecture (and the world). In recent interviews, articles and lectures, he continues to put Arendt forward as one of his peers.⁶ Although Frampton quite early thus understood the relevance of Arendt's writings for the field of architecture, he never stressed it in respect to the theme of the public sphere, probably since the debate on public space within architecture stems from at least one decade later than the first version of the article. It is actually George Baird that introduces Arendt into the architectural debate on public space, specifically in his book *The Space of Appearance* (1995) and two decades later again in *Public Space* (2012).⁷ Recently also the former Antwerp city-architect Kristian Borret as well as the Italian architect and theorist Pierre Vittorio Aureli has offered provoking attempts to rethink the work of Arendt within distinctive architectural debates – Borret trying to conceptualize public space, Aureli emphasizing political aspects behind the autonomy of architectural form.⁸ Although I will come back to their views, and will discuss them in the following chapters, my aim is that we could gain more in this debate on architecture and the public from Arendt's writings than is discovered and presented until now. I therefore regard this reading of Arendt, that I will offer in the following chapters, as being a relatively new introduction of Arendt's thoughts and ideas in the debate on architecture and the public.

To introduce here once again a philosopher in the debate on physical and concrete (urban) space(s), while we are particularly interested in the relationship with architectural artefacts and architectural agency, needs explanation, particularly since the previous chapters lead to the experience of an impasse: to be struck in a complex relationship between theory and practice, or better said, between actual spaces and ideals beyond these spaces. Should we expect another theorist, with a focus on philosophy, to help us out of this trapped situation? The questions are urgent, we already concluded, although they remained on a theoretical and ideological level. They are not yet answered *architecturally*, if we ever can find an architectural answer at all. It therefore does not seem so obvious to introduce another political thinker in order to answer the quest of public space *architecturally*, specifically not a theorist that wrote her main books addressing the public realm more than five decades ago (without, admittedly, even being concerned about actual urban places).

Arendt published *The Human Condition*, the book in which she most clearly has addressed her ideas about the public realm, in 1958, three years before Habermass published his book on *Öffentlichkeit*, which we touched upon in the previous chapters.⁹ In *The Human Condition* the public realm is one of the major concepts, a term she parallels with 'public space'. As I will argue later, this use of the term 'space' often should be understood in a metaphorical sense, quite detached from actual (urban) public spaces like streets and squares, parks and malls. At first sight, the term 'public space' for Arendt seems to be synonym for 'public realm', which thus seems to have a metaphorical character. Again at first sight, this term 'public realm' seems to be aligned with the term public sphere, as defined by Jürgen Habermas. Like Habermass, also Arendt's concept is based

5.

The first time it is published as 'Labour, Work & Architecture' in Charles Jencks and George Baird (eds.), *Meaning in Architecture* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, The Cresset Press, 1969). A reworked version of this article is published as 'The Status of Man and the Status of His Objects: A Reading of *The Human Condition*', in Melyvn A. Hill (ed.), Hannah Arendt: *The Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979). Frampton thereafter included it in the special issue of the magazine *Architectural Design*, he edited in 1982: Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture and the Critical Present*, *Architectural Design*, no 7/8, 1982. He finally selected it as the opening of his collected writings, published in 2002: Kenneth Frampton, *Labour, Work and Architecture. Collected Essays on Architecture and Design* (London/New York: Phaidon Press, 2002).

6.

See for instance his contribution to *OASE#87*, Frampton, 'Not Individual Property, The Ideas of Alan Colquhoun', 27, as well as his lecture held at the opening of the Structuralism exhibition in the New Institute in Rotterdam in 2015; See also this interview that was published in the summer of 2014 on ArchDaily: Vanessa Quirk, 'Kenneth Frampton: What is Architecture?' 12 Jul 2014. ArchDaily <<http://www.archdaily.com/?p=526742>> [Accessed March 26, 2015]

7.

George Baird, *The Space of Appearance* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1995); George Baird, *Cultural/Political Theory; Street Photography, An Interpretation by George Baird* (Amsterdam: SUN Publishers, 2011)

8.

See Kristian Borret, 'On Domains. The Private, and the Collective', in: Marcel Musch and Eireen Scheurs (eds.), *OASE#54, Re: Generic City* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 2001); Pier Vittorio Aureli, 'Towards the Archipelago, Defining the Political and the Formal in Architecture' in: *Log #11, Observations on Architecture and the Contemporary City* (New York: Anyone Corporation, Winter 2008); Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 2011)

9.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1989)

10.

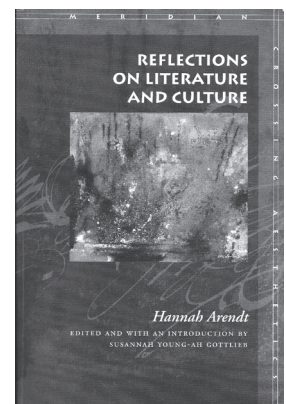
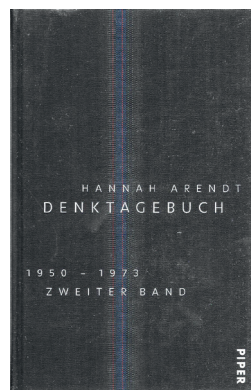
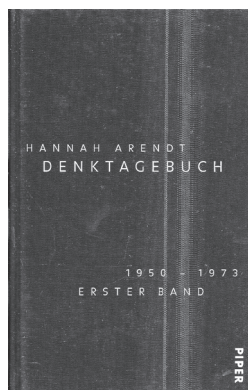
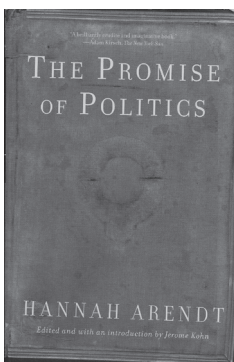
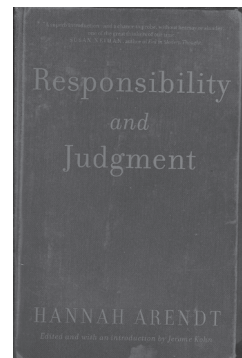
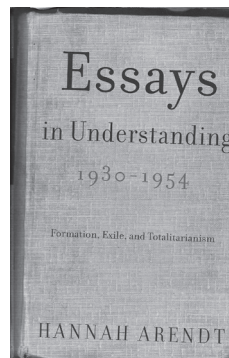
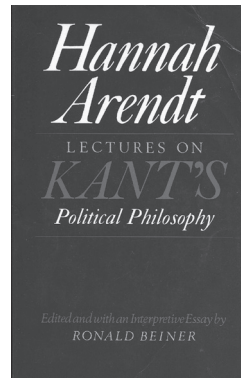
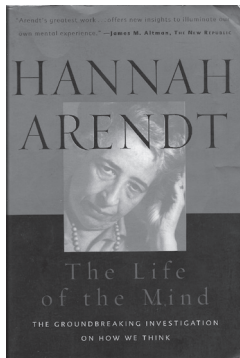
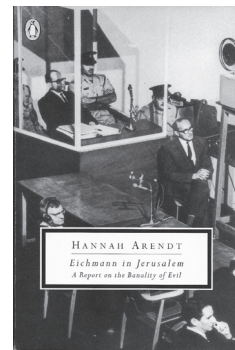
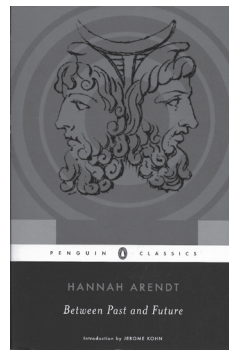
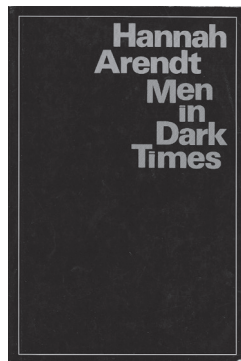
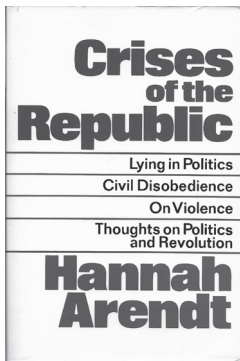
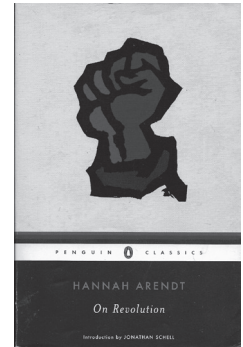
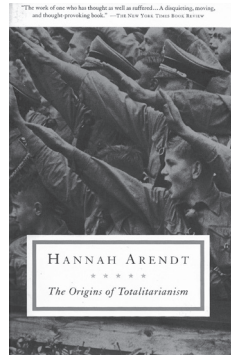
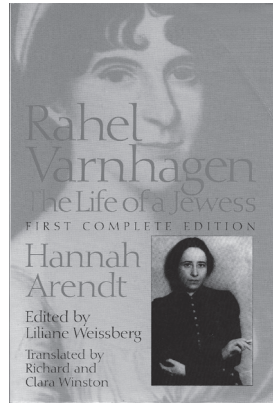
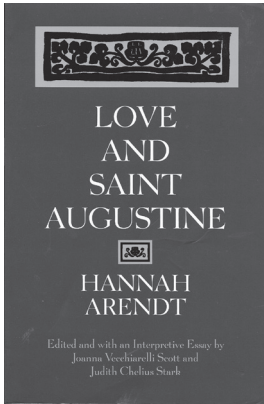
See for instance the (nevertheless) impressive dissertation of my Delft colleague Maurice Hartevelde, *Interior Public Space, On the Mazes in the Network of an Urbanist* (Delft: Technische Universiteit Delft, 2014), 9

11.

I found this quote in Arendt's article, 'Home to Roost', in: Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 270; as Jerome Kohn reveals in the introduction to the collected essays he edited, in which also 'Home to Roost' is published, she used to say it often. Jerome Kohn, 'Introduction to Responsibility and Judgment' in: Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), viii

upon an historic example in which the actual space of the public realm is indisputable: Arendt grounds her concept in the Greek and Roman *polis*, which are urged as the root of the democratic system of politics. As I will investigate in Chapter 5, although both Arendt's and Habermass's concepts seem to be comparable, there are major and important distinctions. However, Arendt's reading of the public realm often is questioned and fiercely criticized when it comes to actual public space. She is blamed to offer just another ideal into the debate: an ideal based on the past and drawn in binary terms, urged by a lament of its vanishing.¹⁰ Would that not again obscure our sight on the specificities of architecture? Does this help us to overcome the ideal of the public sphere in which we are struck? In other words, why again take a view from abroad, why again a detour via a field adjacent to the profession of architecture or urbanism, through seemingly in-tangible theoretical reflections, which certainly are difficult to translate to the field of architecture (a journey which is, as history shows with all sorts of philosophical inquiries, quite risky, very difficult and in much cases results in superfluous and incomprehensible architectural theories)? I of course disagree with this comment: Arendt's thoughts are stubborn, sometimes rebellious, often surprisingly different and open ended. They are only at first sight binary and nostalgic. It indeed seems obvious to read her writings as indeed offering another ideal of a binary distinction between public and private spaces, but this, I will argue later in this chapter, is based on a misreading of her writings. Arendt has a very particular way of dealing with history. Whilst she acknowledges the loss of the past due to the modern times, she nevertheless also argues that we are still living in the past. Arendt therefore uses history, not in order to restore it, neither to go back to a certain ideal, but as a mirror to our contemporary experiences. What she comes up with certainly is not a theory, neither a solution – it's a direction, a path, based upon the recognition of important themes regarding the contemporary situation. Her engagement with the past is not antithetical, which seems to be in the minds of scholars that have argued that we, within the debate on the public sphere, simply need to get rid of all the images of the past in order to value our daily spaces more justly. Arendt strongly opposes that perspective. On the contrary, she argues through her writings, we actually are in need of these images. They are still 'alive' behind our very own and contemporary experiences, Arendt argues. 'The past is never dead, it's not even past', Arendt quotes the writer and Nobel Prize winner William Faulkner.¹¹ This perspective, although it stresses the past as part of the contemporary condition, also does not argue for a linear understanding of history. As if today is the only possible outcome of a progressive past. Again on the contrary – history is not linear at all. It is disruptive, characterized by outbursts of actualities and distinctions, by simultaneous progress and decay. Arendt's urge to 'understand' the contemporary situation, which is behind her writings, therefore is always grasping back and rethinking previous outbursts against a background of more or less hidden historic experiences. Therefore, to bring it back to the discussion on public space: by rethinking historic images, by looking to them from different perspectives, and by relating them to our contemporary experiences, the narratives touched upon not only will reveal dimensions that have been lost over time, what is at stake as well as what differ from previous experiences. These images therefore challenge people involved in the planning and construction of actual public spaces, but also will challenge those involved in the theory and practice of everyday politics – not to go back, nor to restore, but to understand the actualities of today. Public space, politics, everyday life is in need of this continuous challenge, as is the profession of architecture and the whole mechanism of planning and constructing the contemporary everyday

landscapes and symbolic places. The writings of Arendt, the concepts she collected from the past and presented in her books and articles, essays and letters, help to re-invent this debate, not by introducing just another ideal, but by investigating this ideal from other perspectives. The answer therefore, of why the writings of Arendt would be helpful for architects, should arise from the next three chapters, in which I will discuss some of her writings against the background of the field of architecture, concrete physical environments, the architectural project and the agency of the architect.



4.2 I WOULD NOT INSTRUCT YOU

4.2.1 Toronto 1972 – An Introduction

‘What are you? Are you a conservative? Are you a liberal? Where is your position within the contemporary possibilities?’¹²

Imagine the early seventies. America is at war in Vietnam. Still at war, better said. The anti-war movement grows in strength and visibility. Numerous articles are published in newspapers and magazines, and anti-war demonstrations are organized. Throughout the country society is mourning about the loss of troops. President Nixon seems to respond to these voices and negotiates about the withdrawal of the troops. At the same time, however, the troops still bomb cities in Northern Vietnam and Cambodia. The president counts the ‘silent majority’ as supporting the war. Awful images showing the effects of these bombardments – suffering Vietnamese children as well as elderly – are being published in the newspapers nationwide, driving more and more people in the anti-war camp. It is not only this war that dictates the sphere in America in the early seventies. Also the presidential election attracts attention. Or probably better said, the controversies around this election fill the newspaper columns and the discussions on television. President Nixon, a Republican, runs for his second term, while the Democrats still need to choose their candidate (in the end senator George McGovern wins the nomination). Pre-elections are held throughout the States, debates are organized, and the campaign teams are fighting each other. Literally fighting, they actually say: the campaign is unprecedentedly hard. Even more, strange developments are its characteristic. What nowadays is known as ‘The Watergate scandal’ happens: a burglary in the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee in Washington, probably in order to place electronic listening devices meant to overhear the campaign strategies of the Democratic candidate. The burglars were caught, and all evidence pointed towards the camp of president Nixon. He himself rejected responsibility, and even also denied knowledge of the plan to eavesdrop the employees of his opponent. He eventually is re-elected as president in November 1972 – but has to resign a year later when the *Washington Post* journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein make clear that the president himself nonetheless was involved in the scandal, despite his firm denial.

So, imagine this political landscape of Northern America in the early seventies as the context of a conference in Toronto on actual politics. Numerous Canadian and American scholars attended the conference, which was intended to investigate the then actual situation through the lenses of the work of the philosopher Hannah Arendt. Political theorists have gathered, as well as philosophers, sociologists and others involved in political issues – amongst them two scholars from the field of architecture whom we already touched upon: Kenneth Frampton, who offers the audience a lecture based on the mentioned article ‘The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects’, and the architect and then associate professor at the School of Architecture of Toronto University George Baird, who, three decades later, through his *The Space of Appearance* (1995) and *Public Space: Cultural/Political Theory; Streetphotography* (2011) would most extensively introduce and discuss the work of Arendt within the architectural discourse. Teachers, amongst them as well as students, theorists as well as activists (probably roughly the same groups, same generations) – all discussing the concepts Arendt came up with, ranging from action to thinking and beyond – against a background of anti-war protests

12.

Hans Morgenthau, professor of Political Sciences at The New School in New York (where Arendt also did teach regularly), questions Hannah Arendt during a conference at the Toronto University in 1972 on her position vis-à-vis the political circumstances and actualities. Quote taken from Hannah Arendt, ‘On Hannah Arendt’, in: Melvyn A. Hill (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martins Press inc., 1979), 333

13.
See: Arendt 'On Hannah Arendt' and Elizabeth Young Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt, Een Biografie* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Atlas, 2005), 269-270

14.
Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem, A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992)

15.
Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006)

16.
Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt', 301

and revulsion on the political reality of strategy, method, campaign, and even scandals. Whoever reads the report on the conference does feel the eagerness of the audience to act – not only to think and theorize and reflect, as mostly is done within the field of academics, scholars and conferences, but actively respond on actualities.¹³ First, of course through their speeches and essays, in their articles in newspapers and magazines, but surely also through participating in the protests on the streets, in the marches against the war and the president. In this eagerness the audience evidently expected Arendt to support their willingness to act. She, during the conference presented as a political philosopher, was known at least because of two publications: the already mentioned *The Human Condition* (1958) and her report on the Eichmann trial *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1961).¹⁴ *The Human Condition* nowadays is regarded as her *magnum opus*. The book actually reads as a plea for *action*, the very activity of political life, which was, according to Arendt, the distinctive characteristic of the human being. Her emphasis on and surely also celebration of political action moreover was fueled in a book that can be read as an extension of *The Human Condition*, meant to investigate, present and understand concrete forms of political action: *On Revolution* (1961).¹⁵ The public at large however did know Arendt because of a totally different topic: from her report of the Eichmann trial of 1963, which she had followed for the magazine *The New Yorker*. This book has gained attention in the newspapers and caused agitated responses, surely caused by its subtitle: *A Report on the Banality of Evil*. I will come back on this nationwide controversy later in this chapter, which is meant as a biographical sketch of Arendt's life as well as an exploration of her works. For now it is important to know that Arendt blamed Eichmann of 'thoughtlessness'. *The Human Condition* thus investigated the capacity to act, the book on Eichmann the ability to think – action and thinking, the two main topics of Arendt's writings, one can argue.

Thus, it is November 1972, on a conference in Toronto. The audience: eager to stand up and act. The topic: the work of Arendt. Arendt herself was invited as well, as a 'guest of honor. She had replied that she would prefer to be invited to participate.'¹⁶ And present she was, with a quite different response than expected by the audience: no support for their eagerness to act. She actually perplexed the audience with her replies on questions during the conference: she never gave the answer expected. Instead of emphasizing the urge of action, that very moment in time and political situation, she was eager to emphasize the sole and distinctive position of thinking. And it is precisely this emphasis that roused a quite agitated conversation during the conference. Arendt immediately starts to provoke the audience:

'I think I understood something of action, precisely because I looked at it from the outside,'

she states. This slight distinction between participation and reflection, between involvement and distance was well understood by the Toronto professor emeritus of political economy C.B. Macpherson. He replied in disbelief:

'Is Miss Arendt really saying that to be a political theorist and to be engaged are incompatible?'

Arendt again:

'No, but one is correct in saying that thinking and acting are not the same. ...

To the extent that I wish to think I have to withdraw from the world.'

Macpherson replies on his turn:

'But to a political theorist and a teacher and a writer of political theory, teaching, or theorizing is acting.'

Arendt agrees on teaching and theorizing, but is quick to emphasize thinking as distinct from theory.

‘Thinking in its purity is different,’ she states. ‘I have to keep back to a large extent from participating, from commitment. ... What is the subject of our thought? Experience! Nothing else. And if we lose the ground of experience then we get into all kinds of theories. When the political theorist begins to build his systems he is also usually dealing with abstraction. ... I think that commitment easily carry you to a point where you do no longer think. ... I do believe that thinking has some influence on action. But on acting man. Because it is the same ego that thinks and the same ego that acts. ... I really believe that you can only act in concert and I really believe that you can only think by yourself. These are two entirely different – if you want to call it – ‘existential’ positions.’

This perspective astonishes the audience. Why did she now emphasize *thinking* at this very moment? Had Arendt herself not praised action as the ‘highest’ human capacity in *The Human Condition*? And were the actual political circumstances, the war, the political intrigues, the perversion of power, not clearly enough driving towards action? And should this not be seen as the task of academics in the field of political sciences as well as the task of political theorists to inform the public, to influence the opinion of the public, and even to encourage them to protest and resist? Christian Bay, professor of Political Economy at Toronto University asks:

‘I want political theorists of my kind to be men and women of politics first, committed to try to educate ourselves and each other about how to resolve the urgent existential problems that we are up against. ... Hannah Arendt, what can we as political theorists do to see to it that the existential issues – which sometimes have true and false answers – are brought home to more of our fellow citizens, so that they become citizens in the ancient sense?’

But Arendt refuses to underline such urge for the profession of political theorists (although she a couple of months earlier had supported financially some of the anti-war movements in Northern America):

‘These other things – that you saw in the development in the last years – are more or less things of the public mood. And the public mood may be something which I like, and the public mood may be something which I dislike, but I would not see it *my* particular task to inspire this mood when I like it, or to go on the barricades when I dislike it. The unwillingness of people who actually are thinking and are theorists to own up to this, and to believe that this [thinking] is worthwhile, and who believe instead that only commitment and engagement is worthwhile, is perhaps one of the reasons why this whole discipline is not always in such a very good shape. People apparently don’t believe in what they are doing.’

Arendt’s answers thus confuse the audience. What is her point, how does she address actualities, and what do you have to do as a political theorist, as a student in politics, or just as citizen? The Toronto based ‘consultant of social services’, Michael Gerstein, then asks:

‘I wonder, as someone who is or feels himself to be a political actor, how would you instruct me?’

And Arendt replies:

‘No I wouldn’t instruct you. ... I think that you should be instructed when you sit together with your peers around a table and exchange opinions. And then, somehow, out of this should come an instruction: not for you personally, but how the group should act. And I think that every other road of the theoretician who tells his students what to think and how to act is ... my God! These are

17.

The conversation I explore here has been published as Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt', 301-339. This transcription of the conversation is not an exhaustive report of the discussion literally, but is revised and repositioned by Melvyn A. Hill, who was the organizer of the conference. Hill selected fragments of the conversation and grouped it along the themes addressed through it. The transcript thus is an interpretation of what happened at this very conference. I therefore felt free to write here my own version of the discussion, in which I actually follow Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's explanation of the debate in her outstanding biography of Hannah Arendt, *Hannah Arendt, For the Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). I used the Dutch translation, Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 596-570

18.

The political philosopher Seyla Benhabib mentions the student protests even as one of the moments of joy and excitement (as well as concern) in her life. She writes: 'For Arendt, the student movement was proof that every generation could bring something new into the public-political world, that the capacity for "natality", for initiating something new and unprecedented and the capacity for "plurality", for discovery and enjoying the world through action-in-concert, were not exhausted.' Seyla Benhabib, 'Hannah Arendt's Political Engagements', in: Roger Berkowitz, Jeffrey Katz, and Thomas Keenan (eds.), *Thinking in Dark Times* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 59-60. Arendt herself answered that question during an interview with the German writer Adelbert Reif in 1970: 'I welcome some of the goals of the movement, especially in America, where I am better acquainted with them than elsewhere; towards others I take a neutral attitude, and some I consider dangerous nonsense – as, for example – politicising and "refunctioning" (what the German call *umfunktionieren*) the universities, that is, perverting their function, and other things of that sort. But not the right of participation. Within certain limits I thoroughly approve of that.' And her enjoyment: 'the first thing that strikes me is its determination to act, its joy in action, the assurance of being able to change things by one's own efforts.' Hannah Arendt (and Adelbert Reif), 'Thoughts on Politics and Revolution, A Commentary' in: Hannah Arendt, *The Crisis of the Republic* (San Diego/New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1969), 201-202

19.

Which of course was even more perplexing since Arendt herself had also written about politics in the perspective of the Vietnam War, as for instance in her essay 'Lying in Politics', which was published in

adults! We are not in the nursery! Real political action comes out as a group act. And you join that group or you don't.'

The answer actually didn't help that much. The audience still was confused. It is at this very moment that the professor of political science at *The New School* in New York, Hans Morgenthau, who Arendt actually knew quite well since she also lectured at *The New School* on a regular base, asks the question I quoted above already:

'What are you? Are you a conservative? Are you a liberal? Where is your position within the contemporary possibilities?'¹⁷

Arendt, the *advocate of action*, is not advocating action at all! The audience couldn't believe what they heard, which can be read through their responses, their comments and their questions. And it also is the experience of reading the transcription of this discussion today. This Arendt, still seen today as *the* philosopher dealing with concrete political action and revolution, the philosopher who not only thought about action generally but also never resigned investigating extensively political actualities, here refuses to act, refuses to make up her mind facing the actual political situation! Arendt indeed had written in admiration about the revolution in Hungary in 1956 and the student protests in America in the sixties. She even, quite soon after the outburst of these last protests, visited the students of Columbia University in New York – she actually lived around the corner of the campus – to talk and support them.¹⁸ During her lifetime she did publish lots of essays on political issues, on culture and education, on the Jewish question, on 'Europe and the Atom Bomb', on Religion, on Communism, on history, on racism – just to mention some of the actual topics she addressed – in magazines and newspapers distributed widely throughout the world like *Aufbau*, *Partesian Review*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Der Monat*, *The Nation* or more narrowly distributed amongst philosophers, historians, theologians, and political theorists like *Jewish Social Studies*, *The Review of Politics*, and so on. And of course, although she kept distance to actual politics, through these articles she was involved in debates about actual situations, engaged towards certain perspectives and stances. Her articles however gained praise as well as fierce objection, but she never ran away from criticism on her work, and always was eager to discuss the concepts she had introduced and loved to defend the reflections on actualities she disseminated.

However, at this very moment, she continuously refuses publicly to join the protests and the protesters outside the conference hall and moreover even is rejecting a public role for political theorists and educators gathered at this conference inside the conference hall.¹⁹ She emphasizes the audience not to follow a theory, but, on the contrary, to think for themselves. As if the eagerness to protest was roused by 'a theory', an abstract idea. As if these people did not think at all.²⁰ For Arendt, however, this last remark is crucial: to think for oneself is a central motive behind her writings.

Although the transcription of this discussion surely is not Arendt's most striking text, neither does it investigate her work in astonishing ways or is it seen amongst 'Arendt-scholars' as – finally – declaring her oeuvre, and moreover, it might sometimes even evoke confusion about her ideas, I nevertheless want to use this transcript in this chapter as a trail through her life and works. I will use the transcript as an introduction to a couple of concepts and insights that she dwelled upon and explored in her work, topics that I afterwards, in the following chapters, will investigate again and will expand within an architectural context. Every now

and then I will quote the text, sometimes extensively as above, sometimes just in a short note – a trail of steppingstones throughout this chapter. Although it probably is not obvious to grant this transcript critique like I will do, nevertheless there also are reasons to do so. The first reason obviously just is a personal love for transcripts like this: the liveliness of those texts, the meandering, the boldness, the spoken and unspoken words, all due to the critical questions and smart objections, and of course the answers, reflections and attempts to explain a point already taken differently by the subject that is questioned. The second reason is that, being a transcription of a dialogue and despite the confusion at first sight, it gives an unmistakable insight in the thinking of Arendt – particularly in the way she thinks, her *modus operandi*. In the discussion Arendt somehow is very reflective upon her work, which of course partly was due to questions the audience came up with. They asked for explanation of earlier stances, for explorative examples, they came up with quotes, taken from her own works and writings – she had to be reflective, due to which this transcript somehow thus reads as a reflection upon a working life. I guess this is even more enhanced because of the very personal circumstances Arendt had to deal with during the first years of the seventies: the recent loss of her most important relatives: the German philosophers Heinrich Blücher and Karl Jaspers. Blücher was her husband, Jaspers was the (famous) professor with whom she had written her dissertation back in Germany in the thirties. With both of them she had a continuous conversation about actual developments in the world. With Blücher, on a daily base, at their dining table, and with Jaspers through an extensive *Briefwechseln* and regularly visits.²¹ The loss of both *Gesprächspartners* drove her to reflection as well, rethinking her path through life, reconsidering her aim, approach and stances throughout work.

A third reason to use this text is the openness of a conversation like this: it is more ‘open’, multi interpretable than an essay, article or book, creating an overview and cross sections through her life and work. It comes forwards as a trail of trials, nicely, indeed, meandering between abstract addresses and concrete examples, bold statements and nuanced responses, references to her own biography and reflections on the actual situation, combining diverse elements, early thoughts and very dense and well considered concepts. Especially through the questions, the concrete examples and the trials, it explains earlier concepts differently, helps to reflect on her work, on the aim of her writings, the reason she addresses certain topics and handling actualities.

The very last reason is actually even more odd: it is this very ungraspable character of the text itself, this stubborn quality that makes it a perfect trail for this chapter. The text actually shows that Arendt was non-dogmatic in her thinking. She would not prescribe a certain path to go, nor did she want to instruct others how to act. Arendt herself continuously was on the move, she rejected a static position.

So: why was Arendt at this very moment rejecting something she had celebrated in her *magnum opus*? I guess the answer is threefold. First of course is the audience she addressed. Although we only know of (assistant) professors asking questions, the audience surely was filled with a large amount of students as well. As history shows, it is mostly students that are willing to act – to go out and to demonstrate. But Arendt, although earlier appreciating this eagerness (see her attitude in 1968), she now blamed it to be based on theory, rather than on an enhanced personal response. She moreover reacts fiercely to professor Bay, who directly states his expectation for his students to stand up, and on the consultant

November 1971 in *The New York Review of Books*, and a year earlier did publish an essay called ‘Civil Disobedience’ in *The New Yorker*. Both essays are republished in a 1969 collection of essays: Hannah Arendt, *Crisis of the Republic* (San Diego/New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1969)

20.

The previous mentioned interview with Adelbert Reif, which was published in 1971 in *The New Yorker*, somehow shines light on this rejection of ‘action’: there is a lack of ‘real analysis’ amongst the protesters, as well as a lack of a group of real revolutionaries, Arendt states. ‘In this respect I see absolutely no one, near or far, in a position to do this. The theoretical sterility and analytical dullness of this movement [she actually reflects on the student revolt of 1968 and further] are just as striking and depressing as its joy in action is welcome.’ Arendt (and Reif), ‘Thoughts on Politics and Revolution’, 206

21.

Hannah Arendt – Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926-1969 (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1992). Arendt corresponded actively with lots of people around her. After her death, besides her correspondence with Jasper, also her correspondence with her husband Heinrich Blücher, the philosopher Martin Heidegger, and her friend and writer Mary McCarty were published; *Between Friends, The correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy 1949-1975* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1995); *Within Four Walls, The Correspondence between Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher 1936-1968* (New York/San Diego/London: Harcourt Inc, 1996); *Hannah Arendt – Martin Heidegger, Brieven en andere getuigenissen 1925-1975* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Atlas, 2004)

22.
Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*
(New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978)

23.
Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt', 305

Gerstein who asks her how she would instruct him that very moment: 'These are adults!' she states. 'We are not in the nursery!' Instruction is a wrong approach of education and action. Education only makes sense if it urges the students to think for themselves. And action is something that starts 'bottom-up', it cannot be the outcome of a theory, it cannot be nailed, nor can it be organized 'top-down'. It cannot be instructed, but should arise through the thinking and reflection of the people themselves. The outcome of the thinking process will only eventually become action, through appearing in public and through convincing others to act as well. Action, in other words, only emerges as outcome of this exchange of perspectives. Or as Arendt call it: action only rises and gains power if it becomes action 'in concert'. You think by yourself, but you have to act in concert. This also counts the other way around, Arendt argues: you cannot act without this previous moment of thinking. Her rejection of action that very moment somehow has to be read as urging of the students to think for themselves, and challenging the scholars to also urge their students to think for themselves.

The importance of thinking for her, at that very moment, of course has a reason. The very moment of the conference, she was dealing with this topic of thinking by herself. Of course it was roused by her concern on the thoughtlessness of modernity, a concern she developed during a reflection on the answers of Eichmann during his trial. Apart from her publication of her reflection on the trial, she also had taken up a project that was in her mind already years earlier: writing a consistent investigation in the very topic of thinking. She literally was writing the first chapters of what we now know as *The Life of the Mind*, the threefold study she had planned to publish on the topic of thinking.²² This, I would argue, is the second reason she was focusing on thinking that very moment, rather than on action; although she told the audience not to be ready to tell the public much about it, she even admits not to be sure of success in writing about it.²³

Lastly, this 'thinking on thinking' surely also roused an autobiographical reflection on her own path through life. Of course, this can be understood as a devotion to thinking – but Arendt understood it differently. She was not the philosopher, just thinking on topics, striving to unfold 'truths'. She expressed every now and then that she only was out to understand – understand not general perspectives, nor theories and worldviews, but – indeed – actualities. Her work should not be understood as celebration of action solely. Arendt cannot be seen as an *activist* philosopher, not a philosopher *and* activist. Her work is not activism, nor does it challenge people to act on certain topics. Her reflection upon action is much more ontological and phenomenological than to stir up, to activate, or to move her audience politically. The reason Arendt investigated action was not to present a concept here that should be applied, but differently, it only fits in an investigation of understanding the 'things' happening – and that 'thing' happening here was the decline of the public realm and the withdrawal from the world of modern life and (bureaucratic) political institutions. That eagerness to understand actually makes her work strongly personal: thinking, according to her, indeed was to 'think for oneself', beyond systems, theories, the *Zeitgeist*. If the outstanding characteristic of thinking is the thinking against theories and systems, no pre-cooked stances can be embraced, no leaders that can be followed, no models can be adopted, no theories can be joined.

This, it is this view she increasingly developed, adapted and adopted that drove her to respond in a reflective position 'outside action' during the conference. This surely was not only a recent thought of Arendt that very moment, but, as I would argue, is the underlying characteristic of her work throughout her life. It cannot be caught on a certain position, nor circumscribed by a clear theory, nor

written down in a dogma. That also counts for her answers in Toronto: they could not be grasped immediately and thus astonished the audience. That of course is the reason the discussion in Toronto on a certain moment came together in this single question of Hans Morgenthau:

‘What are you?’

The answer Arendt gave Morgenthau is characteristic: it is a refusal to be positioned.²⁴ Not in her own work, neither in the categories she has introduced in her work, nor in known political positions or in any other categories:

‘I don’t know. I really don’t know and I’ve never known. And I suppose I never had any such position. You know, the left think that I am conservative, and the conservative sometimes think I am left or I am a maverick or God knows what. And I must say, I couldn’t care less. I don’t think that the real questions of this century will get any illumination by this kind of thing.

I don’t belong to any group. You know the only group I ever belonged to were the Zionists. This was only because of Hitler, of course. And this was from ’33 to ’43. And after that I broke. The only possibility to fight back as a Jew and not as a human being – which I thought was a great mistake, because if you are attacked as a Jew you have to fight back as a Jew.’²⁵

The aim of this chapter nevertheless is to deliver the reader an introduction *into* the work and life of Arendt – my reading of her work, so to say. Not to position Arendt in a certain position, but to lay-out a framework against which three of the famous distinctions she had dwelled upon throughout her working life – labor, work, and action; the public, the private, and the social; thinking, willing, and judging – can be introduced into the field of architecture (and the public sphere) and interpret them vis-à-vis architectural practices, architectural thinking, building, and design. This chapter thus has to be seen as an introduction *into* the thinking of Arendt: it can be read as both an explanation of her works and concepts as well as a ‘*leading into*’ her approach, effort, aims, concepts and objectives as well.²⁶ The chapter did start with the somehow ungraspable character of (the work of) Arendt: how she puzzled the audience in Toronto. In the following paragraphs Arendt somehow herself responds to the question of Morgenthau: ‘What are you?’ This question of course was frequently asked, and through a couple of interviews, letters, and introductory texts, I construct a certain ‘self-reflection’ of Arendt. The third part of this chapter presents a biography, of course accompanied by short investigation into her works as well. The chapter closes with an exploration of two notions that are fundamental to Arendt’s thinking, notions that she did explore throughout her broad writings.

4.2.2 *In order to Understand*

Arendt regularly is introduced, as I did above, as a *political philosopher*. Although this is a quite accepted understanding of the characteristics of her work, and of her position vis-à-vis the profession of political sciences as well as philosophy, Arendt however would have opposed it. The work of Arendt indeed explores all kinds of issues encircling politics philosophically. She nevertheless emphasized the essence of politics and philosophy to be two opposite trajectories. Although being educated as a philosopher, she did not qualify her own work as being philosophy. She had felt the urge to disengage from this field over the years. In the introduction to the *The Life of the Mind* – a book that *nota bene* easily can be seen as her most philosophical work: it explores the character of the human capacity of thinking, and willing (and would also have included a part on judging,

24.

See for instance also: Arendt (and Reif), ‘Thoughts on Politics and Revolution’, 211

25.

Arendt, ‘On Hannah Arendt’, 334

26.

I refer here to the title of an essay of Arendt: Hannah Arendt, ‘Introduction into Politics’, in: Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005). According to Jerome Kohn, who was her last assistant at *The New School* in New York and who edited a couple of volumes with essays of Arendt after her death, was not meant as an introduction into the study of the field of political sciences but ‘a *leading into* (*intro-ducere*) genuine political practices,’ as he writes in his introduction to the collection of essays of Arendt that he edited and collected in named *The Promise of Politics*: Jerome Kohn, ‘Introduction’, in: Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), viii

27.
Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 3

28.
Stated in an interview with the German writer Günter Graus, Hannah Arendt, “‘What Remains? The Language Remains.’” A conversation with Günter Graus. Published in Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954, Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 2

29.
This is an important remark on Arendt’s relationship with history to have in mind, and upon which I come back later in this chapter

30.
Arendt, “‘What Remains? The Language Remains.’” 2

31.
Arendt, ‘Introduction *into* Politics’, 93

32.
Ibid., 96

if Arendt could have finished it) – she literally warns the reader not to regard her as a ‘Denker von Gewerbe’, a term the German philosopher Immanuel Kant once coined to describe the philosopher: a professional thinker.²⁷ That actually is an important note, concerning the aim of the book. Whereas philosophy, according to Arendt, is dealing essentially with eternal truths, the big questions beyond life, her object is different. And whereas philosophy is ‘extremely burdened by tradition,’ from which the philosopher cannot withdraw, she on the contrary aimed to rethink actualities and actual phenomenon with eyes ‘unclouded by philosophy,’ as she told the journalist Günther Gaus in an interview in 1964.²⁸ This objective, which can be understood as her interest in political issues, I would stress, is the essence of her work: understanding actualities anew – although without losing the historical roots of actual developments and phenomenon out of sight.²⁹ Arendt questions philosophy potentiality to be of any help in this aim – which is precisely the opposition she draws between politics on the one hand and philosophy on the other, the outbreak of actualities on one hand, and an extremely precise tradition on the other. Arendt of course is quick to admit that the tension between the fields of politics and philosophy can be vital, and even probably does need each other (I would stress that her work is an intriguing example of this tension: it indeed should not be seen as a trial to frame the world in philosophical constructions and eternal truths, but as a particular response to and a trial to reflect on the actualities of the world, of her everyday environment, of its current political circumstances and even their extraordinary incidents).

Political philosophy in Arendt’s view thus is a *contradictio interminis*, and she urges this statement with four aspects. The first is the above-mentioned ‘burden of tradition’. Contemporary history, actualities, and nowadays particular questions, according to Arendt, do ask for reflection that is not bounded by tradition. The second aspect is the particular aim of each professional field. The field of politics investigates the now and its eruptions, the rumours of the street and the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Philosophers, on the other hand, aim to dwell upon the big questions of life. The fluidness of the now, which is the aim of the political perspective, only seems to disturb and distort the philosophers aim to discover and unfold eternal truths – these after all are to be found beyond the world, beyond the concerns and events of everyday life. Philosophers thus feel the urge to withdraw from all the eruptions of the now, which is the third consideration: the philosopher’s need to withdraw from the world, literally as well metaphorically, like Plato hid himself in his famous cave to be able to imagine the good and construct his image of the ideal and the state, and also Heidegger, whom Arendt knew personally very well, preferred his workshop in the German countryside. But whereas the philosopher has to withdraw from the world, the field of politics asks for a turn towards the world and all its distorting and disturbing voices. Arendt, somehow in line with the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, urges an engagement with the world and its actualities: contrary to withdrawal engagement. Arendt stresses this oppositional account one step further. Whereas the philosopher is dwelling upon eternal truths and ‘speaks in the name of all mankind’, politics doesn’t aim for such objectivity or neutrality whatsoever.³⁰ It ‘is based on the fact of human plurality’, Arendt writes in an essay titled ‘Introduction *into* Politics’.³¹ Philosophy is concerned about *man*, politics about *men*. Philosophy is ‘metaphysical’, politics ‘social’, one can argue. ‘From the very start’, Arendt writes, ‘politics organizes those who are absolutely different with a view to their relative equality and in contradistinction to their relative differences.’³²

This rejection of the field philosophy in favour of the field of politics is characteristic of the work of Arendt. Almost all of her writings encircle the question of the *now*. How to regard the *now*, the actual situations, contemporary phenomena and the actualities by itself. In order to understand actual tides, modernity, its accidents and events, its actualities and novelty, a perspective is needed which is located *in* the world, amidst and in conversation with the contemporary society and with its history. Her work thus can be read as a response and reflection of current political issues or incidents – of which she always searches for its historical roots. Her magnificent knowledge of the philosophical tradition and Western politics and her knowledge of history, especially Greek, Latin and Roman history is tangible at every page she wrote. She nevertheless also never took a sole historical perspective; she was not solely concerned about the understanding of the root of a phenomenon solely. History as well as the tradition of philosophy are both always used by Arendt as a conversation with her contemporaries and preliminaries, the reader and the critic, discussing a topic from several viewpoints, not to construct final answers or a theory like philosophers do, but in order to open up new perspectives. Arendt thus relates freely to the history and tradition of philosophy, in order to keep the freedom to engage with actualities, and even describes novelties to what happened due to modernity, she does not reject history in her aim to understand these actualities and novelties. On the contrary: her political view uses history to which today is related, although not as a linear process, but rather as points of references.

While she thus rejected to be seen as a *political philosopher*, she sometimes presented herself as a *political theorist* – whereas this ‘theorist’ should be seen as oppositional to the practicing politicians. Arendt never applied her work to a certain party, nor felt the urge to be involved in politics herself. The description of ‘theorist’ nevertheless also can be misinterpreted in a different direction. Despite being a ‘theorist’, she never felt the need to construct a new *theory*. She always rendered her work as strive to *understand* what was going on, especially on the political domain. This notion of ‘understanding’ again and again comes to the fore: In interviews, in introductions to her writings, in letters and also in discussions like in Toronto.³³

‘Now I will admit one thing,’ Arendt stated, ‘I will admit that I am, of course, primarily interested in understanding.’³⁴

It is the very eagerness to ‘understand’ what had happened in the West, politically. Arendt has given a closer description of her own professional approach. In a letter to the German philosopher Karl Jaspers she renders herself as someone between a ‘historian and a publicist,’ disengaging from philosophy and theory, as well as disengaging from the actual practice and pragmatism of politics. This strive actually shows a deep understanding of the contemporary circumstances of everyday life by Arendt, as it is deeply influenced by the condition of modernity, by actualities and novelties. Everyday life cannot be captured in dogma’s and ideologies, which are to fixed to leave room for the otherness caused by unpredictable and unprecedented outbursts of history. The actualities of contemporary politics and recent transformations and mutations of society, the impact of the sciences, of statistics, of economic developments on human life, cannot be understood from a perspective outside the world, nor should they be summarized and abstracted in a theory. The impact of these actualities, the world-changing events in politics that she had experienced herself, and the ever-changing characteristic of contemporary everyday life cannot be recognized from the transcendental perspective, nor from a theoretical position, but only can be re-thought and understood in a continuous conversation. Neither contemporary theories

33. For instance in: Arendt, “‘What Remains? The Language Remains’”, 8; see also Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Introduction [what we are doing]

34. Arendt, ‘On Hannah Arendt’, 303

35.
Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 8 [emphasizes in original]

36.
Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future. Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 14

37.
Ibid., 14

38.
Ibid., 14

nor eternal truths will help. Arendt's writings are exemplary in this respect: she never easily follows a path already known. She deconstructs existing and popular concepts and theories, constructs arguments, unfolds historical perspectives, asks questions and develops insights which are startling and provocative, but never turns them into a new theory, a dogma, a closed system of thinking. This characteristic makes her writings nice reads but simultaneously also hard to grasp.

Arendt's turn towards the world and its actualities – which is for the perspective I develop on architecture the essential move of Arendt – and the simultaneous rejection of those fields of professional thinking and reasoning does not mean that she pleads for novelty as the outcome of this thinking. On the contrary! An idea, according to Arendt, never is without predecessors. 'Her own philosophizing', writes the psychotherapist and Arendt's biographer Elizabeth Young-Bruehl in her recent essay *Why Arendt Matters*, 'always began from particular, concrete experience, which set her wondering, exploring' in order to 'discover *basic* experiences, which she conceptualized and described in carefully chosen, illuminating detail.'³⁵ That ultimately was her goal, which we, as present-day readers of her work, should have in mind continuously: to think and rethink freely, to understand, never to prescribe but to discuss and investigate the actualities, turning this thinking from contemplation into reflection on actualities and from withdrawal from the world towards the very heart of the public debate. She therefore preferred to write essays (or lectures), since they can 'arise out of the actuality of political incidents',³⁶ while they don't have the pretention to deliver a final analysis nor answers, and moreover since through a range of essays different viewpoints can be explored, examined, and emphasized simultaneously. She did, for instance, give the book *Between Past and Future* the meaningful subtitle *Eight Exercises in Political Thought*,³⁷ which shows that she depicts the essay essentially as an exercise, a trial to look from a specific viewpoint in order to unfold new insights in the contemporary circumstances or new views on its history. But it essentially is and remains an exercise. In the introduction to the mentioned collection of essays, Arendt writes:

'My assumption is that thought itself arises out of incidents of living experience ... Since these exercises move between past and future, they contain criticism as well as experiment, but the experiments do not attempt to design some sort of utopian future, critique of the past, of traditional concepts, does not intent to 'debunk.'³⁸



4.3 Portraits of Hannah Arendt

4.3 A BIOGRAPHY

4.3.1 *Eine Verraten Jugend*

Arendt's biography actually is proof of this perspective: 'Thought itself arise out of incidents of living experience'.³⁹ If something became clear to Arendt, then it is this 'realism of reality' and its impact on our thinking. 'What is the subject of our thought?' she asks the audience at the Toronto conference I started this chapter with. 'Experience! Nothing else,' she answers. Or like she had written in a letter to the writer and her friend Mary McCarthy: 'Thinking starts after an experience of truth has struck home.'⁴⁰ Those three remarks on the very origin of our thinking and our eagerness to understand for Arendt neither was a theoretical construct, nor a philosophical reflection, but indeed a living experience. All her works encircle the eagerness to understand almost one single event: being excluded from the public realm as a Jew in Germany in the years previous to World War II – an experience we can summarize as 'the shock of reality' that had struck home. Hannah Arendt was born on October 14th, 1906, in a nonreligious and assimilated German Jewish family in Linden, one of the suburbs of Hannover.⁴¹ Already at the age of three, her father got ill and had to resign from his job at an electro-engineering office. Because of his resignation, the family moved to Königsberg in the very East of Germany, where both her father, Paul Arendt, and her mother, Martha Arendt-Cohn, were born. Their family still lived there. This city, nowadays known as Kalingrad, Russia – it was annexed by the Soviet Union according to the Potsdam agreement after World War II –, once was also the home of philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1802).⁴² Arendt already studied the work of her former fellow citizen at the age of 16 and somehow was struck by it: at the time of her sudden death in 1975, she was lecturing at *The New School* in New York on his *Critique of Judgement*.⁴³

In an autobiographical sketch, that she had written in 1925, Arendt reflected on her youth in sombre terms: 'hilflosen, verraten', helpless, betrayed.⁴⁴ That of course had to do with the illness of her father, who died in 1913 at the age of 40. She thus had to be raised by her mother solely. Due to her family, however, she learned to think socially and politically independently. Her grandparents from both sides were middle-class religious Jews, continuously searching for a certain reconciliation between their Jewishness on the one hand and being an inhabitant of the country of Germany on the other. Arendt's parents both left behind this question of race and religion; they on the contrary were concerned with German politics and joined the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Arendt's mother especially admired the more revolutionary strains of the SPD, particularly of the group lead by Rosa Luxemburg. The question of Jewishness, although not prominent in their family life, nonetheless was always present in Arendt's youth. In an interview Arendt remembered: 'When my teachers made anti-Semitic remarks – usually they were not directed at me, but at my classmates, particularly at the eastern Jewesses – I was instructed to stand up immediately, to leave the class and to go home.'⁴⁵

Soon after Arendt's father died from Syphilis, and with the outbreak of the First World War, she and her mother fled to Berlin, since her mother feared the capturing of Königsberg by the Russians. The Cohns were actually Russians by birth: they were refugees of Russian anti-Semitism. Although the war still was raging, the region was peaceful again after ten weeks. Arendt and her mother therefore decided to return to Königsberg. After a few years of involvement in the local political scene, Arendt's mother married Martin Beerwald, who provided

39. Arendt, *Between past and Future*, 14

40. In a letter to her friend Mary McCarthy, *Between Friends, The correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy*, 24

41. For this short biography, I dwell on a couple of secondary works, of which the brilliant biography of Elisabeth Young-Bruehl is most important: *Hannah Arendt, For the Love of the World*. I actually used the Dutch translation, which incomprehensibly is entitled *Hannah Arendt, Een biografie*, which is far less powerful and covering Arendt's life and works. Besides this biography most important in my reading of the work and life of Arendt are again Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, as well as Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2003); the analysis by the French philosopher and feminist Julia Kristeva, simply called *Hannah Arendt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); the close reading of Arendt in the American context by Richard H. King, *Hannah Arendt and America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015) and some articles and the introductions to the series of edited essays of Arendt by Jerome Kohn, with whom I also had the pleasure to meet and discuss Arendt's ideas extensively.

42. See for an inspiring description of the youth of Arendt in Königsberg: Jan Brokken, *Baltische Zielen*, Chapter 'De stad van Hannah Arendt' (*The City of Hannah Arendt*) (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Atlas, 2010), 215-245

43. Her notes for the lecture series on Kant's *Critique of Judgment* was published as Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992)

44. In 'Die Schatten', which are part of the Arendt Papers, which are archived in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C.; I quote via Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 84

45. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, 'From the Pariah's Point of View. Reflections on Hannah Arendt's Life and Work', in: Melvin A. Hill (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martins Press inc., 1979), 5

financial security to the family till the mid-1920s, when his manufacturing firm went bankrupt. Arendt in the meantime, caused by a mix of stubbornness and recalcitrance, dropped out of school, followed some personal chosen courses at the university in Berlin, and passed her exams successfully through private study. In Berlin she joined the colleges of Romano Guardini, a Christian existentialist who lectured on the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, colleges that made her decide to study theology, although not being Christian herself.⁴⁶ After her exams – her *Abitur* that gave her the right to enter the universities officially – from 1924 onwards, she indeed studied theology and philosophy at the university of Marburg, after the bankruptcy of her stepfather, with financial help of an uncle. The years of her studies, between the two World Wars, were relatively peaceful. The most eminent thinkers of Germany in that period taught her: she followed the colleges of philosophers like Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger⁴⁷ and theologians like Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich. Quite soon, however, she completely focussed on the field of philosophy, which she later described as her ‘first love’. After finalizing her studies in 1926, she wrote a dissertation at the University of Heidelberg on the notion of ‘love’ in the work of Augustine under the guidance of the philosopher Karl Jaspers, which was finalized in 1929.⁴⁸

Indeed, the turn towards politics – or the partial disengagement with philosophy, as I above put forward as the very characteristic of her work – actually took place quite a while after her studies, and only after ‘the shock of reality has struck home’. In a reflection she called herself naïve during her studies. Whereas Jaspers, who guided her through her dissertation, already did plea for the freedom of speech in the political realm as well in the academic spheres, Arendt was not interested. She was interested in philosophy *an sich*, she was involved in theology, and in classical Greek literature, but not in such actual questions. It had been Heidegger that introduced her to the classical sources of philosophy, and it was Jaspers that helped her cultivate her interest in theology, especially in the worldview of Augustine. Even her dissertation doesn’t address ‘political’ issues, despite the dramatic change of the political sphere during these three years she was working on till 1929. She wrote the dissertation, nonetheless the subject, with a strict philosophical attitude. While not politically engaged, the dissertation nevertheless already bears the seed of what I understand to be the main topic of her work afterwards, *the turn towards the world*. In her dissertation she confronts and discusses two different and seemingly opposite Christian notions: first to live in the world and to ‘love thy neighbour as thyself’ as the commandment urges,⁴⁹ while, second, at the same time being in the world, but not ‘from this world’, as Jesus states.⁵⁰ The first urges the Christian to turn toward and engage in the world, while the latter is stressed in an unworldly or extra-worldly Christian Theology. The lack of ‘worldliness’ that can emerge out of the latter perspective bothered her completely – a concern I will emphasize in the final parts of this chapter.⁵¹

With Karl Jaspers Arendt maintained a warm relationship till the death of Jaspers in 1969. Jaspers, born in 1883, actually studied medicine, and started his career as a practicing psychiatrist at a hospital in Heidelberg. He also was interested in psychological and philosophical topics, and was, besides his daily work at the hospital, able to publish thorough studies in these fields. After a while, he took a position as a teacher in psychology at the University of Heidelberg, and again after a while turned to a position as a professor of philosophy at the same university in 1923. Unfortunately he had to retire from this position in 1937,

46. ‘I had some misgivings only as to how one deals with this [theology] if one is Jewish ... how one proceeds. I had no idea, you know.’ Quote of Arendt via Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt*, 13

47. As we will see, Heidegger’s writings have been very important for Arendt. When she starts her studies, Heidegger is still very young, but already is a professor in Philosophy. In a reflection on the situation in Weimar, and especially on the academia, Arendt describes Heidegger as ‘There was hardly more than a name, but a name that traveled all over Germany like the rumor of the hidden king’. Hannah Arendt, ‘Martin Heidegger at Eighty’ in: *The New York Review of Books* (October 21, 1971)

48. Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996)

49. Leviticus 19:18; Mathew 22:39; Mark 12:31

50. John 17:14-16

51. In a later short writing Arendt makes the distinction between worldliness, which was a characteristic of modern life, which first appeared in the modern age, and *otherworldliness*, that has its source in the Scripture. Hannah Arendt, ‘Epiloog’, in: Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 203

52.

Karl Jaspers, *Existenzphilosophie, Drei Vorlesungen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1938)

53.

Hannah Arendt – Karl Jaspers
Correspondence 1926-1969

54.

Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*,
21-25

55.

Which has led to theatrical plays as well, as for instance 'The Banality of Love' by the Israeli Savion Liebrecht in Tel Aviv in 2009, and, in The Netherlands in 2009 as well 'Hannah en Martin' by Lineke Rijxman, Willem de Wolf en Joan Nederlof; As has become increasingly clear, particularly in his recently published notebooks. Heidegger's sympathy for Nazism has not been a flirt of a couple of years for pragmatic reasons, but was rooted in both Anti-Semitism, a belief in Jewish Conspiracy as well as certain resistance against modernity. Malcolm Bull, 'Great Again', in: *The London Review of Books*, Vol 38, no 20, 20 October 2016. <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n20/malcolm-bull/great-again> [accessed December 4th, 2016] To Hannah Arendt, Heidegger already writes in 1933, in a letter trying to respond to rumours that were spread and also has arrived to Arendt's knowledge, that is anti-semitism 'today' is the same is about 10 years ago. Via the letter he tries to convince her that this anti-semitism does not affect his contacts with Jews, and particularly not the contact he had with her. Hannah Arendt, *Martin Heidegger, Brieven 1925-1975*, 70; Although Arendt never accused him, I take it for granted that his aberration is one of the reasons that Arendt was forced towards the political realm, politics and actualities in her thinking. In her article 'Martin Heidegger at Eighty', she calls him a 'political idiot' – which surely is an expression of the striking gap between his attempt to grasp the very nature of being, and his failure to understand the actual political situation in Germany before World War II. Arendt actually calls him 'naïf, a romantic ingénu with no understanding of politics; philosophers of his ilk, she suggested, were best kept away from politics and left to cultivate their gardens.' Sunil Kilani in her review of Sunil Kilani in 'When Smart People get Dumb Ideas', her review of Mark Lilla, *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics*, (New York: New York Review, 2001) in: *The New York Times* (January 6, 2016); <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/06/books/when-smart-people-get-dumb-ideas.html?pagewanted=all> [accessed April 12th, 2016]

56.

This actually was one of the first laws of the Nationalist Social Party, after their victory in the parliament in the early thirties, a law that also affected

since his wife, Gertrud Mayer, was Jewish from birth. In 1938, just after his forced retirement, he published three lectures under the title *Existenzphilosophie*, which became an important contribution to the field of philosophy after the war.⁵² Despite his retirement, and despite the continuous threat to him and his wife of being arrested and sent to a concentration camp, and despite living in isolation in Heidelberg, Jaspers was able to continue his studies during the war. It led to a couple of publications afterwards: amongst others, important works like *Die Schuldfrage* (1946), *Von der Wahrheit* (1947), and *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (1949). In 1949 he took a position at the University of Basel in Switzerland, where he lived till his death at the age of 86. Shortly after the war, Arendt was able to re-establish her contact with him. She then raised money amongst her friends and affiliates in order to help Jaspers set up a home and a life, first in Heidelberg and later for his movement to Basel. After the war, from the fifties onwards, Arendt tried to visit Jaspers regularly. She enjoyed these meetings; Jaspers somehow was like a father for Arendt. During those visits they extensively discussed their works and ideas, their lives and sorrows, face to face. This conversation, spread over days, was continued throughout an extensive correspondence, which are published as *Briefwechsel*.⁵³ Both Arendt and Jaspers were critical to each other, but always with respect to their subsequent works, their thinking, their judgement and their position. Arendt introduced the work of Jaspers in America through lectures and articles, connecting him with publishers and correcting the translations of his work.

Arendt's relationship with Heidegger was a lot more complicated. Almost every commentary on her work spells it. Not because of the influence of his works on her thinking, which is evident, but also since it is known that they have had a love affair during the time Arendt was one of his students (while Heidegger was a young but already married professor).⁵⁴ This relationship is actually questioned with even more disbelief since Arendt, being Jewish, never publicly accused Heidegger for his involvement in the National Socialist Party in the early thirties before World War II and for his deeds as a dean of the University of Freiburg during these years.⁵⁵ But in disguise, as is clear in the correspondence with Karl Jaspers, she blamed him of excluding of Jewish professors from the academic campus on the orders of the Nazi government, as for instance the famous philosopher Edmund Husserl, the founder of the phenomenological approach in philosophy, of whom Heidegger actually was the successor in Freiburg.⁵⁶ Jaspers, however, corrected her afterwards: it was not Heidegger that had fired Husserl.⁵⁷ Later on, in a reflection on what had happened, Arendt stated: 'The problem, the personal problem, was not what our enemies might be doing, but what our friends were doing.'⁵⁸ Heidegger and Arendt nevertheless kept in contact – they met each other again after the war in 1950, and from the end of the sixties (1967) onwards till the death of Arendt in 1975, on a yearly base. In the meantime they corresponded, although hardly on their works.⁵⁹ Heidegger did not even read the books of Arendt, 'or only very cursorily, and what he does read will offend him.'⁶⁰ Arendt on her term did acknowledge Heidegger in America: introducing his books by publishers, taking effort to get them translated and being published.

Heidegger did hold his position as a professor after the war, but simultaneously was prohibited to teach till his retirement in 1951. The French authorities, that controlled this Southern part of Germany after the war, treated him as a mediocre figure. He nevertheless was able to gain a position as a public figure in Germany: he lectured throughout the country on quite a broad range of themes like language, technique, art, poetry, and even architecture – his lecture on

'building' and 'dwelling' from 1951, which I will discuss in Chapter 6, shifted the field of architectural theory and got decades later numerous responses from practicing architects as well as from architectural theorists and critics.⁶¹ Over the years however he retreated from this image of a 'public' philosopher: he preferred the quietness of his workshop at the German countryside near Freiburg.⁶² It is this withdrawal from the public realm, of course supported by the perspective he already developed in his famous studies *Sein und Zeit*, that was published already in 1927 and is to be seen as an investigation in the complex philosophical question of the character of the human existence, that became the final image of Heidegger. As said above, this also can be seen as the regular image of the philosopher: withdrawn in solitude in order to be saved of the 'hustle and bustle' of the world, thinking about complex philosophical questions, reaching for eternal truths. This image of Heidegger withdrawn in his workshop was strengthened in his latter works, while he took his workshop and the German country scape as a major metaphor in his works and an illustration of his thoughts. He literally emphasises again and again the serenity of the woods, the path cut into the woods that leads to a lightening – a metaphor, of course, of the difficulty and somehow unforeseen gift unfolding 'truths'. Despite their renewed contacts, it never became an easy relationship after the war between Heidegger and Arendt, possibly also since Arendt opposed precisely this position of the philosopher thinking in solitude and withdrawn from the world, walking the difficult path of thinking and reaching for the gift of unfolding truths. Arendt offers a perspective of human life as life-in-action and dwells upon the importance of being in the world, amongst people.⁶³

4.3.2 *The Shock of Reality*

Soon after finalizing her dissertation, Arendt started to write an intellectual biography on one of the main figures of Berlin Salon life in the late eighteenth century, the Jewish Rahel Varnhagen (1777-1833). Again, like in her studies on St. Augustine, Arendt wanted to address a question regarding the possibility to live in the world against a background that threatens engagement to the world, this time in respect to experiences of race and racism in daily life. How is it possible 'to live in the world and to love one's neighbours, if one's neighbours – and even you yourself – will not accept who you are.'⁶⁴ This study, certainly somehow driven by her own situation facing the developments in the German society prior to the war, would have been her *habilitation*, which in German academic life is key to get a position in the academic world. The rise of the National Socialist movement actually disturbed her work on the finalizing of the manuscript. She never finished it before 1938 and only published it almost twenty years later as *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, adding two chapters that actually are quite a difference than she had in mind before.⁶⁵ During these years, the question 'how to live in the world' did evolve from a philosophical and social question into a political and personal question.

It indeed was the rise of the National Socialist movement that changed her life radically, as well as the topics she wanted to address in her writings. This 'shock of reality' directed her interest and attention towards politics, and towards her main concern: the very character of freedom within society. Arendt personally was involved in these political developments by just being a Jew by birth. Since being a Jew she was threatened, a 'persona non grata'. Almost all her work afterwards can be seen as an attempt to understand this experience: ideology justifying terror against sole groups of inhabitants, excluding them from public participation, and

the position of Karl Jaspers at the University.

57.
Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt*, 17

58.
via Young-Bruehl, 'From the Pariah's Point of View', 4

59.
Their correspondence is less intense compared with the 'briefwechseln' between Arendt and Jaspers, as well as less a dialogue on their ideas and works. In his biography on Heidegger, Rüdiger Safranski writes that Heidegger 'kept assuring [Arendt] that no one understood him so well as she did – even, and especially, in philosophical matters. Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger, Between Good and Evil* (Cambridge (Mass.)/ London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 140. And indeed, their broken love affair can be felt throughout the correspondence, especially in the poems Heidegger writes during the 50s, around their first meetings after the war. *Nur Dir*, he writes sometimes: Only for you. His letters nevertheless simultaneously also are accompanied with the greetings of his wife Elfriede, which of course is a sign of the difficulty of their relationship. See for example *Arendt – Heidegger, Briefen 1925-1975*, 114.

60.
Safranski, *Martin Heidegger*, 140

61.
Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in: Heidegger, Martin, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 2001). See for an introduction to the architectural responses on Heidegger's lectures the first chapter of Hilde Heijnen, *Architectuur en kritiek van de moderniteit* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 2001). See also Jacques De Visscher and Raf De Saeger (eds.), *Wonen Architectuur in het denken van Martin Heidegger* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 1991). I will dwell upon this debate within the field of architecture in Chapter 6 – Arendt's response on Heidegger will add an important perspective for the field of architecture.

62.
See also the closing wish to Arendt of his letter of May 6, 1950: 'Be saved and rich of quietness'. Arendt – Heidegger, *Briefen 1925-1975*, 117

63.
Kristeva, *Hannah Arendt*, 19

64.
Young-Bruehl, 'From the Pariah's Point of View', 6

65.
Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess* (London: East-West Library, 1957)

66.

cf. Hannah Arendt, 'Humanity in Dark Times, Thoughts on Lessing', in: Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 18

67.

Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 37

68.

Ibid., 37

69.

Young-Bruehl, 'From the Pariah's Point of View', 4

70.

Günther Stern became known as Günther Anders, who wrote philosophical studies as well as romans. Amongst these are *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* (1956, part 1, and 1980, part 2), which can be seen as an attempt to set up an actual anthropology after World War II, especially in the face of the use of atomic bombs and atomic threats. During their marriage, Stern worked on a roman that became known as *Die molussische Katakombe*. Berthold Brecht did send the manuscript for Stern to a Berlin publisher. The Gestapo however confiscated the manuscript, while doing a research in the office of the publisher. Since they judged it by its cover, which showed a fictive Island, they oversaw that it actually was a satire on utopia's, certainly also on the Third Reich. They gave it back to Brecht, who gave it to a common friend, Anna Mendelsohn, who hid it in a cloth, hanging it between cheeses and hams in her attic. Arendt took it with her when she fled to Paris, where Stern already had arrived. The roman finally was published in 1992.

vice-versa, terror being justified by the goal to realize an ideology. This situation thus first of all made her aware of her own background as a Jew.⁶⁶ Her work on the biography of Varnhagen actually changed because of these actualities. While she in the first chapters deals with the will of Varnhagen to assimilate into a gentile member of society, unless she, and others, accepted her as what she was (a Jew), in the final chapters, those that are written after the war, Arendt emphasizes the development of Varnhagen into what she calls a 'self-conscious pariah'. Arendt refers here to two opportunities for a 'stranger' in society, being either a 'parvenu' or being a 'pariah', a distinction she appropriated from the French-Jewish literary critic and journalist Bernard Lazare, who had played a major role in the reconciliation of Alfred Dreyfus after the Dreyfus Affaire in France at the end of the 19th century. The parvenu, according to Lazare, is aware of his origin, but tries to deny it, tries to settle down.⁶⁷ The parvenu thus tries to wipe all differences in order to be a 'good' inhabitant. The pariah, on the other hand, especially in the formulation of Arendt – the 'self-conscious pariah' – is also aware of the differences, but is capable to live with this 'sole' position.⁶⁸ The pariah needed 'to be alert to the unexpected,' Arendt writes, 'to look at how things and events appear without preconceptions about history's course or pattern, to avoid sacrificing the outsider's perspective for the parvenu's comfort.'⁶⁹ Although this only remained social question for Varnhagen, Arendt urged it as a political question. The biography on Varnhagen therefore is regularly also understood as the autobiographical narrative of Arendt's own development into a political 'pariah'. The writing turned out to be an attempt in self-understanding and an attempt to take position within changing political and social circumstances. Moreover, the alertness that is characteristic to the pariah-position can be seen as the metaphor of the writings of Arendt after the war: being aware to the 'outbreaks of history' as well as 'rethinking' them, trying to understand what was happening, in respect to their impact on the plurality of daily human life.

This development into a self-conscious pariah, to inhabit a solipsistic position, not only was a form of increasing self-understanding, it also concretely influenced her everyday life. Arendt moved to Berlin in 1929, after finishing her dissertation. While being there she rekindled her relationship with Günther Stern, a Jewish philosopher and writer who she had met during the colleges of Heidegger in Marburg.⁷⁰ They married the same year, while he was trying to get a position at the University of Frankfurt through a proposal that constructed a philosophy of music. Although Stern and Arendt shared the same background and interest, and intensively worked together on the publication of Arendt's dissertation and several other texts, their marriage only lasted till 1936. In Berlin as well, Arendt in the meantime also reacquainted with Kurt Blumenfeld, the foreman of the German Zionist movement, which she already knew as a child, since he was a friend of her grandfather, and whom she had met afterwards in Heidelberg again. She discussed with Blumenfeld extensively about the impact of the actualities on the life of the Jewish in Germany. Blumenfeld, and with him the Zionists, tried to reconcile their own Jewishness. They foresaw that this was impossible in Germany. They therefore strived for the constitution of a Jewish nation in Palestine. In 1933, Arendt for the first time was involved in an *act* of politics: instructed by Blumenfeld she made excerpts from official anti-Semitic tracts in the Prussian State Library, where she worked on her biography on Varnhagen. He wanted to use these excerpts at the 18th Zionist Congress in August 1933, to show the audience how real the German anti-Semitism was. Although Arendt was slightly involved in and joined the Zionist movement (see her remark in Toronto

that I quoted above: ‘I don’t belong to any group. You know the only group I ever belonged to were the Zionists. This was only because of Hitler, of course’⁷¹ she never became a Zionist by herself. Her biographer Young-Bruehl writes: ‘she was a pariah even among pariahs.’⁷² In the same period Arendt and her husband Stern also harboured German communists in their apartment in Berlin, who prepared their flight from Germany. For both acts, Arendt was arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo, but released after eight days. Soon after this incident, she left Germany via Prague and Geneva to Paris. In 1939 she actually was also able to move her mother to Paris as well. Despite the situation, Arendt somehow enjoyed Paris. ‘If I were ever to feel homesick,’ she wrote to Jaspers in 1946, ‘it would be for Paris.’⁷³ In France, the German refugees were an isolated group, of which Arendt became an active member. In order to make a living, she did some practical jobs at several Jewish and Zionist organizations. Through her work she touched upon and became friends with other German-Jewish refugees like the writer and critic Walter Benjamin and the philosopher Eric Weil. She also met Heinrich Blücher, a Communist philosopher – although he never had followed an official study of philosophy, he did educate himself and followed some colleges at different Berlin institutes on very different topics, ranging from military history towards political theory towards art history –, a Spartakist activist, a proletarian from Berlin, a non-Jew that nevertheless in his youth joined a Zionist youth committee. He became her second husband early 1940. Blücher forced her to read beyond her regular philosophical scope and investigate the writings of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. Although Arendt remained involved in the Jewish question after the war, his influence on her writings in this period is evident as well. Arendt, on her term, influenced him on his final rejection of communism and his critical approach of Marxism later on. In the spring of 1940 they again had to move, since Hitler’s army approached Paris and the Vichy-government was installed. The German refugees were transported to internment camps in the south of France. Arendt, her mother, and Blücher were able to escape from these camps during the first administrative confusions and after that they were also able to secure visas for themselves in order to immigrate to America. Compared to others, they had luck: much of their friends and acquaintances didn’t flee and were transported to Auschwitz after three years, or had back luck during their escape, like her friend Walter Benjamin. Later, in an impressive essay on his work and life, she wrote – and I quote extensively since it is so touching:

‘On September 26, 1940, Walter Benjamin, who was about to emigrate to America, took his life at the Franco-Spanish border. There were various reasons for this. The Gestapo had confiscated his Paris apartment, which contained his library (he had been able to get “the more important half” out of Germany) and many of his manuscripts, and he had reason to be concerned also about the other which, through the good offices of George Bataille had been placed in the Bibliotheque Nationale prior to his flight from Paris to Lourdes in unoccupied France. How was he to live without a library, how could he earn a living without the extensive collection of quotations and excerpts among his manuscripts? Besides nothing drew him to America, where, as he used to say, people would probably find no other use for him than to cart him up and down the country to exhibit him as the “last European.” But the immediate occasion for Benjamin’s suicide was an uncommon stroke of bad luck. ... Thanks to the efforts of the Institute in New York, Benjamin was among the first [German refugees in France] to receive ... a visa in Marseilles [bound for America]. Also he quickly obtained a Spanish

71. Arendt, ‘On Hannah Arendt’, 334

72. Young-Bruehl, ‘From the Pariah’s Point of View’, 7

73. *Hannah Arendt – Karl Jaspers Correspondence*, 66

74.

Hannah Arendt, 'Introduction: Walter Benjamin, 1892-1940' in: Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations, Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 17-18; also published as Hannah Arendt, 'Walter Benjamin, 1892-1940', in: Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 170-171

75.

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co, 1951); Hannah Arendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1955); Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co, 1958)

transit visa to enable him to get to Lisbon and board a ship there. However, he did not have a French exit visa, which at that time was still required and which the French government, eager to please the Gestapo, invariably denied to German refugees. In general this presented no great difficulty, since a relatively short and none too arduous road to be covered by foot over the mountains to Port Bou was well known and was not guarded by the French border police. ... The small group of refugees that he had joined reached the Spanish border town only to learn that Spain had closed the border that same day and that the border officials did not honor visas made out in Marseilles. The refugees were supposed to return to France by the same route the next day. During the night Benjamin took his life, whereupon the border officials, upon whom this suicide had made an impression, allowed his companions to proceed to Portugal. A few weeks later the embargo on visas was lifted again. One day earlier Benjamin would have got through without any trouble; one day later the people in Marseilles would have known that for the time being it was impossible to pass through Spain. Only on that particular day was the catastrophe possible.'⁷⁴

4.3.3 *The Novelties of our Times*

It is indeed this 'shock of reality', this experience of 'truth that struck home', this 'living experience' that changed her attention, rejecting philosophy in favour of politics and actualities: being excluded from the public realm and the loss of a couple of other civil rights (as a Jew), the need to flee and the flight itself, this confrontation with the fragility of human affairs. In New York, Arendt and Blücher found accommodation in two furnished rooms on West 95th street on Manhattan. Arendt learned English as soon as possible; a German accent however accompanied her till her death, as is mentioned by several of her students afterwards. She did learn English not in order to assimilate like a parvenu – she got the American nationality in 1951, actually – but only since she was eager to participate in the on-going public debates. Especially those discussing the Jewish situation: during the war and shortly after, she particularly was focussed on other European immigrant Jews and spoke with them about topics as 'Jewish identity', 'the creation of a Jewish army to fight against Hitler's army', 'the constitution of a bi-national Arab-Jewish state in Palestine', and 'the need to resist the call for assimilation.' In the meantime, she earned a living through a range of projects she worked on: as an editor at Schocken Books, the publisher that also published a number of her early works, as a journalist, mostly focussed on Jewish topics, and by writing articles and essays for the German Language Jewish Magazine *Der Aufbau*, and other magazines like the *Jewish Frontier*, the organization journal of the Labor Zionist Alliance. Despite her preliminary focus on the Jewish question, she also immediately investigated the bigger picture: the emergence of Fascism in Germany, the limits and possibilities of Western democracies, and – later – the Soviet Union and the transformation of the Marxist worldview into communism as a repressive ideology.

On that latter matter she collected her essays into a book, called *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which was published in English in 1951 for the first time, appeared in German language in 1955, and again was published in America (in an expanded version) in 1958.⁷⁵ In the book, Arendt investigates the sources of anti-Semitism in the years prior to the war, as well as the emergence of National Socialism as a totalitarian system, and added later – when the similarities became clear to her – also the totalitarianism of Stalinism and Imperialism in the Soviet

Union. The preface to the first edition actually starts with a thrilling description of the time:

“Two world wars in one generation, separated by an uninterrupted chain of local wars and revolutions, followed by no peace treaty for the vanquished and no respite for the victor, have ended in the anticipation of a third World War between the two remaining world powers. This moment of anticipation is like the calm that settles after all hopes have died. We no longer hope for an eventual restoration of the old world order with all its traditions, or for the reintegration of the masses of five continents who have been thrown into a chaos produced by the violence of wars and revolutions and the growing decay of all that has still been spared. Under the most diverse conditions and disparate circumstances, we watch the development of the same phenomena – homelessness on an unprecedented scale, rootlessness to an unprecedented depth.”⁷⁶

This description reveals her, and certainly also more genuinely *the* experience of the decade after the Second World War – the experience of scattered hopes, of homelessness and rootlessness. Even more important seems to be her addition to the experience: the scale of it is unprecedented. It is a novel experience, there is no precedent in history for this experience. Arendt actually argues that this unprecedentedness is exactly also the case regarding the political systems of National Socialism and Stalinism. She therefore emphasized that such ‘new’ occurrences cannot be re-thought or analysed by the use of already known, traditional concepts, which actually have become meaningless and empty in the face of modernity. Arendt thus claimed that new concepts had to be developed, although she warns not to put the old concepts aside as being ‘past’ or ‘out of date’. There is, on the contrary, a need to explore and re-think those concepts. Historical knowledge, Arendt states, is not like worn-out fashion, but is essentially part of our thinking today. It still affects our view on the world: our thinking is rooted in it – and we use them even if we are not aware of it or even if we reject them.⁷⁷ Arendt’s aim with *The Origins of Totalitarianism* thus never was to write just a particular history, ‘a study of a kind of political domination that once threatened the world, which the world rose up against and overcame.’⁷⁸ Therefore the book not only was a reflection on recent developments in the Europe, neither a historical analysis of and reflection on the downfall of nation states nor an investigation in the rise of totalitarian regimes, but also an emphasis in structures of the contemporary world that could be understood as having a parallel with the historical structures that have led to the forms of repression and totalitarianism. Such investigation thus does not aim for the importance of ‘remembrance’, is not concerned about the conservation of certain historical facts as well, but tries to understand the (final) happenings, the events Europe and the world had suffered, in order to recognize the parallels in our contemporary society, the weaknesses of modern democracies, and the threat of possible developments. And she indeed touched upon ‘new threats’ that are an enduring concern for the human community in modernity – threats that she understood via two characteristics that both Nationalism and Stalinism did share. *The Origins of Totalitarianism* actually did have had two different working titles: *The Burden of our Times* (which actually became the official title of the publication in Great Britain),⁷⁹ and *The Three Pillars of Hell*. In respect to this latter title, Arendt had in mind that the book would address respectively anti-Semitism, imperialism and totalitarianism. During the writing of these chapters, however, it became clear to Arendt that both

76. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, vii

77. Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, 11

78. Jerome Kohn, ‘Evil and Plurality, Hannah Arendt’s Way to *The Life of the Mind*, I’, in: Larry May and Jerome Kohn (eds.), *Hannah Arendt: Twenty Years Later* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 149

79. Hannah Arendt, *The Burden of Our Time* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1951)

80.
King, *Arendt and America*, 31

81.
Kohn, 'Evil and Plurality', 148;
Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*,
445-447

82.
This, of course, refers to the work of
the German philosopher Theodor
Adorno, who's imparative is the quote
'Nie wieder Auschwitz', 'Auschwitz
never again!'. See for instance his
article 'Education after Auschwitz'
that can be downloaded at [http://
ada.evergreen.edu/~arunc/texts/
frankfurt/auschwitz/AdornoEduca-
tion.pdf](http://ada.evergreen.edu/~arunc/texts/frankfurt/auschwitz/AdornoEducation.pdf) [visited October 31st, 2012]

83.
Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*,
37

84.
Ibid., 38

first two topics served the latter and thus that she had to show her readers how totalitarian regimes and political structures used the first two, indeed, as *pillars* in order to gain its power. For Arendt this became clear through two discoveries that somehow shocked her. The first was the difference between 'old' religious anti-Semitism in pre-war Europe, as for instance in the writings of Luther, and recent forms of anti-Semitism, that actively were fuelled in the political reality and by the political authorities in order to gain power. The latter was, according to Arendt, a dangerous and more far-reaching modification of the already known religious' form. The second discovery was the 'reality' of concentration camps. She became aware of the awful existence of concentration camps in Germany during the war in 1943, but only understood the extraordinary phenomenon of these camps – 'administrative murder and the industrial nature of the extermination system'⁸⁰ – as a crucial element of the totalitarian political system since she became aware that in the Soviet-Union those camps also existed. Concentration camps were the appearance of 'hell on earth', as Arendt stated, where people were 'concentrated, massed together, neither distinct nor related, in preparation for extinction.'⁸¹ She then immediately understood those camps as not just 'a black page in Modern Western history', of which we easily can state 'never again'.⁸² For Arendt, these camps were a proof that the very human condition itself was under attack, since, 'for no political purpose, people were dominated, terrorized, deprived of their rights and their 'rights to have rights', of their capacity to act, and finally of their now completely devaluated lives.'⁸³ I took this circumscription from Young-Bruehl, who renders here the political problem of two of the concepts Arendt dwelled upon in her latter work: the 'right to have rights', and 'the capacity to act'. Both 'discoveries', the new political forms of anti-Semitism and the reality of concentration camps, lead her to the provocative analysis that the events that did happen in Europe, especially on the political level, didn't have a precedent in history. Arendt called this new political phenomenon the 'totalitarian state' – which became a famous notion within political theory. As Young-Bruehl, states:

“... the concentration camps were the defining institution of an unprecedented form of government that was neither a deformation of tyranny nor an extreme of authoritarian dictatorship. In a totalitarian state, nor a single leader but a party that has abolished all other parties establishes absolute power in the wake of a political movement that has broken down all social and class formations and created a 'mass society.' This new form of government, without political opposition or traditional forms of community to check it, reaches into every facet of life with institutions of total terror, among them secret police, and, especially, concentration camps.⁸⁴

It is important to understand that Arendt recognized these camps not to be just a mere novelty of two political systems of the past. They moreover belonged to the essence of new forms of political domination, a domination that was distinct from all previous tyrannies. Arendt frames the camps indeed as an inalienable part of totalitarian, repressive regimes, but she also shows that the context of the existence of concentration camps is a certain lack of 'morality' in combination with growing technical possibilities. In such society everything is permitted, and everything also is possible. The importance of Concentration camps, of course, were the places where this not only was possible but also a shocking reality. However, this is not a threat of the past and of specific political systems and ideologies; the lack of 'morality' and the growing technical possibilities are also at the very heart of Western capitalism and modernity. This urges Arendt to

emphasise the importance to ‘think without banisters’ – not to think from a firm set of principles, but to think for oneself, an urgency she later takes up again in her report on the trial of Eichmann as we will see. Arendt’s call here is shaped by Jaspers’ idea of a ‘boundary situation’, in situations of life and death, where one is thrown back on oneself. ‘The point was’, Richard King argues, ‘to maintain the flexibility to think in reference to the situation at hand.’⁸⁵

Through this statement, the book gained attention and did set the name of Arendt as a political thinker as well in America as abroad. From that moment on, she got invitations to lecture and teach on universities in, amongst others, Chicago, New York, Princeton and Berkeley, and to participate in intellectual discourses in America and Europe. She sometimes was asked to teach at universities and colleges throughout America, from the University of Chicago to Bard College, from Columbia University till Berkeley, and from Princeton to The New School, but never extended a stay at these campuses with a formal contract and appointment as professor. Since she never strived for an academic career, she didn’t apply for official jobs at universities too. She nevertheless enjoyed teaching one or two semesters at a university on a specific topic: she enjoyed talking with students, the possibility to experiment with thoughts, to set up an argument, to reflect on actualities together with the students. Through such lecture-series, Arendt was able to develop her ideas and work them out into books. Nevertheless her career somehow shows the pattern of switching between small jobs, academic obligations, writing, teaching, discussing, and traveling. Her life, better said, was not encircling the university campuses, but moreover encircling debates, topics, and controversies, traveling between New York and the rest of America, and between America and Europe, simultaneously writing essays, lecturing, corresponding, and editing books and articles that were published in well-known magazines as *The New Yorker*. Her success as a writer – and also Blücher’s appointment as a professor in philosophy at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson (NY), about 90 miles above the city of New York –, also meant that they could move to a somewhat bigger apartment at the edge of Harlem at the Morningside Drive containing at least two working rooms. Later, when the crime rates in their neighbourhood increased and threatened them, they rented an apartment at the Riverside Drive, around the corner of the campus of Columbia University, where they lived till their death.

4.3.4 *This Comes Right Out of Aristotle!*

Blücher, although even not having finished his high school, was offered to set up a course in philosophy for first year students at Bard College. His proposal was to introduce the students in the sources of human creativity, through an exploration of thinkers that somehow explored this human capacity, ranging from Abraham to Jesus, from Buddha to Lao-tse, from Homer to Socrates. The course of Blücher was very successful; therefore he got an appointment to teach philosophy at Bard in 1952, an appointment that was extended till his death in 1970.⁸⁶ Arendt followed the course as well – at home – and absorbed it in her own work – only the Asian philosophers that Blücher introduced in his course did not get a foothold in her reflection. Blücher’s interest in the human creativity had influenced her next big study after the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that became her second big book, *The Human Condition*. In this book, regularly presented as her magnum opus, she takes the notion of politics that she had developed in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in order to define the essence

85. King, *Arendt and America*, 27-28

86. Since Blücher wasn’t a writer, Arendt had convinced him to write down his lectures on philosophy at Bard, which were famous amongst students. This project unfortunately never was finished because of the death of Blücher. A series of lectures were taped and transcribed because of this goal, they recently are published on the web by the Blücher Archive of the Stevenson Library at Bard College: <http://www.bard.edu/bluecher/listen.htm> [visited July 10th, 2012]

87.
Young-Bruehl, 'From the Pariah's
Point of View,' 13

88.
Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism
of Hannah Arendt*, 12

of political action. Arendt possibly became aware of the remarkable characteristics of action, even in the suppressing totalitarian political systems that actually were supposed by herself as implacable facing resistance, by the uprising protests against the Soviet oppression in East Berlin in 1953 and in Budapest in 1956. Whereas the undertone in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* surely is pessimistic, *The Human Condition*, despite descriptions of loss and neglect and other negative readings of the contemporary situation, has a remarkable optimistic message. It is characterized by hope, stressing the unpredictability of action. Opposite to her earlier book, she now doesn't develop her perspective from within certain macro-political structures, but from outside these structures, from a micro-political level. She explores the perspective of political action as a capacity of the human being itself – not as a part of political institutions, but as a possibility, even in 'boundary situations'. Whereas she had discussed the regimes of Nazi-Germany and the Soviet-Union as similar totalitarian political structures in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she also understood that the racism of the Third Reich was of a different order than that of the Soviet ideology. The Soviet ideology was, in contrast to Nazism, part of the 'Great Tradition' of European thought, since it after all was based on Marxism, which of course cannot be rendered without this philosophical tradition. Arendt therefore, in order to deepen her understanding of the Soviet ideology, planned to investigate the thinking of Karl Marx extensively. She spent a year in Europe working on this study, but changed her mind since she became aware of the lack of awareness in the 'Great Tradition of European thought' for the realm of politics – a lack that also had its impact on the ideas of Marx, she argued.⁸⁷ This lack of attention for politics mainly came down to overlook the capacity of the human being to 'act and speak' in public, amongst peers. This lack of rewarding public appearance, as she defined it in *The Human Condition*, somehow is inherent in the tradition of philosophy, which after all, as I already touched upon above, is rooted in a withdrawal *from* the world. Politics, on the contrary, only can grow and flourish through an interest *in* the world and by a commitment to sustain this world.⁸⁸ Arendt is particularly interested in this 'worldliness' of politics, as she calls it, and through this perspective also in the fundamental 'worldliness' of the human being. In her introduction to *The Human Condition* she stresses Western modernity as continuous trial to escape the conditions of the earth-bound character of human life, an escapism that somehow is driven by recent developments in techniques, sciences, and philosophy. Even the totalitarian slogan 'everything is possible' has to be seen as a manifestation of this 'escapism' as well. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt investigates this worldliness of the human being: the conditions of life on earth. Arendt distinguishes these conditions in three spheres: to be part of the life cycle of nature, being restrained to place and time, and – the most essential and simultaneously the most threatened condition according to Arendt – within a condition of plurality. Those three conditions are interconnected with three activities of the human being: labor, work and action.

Before we go into the argument Arendt develops in *The Human Condition* in more detail, it is important to acknowledge 'making distinctions' as her method of investigating topics and constructing arguments, which is applied in the majority of her writings. Quite regularly she stresses her views and constructs arguments through the investigating of a number of (irregular) distinctions – some of them remarkable themselves since the distinctions Arendt explores in everyday language are usually understood as synonyms. Besides the mentioned 'labor, work and action', and the 'parvenue' and the 'pariah', Arendt also distinguishes the

'earth' versus the 'world', 'power' and 'violence', 'the public, the private, and the social realm' and finally 'thinking, willing and judging'. Through such distinctions, which she often derives from a particular historical investigation, Arendt tries to differentiate aspects of life, the world, our being, that regularly are understood as a spectrum or even are experienced as a whole. She however is keen to stress the differences (and even sometimes makes them more explicit than arguably have been in everyday language), since awareness of differences enlighten important phenomena and perspectives that might have been once evident, but has been lost over time. This once again emphasises her particular use of history as a point of reference. By investigating historical circumstances – or notions, as in the case of distinctions – she investigates the Western tradition of thought in order to stress the contemporary situation. Arendt's method can be understood as enhancing, rethinking and stressing the differences consciously, and therewith offering a new richness of definitions. Although she is aware that the emphasis on differences does not always correspond to the blurred experiences and language of the human being, she nevertheless delivers an argument on the importance of the new awareness of aspects often overlooked. She even speaks of 'the human ability to make distinctions', which, according to her, is closely related to the human capacity of judgement, a capacity that is central in the fields of politics, aesthetics and taste.⁸⁹ Here method clearly also rouses questions. At the Toronto conference her friend, the writer Mary McCarthy, at a certain point remarks:

'This space that Hannah Arendt creates in her work and which one can walk into with the great sense of walking through an arch into a liberated area and a great part of it is occupied by definitions. Very close to the roots of Hannah Arendt's thinking is the *distinguo*: 'I distinguish this from that, I distinguish labor from work, I distinguish fame from reputation.' And so on. This is actually a medieval habit of thought.'

Arendt interrupts:

'It is Aristotelian!'

McCarthy again:

'This habit of distinguishing is not popular in the modern world, where there is a kind of verbal blur surrounding most discourse. And if Hannah Arendt arouses hostility, one reason is because the possibility of making distinctions is not available to the ordinary reader. ... Each of her works is an unfolding of definition, which of course touch on the subject, and more and more enlighten it as one distinction unfolds (after another).'

Arendt indeed admits:

'It is perfectly true what you say about distinctions. I always start anything – I don't like to know too well what I am doing – I always start anything by saying, 'A and B are not the same'. And this, of course, comes right out of Aristotle.'⁹⁰

But C.B. Macpherson comments:

'She defines a lot of key words in ways unique to herself: you know social *versus* political (a rather special meaning to the word "social"), force *versus* violence (a quite special meaning to the word "force")...'

Arendt again interrupts to correct the speaker:

'No, power versus violence. I am sorry.'

Macpherson finalizes his comment:

'Power and violence, sorry. Action (a unique definition of "action") ...'

Arendt reacts:

'I would not agree with this. What you consider my idiosyncratic use of words – I think there is a little more to it, of course. We all grow up and inherit a certain vocabulary. We then have got to examine this vocabulary. And this not

89. Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics,' 102

90. Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt', 337-338

91.
Ibid., 322-323

92.
Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 118

93.
Ibid., 118

94.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 5

95.
Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa, Vom tätigen Leben* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1960). Also most translations of *The Human Condition* – as, amongst others, the Dutch, the Croatian, the Italian, the Slovenian, the Greek, the Norwegian, the Russian – are entitled or subtitled *Vita Activa*. Arendt wrote *The Human Condition* in English, but translated it afterwards to German by herself. There are a few differences in the English and German version. It is genuinely accepted amongst philosophers to suggest that Arendt, in the end, was able to express herself more precise in her mother tongue.

96.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 12

97.
Ibid., 13

98.
Ibid., 14

just by finding out how this word is usually used, which then gives as a result a certain number of uses. These uses are then legitimate. In my opinion a word had much stronger relation to what it denotes or what it is, than just the way it is being used between you and me. That is, you look only to the communicative value of the word. I look to the disclosing quality. And this disclosing quality has, of course, always an historical background.⁹¹

The reason Arendt thus distinguishes distinctive notions is the urge to reveal quite different aspects that play a role in daily life unconsciously, which can be unfolded through the different words that are used in everyday language, while at first sight most of these notions are not distinct in daily conversations at all. It has to be clear that by making these distinctions, Arendt does not particularly aim for the construction of a theory or a coherent system, a system in which the distinct phenomenon or concept will get its place, according to a certain hierarchy and meaning. Such a systematic philosophy she no longer understood 'either desirable or even possible.'⁹² On the contrary, Arendt moreover operates consciously to unfold, enhance and explore tensions and contradictions that are at the very root of the notions used through which we have had ordered our daily lives as well as our political life. According to the political philosopher Sheyla Benhabib this is the very reason to make such distinctions: 'Certainly,' she writes, 'for Arendt a thinking process that does not exhibit tensions and contradictions would be superficial as well as inadequate to grapple with the tasks at hand.'⁹³ It is through this specific method of stressing distinctions and unfolding their (historical) use, aspects, and background that Arendt is able to remember, rethink, reconsider, and re-appropriate phenomenon that apparently are lost, but which will help to understand the contemporary situation. In other words, by investigation the particular notions and their historical connotations, she discloses certain values that have vanished over time, but by stressing them once again will enhance the understanding of certain phenomena and developments.

4.3.5 Labor, Work, Action

Such tensions and contradictions also are at the very root of *The Human Condition*. The goal of this book, Arendt writes in the prologue, is as simply 'to think what we are doing.'⁹⁴ It is important to keep that sentence in mind as a reminder that Arendt does not aim to develop a theory on *the* human condition, on human active life, or whatsoever. On the contrary, she simply intends to explore and understand the human activities on earth. Arendt, to put it with the Greek term that she did choose as title of the German translation of *The Human Condition* which appeared in 1960, wanted to rethink the *vita activa*.⁹⁵ This notion, Arendt immediately admits, 'is loaded and overloaded with tradition'.⁹⁶ The *vita activa* initially was one of the three ways emphasized by Aristotle as the good life (*bioi*) that could be chosen by men that were freed from the necessities of life and the body. This life devoted to 'the matters of the *polis*' (politics) was accompanied by the life 'enjoying bodily pleasures' (art), and by 'the inquiry into things eternal' (philosophy).⁹⁷ During medieval times the term *Vita Activa* gained a different meaning through the decline of the ancient city-state. Whereas the Greek thinking limited the *vita activa* to the *bios politikos*, life devoted to public matters, the medieval philosophy broadened its meaning by including 'all kinds of active engagement in the things of this world.'⁹⁸ All activities 'to stay alive' now became part of the *vita activity* too: from the production of food and livestock towards the crafts of things and artworks. By including them in the *vita activa*, alongside the *bios politikos*, this also meant that the life devoted to the public

affairs was understood in the same vein: being enslaved by the necessities of life (to state it negatively). What Aristotle had excluded from the *vita activa*, the working life of the labourer, the craftsman and the merchant, now was understood in the same manner. The Aristotle emphasis on the freedom of ‘movements and dispositions’, that he related to the life devoted to public affairs, had been lost. For the Medieval philosophers (and theologians), like Thomas van Aquino, only the life of the philosopher was understood as the ultimate good life, a perspective they gained from the writings of Plato and Augustine.⁹⁹ Since the *vita activa* was regarded to be restless, and with that opposed to the absolute required tranquillity of the *vita contemplativa*, which was devoted to the ‘inquiry of the things eternal’, Arendt is quick to admit that also in Greek thinking the same hierarchy slightly is tangible: in Aristotle’s threefold distinction of the good life, the ultimate preference of the ‘life of the philosopher’ can be traced. However, Arendt’s aim in *The Human Condition*, although not explicitly said, is to bring *bios politicos* back to attention and undo it from all the dust that has fallen down on it after the decline of the *polis*. She does so by focussing on all the human activities on earth, [should there be a ‘not’ in this clause?] but by excluding the life of the philosopher, which had been central as the highest good in life already since the Medieval times. The Medieval philosophers after all had influenced the philosophers of the Enlightenment and modernity, even until Hegel and Heidegger, in whose philosophies Arendt was well at home. Quite revealing in that respect is the title of the famous series of books written by Descartes, in which he tries to find out what can be said to be absolutely sure: *Meditations*. The active life, in other words, never had lost its ‘negative connotation of the “un-quiet”’.¹⁰⁰ Augustine in his *De civitate Dei*, Arendt adds in a note, even ‘speaks of the “burden” of active life ..., which would be unbearable without the “sweetness” and the “delight of truth” given in contemplation.’¹⁰¹ The general idea was, in other words, that the eternal things only could be approached through the possession of meditative prayer and only would be revealed in contemplation through a cessation of all worldly activity. Arendt is quite opposed to that perspective, as we already have seen above in her response to Heidegger. This neglect of the active life and the emphasis on contemplation, Arendt stresses, is to be seen as a process of extracting, idealizing and universalizing ‘eternal truths’. And besides that, it also should be seen as a misunderstanding of the highest form of the *bios theōrētikos*: the human faculty of thinking. Arendt in turn emphasizes the human capacity to think as a constant dialogue with the self as well as with the world. This perspective also does mean that truth doesn’t appear necessarily in silence, but more likely in direct access of the world, roused by the hustle and bustle of everyday life, by unforeseen happenings and astonishing events.

99.
Ibid., 12

100.
Ibid., 15

101.
Ibid., 16, note 14

In this aim Arendt somehow is inspired by the works of Marx and Nietzsche, who already in their respective writings tried to break with this tradition of over-emphasizing the *vita contemplativa*. But even in their works, Arendt concludes, the essence of the *vita activa* still remained blurred. Their works did not even try to reveal the value of the *bios politicos*, this direct interaction and engagement with the world. Although *The Human Condition* initially had been imagined by Arendt as a serious critique upon Marx, she soon became aware that she had another mission to follow: to re-assess the *vita activa* by freeing it from the ‘burden’ (to reverse the Augustine complaint) of the *vita contemplativa* as well as to re-value the distinctiveness of the different activities the human employ on earth.

102.
Ibid., 17

103.
Ibid., 2-5

104.
Dagmar Barnouw, *Visible Spaces, Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience* (Baltimore/London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 197

'If, therefore, the use of the term *vita activa*, as I propose it here, is in manifest contradiction to the tradition, it is because I doubt not the validity of the experience underlying the distinction but rather the hierarchical order inherent in it from its inception. This does not mean that I wish to contest or even discuss, for that matter, the traditional concept of truth as revelation and therefore something essentially given to man, or that I prefer the modern age's pragmatic assertion that man can know only what he makes himself. My contention is simply that the enormous weight of contemplation in the traditional hierarchy has blurred the distinctions and articulations within the *vita activa* itself and that, appearances notwithstanding, this condition has not been changed essentially by the modern break with the tradition and the eventual reversal of its hierarchical order in Marx and Nietzsche.¹⁰²

As stated before, the goal of *The Human Condition* is actually not to theorize the *vita activa*, nor to construct a 'philosophy of the human activities'. The book in that sense doesn't deliver a systematic investigation, neither a balanced and firm construction of the working life of human beings on earth. It does render human activities, distinguished by her in three categories: labor, work, and action, but only and insofar as to 'understand' the distinction between our activities through differentiation and through definition of these differences (vice-versa). Therefore Arendt uses classical sources, investigates the political and philosophical tradition, as well as confronts her findings with actualities. In the prologue she mentions three recent 'threatening events' that somehow sketches the context in which the book should be rendered. Arendt respectively comes up with Yuri Gagarin, the growing complexity of the sciences, and finally the increasing emphasis on labor in modern society. Gagarin, of course the first man in space, figured in her prologue as the rejection of the earth as the 'quintessence of the human condition.' Her second example emphasized as 'our inability to understand, that is, to think and speak about the things which nevertheless we are able to do'. Only a few scientists are able to give words to their findings, and they only can communicate with each other. Nevertheless, the impact of their finding is unsurpassed. How would that be made public, how can society prepare, deal and judge these developments? Her final example discusses the advent of automation, which she interprets as 'the prospect of a society of laborers without labor, that is, without the only activity left to them'.¹⁰³ She actually pushes forward that the increase in spare time did not lead to a larger involvement in society, nor to engagement in public affairs (which was the very characteristic of the citizens of the polis that were set free, as we will see), but to the increase of leisure and entertainment. Spare time was to be filled with entertainment, that is, filled with personal joys and experiences, self-interest distinct from the world. In other words, the background to which she poses her book is a few concerns about actual developments. First, according to Arendt is the lack of the possibility of a dialogue between on the one hand (economical) sciences and technological developments and on the other hand the political realm itself. Without such a dialogue, sciences and the technical wonders have the tendency to set up a distinct realm in which they develop in their own respect, risking the loss of the touch of humanity.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, secondly, the sciences as well as technological developments can be understood as means in the process of freeing oneself from the necessities of life – a perspective that is of course emphasized by Marx also. However, in his perspective of the society of laborers, the emergence of 'empty time' is symbolic, according to Arendt. This newly gained freedom, caused by scientific and technological developments, as well as the growing economic prosperity of society

generally, doesn't lead to an increasing participation into the affairs of the world. This participation, however, Arendt renders as ultimate freedom: to be freed from the necessities of life in order to be able to be dedicated to the world. Instead people nowadays understand this newly gained freedom also as a freedom *from* politics (which somehow is outsourced to parties and professional politicians). The empty space, once again, is not filled with a turn towards the world but with entertainment and amusement. Arendt understands this as another turning away from the world, a turn towards the 'private life'. Modern developments, in other words, risks the loss of the world that is not just a single possession but is, as Arendt defines, the commonly owned structure, a shared entity, that makes life as men amongst men, as men in plural, of society possible. According to Arendt, the world is what the human being produces in order to make life possible: from concrete objects to institutes, from tools to artworks. All these things we share with others. It is through these interventions in the earth that human life on earth is possible. Moreover, the human artifice also makes the human community possible. I will investigate this idea of the world later in this chapter, for now it is important to know that this definition of the world, which she actually acquires from the writings of Heidegger, is one of the major assumptions beyond the works of Arendt. The prologue of *The Human Condition*, to summarize, shows Arendt's concern about world-alienation that is part of modernity, while the common world, according to her, is the very *condition humaine*. In other words, while Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was concerned with the source of actual developments in politics solely, in *The Human Condition* she also addresses the broader 'condition' of human life, our material world and the influence of the 'sciences' of both physics and economics on our treatment of this shared condition.

Arendt thus in *The Human Condition* examines explicitly the worldliness of the human being. She immediately emphasizes this condition as plural. There is no such thing as *the* human condition. It always is men in the plural. This emphasis of course is rooted in her own experiences. In her emphasis it immediately becomes clear how concerned she was on this condition of plurality. The main sources for Arendt's aim are the Greek and Roman city-states, the *polis*. The establishment of the Greek *polis* has been a crucial moment in the development of human life on earth. Before the existence of the city-state, people were organized along the lines of kinship and family bonds. The *polis* was preceded by the demolition of these 'natural' structures. The organization of the city-state is in opposition to these 'natural' forms of kinship and family bonds: citizens – the inhabitants of the city-state – belonged to two orders, on the one hand to their own property (*idion*), and on the other to that of the city-state (*koinon*). To rephrase this important change: citizens correspondingly had a private life, organized through a household, the *oikia*, as well as a public life, the *bios politikos*, which was bound to the *polis* and unfolded in the public realm of the city. Crucial in this perspective is thus the emergence of the public realm that offers the opportunity of a public life. The demarcation of a public space thus is the second important aspect of the *polis*, which differentiates the city from all other (and former) settlements. Of course, this erection of public space is immediately linked to the different organization of the people. Without public space this new organization along the lines of citizenship was not possible, likewise also without this new organization a public space was not needed. Community-life in all other settlements, one surely can argue, was bound to the private sphere: the community was understood as one big family, sharing the

105.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 26-27
[emphasis in original]

106.
Ibid., 30

107.
Ibid., 24-26

108.
Ibid., 178-179

109.
Ibid., 178-179; cf. Benhabib, *The Reluctance Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 199, where she argues that Arendt does not argue that speech is a form of action. 'Human action is linguistically structured, in that it can be identified, described, and recognized for what it is only through a narrative account. Both the doer of deeds and the teller of stories must be able to say in speech what it is that they are doing.'

same needs and interests, organized along the lines of hierarchy with a *pater familias* (which was the Roman title of the head of a household) as the ruler over the community. In the city-state, where the inhabitants thus did not share common interests (at least, one cannot presume so), the community needed to be organized differently. Quite remarkable is that no citizen was appointed as ruler. *All* citizens were challenged to participate in the public realm, to gather in the *agora* in order to discuss the things at hand in the community and to decide upon the future of the city. It is obvious that this only is at stake when all citizens were regarded to be equals. To appear in public space (in order to discuss the things at hand) means to appear amongst equals. To be political, to live in a *polis*, meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence. In Greek self-understanding, 'to force people by violence, to command rather than persuade, were pre-political ways to deal with life outside the *polis*, of home and family life, where the household head ruled with uncontested, despotic powers.'¹⁰⁵ Amongst equals only words (and deeds) are the proper instruments to go forward, while the necessities of life only can be mastered by sheer violence. 'Violence,' Arendt writes, 'is the pre-political act of liberating oneself from the necessity of life for the freedom of the world.'¹⁰⁶

It is in this perspective that Arendt emphasises that only two activities necessary for human community were understood as part of the *bios politikos*: action and speech, *praxis* and *lexis*. All other forms of human activity somehow contain force and violence, which essentially means that the one rules over the other. This also means, Arendt argues, that the aim of public life was limited to these two human capacities as well: to do great deeds and to speak great words.¹⁰⁷ Both terms need to be kept closely together: speech without action easily turns into empty speech, chatter, while action without words is not possible either, since it means that the actor had been vanished, as well as the action senseless. 'Speechless action,' Arendt writes, 'would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words.'¹⁰⁸ Without actions being seen, and speeches being heard, no inter-action is possible.¹⁰⁹ It thus is not only the actor that vanishes without speech, also the action itself remains unnoticed, or at its highest, badly understood. It lacks power to evoke response. This of course inherently suggests the need of a public that is regarded to be equals too. Action only make sense when seen and heard by a public that understands the deeds and words in order to re-act. In other words, Arendt celebrates a political space in which citizens gather together for speech and action. This is the core of Arendt's understanding of politics and political space, which is, as we compare it to contemporary ideas on democracy, quite narrow. For Arendt the essence of politics is the possibility to act amongst peers, and to re-act as a response to the actions and speeches of others. Arendt's gatherings never are just about speech and exchange of opinions. It always is about the opportunity to do great deeds and to speak great words. In other words: for Arendt the public realm is not about the aim of a public opinion (through discussion), it's aim is action itself. Action is not a means but an end, according to Arendt.

But here we are a bit ahead of our exploration of the three notions Arendt actually stresses as the human activities bound to the earth: labor, work and action. Arendt circumscribes these three activities as follows:

'Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound

to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor. The human condition of labor is life itself.

Work is the activity that corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence, which is not imbedded in, and whose mortality is not compensated by, the species' ever-recurring life cycle. Work provides an 'artificial' world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings. Within its borders each individual life is housed, while this world itself is meant to outlast and transcend them all. The human condition of work is worldliness.

Action, the only activity that goes directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on earth and inhabit the world. While all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically *the condition* – not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam* – of all political life.¹¹⁰

110.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7
[emphasis in original]

Particularly the terms 'labor' and 'work' today are used in everyday language as synonyms. The distinction Arendt pushes forward between those two forms of human activities therefore seems odd, specifically by mirroring it with the very activity of 'action'. The root of these distinctions however is based upon Classical sources, specifically upon the organization of the Greek and Roman city-states, and above all on Aristotle and his perspective on the human being, and finally on Machiavelli and his remarkable observations about politics. We might understand the terms probably better as 'faculties' every human being share. Through her focus on the distinction between the activities, Arendt nevertheless however seems to suggest that it's a quite blunt black and white distinction, as if no one whose daily activities are to be understood as part of 'work' not also can 'act'. The three activities however are surely simultaneously interdependent and intertwined, although Arendt again and again emphasizes the very distinctness of the terms. Since she is not eager to offer theories that try to cover everything, she's quite comfortable by leaving it at that. *The Human Condition* has, therefore, lots of open endings. The interplay between these forms of activities surely can be understood as one of the major perspectives still to be elaborated. It might be, however, important to sustain these distinctions for a while, since this not only reveals aspects of political life, of the human activities on earth, but also enlighten potentialities and qualities of the field of architecture that in the debate sometimes are undervalued.

Arendt's main focus obviously is the activity of action, which she once again wants to withdraw from the dust that the emphasis on the *vita contemplativa* has drawn upon it. She even goes so far that she argues that without the activity of 'action' a human being cannot be regarded fully human. Action always has the world as objective. It is, we might exaggerate, characterized by world-engagement. Without action, one can state, the human being is bound to his own perspective and limited by his own sorrows. Without action the human being fails to embrace the world and its plural perspectives. Or to state it differently: action lifts one from his limited position and redirects his views towards the world and its inhabitants. This of course is Arendt's major critique upon modernity and its temptation of world alienation: it fails to withdraw from the very personal concerns and perspectives. Even the political realm today, as we will see, is limited to these personal concerns and interests. However, although Arendt's main focus in *The Human Condition* obviously is upon 'action', she nevertheless regards the three activities together as the foundation of every creation of and intervention in

the 'world'. Labor, work and action are at the very fundamentals of every civilization – without labor, work and action no culture, no world, that is, no commonly owned and shared world amongst the people will stand and be sustained. Labor actually corresponds to biological life, the human body, growth and decay. It is linked to the effort 'to stay alive'. Work, on the other hand, is connected to the human artifice. Work creates an artificial, sustainable 'world of things' within which human life can develop. Action, finally, depends upon human plurality: since human beings are plural, action (and speech) is needed. Action is the basis of political life. This also does mean that action is part of public life. Action itself is intangible and fluid. Action only makes sense if seen (and heard) by others: it therefore needs to be seen and heard immediately, only then it can have effect, rouses responses, reactions and support. In other words, action in solitude does not affect the world. It needs the visibility of the public realm in order to gain responses and indeed offer new beginnings. Other human beings should see and hear what is done and said in order to respond. Arendt therefore always emphasizes 'action' as 'action and speech'. They need to be joined together – they can't survive solely. Action without speech is superfluous and does not leave traces. It needs to be joined with speech that declares and clarifies the action. This also counts vice-versa: speech without action is nothing more than babbling, offering empty words.

Although Arendt's main objective certainly is to reveal once and for all the importance of (political) action, Arendt nevertheless also develops way more multiple and ambiguous perspectives in which labor and work plays a significant role. Particularly for the field of architecture, as we will see in Chapter 6, the notion of work is decisive. Action, we briefly might emphasise already, not only needs to be seen and to be heard to get real, it also needs to be reified in order to leave actual traces behind. This immediately introduces the efforts of *work* in relation to action and speech. Action takes place directly among humans, without the intercession of things or matter. It needs to be heard and seen by others and therefore is bound to the public realm; it doesn't produce tangible results itself unless it is recorded in stories, reports, novels, films, and so forth. Action, in other words, depends upon human artifice, which actually is the product of 'work', in order to be reified as permanent. Action thus needs the work of the artists, writer, and certainly also the architect to be remembered at all. Arendt nevertheless follows Aristotle in his statement that participation in this political realm only is possible by a freedom from the necessities of life. Labor and work, for Arendt, somehow are related to these necessities. The main objective of labor, after all, is to survive the species. Labor is closely related to the biological cycle of life, it is part of 'nature', one might argue. Labor, according to Arendt, indeed is related to the earth and its temporalities. Work in contrast does create artifice that lasts, and thus is related to the durable world. What actually is distinctive in Arendt's categorization is the *durability* of that which is produced. The produce of labour is a consumer good that has a very short lifespan. Bread, for instance, needs to be consumed quickly otherwise it will spoil. Action has no permanence of its own, although re-action and inter-action can have enormous impact. The distinctive characteristic of the products produced by 'work' is their inherent durability: they outlive the producer.¹¹¹ The durability of the human artifice, for instance, Arendt understands as prerequisite for political action. It is the human artifice that delivers the world its durability, which makes it worth to be engaged in the world. Action itself is intangible and fluid – it therefore needs the stability of the world. It is, Arendt states, the stage of political action.

Although Arendt argues that this world is a prerequisite for all political action, as it is commonly owned and a durable stage, the craftsman himself is depicted by the need to produce, as well as by an attitude towards the world in categories of means and ends. He therefore isn't free to enter the public realm and participate in the affairs of the world itself, Arendt argues. The need of the artist, however, in regard to political action to not immediately vanish, shows the complexity and somehow artificiality of this distinction. It nevertheless is important to understand that Arendt rendered the 'necessities of life' as continuously frustrating the possibilities of 'action'.

It is important to emphasize 'action' once more. It might seem that action is rendered by Arendt as a means within the *bios politicos*, that it gains its value against the background of its possibility to change situations, enhance public life, and so on. Action, however, for Arendt is an end in itself – and it is, as we will see in the following chapter, important to emphasize particularly that aspect. According to Arendt, action unfolds the plurality of mankind. For Arendt this plurality is paradoxical. Individual man, after all, is similar to others as human being. Words and deeds, action and speech, somehow contain the difference in content and character, in wisdom and eagerness, in response and reaction that exists between people. Words and deeds are specific: no one speaks or acts the same way, because everyone's life story is different.¹¹² The response of the human being to the world is not only influenced by genes, but also through origin and life story, through experiences and chances, through education and daily context. These differences influence the way the human being participates, how he responds on what happens, and defines his perspectives in certain discourses. It is thus *nature and nurture* – as nowadays is said – that influences the individual and his appearance amongst peers. These differences, Arendt emphasizes, only will appear to each other through words and deeds. However, the human being demonstrates his uniqueness by speaking and acting *publicly*. 'Men in the plural,' Arendt writes, 'that is, men in so far as they live and move and act in this world.'¹¹³ It is only against a background of peers, that differences come to the fore.

The importance for Arendt of action and speech beyond their possibility of change thus is that through action and speech plurality is confined. Insofar people appear in public through action and speech, the plurality of society is both revealed and constituted. Society, in other words, by definition is plural, although this plurality is simultaneously and obviously depending on the possibility to act and to speak publicly. The plurality of mankind is thus related to and depending on men as *acting* beings amidst other human beings. By emphasizing plurality in this direction the importance of politics immediately is clear as well, be it formalized in institutions, laws, rights, and borders, or be it informal as the interactions between human beings, as a key condition of human life. It is important to note, however, that for Arendt the aim of politics is not the human community as a single entity, as the aim of action. If that would be the aim, according to her, plurality itself is at stake. It is therefore that action is an end in itself: only through action the human plurality is revealed as well as secured.

Arendt of course also is very critical about the activities of work and labor (less about action, although she again and again stresses the difficulty action delivers with it: the lack of control, its fluidity, its endlessness, and its unpredictability). If all activities on earth are solely understood as labor, she argues, all plurality of mankind soon will be vanished. *The Human Condition* at this point can be understood as a major rejection of the Marxist tendency to read society, power,

112. Ibid., 176; compare also with Veronique Vasterling, 'Hannah Arendt: Een fenomenologie van het politieke', in: Ciano Aydin (red.), *De vele gezichten van de fenomenologie* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Klement, 2007), 75

113. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 4

and relationships solely through the lenses of the activity of labor and the laborer. Labor, somehow, is the rejection of differences, since it is rooted in the biological sphere and the cycle of life. Of course, before the human being is able to act, before the philosopher is able to think, before the artist is able to create, before even the laborer is able to labor, there is a need to be freed from the sorrows of daily bread and livestock – a need that is fulfilled through the laboring activity itself as well as to gain some properties. Nevertheless, to solely understand the human activities through the lenses of labor, as a way to understand the human presence in the world, is very limited and actually threatening the plurality of men. With its close relationship to the cyclic character of biological life, labor itself is a threat for the durability and the plurality of the world. Biologically, every human being not only is bound to the same life-cycle, they also are part of species that needs to adapt to that life-cycle in order to survive. All human beings, therefore, are bound to the same necessities. Secondly, the activity of work is bound to a process of means towards another end. There always are tools needed in order to cut the tree, slices it into boards, and bring it back together differently, as a table. The table, in turn, although the end product of this production process and probably the proud object of its craftsman, is a tool in itself too: it simply is meant to collect the family for dinner. The two main concerns Arendt shares are linked to these activities, specifically when their objective is used as lens to understand the world. Through labour, Arendt argues, the human plurality is at stake. Through work violence enters the public realm: the means towards another end-approach will destroy the very opportunity to act freely. Violence destroys the equality that is at the basis of the public realm. Violence divides the public in rulers and ruled and makes it impossible to appear in public through action and speech freely. This emphasis on equality of the public realm, as we will see, is not so much a critique upon diversity and discrimination, let alone a critique upon personal property. On the contrary, actually, as I will argue in Chapter 5, when I will discuss the importance of the private space. Arendt nevertheless was very critical about the contemporary primacy of economy as a model to understand the world. Economy, according to Arendt, leaves us with the inability of speech (and action). Political life is brought back to models of profit and failure, welfare, the accumulation of capital and the importance of money (even over property). This model changes our approach to the artifice of the world, and turn them from goods (that can be an end in themselves) into merchandise. That is: means towards the end to earn money, if possible within short term. The human artifice is simply turned into a collection of consumer goods, soon to be sold or replaced. This approach shortens the lifespan of the artifice drastically (it tends towards the category of labor, one might stay). Even the individual home on earth, family properties or whatsoever are approached differently, and thereby in itself extensively changed. It is not difficult to understand, but the economical perspective has had a major impact on the fundamental structure of society as well as on the political realm.

Despite the omnipresence of bureaucracy in the contemporary western societies, and despite the primacy of economic models and arguments – about which Arendt speaks negatively – she nevertheless unfolds a surprisingly hopeful view on the possibility of political action of human beings. Action actually should be understood as the faculty to start anew, to take initiatives, which in its essence is the source of hope for the world. This source of hope is the very characteristic of ‘action’: the human capacity to start things anew, to take initiatives, to communicate and to collectively be engaged in public affairs. Action, therefore, is

closely related to the natality of life, Arendt states. This once again is in opposition with Heidegger, who approached the world and life through what he called the human *Sein zum Tode*, his mortality. Everything, even the human life, comes to an end, is bound to its finality. Arendt turns this perspective upside down: what affects life even more drastically is not its perishing but its very beginning. We're not only bound to temporal existence, we're also able to initiate new things, new directions, new beginnings. That is the very characteristic of the human being, according to Arendt: his ability to take initiatives.

114.
Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006)

115.
Ibid., 170-176

Arendt somehow felt the urge to extend *The Human Condition* with some 'recent' and concrete examples of political action, and therefore wrote additionally *On Revolution* in which she investigated the French and American Revolution.¹¹⁴ We might argue that this 1963 book is to be seen as an extension to *The Human Condition*, trying to construct a more concrete and historical understanding of the concept of action and how that could be related to actual political regimes. In *On Revolution* Arendt particularly admires the American Revolution, which she understood as the only revolution that culminated in a change of the political system – establishing a constituted republican form of government. The French Revolution could not be seen as a political revolution, Arendt argued on the other hand: it remained a social one. The French changed the social circumstances, but did not change the political system *an sich*. Whereas the American revolution provided in new and sustainable political structures, the French actually forgot to do so, and therefore only changed the panels and could materialize into new oppressive structures in the end. On the basis of these differences, Arendt distinguishes two stages within revolutions: they start with a transitory phase in which people gather together in recognition of a common 'desire for liberation from oppression', while in the second stage a new body politic is formed. The French Revolution never entered the second stage and thus was bound to fail, Arendt argues. It ended in a terrible bloodshed. The American Revolution, after having liberated the inhabitants from the British rulership, formed new political order based on human interaction, from the famous town hall meetings in the small villages to the governmental institutions on the level of the state and the (united) nation. Arendt here uses words as 'cosociation', 'cohabiting' and 'cojoined' in order to express what actually is the meaning of this human interaction and its importance in order to organize the new secular order through 'covenant and combination'.¹¹⁵ What is important to note here is that Arendt, although she celebrates 'action' as an end in itself, and although she celebrates the unpredictability of it, there is a need to institutionalize the public realm and public structures, in order to secure the possibility of action in the end.

Arendt once again gained critical response upon her reading of the American and French revolution, which was understood as a particular conservative or elitists view, overlooking the social needs beyond and the French revolution and the changes it actually forced. Arendt, however, was charmed by the directness of the early forms of political and democratic organization in the States, as well as the way it was constituted in the General Constitution. In Toronto the Canadian professor C.B. Macpherson asks Arendt:

'I was interested in Miss Arendt's position in relation to the traditions. I take it the idea is that she has rejected the tradition of Hobbes and Rousseau, and she has accepted the tradition of Montesquieu and the Federalists. I can understand this, but it raises a puzzle because there is one very important thing that it seems to me the Hobbes tradition and the Federalist tradition

116.
Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt'

117.
Arendt, *On Revolution*, 219

118.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 28

119.
Ibid., 50

have in common. That is their model of man as a calculating individual seeking to maximize his own interest. Bourgeois man is the model. And the model of society that follows when you put it in the addition assumption is that everyman's interest naturally conflicts with everybody else's.'

Arendt replies:

'I do not believe that the model of man is the same for the two traditions. I agree that the model of man which you described is the bourgeois and I agree that this bourgeois, God knows, is a reality. But if I may, I want to talk now about the model of man in this other tradition. The tradition of Montesquieu that you mentioned could really go back to Machiavelli and Montaigne, and so on. ... And this kind of man is not the bourgeois, but the citizen. This distinction between *le citoyen* and *le bourgeois* remained, of course, throughout the eighteenth century because it became such a central way of talking and thinking about these things during the French Revolution, and lasted up to 1848. ... And they [Machiavelli and so on] read all these books [that is: the books from antiquity] ... in order to find a model for this new political realm which they wanted to bring about, and which they called a republic. The model of man of this republic was to a certain extent the citizen of the Athenian *polis*.¹¹⁶

In between the lines it actually is very clear that Arendt felt the need to retell the Americans their history, since, what she acclaimed, 'fear of revolution has been the hidden *leitmotif* of post-war American foreign policy.'¹¹⁷

4.3.6 *Public, Private, Social*

The turn towards the private or – even worse – the social, a turn I dropped in the paragraphs above, was understood by Arendt as a threat for the world and humanity. Without the appearance in public space, life evaporates, she argues. A human being, she even goes further, can't be completely regarded to be 'human' without participation in public. A life lived in private, devoted to private matters, might be a happy life, but it nevertheless doesn't reach full flourishing heights, we might bluntly summarize Arendt's viewpoint. Or to state it differently, Arendt's distinction between the public and the private somehow is ontological. The public is a prerequisite for human life. This emphasis of public participation obviously fuelled by her own experience of being disclosed from the participation in public, but moreover is deeply rooted in her understanding of the distinction between the public and private realm.

Public and private, according to Arendt, correspond to the distinction between the household and the political realm in the *polis* – she once again grasps back to Greek and Roman thought.¹¹⁸ The *bios politikos* has its proper place in the public realm, while private life is limited to the *oikia*. A clear line separates both distinctive entities, although both entities also cannot be understood separately. The public and the private are interrelated and even interdependent concepts. She actually starts her description of the public realm by emphasizing the very characteristic of appearance in public:

'It means ... that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity.'¹¹⁹

Arendt mirrors this perspective of gaining publicity immediately with the intimacy of the private realm which – in her terms – cannot get publicity. The private

realm is the realm that offers space concealed from public viewing. The private is a space where one is on its own, not being seen neither being heard by ‘others’, invisible for peers. Surely, this might not mean that one is ‘alone’: in the private realm one often is surrounded by relatives or friends. Arendt thus strictly distinguishes ‘relatives’ from ‘peers’: to function amongst relatives is quite different that appearing in public amongst peers. The very distinctiveness of both realms is important – they are in need of each other. The public realm cannot exist without a private realm: the public depends upon the private, the private upon the public. The private realm nurtures biological life and thus is characterized by necessities. It is concerned with everything we need to do in order to the biology of the body: eating, drinking, earning money, making love, giving birth, and finally dying. The household, in other words, is the very realm of necessities. It is the realm where necessities are captured and mastered. ‘Necessity ruled over all activities performed in [the household]’, Arendt writes.¹²⁰ The public realm, on the other hand, is the realm of the *bios politikos*. Arendt follows Aristotle at this point, since he excludes everything that is necessary or useful from the *bios politikos*. Arendt draws the public realm as the realm of freedom, of not being enslaved by the necessities of life, the self, the body, relatives. In the public realm one even is free from the necessities of the community (although the very characteristic of this realm is devotion to the world). This realm is characterized by the promises and uncertainties of action and speech. This emphasis also makes clear how the private and the public are bound together. The public realm cannot exist without a private realm: in order to live a public life, somewhere else the necessities of life – since all human beings are biologically bound to these necessities – need to be captured elsewhere. What thus is important at this point is Arendt’s distinction between the realm of necessities (the private) and that of freedom (the public). The very distinction between both realms thus is to be understood through her emphasis on freedom: both the freedom from the necessities of life, but also immediately a freedom to be devoted to the world.¹²¹

Both realms were organized accordingly, Arendt argues. Whereas the public realm was regarded to be a space where equals could appear to one another, the household was organized through hierarchy with slaves, women, and children being ruled by the head of the household. This also meant that violence was inherent to the private realm, which in turn was unthinkable within the public realm. The household mastered the necessities of life, so that the head of the household could devote himself to the public realm. Again an important perspective needs to be stressed here. With leaving the household in order to enter the public realm, the head of the household also had to leave personal and private concerns and interests behind, so that he – and the others present in the public realm – could think and act from the perspective of the *polis*. By participating in public one had to leave its role as head of the household behind in order to participate as a citizen within the public realm.

Throughout her writings, and especially in *The Human Condition*, Arendt renders the public realm as a space of words and deeds, of ‘action’ in favour to the world. It is a space in which people are seen as equal, despite their fundamental differences. This perspective, again, harks back to Classical references: the Greek and Roman city-states, their public spaces of the agora, the forum, and the market-square. This crowded public space was surrounded by buildings that we today call ‘public’ too: libraries, shops, courts, cafes, markets, temples and offices. For Arendt nevertheless only the *bios politikos* counts – that is, according to her, the only activity that is truly public.¹²² This of course causes trouble for the

120.
Ibid., 30

121.
Ibid., 31

122.
Ibid., 38

123.

As seen through her emphasis on freedom, this might be obvious: most of the activities present in the agora and the forum after all are enslaved by the need to earn money, to be entertained, to legislate, or to actively maintain the world. They belong to the category of labour or work, not to the category of public action.

124.

Ibid., 197

125.

Ibid., 194

126.

Arendt also argues that it limits the size of the polis – unlimited growth is not possible. The public realm only makes sense to a certain size of a community. Ibid., 192-199

127.

Ibid., 26-27 [emphasis in original]

contemporary viewer. Although these classical public spaces after all were full of people – merchants selling goods, craftsman creating objects, philosophers deliberately discussing ideas, visitors conscious to look after new perspectives – not all of these present were allowed to participate in what was understood the public realm: the more or less debates on the future of the city state.¹²³ Only citizens were allowed to participate in the public life of the *polis*, which offered room to appear in public through action and speech amongst peers. To be a citizen, as stressed above, actually meant that one needed to own a household – which thus comes down to the male head of the household. Having a household, in other words, was seen as a prerequisite for entering the public realm, since the women, the children, and the slaves within this household captured the necessities, the head of the household was free to admit him selves to the public life. The household frees the head of the household, offering him the possibility to participate in the public realm. Arendt emphasises this equality in the public realm is realised only through a limited accessibility. Not only the *polis* was of limited size,¹²⁴ also not every inhabitant of the city-state was allowed to participate in these discussions in the agora.

Once again, only two of the human activities are needed to erect and sustain human communities, according to the Greek, and thus should be seen as belonging to the political realm: action and speech. All other human activities, also those we today regard political (even legislation!) were understood as of public relevance, but not as political in itself. Between brackets, Arendt also mentions architecture in this respect: the actual construction of the *polis*, more specifically, the construction of its outer wall, was needed in order to create room for the political realm – a statement I will discuss in Chapter 6 and 7.¹²⁵ Arendt thus emphasizes at this point the very fact of the construction of the defensive walls as an architectural act in order to secure a place where people can gather, appear to one another, in order to act politically. Legislation in a way fulfilled the same function: also the law created room for action – it set out the limits of the public realm. The law and the wall – which are two words that mirror each other quite nicely, by the way – are thus prerequisites for the *space of appearance*. The wall offering the proper safety of the place, both physically as well as mentally,¹²⁶ the law offering the proper rules for the organization of the political realm and human community. The law and the wall, once again, thus created space for action and speech. They are those two activities that are bound to the *space of appearance*, as well as are the source of the human affairs. It is important to understand that for the Greek, the community was not the goal of the action and speech – it was the other way around. The *polis*, the community, is the stage for action and speech. Only this political realm makes the doing of great deeds and the speech of remarkable words possible. Everybody that didn't belong to the polis was deprived of this possibility, of course not of speech itself, but of the life dedicated towards the public realm, a life engaged in the world.¹²⁷ Arendt acknowledges that *only* citizens were able to participate in the *bios politikos* in these city-states. Clearly, the situation in the *polis* was quite elitist: only male household owners were recognized as citizens. Those were freed from the need to search for food, to produce products or every other necessity to earn money in order to survive: all these other activities in life, labor and work, were executed by the other members of the household, the women, children and slaves, or by the craftsman in the city, the merchant, businessman, lawyer, the architect, and so on.

Beyond her argument on the specificities of both realms, Arendt is concerned about something else: the contemporary (in)ability to use the (recently) gained freedom to withdraw from the self and the private towards the world. As Seyla

Benhabib argues, for Arendt ‘there is not an elite of class, an elite of income, an elite of talent that has the privilege to engage in politics; rather, political life brings forth a self-appointed elite.’ This self-chosen elite consist of those ‘people that are able to care for “the public thing,” for the *res publica*,’ and are capable to look beyond their own interests. ‘In every generation’, Benhabib continues, ‘there will be people who care for the *res publica*, and it is the legacy of revolutions that, like a Fata Morgana, they appear and disappear, bearing witness to the human capacity for natality – for letting the new shine forth in politics.’¹²⁸ Arendt thus does not emphasise the limited group (gender, status) that was able to participate, but moreover stresses the capacity of the citizen to *choose* to be involved in the public realm. Before entering the public realm and participating in the debate, one surely needs to be free, Arendt argues, free from every necessity of life, but also from other necessities that could capture the opinions about the future of the city in self-interest. This latter aspect requires a personal choice of dedication to the city and the world, rather than to the self and self-interest. As she continues: this perspective actually urges an important perspective in this regard. Before entering the public realm, one needs the courage to give up one’s own interests in order to dedicate oneself to the affairs of the world.

‘To leave the household, originally in order to embark upon some adventure and glorious enterprise and later simply to devote one’s life to the affairs of the city, demanded courage because only in the household was one primarily concerned with one’s own life and survival. Whoever entered the political realm had first to be ready to risk his life, and too great a love for life obstructed freedom, was a sure sign of slavishness. Courage therefore became the political virtue par excellence, and only those men who possessed it could be admitted to a fellowship that was political in content and purpose and thereby transcended the mere togetherness imposed on all – slaves, barbarians, and Greeks alike – through the urgencies of life. The ‘good life,’ as Aristotle called the life of the citizen, therefore was not merely better, more carefree or nobler than ordinary life, but of an altogether different quality. It was ‘good’ to the extent that by having mastered the necessities of sheer life, by being freed from labor and work, and by overcoming the innate urge of all living creatures for their own survival, it was no longer bound to the biological life process. ... Without mastering the necessities of life in the household, neither life nor the ‘good life’ is possible, but politics is never for the sake of life. As far as the members of the *polis* are concerned, household life exists for the sake of the ‘good life’ in the *polis*.’¹²⁹

It is in this perspective that Arendt stresses the more or less ontological character of the public realm. Without participating in public, the human being has lost his very humanity, she even states. In order to underline this bold statement, Arendt offers two definitions of the public, which are strongly related. First Arendt argues that only the public appearance guarantees ‘reality’, simply through the fact that only what appears in public can be seen and heard by others. This starts with the quote that I already offered above. Public, Arendt writes,

‘means, first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity.’

She then continues:

128. Seyla Benhabib, ‘Hannah Arendt’s Political Engagements’, in: Roger Berkowitz, Jeffrey Katz, and Thomas Keenan (eds.), *Thinking in Dark Times, Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 61

129. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 36-37 [emphasis in original]

130.
Ibid., 50

131.
Ibid., 38

132.
Ibid., 49; Also Richard Sennett underlines this aspect in his investigation of what he calls the public domain. The activity he put forward as the proper activity of this public domain is playacting, which in turn is as much depending upon a public as the Arendtian action. 'Playacting', Sennett writes, 'requires an audience of strangers to succeed, but is meaningless or even destructive among intimates.' Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 28-29

133.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 26-27 [emphasis in original]

134.
Ibid., 52-53

'For us, appearance – something that is being seen and being heard by others as well as by ourselves – constitutes reality. ... The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and of ourselves.'¹³⁰

What stays in the private realm, stays hidden, or is left to the personal and highly individual perspectives, emotions and experiences of the single human being. Arendt even stresses therefore that a life lived completely in the private realm cannot be regarded fully human. 'In ancient feeling,' Arendt writes, 'the privative trait of privacy, indicated in the word itself, was all-important; it meant literally a state of being deprived of something, and even of the highest and most human of man's capacities. A man who lived only a private life, who like the slave was not permitted to enter the public realm, or like the barbarian had chosen not to establish such a realm, was not fully human.'¹³¹ One of course is not deprived from the ability to talk or employ activities, or to live a happy life. Arendt much more stresses the aspects that can uplift the single life out of its own circle. Therefore a public is needed. 'Every activity performed in public can attain an excellence never matched in privacy; for excellence, by definition, the presence of other is always required, and this presence needs the formality of the public, constituted by one's peers, it cannot be the casual familiar presence of one's equals or inferiors. ... No activity can become excellent if the world does not provide a proper space for its exercise. Neither education nor ingenuity nor talent can replace the constituent elements of the public realm, which make it the proper place for human excellence.'¹³²

With a reference to Machiavelli, Arendt states that in this political realm, goodness can not be the norm of action, but glory. At the Toronto conference the architect George Baird asks to clarify this statement. And Arendt responds: 'It has something to do with the distinction between the public and the private. But I can put it differently. I would say that in the notion of wanting to be good, I actually am concerned with my own self. The moment I act politically, I'm not concerned with me, but with the world. And that is the *main* distinction. ... Whether the criterion is glory – the shining out in the space of appearances – or whether the criterion is justice, that is not the decisive thing. The decisive thing is whether your own motivation is clear – for the world – or, for yourself, by which I mean for your soul.'

Important to underline in Arendt's first definition, however, is the importance of the public in order to assure the 'reality' of the world. Human life that is enclosed solely in the private realm actually is de-privated from the reality of the world, which only is established through the appearance in public, through the shared experiences – being seen and being heard, as well as to see and hear what others also see and hear. This emphasis on the reality of the world also is the most important aspect of the second definition, although emphasized in a slightly different direction. Public, Arendt put forward as her second definition, is the world itself. The world is what human beings have in common. Therefore, to be deprived from the public realm, Arendt argues, not only means to be struck in personal and private concerns and interests, it also means that one is de-privated from that what actually is able to gather human beings, deprived from a life dedicated to the concern for the world.¹³³

'The term "public" signifies the world itself, insofar as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned space in it.'¹³⁴

It is in this perspective that Arendt also emphasises a third realm that she saw emerging in the Modern age, the social realm. This social realm she actually understands as a threat for both the public and the private realm. This realm actually is characterized by an ‘upscale’ perspective of ‘labor’ as the shared characteristic of the human being. This lens of ‘labor’ actually affects extensively the understanding of the human community. Whereas through the perspective of action the human being is understood in all its differences, the labor perspective stresses its sameness: sharing the same needs and interests, as well as offering the same capacities to society (labor).

135.
Ibid., 39

136.
Ibid., 38

Arendt traces this change back to early Romantic period at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century – a change she for instance traces in the fall of architecture as truly public art, which I will discuss in Chapter 7, and the rise of the novel as the ‘only entirely social art form.’ With this image, Arendt means that it investigates the ‘modern individual and his endless conflicts’, making public ‘the intimacy of the heart.’¹³⁵ For Arendt this is an entirely negative judgment. With the term ‘social’, and in correspondence with that also ‘society’, she refers to something she understands as a threat for both the public and the private realm. The rise of society, she writes, has not only blurred the border between public and private, but also changed the meaning of both terms ‘beyond recognition’.¹³⁶ The human community in this perspective is ‘a body of people’ that share the same needs and interest, and that together need to contribute to the prosperity of society at large. Thus, this means that the aim of society is the prosperity of every member of society. This perspective obviously is derived from Marx’s emphasis on the structure of society through which this prosperity is distributed amongst its people. Arendt however faults him for a lack of understanding of the differences amongst people at all, as well as his inability to retrieve the economical perspective from the human body. Whereas for Arendt the possibility of outstanding work and glorious deeds are beyond doubt, through the labor perspective there is no room for each of these. Economic principles after all deal with generalities and therefore do only deliver room for minor differences. They render only the shared need to survive, the shared interest in prosperity, the shared requisite of peace and welfare. This perspective, Arendt argues, does lead towards an understanding of the human being as being part of a mankind, being part of the body of man, part of a larger construct that simply share the same interests and needs. In economic perspectives man is seldom approached as ‘merely’ a consumer, as a being that can be regulated through economic principles. The public realm, according to Arendt, on the other hand is about ‘glorious deeds’, remarkable words and great works, appearing in public, and through this appearance, adding his perspectives, words and deeds towards culture and the history of the world. In a community that is dominated by economic principles everything is in the end understood through its monetary value. Arendt however withstands this urge. Words, and deeds, and also ‘works’ (sic), cannot be judged through a single measurement, she states, without simultaneously being consumed, that is, being destructed at the same time. Money turns everything into a sort of objective mode. This however runs counter with not only our own experiences of reality in which all sorts of remembrances and objects resist such a limitation towards countable objective, as well as with the very character of the public realm.

What finally is important here is to understand the threat Arendt describes when she investigates the social realm. ‘The emergence of the social realm, which is neither private nor public, strictly speaking, is a relatively new phenomenon

137.

Ibid. 28; For Arendt the establishing of a world order of nation states not only gave rise to the social realm, it also issued a bigger problem after World War II, the rise of the stateless person. A problem that yet today still is not solved – neither are the huge problems of war, terrorism, climate-change and so on, that are discussed in depth, but that hardly get proper responses. As the urban sociologist Saskia Sassen emphasizes: 'Today's catastrophic conditions – the melting of the glaciers, the radicalness of poverty, the violence of economic inequality, the radicalness of poverty, the genocidal character of more and more wars – are often seen as part of a crisis. But it seems to me they are not. On the contrary, they are part of that putative no-man's-land that absorbed the costs of the making of national states and the more brutal side of capitalism.' Saskia Sassen, 'To Occupy', in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA), New Village Press, 2012), 67

138.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 57

139.

Ibid., 57

140.

Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 148

whose origin coincided with the emergence of the modern age and which found its political form in the nation-state.¹³⁷ In modern times, Arendt writes, property becomes prosperity, something that can be used and consumed. Prosperity can offer the state certain stability, but this never is a stable structure. Since capitalism is a process, also the stability of prosperity is the stability of a process. Arendt is quite concerned about this loss of durability. First she, however, sketches another warning. The social sciences as the theory of the social realm actually emphasize the 'normal' behavior, not their excellent, neither their eccentric acts. It is the theory of behavior – which is mapped and with statistics carefully employed. Human behavior, in this perspective, can be predicted, and even be manipulated. These perspectives actually dwell upon the huge number and the long term, upon what is the norm and what can be predicted. What is left behind in this model, Arendt argues, is the very human capacity to act. Action is regarded 'not natural', since it withdraws itself from the normal behavior. It starts something new, something of which the outcome cannot be predicted. Arendt understands this as the biggest challenge of the social realm. History changes, she states, not due to everyday behavior, but through that what is beyond the normal, through what is odd, different and stunning (these might be small differences, but differences they are). In society, it is not about these single actions and speeches that would gain reaction and responses, endorsement or objections, but cannot be predicted. The emphasis upon the 'normal' requires from its inhabitants to act as if they are part of one enormous family, as if everyone has the same interests, opinions, and objectives. The public realm has become an extension of the private, Arendt states: the government needs to take care of the private interests and is forced to strive for prosperity for all its citizens.

However, it is this ruling economic principle that Arendt mainly understands as the core of the social realm. This social realm, she states, swallows both the private interests and experiences, as well as the private properties on the one hand, as well as the possibility to act in public on the other hand. Both the public realm and the private realm turn into hollow realms, when the economical approach is influential both in public affairs and in private matters. For Arendt, in a society that is characterized by such a limitation of the instruments to value and judge its happenings, events, objectives, outbursts, structures, artefacts, and so on, people have become solitary individuals, prisoners of their own subjective experience – even if others can have the exact same experience. 'Being seen and being heard by others', Arendt writes, 'derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position.'¹³⁸ The end of the commonly shared world, in other words, has arrived when it is reduced to a single perspective and a single aspect. Arendt argues that a real public realm on the contrary is characterized by the *simultaneity* of countless perspectives. 'Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear.'¹³⁹

With this analysis, Arendt emphasizes the importance of the public realm as a space of human plurality. The public realm and plurality are interdependent. While plurality is confined, there is no public realm. And if there is no public realm, also plurality is endangered: people are stripped of the freedom to develop their own unique biography in relation to others and with it to take part in the organized world.¹⁴⁰ In this regard, Arendt, in *The Human Condition*, does not so much identify political threats (totalitarian regimes), but mainly other devel-

opments: the mass society (which was becoming more and more evident in her time), the bureaucratic forms of organization attendant upon this and in addition the increasing primacy of economic principles over everyday life, as I already discussed.

This idea of the emergence of a 'social realm' quite often is misunderstood in the work of Arendt; it leaves the reader with a lot of questions, actually. In Toronto a nice conversation emerged about this topic, starting with a question by Arendt's close friend and writer Mary McCarthy:

'What is somebody supposed to do on the public stage, in the public space, if he does not concern himself with the social? That is, what's left? It seems to me that if you once have a constitution, and you've had the foundation, and you have had a framework of laws, the scene is there for political action. And the only thing that is left for the political man to do is what the Greeks did: make war! Now this cannot be right! On the other hand, if all questions of economics, human welfare, busing, anything that touches the social sphere, are to be excluded from the political scene, then I am mystified. I am left with war and speeches. But the speeches can't just be speeches. They have to be speeches about something'

And Arendt replies:

'Life changes constantly, and things are constantly there that want to be talked about. At all times people living together will have affairs that belong in the realm of the public – "are worthy to be talked about in public." What these matter *are* at any historical *moment* is probably *utterly* different. For instance, the great cathedrals were the public spaces of the Middle Ages. The town halls came later. And *there* perhaps they had to talk about a matter which is not without any interest either: the question of God.'

She then, after a while, adds:

'There are things where the right measures can be figured out. These things can really be administered and are not then subject to public debate. Public debate can only deal with things, which – if we want to put it negatively – we cannot figure out with certainty. Otherwise, if we can figure it out with certainty, why do we all need to get together? Take a town-hall meeting. There is a question, for instance, of where to put the bridge. This can be decided from above, or it can be done by debate. In case there really is an open question where it is better to put the bridge, it can be decided better by debate than from above. I once assisted such a town-hall meeting in New Hampshire, and I was very impressed by the level of sense in that town. On the other hand, it seems to me also quite clear that no amount of speeches and discussions and debates – or what is unfortunately taking their place: research committees, which are an excuse for doing nothing – that none of these things will be able to solve the very grave social problems which the big cities pose to us.'

'Lets take the housing problem. The social problem is certainly adequate housing. But the question of whether this adequate housing means integration or not is certainly a political question. With every one of these questions there is a double face. And one of these faces should not be subject to debate. There shouldn't be any debate about the question that everybody should have decent housing.'

George Baird comes in:

'From an administrative point of view, the British government described as inadequate a huge percentage of the housing stock of Britain in a way that makes no sense to a large proportion of the inhabitants who actually live there.'

141.
Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt', 315-319

142.
Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978)

143.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 5

Arendt admits:

'I think this example is helpful in showing this double face of which I have talked in a very concrete way. The political issue is that these people love their neighbourhood and don't want to move, even if you give them one more bathroom. This is indeed entirely a debatable question, and a public issue, and should be decided publicly and not from above. But if it's a question of how many square feet every human being needs in order to be able to breathe and to live a decent life, this is something which we really can figure out.'¹⁴¹

4.3.7 *Thinking, Willing, Judging*

Although Arendt's turn towards the *vita activa*, and her opposition towards the *vita contemplativa*, as well as her favoring of the public realm above the private realm, indeed can be understood as this rejection of the withdrawal from the world in favor of the 'love for the world', it nevertheless is remarkable that she doesn't address the activity of 'thinking' as a human faculty in her study. Arendt herself in the prologue explains this lack of attention. Thinking, after all, is the highest activity of the human being, Arendt admits. Nevertheless, she's not sure every human being is able to think. It follows, she argues, that she had to exclude thinking from the human capacities that are shared by everybody. This seems to be a weak argument, specifically since Arendt also is quite concerned about action as a shared capacity of the human being. However, thinking is not completely written out of her investigation. Again and again this activity is touched upon, indeed often in a quite pessimistic view upon the human capacity to think after all. This concern somehow is the embarrassing thesis of which she found proof in her analysis of the Eichmann process a couple of years later. Thinking, therefore, turned to be her central concern in the latter part of her life, especially extensively discussed in her last – not completed – book *The Life of the Mind*.¹⁴² Yet now, still in *The Human Condition*, she states: 'Thoughtlessness' – the heedless recklessness or hopeless confusion or complacent repetition of 'truths', which have become trivial and empty – seems to me among the outstanding characteristics of our time.'¹⁴³

This thoughtlessness is precisely what Arendt renders as the very characteristic of Adolf Eichmann. Quite a lot of her books and essays roused attention, which already started amidst the Jews and Zionist at the moment she – early in her career – critically investigates the Zionist ambitions to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, when she herself is still an active member of some Zionist groups. She also rouses attention of the conservative and liberal political theorists, philosophers, historians, writers, activists in Europe and America with her uncommon approach of politics, political action, thinking and philosophy, in her latter work. Most attention, however, she had gained with her critical approach of the Jewish culture in her review of the 1961 process against Adolf Eichmann, the former SS-officer during World War II responsible for the logistics of the transports of Jews, Roma and Sinti to the concentration camps. Certainly Arendt was happy to be involved in those debates, and answered questions, letters, and remarks extensively. Despite this eagerness to rethink all issues and actualities towards their essence, and reconstruct arguments, and her love to dispute, the commotion caused by her book on the trial *Eichmann in Jerusalem* touched her strongly. The critical response and the implicit and explicit blame of betraying the Jewish case moved her emotionally, specifically since it also did cost more than she had expected: the loss of some friendships too. Quite soon after the publication of

The Human Condition, Arendt was asked by the magazine *The New Yorker* to follow and comment the trial of Eichmann. Arendt accepted the invitation and followed the process, of course, with personal interest. She certainly also dealt with the question that the whole world was asking: how could this man do such evil deeds? Already in 1951 Arendt had written to Jaspers that the evil of modern times ‘has proved to be more radical than expected. In objective terms, modern crimes are not provided for in the Ten Commandments. Or: The Western tradition is suffering from the preconception that the most evil things human beings can do arise from the vice of selfishness. Yet we know that the greatest evils or radical evil has nothing to do anymore with such humanly understandable sinful motives.’¹⁴⁴ She adds to this remark that she didn’t know how such radical evil should be understood really – at that moment in 1951 she suggested that human beings were made superfluous. As an example Arendt refers to the Soviet Union, where during the World War II people not only were used ‘as a means to an end, which leaves their essence as humans untouched and impinges only on their human dignity’,¹⁴⁵ but moreover the very humanity of people was threatened: they were deprived from their capacity to act. About a decade later, at the moment Arendt writes Jaspers that she will follow the trial of Eichmann (‘I want to go to Israel for the Eichmann trial, and *The New Yorker*, a very well-known magazine here, has said it will send me’),¹⁴⁶ Jaspers advises her not to go: ‘The Eichmann trial will be no pleasure for you. I’m afraid it cannot go well.’¹⁴⁷ But Arendt went, and indeed tried to find the answer how a man like Eichmann was able to do such evil deeds. Her answer actually was surprising – the very root of the evil was thoughtlessness, she stated. Eichmann was not able to think for himself. At a certain point in her book she writes: ‘The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to *think*, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else.’¹⁴⁸ In Arendt’s terms: he did not think, neither did he act - the reason he didn’t act probably was he lacked the faculty of thinking. He just did what he was told to do. He behaved. According to Arendt the evil done by this man only source was ‘thoughtlessness’, which is not the evil-doing itself, but the very first step which can cause this evil-doing on a vast scale.¹⁴⁹ Thoughtlessness for Arendt is both just following ‘truths’, be it the truth declared by one man, the ‘truth’ acquired from an ideology, or the ‘truth’ which is the undoubted *zeitgeist*, the celebrated narrative of current society as a whole. Such thoughtlessness is a withdrawal from the world as well, a withdrawal from its reality. This idea is precisely what Arendt declares as *the banality of evil*, the phrase that Arendt added as the subtitle of her book on the Eichmann trial, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. She writes on Eichmann: ‘He did not need to “close his ears to the voice of conscience,” as the judgment had it, not because he had none, but because his conscience spoke with a “respectable voice,” with the voice of respectable society around him.’¹⁵⁰ He, in other words, was not able to ‘think for himself’, nor ask himself: ‘can I live with the deeds I did?’ – a phrase that is of major important for Arendt.

In her report, however, Arendt doesn’t address this as a question limited to Eichmann only. She drew this lacking capacity to think for oneself as a widespread problem of modernity. The commentators and critics immediately stumbled over the subtitle since they wrongly understood the phrase ‘the Banality of Evil’: it roused the fiercest responses Arendt got on her work during her lifetime. It even did cost her the loss of some friendships.¹⁵¹ In retrospect, for a large part the discussion was not based on her statement in the book, but only on the sound bite of the word ‘banal’ on the cover. At first sight the word banal could after all mean that such evil, of which Eichmann than is a symbol, could be done by ‘everyone’, that ‘Eichmann is in each of us’, and that ‘we’ therefore should see the evil itself

144. Hannah Arendt – Karl Jaspers Correspondence, 166

145. Ibid., 166

146. Ibid., 402

147. Ibid., 404

148. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 49

149. Kohn, ‘Evil and Plurality’, 154

150. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 165

151. Moral Philosopher Susan Neiman even states: ‘violent – no, hysterical – reaction’, based upon ‘misreading of the text so crude and grotesque you would think it could only occur in the most ill trained of superficial readers.’ Susan Neiman, ‘Banality Reconsidered’, in: Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Politics in Dark Times, Encounters with Hannah Arendt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 305

152.
See Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt', 308

153.
Hannah Arendt – Karl Jaspers
Correspondence, 542

154.
Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future, Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Viking Press, 1961)

155.
Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*
(New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968)

as banal. This misunderstanding Arendt had yet to correct during the Toronto conference.¹⁵² With 'banal', she stated during the conference, she never did mean such a statement. She simply was astonished by the ordinariness of Eichmann. He was not strange nor resentful, ideological nor evil: his evil neither sprang from psychopathic depths, nor from a frustrated life or abused childhood. He was just an ordinary man. And the problem was, Arendt stresses, he just did what he had to do without asking questions. He even during the trial still backed himself behind the system he had to operate in. That attitude did not make the evil itself banal, but the other way around, Arendt suggests. It turned banality itself into evil. Jaspers – indeed like a father – later wrote Arendt that she better could have written that it was 'this evil, not evil per se' that was banal.¹⁵³ The 'banality' she added to the subtitle however shows that Arendt did not limit this 'unthoughtfulness' to this one person, but understood it as a broader problem, linked to modernity and a characteristic of contemporary 'masses'.

Although strains of this argument already were part of her writings before, from this moment on she began to give more explicit attention to the human faculty of thinking, although she still also worked on her ideas on the importance of the human ability to act, of which she felt the urge to make her concept less abstract and way more actual. I already mentioned her 1963 book *On Revolution*, in which she investigated political and social revolutions, especially the American Revolution and the French Revolution. The two lines of attention, action and thinking, for the first time, actually, merge in a collection of essays that she published in 1961, called *Between Past and Future*.¹⁵⁴ In these essays, Arendt elucidates fundamental terms like history, freedom, culture, and education – and through those topics investigates again action and thinking, but adding terms as beauty and judgment. In 1968 Arendt publishes *Men in Dark Times*, a collection of essays on her 'hero's', as for instance Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Jaspers, Berthold Brecht and Walter Benjamin, who in quite different ways but clearly have been able to recognize and resist actual and dangerous trends in society.¹⁵⁵ Through those essays Arendt not only presented these figures as 'men able to act', but also as 'human beings able to think', which obviously counter with the figure of Eichmann. The five years after the death of her husband Blücher, Arendt worked on what had to be a counterpart of *The Human Condition*. In *The Human Condition* Arendt had deliberately not addressed the human activity of thinking. Thinking is an activity itself, an activity that, according to Arendt, the human being distinguishes from the animal. While describing thinking as a human activity, it is clear that Arendt understood this emphasizing the very idea of thinking not as a new project. Moreover, this project can be considered as the investigation of those activities that she had excluded from her earlier reflection on the human activities. By emphasizing thinking as an act, Arendt distinguishes it from mere reasoning, which can be seen as applying a certain theory. She rephrases thinking already in earlier writings as 'a talk with oneself'. This 'dialogue' or even 'arguing', as she renders it, needs to be without restrictions. In a three-volume book called *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt therefore intended to investigate not only 'thinking', but also the notions 'willing' and 'judging'. Unfortunately, Arendt only could finish the first two volumes roughly, since she died suddenly because of a heart attack the very morning of December 4th in 1975. In her typewriter the first page of the third part was found, containing two epigraphs. Her friend the writer Mary McCarty published the first two volumes as *The Life of the Mind* posthumously in 1978. In these two volumes she asks herself if our thinking, as being seen as a dialogue with the self, can lead to the development of

a conscience. The third volume would have been a reconsideration of the ideas of the philosopher Immanuel Kant on judgment – this ambition was already clearly mentioned by Arendt, and she actually just had given a range of colleges on this topic at The New School in New York. The propelling posthumously published transcriptions of these lectures on this topic in *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, can be seen as an outline for this volume.¹⁵⁶ The idea to reconsider 'thinking', 'willing' and 'judging' as three different faculties of the human mind already shows a bit of her view. Within these topics, the philosophical distinction between thinking and willing, the tension between willing and acting is tangible, as well as the important role of 'judging' in her view. Judgment makes thinking manifest in the world.¹⁵⁷

The idea that 'thinking' and 'action' are intertwined, as for instances was rendered through the portraits of her 'heroes' in *Men in Dark Times*, of course also was at the very basis of Arendt's critical response towards the audience at the Toronto conference and their eagerness to act.

'Reason itself,' Arendt explained to the public in Toronto, 'the thinking ability which we have, has a need to actualize itself. The philosophers and the metaphysicians have monopolized this capability. This has led to very great things. It also has led to rather unpleasant things.'¹⁵⁸

Already in her very first statement¹⁵⁹ during the Toronto conference Arendt roused the public, not only by her rejection to be positioned or to be involved in concrete political action at that very moment, but also by the very provocative rejection of philosophy and political theory as such. That is a bold statement to start with, especially amongst an audience of political theorists and philosophers: a disassociation from both philosophy and political sciences – and theology, I guess, but that is less relevant in this case. In Toronto Arendt nevertheless also stressed that both activities, thinking and acting not are two capacities of different persons, as the capacities of the philosopher on the one hand, and of the politician on the other hand. Not at all – thinking and acting essentially should be seen as two different capacities of a single person. But although united in the same person, Arendt here even harder stresses the distinct character of both capacities.

'I do believe that thinking has some influence on action.' Arendt nevertheless admits. 'But on acting man. Because it is the same ego that thinks and the same ego that acts.'

Arendt actually adds to this statement:

'But not theory!'

Which is a particular insight in the critic Arendt actually has. Arendt blames the practitioners of these fields of thinking of a monopoly that has brought good, surely, but evil as well:

'We have forgotten,' Arendt states, 'that every human being has a need to think, not to think abstractly, not to answer the ultimate questions of God, immortality, and freedom, nothing but to think while he is living.'

Theory, however, mostly is dealing with generalities – that is what Arendt blames the professional thinkers.

'If you think about it in these ... terms, you think about mankind – that is, about some noun which actually doesn't exist, which is a concept. And this noun – be it Marx's species-being, or mankind, or the world spirit, or what have you – is constantly construed in the image of a single man. [But] if we really believe – and I think we share this belief – that plurality rules the earth, then I think one has got to modify this notion of the unity of theory and practice to such an extent that it will be unrecognizable for those who

156. Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989)

157. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 193

158. Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt', 303

159. Better said: it is the first remark in the transcription, but probably in reality was part of a latter reflection. The transcript is edited and reordered by theme by Melvin Hill, as I explained previously.

160.
Ibid., 305

161.
Ibid., 303

162.
Ibid., 308

163.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 16

tried their hand at it before. I really believe that you can only act in concert and I really believe that you can only think by yourself. These are two entirely different – if you want to call it – “existential” positions. And to believe that there is any direct influence of theory on action insofar as theory is just a thought thing, that is something thought out – I think that this is really not so and really will never be so.¹⁶⁰

Arendt thus opposes again thinking or philosophy seen as a construct, a system, a theory – thought out and ready to be accepted as a framework by the single human being, ready to be applied in the everyday world. Arendt on her terms pleads for thinking that is not detached from the world, even not detached from everyday life. She takes it from the sole and lone position of the professional thinkers, and brings it to the human being itself, into the world.

‘Everybody who tells a story of what happened to him half an hour ago on the street has got to put this story into shape. And this putting the story into shape is a form of thought.’¹⁶¹

The explanation and the understanding of that what happened – or possibly what actually now is happening or what will happen in the future – only can exist in a continuous interaction with the world and its actualities – which is what Arendt pleads for.

‘What is the subject of our thought? Experience! Nothing else! And if we lose the ground of experience then we get into all kinds of theories. When the political theorist begins to build his systems he is also usually dealing with abstraction.’¹⁶²

Arendt thus rejects philosophy not only because of its existing philosophical constructions and insights, but also because of its very objective, as well as because of its ‘exclusivity’. Philosophy, Arendt states, essentially deals with eternal truths, the big but mostly abstract questions beyond life. But Arendt here brings it back to the single person and life itself. The eternal truth, that the professional thinker tries to explore, only will unfold to the human being in contemplation and solitude. The philosopher has to withdraw himself from the world, literally as well metaphorically, to not be disturbed by the rumours of the street and the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Without contemplation and solitude the philosopher probably is even not able to think. The common view is that the philosopher needed contemplation and solitude to touch upon the eternal. In other words, such an emphasis on the withdrawal from the world renders the conviction that truth is transcendental and only can be found beyond this world, beyond the concerns and events of our everyday life. But Arendt thus blames the profession of thinking, as indeed being disconnected from the world and actualities. This remark actually is an important insight in what Arendt understood as ‘thinking’. It is not the ability to construct abstract worldviews or views beyond the world, but the interaction between everyday live and personal reflection on what one is doing. In other words, to ‘think for oneself’, so to say, and not hide behind the shoulders of certain predecessors, schools, programs, theories. In her book *The Human Condition* Arendt states that thinking is like the daimon on one’s shoulder who continuously asks ‘can you live with what you are doing?’¹⁶³

Thinking, according to Arendt, is not the sole activity as regularly seen in the tradition of philosophy, in which the thinker is turned away from ‘reality’ in order to conceptualize the ‘truth’, as in Plato’s idea of the eternal ideas. Nor is it rational and logical reasoning which leads to a cognitive truth, as scientists mostly see it and as it is seen in contemporary society as well. Thinking moreover is to be seen as getting rid of these constructions. On the contrary, thinking should address

the reality itself and its only source is the experience of reality – as Arendt had understood by her own biography.¹⁶⁴ Thinking is concerned about the world itself, its daily experience as well as the ‘interruptions or outbreaks of history’, and especially focused on what man (or men) can do, how they (should) act, interact, and react, and what the world may become because of that action. Or as Arendt write to Mary McCarthy: ‘thinking starts after an experience of truth has struck home, so to speak.’¹⁶⁵ So thinking is not ‘just having some thoughts in mind,’ nor ‘developing an opinion on a certain topics’, even not constructing a certain theory and finally also adopting and adapting certain dogma. It is also not mere contemplation (as opposed to the *vita activa*), nor a goal-bounded theorization.¹⁶⁶ The essence of thinking, states Arendt following Plato, is a dialogue between ‘me and myself’,¹⁶⁷ distinct from voices around, but caused by ‘real experiences’.

It is the dialogue between me and myself that is the essence of thinking. This on-going dialogue is fuelled by the ever changing context: all new information, newly emerging circumstances, new actions and speeches, are needed to be rethought and re-approached. The goal of this ongoing dialogue is a holistic life, living in agreement with oneself. Or as said by Socrates: ‘Since I am one, it is better for me to disagree with the whole world than to be in disagreement with myself.’¹⁶⁸ In other words, thinking is clearing the mind of general collective thoughts, common premises, the presuppositions, opinions, and prejudices. Thinking, thus, should be seen as a form of personal resistance to the environment surrounding us. Thinking should be free, she said – it even should be freed from the ‘right way of thinking politically.’ Through this conversation also, her own refusal to be pinpointed on one position is felt. Arendt’s oeuvre, of course, is an example *par excellence* of such thinking.

‘If you take away the bannisters from people,’ Arendt stated in Toronto, ‘– their safe guiding lines (and then they talk about the breakdown of tradition but they have never realized what it means! That it means you really are out in the cold!) then, of course the reaction is – and this has been my case quite often – that you are simply ignored. And I don’t mind that. Sometimes you are attacked. But you usually are ignored...’¹⁶⁹

Nevertheless, if all ‘common ground’ has to be questioned, if theory is suspicious, how is the human being able to judge? Is common ground not needed in order to take decisions that are not purely personal, but also can be understood and followed and accepted by the public at large? For Arendt that was a serious question: how to judge actualities within politics? Arendt found a perspective in the work of Immanuel Kant that helped her to define a perspective of judgment in politics, although she derives it from the thinking of Kant on aesthetics and taste. Kant supposed, in his third critique, that there was a certain common ground for beauty – that the human beings could collectively agree on what they understand as beautiful. Therefore he emphasized this capacity of the human being through the definition of taste. Arendt on her term takes this third critique towards the political level. Politics, according to Arendt, deals first and foremost with the human plurality. The plurality of men unfolds through action and speech, which is actually the domain of politics. The goal of politics somehow is the continuity of the world – the world that is around us and the world that connects us – we, now, together; but also with the generations before and those after us. For Arendt this world only gets its reality through the plural approaches of the human beings. It only gets tangibility through the process of being seen and being heard from different perspectives – only through these different perspectives can a certain reality be understood in all its different aspects and complexities. In order to

164. Arendt, ‘On Hannah Arendt’, 308; *Between Friends, The correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy*, 24

165. *Between Friends, The correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy*, 24

166. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 16

167. Arendt uses this quote often, as for instance in: *Ibid.*, 76

168. As quoted by Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 216

169. Arendt, ‘On Hannah Arendt’, p.336

170.

Hannah Arendt, 'The Crisis in Culture', in: Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future, Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 217

171.

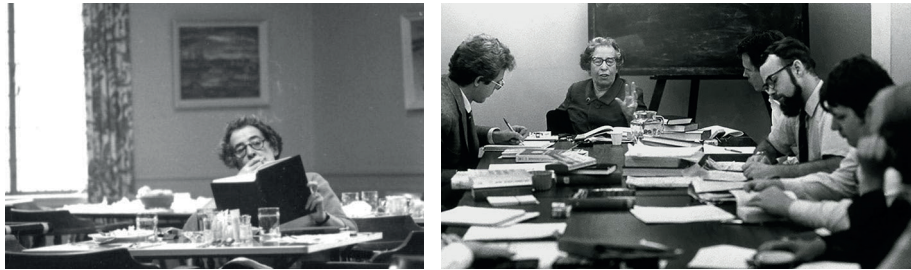
Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 72

judge, Arendt thus explores the idea of taste in the work of Kant, and she follows him in his emphasizing the need of 'enlarged mentality'. In order to judge – Kant means aesthetical judgment, Arendt means political judgment – a human being should be able to look from different perspective, not only from his own standpoint, but also from each other's position around him or her. Judgment thus is not reasoning; its arguments are not linear but holistic. Again, like thinking, it is not about 'truth', but about 'reality', and this reality only appears (or gets real) from different viewpoints. Judgment is the ability to look from different perspectives, 'to think from the standpoint of everyone else' as well as the ability to 'reflect upon one's own judgment from a universal standpoint'. Or as an inscription in some tiles in Mazara del Vallo on Sicily, Italy reads,

'Nell' accessione della filosofia Hannah Arendt
la tolleranza è la capacità di pensare
anche per un solo instante, che
l'interlocutore possa avere ragione'

'In Hannah Arendt's conception,
tolerance is the ability to think,
even for a moment,
that your interlocutor might be right'

These exercises, according to Arendt, however requires different capacities from the human being: courage (to think for oneself and to judge their own perspective), imagination and creativity (in order to explore different viewpoints), experience, 'culture' or community (on the basis of which a judgment gets validity) and finally communication (the community should be able to discuss the judgment, the judge should be able to explain its decisions). It is important to come back to this notion of the 'enlarged mentality' of Kant and Arendt's interpretation – or, in other words, the capacity to think from different standpoints. The goal of this 'enlarged mentality' of course is not to be empathic. On the contrary. It is meant to set up a political agreement. Judgment derives its validity, writes Arendt, only through such agreement – it only through such agreement 'can liberate itself from the subjective private conditions'. Judgment thus 'needs the presence of others 'in whose place' it must think, whose perspectives it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all.¹⁷⁰ This idea of the enlarged mentality and the goal of thinking from different positions presupposes the existence of a 'sensus communis'. Kant and Arendt both used this Latin term and not the more general and everyday used common sense – which meant that they emphasize that this is not a certain extra mental capacity but that this sense is rooted in a human community. It thus has to be seen as 'community sense'. And since it is community-sense, it is open for communication.¹⁷¹ Judgment, thus only is possible within a community. Beyond thinking, beyond this idea of 'to think for oneself', common ground is needed in order to judge. Again, thus: in order to judge one needs courage, imagination, creativity, experience – and a judgement only gets its validity within the context of a certain culture and community, and only through communication.



4.4 Hannah Arendt 'at work'

4.4 TWO BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

4.4.1 *The World*

Regarding the life and works of Arendt it is obvious to argue – as I do above – that her oeuvre closely is related to her biography: particularly her unwanted involvement in the political developments in Germany before the war and her escape to the United States in the early 40s and, later in her biography, the controversy around her Eichmann report. Somehow these events indeed caused a change from philosophical to political oriented works, as well a renewed attention to the very capacity of thinking of human beings in the latter decades of her life. Although she did regard her position as a student facing the emerging National Socialism as rather naïve afterwards, these experiences nevertheless did not lead to a complete turn in her work. These experiences worked like an accelerator, which pushed some perspectives already existent into new depth and attention by making these lines of thoughts urgent to investigate, elaborate, and enhance. Major concerns and objectives of her latter works, for instance, are already between the lines of her dissertation, on Augustine, as well as in her biography of Rahel Varnhagen, whilst the topic of thinking itself was already important before her report on the Eichmann trial. I would argue that at least two main concepts do form the foundation of her work: ideas about the ‘world’ on the one hand, and about ‘politics’ at the other. Both concepts I will address in the following subsections of this chapter.

Obviously one of the major notions in the work is that of ‘the world’. It at least is a perspective that already in her very first writings are pronounced, but surely gained way more attention in her latter works. Arendt’s dissertation on Augustine, for instance, dealt with the very worldliness of the human being, which has, in the works of Augustine as well as in the very heart of Christianity, a certain tension. I already noted above the tension between the command ‘to love thy neighbor as thyself’ versus the remark of Jesus that whoever follows Him lives ‘in the world’ but not is ‘from the world’. This tension actually is very characteristic within the writings of the apostle John, who starts his gospel with the famous words ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son ...’¹⁷², while he in his letters assures the readers to ‘not love the world or anything in the world.’¹⁷³ Arendt coined this emphasis of John later as *otherworldliness*.¹⁷⁴ Somehow the same dilemma played a role in the biography on Rahel Varnhagen: the position of the stranger in the world as being a pariah or a parvenu. It is reasonable that the same tension also drove her to emphasize the human activities in *The Human Condition*, which are somehow forced against a certain bias of philosophy in the actual world. This urge still is at the very heart of her *The Life of the Mind* in which her dwelling upon thinking is not a celebration of a withdrawal from the world. It thus is not without reason that Elisabeth Young-Bruehl did choose to subtitle her biography on Arendt with: *For the Love of the World*. In the tension between withdrawal from the world and involvement in the world, Arendt chooses the latter. The notion of the world she gained from the work of Heidegger, although their respectable reflections on the notion are utterly different. Heidegger actually defined the notion of the world as ‘an encompassing network of instrumental’ relationships of entities that surrounds us and are a ‘given’ because they fulfil ‘certain functions within the nexus of our pragmatic concerns.’¹⁷⁵ This notion of the ‘world’ is opposed to that of the ‘earth,’ which he saw as the natural

¹⁷².
John 3:16

¹⁷³.
1 John 2:15

¹⁷⁴.
Arendt, ‘Epilogue’ in: Arendt *The Promise of Politics*, 203

¹⁷⁵.
Dana R. Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger, The Fate of the Political* (Princeton (NJ.), Princeton University Press, 1996), 121

circumstances of the globe and outer space. The distinction thus is the ‘natural’ versus the ‘artificial’, the ‘given’ versus those things that request a certain effort of the human being, the ‘circumstances’ and the ‘relationships’. Essentially the latter category disturbs the first category: all human effort somehow intervenes in natural circumstances as well its processes – even the existence of the human being itself is difficult to understand without also disturbing the ‘natural’ circumstances. To be clear, ‘natural’ circumstances does not per se mean ‘nature’, although this nature is an important part of the earth. The distinction between earth and world lies precisely in the active role of the human being. Arendt does follow Heidegger in this distinction: she on her term calls the earth the ‘very quintessence of the human condition.’ Earthly nature provides ‘human beings ... a habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort and without artifice.’¹⁷⁶ The distinctness of the ‘world’ from the ‘earth’ lies precisely in this artifice. Both Heidegger and Arendt do emphasize that artifice is a human need. Without intervention in the earth in order to create a world – creating a shelter, fabricating tools, equipment, instruments, aiming for a place, resources and even comfort – human life on earth is not possible; the human species does need artifice in order to survive. The earth thus has to be converted into a world that’s fit for the human being – it is through intervention in the natural circumstances of life that the world is created; intervention turns the earth into a world that is inhabitable. According to Arendt, it is also through the production of the human artifice that human life is distinct from animal life (although of course also animals do need to create spaces for their survival as well: they create holes, nests and shelters as well. Compared to animals, however, the intervention of the human being onto the world has way more effect and impact).¹⁷⁷ Whoever is familiar with both the work of Heidegger and Arendt, this distinction between the earth and the world for both is not a permit to intervene in nature *rücksichtslos*. They both render the earth as a ‘given’ – indeed, a ‘gift’ – while intervention is seen as a necessity. Even in Arendt’s embracement of the *vita activa*, intervention in order to create a world is a necessity rather than a given. What is very important to stress once again: beyond the intervention in the earth there is a moment of creation and invention that finally turns into intervention. It is specifically in the writings of Arendt that this aspect gains attention, however, Heidegger also renders this moment as part of the specific ‘worldliness’ of the human being.

It might be confusing, but besides the earth as a ‘given’, the world itself is a ‘given’ too. It after all consists of the interventions made by our predecessors. These humanly made circumstances, these ‘new’ relationships, and this artifice is the pre-existing context for the life of human beings. In that sense, both earth and world are a ‘given’, circumstances that already exist when we enter the world, as well as which will be out there when we leave the world, which highly affect our being on earth in the world.

The difference however is how both value and assess this (man-made) world. Heidegger describes the ‘world’ as a necessity, a functional entity needed for the human life to survive and develop. His focus in respect to the world is on the relationships between entities and beings, how the human being is surrounded, related, and affected with other beings and objects. It is this perspective that he seems to understand the world entirely negatively. Quite central in his writings is the question of the self, the authentic being of the human being. The ‘authentic self’ somehow is the aim, the ultimate goal in life. According to Heidegger, the self only can know nothing but the self. This perspective urges him to emphasise the importance of the *vita contemplativa*: withdrawn from the world, in solitude with

176. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2

177. *Ibid.*, 2

178.
Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 105

179.
Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', 145

180.
Ibid., 148

181.
Safranski, *Martin Heidegger*, 140

the self. The world, in this perspective, is a threat for this contemplating life: the world after all is depicted by the hustle and bustle of events and actualities that again and again darkens the sight, disturbs the search and distracts the human being. In other words: the hustle and bustle of the world disturbs the self to develop authentically. Heidegger therefore stresses the need to find a space that is detached from the world in order to offer room for this *vita contemplativa*, room for the self in which it can ripen to authenticity, undisturbed and undistracted. Only in solitude, withdrawn from the world, the self would reveal, he states. The very image, this contemplative life, of course, has been represented by his own hut in the woods, his philosophical atelier in the Black Woods in Germany, far away from the city that is understood as the ultimate appearance of the continuous tumble of human affairs, the ultimate detachment of the earth, nature, and authenticity. This active being detached from the world only is achievable by the philosopher – all other human beings need to operate within the world, amongst, with and against others, Heidegger admits. Essentially, Heidegger therefore understands the world in a quite instrumental way.¹⁷⁸

The existence of the human being, according to Heidegger, thus is that he's dropped into a world he can't know. The human being thus is in helpless dependence, *Verfallenheit*. The world therefore is important, but only as necessity: consisting of relationships with other human beings or things, which help the helpless individual to settle and survive within this world. His 1951 lecture on 'building, dwelling, thinking', that became famous within the field of architecture and which I will discuss in Chapter 6, seems to celebrate the relationship between the world and the human being, since it links the very root of the German word being and thinking to the root of dwelling.¹⁷⁹ The human being is a being that dwells upon earth. This perspective does not celebrate the world: Heidegger even speaks in this lecture as the real problem of housing (he delivered this lecture at a conference on housing shortage after the war in Germany) is that the modern (architectural) artifice detached the human being from real dwelling, that is, from inhabiting in the landscape. This perspective not only does not value the commonness of the world, it also stresses the dwelling human being in a as solipsist perspective facing the earth and the heaven, the mortals and the immortals.¹⁸⁰ Heidegger emphasizes this world not only as an entity the human is dropped in, in which he has to carve out his path in order to find his very own place, this world moreover is disturbing the individual carving out this path to his authentic self. In other words, Heidegger's approach of the human being dropped in the world is rather negative: the world is a necessity, unknowable, disturbing.

The German philosopher Rüdiger Safranski in his biography of Martin Heidegger emphasises the work of Arendt as a complement to the work of Heidegger. He writes: "To his "running ahead into death" she will reply with a philosophy of being born; to his existential solipsism of *Jemeinigkeit* (each-one-ness) she will reply with a philosophy of plurality; to his critique of *Verfallenheit* (helpless addiction) to the world of Man (One/They) she will reply with *amor mundi*. To Heidegger's *Lichtung* (clearing) she will respond by philosophically enabling the "public."¹⁸¹ Opposed to Heidegger, Arendt emphasizes that only through participating in the world, does the reality of the world get revealed (which was the first point Arendt stresses as the importance of the public realm). The public, however, also is needed to reveal the self (which is her 'philosophy plurality', as Safranski calls it). Arendt, in other words, rejects the *vita contemplativa* as the instrument to get to know oneself, and on the contrary argues that the self only

is revealed by appearing in the world through speech and action. Human beings appear to each other in the world, by ‘which we reveal who we are and what we are capable of.’¹⁸² As Seyla Benhabib writes: ‘To be alive as a human being, as opposed to being a mere body, is to act and speak with others in space and time. Being is being present, it is to appear; it is to manifest itself.’¹⁸³ In this perspective the very activities of the public realm, ‘action and speech’, are at stake. It is through action and speech that one manifests oneself. ‘In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world, while their physical identities appear without any activity of their own in the unique shape of the body and sound of the voice. This disclosure of the “who” in contradistinction to “what” somebody is – his qualities, gifts, talents, and shortcomings, which he may display or hide – is implicit in everything somebody says and does.’¹⁸⁴

Revelation is not only unconscious, or a gift that accompanies our being in and acting upon the world, it also often is a conscious step into the world, a conscious appearance to others. This appearance, in other words, rests on initiative, the initiative to appear amongst others. Nevertheless, this ‘who’ that is revealed is hidden for the agent himself as well. ‘The unchangeable identity of the person, though disclosing itself intangibility in action and speech, becomes tangible only in the story of the actor’s and speaker’s life.’¹⁸⁵ This revealing of the person to the public thus might be a conscious action – who is revealed is under the control of the agent himself. ‘Nobody know whom he reveals when he discloses himself in deed or word, he must be willing to risk the disclosure.’¹⁸⁶ In close relationship to this revealing of the ‘who’ through words and deeds, Arendt emphasizes thus that only in the same movement one gets to know oneself.¹⁸⁷ For Arendt the only thing that counts in public space is the revealing of the plurality of mankind. As I discussed earlier, Arendt’s reference was the agora in the Greek Polis and the Roman City States, where the citizens gathered in order to act and speak. This reference shows that the revealing of the plurality of the public only is possible in a sphere of equals. Only on the basis of equality, one can participate in a way that the single ‘who’ is revealed.

Returning to the concern of Heidegger, Arendt thus pleads for a contradictory perspective: her ultimate aim is the participation of the human in the world rather than withdrawal. To be fully human, the human being needs to be *dedicated* to the world. To get to know oneself, one need to participate in the world. Only by appearing amongst peers and by participating in this disturbing world through action and speech, by being engaged in the hustle and bustle that accompanies human life on earth, the self will be revealed and established. Arendt of course writes here also with her experience of being deprived from the public realm: it is this detachment from the world that darkens the sight upon the commonality of the world. It is the world gathering human beings, as well as reveals their plurality.

This change of perspectives upon the world is of major importance for architecture as well, as I will emphasize in the upcoming chapters. For now it is important that Arendt, on the shoulders of Heidegger, redirects his ideas in favour of the world. The world, for Arendt, not only is a necessity for human life, the sole human being, it also is a necessity for the life of the human community at large – the world and the public are two interrelated phenomena. It even is so, Arendt argues, that without the world, which somehow is the testifying of the presence of other human beings, human life is not possible.¹⁸⁸ But whereas Heidegger focuses on the disturbance of the surrounding world and the presence

182. Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 107

183. *Ibid.*, 110

184. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 178

185. *Ibid.*, 180

186. *Ibid.*, 180

187. See Rudi Visser, *Lof der zichtbaarheid. Een uitleiding in de hedendaagse wijsbegeerte* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SUN, 2007), particularly the first chapter

188. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 22

189.
Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism
of Hannah Arendt*, 107

190.
Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics',
107

of other human beings on the individual – a disturbance of the very character of the human existence –, Arendt on the contrary celebrates the public. Where for Heidegger the plurality of the public is a condition of facticity, in which the human being is thrown and easily loses itself, for Arendt plurality is the condition of the human being, that needs to be valued. Only through the appearance in the world, amongst peers, the human can get to know the self, an utterly different statement than Heidegger's response. As Benhabib writes, the difference between Heidegger and Arendt is 'Being-unto-death is displaced by natality; the isolated *Dasein* is replaced by a condition of plurality; and instead of instrumental action, a new category of human activity, action, understood as speech and doing emerges. Everyday being-in-the-world, rather than being the condition of inauthenticity into which *Dasein* is thrown, now becomes that "space of appearance" into which we are inserted as acting and speaking beings and within which we reveal who we are and what we are capable of.'¹⁸⁹

For our perspective it is important that Arendt emphasizes and values the man-made character of the world. Besides the 'psychological or intellectual realms, [which] have become permanent' realities, Arendt underlines that an important part of this world surrounding us is a *world of things*:¹⁹⁰ concrete, durable, and tangible objects and artefacts, which are produced by our predecessors and by ourselves. The human being is indeed dropped into a world that was created before him: predecessors have created this world by continuous interventions and inventions, adding their produce to this world, as we will do as well. Every generation is dealing with this world, that is a given: produce products, intervening in situations, inventing new approaches, modifying circumstances, accommodating places, making the world inhabitable according to contemporary insights. Through this continuous involvement in the world, this world is the object of continuous change as well – slightly but slowly the world adapts to these changes, and it is changed through new adaptations. Every generation thus forms the context of the life of other generations by their additions and interventions. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that the production of things not only add to the world, it also destroys the world of the past. Better said, production destroys the world as well as the earth. For a wooden chair, for instance, a tree is cut down and sliced into boards, power is needed to produce the chair, and natural processes are forced down. It is important to have this in mind while touching upon the notion of the world: at the very heart of the notion of the world is a process of creation and intervention as well as destruction and demolition. Summarized, the world thus refers to the way the human being is making a living on earth, how he conditions the earth to his sojourn on it, how he carves out a place to live in, furnishes it, makes it more comfortable, and – because he is not alone in the world – forms communities. The world serves our daily lives, and simultaneously is the context of it. It influences our lives, and we on our turn intervene in the world. It comforts our lives, and, very importantly, it connects us with other human beings, it is in-between human beings – as a famous quote of Arendt reads:

'This world, however, is not identical with the earth or with nature, as the limited space for the movement of men and the general condition of organic life. It is related, rather, to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs, which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together. To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between

those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time.¹⁹¹

191.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52-53

192.
Ibid., 55

193.
Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics',
107, 156

For Arendt it thus is clear: it is the world that makes the human 'community' possible – the world arises between men, simultaneously connecting and separating – which actually also is a short but sharp description of the human community itself. The world thus is, so to say, the common ground for the community, but this common ground is not a fixed entity. Not at all! It is, as investigated above, continuously influenced by the activities of human beings. Although the slightly but continuously changing character of the world, due to our interventions, additions, destructions, it also is to be seen as the shared 'experience' of the human community, as well as the shared concern of this community. For Arendt, the act of constituting and, very important, maintaining a world is essentially not an act of an individual human being, but is an act of society itself. For Arendt the notion of the world thus always refers to a 'common world'. It is not just the surrounding in which human beings are dropped in 'helpless addiction'. Human beings, here and now share these given circumstances – this world it is. The human being has this world in common with his contemporaries as well as with his predecessors and the generations to come. That is why Arendt renders and emphasizes this commonly owned 'world' as essentially being an in-between: gathering and simultaneously separating human beings, generations, the past and the future. For Arendt, this thus is a positive notion: it is the *world* that places us between and binds us with our contemporaries and connects us to our predecessors and the generations to come. Actually this common world, the world of things, is the first meaning of the notion of the *public* in Arendt's works. The world of things is the stage for action and speech: it delivers the stability, permanence and transcendence that is needed in respect to the inherent unpredictability and frailty of action and speech. Therefore the continuity of the world is crucial for Arendt. Only through the permanence of the world, this world is understood as common world, that is the stage and the concern of politics. This world is the public realm itself.

'Without this transcendence into a potential earthly immortality, no politics, strictly speaking, no common world and no public realm, is possible. It transcends our life-span into past and future alike; it was there before we came and will outlast our brief sojourn in it. It is what we have in common not only with those who live with us, but also with those who were here before and with those who will come after us. But such a common world can only survive the coming and going of the generations only to the extent that it appears in public. It is the publicity of the public realm which can absorb and make shine through the centuries whatever men may want to save from the ruin of time.'¹⁹²

A threat for the world she investigates in *The Human Condition* is the increasing abilities and opportunities to intervene on a vast and enormous scale. Although destruction and creation anew always has been the very essence of the world itself, through modern equipment and technics, scientific insights and mechanical power and even nuclear power, this world can be destroyed completely.¹⁹³ Of course, this rendering of the world in the end is a political issue. Without recognition of the importance of this common world, without understanding the responsibility, and without effort to establish and edifice the world, it will be destroyed. The continuity of the world thus is a political question, a shared effort, common concern of the human society. And on its turn, without world, no

194.

Arendt even states that most wars therefor not only 'decimated' the people, but also destroyed their world: Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics', 155; Probably this also can be seen as a background behind the destruction of images of Buddha in Afghanistan, as well as the famous iconoclams of 1566 in The Netherlands during the protests of the protestants against the Catholic Church – not only theologically driven.

195.

Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt', 305

196.

Arendt (and Reif), 'Thoughts on Politics and Revolution', 210

197.

Ibid., 211; Arendt dwells in the interview afterwards upon the idea of ownership, property and production in socialist and capitalist societies, and concludes that we actually deals with 'twins, each wearing a different hat.' 214

198.

Ibid., 215

199.

Ibid., 217 [emphasis in original]

endurable society is possible. World and society, according to Arendt, thus are interrelated: no society without a world, as well as no world without the human community.¹⁹⁴ This world actually is in continuous change, but since it is strongly related with the human being and the human society, Arendt in her work stresses the durability and tangibility of this world as a prerequisite for the human society. A lasting community only develops within an endurable world – the effort the human being will invest, the political interference in this community, only has sense within an endurable context. Therefore Arendt emphasises that politics only will develop in respect to a shared *love for the world*. In the end this is a very crucial insight within the work of Arendt, that she has emphasized throughout her work, and which she practiced through her refusal of philosophy – the *vita contemplativa* – an sich.

'In order to think, I have to withdraw from the world.' Arendt states in Toronto. 'But the moment you begin to act, you deal with the world,' she adds.¹⁹⁵

4.4.2 Politics

The Toronto conference, which I addressed in the very first paragraphs of this introduction *into* the work of Arendt extensively, was of course just one of several occasions Arendt was questioned about her position vis-à-vis the actualities of politics. Quite a lot of these occasions – be it a discussion in real life, certain 'briefwechseln', an interview, or whatever – end up in questioning the very position of Arendt in the field. In his interview with Arendt, the German writer Adelbert Reif for instance asked her to render the possibility of an alternative besides capitalism or socialism. The conversations starts with a reflection on the relationship and responsibilities of the Western world for the 'third world'. Arendt stubbornly however rejects the notion of the 'third world', which surprises Reif a lot. The rejection comes down as blaming the 'New Left' movement of 'empty talk': 'This imperialist levelling out of all differences ... is always the same old story: being taken in by every catchword, the inability to think or else the unwillingness to see phenomena as they really are, without applying categories to them in the belief that they can thereby be classified. It is just this that constitutes theoretical helplessness.'¹⁹⁶ Arendt does not shut her eyes for the deplorable circumstances people had to live in the 'developing' countries, but on the contrary rejects them to be seen solely from the perspective of the Western World, and through the categories of Western philosophy and political theory. She blames this approach for levelling out differences, and only comparing local situations towards a presumed standard, which is the 'developed world'. Such approach doesn't help, Arendt states. That very moment, Reif urges the question of capitalism either socialism: can there be another future than these two alternatives? The answer of Arendt again is very characteristic: 'I see no such alternatives in history; nor do I know what is in store here. Let's not talk about such grand matters as "the historical development of mankind" – in all likelihood it will take a turn that corresponds neither to the one nor to the other, and let us hope it will come as a surprise to us.'¹⁹⁷ Arendt on her term would propose another distinction: between countries that respect the rights of human beings and those that don't: Sweden versus Franco's Spain, the United States versus the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁸ The concern is beyond the 'economical model': the difference is that 'in one country people can say and, within limits, also do what they like and in the others they can not. Believe me, *that* makes an enormous difference to everyone,' Arendt states.¹⁹⁹

It is through such discussions of actual situations and her responses on contemporary approaches that some of her assumptions regarding her ideas on politics stay rather ambiguous. Take this idea of the ‘rights’ that Arendt put forward here. Arendt starts to address this idea of the human rights soon after the war. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, for instance, Arendt emphasizes the problem of post-war politics through the symbol of the ‘state-less person’. After the war this ‘state-less’ person was a common ‘figure’ all over Europe and in the USA: refugees of the holocaust, survivors of the camps, persons not welcome in their country of origin or not able to travel back to their original country anymore. Arendt understood this as a general problem of contemporary nation states, of which even today countries in the West do house stateless persons, like refugees, asylum seekers, and illegal immigrants. The very problem of these state-less persons is that they are deprived from their rights. Moreover they even are deprived from ‘their rights to have rights’, as a famous circumscription of Arendt goes. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) after all is based on the presupposition that the *nation state* defends the rights of its inhabitants. Arendt was very critical about this idea of the nation-state, which, according to her, not was begun on behalf of the people, ‘but rather on behalf of the national economic interest,’ in order to extend European imperialism at the turn of the century.²⁰⁰ For Arendt this situation, to be deprived from the rights to have rights, comes in its essence down to the worldlessness of the state-less person. There not only isn’t any agency that will defend his rights, he moreover is deprived from the world: no room in the world that he can inhabit, which thus not only is literally no place to go, but essentially to be deprived from the participation amongst and with others.

According to Arendt, this ‘problem’ has to be seen as a sting in modern societies, a misfit in how the world is rendered through the eyes of modern Western principles. Arendt herself however didn’t come up with a solution, which of course not only is caused by its complexity, but moreover by the aim of her work.²⁰¹ This case of the stateless however is an illustration of the important essence of the political realm: the freedom to appear amongst peers in order to participate in a commonly owned world. The stateless person shows in his status of being deprived from the ‘rights to have rights’, this participation in the world, this speaking and acting in public, only will be ‘allowed by different forms of government and secured by ... laws.’²⁰² Nevertheless, politics for Arendt never converge in these forms of government and institutions solely. She does understand them as ‘pre-politics’, the rules and rights that give room to the participation in public. Politics thus for her is this participation itself, as also would become clear in a revised part of the second edition of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, that was published in 1958, the same year also *The Human Condition* was finished. In this revised edition, she added a chapter on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 addressing the ‘council system’ that was developed during this revolution. Arendt celebrates in this chapter those councils as a form of bottom-up self-organisation, open for participation in the actual (political) developments and moreover – which can be understood as a response to the problem of the stateless person – not bound to certain (abstract) boundaries. The future direction Arendt thus sketches is that of ‘more political life’ as the enhancing of everyday life. A council structure, according to Arendt, has to be understood as a chance for ordinary people to act politically: those councils were opportunities for the public at large to constitute an accessible ‘political space’ in which the human being was able to act and speak in public in close extension of the daily environment and life of the people and with actual relevance and influence on the wider political develop-

200.

Arendt, ‘Introduction into Politics’, 98

201.

See the provocative essays of the Flemish philosopher Lieven De Caeter on the problem of the refugee, the homeless, and other ‘outlaws’: Lieven De Caeter, *Capsular Civilization. On the City in the Age of Fear* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2004). This also is one of the very starting point of the work of the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who dwell upon this problem, deriving it from different notions stemming from the work of Arendt.

202.

Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters*, 39

203.
Stated in a lecture of Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, 'On Global Thinking in a Time of Nation-States and Nationalism, 4th Hannah Arendt Lecture,' Nijmegen, October 7th, 2010, Radboud University.

204.
Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt', 328

205.
Arendt, *On Revolution*, 1; see also: Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics', p.108

206.
See for instance Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7-8; Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics', 93

207.
Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics', 93

208.
Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt', 305

209.
Ibid., 305

ments. The importance of such platforms, of this increase in political realm within such critical moments and movements of revolution, is not only participation and influence by the public at large, but also an assurance of the continuation and exploration of plurality. In the words of Young-Bruehl: 'The more you are bound closely to other people, the more you are unable to exclude.'²⁰³ However, as Arendt stated at the Toronto conference, such a council system has a certain inherent contradiction in regard to the continuity of the common world. Its success also will be its failure:

'You know I have this romantic sympathy with the council system, which never was tried out – that is something which builds itself up from the grass roots, so that you really can say *potestas in populo*, that is, that power comes from below and not from above – if that all is said, then we have the following: after all, the world in which we live has to be kept. We cannot permit it to go to pieces. And this means that 'administration of things', which Engels thought such a marvelous idea, and which actually is an awful idea, but which still is a necessity. And this can be done only in a more or less central manner. And on the other hand this centralization is an awful danger, because these structures are so vulnerable. How can you keep these up without centralization? And if you have it, the vulnerability is immense.'²⁰⁴

Arendt thus here emphasises the fragile balance of the rules and rights that are needed in order to create room for politics, and the political participation itself. Without the first, no participation in the world is possible, but the danger of these pre-political instruments is that they also can turn into a restriction of political participation. We definitely touch upon the very essence of the idea of politics here within the work of Arendt: freedom against tyranny.²⁰⁵ Tyranny, according to Arendt, is any form of political and economic organization that defeats the 'human condition of plurality'. Not Man, but men inhabit the world, she states in her 'Introduction into Politics', which at least renders two significant principles. Firstly of course the very essence of worldly life: to be amongst men. The Roman – the most political people the world has known, according to Arendt – even used the words 'to live' and 'to be among men' as synonyms, as also 'to die' and 'to cease to be among men'.²⁰⁶ Second this of course also is a critique on the approach, aims and methods of most sciences, as well as philosophy and theology (and religion). 'All their pronouncements', Arendt writes, 'would be correct if there were only one or two men or only identical men.'²⁰⁷ She actually understands these approaches of reality as a threat: essentially, Arendt stated at the Toronto Conference,

'you then think about mankind – that is, about some noun which actually doesn't exist, which is a concept. And this noun – be it Marx's species-being, or mankind, or the world spirit, or what have you – is constantly construed in the image of a single man.'²⁰⁸

It is either or, according to Arendt. That is why she is provoking the audience and their eagerness to unite their theory with the practice of political action.

'Or we really believe – and I think we share this belief – that plurality rules the earth, then I think one has got to modify this notion of the unity of theory and practice to such an extent that it will be unrecognizable for those who tried their hand at it before.'²⁰⁹

The reason Arendt of course emphasizes plurality again and again is of course her own experience of being excluded from the public realm, the participation in politics, public life, and surely important for her, academic life, just by being a Jew by birth. 'Politics deals with the coexistence and association of *different* men,' she writes. 'Men organize themselves politically according to certain essential commonalities found within or abstracted from an absolute chaos of

differences.²¹⁰ It nevertheless is important and remarkable that Arendt never had addressed this pluralism of the human condition as the existence of different ‘groups’ in society, as is nowadays widely admitted and accounted in Western democracies, differences that are distinguished through differences in birth, race, belief, conviction, sexual orientation. These differences on the one hand are celebrated as a need for innovation in respect to the economical development of the West, as well as on the other hand simultaneously being a threat through an increasing discomfort in Western societies of multiculturalism. However, Arendt is not so much dealing with distinctions as such. The fundamental condition of plurality that Arendt emphasizes does not regard groups but individuals – it has a different grain, which is challenging and complex. Arendt rejected ideas of democracy as being understood as a representative system, being the representation of distinguished groups of people at the level of the government.²¹¹ ‘We are all the same’, Arendt writes in *The Human Condition*, ‘that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live.’²¹² It is from this perspective of plurality that Arendt renders it important to emphasize politics not only not as a system of representation of the people, but also not as a self-evident system, as if it would be a ‘natural’ process or project of worldly life in order to ‘safeguard’ life: communal life rendered as a need since man is not self-sufficient.²¹³ The assumption in this perspective is that something political is inherent in man essentially. But Arendt on the contrary regards this idea as a misunderstanding of Aristotle’s definition of the *zōon politikon*, especially caused by the interpretation of the term by Seneca, but spread throughout the world through the more influential interpretation of Thomas Aquinas of the term, who understood the human being as a ‘social being’ by ‘nature’. Arendt rejects this view. ‘Man is apolitical,’ she writes. ‘Politics arises between men, and so quite outside of man. There is therefore no real political substance. Politics arises in what lies between men and is established as relationships.’²¹⁴

Aristotle’s definition of the *zōon politikon* however is very important for Arendt. She therefore went back to the very roots of the idea of politics in order to understand its essence: Greek thinking. Important in Greek thinking is indeed this difference between political organization and natural association.²¹⁵ Political organization was bound to the city-state, the *polis* (which actually in the European languages is the very root for the word politics itself).²¹⁶ Politics thus can be understood as the project of organizing the city; that is organizing the human community *beyond* family bonds and kinship relationships. Even preceding the establishment of those city-states there was a destruction of existing organizational units based on kinship.²¹⁷ Within the *polis* however a sharp distinction was made between the public realm of the city and the private realm of the household, the first understood as being the realm of private life bound to families, the second as the scope of public life and politics. Arendt renders political life, life in the *polis*, as a ‘second life’: it only can exist besides private life. In the *polis*, it is only the owner of a home, the head of a household, that is rendered as a citizen, and therefor allowed to participate in the public realm, the public affairs of the city-states. This restriction of participation in the public life of the *polis* concentrates on the distinction between the very essence of private realm and the public realm as being a distinction between a realm of necessity and a realm of freedom. The household, according to Arendt, is the sphere of the necessities of life, related to the maintenance of life of all members of the family. ‘The distinctive trait of the household sphere,’ Arendt writes, ‘was that in it men lived together because they were driven by their wants and needs.’²¹⁸ The political realm on the other hand

210. Arendt, ‘Introduction into Politics’, 93

211. *Ibid.*, 98

212. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 8

213. Arendt, ‘Introduction into Politics’, 115

214. *Ibid.*, 95

215. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 24

216. Arendt, ‘Introduction into Politics’, 114

217. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 24, 29

218. *Ibid.*, 30

219.

Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics', 116; Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 30; participation in public thus is restricted, only the male owners of a home could enter the public sphere. The public sphere in itself however was a sphere of equals: no one reigned nor ruled of the other. Power only was organized through 'action in concert'. I will investigate these characteristics of the public and the private realm below.

220.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 38; I will of course investigate the difference between the public and private later, I note here that the difference rendered here of course is utterly different than the distinction between the public and the intimate sphere, as this distinction is mostly rendered today

221.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 30, 32, 36, 186

222.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 24

223.

Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics', 94

224.

Ibid., 94

is the realm of freedom. In order to enter this political realm that is concerned about communal life, all necessities should be fulfilled, in order to commit oneself to the community, to the *polis* solely, without being restricted by questions of survival, wants and needs. The freedom that is characteristic to the public realm thus is understood as a freedom *from* necessities of daily life as well as a freedom *towards* a dedication to the public affairs. Only the home-owners, the rulers over household who reigns over the members of the family as well as their slaves, could afford this freedom, and therefore were able to enter the public realm.²¹⁹ This freedom towards politics is opposite to a regular view on freedom in society nowadays as well as in the past, which moreover can be understood as a freedom from politics. Arendt however renders the participation in public affairs as the highest capacity of the human being – only by appearing amongst peers on the public realm does life get fully human. And on the contrary whoever stays in the private realm is literally deprived – deprived from public recognition, deprived from 'the highest human capacity'.²²⁰ Arendt nevertheless emphasises the entering of the public realm as an act of courage: since this participation in public affairs comes down to the renunciation of the personal and private interests in order to strive for the interests of the city-state.²²¹ However, the citizen – where here is this male home-owner – thus has 'two orders of existence', Arendt writes. 'There is a sharp distinction in his life between what is his own (*idion*) and what is communal (*koinon*).'²²²

According to Arendt this distinction still is of major importance: the downfall of politics she recognizes throughout her work, she again and again understood as caused by a confusion of political organization on the one hand, and what she calls 'social' association on the other, organization of the human body based on kinship and shared interests. It thus is a confusion of what is of public and communal concern, and what should be understood as private interest, resulting in a convergence of public and private interests. The problem, according to Arendt, actually is that in those political systems the human community is conceived as a family at large. This of course is a powerful structure, Arendt admits, since it is able to 'unite extreme individual differences', as well as simultaneously isolating and contrasting groups of individuals.²²³ This however simultaneously is a threat as well: its outcome is the eradication of 'any original differentiation' amongst human beings. 'Families', she writes, 'are founded as shelters and mighty fortresses in an inhospitable, alien world, into which we want to introduce kinship. This desire leads to the fundamental perversion of politics, because it abolishes the basic quality of plurality, or rather forfeits it by introducing the concept of kinship.'²²⁴ The problem for Arendt is that, as it is compared to a family, the people are understood as sharing the same interests, needs, wishes, experiences, hopes, convictions, and so on, all of them related to the 'family' and its prospects. Within such an idea of ordering of the human community, deviations from 'normal' behaviour run counter to the common interest of the group, which therefore cannot be tolerated. In this perspective moreover, politics is seen as the instrument to defend these interests against the chaos of reality, as well as a tool to fulfil the individual needs or even wishes. The threat, of course, is that everything that differs, which probably will oppose the shared interests or threaten the fulfilment of the needs at large, should be excluded or suppressed.

Through such merging of the public and the private interest, according to Arendt, the political realm is rendered as a 'gigantic, nation-wide administration of house-keeping' in which the sciences of economics and the practice of politics somehow

coincide as well.²²⁵ It is the economics that rules this gigantic household. Since all of our contemporary forms of democracy are based on the latter, Arendt is very critical about contemporary systems of governmental and political organization. Although she of course acclaims the rejection of organization of society through racial kinship – as is secured in basic laws and constitutions of Western countries –, the essence of the contemporary system is however an organization based on kinship of nationality and economic interests, an ordering of society that can be as suppressing as the totalitarian regimes Arendt had investigated in her first publication after the war. Surely, the communist political system of the Soviet-Union can be seen as an extreme outcome of such conception of the community, a system that in the end even was repressive towards individual properties: agricultural land was expropriated and the farmers disowned, and even the ‘elite’ of the country could be ‘made a beggar overnight – without even the right to employment – in case of any conflict with the ruling powers.’²²⁶ Arendt of course, while exploring her ideas of politics, had this in mind, as well as her own experiences with totalitarian regimes. She nevertheless does not locate these threats in a past or in a system that once was there but now had showed its reality and is overcome, according to her it is also accompanied in modernity itself. Also, current democratic societies indeed are regularly understood as large ‘households’; people are bound together by kinship of economical interests and national boundaries, political order in which the government is seen to serve and secure in the individual needs of its inhabitants: their individual security, as well as securing the freedom the individual inhabitants as well as their economic means and settlement.²²⁷ Again and again Arendt thus emphasises the threats of such a perspective on political order: the very room for plurality in society. Arendt questions this even more since in mass society the political systems has turned into a bureaucracy, which is not the system of one ruler, but the system of the ‘nobody’ and the rule of the anonymous.²²⁸ At the Toronto conference, Hans Morgenthau asked Arendt about her opposition against the ever growing importance of central organized political systems. Morgenthau:

‘The question has been raised about centralization, which runs directly counter to democracy if it is pushed far enough.’

And Arendt confirms this:

‘I think this question is very complicated. I would say on the first level there is indeed all over the world a certain rebellion, almost against bigness. And I think this is a healthy reaction. And I myself share it. Especially because this bigness and centralization demands these bureaucracies. And the bureaucracies are really the rule by nobody. And this nobody is not a benevolent nobody. We cannot hold anybody responsible for what happens, because there is no author of deeds and events.’²²⁹

It of course is way too far for our purpose here to investigate the contemporary Western democracies, be it the process of elections and representation of the people in the USA, the scattered political landscapes of The Netherlands, Germany and Belgium, the divided situation in the UK or France, and so on, facing Arendt’s warning of the inherent problem of bureaucracies – contemporary Western democracies are of course to some extent bureaucratic. The major importance of this emphasis on this warning here however is that Arendt not only was addressing political systems from the past and from elsewhere, but also the (liberal) democratic systems of the contemporary West, which till quite recent were rendered as the ‘outcome of history’,²³⁰ that even should be forced to the rest of the world. Even in democracies, which are seen as a system celebrating

225. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 28

226. Arendt (and Reif), ‘Thoughts on Politics and Revolution’, 212

227. Arendt, ‘Introduction into Politics’, 142

228. *Ibid.*, 97

229. Arendt, ‘On Hannah Arendt’, 327

230. Francis Fukuyama, *Het einde van de geschiedenis en de laatste mens* (Amsterdam Uitgeverij Contact, 1992)

231.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 220

232.
Arendt (and Reif), 'Thoughts on
Politics and Revolution', 221

233.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 247

234.
Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt', 305

the freedom of participation and the freedom of opinion, the very plurality of the inhabitants is not guaranteed. For Arendt, however, plurality is the essence of the human community. Through this analysis of political systems, we nevertheless thus can at least determine two basic important aspects of the idea of politics in the work of Arendt. First is pluralism as the condition of politics, and second is the meaning of politics: freedom. Both of course are interrelated: there is no freedom without room for plurality, and without freedom there is no room for plurality. As stated earlier above, Arendt aims in her work for 'more political life', which somehow has to be seen again as the celebration of pluralism of human mankind. The council system, which she investigates through the Hungarian Revolution, for Arendt symbolized the opportunity to 'appear amongst peers', amongst fellow citizens, and participate in the worldly affairs as a citizen itself, not through representation of a group, but as an individual. In *The Human Condition*, as well as in lots of other writings, Arendt emphasizes that only through such 'appearance amongst peers' in 'action and speech' the plurality of mankind unfolds and gets substance.²³¹ The freedom, therefore, for Arendt always tends towards the freedom of speech. 'Freedom,' Arendt states, 'is freedom whether guaranteed by the laws of a ... state. ... The point is simply and singly whether I can say and print what I wish, or whether I cannot; whether my neighbors spy on me or don't. Freedom always implies freedom of dissent. No ruler before Stalin and Hitler contested the freedom to say yes – Hitler excluding Jews and gypsies from the right to consent and Stalin having been the only dictator who chopped off the heads of his most enthusiastic supporters, perhaps because he figured that whoever says yes can also say no.'²³²

For Arendt however the freedom, which is the meaning of politics, is not limited to the freedom of speech. Moreover, Arendt renders again and again this freedom as a freedom to take initiatives, which is the very essence of political action. Moreover, action and speech in her view are the instruments to start something new. This somehow is the only reason to have 'hope' for the future. I guess Arendt at this point is opposing Heidegger again. Heidegger after all is emphasising the finality of life. Arendt admits this finality, but suggests that this is not the only perspective that counts. Life also is characterized by its natality: every birth is the start of something new, the chance of change, of a different future. 'The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal "natural" ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted,' Arendt writes *The Human Condition*. And she adds: 'It is this faith in hope for the world that found perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced their "glad tidings": "A child has born unto us."²³³ Arendt emphasizes action and speech in the same manner. Every action and every speech in public has the inherent possibility to start something new. I need to emphasise here the addition 'in public': only when actions are seen and thus requests response, and only when speeches are heard and understood and drive towards action and again reaction and again speech, and again response and recognition, opposition and approval, contribution and resistance, and so on, will it grow and slowly but surely will lead to something new. Real political action is recognized and joined, gain response, and thus grow in power.

'You can only act in concert',²³⁴

Arendt stated in Toronto. Action and speech in public are powerful instruments of the possibility to take initiatives, to develop, to criticize, to interact, to change the world – in other words, to act politically. Action nevertheless, Arendt warns, is

unpredictable and frail. Action cannot be controlled, nor directed. It is over before one knows, or it grows in power and recognition. This, somehow, is the reason in totalitarian regimes, but also in other political systems or human societies, for diminishing the possibilities for action in public. It is a threat for the established political systems and regimes, organization and differences. The political therefore can be seen as 'the creation of power through action-in-concert of the many, united-in-diversity, through the plurality of their views.'²³⁵

235.
Benhabib, 'Hannah Arendt's Political Engagements', 59

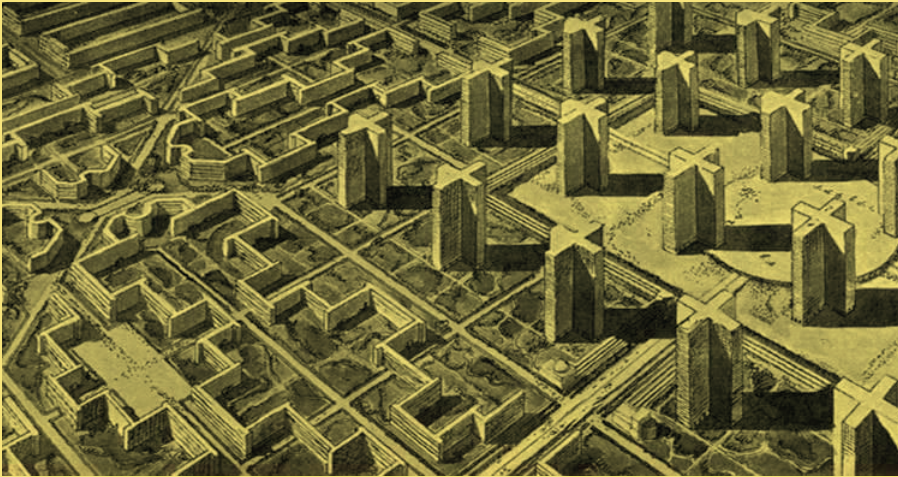
5.

PUBLIC SPACE. LOCAL
ENCOUNTERS AND THE
POSSIBILITY OF ACTION

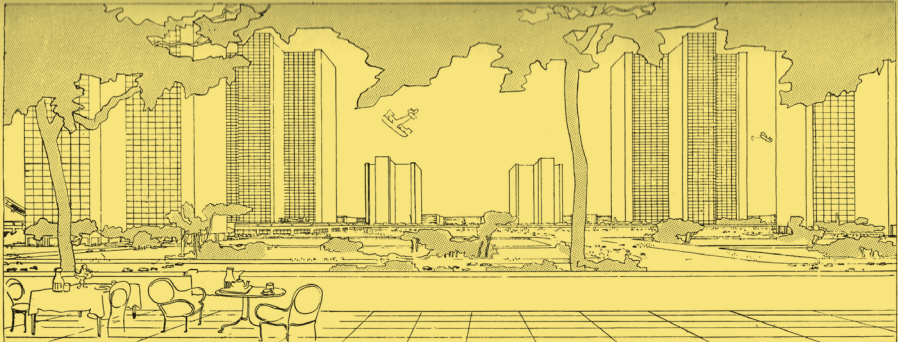
At the very same moment Hannah Arendt develops her ideas on the public realm and Jürgen Habermas his ideal of the public sphere, the question of public space also entered the discourses on architecture and the future of the city. Although not aware of the parallels in the field of philosophy, a new generation of modern architects stressed the issue of public space as part of their critical stance towards previous Modernist approaches to the city. The Canadian architect George Baird explores the moving back-and-forth of this debate in architecture, particularly in the post-war period, in his 1995 book *The Space of Appearance*, freely comparing the newly developed architectural views with ideas Arendt investigated. This is limited not only to issues of space, but also to reflections on art, craftsmanship, and other architectural aspects. Baird however mainly addresses the theme of public space through the emphasis on *plurality*, *history*, and *mobility*, which are central aspects of public space as addressed throughout the 'modern' and 'postmodern' debates on architecture. Whereas his first book mainly has a historical outlook, his second book on public space, simply called *Public Space*, is much more philosophical. Baird in this book focuses on the specificities of the notion of *action*, and what that might mean for our understanding of architecture and the project of the city. He therefore contrasts this notion with the everyday experience of (urban) spaces in a rather distracted way, an observation that comes right from the writings of Arendt's friend and literature critic Walter Benjamin. This second book therefore is not so much in discussion with the history of modern architecture, but much more with the modern recent debate on cities and their public spaces, facing the increasing amount of exclusive spaces in the contemporary (sub)urban landscapes, upon which we touched in Chapters 1 and 2. With the help of the notions of action and distraction, Baird shows how these notions help to develop a certainly more optimistic and architectural look upon public space as outcomes from this debate.

In this Chapter, I first take Baird's explorations in architectural history, urban theory and the work of Arendt from *The Space of Appearance* in order to address the notion of public space, as it is related to the idea of plurality, encounter, and action. I will start with his reading of architectural history, which reveals how the notion of the public is a recurrent theme in modern architecture. On the basis of his encounters, I will develop a brief history of architecture of the public space, as it has been part of debate amongst architects. This history somehow reveals a range of aspects of public life that are addressed, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly, within the architectural intervention and project, and how this has fuelled debates reflecting on architecture. This also means that the landscape, as we touched upon in the previous chapters, not only is discussed in urban theory, anthropology and urban sociology, but also urges architects to come up with 'new' models and typologies, to reflect upon their contribution to the city and public life, and to their effect upon issues that are not architectural at all. The current debate, which Baird discusses in his second book, and which I traced previously, however is particularly fuelled by ideals beyond public space, which are evoked by concrete urban and architectural artefacts. Therefore, before turning to Baird's second book in the third part of this chapter, I mirror the Arendtian understanding of public realm with the notion of the public sphere, as it has been developed by Jürgen Habermas. As has become clear in the previous chapters, it is particularly Habermas's view which shapes the mentioned debate. It is his ideal of the public sphere that offers a negative horizon to actual public life. By stressing the differences between his view and Arendt's notion, it will become clear how the latter, and particularly her emphasis on the activity of action, offers an alternative that will help to overcome certain impasses in the recent debate

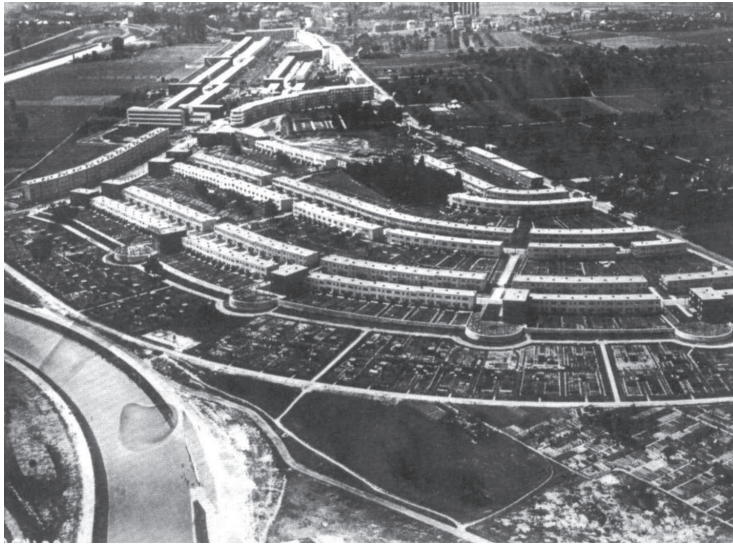
on public space. Nevertheless, also the notion of Arendt cannot be applied 1:1 on the urban experiences of the masses in cities today, nor to architectural form of public space. In the third part, I therefore investigate Arendt's notions of the 'space of appearance', 'the public realm', and 'public space', in order to reveal how this relates to actual space and eventually also to architectural intervention. These remarks therefore open up the stage for Baird's *Public Space*, which needs our attention particularly because of his attempt to relate Arendt's notion of action as well as Benjamin's notion of distraction to actual experiences of public space, an attempt that offers a few directions to enhance the design of urban public spaces. This chapter ends with an aspect of public space that largely is overlooked, not only in debates in the field of architecture and urban design, but also in philosophy: the interrelatedness of public space and private space. By taking Arendt as a scope to understand public life and public space, this interrelatedness needs more attention.



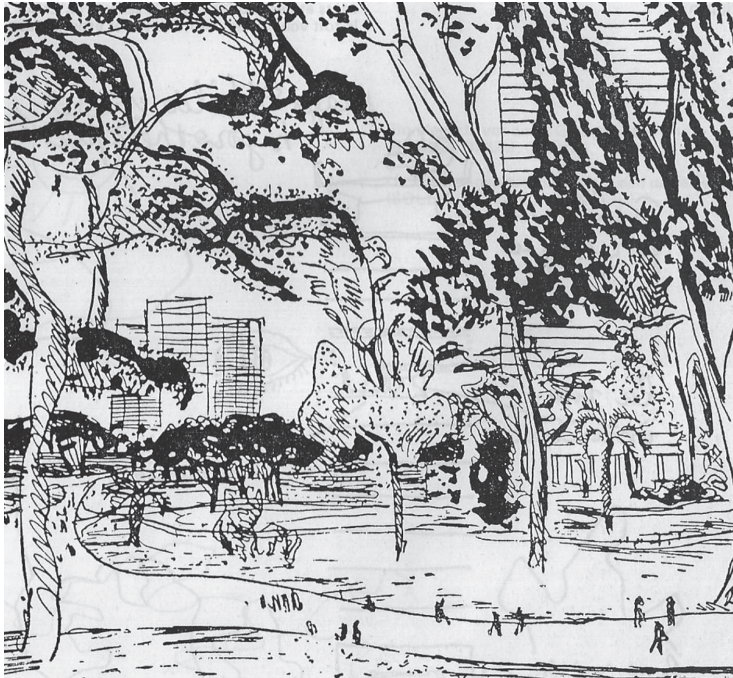
5.1 Le Corbusier, *Ville Contemporaine*, 1922, birds eye view



5.2 Le Corbusier, *Ville Contemporaine*, 1922,
perspective on eye level



5.3 Ernst May, *Römerstadt Siedlung and the Nidda Valley*, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 1929



5.4 Le Corbusier, *Ville Radieuse*, 1930, perspective sketch



5.5 Le Corbusier, *Unité d'Habitation*, Marseille, France, 1952, interior street



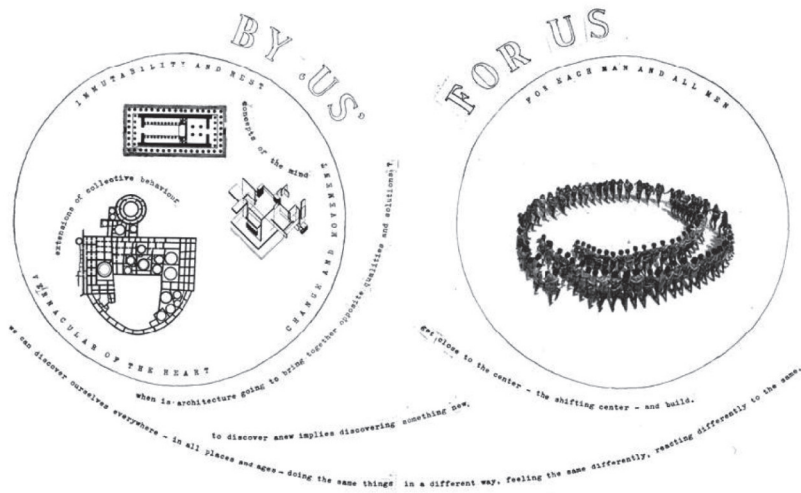
5.6 Le Corbusier, *Unité d'Habitation*, Marseille, France, 1952



5.7 Alison and Peter Smithson, *Robin Hood Gardens*, London, UK, 1972, Street deck



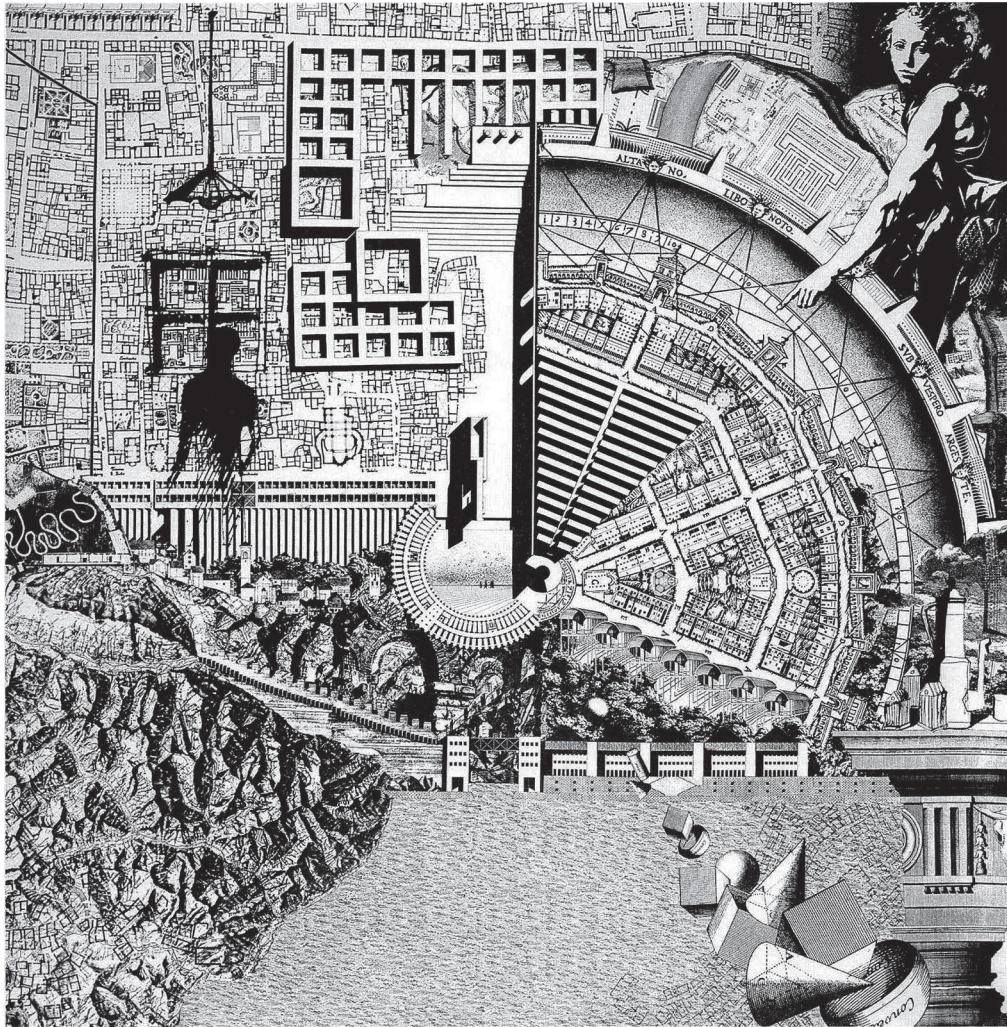
5.8 Candilis-Josic-Woods, *Toulouse Le Mirail*, Toulouse, France, 1961; Model



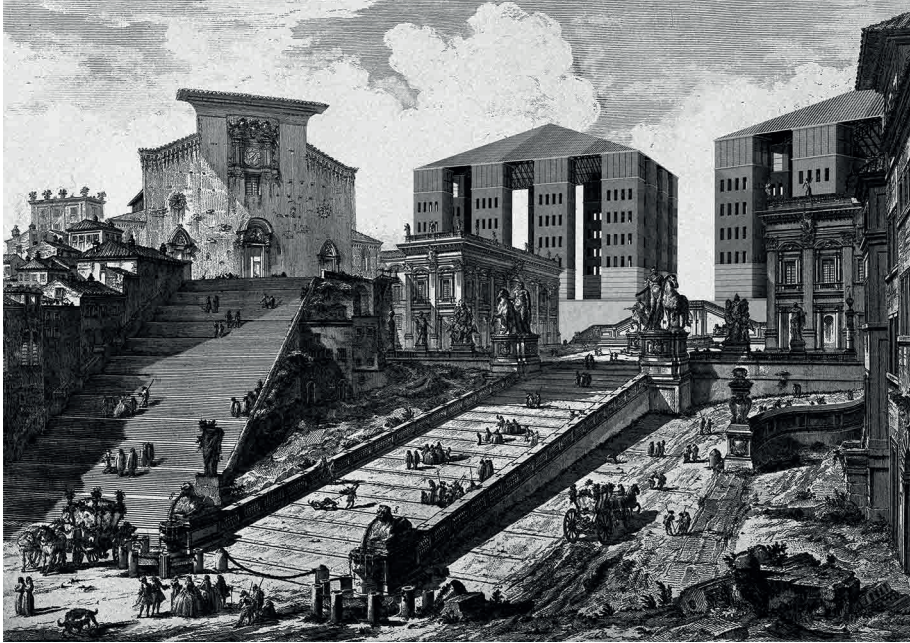
5.9 *By us / For us* - diagram presented by Aldo Van Eyck at the Otterlo meeting of CIAM in 1959



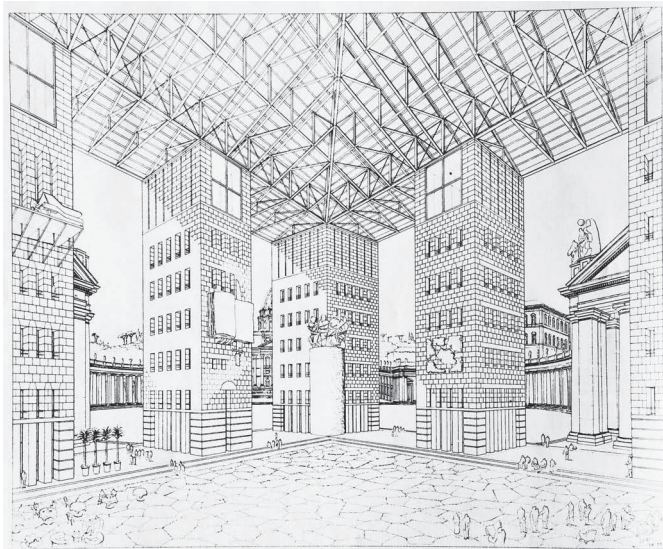
5.10 Aldo Van Eyck, *Playground Zeedijk*,
Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1956



5.11 Aldo Rossi, *Citta Analoga*, 1977; Collage



5.12 Léon Krier, *Project d'un centre social*
place Saint Pierre à Rome, Italy, 1978



5.13 Léon Krier, *Project d'un centre social*
place Saint Pierre à Rome, Italy, 1978



5.14 Herman Hertzberger, *Centraal Beheer Offices*, Apeldoorn, The Netherlands, 1973; interior

5.1 THE PIVOTAL FIFTIES

5.1.1 *A Space set Apart for Public Functions*

It does not need many words to argue that landscapes, cities, houses, public buildings, squares, streets and other elements of the spaces we live in somehow represent ideas about 'being at home in the world'. Parking lots, for instance, embody the obvious importance of the car today. The same parking lot can reveal something completely different in two decades from now, when mobility and infrastructure have changed drastically. Monumental buildings on a university campus reveal something of a view on the university as institution, although that view has been surpassed today: in their new buildings universities emphasize their outstanding character through technology and innovation, which is expressed in a dynamic and transparent architecture. This sometimes hidden, sometimes obvious representation of ideas belonging to certain cultural convictions is also behind the journey through the Florida landscape and cities: their very appearance 'before our eyes' revealed something of the cultural and social processes in society of the past decades – or even from ages ago.¹ The artefacts touched upon along the route revealed aspects of public life, security, history, and plurality. Since architects and urban designers are dealing with the world in their daily practices, such ideas are behind their works, debates and reflections – sometimes very explicit and intentional, often in very hidden ways, in *inattentional blindness*. Nevertheless, by reviewing these works, debates and reflections, one can reveal hidden aspects that are present in their views, approaches, and designs and that are certainly roused by (new) insights, (new) ambitions, and (new) intentions dealing with the world that is in common. Seeing in back sight, we can state that the theme of public space is at the heart of Modern Architecture, although it is often described and discussed in completely different directions. In his book *The Space of Appearance* (1995) George Baird develops such a back sight reading of the development of Modern Architecture, easily flipping back and forth between the architectural debate on the public and aspects that Hannah Arendt urges as important aspects of the public realm.² Baird, whom we touched upon already in the previous chapter since he attended the Toronto conference in 1972, throughout his career as an architect and educator has been one of the few introducing Arendt in architectural debate. In the mentioned book, he in very explorative ways connects aspects of what Arendt wrote in *The Human Condition* to particular moments and figures in recent architectural history, particularly in the views of Modern and Post-Modern architects. By taking his explorative views as a starting point, I will develop a brief overview of the theme of public space in the recent history of architecture.

In *The Space of Appearance* Baird follows the development of architecture from the cultural context in Vienna during the turn of the century around 1900 towards the end of the eighties and the early nineties of the twentieth century. Baird easily switches between debates amongst architects and artist and quotes from Arendt and other scholars from outside the field of architecture. His reading actually connects important developments, ideas and concepts from within architecture, with a broader cultural reflection, particularly offered by Arendt. Baird's reading of the history of modern architecture offers important reflections upon the relationship between art and architecture, architecture as a craft, architecture and history, architecture and politics, and finally, in his last chapter, architecture and public space. As the start of our own reflection upon that latter theme, let us take his reading of the history of architecture and the relationship he acknowl-

1. cf. Karl Schlögel, *Im Raume Lesen Wir Die Zeit, Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik* (Frankfurt, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2011), 13

2. George Baird, *The Space of Appearance* (Cambridge (Mass.), MIT Press, 1995)

3. Ibid. 308

4.
Ibid., 309

5.
With the term programmatic and pastoral modernity, I refer to the clarifying distinction the Flemish architectural theoretician Hilde Heynen makes between four different conceptions of modernity. The programmatic understands modernity as everything that is new, what makes the contemporary different from the past. Its opposite is the transitory view, which focusses on the transient aspects of the process of modernization. The pastoral in turn overlooks the tension that is inherent to modernity, while the anti-pastoral argues that modernity cannot exist without cracks, gaps, and conflicts. I regard this distinction between the four perspectives / responses evoked modernity valuable. It helps to understand also postmodernism, supermodernism, the 'new' conservative movements, and other movements of the last decades within the frame of responses to change and modernization, and how we deal with what is left behind. Hilde Heynen, *Architectuur en kritiek van de moderniteit* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 2001), 21-25

6.
Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, Joseph Lluís Sert, Ernesto Rogers (eds.), *The Heart of the City. Towards the Humanisation of Urban Life* (London: Lund Humphries, 1952)

7.
quoted via Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 311

edges with the writings of Arendt as our starting point. We stand here, as it were, on the shoulders of Baird – we make use of his capacity to go back and forth between architecture and philosophy in a quite flexible way. Baird, in this final chapter, mainly addresses public space through an emphasis on three aspects that belong to public space and which have some resonance with the reflections of Arendt: 'plurality', 'mobility' and 'history'.³ Particularly in the earliest stages of modern architecture these three aspects were somehow neglected. Or, should we say, a new idea of these aspects was at the heart of the plans of modern architects regarding cities and urban extensions. Baird rightly argues that these aspects were put back on the table by a younger generation of architects after World War II – he even calls these notions the 'hallmarks of debate about architecture and urbanism in Europe and North America since the end of the World War II'.⁴ In other words, at the very same moment Arendt develops her first ideas on the public realm – in which she also stresses aspects of plurality, history and even mobility, as we will see – in architecture a debate on public space is roused. Baird rightly shows that the early fifties can be understood as pivotal in architectural debates about the city and public spaces. A new generation of architects started to develop their ideas about the city. Although critical to the previous modern approaches, they could present these ideas within the context of the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM), the organization of Modern architects in the West. Their ideas particularly were at the table during the seventh and eighth congress of the CIAM, respectively in 1949 and 1951. The first addresses the question of how the Modern should deal with history, the latter reintroducing the theme of the center in the modern assessment of urban fabrics. The ideas of the new generation on the one hand are to be seen as 'corrections' on the programmatic and pastoral modernity of the Modern Movement – they, much more than in the Modern Movement itself, have an eye for the experiences of transition and loss of tradition that has accompanied the transformations of cities and landscapes.⁵ Baird shows that this 'correction' also includes new or renewed ideas about public space. One of the clearest statements of such new attention to public space, Baird argues, can be found in the introduction to the book that accompanied the 8th CIAM congress, *The Heart of the City*.⁶ During this congress the architects discussed the theme 'the core of the city,' revaluing the notion of centrality within the urban fabric. In his introduction to the mentioned book, the Catalan architect Joseph Lluís Sert, who at that time chaired the CIAM, quotes the Spanish philosopher Ortega Y Gasset, investigating the 'birth of the city'. Gasset, in this quote, argues that with this new form of settlement, the city, also a new space emerges.

"The "urbs" or the "polis" starts by being an empty space, the "forum," the "agora," and all the rest are just means of fixing that empty space, of limiting its outlines. The "polis" is not primarily a collection of habitable dwellings, but a meeting place for citizens, a space set apart for public functions."⁷

This statement is actually taken from the first paragraphs of his 1930 book *The Revolt of the Masses*, in which he in rather pessimistic tones investigates the emergence of the masses and what this might mean for the cultural situation of the modern world. It is revealing to see in what context Gasset comes to the fore with this reflection. He starts his book with the remark that every investigation into the human community has to start with the city, whose origin – he emphasizes – is mysterious.

‘Excavation and archaeology allow us to see something of what existed on the soil of Athens and Rome before Athens and Rome were there. But the transition from that pre-history, purely rural and without specific character, to the rising-up of the city, a fruit of a new kind produced on the soil of both peninsulas, this remains a secret. We are not even clear about the ethnic link between those prehistoric peoples and these strange communities which introduce into the repertoire of humanity a great innovation: that of building a public square and around it a city, shut in from the fields. For in truth the most accurate definition of the urbs and the polis is very like the comic definition of a cannon. You take a hole, wrap some steel wire tightly round it, and that’s your cannon.’⁸

Immediately after this quote, the phrase follows that Sert had quoted, in which Gasset thus emphasizes the importance of this empty core in the middle. A city can’t exist without these empty spaces ‘set apart for public functions’. The city, once again, is not about a certain collection of buildings, nor about a certain dimension, nor about the amount of people, but about the possibility of an empty space. After pushing the centrality of public space, Gasset then continues by emphasizing the extraordinary character of this space.

‘The city is not built, as is the cottage or the domus, to shelter from the weather and to propagate the species – these are personal family concerns – but in order to discuss public affairs. Observe that this signifies nothing less than the invention of a new kind of space, much more new than the space of Einstein. Till then only one space existed, that of the open country, with all the consequences that this involves for the existence of man.’⁹

Gasset thus, about 25 years prior to Arendt, urges a perspective upon public space as part of the new order that cities brought to the world. This might not be remarkable today, but in the context of the development of Modern Architecture and the CIAM-debates, this is part of a pivotal moment in the reflections upon cities, existing structures, and urban fabrics. Sert thus quotes Gasset in the introduction to the CIAM meeting of 1951, in which the theme of ‘The Core’ was at the table. As George Baird emphasizes, this theme was urged by a debate between the initial group of architects that formed the CIAM movement in 1928 and particularly Le Corbusier on the one hand, and younger architects that during and after World War II joined the group on the other hand. Whereas the pre-war principles of the CIAM approach, known as the *Athenian Principles*,¹⁰ emphasized the segregation of (urban) functions (work, living, recreation and circulation), after the war new challenges were ahead. The war itself, with its destructive forces, opened the field for the architects of the CIAM to implement their ideas in the existing urban fabric, even in the very heart of many cities in Europe, as well as urged by the growth of the population and welfare during the decades after the war. While the CIAM principles were applied in post-war urban plans, new questions were raised, which caused modifications of the straight forward modern principles. The new questions, nevertheless, revealed their ‘new’ interest in history and existing form. It first came to the fore in the 1949 meeting in Bergamo, where the participants discussed how to deal with history, having the historic centers of existing cities in mind. This theme was reassessed in a broader sense in the 8th CIAM meeting at Hoddesdon (England) two years later – and it is at this moment that Sert urges the quote of Gasset. The discussion on the core somehow acknowledged that the center of the city was in need of a more distinctive approach, different from the clear-cut segregation of the CIAM principle on urban devel-

8. Ortega Y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1957), 151

9. *Ibid.*, 151

10. These principles are named after the 1933 meeting in Athens, where these principles were agreed upon, after object of extensive discussion; Le Corbusier, *La Charte D’Athènes Des CIAM* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1957)

11.
Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 310

12.
Ibid., 311

13.
Ignasi De Solà-Morales, 'Nouveaux Espaces dans La Ville Moderne', in: Jacques Lacan (eds.), *Le Corbusier. Une Encyclopedie* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1987), 136

14.
Ernst May, 'Stedebouw en volkshuisvesting', in: Henk Engel, and Endry Van Velzen (eds.), *Architectuur van de stadsrand, Frankfurt am Main, 1925-1930* (Delft: TU Delft, Faculteit der Bouwkunde, 1987), 58 [translation from Dutch, HT; Original: Ernst May, 'Städtau und Wohnungsfürsorge', in: *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, volume 24, 1927 no.6]

opments. As Baird states: 'By 1951, the views of the CIAM group had moderated to the point that they were even prepared to qualify the imperatives of the old functional grid, conceding that a mixture of functional activities was appropriate to this particular part of the urban territory.'¹¹ However, as he continues, 'the CIAM did not then come seriously to grips with the issues of the historic fabric of existing urban cores, or with new issues arising out of the ever-growing phenomenon of mobility. Less still did it manage to come to grips with the more elusive social conception of plurality – this, of course, being one that had played no role at all in the original formulations of CIAM.'¹²

5.1.2 *A Mute-Theme of Modern Architecture*

Although Baird thus rightly argues that the early fifties thus can be seen as pivotal, it also has to be said that some sort of attention to public space was never absent in the works of the Modern Movement. As the Spanish architectural theorist Ignasi De Solà-Morales has stated, new ideas about public space and public life were at the heart of the Modern Movement, but it remained 'mute' as a theme in the modern discourse.¹³ In their 'new models of urbanisation' and their attempt to transform existing urban fabrics, the question of public space certainly was at stake. It only took the form of 'landscape', dedicated to leisure and/or infrastructure. Let us briefly look to some of the works of Le Corbusier to show how public space was present in his ideas. The presentation of the *Ville Contemporaine* (1922) might be exemplary for the understanding of public space as infrastructure.^[IMAGE 5.1] The plan consists of two types of urban buildings: central one finds a cluster of typical skyscrapers in a park-like setting, around which a vast sea of twelve storey urban blocks is drawn, all strictly aligned along an orthogonal grid. The lay-out of the buildings is important: all the apartments in the urban blocks have huge terraces, rendered as outside gardens. Different from traditional urban plans, where streets organize everything, roads here are purely infrastructural. The green inner courts of the block after all organize communal life, offering services to the inhabitant ranging from tennis-courts to schools. Although not rejecting the model of the (closed) urban block, this proposal nevertheless is not about the street that is formed by the blocks, but about the blocks as objects in an open landscape, about living in a green environment. In this model both the green and communal inner courts, as well as the apartments, which are oriented around the private balcony (huge two storey high loggias that are rendered as inner gardens) are the crucial elements. The center of the plan, however, consisting of twenty-four office blocks, are located in an open green structure. The very middle of the plan is divided by a 'megastructure' that, on its roof, offers a landing strip, and beneath gives room to a subway and rail-system. The park on the edges of this business-district detaches it from the living environment. The typical cross-form of the skyscrapers show that they are designed in order to offer the office-workers places near the windows, offering them 'space and air', as the well-known 'drive' behind the modernist approach can be summarized.

This description of *Ville Contemporaine* shows the vast sea of open spaces – it even reveals a distinction between core and surrounding, where the core offers certain functions of transportation. In Le Corbusier's schemes for urban growth the street and its public life is certainly not completely forgotten, although it seems to be completely devoted to the 'function' of leisure. The center of *Ville Contemporaine* is not only presented through bird's-eye perspective drawings and a model, but also – and this is particularly important – by drawings that shows perspectives at eyelevel. The most famous of these is the one that shows the

towers in the background of a terrace of a café.^[IMAGE 5.2] The drawing actually shows a sidewalk, a road and a park. No human beings are present in either the park, the sidewalk, or the terrace, while no cars are drawn on the road, although they may be represented by little dots far away (but it is not clear if these are meant as cars or pedestrians). However, since the tables are set with teapots and cups, the suggestion at least is evoked that it is used after all. This city is not just the private domain of the apartment and its inner garden, nor that of little communities and their inner-courts, there still is the public life of the café and its terrace on the side walk, which offer potentialities of encounter. The drawing also shows that an in-between level between the individual and the superstructures is missing: the table, teapots and cups rightly in the shoulder of a highway.

The figure of the ‘open landscape’ as public space seems to be the most important figure, not only in the works of Le Corbusier, but also in that of his contemporaries. In the plans for the extensions of Frankfurt am Main by Ernst May and Leberecht Migge the landscape gains an even more pronounced position. Where in the work of Le Corbusier landscape seems to figure as the plain background of building blocks, in the plans of May and Migge the landscape has a vital function as back bone of the new city extensions. Particularly their plan for the Nidda Valley, that separates the new extensions from the existing city, does reveal this important function. In his 1927 article ‘Städtbau und Wohnungsfürsorge’ May explains his view by urging the explosive growth of both the population of the city, as well as the traffic involved. The city’s responsibility is not offering nice monumental streetscapes and squares, but is to offer the citizen healthy environments. ‘Within these circumstances’, he writes, ‘it is the task of the urban designer to offer the citizen, wherever they settle together, living conditions that guarantees bearable and healthy life.’¹⁴ The destruction of the unhealthy situation of the industrial city has his primary attention. By taking the garden-city plans of Ebenezer Howard and Raymon Unwin as prime examples, May proposes the introduction of ‘green zones’ in-between the different urban extensions and the old city. This idea he had developed already in a competition for Berlin, where he developed a ring of satellite cities around a core city that housed most services like schools and shops. The open land, he then writes, ‘is about strollers-distance, easy accessible from every dwelling.’¹⁵ In other words, the green structure is not just opening up the city, and delivering air and light to the new urban extensions – siedlungen, as they were called in Germany –, it is also meant to be ‘public space’. It is near the houses, and offers additional communal services to the inhabitants: playgrounds, swimming pools, and collective vegetable gardens. In the Berlin example the green structure also needed to give room for an intensive agricultural infrastructure that would feed the increasing urban population. That latter aspect plays also part in the Frankfurt am Main proposal, which meaningfully articulates the existing landscape of the Nidda Valley. The multiple use of the landscape is important. Whereas in the modern designs of the post war neighbourhood designs landscape is drawn only as leisure, in the proposals of May and Migge, the landscape offers much more meaning to the inhabitants as a ‘working-landscape’ of collective and productive gardens, which even sometimes had the character of anarchistic communities (originating in a history as squatted land).¹⁶ Besides that, the gently rising slopes of the valley offered the opportunity to position the surrounding neighborhoods on terraces, which offers the inhabitants a view over the green belt.¹⁷ ^[IMAGE 5.3] Lots of the houses that are at the edge of the Nidda Valley had been given roof terraces, which offered the inhabitants, as May writes, an ‘Ausblick auf die freie Landschaft der Flußniederung in vollen Zügen

15. May, ‘Stedebouw en volkshuisvesting’, 59 [translation from Dutch, HT]

16. David Haney, “‘No House Building without Garden Building!’ (‘Kein Hausbau ohne Landbau’): The Modern Landscapes of Leberecht Migge”, in: *Journal of Architectural Education* 54/3 (February 2001), 153

17. May, ‘Stedebouw en volkshuisvesting’, 60 [translation from Dutch, HT]; on the ‘surplus’ of using and enhancing existing landscape structures and its relationship to the notion of the public realm, see: Hans Teerds and Johan Van der Zwart, *Levend Landschap, Manifest voor stad en land* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SUN, 2012), specifically chapter 4.

18.

The roof terraces offered the inhabitants 'a view in order to extensively enjoy the free river-landscape.' Justus Buekschmitt, *Ernst May* (Stuttgart: Verlaganstalt Alexander Koch GmbH, 1963), 40

19.

Leberecht Migge once stated: 'No housebuilding without garden building.' The act of gardening, Migge argued against the background of poverty during the years in-between the world-wars in Germany, provides for healthy physical activity, while the fruits of the garden were to be the primary source of nutrition for the labourers that were going to live in the new settlements. Haney, "No House Building without Garden Building!"; 150

20.

Quote via Kenneth Frampton, *Le Corbusier* (London, Thames & Hudson, 2001), 157

zu genießen.¹⁸ What is important to stress here as well, is that this model of green zones in-between the urban extensions clearly not only separates the built areas, providing them with healthy air, views, and space, but also connects them: it is meant to be used by the inhabitants of the different neighborhoods. The landscape, which thus is not simply green and open, but 'programmed', gathers them.

Whereas May in Frankfurt develops his low-rise urban extensions, in which the (private) garden was essential,¹⁹ Le Corbusier continues to emphasise his initial idea of high rises in the park-like landscape. However, also his ideas were developing, increasingly adopting experiences of collective and communal life. This particularly can be touched upon in the project *Ville Radieuse* (1934). This enormous urban setting again emphasizes the continuous landscape, which by then had become known as one of the five points advocated by Le Corbusier as the characteristics of a 'new architecture'. The continuity of the landscape would be guaranteed by lifting buildings from the ground, by the use of *pilotis*, columns. This idea suggests that durable structures should intervene in the landscape as little as possible in order to offer this landscape for leisurely use (and I formulate it as wide as possible here). When it comes down to the soil, there would be only 'public space', since no part of this continuous landscape needed to be claimed as private property anymore. In the drawings of Le Corbusier of the *Ville Radieuse* this landscape indeed is imagined as heavily used by the people. Trees and plants hide the buildings, while the park floats underneath. People settle down for a picnic, or stroll along the paths.^[IMAGE 5.4] One of the sections Le Corbusier drew to present the project, however, reveals that he made an important differentiation: the landscape itself indeed is 'public' ground, accessible to all, but elsewhere also collective spaces are defined. In the buildings, 'collective' courtyards, 'collective' roof terraces and even new (interior) streets run up, this all accompanied by an emphasis on the 'private' green balcony which again is part of the apartment lay-out. This suggests at least that Le Corbusier urged the need for a gradation or even a hierarchy of more or less public spaces, and that the very continuous and scale-less public space of the landscape needs to be accompanied by other more limited spaces.

This section obviously is the very basic idea that in the end is developed into the well-known series of *Unité d'Habitation*, the apartment complex as built in Marseille (1952)^[IMAGE 5.5, 5.6], Nantes-Rezé (1955), Berlin (1957), Briey (1963) and Firminy (1965). With these project we are of course back to the fifties. These buildings actually show how Le Corbusier's previous thoughts already were reinvestigating his ideas about public and communal space, and how he was able to connect these to the ideas of the younger generation of architects joining the CIAM. In the concept of the *Unité*, additionally to the prevailing landscape-like ground level, Le Corbusier again introduced three other spaces that particularly were intended to be shared by the inhabitants of the building. Le Corbusier's own reflection on the Marseille project of the *Unité d'Habitation*, which actually is a short explaining note in his *Oeuvre Complet*, is revealing. The surrounding landscape, above which the building 'floats' on *pilotis*, is left 'unencumbered, and given over to the pedestrian', while the building itself is served by five 'internal streets', so-called *rues intérieures*, and 'halfway up (levels 7 and 8) is the shopping street for provisions (communal services).' Finally he describes the offerings of the roof terrace with an emphasize on (communal) active life: 'a hanging garden and a belvedere', which 'provides a gymnasium, an open-air space for training and gymnastics, a solarium, a 300 metre running tract, a buffet-bar, etc.'²⁰ The

building thus offers thus a distinction in ‘collectiveness’: the landscape as totally public space, not simply as a nice green environment, but actually ‘given over’ to the pedestrian. Within the building three different types of collective spaces are offered: the roof terrace, that is a collective space for active, bodily life, the internal streets that were not only meant for circulation but also as a ‘social condenser’, and the shopping street ‘in the air’. Baird, who briefly touches upon Le Corbusier’s concept of the *Unité d’Habitation*, rightly points to the significance of the *rue intérieure* in these plans, which particularly is the return of the term ‘street’ within the ideas of Le Corbusier. Le Corbusier after all had declared the ‘death of the street’ in his book *The Radiant City*, a remark that has become ‘a basic tenet of CIAM orthodoxy,’ Baird argues.²¹ It thus is remarkable that Le Corbusier himself re-introduces the term, and re-appropriates the idea of the street as social condenser. The street is not just a transportation zone, but is also a place of encounter, which is clearly emphasized by the benches along the façade in the shopping street, which are articulated by a series of light armatures in the internal streets.^[IMAGE 5.5]

One rightly can question whether indeed the roads, the parks, the terraces, the collective rooftops in these plans are about public life as we would understand it today. Today public life is associated with street life, which is far more complicated than the public life dedicated to leisure as comes to the fore in the images that are discussed above. Public life was conceptualized along the lines of health, space, sight, airiness, and movement, avoiding notions of plurality, differences, tension, and conflict. As Baird argues, like Jane Jacobs as we touched upon previously in Chapter 2, beyond the movement of modern architecture is the influence of the ‘organicist conceptions of community, which ‘have attempted to maximize the social homogeneity of community, either by excluding or escaping from those who do not conform, or by deliberately instituting programs of homogenization.’²² Although these organicists heavily opposed the anonymity of modern architecture (specifically because of the enormous scale of the new urban developments), beyond the modern approach the same aversion to heterogeneity and ambiguity can be found.

However, despite the initial images of a heavily used landscaped urban park as the immediate surroundings of the new (sub)urban extensions as the twentieth century unfolded, the specific aspects of proximity and heterogeneity turned increasingly into despair, delivering extended fields of homogeneous habitation and use and thereby decreasing the possibility of encounters almost to zero. One might argue that the figure of the landscape specifically lacks the clear-cut edges that are emphasized by Gasset in the quote above. The modern movement (re-) introduced the figure of the landscape, which only was possible by the increasing independence of the modern human being from the land itself. As Gasset notes, in ancient times the city was needed to distinguish the human being from what he calls the ‘community with the plants and animals’, and what Arendt would surely call human life captured by labor and everyday necessities. Gasset clearly emphasises the importance of the city as the opportunity to withdraw from the fields, nature and the cosmos.²³

‘Where will he go, since the earth is one huge, unbounded field? Quite simple; he will mark of a portion of this field by means of walls, which set up an enclosed, finite space over against amorphous, limitless space. Here you have the public square. It is not, like the house, an “interior” shot in from above, as are the caves which exist in the fields, it is purely and simply the negation of

21. Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 317

22. *Ibid.*, 308

23. cf Leonardo Zuccaro Marchi, *The Heart of the City, Continuity and Complexity of an Urban Design Concept (Dissertation)*, Delft: Delft University of Technology, 2013), 126-127

24.

Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, 152

25.

See on the distinction between programmatic and other forms of modernity note 5 of this Chapter

26.

Ton Lemaire, *Filosofie van het landschap* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Ambo, 2007), 76

27.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 5; In the modern perspective, by the way, it might not be a surprise, that the most important figures of modern architecture, or better said, the most telling examples of modern architecture – even until the early sixties – are based upon the private family cell of the house. Moreover, most of these examples are built as vacation homes: the Villa Savoye by Le Corbusier, the Farnsworth House by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the Falling Water house by Frank Lloyd Wright. But it are not only these single houses that are highly emphasising the own world of the family cell, this also is beyond the flats and skyscrapers that dominate the pre and post war urban approach of the CIAM architects. It is only in the *Tusschendijken* project in Rotterdam by the architect J.J.P. Oud and in Le Corbusiers *Unité d'Habitation* that the social aspect of housing comes into the sight of the architect, as Siegfried Giedion argues. Siegfried Giedion, *Architecture You and Me, The diary of a development* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1958), 126

28.

The earliest stage of Modern Architecture thus is characterized by a rather instrumental approach to space. See Hilde Heynen, 'Space as Receptor, Instrument or Stage: Notes on the Interaction Between Spatial and Social Constellations,' in: *International Planning Studies*, no 3-4, vol. 18, 347; cf. Paul Holmquist, 'Towards an Ethical Technique: Reframing Architecture's "Critical Call" through Hannah Arendt,' in: *The Plan Journal*, no 1, vol 1, 2016, 18

29.

Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 309

30.

They were called *Team 10*, since they were asked to organize the 10th meeting of the CIAM

the fields. The square, thanks to the walls which enclose it, is a portion of the countryside which turns its back on the rest, eliminates the rest and sets up in opposition to it. This lesser, rebellious field, which secedes from the limitless one, and keeps to itself, is a space sui generis, of the most novel kind, in which man frees himself from the community of the plant and the animal, leaves them outside, and creates an enclosure apart which is purely human, a civil space. Hence Socrates, the great townsman, quintessence of the spirit of the polis, can say: "I have nothing to do with the trees of the field, I have to do only with the man of the city".²⁴

Regarding this origin of the *polis*, one might argue that the modern approach to the city was somehow strongly based in a 'programmatic' understanding of modernity.²⁵ The increase in power and force of modern instruments, the refinement of social behaviour, the increase in spare time (freedom from labor) offered the opportunity for the city to open its public space to the landscape. The urban dweller, we might argue, is brought back into the field, although not so much in a modus of survival, as in a sense of enjoyment – even enjoyment of the little vegetable gardens. Landscape as landscape, that is landscape as enjoyable and peaceful image, as space of leisure and accommodation, as space of 'other practices', has become increasingly important for uprooted human beings.²⁶ In this movement, however, as we would argue today, public space as *political* space, which was the main aim of Gasset's narrative on the birth of the city, has been lost. It has become an image of 'communal life', united by different forms of leisure – even in these parts programmed as vegetable gardens. Although this idea of leisure (and the need for leisure) is rooted in the modern experience of freedom, it is the opposite freedom Arendt understands as the heart of public space. Leisure is to be free from labor, to be set free, withdrawn from anything. Arendt's understanding of freedom is indeed also 'to be freed from labor', but this freedom is not filled with entertainment, nor does it lead to withdrawal, but leads to engagement with the world. It is: to be freed in order to participate (in public and political life).²⁷

5.1.3 *Team 10 and the Revision of Public Space*

Although I called public space a 'mute theme' in the early modern approach to architecture and the city, it nevertheless is a very central issue. It was as we have seen implicitly intertwined in the social aims of Modern Architecture, hidden in its belief of social-political efficacy.²⁸ With the vanishing of this belief amongst the younger generations of modern architects – or at least the increasing critical attitude towards the rather technical approach to social issues in the modern project – the question of public space became explicit in the discourse on architecture and the city. It is, indeed, a central issue in the discussions at the 1951 CIAM meeting discussing the Core. Baird thus argues that the renewed attention to the historic center and the idea of the existence of a core within the urban fabric is the sign of a slowly folding understanding of the importance of public space. It is only four years later, when a new generation of participants raised their voices more clearly and stubbornly, that the principles of the initial 1933 Athens Charter were questioned and adapted.²⁹ The younger group of architects, later known as the Team 10 group,³⁰ questioned specifically the diagrammatic character of these principles: the reality is so much more complex and mysterious than the principle of the separation of functions as an approach to all questions of city-building suggests. Opposed to the smoothness that was the aim of the modernist

approach to the city by focusing on separation of functions, they emphasized the inherent contradictions and controversies that are part of reality, specifically within the urban fabric, even within those mono-functional areas, as they are raised by everyday life. From several other sources, we can understand how public space actually was understood in the decades after the war. Tom Avermaete, for instance, argues, reflecting upon the contribution of George Candilis, Alexis Josic and Shadrach Woods, the French members of Team 10, that, in their own terms, one can already touch upon a changing orientation. ‘Terms such as architecture urbaine, architecturbanism and environment were much used designations in Team 10 discussions ... They indicated that architecture was not conceived as a matter of single building projects, but rather that each architectural project should be concerned with delivering a contribution to the collective urban realm.’³¹ According to George Baird ‘these tentative observations are ... the early indicators of a new appropriation of the possible impact of such phenomena on the design of the contemporary city.’³² The 8th CIAM meeting, addressing ‘the Core’, was actually not yet prepared by the younger generation. Moreover, according to my Delft colleague, the Italian researcher Leonardo Zuccaro Marchi who wrote his dissertation on this theme, the younger generation even almost all abhorred this meeting.³³ The 8th CIAM conference was actually organized by the English participants in CIAM, who were known as the MARS group. They presented the theme as an additional 5th element to the Athens Charter, the ‘element which makes the community a community and not merely an aggregate of individuals. ... This is the physical heart of the community, the nucleus, THE CORE.’³⁴ In other words: the theme acknowledges the importance of a certain centrality as well as the importance of ‘public life’, which somehow is rendered in this core. This does not mean a single centrality on the level of the city – it actually urges centrality and public life also on the level of the district and the neighborhoods, in clusters of apartment buildings, and so on. Although Zuccaro Marchi doesn’t spend many words on the background of the theme, he points to several movements in the then contemporary discourse on the city that somehow delivered the arguments to change the focus towards the central core. The general idea is, as Zuccaro Marchi makes clear, that this 8th conference addressed mainly the question of how historic centers, that suffered from bombings during World War II, should be addressed. Zuccaro Marchi however rejects this view, not only since brand-new cores were also presented during the conference (amongst which the well-known plan of Le Corbusier for Chandigarh), but also because already before the war city-cores had been emphasized in several reflections upon the city and had been put forward into the debate, some of them clearly meant as critical responses towards the Athens Charter approach to the city. One of the main sources of this different approach to the city seems to be the writings Scottish biologist/urbanist Patrick Geddes, who understood cities as organisms – of course with a reference to his knowledge of the biological sciences. The core, or better said, the heart, in his perspective is a prerequisite for a vital urban configuration. Although he offers this perspective already in 1915, and thus as a reflection upon the industrial city, when Jacqueline Thyrwirt, the MARS-member who took part in the organization of the 8th CIAM congress, (re)edits his book *Cities in Evolution* in 1949, just a few years before this conference, this argument is clearly readdressed against the background of the modern approach to the city. The lack of a core with its ‘supreme organs of the city’s life – its acropolis and forum, its cloister and cathedral,’ according to Geddes, means that ‘our cities reek with evils.’³⁵ Another critical response, Zuccary Marchi states, came from the American historian Lewis Mumford a decade before CIAM 8. In a letter to Joseph Lluís Sert,

31. Tom Avermaete, ‘Mat-building, Mat-building: Team 10s Reinvention of the Critical Capacity of the Urban Tissue.’ In: Max Risselada and Dirk Van den Heuvel (eds.), *Team 10: In Search of a Utopia of the Present* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005), 246

32. Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 313

33. Zuccaro Marchi, *The Heart of the City*, 63

34. MARS, *Text of Mars Group Invitation. The Core. Report of CIAM 8, 1951*. Cited via: Zuccaro Marchi, *The Heart of the City*, 65

35. Quote via: Zuccaro Marchi, *The Heart of the City*, 63

36.

Lewis Mumford in a letter to Josep Lluís Sert, December 28th, 1940. Quote via: Zuccaro Marchi, *The Heart of the City*, 63

37.

Eric Paul Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 2002), 215

38.

Ibid., 215

39.

quote via Zuccaro Marchi, *The Heart of the City*, 140

40.

Giedion, *Architecture You and Me*, 123

41.

Ibid., 128

42.

Ibid., 128; The addition to this quote is of course revealing in this perspective: 'There is, of course, no suggestion that we should imitated our forebears, but I believe ... that there are certain continuous features running through human history – certain experiences which appear and are lost and then come up again.'

who later became the chairman of the conference on 'the core', he wrote that 'the four functions of the city do not seem to ... adequately cover the ground of city planning.' What is lacking, he continues, are 'the organs of political and cultural association [which] are ... the distinguishing marks of the city: without them, there is only an urban mass.'³⁶

During the conference meeting 'the core' is adopted as a self-evident need within the urban fabric, although simultaneously a proper definition of the theme fails to appear. The several participants, however, present and express quite different and sometimes opposing features of the core. The core itself therefore remained rather vaguely defined, as the urban theorist and historian Eric Mumford argues.³⁷ Nevertheless, the meeting was a reference point of 'new forms of public space, including shopping malls, renewed downtowns, and theme parks', he states, as well as the first expression of the 'major preoccupations with architect-designed public gathering places in the work of Victor Gruen, Kevin Lynch, and many others in the following decades.'³⁸ One might conclude that due to the focus on 'the core', the heart of the city, the human being and its social life was re-introduced in the perspective of the architect. What somehow was lacking in the Athenian Principles was this understanding of public space as a space where people meet. This perspective of public space, that had to be reclaimed from other (infrastructural and leisure) functions, was underlined in a couple of points that were included by the architectural historian Siegfried Giedion, who was one of the participants in CIAM from the beginning, in his concluding 'Summary of the needs at the core', which was included in the conference readings. The third point he proposes reads that 'the Core should be a place secure from traffic – where the pedestrian can move freely'.³⁹ Giedion himself a couple of years later affirms this perspective upon the core strongly in his book *Architecture You and Me*. 'Even the most beautiful housing project', he writes, 'remains but a segment when it stands in isolation, when it has no "heart," no place that serves as a bridge between private life and community life, no place where human contacts between man and man can again be built up. The destruction of human contacts and the present lack of structure of the metropolis are mutually urgent problems.'⁴⁰ He makes this perspective very explicit towards this importance of spaces for the 'pedestrian': 'The right of the pedestrian in the center of community life – in the core,' he writes, 'was carefully respected, and indeed self-evident, in all former civilizations. Today this right of the pedestrian – this human right – has been overridden by the automobile, and so the gathering places of the people – the places where people can meet together without hindrance – have been destroyed. Today one of our hardest tasks is the reestablishment of this human right, which is not merely imperiled but has been destroyed altogether.'⁴¹ According to Giedion amongst the participants in the CIAM meeting on the Core a special interest could be sensed in the sociologist's reflection upon the 'spontaneous activities of people of all ages,' as well as – and this might be a surprise, given the explicit rejections of tradition within the modern approach – in the question of history: 'We are vitally concerned to know how those who came before us handled certain like problems. For instance, how did they develop social intercourse and community life?'⁴² Although not explicitly emphasized in this perspective, this somehow reveals that the participants in the 8th CIAM conference had a sense of the political importance of public space – which had already been mentioned by both Geddes and Mumford as respectively the emphasis on the acropolis and forum as the 'supreme organs of city life', and the 'organs of political and cultural association.'

meetings from the early 1950s onwards had a particular interest in these themes of 'history' and 'the core' and their reliance on 'reality'. This group of youngsters, like Alison and Peter Smithson from England, Giancarlo de Carlo and Nathan Ernesto Rogers from Italy, Georges Candilis, Alexis Josic and Shadrach Woods from France (although two of the three partners of this office were not born in France), and Aldo van Eyck and Jaap Bakema from The Netherlands, did gather together as a group after the 9th meeting in order to prepare the following conference, which would be held in Dubrovnik (Yugoslavia), 1956.⁴³ They therefore became known as Team 10. Although the emergence of Team 10 is often presented as a clash of generations, their 'new' views certainly reveal signs of a continuously thinking process, rather than specific and radical distinction from the 'elderly'. There is, one can surely argue, a vice-versa influence between the generations, where the young ones stood on top of the shoulders of the elderly, while immediately also influencing the elder generation of architects.⁴⁴ In order to organize the 10th CIAM meeting, the Team 10 members previously held a series of preliminary meetings in which they developed the theme for this CIAM conference.⁴⁵ According to Tom Avermaete, the group argued that new analytical and conceptual tools needed to and could be formulated. The shift in their attention was slightly influenced by developments in the social sciences, where such concepts as *identity*, *association* and *neighbourliness* gained attention.⁴⁶ Their 'new' perspectives were actually supported by Le Corbusier. The CIAM had to renew itself, he argued. This renewal could only be expected from a younger generation, he added. It is the younger ones who should be regarded to be the 'only ones capable of feeling actual problems personally, profoundly, the goals to follow, the means to reach them, the pathetic urgency of the present situation. They are in the know.'⁴⁷

As stated above, this newer generation of architects developed perspectives that somehow embrace the urban 'reality' of contradictions.⁴⁸ Baird quotes a telling statement, as brought to the fore by Peter and Allison Smithson in 1956, which on the one hand places them within the modern approach to architecture – 'we are still functionalists and we still accept the responsibility for the community as a whole' – but immediately distinguishes themselves from their forerunners – 'but today the word functional does not merely mean mechanical as it did thirty years ago. Our functionalism means accepting the realities of the situation, with all their contradictions and confusions and trying to do something with them.'⁴⁹ An exemplary example of this simultaneously walking the path of their predecessors as well as distancing themselves is the reintroduction of the urban figure of 'the street'. 'Not the street of historic European form, to be sure,' Baird writes. 'Revisionists as they were, the members of Team 10 still held fast to the critique of the historic form of the street that had so forcefully been made by Le Corbusier, some two decades before.'⁵⁰ It actually is Le Corbusier himself who re-accesses his 1933 thesis of the 'death of the street' by, as we have already discussed above, introducing the *rue interieure* in his *Unite d'Habitation* in Marseille.

The growing interest in the figure of the street surely can be understood as part of the rediscovery by the members of Team 10 of the *human scale* as 'primordial elements in the continuity of human institutions', as George Candillis reflects upon the 10th CIAM congress in Dubrovnik.⁵¹ As Avermaete argues, the idea to find an alternative for the traditional street, not by rejecting it completely, but by reassessing it, has been central to lots of attempts among the Team 10 participants.⁵² The English participants in Team 10, Allison and Peter Smithson, offered an alternative with their 'streets in the air' or 'street decks',⁵³ which are a very prominent part of their Golden Lane competition project, as well as later in

43. The conference was actually scheduled to take place in Algiers, but because of the outbreak of the Algerian war of independence, the meeting was postponed by one year and then would be located in Dubrovnik. In the meantime, an interim congress was organized in La Sarraz.

44. cf Tom Avermaete, *Another Modern, The Post-war Architecture and Urbanism of Candilis-Josic-Woods* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005), 30

45. The themes that would be addressed during the conferences were largely kept open – way to open for the CIAM leadership, Francis Strauven argues. The members of Team 10 wanted to conclude the specific themes for that specific meeting just at the start, as derived from the 'grids' that were presented by the participating architects (they had to present their work by the use of specifically defined grids that would unravel the projects in particular aspects). Sert and Giedion, as members of the CIAM Leadership, therefore decided to gather the organizational team together just before the start of the conference in Dubrovnik, in order to once and for all set the theme on the forehead. Despite this intervention, the Team 10 members kept their own path, that they had prepared within the two years before. See Francis Strauven, *Aldo Van Eyck, The Shape of Relativity* (Amsterdam, Architectura & Natura, 1998), 265-266; See for the methods of the grid as an epistemological methods of sharing knowledge Avermaete, *Another Modern*, 59: 'The best-known methodological instrument ... is the so-called CIAM Grid or *Grille*. The Grid was introduced for the first time by Le Corbusier at CIAM VI (Bridgewater, 1947) as a "town-planning grid". ... The Grid is primarily presented as a system for graphically organizing information on town planning projects. This system was shaped as a matrix composed of columns and rows of basic cells (panels) of 21x31 cm. The columns represented nine analytical categories: environment, occupation of the land, constructed volume, equipment, ethical and aesthetic problems, economic and social influences, legislation, finance, and stages of realization. The rows represented the four urban design themes around which CIAM had structured its thoughts since the first congresses: living (green), work (red), cultivation of body and spirit (blue) and circulation (yellow).'

46. Avermaete, *Another Modern*, 51

47. quoted via Strauven, *Aldo Van Eyck*, 266

48.

According to Avermaete this shift towards 'reality' already is tangible in introduction of the Grid as a form of analysis and presentation during the 1947 meeting – as a result of an understanding of architecture as a discipline that is embedded in a wider cultural and social reality: "The development of CIAM between 1928 and 1947 can be understood as the installation of an epistemological transition from absolute values towards the analysis of empirical facts. ... Within CIAM, architecture was not regarded as an autonomous discipline based on ideal principles, but rather as a matter of building that touches upon the different realms of human existence. From its inception, CIAM elaborated a definition of architecture as a heteronomous matter; anchored in a broader matrix of social, economical and geographical parameters. The introductions of questionnaires concerning the economic, social and cultural specifics of architectural projects at the occasion of CIAM II (Frankfurt, 1929) can be considered as a first attempt to broaden the definition of architecture. However, it is only with the presentation of the 1947 CIAM Grid that a heteronomous approach to architecture is completely embedded within CIAM methodologically. The twelve columns of the Grid exemplify the broadened approach to architecture in categories such as: "the environment" (natural condition, geographic and demographic parameters); "occupation of the terrain" (two dimensional zoning and drawing); "facilities"; "ethics and aesthetics" (with possibly a study on the link between the Ancient and the Modern), "economic and social impact"; and "legislation". The categories of the CIAM Grid reveal an approach to architecture as a matter that is ingrained in the analysis of concrete facts with a geographical, ethical, social and legal character. The form and concept of the Grid suggest that only through careful reading and consideration of these various aspects of the "real" can a work of architecture be analyzed, conceived and understood." Avermaete, *Another Modern*, 63

49.

Quote via Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 313

50.

Ibid., 317

51.

Avermaete, *Another Modern*, 219

52.

Ibid., 235

53.

Architectural historian Alan Powers offers this following reading in his reflection upon the Robin Hood Gardens project: 'While Robin Hood Gardens was the first and only public housing built by Alison and Peter

their actually built project Robin Hood Gardens.^[IMAGE 5.7] In their turn, the French members Candillis, Josic and Woods introduced their concepts of the 'stem' and the 'web'. According to Avermaete, Candillis, Josic and Woods tried to address two perspectives on the street in their approach: a physical and a phenomenological approach. The physical emphasizes the street as a road that is to be seen as 'an element that defines a framework for architectural development', which regulates the 'development of the settlement and the landscape.'⁵⁴ This phenomenological aspect resonates with the perspectives of Kevin Lynch and Gordon Cullen, who emphasized the human experiences of roads, streets, streetscapes and cityscapes. Again the street here is understood as a method of structuring the landscape: it is the road and the practice of moving along the road that structures the experience of the perceiver. However, according to Avermaete, Candillis, Josic and Woods merge both perspectives upon the structural role of the road in their concept of the stem. The concept reaches beyond the moving eye and its experience of the physical form of the street towards the daily practices of the users as their starting point for design. The main function, however, is to be the thread that holds the basic characteristics of the urban fabric together,⁵⁵ relating the spatial practices and physical elements. According to Candillis the role of the street, which 'is formed by its composing parts: dwelling complexes, shops, markets, performance spaces, places of worship, social service offices, garden and parks, ... is to link the dwellings to the various activities of the city.'⁵⁶ The office of Candillis, Josic and Woods emphasized their interest in the street and their concept of the stem within a broader interest in the urban fabric, also by addressing the open spaces and the grid or the frame as aspects of this urban fabric. This threefold approach actually led them to a new concept for the urban fabric, which they called the web. The city, they argued, is not about the geometry of form, but the physical form that allows the specific daily practices of the users. The web-concept that they developed therefore should be a system that should permit development of an area, 'organizing it by a network of circulation and support systems that would unify diverse activities.'⁵⁷ This idea of the network somehow tries to overcome the limited, static and discriminating aspects of the stem, which of course by definition is linear, a connection between two points. The web, by reaching back to the image of the grid, somehow tried to offer unification and flexibility within the vast growth of the city fabric.⁵⁸ Despite their emphasis on everyday practices, and despite the very interesting architectural investigation in projects like their urban scheme for Toulouse Le Mirail, in which they used their concept of the *stem*,^[IMAGE 5.8] as well as their proposal for Frankfurt am Main, based upon their concept of the web, one might argue that their projects indeed still show the modern belief in architecture as a social project, a belief in the power of architecture to structure society.

Whereas both the English and the French participants in Team 10 investigated these 'mega structures', ultra-large projects, the Dutch participant Aldo van Eyck introduced a completely different emphasis on the heterogeneity of the daily urban fabric. Whereas, one might argue, the French office has their starting point in the structure of the project, it is remarkable that Van Eyck's projects seem to start from the (small) single cell, and somehow construct the whole as an ensemble of these single cells, sometimes articulating the structure as a whole, sometimes the single cells. The source of his proposal nevertheless is not so distinctive, compared to Candillis, Josic and Woods. Whereas the work of the French office was influenced by their projects in the cities of the French colonies, where they were confronted in their actual works with the (urban)

practices of non-Western societies, Van Eyck was inspired by the ‘primitive’ cultures of constructing and building. He presents his Burgerweeshuis design at the 11th meeting of CIAM in Otterlo, The Netherlands, in 1959. His design was accompanied with an analysis to the Kasbah structures in Northern African societies.⁵⁹ Seemingly challenged by Candillis, Josic and Woods and their colonial experiences, Van Eyck also introduces his experience with the Dogon culture as a source of inspiration, first in the magazine *Forum*, of which he was one of the editors.⁶⁰ The introduction of these references can be read as a strong comment on the more or less deterministic approach to reality that somehow is at the heart of modernist thinking. This is one of the important details beyond the Team 10 movement, which broadens the scope of their inspiration from the Western world to the non-Western continents, particularly to Africa. Van Eyck in Otterlo pleads for another approach to thinking, which is much more based upon a non-Euclidian form,⁶¹ and which strongly introduces through his famous ‘Otterlo circles’ an image made up of two circles.^[IMAGE 5.9] The left circle – I introduce you here to the updated version, not the one he presented at the conference, the idea beyond is however still the same – bears the title ‘by us’, the right ‘for us’.⁶² In the middle of the left one, two plan-drawings and an axonometric drawing are visible, the right shows a circle of people. The plans and axonometric drawing seem to offer different architectural positions and approaches, as understood through the few words that are added to the plans: next to the plan of the Temple of Nike in the Acropolis of Athens – a clearly defined object, harmonious in its basic form – he added ‘Immutability and Rest’; besides the group of houses from the village of Alouef in the Sahara in Algeria – a truly organically grown ground plan – he added ‘Vernacular of the Heart’; and finally the axonometric drawing, one of Van Doesburg’s ‘contra-constructions form the 1923 Maison Particuliere’ – a drawings that reveals the continuity of space – to which he adds ‘Change and Movements’. These are the physical realities that somehow cover the architectural field – they represent the different approaches to the field of architecture. According to Van Eyck, these approaches cannot be separated. They are complementary, they belong together. However, the tension is with the other circle, of course, which seems to be a different realm – or is it a different reality? A reality of the people that are the object of these architectural figures – that have to inhabit the spaces offered. ‘For each man and all men’, Van Eyck has written in this particular circle. The one circle thus represents the spatial realm, the right one the social realm. A third layer added is another series of sentences that somehow are written below and encircle the circles and through which tension between the two realms is emphasized. ‘Getting closer to the center, the shifting center – and build’, Van Eyck wrote down under the right circle. Close to the left one he questions: ‘When is architecture going to bring together opposite qualities and solutions?’ Two sentences bridge the two poles: ‘to discover anew implies discovering something new’, and: ‘We can discover ourselves everywhere – in all places and ages – doing the same things in a different way, feeling the same differently, reacting differently to the same.’ The circles through their images and depictions question the distinction of the realm of architecture towards the reality of the people. The last sentence somehow reveals Van Eyck’s emphasis: there is not really a difference between the people in the 20th century compared to those of the ages before. It is of course within this frame that we can read the introduction of photos of the Dogon culture in the *Forum* magazine: they reveal ‘a culture of living that still existed as the embodiment of an original harmony of contrasts’.⁶³ The people are the objective of architecture – and moreover, the architect should not distinguish himself from these people: they’re part of the people too. It is ‘by

Smithson, it followed their famous competition entry for housing for the City of London at Golden Lane, 1952. ... It pays homage to and at the same time is a critique of Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation at Marseilles, complete in the same year. ... At Marseilles, the access to the individual flats is through an internal corridor, which cannot avoid being very dark. While this might be possible in the Mediterranean, it was unsuitable for Britain. ... The Smithsons were not the sole inventors of the street deck concept, which seems to have developed among a group of their student contemporaries in Newcastle, but in their collage drawings of the Golden Lane scheme they gave it a memorable quality, and by republishing these at intervals, they kept the idea alive as a future ideal. In the Golden Lane scheme, the deck was part of a more varied system of spaces. There would be deep balconies for each flat at the same level as the deck, described as ‘yard gardens’, providing contact between residents and those passing by, with ‘see-through’ views making the building less massive. The decks themselves were “no mere access balconies. Two women with prams can stop and talk without blocking the flow, and they are save for small children” [quote from Alison Smithson and Peter Smithson, *Ordinariness and Light* (London: Faber & Faber, 1970), 57]. Where the blocks joined each other, there would be taller spaces, the height of three floors, next to the lifts and stairs “inviting one to linger and pass the time of day” [Quote from Smithson and Smithson, *Ordinariness and Light*, 54]. Alan Powers, ‘Robin Hood Gardens, A Critical Narrative’, in: Max Risselada (ed.), *Alison & Peter Smithson, A Critical Anthology* (Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, 2011), 234

54. Avermaete, *Another Modern*, 235

55. *Ibid.*, 246

56. Quote via *ibid.* 239

57. Quote via *ibid.*, 303

58. Quote via *ibid.*, 303; As George Baird argues, the influence of the work of Candillis, Josic and Woods is beyond discussion. Their concept of the web influenced also Le Corbusier in his proposal for the Venice Hospital (1964-1965). Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 317

59. Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 319

60. Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck*, 343

61.
Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck*, 348

62.
Ibid., 349-351

63.
Ibid., 343

64.
Ibid., 351. Strauven notes the following dualities: interiority-exteriority, mind-matter, reason-emotion, constancy-change, individual-collective.

65.
Ibid., 355 – note that Francis Strauven in his biography mainly refers to Buber's *Das Problem des Menschen* (1943), while Liliane Lefavre and Alexander Tzonis refer to *Ich und Du* (1923), which actually is the most well known writing of Buber, as the main reference of Van Eyck. Liliane Lefavre and Alexander Tzonis, *Aldo Van Eyck Humanist Rebel, Inbetweening in a Postwar World* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1999), 62

66.
It is within the Dutch approach to Team 10, and specifically through the publications in the *Forum*-magazine that certain anthropological myths on space gains attention – see for instance the writing of Joseph Rykwert, 'The Idea of a Town', which was published in *Forum* in 1963, and which was edited by Van Eyck. Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 320

67.
Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck*, 345

68.
Lefavre and Tzonis, *Aldo Van Eyck Humanist Rebel*, 65

69.
Quote via *ibid.*, 166

us', not 'for them', but 'for us'. It is nevertheless quite revealing too that Van Eyck doesn't merge the drawings into a single one: there are polarities between architecture and the people that are separate in themselves. Architecture is somehow always about these dualities, about balancing between dual-phenomena – as is the human existence.⁶⁴

Van Eyck's emphasis on the dual-phenomenon of both architecture and the human existence was particularly influenced by the writings of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, who strongly emphasized the 'in-between' as an embodied sphere – *das Gestalt gewordene Zwischen*.⁶⁵ As the Otterlo circles also show, the architectural project cannot be limited to the object itself. It merely should be defined in terms of its relationships. It always addresses the spatial and the social, the part and the whole, the physical and the – as one might state – mythical.⁶⁶ This moreover also counts for the physical urban form, as Van Eyck argues. Its identity is not included in terms of its functions (as might be the case in a functionalist approach), but 'only can be approached in terms of relations.'⁶⁷ In his writings Buber develops the dialogue as the main figure through which the human community can be approached. This dialogue can only be based upon the acceptance of the plurality of men, 'the acceptance of each other's "opposition and complementarity"'.⁶⁸ This dialogue actually requires and evokes a space between men, which, as Buber writes, 'is rooted in the fact that a being considers another as an other, as a clearly distinct being, so as to be able to communicate with him in a realm which is common to both and which transcends the individual realm of both.'⁶⁹ This realm of the in-between has become a fundamental figure in the work of Van Eyck, as is tangible in his approach to architectural assignments. His seems to construct freely a bridge between the anthropological ideas of Buber and particular forms of architecture. The well-known design for the Burgerweeshuis in Amsterdam might be exemplary. The building offers a collection of individual and collective cells, arranged around a series of patios. These cells, however, are structured by an in-between space, that connects the single cells of the different parts of the building. This in-between space is not programmed: it offers particular forms that can be appropriated by the children who lived in the building. The space challenges these children to occupy the spaces, to make them part of their play, to find places for themselves, to appear amongst their peers in order to meet and play. The same importance of the figure of the in-between is also tangible in Van Eyck's approach to the city, which specifically is exposed within the more than 700 playgrounds he designed for the municipality of Amsterdam. Most of these playgrounds were located on vacant lots or in leftover spaces in the streets. Van Eyck added simple forms to these spaces: climbing frames, sandpits, little walls.^[IMAGE 5.10] Through the lay-out of these spaces, it is clear that Van Eyck mainly was interested in the in-between, connecting different worlds. Sometimes the playgrounds indeed connected different worlds: through a vacant lot two streets were connected. In other places, the playground offered intriguing in-between spaces between the children and their peers, between the children and their parents, and between the public itself. The historian Siegfried Giedion actually offers a nice reading of these playgrounds:

'I had another experience recently in Amsterdam. I saw a number of children's playgrounds which have been created under the guidance of Van Eesteren and designed by a young Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck. These have been made from very simple elements – a circular sand pit, some upright steel hoops, a parallel pair of three trunks lying horizontally. But these simple elements are grouped so subtly – with a background of the Stijl movement and modern art

which injects some kind of vitamin into the whole performance – that they act as fantastic starting points for the child’s imagination. These playgrounds also, simultaneously, fulfill another function. The careful design of their layout has transformed useless pieces of waste ground into active urban elements. One needs only to provide the opportunity and we, the public, who are also maybe children of a kind, will know how to make use of it.⁷⁰

Van Eyck, within these mentioned designs, thus offered lots of leftover places that could be occupied (and transformed) by the inhabitants and users – room for the daily practices of the people themselves.

5.1.4 History Reloaded

Despite this focus upon everyday life and its messiness, the re-appraisal of streets and squares, primitive cultures as a source of inspiration, and the eagerness to deal with a ‘reality’ beyond a deterministic approach, the Team 10 approaches nevertheless do not acknowledge a ‘full-fledged recognition of the phenomena of pluralism or of heterogeneity,’ George Baird states.⁷¹ Neither the huge urban interventions that were the study of the Smithsons and Candillis, Josic and Woods and that turned urban neighborhoods into huge built structures connecting an agglomeration of buildings, nor the emphasis on the reciprocal relationships as embraced by Van Eyck, who turned buildings into small agglomerations of parts – the building as the city – does grasp the complexity of the human condition of plurality. One might argue that these projects were still bound – despite their emphasis on controversy, contradiction, and human interaction – to the project of social engineering, which is so typical of the Modernist approach to the city. It nevertheless the question is also whether the post-modern architects of the seventies and eighties, who left this belief in architecture as social engineering behind and particularly embraced everyday culture, were capable to grasp the plurality of the public in a more convincing way. Baird himself refers to about four directions that were taken after or alongside the Team 10 movement. First Baird briefly refers to Victor Gruen, who introduced the concept of the suburban shopping center in the American suburban landscape (as I described in Chapter 2). As Baird argues, this center is the outcome of segregation as the underlying figure of the modern approach to the city. The important step Gruen took in respect to public life is of course the connection he provides between the commercial realm of shopping and public space. Although this figure has also been implemented in the Team 10 concepts, specifically that of clustering as developed by the Smithsons, due to the vast growth of the shopping center towards the shopping malls, this development has been criticized a lot from the European perspective.⁷² The second direction we can recognize within the architectural field before the nineties is surely the approach of what can be called ‘The Rationalists’, but often is referred to as La Tendenza. This somehow started with the pleas to acknowledge the ‘context’ of architecture by the Italian architect Ernesto Rogers during the 1959 Otterlo Conference. He, during that conference, was specifically critical of projects that somehow tried to redesign the city, but by doing so completely destroyed the history of specific sites.⁷³ The importance of history as the context of new additions to the city has been a central figure in the works of Aldo Rossi, Giorgio Grassi, and – a to a lesser extent – the formal approaches to the city by U.M. Ungers. Their works were quite opposed to the Team 10 approach, which somehow tried to come up with an architecture that is characterized by an ‘open aesthetic’, while, as Baird argues on the works of

70. Giedion, *Architecture You and Me*, 130; for the context of these playgrounds within the work and thinking of Van Eyck, see the first chapter of Lefaivre and Tzonis, *Aldo van Eyck Humanist Rebel*, 13-77

71. Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 313

72. Ibid., 326; Baird in this respect also refers to the famous article of Charles Moore, in which he explores the recent development of architecture in California, concluding with the remarkable emergence of the theme park (Disney, specifically) as the most significant artifact of the ‘contemporary’ (architectural) landscape. Charles Moore, ‘You have to Pay for the Public Life’, in: *Perspecta* (Vol 9, 1965). A shortened version is also included in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (Amsterdam: SUN publishers, 2009).

73. Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 322

74.
Ibid., 331

75.
Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1982), 41

76.
Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 41

77.
Avermaete, *Another Modern*, 15

78.
It might be clear that the themes Ungers, Rossi, Grassi and Rogers urged also, but differently, can be found in the works and discourses of the Team 10 architects as well. The openness of the urban fabric, as is urged here as part of their reflections, for instance also is discussed as part of a Structuralist outlook on the city. See particularly the early works and recent writings of Herman Hertzberger.

79.
cf Bernard Hulsman, *Double Dutch, Nederlandse architectuur na 1985* (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2013), 17, 82, 188

Ungers, they ‘promote a strong current of formality, and a sharp urban definition.’ Specifically in the (theoretical) works of the Italian architects, this formality and the stress on typology, the street is re-introduced ‘in its literal form as the primary organizational principle of urbanism.’⁷⁴ As Rossi explains in his book *The Architecture of the City*, typology can be explained as the study of types, that is, the essential characteristics of certain urban and architectural elements. It is the core essence of a building, like the essential characteristics of a theatre. Important in this perspective is that Rossi argues that architectural form and type regularly do not coincide. ‘No type can be identified with only one form, even if all architectural forms are reducible to types.’⁷⁵ What Rossi stresses with the emphasis on typology is that there is much more continuity in architecture than modernism would admit. The type of the theatre, as it is foundational for the newest theatre-building is still the same as an examples of 500 years back. ‘Typology is an element that plays its own role in constituting form; it is a constant.’⁷⁶ Rossi’s urge to discuss typology is actually a response to the paradigm of functionalism in Modern Architecture, which is often stressed by the slogan ‘form follows function’. This paradigm was often understood as machine-like – as if a certain function could be analyzed and deconstructed into certain diagrams, which in turn offered the right architectural form to the designer, as if it were a mathematical formula. What Rossi actually shows is that knowledge of architecture is already present in the actual city and architecture.^[IMAGE 5.11] It is present in the building stock, it is inherent in architectural constructions. Rossi’s point here might be summarized as ‘form follows knowledge’. This at least might count for most assignments, but the modern city and modern life also has urged new programs, particularly those based on the car, mass production and welfare. A typological approach does not offer any guidance in designing a supermarket or shopping mall.⁷⁷ The second half of the Rossi’s book, however, stresses the experience of the existing city, underlining the permanence of actual urban form, and particularly the monumental building within the urban structure. He shows how the existing city fabric was able to offer room for changing programs and practices over time.⁷⁸ In this part he therefore brings together the typological approach and his critique on functionalism in order to stress the future of city-planning. This of course is a response to the form of the modern city, as urged in the Athens Chapter of CIAM, and has become tangible in the post-war extensions to cities. New urban additions, Rossi urges, should take account of existing forms, give accountability of the knowledge that is existent in existing structures. The old city functions as the model for new urban extensions.

At first sight, the approach of the Luxembourg born Krier brothers seems to be alike. By looking back to the formal analysis of, for instance, Camillo Sitte (Rob Krier) or the principles of classical architecture and urban morphologies (Léon Krier), they explicitly reject the achievements of the modern approach. Léon Krier in particular has become well known because of his hilarious drawings and comics, in which he jokes about modern architecture, and compares it with the merits of the classical language. For them, architectural form is a certain language, and the classical idiom is closest to the human condition. I return to this point in the next Chapter. At this point it is important to know that the very difference with Rossi and Grassi, however, is that for Léon Krier and Rob Krier the continuity is in the architectural form itself, while for the Italian architects it is in the principle beyond architectural form. Whereas Léon Krier developed his ideas further in a mostly academic career, Rob Krier has built a flourishing practice, that, remarkably enough, got a foothold in The Netherlands.⁷⁹ Their

ideas about a pre-modern approach to the city fits in the post-modern critical approach of modern architecture, although the earliest critics, like the American architects Robert Venturi in the mid-sixties, and Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter in the mid-seventies urged a more ambiguous urbanity than the Krier-brothers urge. As we have already seen previously, Venturi urges ‘complexity and contradiction’,⁸⁰ which also seems to be behind the ideas of the latter two. In their ‘manifest’ developing alternative approach to city planning, published as *Collage City*,⁸¹ they oppose the modernist treatment of the city, first by convincingly tracing the ambiguity and incoherence in the approaches of modernism itself, and secondly by proposing such incoherence as the very starting point of urbanity. The ambiguity in the modern approach they emphasize is manifested in the prescribed ‘natural’ or ‘landscape’ setting of the apartment blocks. They cite Le Corbusier: ‘Sun, space, verdure: essential joys, through the four seasons stand the trees, friends of man. Great blocks of dwellings run through the town. What does it matter? They are behind the screen of trees. Nature is entered into the lease.’⁸² Rowe and Koetter regard the last sentences as ironic. How about this relationship between the building blocks and the landscape, why design those objects when they are to be hidden behind the lines of trees? they question. Should the city be evaporated?⁸³ In their research they actually use the map-technique of the famous Nolli-map of Rome (1748) to compare the classical city pattern to the modern approach of urban design. Gianbattista Nolli graphically emphasized in his map the public space, by drawing the buildings that were not accessible in grey, but leaving the publicly accessible ones, civic buildings and churches, blank, like the streets and squares (only showing in black their structure). Through this technique of presentation, these accessible interiors were shown as extensions of the public space. What is revealed through such mappings is a pre-dominant urban pattern of masses and voids, the urban blocks and the streets, that is punctuated by major buildings and spaces, landmarks and open spaces that provide ‘locus’ within this ‘vast’ urban fabric. Through the map, since in the centre of Rome the coverage of buildings of ‘ground’ is dense, the streets and squares appear to be carved out from the building mass.⁸⁴ As cities have grown explosively in the twentieth century – all intrinsically related to the development of mass production, the emergence of cars, the rise of speed, the increase of prosperity, and so on – this had a major influence on this relationship between figure and ground, solid mass and voids.

Well known are these pages of *Collage City* that simultaneously shows a fragment of the urban center of the Italian city of Parma and a fragment of Le Corbusier’s project for Saint-Dié (1948).⁸⁵ The differences between both situations immediately become clear. Whereas in the Parma example the buildings define the open spaces, in Le Corbusier’s proposal the objects are placed in what can be called generic space. Space generates the setting for the objects, while the objects barely differentiate the sea of space(s) that surrounds them. They link this back to Classical examples, referring to the difference between the Roman forum and the Greek Acropolis.⁸⁶ Through the drawings and in their texts they show the loss of ‘defined’ urban spaces and such types as the street, the square and the park. Everything has been turned into ‘landscape’, in a quite narrow sense of the word – a green park-like structure, occasionally sliced by (elevated) roads. In the modern approach, the pre-dominant figure is the single building. A connecting pattern of blocks or well-defined spaces is missing. What is lost is the ability to shape a coherent urban space through built form. In an object oriented approach, spatial structure of the environment cannot be constructed through the built figure.⁸⁷

80.

Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977)

81.

Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: MIT Press, 1983)

82.

Quoted via *ibid.*, 51

83.

Ibid., 59

84.

Roger Trancik, *Finding Lost Space, Theories of Urban Design* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1986), 98

85.

Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 62-63

86.

Ibid., 83

87.

The aim of Rowe and Koetter with their book, by the way, is to suggest another option, in-between those extremes, not solely space driven (since modern times has changed the use of spaces and buildings, changed the patterns of life), nor solely object driven (but an approach in which space and object are in balance, in a new equilibrium. The imagined condition is a type of solid-void dialectic,’ they write, ‘which might allow for the joint existence of the overtly planned and the genuinely unplanned, of the set piece and the accident, of the public and the private, of the state and the individual.’ *Ibid.*, 83

Trancik, *Finding Lost Space*, 100; In his discussion upon the 'figure-ground-theory', he distinguishes three types of urban solids as well as five types of urban voids that together form the urban fabric, although these types of course are describing only those plans in which the built form shapes the voids, ranging from the threefold distinction of urban solids ranges from the regular building blocks, via the perimeter blocks defining the major public spaces, to the, often freestanding, public monuments or civic institution-buildings. These types have their specific role in regards to the public space. The monuments are the centrepieces, providing political and social significance through their appearance. The blocks form the vast urban tissue, providing the everyday functions of offices, dwellings, retail – and, very important, coherence to the urban pattern. The edge-defining blocks finally are intentionally designed in order to establish specific urban open spaces, like boulevards and squares, or emphasize the edge of a neighbourhood – they somehow measure the scale of the city. The types of open spaces are, according to Trancik, the foyer, the inner-block void, the streets and squares, gardens and parks, and finally specific linear structures. Trancik, *Finding Lost Space*, 103

Ibid., 103

This might be summarized as a preference for clear urban forms of spaces, well circumscribed by surrounding mass. Rob Krier, in his book *Urban Spaces* provides emphasis on the importance of its edges: 'If we wish to clarify the concept of urban space without imposing aesthetic criteria, we are compelled to designate all types of space between buildings in towns and other localities as urban space. This space is geometrically bounded by a variety of elevations. It is only the clear legibility of its geometrical characteristics and aesthetic qualities which allows us consciously to perceive external space as urban space.' Rob Krier, *Urban Space (Stadtraum)* (London: Academy Editions, 1979), 15

Léon Krier, *Architecture, Choice or Fate* (Windsor (Berkshire): Papadakis Publisher, 1989), 83

Ockman, 'Between Utopia's and Ideologies', in: Cynthia Davidson (ed.), *Eisenman/Krier: Two Ideologies, A Conference at the Yale School of Architecture* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2004), 12

Krier, *Architecture, Choice or Fate*, 49

The approach of Rowe and Koetter can be described as a 'figure-ground' approach: it investigates the relative land coverage of masses to voids. Voids here are positively understood, and indeed, as specifically in the Rowe and Koetter approach, opposed to urban approaches characterized by objects in infinite space, or in the case of Sitte, opposed to 'technical spaces'. In other words, in this approach to urban space, public space is understood as 'enclosed' space, or even sometimes as 'interior' space: specifically designed, distinctive in form, composition, articulation, and spatiality. One might conclude that this 'figure-ground-theory' can only be applied to quite classical forms of urbanization and design. The urban designer and former Harvard Professor of Urban Design Roger Trancik, when he discusses this 'figure-ground' theory, only refers to classical examples – and when he refers to more contemporary examples – including the design of H.P. Berlage for Amsterdam Zuid –, it is shortly to Alvar Aalto, who had stated that 'the problem of spatial design as connecting the form of the building to the structure of the site, or of twisting and turning the building's facade to create positive exterior space.'⁸⁸ The open spaces of streets and squares within this classical urban fabric, beside their function of transport and connectivity, give room to the active public life of the city – as do the parks, although they specifically offer the opposition of the hard urban fabric: room for nature, rural settings, and leisure. 'Historically,' Trancik writes, 'the streets and squares were the unifying structures of the city.' However, as almost overstated: 'in modern times ... they have lost much of their social function and physical quality.'⁸⁹ It however might be questioned if it can be brought back through a very formal approach, as in the case in the figure-ground-theory. How can this address the social and communicative aspects of streetscapes? And how does it value its mercantile and pragmatic root? And is the unspoken but clear preference for the pre-industrial city vital enough to also structure today's urban lifecycle? The emphasis is on the shape of (open) space, moreover on the dialogue between void and mass, embedded within a comprehensible and coherent urban structure, which can be perceived by the human body.

Here we are of course back to the ideas of the Luxembourg brothers Léon and Rob Krier – their aim that the city and public life can only be revived by a return to the pre-modern types and organization of urban space.⁹⁰ As Léon Krier writes: 'Today, one truth is evident: without traditional landscapes, cities and values our environment would be a nightmare on a global scale. Modernism represents the negation of all that makes architecture useful: no roofs, no load-bearing walls, no columns, no arches, no vertical windows, no streets, no squares, no privacy, no grandeur, no decoration, no craftsman, no history, no tradition. ... There is no true substitute for the traditional fabric of streets and squares.'⁹¹ Krier, as well as his younger brother Rob, therefore aims to reconstruct the city along 'romantic-reactionary lines', as Joan Ockman has characterized their work: a return to the preindustrial world.⁹²

Specifically the early examples of Léon Krier's own work, as for instance his contribution to 'Roma Interrotta', his *Project d'un centre social place Saint Pierre*, (1978) ^[IMAGE 5.12, 5.13] places emphasis on public space and monumental structures: axes and colonnades cutting through a fine mazed urban fabric, public buildings, quite monumentally designed by abstracting and reconsidering classical examples, strategically placed amidst the vast mass of urban housing. The Roma Intterrotta plan even comes up with a new type of public building that is a building and square at once. 'It provides', Krier writes, 'engines for urban centrality and marks both the plan and skyline of the city.'⁹³ His 1976 proposal for *Parc de La Villette* (his submission to the pre-competition) is also a very clarifying

example of his approach. The plan is characterized by a limitation of the large open space of La Villette to two open public spaces, which form two distinctive parks, interrupted by ‘urban’ axis containing a few larger buildings and squares, running north-south. The rest of the site is completely filled with ‘generic’ urban building blocks. His strategy, in other words, is to limit open space, while in the same gesture carefully designing the perimeter of these spaces. Simultaneously, the urban axis and the parks divide the area into four quarters, easily understood as distinctive neighborhoods. The design for La Villette exemplifies Krier’s understanding of the urban fabric: hierarchy of public spaces of streets and local squares, distinctive neighborhoods, a vast sea of urban buildings (*Res Economica Privata*) knitted together by monumental public buildings and carefully designed central public spaces (*Res Publica* – Churches, Theatres, Schools, Markets, Memorials, Parliaments, Galleries, and so on).⁹⁴ To him this division in hierarchy and distinction of public spaces, as well as between generic and specific buildings, is based upon a clear lesson learnt from tradition. ‘All traditional architecture clearly distinguishes between public and/or sacred buildings on the one hand,’ Krier states, ‘and utilitarian and/or private buildings, on the other. The former express the qualities of institutions – dignity, solemnity, grandeur for the *res publica* and the *res sacra*; the latter, the more modest private activities of housing, commerce and industry in the *res private* and the *res economica*.’⁹⁵ In a provoking discussion with the American architect Peter Eisenman he adds: ‘It is, obviously, not enough to have fine houses; a city also needs temples and monuments. Architecture is not concerned with the private realm. It shapes the public domain, the common world.’⁹⁶ This of course is much more than just the shape of space. The context of public space should be rightly approached as well. Urban environments should accommodate the pedestrian, he states. Its size should not be bigger than about 10 minutes walk, within this distance the primary services should be located, and that the city should be constructed out of such autonomous fragments (that share the secondary services on the level of a borough, and some urban functions, like the airport, the administration, and cultural facilities, on the level of the city).⁹⁷

The projects for *Roma Interrotta* or *La Villette* site indeed show well-defined public spaces, clearly being part of the urban fabric (although immediately admitted, not at all divided in 10 minutes’ walk divisions). In *La Villette* surely the canal helps to embed the structure in the existing environment, since the urban axis, the distinguished parks, and the structure of the generic building blocks, are orthogonally positioned along the canal. Both plans also show the relationship between architecture and public space: architecture indeed is used to ‘shape’ space. The squares are dominated by colonnades and arcades, obelisks and sometimes even by covered structures. In other plans too attention is paid to ‘natural’ environments of lakes and rivers, specifically since they always have a relationship with built structures: thorough designs of bridges and embankments, walls and boulevards.⁹⁸

5.1.5 The Architecture of Social Condensers

The pivotal discourses on public space during the fifties also made room for an emphasis on ‘social’ aspects of space by the former student of Van Eyck, Herman Hertzberger, who is introduced by Baird in a description of his Centraal Beheer office in Apeldoorn: [IMAGE 5.14]

94. Demetri Porphyrios (ed.), *Léon Krier, Houses, Palaces, Cities, Architectural Design Profile #54* (London: AD Editions Ltd, 1984), 40-41

95. Krier, *Architecture, Choice of Fate*, 31

96. Peter Eisenman and Léon Krier, ‘Eisenman and Krier, A Conversation’, in: Cynthia Davidson (ed.), *Eisenman/Krier: Two Ideologies, A Conference at the Yale School of Architecture* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2004), 37

97. Krier, *Architecture, Choice of Fate*, 125

98. It is remarkable that this – to my understanding rather fresh and provoking – approach is lost in the newer projects, as for instance the urban lay-out of the British New Town Poundbury, in favour of a more direct application of the classical forms and structures of cities and buildings.

99.

Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 336

100.

Herman Hertzberger, *Architectuur en structuralisme, Speelruimte en spelregels* (Rotterdam: naoio publishers, 2014), 41; In this book, Hertzberger from hindsight revalues the ideas John Habraken developed for instance in his book *De dragers en de mensen* (Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema 1961)

101.

Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 337 [emphasis in original]

102.

Hertzberger, *Architectuur en structuralisme*, 41

103.

cf *ibid.*, 17, 29

104.

Ibid., 54

105.

Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 338

‘Basically, it is an office building to house the administration of a governmental insurance organization. Given his strong social orientation to architecture, Hertzberger was very interested in the potential programmatic symbolism of the building, but for him this symbolism of the building, but from him this symbolism was necessarily far more poetic and elliptical than institutional and monumental. Indeed, Hertzberger’s almost psychoanalytic orientation to the creation of built form was so individualistic, in its anti-institutional, and to establish its intended systems of social meaning exclusively from the individual outward, as it were.’⁹⁹

This connection of the individual towards the collective has strongly influenced the early design-schemes of Hertzberger. One might argue that he has pushed the scheme of the *Orphanage* of Van Eyck, upon which we already touched, towards its more extreme position, by taking the building as a strong collective structure that not only offers guidance in a situation of chaos but immediately also generates freedom for the individual.¹⁰⁰ Baird actually argues that

‘for Hertzberger, the constitution of the public realm can only proceed from the individual act cumulatively outward to the *resultant* collectivity. According to his politics, any preconstituted collective image would necessarily be authoritarian.’¹⁰¹

This is an important remark, when architecture is also understood in its representative character. The early works of Hertzberger are characterized by what we might call a structural approach. As he himself describes backwards, this approach was roused by the attention to the Kasbah-structures within the Team 10 meetings, as well as the then contemporary studies on urban neighborhoods. Hertzberger joined the discussion as a member of the board of the architectural journal *Forum* by using matchboxes to show how simply squared elements can be brought together in different configurations, and how this could lead to more pleasant outdoor spaces, substantial urban settlements, and provocative differentiations than the standard suburban developments, which were based upon repetition.¹⁰² Hertzberger has always offered the metaphor of the city as a perspective to judge his attempts. In his early experiments with individual cells and collective structures, he emphasises these structures which are simultaneously building and city, while in later projects he presents (and designs) the collective spaces as streets and squares. The building functioning as city (in a city), and vice versa, the city understood as interior.¹⁰³ Hertzberger argues that with the introduction of ‘structuralism’ in architecture – a term that nowadays often just refers to an architecture that pronounces mainly its structure, but that for him foremost is stressed by offering collective structures, through which the individual gets freedom of choice, occupation, and adaptation – ‘urban-design-thinking’ has been introduced in architecture, introducing the consciousness of the collective as distinguished from the private domain in architecture too.¹⁰⁴ According to Hertzberger, this understanding of structuralism in architecture offers a more ‘humane’ perspective for the designer, a far more social understanding of architecture.

Baird however, stresses particularly the expression of the individual in the architecture of Hertzberger:

‘Growing out of the Team 10 tradition, the Centraal Beheer manifests instead a commitment to the constitution of a human plurality that is radically indi-

vidualist and decentralist, and that cannot tolerate any predetermined representation of collectivity.¹⁰⁵

Despite this interpretation of Hertzberger's withdrawal from a prescribed representation, it is quite remarkable that at the very moment George Baird wrote these reflections, Hertzberger himself changed his architecture quite radically. The *Ministerie van Sociale Zaken* building in The Hague, which can be understood as the last building in the former approach to the task, already shows traces of the new characteristics of Hertzberger's architecture. It somehow merges the themes that Hertzberger had addressed in the past with those that he would address in the future.¹⁰⁶ The outward appearance of the building still somehow emphasizes the parts, the different elements, over the whole: it is a structure of different wings that are bound together through a corridor. This corridor here however draws far more attention than in the *Centraal Beheer offices*. Whereas the wings, which offers spaces to the several departments of this government building, are less articulated (and less separated along the lines of units or clusters of office spaces, the central hall has been treated with much more attention. This collective space consists of the central atrium, broadened hallways or corridors, broadened stairs, added heights and stages, and so on. Particularly in his famous school-designs, these elements were already investigated and articulated. However, in his other projects too these architectural elements gained a central role and have been turned into the very characteristics of Hertzberger's architecture over the years. The infrastructure of the building turns here into architecture. Stairs and corridors, entrance halls and atriums are designed as the heart of the building – it is these spaces, this spatial infrastructure as we can call them, that have the potential to offer space for the collective, where the users of the building in more or less spontaneous ways touch upon others. These are the 'social condensers' of the project, as Baird argues.¹⁰⁷ Simultaneously with the concentration upon the central collective spaces, Hertzberger's designs of the buildings themselves began to change, particularly the way his more recent designs appear in the city, through their ultimate form and façade, changed drastically. Instead of the articulation of differentiation along the lines of the individual (element), his buildings more and more emphasized the collective itself: the building understood as single object, embedded in the structure of the city. Despite these changes, understanding the building as an object rather than a collection of individual elements, Hertzberger still kept his previous ideals: the interior of his buildings always gave space for central collective spaces, connecting different parts of the building. These are often infrastructural spaces of stairs and corridors that are broadened and combined in such a way that they turn into a diverse and dynamic space, where people can bump into each other, can relax and sit, or performances can be given. The stair as tribune, the corridor as balcony, the ground floor as stage. The interior-space thus is characterized, we can argue, by a certain 'predetermined representation of collectivity' that nevertheless has to be appropriated by the users. 'I regard a building only a success,' Hertzberger once stated, 'when I come back after a few years and find it appropriated by the users.'¹⁰⁸

106.

It is probably therefore that Kenneth Frampton recently stated that this has to be seen as the best building of his oeuvre. Remark in his lecture during the opening of the Structuralism Exhibition in *The New Institute*, Rotterdam, September 20, 2015

107.

Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 337

108.

Herman Hertzberger in a personal conversation with the author at the moment Robert McCarter's biography on Hertzberger was presented in one of the Appollo School buildings (1980-1983), April 11th, 2015. Robert McCarter, *Herman Hertzberger* (Rotterdam: naio publishers, 2015). Cf also Hertzberger, *Architectuur en structuralisme*, 17-18, 211-218



5.15 Reinhold Völkel, *Café Griensteidl in Vienna, 1896*

5.2 PRELIMINARY NOTES ON ARCHITECTURE AND THE PUBLIC REALM

5.2.1 *The End of the Commonly Shared World*

Almost at the end of his book, immediately after his review of the early works of the Luxemburg architect Léon Krier, Baird vents his hope for ‘a more fruitful theoretical exploration of our predicament that this acrimonious bifurcation, one that would look again to the related concepts of “plurality” and of “action” as they were propounded by Arendt in the late 1950s.’¹⁰⁹ He thus seems not to be satisfied by the proposals he previously discussed. His reflection nevertheless is open ended: he also does not urge one particular approach as a (final) architectural solution for the design of public space. The future of public space, he seems to argue, lies somewhere in-between the proposals he discussed. Based upon a brief review of the activity of action as the core of the public realm,¹¹⁰ he finalizes his book by returning to the important analysis that he offered in the very first chapter. Beyond the question of actual physical spaces that can be regarded to be public, another question emerges: how architecture is able to affect the possibility of – to say it with Arendt – the human activity of ‘action’. In other words, how architectural design can offer room for appearance of the human being amongst peers, through the activity of action. Behind this question a critical stance can be detected, which is the other side of the coin: architecture often limits the possibility of appearance amongst peers, narrows the opportunities to act. The opportunities ‘to act in public’, Baird suggests, will be found far more in the succession and sequence of different spaces than in a profound design of public space: the network is more important than the singular space. At this point Baird does not choose a particular architectural position within the debate he just laid out, but underlines the lessons that can be learned from all previous approaches: public space has to have representational elements, has to have learnt from historical models, has to offer space(s) for meetings (in a very pragmatic sense), has to consist of a network of spaces, has to contribute to the urban fabric, and so on.

At the core of these statements is the conviction that the architecture of public space needs to give room, which urges architecture not so much by taking control of all of the different aspects in a – you could say – totalitarian way, but rather in an unconscious intertwining of the different aspects. In other words, Baird urges a rather ambiguous approach to public space:

‘It seems to me almost certain’, he writes, ‘that [the future public realm, HT] will be fabricated, in part, of known historical models, but that those models will have been fragmented and reconstituted in newly affirmative ways. It will also be rhetorical in its explicit taking up of public positions, but the concatenation of those positions will itself be heterogeneous – not to say pluralistic.’¹¹¹

Baird’s *The Space of Appearance* indeed has an open end – he simply expresses his hope that Arendt’s concept of ‘action’ might offer new insights in order to understand the notion of the public realm architecturally, beyond irony and bifurcation. He thus closes his exploration of public space with the recommendation to explore the related concepts of ‘plurality’ and ‘action’.¹¹² He faced this challenge himself about two decades later, in his second book on public space, simply called *Public Space*. We will come back to that book later, but at this point will take up the challenge as well: to explore the related concepts of plurality and

109.
Baird, *The Space of Appearance*,
344-345

110.
It is this understanding that Baird differentiates from Frampton, the two architects and architectural critics that were grasped by the thinking of Arendt quite early, as he also himself also argues in the introduction to his book *The Space of Appearance*. *Ibid.*, 18, note 25

111.
Ibid., 347

112.
Ibid., 345

113.

This seemed the first appropriate moment to look upon the contemporary events with the backward-directed glance of the historian and the analytical zeal of the political scientist, the first change to try to tell and to understand what had happened, not yet *sine ira et studio*, still in grief and sorrow and, hence, with a tendency to lament, but no longer in speechless outrage and impotent horror. ... It was, at any rate, the first possible moment to articulate and to elaborate the questions with which my generation had been forced to live for the better part of its adult life: *What happened, Why did it happen? How could it have happened?* Arendt writes in her preface to part three of the book. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968), xxiii

114.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998 (1958)), 7

action as the very essential characteristics of the public realm, particularly urging how this realm is related to actual space. After all, there was an intensive debate on public space in architectural and urban theory during these two decades that have passed between Baird's books on public space – a debate that we traced in Chapters 2 and 3. Our exploration of the debate led to the conclusion that the relationship between the public realm (as a political idea, or even ideal) and actual public space (as it is the object of architectural intervention) cannot be defined in clear lines, a toolbox of interventions, a matrix of architectural figures. The question thus is what Arendt's concepts of plurality and action offer in this respect. How can we think about – if not understand – the relationship between architecture and the public realm, or how to imagine the relationship between architecture and the political?

Arendt most clearly has introduced the concepts of plurality and action in *The Human Condition*, where, as Baird states, they appear to be interrelated. Plurality amongst human beings is revealed through action. To state it briefly, Arendt is very concerned about the possibilities of action within modern concepts of society and bureaucracy. In the background of this concern of course is her previous study to totalitarianism, a completely new form of organizing society according to her. Within totalitarian political systems there is no room for action, nor plurality, as we will see. The book in which she presented her reflections upon this new form of political organization, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, can obviously be seen as a reflection upon her own experiences as a Jew in Germany, prior to World War II.¹¹³ It came to her somehow as a shock, but she not only had to reflect upon Nazism, but also upon Stalinism, the political system of the Soviet Union, in which she also recognized parallels of totalitarianism. As a following up upon that recognition, Arendt started to thoroughly investigate Karl Marx' theory of labor and capitalism, upon which, as is well known, Stalinism was built. During her close reading of Marx, Arendt however recognized two other modes of human activity on earth besides labor, work and action, that were overlooked largely, not only in Marx's perspective, but within the whole tradition of Western philosophy since medieval times. Philosophy moreover overlooked all these three forms of activity, celebrating contemplation as the ultimate form of 'the good life', to state it with Aristotle. In *The Human Condition* Arendt therefore articulates these 'other' activities and their essential characteristics, as she also investigates the labor-perspective. The differences between the three forms of activity are decisive, Arendt insists. Labor, she states, is the very earth-bound image of the human activities. Its aim is to fulfill the needs and necessities that burden the human existence upon earth. Labor is driven by the biological needs of the human being, the need to survive. Work distinguishes itself from labor: it is the creation of a durable place on earth for the human being. It is not simply 'surviving', but it establishes the permanence of the world, furnishing it with things and produce that last. Finally, action is bound to all political life – it is the capacity to be engaged in a common world through words and deeds.¹¹⁴ These activities are bound to different realms of human life: labor to the cycle of nature and survival, work to the durability of culture, and action to the establishment of a political community. As we will see in the next chapter, there is an important connection between work and action, between culture and the political community. At this point, however, we need to trace the differences between labor and action, particularly since it is the labor-perspective that threatens the very character of plurality that is bound to the public realm. The critique Arendt develops by emphasising these distinguished praxes of the human being is that perspectives limited to one

of these fail to understand these praxes within the right realm, and therefore also fail to understand essential characteristics of the human condition.

That also is what Arendt developed as a critique of Marx. As is well known of Marx, with his emphasis on corruption, he is challenging the very structure of society. The prosperity gained through the effort of all in the capitalist system certainly is not the prosperity of all. The capitalist system is corrupt: the labor offered of the laborer benefits the elite of owners rather than helping the laborer. Structures in society thus needs to be revolutionized – power to the laborer. In other words, this perspective positions the laborer against the owner, everyday man against the elite. In her investigation, however, Arendt blames Marx first for a lack of understanding of the differences amongst all people, not only between classes, but between all individuals, and secondly of an inability to step back from the economical perspective. Arendt, in her attempt tries to go beyond these limiting perspectives. Her main critique is that in a solely labor-perspective everything is similar. The activity of labor is bound to the biological sphere, to the earth and its circular economy. It is urged by everyday needs. Although it produces products, these are products understood within this cycle of needs: they are meant for consumption. Through the labor-perspective human beings are understood as species sharing the *same* needs and interests, as well as offering the *same* capacities to society (namely: labor). The singular human being is brought back to a person that is alike others. There is no plurality amongst men: there only is the *animal laborans*, who needs to labor in order to live and to fulfil the necessities of life. According to Arendt this perspective leads towards an understanding of the human being as being part of mankind, the body of man, a part in a larger construct, one big family. The human community is brought back to a society based on kinship, in which the individual members are seen as the members of a family at large. The members of that family share the same interests, opinions, prospects, which together are expected to contribute to the prosperity of the family as a whole. In other words, the prosperity of society thus strongly emphasized as the very prosperity of every member of that society. Arendt regards this view as a misfit between the particular activity on the one hand and the realm in which it is employed on the other. Labor is bound to the private: it is bound to the body. Labor urges the public as the body of man, whereas action stresses the image of men in plural. It is the replacement of the public realm by the realm of the social, plurality replaced by similarity.

This emphasis on society and its members, which are depicted in their similarity, threatens the possibility to be distinct within the public realm. This certainly is one of the difficulties in totalitarian systems. To differ in view, in outlook, in ambition, in aim, in interest simply is impossible within the totalitarian view, as it is within the view of the public as a family at large. Differences cannot be allowed to appear. Arendt discovered in her investigation into totalitarian systems that this prompts questions about public space. In the last chapters, Arendt proposes this perspective, which she takes up again in *The Human Condition*. ‘Totalitarianism has no spatial topology’, the Turkish-American political philosopher Seyla Benhabib summarizes. ‘It is like an iron band, compressing people increasingly together until they are formed into one.’¹¹⁵ The single labor-view, in other words, threatens the possibility of a public space, where one can appear in words and deed – those two together are at the heart of Arendt’s concept of action – amongst others. Words and deeds reveal differences between the actors and speakers. These differences are not simply caused by different genes that offers variation to the human species, but are grounded in the very experiences of the human individual, in his narrative of life. Although science has

115.

Seyla Benhabib, ‘Models of Public Space. Hannah Arendt, The Liberal Tradition and Jürgen Habermas’, in: Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT press, 1992), 77

116.

This is a major perspective that offers an extensive critique upon the heavily planned spaces of Theme parks and Shopping Malls, in which every square meter are designed in order to gain money in increase the profit of the owners. Their lack of public space is not (only) that they are not really accessible, nor that one cannot (or are not allowed to) demonstrate within these spaces, but since they are dominated by one theme, one aim, one structure, and prescribe the experience one should have quite secure. Visitors are not allowed to have other experiences. Everyone is expected to have the same experience (and being content with that).

117.

cf Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 45

118.

Ibid., 58

proven that genes are important too in respect to the differences between human beings, it is the nurtured condition of the human being that is really distinctive, Arendt argues. Despite differences in DNA, biologically the human being is fundamentally the same as we have seen previously. The differences that prescribe how we act and speak are evoked by the narrative of our lives. Each human inhabits a particular view, based on previous experiences, education, convictions and so on. Words and deeds thus are crucial in establishing plurality, as vice-versa, action always reveals differences rather than similarity. Plurality, once again, is the very condition of the public realm. For Arendt this plural outlook that is revealed through action is crucial. The end of the 'commonly shared world', she warns, has arrived when it is reduced to a single perspective and a single aspect.¹¹⁶ As we will see in a few moments, the reality of the world, that is in common for all, can only be established through plural perspectives on that world.

Arendt does not only present this limiting of perspectives as a threat to the political systems of the past, she also emphasizes it as the very problem of modern social sciences, particularly the economic sciences. As is clearly the case, these sciences impact today's political (democratic and bureaucratic) systems extensively, as well as on our everyday environment as we have seen previously. Economic, social, psychological studies are used as tools to define the government and its assets, the lay-out of the social realm, the 'design' of public amenities. All human beings are alike: consumers in need of consumer goods. Or voting masses. Or the mass. Or yuppies, hipsters, youngsters, or take all the categories that are used in statistics, planning, urban sociology, psychology, or other scientific fields and politics to predict what will happen in society and forecast the behavior of people. This reduction of multiple human beings – or groups of human beings – into the human body not only is preferable to those in power, but also enables the scientist to quantify needs and predict behavior, the politician to develop policies, the entrepreneur marketing, and the brand to pitch consumer goods.¹¹⁷ Such reductions of the single human being into 'a human body' however can turn quite repressive. What is different must be excluded. It disturbs the profitability of the shared outlook. Labor leads to behaviorism, Arendt therefore states, to predictability and stability. This is specifically why it is so tempting for all political systems, and particularly to the totalitarian approaches. But this is also why it, as a model, is rejected by Arendt. If behavior is the norm, action is impossible.

Within economic principles, which are a particular case addressed by Arendt, a generic viewpoint covers society, in which deviations and differences are problems too. Economic principles after all are only concerned with the shared need to survive, the shared need of prosperity, the shared need of peace and welfare. In economic perspectives man is not seldom approached as 'merely' a consumer, a being that can be regulated through economic principles. People are expected to behave, and in their spare time to be entertained, absorbed in the bubble of economic goods, while losing sight of engagement in the world. In the end, when the public is understood as consumers, this public has lost its specific plurality. The differences between people vanish in this economic perspective, as long as the people go shopping, and enjoy it, as long as they follow the pattern of consumption, and continuously buy new stuff (that is expected to comfort them). Within the consumer-society, she argues, people have become solitary individuals, prisoners of their own subjective experience – even if others can have the exact same experience.¹¹⁸

Arendt thus understood the increasing importance of economic principles in the Western societies as a curtailment of ‘man in the plural’, and this becomes visible in space – indeed, specifically in those spaces that appear in the book of Michael Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park*. Understood from this perspective, the shopping mall might be one of these everyday places that at first sight is stripped of its possibility to offer a space of appearance by the very use of architecture. In their planning and organization, their design and construction, one thing prevails: the treatment of the visitor as consumer. As Robert Bellah emphasized – and we touched upon this perspective previously – the moment you enter a shopping-mall, your (world)view is shaped – and this is what our common cultural experience in the end seems to be. Bellah in his article is quite pessimistic on the possibility to adjoin this extensive cultural influence with counter narratives, which in turn can critique the prevailing and determining worldview.¹¹⁹ In the Mall, the Theme Park, the Historic District, and so on, despite the effort of the designer and planner to offer outspoken, thrilling, tempting experiences, in all of these instances one perspective prevails: the economic. ‘Once the city is imaged by capital solely as spectacle, it can then only be consumed passively, rather than actively created by the populace at large through political participation.’¹²⁰

Regarding the relationship between the public realm and architecture, we might argue that this emphasis on plurality and action also has something to offer regarding concrete public spaces. As Arendt argued, the public realm has lost its power to enlighten the ‘commonly shared world’ the very moment it is reduced to a single viewpoint. Based on that viewpoint, we might conclude that within spaces that are structured along the lines of such a ‘single viewpoint’, to appear amongst others in words and deeds is rather difficult – more difficult than in spaces where multiple viewpoints are possible. Such spaces dominated by a single outlook are increasingly important in today’s life – we touched upon them extensively already: the mall, with its emphasis on consumerism, the theme park, with its emphasis on entertainment, and the gated community, with its emphasis on the secured private paradise, and so on. In other words, the very lay-out of space, how it is ordered, structured, connected in a network, designed, certainly contributes to the possibilities of action: it increases the possibilities or, on the contrary, it can limit these possibilities.

5.2.2 *The Condition of All Political Life*

Action, according to Arendt, is the activity that distinguishes between people. It changes the perspectives upon the human being from being an *animal laborans* towards being a *zōon politikon*.¹²¹ Arendt introduces ‘action’ in *The Human Condition* as follows:

‘Action, the only activity that goes directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on earth and inhabit the world. While all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically *the condition* – not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam* – of all political life.’¹²²

At least four aspects mentioned in this introduction of the notion are important in our aim to reflect upon the architecture of public space. First is of course the fundamental condition of plurality as the basis of political life. It is important to

119. Robert Bellah, ‘Is There a Common American Culture?’, http://www.robertbellah.com/articles_6.htm [accessed May 16, 2014]

120. David Harvey, ‘The Political Economy of Public Space’, in: Setha Low and Neil Smith, Neil (eds.), *The Politics of Public Space* (New York, Routledge, 2006), 31

121. cf Aristotle’s description of the human being as a *zōon politikon*: ‘Among the animals, a human being is uniquely a *zōon politikon*, a creature of political relations.’ Elizabeth Young-Breuhl, *Why Arendt Matters* (New Haven, Yale University Press 2006), 81

122. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7 [emphasis in original]

123.

Arendt understands the second story of the creation in Genesis as an important correction of the first. In the first we are told God created man (*Adam*), in the second that 'man and women He created *them*.' Whereas Jesus refers to the second one, Paul refers to the first. Paul, she insists, is focussed on salvation, Jesus on action. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 8; It has to be said that in the book of Hebrew, that previously was described to Paul as well (which today is questioned), another image of 'belief' comes to the fore as well. Particularly in chapter 11, the famous passage on the substance of belief, belief is presented in a way similar as Arendt presents 'action' in the later parts of *The Human Condition*. Arendt argues that courage is needed in order to act, since acting opens the possibility of the unexpected, the unpredicted and the unforeseen. The writer of Hebrew argues that it is through 'belief' that people start acting, and that unbelievable happenings happen.

124.

Ibid., 175

125.

Ibid., 26

126.

Ibid., 7 [emphasis in original]

127

Ibid., 176

128.

Ibid., 41

have this perspective continuously in mind. For Arendt politics is always linked to the plurality of mankind. As touched upon above, mankind is understood as a single body, as Man, like Arendt calls it in this quote. Arendt fiercely rejects that perspective as a false conception of common life. According to Arendt only men live on earth – plural in pluralism, as well as plural in unpredictability.¹²³ The image of mankind as a single body has been tempting, since it is imagined as predictable and accountable. Arendt, however, urges the unpredictability of political life and the plurality of men. It is this plural condition that requires political life.

The very character of this pluralism is the second aspect we need to address. As already touched upon above, this plurality is not diversity per se. It is not bound to the biology of the human being, to nature, but to nurture. Nevertheless, Arendt insists that, although the condition of public life is pluralism, this public life can only take place between 'equals'. 'If men were not equal,' Arendt writes, 'they could neither understand each other and those who come before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them.'¹²⁴ We need to be sufficiently alike in order to be able communicate. Arendt actually strongly emphasizes both the aspect of equality as well as of pluralism in regard to the public realm. Only in a space that offers room for pluralism amongst equals can politics rise. In such a space there is room for words and deeds, for critique and arguments, for questions and debates. This is the ultimate view of the space of appearance according to Arendt: the appearance amongst peers in order to convince, to exchange, and to persuade through action and speech. The words and deeds reveal the differences. In such a space, the only thing that cannot be permitted is violence. Violence after all immediately destroys the public sphere by introducing inequality: it means the performance of a power relationship, in which people are not equals.¹²⁵ Therefore it is only through words and deeds, through action and speech that we appear amongst peers *equally* yet simultaneously distinctive. On the other hand, the political realm would make no sense if there were no differences. Action would be unnecessary if we were all the same, 'endlessly reproducible repetition of the same model, who's nature or essence was the same for all and as predictable as the nature or essence of any other thing.'¹²⁶ In such a condition of sameness, *behavior* would be sufficient, Arendt argues. 'Speech would not be needed, nor action, 'to make themselves understood.'¹²⁷ For Arendt, moreover, this action and speech is not simply the heart of political life, it also is its aim. This is an important perspective: politics after all often is valued because of its political aims. It is understood as an instrument to reach another goal. Arendt, however, the end of action and speech is to disclose the human being itself – and with that establishing again and again the plurality of men.

This brings us to our third aspect: the 'un-mediated' aspect of pluralism. Today, pluralism is often understood to mean diversity: visual distinctiveness which is articulated, enhanced, upheld and confirmed by personal decision. How we dress, what we buy, where we eat, where we go underline our personal choices – and for some these aspects even underline their individual distinctiveness. In other words, how we appear in public *visually* reveals something of who we are, or better said: how we would like to be seen by others. At a closer look, these differences are mediated by representation, but the things that on the one hand underline our own 'personality' also stress not so much individual differences as group sameness. Certain groups attend particular coffee bars, others go to a skate ramp, some wear headscarves, others wear caps. These visible 'differences' can often be brought back to individual choices,¹²⁸ particular lifestyles, or are roused by religious beliefs, national pride, a love of sport, sexual preferences,

and so on – often they are even commercially boosted. This however does not match with Arendt’s understanding of plurality. These differences after all are not be a matter of human beings appearing among equals in words and deeds, but hiding oneself behind the mask of a prescribed identity. Arendt would call these differences, as they appear to be the distinction between recognizable groups, the ‘social realm’. The articulation of differences through ‘styles’, one can argue, hide both the fundamental equality of human beings and plurality of men out of sight. Arendt therefore urges a different understanding of plurality. What really makes a difference, Arendt urges, is communicated without means and medium: plurality unfolds while the human being appears in public *through action and speech*. It is beyond our control, she states. ‘In addition to the urge toward self-display by which living things fit themselves into a world of appearances, men also present themselves in deed and word and thus indicate how they wish to appear, what in their opinion is fit to be seen and what is not. This element of deliberate choice in what to show and what to hide seems specifically human. Up to a point we can choose how to appear to others and this appearance is by no means the outward manifestation of an inner dispositions; if it were, we probably would all act and speak alike. Distinction and individuation occur through speech, the use of verbs and nouns, and these are not products or “symbols” of the soul but of the mind.’¹²⁹ In other words, the distinctiveness of human beings is not just a matter of mere otherness. Words and deeds themselves are not grounded in and highly affected by one’s biology, but in one’s biography. Where we are born, how we are raised, what we have experienced – all of this affects the way we act and speak, which initiatives we take, how we react and respond to what happens around us.¹³⁰

The final aspect we need to stress at this point is that Arendt immediately situates action and speech in the *world*. Biologically the human being lives on earth, but as far as we make a living on the globe, occupy a place for ourselves, and create societies in which we can live together – as men – we turn this globe into a shared world. In other words, the activity of labor is bound to the earth and its inherent cycle. Work, in turn, transforms the earth into a world – and particular to this world is that it is shared with others, as it is both the location and the object of action. As far as he lives in the world, the human being is fundamentally a being living together with others, able to communicate, and to set up political life. In turn, this political life particularly means being engaged in a shared, common world.¹³¹ If the aim of political life is action and speech itself, which reveals the actor itself, than it is to disclose this unique identity in close relation to the world-in-common.¹³²

These aspects thus offer a fourfold reflection upon the condition of political life: it is evoked through the (1) plural appearance of human beings amongst (2) peers through action and speech, that is (3) un-mediated. It is the (4) world that offers the space of appearance, the stage as well as the object of action and space. Although in the next chapter we will focus on the activity of work, at this point we can already state that architecture essentially can be seen as interventions that turn the earth into a world – moreover, into a world-in-common. This world-in-common in Arendt’s view is essential to the public realm. Action and speech are bound to the world: it is a form of being engaged with the world. To appear through words and deeds means not only to live on earth, but also to inhabit the world. Action and speech, in other words, are not simple abstract terms, regarding a meta-level of political life, but are bound to the immediate environment, the very world, of the actor (and spectator).

129. Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 34

130. cf. Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press), 87: ‘Action is quite different from behavior, which is repetitive and habitual, showing what people have become, not who they can become in the performance of action, which forces them to rise to an occasion.’

131. To stress this aspect of the human being actually is not only a critique to Marx, but also has to be seen as a response to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. For Heidegger, the world is depicted by the hustle and bustle of events and actualities, which are intrinsic to the life and plurality of mankind on earth. Heidegger stresses the need to be detached from the world, since all its events and happenings might disturb or distract the authenticity of *being*. Only in solitude, withdrawn from the world, the self would reveal. Arendt replaces that view by her statement that the self only will be revealed through action and speech in the world, thus through engagement with the hustle and bustle that is bound to mankind.

132. cf. Holmquist, ‘Towards an Ethical Technique,’ 20

133.

Matthew 6:1-3 'When you do good deeds, don't try to show off. If you do, you won't get a reward from your Father in heaven. When you give to the poor, don't blow a loud horn. That's what show-offs do in the meeting places and on the street corners, because they are always looking for praise. I can assure you that they already have their reward. When you give to the poor, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.'

134.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 77

135.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 77; Arendt quotes from Machiavelli's book *The Prince*.

136.

Holmquist, 'Towards an Ethical Technique,' 20

137.

I was reminded to this aspect of Arendt's notion of action by George Baird, particularly when he introduces Bonnie Honig in his book *Public Space*. Honig comes to Arendt via Nietzsche, he states, which is why Honig emphasizes other aspect of Arendt's writings than those coming from, for instance, Heidegger. I follow here Baird's reading of Bonnie Honig in: Baird, *Public Space*, 32-33

138.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 36

5.2.3 Startling Unexpectedness

Although this image stresses a public and meaningful conversation, in which all perspectives are being heard and positions being seen, and in which the capacity to persuade is central, it might be that this perspective evokes less the toughness of the public realm. In Arendt's perspective, action and speech are not 'toothless' – the public realm offers room for conflict and danger. The condition of plurality, which is the very condition of all political life, essentially is one of conflicting perspectives, of unpredictability and challenge. To appear in public, therefore, is never an easy activity. It might be a painful, rather than a calm, heart-warming or confirming experience. Action always reveals differences, as it also disturbs the quiet, calm and comfort that are bound to the private and social. Action by definition is different and dangerous with its characteristics of unpredictability, instability, and unexpectedness. In her writings Arendt strongly emphasizes these aspects of *unpredictability* and *unexpectedness* of action. Every act is fundamentally open, is a risky business, the outcomes of which can never be predicted or forecast.

This perspective is tangible for instance in Arendt's rejection of goodness as the aim of action and speech. The public realm offers room for 'heroic deeds' and remarkable words, which is not simply just meeting each other, presenting a particular perspective, or publicly doing something good (for the world). Arendt even goes so far as to join Machiavelli by rejecting the aim of goodness as the goal of public life. 'Goodness,' she concludes from a stunning passage on the famous quote of Jesus that goodness should always be hidden in order to be protected from corruption,¹³³ 'is not only impossible within the confines of the public realm, it is even destructive of it.'¹³⁴ Arendt then refers to Machiavelli. 'Nobody perhaps has been more sharply aware of this ruinous quality of doing good than Machiavelli, who in a famous passage, dared to teach men "how not to be good." Needless to add, he did not say and did not mean that men must be taught how to be bad; the criminal act, though for other reasons, must also flee beings seen and heard by others. Machiavelli's criterion for political action was glory, the same as in classical antiquity, and badness can no more shine in glory than goodness. Therefore all methods by which "one may indeed gain power, but not glory" are bad.'¹³⁵ The public space thus is not a space where people can do good, it's a place where people can do heroic deeds and speak remarkable words amongst others. In other words, action and speech does create public realm in which to appear in close relation with prior appearances – in close relation to the 'highest human qualities and principles'.¹³⁶

Machiavelli's daring perspective on politics is very important in Arendt's image, as the American Political theorist Bonnie Honig has argued.¹³⁷ Honig stresses 'speech' as the opposite of 'war' in the spectrum of human action. Since 'war' cannot be part of the public realm, as we have seen above, (violence introduces inequality in public space), speech has to deal with the inherent controversies of the distinctive perspectives, aims and claims. But as the actor is involved in his action, is revealed through the way he acts and speaks, this is not to be seen as an easy conversation. For Arendt, conversation – the activity of speech – is related to action. Speech reveals action. Action and speech, even if they cannot include violence in public space, then is always on the cutting edge, since the actor himself is involved in the action. Honig therefore proposes the public realm as an agonistic space. Appearance in public space, Arendt stresses, requires courage.¹³⁸ For Bonig this is a critical perspective upon all political approaches that immediately diminish the dimensions of conflict within the

public realm. 'For the sake of the "who" they might become,' she writes, 'Arendt's actors risk the dangers of the radically contingent public realm where anything can happen, where the consequences of action are "boundless", uncontrollable, irreversible and unpredictable.'¹³⁹

Arendt thus presents action as a risky business: one can start something, but not predict what the outcome might be. One does not know how action is received, acknowledged and eventually accepted, and how others will react. Totalitarian regimes as well as bureaucratic organizations have difficulties with this aspect of action, as we will see. With these perspectives in background, Arendt highly values this aspect of unpredictability. Action is not mere reaction to what happens. On the contrary: it has the potential of something unpredictable and 'new' in it, of something that cannot be singled out beforehand. Human beings, Arendt emphasises, have the capacity to start something anew. As Arendt argues, the capacity to take initiatives, that is to start things unknown and uncertain, is a particular and important human capacity. It is this capacity that offers the possibility of change, of renewal and improvement. This capacity thus also provides the 'hope' for a different, not to say 'better' future. Life, not only that of the individual, but also of the community, is not predicted and pre-scripted, but open for change and chance. According to Arendt, this capacity is rooted in the fundamental natality of human beings, the fact of being born. This emphasis, which evokes a hopeful perspective, turns Heidegger's perspective upside down, since he builds his perspective narrative upon what he called the fundamental *Existenz zum Tode* of the human being, *Being unto Death*. Arendt's change of perspective and emphasis on natality, brings the aspect of hope back into her view of the world.¹⁴⁰ When everything boils down to this *Being unto Death*, everything is burdened by finality. Arendt's perspective, on the other hand, is drenched in the possibility of the new. For Arendt every birth is the possibility of change, an opportunity of differences, a potential 'newness' for the world.¹⁴¹

We therefore can qualify action and speech as 'open' activities, a term that rightly resonates with some of the reflections on the arts and writings from the sixties and seventies – particularly to the theory of the 'open work' by Umberto Eco.¹⁴² As he has argued in written texts, they are to be seen as open: they can be read in infinite ways, which depend upon the reader and what he or she brings to the table. The writer cannot grasp all these layers hidden in the text, nor can the reader. Something also happens with action and speech. To start with, action cannot stand 'alone', in the wide open. It does not make sense if nobody can see and listen. Arendt even argues that what does not appear in public simply does not exist. In the case of 'action', this particularly means that action which does not gain responses does not have any effect. It simply whispers away without causing any chain of action and reaction. However, this chain of responses can be neither controlled nor pre-scripted. It is an open process, which depends upon the responses of other peers. It evolves through the particular actions of actors and peers, it thus stands or falls with their interpretation and experiences of previous actions.

Action can only impact the world if there is room for re-action and inter-action. That, for Arendt, is the problem of world-alienation. It not only does reject the value of the world that is common, as I will discuss in the next Chapter, it also reduces the opportunities to act, to initiate, and to inter-act. However, to stand up, to appear to the world, to act and speak, is also losing control: it is not clear beforehand in which direction the actions and responses will evolve. 'This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and all

139.

Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993), 80. I quote here via Baird, *Public Space*, 33

140.

Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger, Between Good and Evil* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London, 1998), 383

141.

"The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, "natural" ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human affairs faith and hope, those two essential characteristics of human existence which Greek antiquity ignored altogether, discounting the keeping of faith as a very uncommon and not too important virtue and counting hope among the evils of illusion in Pandora's box. It is this faith in and hope for the world that perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced their "glad tidings": "A child has been born unto us." Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 247

142.

Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1989)

143.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 178

144.
Ibid., 178

145.
Yell in the campaign of Barack Obama running for president in 2008. See this reflection of him on the story behind this yell, on a rally for Hillary Clinton on the day before election day in 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AhRqgoADbk> [visited November 9th, 2016]. 'One voice can change the room. And if it can change a room, it can change a city. And if it can change a city, it can change a state. And if it can change a state, it can change a nation. And if it can change a nation, it can change the world.'

146.
Hertzberger, *Architectuur en structuralism*, 213 [translation HT]

origins.¹⁴³ The future is open, at that point. In this openness acting and speaking also take initiative. Action is active, we might argue – it is not a passive following of the regular directions. We have to distance ourselves from 'behavior', in order to seek new ventures, new paths to follow. Action is starting, starting anew, moving, not alone, but in a way that others can apply, add their perspectives. Action essentially is never finished: responses are needed and can't be controlled. Arendt stresses that as the very hopeful aspect of action: 'The fact that man is capable of actions means that the unexpected can be expected.'¹⁴⁴ So is every act also the opportunity of a new and distinct future that cannot yet be foreseen. Every voice can change a mind.
'Fired up? Ready to go!'¹⁴⁵

Arendt is quite aware that this aspect of action also immediately leads to an inherent instability in the public realm. For Arendt action therefore is always a venture that needs protection. The history of mankind again and again shows the anxiety towards the ability of human action, towards this instability and unpredictability. Action always has the potential of gaining collective acknowledgment, which is the very basis of a revolution against those in power. Action and its responses also stress the very diversity of the public realm, which is a difficult aspect of society in respect to a bureaucratic government. Political power often combined with military power is used to diminish this aspect of unpredictability – today we can argue that not only political power is at stake, but commercial power is used to diminish the aspect of unpredictability in the public space. In other words, public space is always a threatened space, since most 'power systems', be it political or commercial, can't deal with the indissoluble characteristic of unpredictability and instability.

We can allow at least two brief and preliminary thoughts at this point regarding architecture. The image of the public realm as a quiet conversation about all-things-that-matter is simply a wrong impression. The public realm is harsh, exhausting – it is a realm of struggle between conflicting interests. The world, however, in which this struggle is engaged, is a world-in-common. Action and speech, although revealing the plural interests and conflicts, are always bound to this world-in-common, as we have seen before. The awareness of inhabiting-a-world-in-common offers room for action as contributing to this world. The public realm, despite its inherent conflicts, is fundamentally an open-work. It is open to intervention, as long as it is the outcome of action (and re-action). This once again urges the plural image of public space: not being defined by a single narrative. The single narrative after all does not offer room for the unpredictability of action (since it disturbs the very aim of these spaces, as we have seen previously), but also since these single narratives are closed systems. There is no room for the users – the public – to appropriate, inhabit and contribute to the space. This once again requires a certain ambiguity or openness of public space, as we have touched upon already. The public can only occupy, appropriate and contribute to that public space if these spaces allow them to inhabit their own positions, preferences, perspective in space. This of course is a lesson for architects, as the architect Herman Hertzberger posits when he states that architects have to 'detox' from the idea that 'what he makes only is his exclusive creation.'¹⁴⁶ The design (and the construction) of a building only is the start of the new, the largely unexpected future of appropriation and change.

5.2.4 *The Virtual Sphere of Inter-Action*

We now have described the first outlines of Arendt's image of action and how it is related to the public realm. It is at this point that we need to compare Arendt's perspective with the image of the public sphere as described by Jürgen Habermas. Through this comparison a few other aspects of Arendt's image of the public realm will be enlightened. In architectural and urban theory their views are often taken as one.¹⁴⁷ Close reading of both concepts, however, will reveal differences on essential aspects. And since particularly Habermas's view has triggered the debate on public space in architectural and urban theory (although this is not always clearly stated), it is valuable to stress these differences at this point. It will offer some other points of departure to rethink public space in the contemporary circumstances.

Not only are Arendt's and Habermas's sources different, but also the images and aims they propose put forward distinctive aspects. A brief remark is needed at this point: by comparing both concepts, it is clear that we push the limits of the distinctive aspects of both concepts, rather than stressing their similarities. Although pushing the limits and focusing on Arendt's perspective, this is not meant to dismiss the image Habermas' provides. His perspective is valuable, as it has been in the past. However, Arendt's perspective, we will see, offers a different way to understand the relationship between public space as the object of architecture and the public realm as the political perspective bound to public space. The aim of this comparison, in other words, is to clarify the debate and to discuss the possible expectations of public space. The similarities of Arendt's and Habermas's thinking nevertheless are evident: their views are both rooted in Western-European cultural thinking. Or to be more precise, they are evoked through their German perspective, easily accessing and discussing the philosophical writings, concepts and reflections of a variety of German philosophers. The differences in their view are evoked in a different reading of this German context. Habermas positions himself as member of the *Frankfurter Schule* in the Marxist tradition, while Arendt, as we have seen, distances herself from Marx. Arendt is much more in conversation with the Classical strain of philosophy and in its wake also the German 'Grand Masters of philosophy' Immanuel Kant, Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, with a twist of Friedrich Nietzsche.

According to the political philosopher Seyla Benhabib, upon who we touched previously, Habermas' *Strukturwandel* is indebted to Arendt's *Human Condition* and her emphasis on public space. The *Strukturwandel* was published four years later than the publication of *The Human Condition*, which was not yet translated into the German language at that very moment. It nevertheless did reach Habermas: there is one brief reference to the book in the first chapter. Habermas and Arendt dwell upon the changing private sphere as a thriving force beyond the rise of the public sphere (Habermas) or as, quite on the contrary, a threat to the public realm (Arendt) in the modern age. Benhabib emphasises that the first pages of Habermas's *The Transformation of the Public Sphere* are to be understood as a (hidden) dialogue with Arendt. Within these pages Habermas (re) discovers public space and the public sphere as a central question of modernity, which he first brings into the German discourse. Secondly he connects this idea of the public sphere to different aspects of the activities of the human being on earth. This indeed seems to acknowledge the similarities in their approach to the theme. Arendt after all also develops her view accordingly: the public realm as crucial phenomenon in the modern era, as well as how the public realm is indebted to the human activities on earth.

147.

A clear example of this is Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain, Analysis and Strategy* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2001), 10-12

Note by the way that in contemporary views the distinction between the three societal spheres has become blurred or troublesome. One the one hand, the state has adopted the mechanism of the market as a way of dealing with the public, while vice versa the expectations by the public are highly influenced by a consumer-relationship to the government. The continuous troublesome relationship at least also comes to the fore in the recent governmental elections in the USA and Europe, where the gap between 'the street' and 'those there in Washington DC, London, Berlin, Paris, Madrid, The Hague, Brussels...' has become a theme of the campaigns. The tension between the sphere of the government and the public sphere gives rise to incomprehension: politics today often is seen as an extension of the public, a 'machine' to organise whatever the public wants. In other words, in the popular image of democracy, the distinction between the public sphere and the political realm has been neglected (or has become a one-way relationship: the public prescribes, politics organizes). This perspective has its shortcomings, particularly in the way it acknowledges minorities within the community. Already John Adams, Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill have discussed the backside of this image of (democratic) society, which they called 'the tyranny of the majority'.

There are nevertheless two important differences between their notions, which are related to their sources, certainly, but particularly to their definition of the human activities. Arendt distinguishes, as we have seen, between three activities: labor, work and action. Habermas, in turn, only distinguishes between two: labor and interaction. Habermas thus leaves the activity of work behind, and this is a crucial difference. In the next chapter, we will see how the concept of work offers an important perspective upon the relationship between architecture and the public realm. In this paragraph, since we are focussed on 'action' now as the activity bound to the public realm, we will investigate this second difference: Habermas's concept of inter-action. The differences between these two notions, 'action' versus 'inter-action', are remarkable, and influences the understanding of public space and its purpose. Obviously, Arendt's concept of action is much broader than Habermas's inter-action. Action after all requires and includes inter-action – as we have already seen above: action requires inter-action in order to evoke re-action. Action always needs speech that explains the action, it needs a public, and it needs responses in order to gain tangibility and to be effective. Effective action requires inter-action. Action, if it is to be meaningful, cannot be left unseen, unknown; it needs company. Action in Arendt's writings thus always pre-supposes the context of 'action in concert'. However, when we push the limits of these notions in order to grasp the differences, we will understand that Habermas's idea of the public sphere is much more impersonal and virtual than Arendt's concept. In our comparison, it is first important to see that Habermas's term is only loosely related to the actual space of the salon and coffeehouse, as it is only loosely related to the actual persons that gather in the salon and the coffeehouse in order to have a chat.^[IMAGE 5.15] As we have seen previously, this is the very image Habermas evokes, the bourgeois in the 18th and 19th century, gathering in particular spaces discussing actualities or literature. This 'looseness' of the relationship between what Habermas calls the public sphere and these meetings – the very space and the people gathering – is that this public sphere is not simply the singular meeting, but that it contains all meetings, debates, discussions on actualities in cafés, coffeehouses, salons and *Tischgesellschaften* together. The public sphere, in other words, consists of the accumulation of all meetings on the micro-level, but is mainly drawn and meaningful on the macro-level. This is an important perspective, since what Habermas celebrates in this public sphere is the inherent power of the public sphere on that macro-level, vis-à-vis the market and the state. The public sphere, in other words, plays its role in-between the spheres of the state and the market: neither coloured by government intervention nor susceptible to market forces.¹⁴⁸ The local meetings are important in so far as they contribute to and are absorbed by this meta-sphere. This distinction between the local and micro level on the one hand, and the macro level of the public sphere clarifies the relationship with the other two spheres that dominate society, the state and the market. These two of course are also to be seen as meta-spheres, which exists as localized practices, but together merge into a single societal sphere. This is an important perspective, which loads the public sphere with political importance. The twin spheres of government and market had to learn to relate to this new public sphere.¹⁴⁹ To my mind, this is the point where the struggle around the Western idea of democracy and reflections upon its vitality today comes in: the modern state only derives its legitimacy from this public sphere, namely from the extent to which the political project serves the collective pursuit that is made known through the public sphere. The public, after all, is only powerful if it can be brought back to a 'consensus on the common good', the 'public opinion'. The modern state, the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor

summarizes Habermas's point, only derives its legitimacy from this public sphere, namely from the extent to which the political project serves the collective pursuit, which is made known through the public sphere.¹⁵⁰

'Inter-action' as compared to 'action' thus emphasizes conversation, dialogue, discussion. This term is to be seen as the root of Habermas's concept of 'communicative action' that he coined later in his massive 1981 book *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*.¹⁵¹ Society consists of a network of interactions, the aim of which is to gain 'understanding' between the inhabitants. In this book Habermas distinguishes between several forms of inter-action, both on the level of the individual as well as on the level of society and politics. In the *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, prior to his 1981 investigation into communication, he already argues that the public sphere is devoted to communication, which in turn is shaped by the media.¹⁵² This perspective reveals how the media (the printed press) is fundamental to the public sphere. In order to gain the power that challenges both the government and the market, all public gatherings need to be informed about actualities. The 'right' information, shared with anybody else present, is essential to fuel the discussion. Only shared information leads to meaningful conversations, a shared level of entry, and a shared outlook on the world. Fundamental to the conversations in the 18th and 19th century salon and coffeehouses indeed was the then new printed media: the newspaper for the coffeehouse and the wider distribution and accessibility of books for the salon.¹⁵³ Habermas's public sphere, in other words, is particularly evoked by the rise of the printed press and other changes in the media. Note here that this 'public' is a particular group of citizens. As already stated, and Habermas admits that by calling this the 'bourgeois' public sphere, those attending the cafes, salons and coffeehouses were a wealthy group of citizens, rich enough to afford a newspaper and having spare time to visit the coffeehouse in order to meet with others. These 'bourgeois' were literate, well-educated citizens, eager to share their opinion to other literate and educated citizens.¹⁵⁴ In respect to their eagerness to deliver their opinion about actualities, the new media played a major role by informing them on the same level, offering subjects of conversation. The public gathers, whereas the media offers them a basis of conversation and interaction. The public sphere of Habermas, in other words, is based on reason – what joins the 'public' is their use of reason in order to form their opinion about actualities, and thus the ability to discuss, argue, and gain approval.¹⁵⁵ But since the public sphere is about the accumulation of all particular meetings, the new media evokes what we can call a 'virtual community of like minds', which in turn offers a 'public opinion'.¹⁵⁶ When defining the public sphere, it is immediately clear that this concept is virtual and intangible rather than spatial and tangible. It might be therefore questioned whether this model indeed helps us to define the relationship with architecture, challenged by the question of concrete public spaces and their inherent spatiality and tangibility. The image of the public sphere at least is quite far away from Arendt's concept of action, which, as became clear, is always bound to the world and thus cannot fade away into realms of virtual reality.

5.2.5 *The Public Sphere and the Realm of the Social*

The intertwining of media as the source of the conversations on the micro-level that serves the aims of the public sphere on the macro-level also demands a second important distinction from Arendt's concept of action. Unlike in Arendt's, in Habermas's concept it is not the meetings and appearances that are central, nor the action and reaction, but the outcome of these meetings, the result of

150.

Charles Taylor, *Moderniteit in meervoud, Cultuur, samenleving en sociale verbeelding* (Kampen/Kapellen: Uitgeverij Klement/Pelckmans, 2005), 97

151.

cf. Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2003), 199

152.

Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 16

153.

Ibid., 27

154.

Habermas stresses this point with a reference to the English Philosopher Edmund Burke: 'In a free country, everyman think he has a concern in all public matters; that he has a right to form and a right to deliver an opinion on them. They sift, examine, and discuss them. They are curious, eager, attentive and jealous; and by making such matters, the daily subjects of their thoughts and discoveries, vast numbers contract a very tolerable knowledge of them, and some a very considerable one.' Burke puts this eagerness to form an opinion and to intervene in public matters with those countries that are not free at all, and where the people thus do not have any incentive to participate. *Ibid.*, 94

155.

Ibid., 27, 51

156.

Ibid., 89-102

157.
Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 200

158.
Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 56

159.
Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 60

160.
Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen, The Life of a Jewess* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 85

161.
Ibid., 88

162.
Ibid., 244

163.
Ibid., 220

164.
Ibid., 176

interaction. Habermas's public sphere urges a purpose: to withstand the state and the market. With that aim, the conversations in these coffeehouses are immediately burdened with that aim: their aim was consensus and agreement which – accumulated – could be described as the 'public opinion'. It is this burden that shifts the focus from the very personal nature of appearance, which is central to Arendt's concept of action, to the very impersonality of the result that is the aim of Habermas's interaction. 'For Habermas,' as Benhabib writes, 'the public sphere is not just, or even principally, an arena of action but an impersonal media of communication, information, and opinion formation.'¹⁵⁷ Although Habermas himself evokes this image of a 'public opinion' as the 'fiction of the *one* public',¹⁵⁸ this aim of the public sphere nevertheless reveals how this idea does match with the characteristic of plurality, which Arendt argues as essential to the public realm. The public sphere that has the capacity to meaningfully challenge other societal spheres is after all necessarily to be seen as a unity.

As Arendt never responded directly to this thesis of Habermas, it is no surprise that Arendt's reading of the developments in the 18th century would be different. Arendt did not write about the cafes and coffeehouses, but discussed the Berlin salon in delightful tones. 'The charm of the early Berlin salons,' she writes in *The Origin of Totalitarianism*, 'was that nothing really mattered but personality and the uniqueness of character, talent, and expression.'¹⁵⁹ In this book the salon is just a minor point, but in her biography of Rahel Varnhagen, the Jewish organizer of a famous Berlin Salon at the end of the 18th century, it has a more significant role. Varnhagen, Arendt argues, suffered from her Jewishness. Only at the end of her life does she engage with it. 'The thing which all my life seemed to me the greatest shame, which was the misery and misfortune of my life – having been born a Jewess – this I should on no account now wish to have missed.'¹⁶⁰ Behind this quote is a longing for a full participation in society. However, Varnhagen was able to participate neither as a Jew, nor as a woman. She was left 'without weapons', Arendt states.¹⁶¹ As we touched upon previously, Arendt frames Varnhagen's turn at the end of her life – from the struggle to assimilate towards the engagement of her Jewishness – as the turn from a parvenue towards a pariah. To bear differences with pride. To assimilate, Arendt argues, was only possible at the cost of lying. Honesty and being-a-parvenue is a paradox.¹⁶² However, the salon Varnhagen organized, and which became significant in Berlin Culture, was one of her attempts to assimilate and participate in the world. Although this notion of the world, as we have already seen and we will discuss extensively later, in Arendt's terms is always the world-in-common, here she uses it differently. For Varnhagen, she writes, world means society, 'the world of those who were socially acknowledged.'¹⁶³ This of course already shows how much the eagerness to assimilate is not meant to be engaged in the world, but is about 'being-acknowledged-by' society or 'being-acknowledged-as' part of society. Furthermore, about this salon itself, Arendt argues that it was immediately affected by the Romantic spirit of the 18th century: it offered space 'in which the private things were given objectivity by being communicated, and in which public matters counted only insofar as they had private significance.'¹⁶⁴ Although Arendt does not use that specific term here, we might conclude from these remarks that Arendt rendered the salon to be a social realm. Although the attendees discussed all sorts of actualities and public affairs, she only understands it as private conversations. It is inter-action without action, it is a matter of private interests rather than engagement in the world. Even the 'charm' of the salon, as we touched upon above, is a matter of private profiling: the revealed personality and unique characteristics, which are longing for recognition, 'being-acknowledged-by' others. To be acknowledged by 'the

people of rank and name who represented something lasting and legitimate.¹⁶⁵ Although Arendt has written most of the book in 1933, she finished and published it only in 1956, two years prior to *The Human Condition*. It is in the final two chapters, which she wrote after the war, in which she argues this position of the pariah, certainly in recognition of her own position during the terrible period of Nazism in Germany and her flight to America. The war had not only disturbed her writing activities, but also redirected her points of attention and interest. However, since she was extensively reflecting upon Varnhagen, it is telling that the salon-meetings (and the meetings in cafes and coffeehouses) are absent in *The Human Condition*, the book in which Arendt sharpens her notion of public space. That Arendt does not write about the salon or coffeehouse as one of the public spaces in the modern age is not a matter of ‘overlooking’, since she is too focussed on the Classical examples of the agora and the forum, nor is it to be seen as an omission in her writings. Again this is to be seen as stressing the social character of the salon and coffeehouse. For Arendt the social realm is a realm of ‘society’, which stresses sameness and similarity rather than plurality. The coffeehouse and salon are such places stressing similarity: it gathers a particular literate public and it unites them through the reading of a single newspaper; people with about the same background, reading by the same newspaper. The salons and coffeehouses, in other words, were places where similar people could discuss their shared opinions, could propel and share their private interests.

This ‘reading public’ of the public sphere therefore is utterly different than the *zoon politikon* that Arendt put forward as the figure appearing in public. Arendt emphasizes the agora and the forum – admittedly, these were spaces for the elite too, however, Arendt renders public space as offering the opportunity for every citizen (in the modern meaning of the word) to participate in the ‘government of affairs’¹⁶⁶ – again and again as ‘spaces of appearance’ and action, where pluralism becomes tangible and people are engaged in the world. Habermas’ public sphere, once again, can be read as a sophisticated form of the social realm, organizing the counter forces for state and market, which in the end needs to cover ‘the public opinion’ – a single version of what ‘we’ might think of the things at hand. Habermas would agree with that perspective. He himself argues the public sphere, as we have seen, not as the realm of politics in itself, but as something in-between the public and the private. It challenges the realm of politics, as it also challenges the sphere of the market. ‘The political task of the bourgeois public sphere,’ he writes, ‘was the regulation of civil society (in contradistinction to the *res publica*).’¹⁶⁷

Arendt on the other hand celebrates the public realm as the political sphere, although she does not stretch that perspective to a macro (and virtual) level. Arendt’s concern is limited to the micro-scale of politics, to councils and town hall meetings, in which citizens appear to one another as equals, but nevertheless reveal through their acts and words their utter distinctness. Within this space of appearance, human beings appear in public, inter-act with one another, discuss the future, take note of one another, and (finally) re-act. According to Arendt, this is not in order to construct common opinions from the multitude of private interests and convictions. Quite on the contrary: the public realm – and all its inter-actions – reveals the utter plurality of mankind. Nothing more, nothing less. For Arendt, and that is the significance of the statement that the salon is a social space rather than a public space, the social is about sameness rather than differences. This clarifies why in Habermas’s perspective it quickly goes to the ‘outcome’ of the conversations, which urges the virtual character of the public sphere rather than the reality of actual meetings. For Arendt however, such

165.
Ibid., 220

166.
Richard H. King, *Arendt and America* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 221

167.
Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 52

an idea of an aim or outcome of (inter)action is highly problematic. Arendt's description of action, certainly in comparison with Habermas's interaction, remains local and personal. This is an important aspect of architecture as well. Although addressing 'the public' on different scales, the architectural project (of public space) is always local. It offers spaces to real people, to real uses, and to real gatherings, meetings, exchanges of ideas. Moreover, the format of the social realm, which gathers communities of like-minds, aligns with spaces that promote a single viewpoint, upon which we touched previously. This runs counter with Arendt's emphasis on the open and ambiguous space, in which every participant, appearing amongst peers, can take his own particular place.



5.16 Three iconic images of recent protests:

1. Lucy Myslikova, a 16-year-old girl Scout, standing up to a far-right skinhead, May 1st, 2017, Brno, Czech Republic
2. Ieshia Evans arrested during a black-livesmatter demonstration in Baton Rouge, LA, USA, July 9th, 2016
3. Markiyan Matsekh playing the piano during demonstrations on the Maidan Square in Kiev, Ukraine, January 2014



5.17 Peter Eisenman, *Aronoff Center for Design and Art*, Cincinnati, OH, USA, 1996



5.18 The Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center in 1949
(Raymond Hood, New York, NY, USA, 1929-1940)

5.3 ARCHITECTURE AND THE PUBLIC REALM. THE ESSENTIAL ASPECTS OF TANGIBILITY AND REALITY

5.3.1 *The Reality of Concerted Action*

In Arendt's emphasis on action as the very aim and activity of the public realm, the idea of a meta-level in which the outcomes of activities merge into a single perspective is suspicious from the very beginning. Her emphasis is on the importance of plurality, a theme that she discusses from many angles. This emphasis on plurality once again depends upon her understanding of action as the activity of public space. Arendt always comes back to this matter of actual doing, and resists the temptation to count all actions as a single (meta) power of the public.¹⁶⁸ In other words, because of her focus on action itself, on this localized and somehow tangible activity, Arendt is less tempted to simply acclaim 'the results' of all these actions acted in public in a single view. On the contrary, Arendt stresses the multi-dimensional and multi-perspectival views of the actors again and again. Arendt even is not focussed on the question of how a (political) institution can offer space for action and speech in a meaningful way, that is, in such a way that it also organizes contemporary society properly. Arendt thus strictly stays at the level of local action and speaking itself, of appearing in public, which does not lead to consensus but to the unfolding and the plurality of human beings. Even when asked about the political perspective, the aim of action and speaking, she still chooses metaphors in which the single participant is important (and is not tempted to speak about the common good or the common future, not even of living peacefully together).¹⁶⁹

Of course, for Arendt the aim of action is relevant too. Real political action, she states, is recognized and joined, it gains response, and only thereby will grow in power. If there is a powerful political movement that can resist the market or the state, if there ever will be a revolution, this can only occur when single action gains recognition, praise, endorsement and approval. 'You can only act in concert', Arendt stated in the conversation at the 1972 Toronto conference that we touched upon in the previous chapter.¹⁷⁰ That means, only groups of people will affect the world – only if there is a chain of action and reaction will something happen. We can argue that only 'concerted' action will be effective. The 'concert' as metaphor of meaningful action is a powerful image. It immediately reveals that in this political realm every single action counts, and every perspective is still tangible and sensible. All strings and horns, all voices and tones work together towards this 'gesamtkunstwerk', this total artwork – but all separate instruments are needed in order to create this overwhelming spectacle. To strive for consensus, we might argue, moves counter to this image of a concert. Consensus after all strives to mediate between the different voices in order to achieve the single perspective the political institutions can react to. Or to state it in terms of the concert: the strive to distil the 'public opinion' searches for a single tone that represents all. A concert, although it can sometimes reveal and articulate a single tone, always consists of polyphonic tonal contributions. It often bursts into a whole range of tones, which together are adjusted and tuned, or are in struggle with each other.

The metaphor of the concert reveals the plural character of action and re-action, although this image of course has its limitations. If we use the 'concert' to stress the role of the conductor, or the first violin, this is certainly beyond the point that Arendt argues. Concerted action is never orchestrated action – as Arendt states again and again. Action is unpredictable and cannot be prescribed, as we have already seen. One never knows beforehand how others will respond

168.

Arendt distinguishes between violence, force and power. As Seyla Benhabib summarizes: 'Violence can occur in private and in public, but its language is essentially private, because it is the language of pain. Force, like violence, can be located in both realms. In a way, it has no language, and nature remains its quintessential source. It moves without having to persuade or to hurt. Power, however, is the only force that emanates from action, and it comes from the mutual action of a group of human beings: once in action, one can make things happen, thus becoming a source of a different kind of force.' Benhabib, 'Models of Public Space', 78

169.

This certainly is the influence of the American context – particularly Montesquieu and Jefferson – on her Classical and German sources. cf King, *Arendt and America*, 91

170.

Hannah Arendt, 'On Hannah Arendt', in: Melvin A. Hill (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World* (New York, St. Martin's Press inc., 1979), 305; cf also Hannah Arendt, 'Civil Disobedience', in: Hannah Arendt, *Crisis of the Republic* (San Diego/New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1969), 55

to action. We can therefore better understand this ‘action in concert’ as a jazz performance, where the single actors can start new narratives, while others anticipate these changes in tone, direction, and composition. The new can only come into being if based upon knowledge of the music, of chords and rhythm. Only by playing it rightly and recognizably can the other actors in the play respond properly, and together create something new. This is what Arendt stresses as well. Action and re-action are never pre-scripted, she states. One cannot foresee the outcome of one’s actions. There can be an intended direction, but since one is dependent on the responses of others, as well as that these responses affect the very direction of the ‘action’ in process, the outcome of a single action cannot be foreseen. To evoke responses, there needs to be a shared object and concern. It can rightly be stated that concerted action does not require consensus, but surely does require *cohesion*, and *recognition* in order to gain response, engagement and care. Action cannot be recognized, nor re-acted to when the doer of deeds, the actor, and his public, his peers, are too different. There should be a ‘certain amount of convergence in interpretation,’ as Benhabib argues. And she continues with an important conclusion upon public spaces, when she states that it, from this perspective emerges ‘a space in which a collective becomes present to itself and recognizes itself through a shared interpretive repertoire.’¹⁷¹ We might argue – and that is what I will do in the next chapter – that public spaces and their architecture have the potentiality to offer this cohesion between the actor and his public. It might be clarifying to underline this aspect of the concert differently. Although the concert consists of polyphonous contribution, there is a limitation and a common ground. The limitation is in the use of instruments, which includes the voices as well as unexpected objects that can work as instrument, whereas the common ground is the music itself. The musicians together contribute with their particular tones to the concert, but in all their different voices and roles, they are in it together. This image indeed finds its echo in Arendt’s description of the public realm as a powerful stage for action. This ‘concert’ is brought back by Arendt to a local level. It is not the meta-level of meetings and exchanges that offer a polyphone outburst of voices, but the actual appearance amongst peers that forms the outline of the concert. Arendt only in the second instance comes up with recent ‘examples’ of the public realm – but these examples all direct to the local, the small, and the personal: the town-hall meetings that became part of the political system in the USA after the American Revolution, and the local councils that were organized in Hungary after the uprising of 1956 (and before it was crushed again by Russian intervention). It is worth stressing that it is the local instances that are concrete and tangible, relatively small, locally grounded and transparent. Only such instances offer the stage for a ‘concert to happen’. Something similar is stressed in *The Human Condition*. Arendt argues there that the public realm has its limitations, as is clearly the case in the original reference, the agora in the *polis*. Cities could not grow limitlessly; there is a need for a certain overview and common ground.¹⁷²

This of course opens ground for a possible meaning of architecture and contribution of the project of architecture in respect to public space. If action is bound to the world and particularly to local instances, architecture is a means to create room for these local instances to happen. It also, as we will see in the next chapter, immediately reveals the world as the inhabitants have it in common, not only with the contemporaries, but also with generations of the past and those who will occupy it in the future. Architecture, in other words, is essentially a tangible and durable ‘space’, in which local instances can happen. The outline of this space, the

171.
Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism*,
201

172.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*,
192-199

Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa, oder Vom tätigen Leben* (München/Zürich: Piper 2013), 251; The 1994 Dutch translation did choose the word 'plaats der ontmoeting', which actually means 'meeting place'. To my understanding, this is a rather weak translation. The emphasis in this description is less on the movement that precedes and that characterizes the meeting (coming into presence, revealing one another through action and speech) – it is on the meeting itself, which to me is a rather concealed and static description. Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa, Mens, bestaan, bestemming* (Amsterdam 1994, Uitgeverij Boom), 198

object of architecture, places the local instances in the world-in-common, as it also introduces the world-in-common within the perspective of those participating in the local instances, in this concerted action.

5.3.2 *The Spatiality of Appearances*

As can be derived from the previous reflections upon the characteristics of action and the public realm, this concept cannot be considered without spatial descriptions. As mentioned previously, Arendt bases her reflections on the public spaces in the Greek and Roman city-states. These classical models of public space have their limits, as Arendt acknowledges, but this reference, to which she comes back regularly, keeps her concept very spatial and tangible. Although the coffeehouse and salon – Habermas's references – certainly were concrete spaces too, Habermas's focus is not so much on these spaces, but rather on the media that allowed shared topics to be discussed. Whereas Habermas's interaction solely stresses speech (that is: a conversation about actualities as borrowed from shared media), Arendt stresses speech and action. (Habermas's) conversation of course needs a space of gathering (of people in conversation), but the speech itself does not appropriate any space. It is intangible, and remains intangible. Arendt's action, on the other hand, requires a space. Action, after all, is linked to the actor, to a human being and a human body. The human body requires space, it appropriates space, particularly when in movement (which certainly is the case in action). Besides that, much like speech it needs others who see, acknowledge and respond. This is the function of speech in Arendt's concept: it reveals action to others, it is in function of action. The actor needs to appear amongst others, as he also needs space to act. Action only makes sense amongst these peers – which, in turn, thus requires a space where peers can gather and actors can be seen and heard, and in turn, also perceive others appear through speech and action. To act thus requires a public space, where others can see and act accordingly. This being amongst others of course requires, a conversation. This conversation is not meant to create a shared viewpoint. Bound to the uncertainty of action and the unpredictability of the responses, the conversation includes (philosophical) reasoning and persuasion. By focussing on 'action' and speech, Arendt rejects the singular outcome that is beyond Habermas's ideal of the public sphere. Action, Arendt argues, is unpredictable. What comes out of it is uncertain. Action, for Arendt, is an end in itself.

Something of the difference between both concepts of the public sphere and the public realm can also be felt in the very term used to describe the phenomenon of the 'public domain', both in the German as in the English language. The translators of Habermas's text did choose for the more ephemeral description 'public sphere' as translation of the German *Öffentlichkeit* instead of the term 'public realm', as coined decades before by Arendt. Arendt had originally written her book in English, and had chosen to use 'public realm' or even 'public space', but when she translates her book into her mother tongue (she was a Jewish refugee from Germany, who had to flee her country prior to World War II), she does not use Habermas's term *Öffentlichkeit*, but *Öffentliche Raum* (the German word 'Raum' can be translated as room, enclosed space). It thus clearly emerges from Habermas's text that his use of the term 'public sphere' has to be taken in a more abstract and virtual sense than Arendt's image of the 'public realm', even more so since Arendt also replaces this word every now and then with the description 'space of appearance' (in German: *Erscheinungsraum*), which unmistakably underlines the spatial characteristics of what Arendt has in mind.¹⁷³ For

Arendt the public realm and its activity of action was bound to ‘appearance’, to appear to one another. Using a term like this even evokes *action*, movement,¹⁷⁴ people that *do* something – they appear in tangible ways.¹⁷⁵ Appearance, we might state, is always a matter of time and space.

Action, one can state, differs from sole inter-action since it is both *personal* and *spatial*. It is the difference between the letter to the editor and the actual talk, between a comment on *Facebook* and a real conversation on the street. ‘Action and speech,’ Arendt writes, ‘create a space between the participants, which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere. It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as they appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly.’¹⁷⁶ Action requires public space, although it is not bound to official and formal public space: it is locally grounded, it is where people meet, act, and inter-act (which we should better call re-act). In other words, the first distinction between Habermas’s inter-action and Arendt’s action, briefly stated, is that action is bound to concrete space in a much more tangible way. It is not dominated by the actualities that are offered by the media – from newspaper to *Facebook* – but by *what actually happens in space*, to the world. Action can only take places ‘out there’, so to say, in space, amongst peers. Although I am keen to distance Arendt from Habermas, it has to be said once again that her notion incorporates Habermas’s inter-action. It is nevertheless important for our perspective on public space that Arendt’s notion of action in at its core offers more implications for real space. Interaction can remain virtual, action can’t. Interaction can do with a virtual stage, action requires a real stage.

In our argument to push plurality forwards as the central notion of public space, we need to stress finally the ‘act’ of action itself. It is true that this act affects peers and maybe even the world, since it forces the peers to respond, and through that ‘action in concert’, it also slightly but surely changes the world. But in the doing itself, in action accompanied by speech, the differences between anybody living today, anyone who has ever lived, or who will live in the future is revealed. Action and speech are the vehicle through which the human being – as the doer of deeds and the teller of stories – appears in public, and by this appearance he is revealed (in bits and pieces) to the world. In speech and action, the agent is disclosed. ‘Speech and action,’ Arendt writes, ‘reveal this unique distinctness. Through them, men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; these are the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but *qua* men.’¹⁷⁷ What distinguishes the human being from other species, which of course have their variations and distinctions too, is that the human being is able to express his distinction himself, that he is able to distinguish himself through speech and action. He is not merely able to express ‘something’, like hunger, thirst, affection,¹⁷⁸ like other species that lack the capacity of language can, but that in his speech and action the speaker and the doer themselves are disclosed. When the plurality of the world unfolds through action and speech, this conversely means that words and deeds are the activities by which we actively reveal ourselves to others.

Action thus is a rich entry to the notion of public space. It is spatial, personal and historical not only as an activity, it also presses issues of ‘plurality’, ‘time and temporality’, and finally ‘reality’. Action by definition binds the human being to the tangible world, understood as the public realm, a space where one appears to peers, others that are simultaneously equal and distinct. Every action in revealing the particularities of every human being contributes to and

174.

In her Lessing-Prize acceptance speech, Arendt also stresses the ‘movement’ that is beyond action: ‘From all the specific liberties which may come into our minds when we hear the word “freedom”, freedom of movement is historically the oldest and also the most elementary. Being able to depart for where we will is the proto-typical gesture of being free, as limitation of freedom of movement has from time immemorial been the precondition for enslavement. Freedom of movement is also the indispensable condition for action, and it is in action that men primarily experience freedom in the world. When men are deprived of the public space – which is constituted by acting together and then fills of its own accord with the events and stories that develop into history – they retreat into their freedom of thought. ... Lessing retreated into thought, but not at all into his own self; and if for him a secret link between action and thought did exist ..., the link consisted in the fact that both action and thought occur in the form of movement, and that, therefore, freedom underlies both: freedom of movement.’ Hannah Arendt, ‘On Humanity in Dark Times’, in: Hannah Arendt, *Man in Dark Times* (New York, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 9

175.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 199: ‘The space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action.’

176.

Ibid., 198

177.

Ibid., 176

178.

Ibid., 176

179.

Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006)

180.

John R. Parkinson, *Democracy & Public Space, The Physical Sites of Democratic Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 62

endorses the fundamental plurality of public space, and specifically evokes the shared engagement with the world by people who are both equal and completely different. Without acknowledging the plurality of men, one easily develops the understanding of mankind as a whole, as is often the case in mass political movements. Arendt thus emphasizes the inextricable connection between human plurality and the public realm. When plurality is confined, there is no public realm; the loss of the public realm is simultaneously dangerous for plurality. When there is no space to appear amongst others, people are stripped from the freedom to develop their own unique biography in relation to others and with it to take part in the organized world.¹⁷⁹

We can conclude that the centrality of action offers the following characteristics for the public realm: action is an end in itself, not a means towards something else. Every human being is able to act – to initiate something, to participate in meaningful action. Every action is the start of something new, although it is unpredictable how this will unfold. Action makes sense only within a public space: it should be heard and be seen, action should lead to the possibility of re-action. Since action reveals the actor as well, plurality is the very characteristic of the public realm. It is as simple as this: the sphere addresses the ‘myriad ways in which people participate in collective deliberation about political action’, Jonathan Parkinson writes,¹⁸⁰ while the public realm emphasises the local and limited, the situation itself, the actual participation in (political) action. The public realm might not be limited solely to physical public space, but its ‘activity’ immediately evokes people and places, tangible situations.

5.3.3 *Innumerable Views*

The notion of Arendt, as argued above, at its very heart is spatial and personal, it is localized and bound to actual people. Although essential to the concept, this does not yet mean that it is bound to an actual space, to which architecture contributes. We now need to question at what point architecture is at stake, regarding the spatiality of Arendt’s concept of action. Arendt urges the activity of ‘action’ in *The Human Condition* against a background of concern: the decline of public space as the stage of action. With that concern, Arendt clearly does not think of concrete examples like processes of suburbanization, gentrification, the rise of the shopping mall and the business district. None of these developments, which I described in the first two parts of this dissertation, can be found in Arendt’s writings. Nevertheless, these concrete examples are parallel to Arendt’s concern. Public space, in her image, depends upon the possibility of ‘acting publicly’, that is: appearing amongst others through action and speech. Arendt is concerned about the increasing limitation of the possibility of such appearances. This limitation Arendt describes as the cause of the increase of the social realm, upon which we touched already. It might be good to stress once more that this social realm is not simply a particular spatial condition, but is highly dependent upon the people and society themselves, upon expectations and aims at the heart of a community. However, this image of the social definitely is also echoed in particular spaces. So let us once again trace the characteristics of the social, and see what this might mean for our understanding of concrete public space today. With the notion of the social realm, Arendt does not describe anything positive: the social, to Arendt, means mankind as a ‘social body’ and the human community as ‘society’. The state, in this perspective, is approached as a huge household that caters to the everyday life of its inhabitants. ‘The same historical process that brought forth the modern constitutional state also brings forth ‘society’,

that realm of social interactions that interposes itself between the household on the one hand and the state on the other.¹⁸¹ Habermas and Arendt thus read the preliminary traces of the modern age utterly differently. Whereas Habermas sees the emancipation of the bourgeois, evolving into an independent realm between state and market, which somehow challenges both realms, Arendt sees the establishment of ‘society’ in-between the household and the state. This society does not challenge the other realms but empties them out. Or to describe it differently: it is household-thinking brought to the whole community. It absorbs public affairs in a social perspective, as it also overlooks the need for a private realm, to which I will return later. For our argument here it is important to understand that through the social realm inhabitants of the state (the participants of society) are urged to act alike, that is, to act as though part of a (unifying) household. All participants in this household share the same interests, and certainly opinions. They inhabit the same perspectives. It evokes, according to Arendt, a sphere of conformism. There is no room for plurality and exception, only for the average and the similar, the expected and the known. This is a thread for the possibility of action, which always stresses the opposite qualities: the unexpected and the unknown, the exceptional and the particular. It is replaced by behaviour. For Arendt, this means a great loss: it is the loss of the distinct and outstanding. ‘No activity can become excellent,’ she writes, ‘if the world does not provide a proper space for its exercise. Neither education nor ingenuity nor talent can replace the constituent elements of the public realm, which make it the proper place for human excellence.’¹⁸²

Important at this point, regarding the decline of public space, is the limited possibility to appear amongst peers through action and speech. This appearance is not simply the possibility to access certain spaces, which is discussed extensively in architectural and urban theory. Access is one thing (and certainly threatened), appearance another.¹⁸³ Appearance is not so much simply ‘being-around’, it is the ability to act and react, to speak and hear. This requires an in-between that gathers actors and audience at once. ‘What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least not primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them.’¹⁸⁴ Arendt is particularly concerned here with the ‘world’ not so much as space, as we are now, but as a ‘thing’ we have in common. Action, Arendt argues and as I will discuss in the next chapter, is bound to the love for the world. What is left, Arendt asks, if this world loses its capacity to evoke shared engagement and concern? It will lose its fundamental capacity to be an in-between linking all members of a community. But when we focus on public space, as one of the important ‘places’ of the world, we can conclude the same concerns. It has lost the power to gather and to unite a people in utter plurality. At first sight, the ‘virtual world’ of internet, forums, and social media seems to offer a new public sphere, where people discuss all together and immediately the actualities of what happens. After all, it is within these environments that people can speak out and discuss. But this is only at first sight. The actual contribution and responses to the political movements of the government have never been as intense as today. However, even these ‘new virtual spaces’ offer much more distinction than real exchange, as is today claimed. The virtual world offers ‘filter bubbles’: they happen to be a series of islands, distinct platforms of instant opinion and momentary anger, rather than structural engagement and evocation. This, in other words, reveals how the world has evolved in distinctive social realms, which do not push the participants into a public space, but actually isolate them from public appearance. Moreover, and this is an important point regarding the field of

181.

Seyla Benhabib, ‘Models of Public Space, Hannah Arendt, The Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas’, in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 1992), 74-75

182.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 49

183.

cf. Patchen Markell, ‘The Rule of the People: Arendt, *Archê*, and Democracy,’ in: Benhabib, Seyla (ed.), *Politics in Dark Times, Encounters with Hannah Arendt* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010), 59

184.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52-53

architecture, the idea of action and speech is tied to the very spatiality and reality of the space of appearance, upon which we touched previously. If we have to find 'new public spaces', we cannot depend upon the virtual, but we are in need of the tangibility and the reality of the world itself. It is at this point that architecture comes in. Architecture creates a tangible world of spaces, as we will discuss in the next chapter. Architecture, we might state, is the knowledge of the world as a spatial-social construction – a frame for social and bodily life, as it is for political life, for appearances amongst peers.

Appearance, although intrinsically related to 'action', since it is through action and speech that 'we' appear amongst peers, Arendt argues, precedes action itself. Arendt after all talks about the importance to appear from the private into the public. This is a physical experience – a movement from one realm into another. If we think through the activity of 'appearance' once again, starting with this sense of the physical appearance, we will better grasp the image Arendt evokes. Arendt also stresses the tangible appearance as a physical experience, not only by framing public spaces as literally 'spaces of appearance', but surely when she describes appearances in terms of a movement: from the dark into the light, and from the private into the public. Even more so when she stresses the 'what' of this appearance amongst peers. The public, she argues, is the presence of others that are able to see what we see, and hear what we hear. For Arendt this is an important figure, since it is in this shared seeing and hearing of the same issue, although from different perspectives, that reality is confined. In other words, this is not just a matter of a conversation, it is a matter of our senses too. Seeing and hearing joined together are completely different from reading opinions – tweets – from a screen.

At this point we need to emphasize the importance of the 'world' for Arendt. In the vocabulary of Arendt, this world is not simply a philosophical term to describe the intangible web of relationships between people, but is a tangible entity – and entity that is common to the inhabitants of the world. This is a very important perspective regarding the relationship between architecture and action. Action, after all, as we have seen, is an end in itself. It reveals the actor. But action, as an end in itself, also creates the public space in which (other) appearances are meaningful – a public space that is sustained by world-in-common.¹⁸⁵ This relationship between appearances and the world is crucial in order to understand the meaning of architecture regarding political life. We will discuss this relationship in the next chapter, but at this point we already touch upon the literal and physical descriptions that Arendt uses in order to describe the very act of appearance to one another. The moment Arendt continues to stress the importance of such appearances, her image becomes even more physical: all the different peers, who are in their proper position, represent innumerable perspectives upon the same thing. She again invokes the image of a space, where the people at a particular moment stand in a particular place – their views differ, since they see different sides of the same object in their midst. The importance then, according to Arendt, is that things only gain reality in all its numerous aspects when revealed through the different perspectives of all peers present. If we in this world can speak of an 'objectivity' of the world, it is only through these multiple views that establish the reality of the world in all its innumerable aspects. "To men in the reality of the world is guaranteed by the presence of others, by its appearing to all; "for what appears to all, this we call Being," Arendt quotes Aristotle, "and whatever lacks this appearance comes and passes away like a dream, intimately and exclusively our

own but without reality.’¹⁸⁶ This is the reason Arendt is concerned about plurality in modern societies. It is not simply about the possibility of being different (or oneself), but the loss of possibilities to appear threatens the world itself. Only what appears in public, and can be seen and heard by others, is tangible, and becomes real, part of the reality of this world. As Arendt writes:

‘For us, appearance – something that is being seen and being heard by others as well as by ourselves – constitutes reality. ... The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and of ourselves.’¹⁸⁷

For Arendt this is at the core of her concern, the loss of the innumerable views upon the world and its appearances, who reveal the innumerable aspects of reality. It is the loss of reality itself. Reality is only constituted in the numerous perspectives that are apparently part of the public realm. Without appearance amongst others, one is deprived of the inter-action with other perspectives, and thus of the world. It is in this perspective that Arendt investigates the public realm: as the stage upon which people act and inter-act, are seen and heard, can see and hear, reveal themselves, but also gain reality, as they together reveal the innumerable aspects of reality to each other.

Reality (the world itself) thus is only revealed through the different viewpoints of the spectators being present. In other words, the reality of the world is in the hands of public appearances, which means that only through the views of others – this whole unstable constellation in constant flux, of the perception of and exchange between actors and spectators – the world is constituted in all its aspects. Arendt thus argues, we might conclude, that a real public realm, which offers the opportunity of appearance, is characterized by the *simultaneity, polyphonic, multi-layeredness and un-stability* of countless perspectives. In a wonderful passage, that actually is very spatial too, she writes:

‘For though the common world is the common meeting ground for all, those who are present have different locations in it, and the location of one can no more coincide with the location of another than the location of two objects. Being seen and being heard by others derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position.’¹⁸⁸

This is certainly not only a matter of simply confirming plurality. Arendt also emphasizes that only through this appearance ‘reality’ is affirmed, also from those appearing in public. What remains in the private realm never becomes ‘real’ since it is after all neither visible nor audible. What appears in public, however, acquires the greatest possible recognition. She then continues:

‘Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear.’¹⁸⁹

At this point we are back to some previous conclusions: the end of the commonly shared world, which we only share through the innumerable views we add to the common, has arrived when it is reduced to a single perspective and a single aspect. Arendt thus strongly warns against this reduction of public life to a single viewpoint or experience, and propels the importance of the possibility

186.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*,
198-199

187.
Ibid., 50

188.
Ibid., 57

189.
Ibid., 57

190.
Ibid., 57

191.
Holmquist, 'Towards an Ethical
Technique,' 21

of 'innumerable perspectives'. The reality of the world, she argues, can only be experienced through the innumerable perspectives upon that world, which only appear and will be shared in heterogeneous public spaces.

'This is the meaning of public life, compared to which even the richest and most satisfying family life can only offer the prolongation or multiplication of one's own position with its attending aspects and perspectives. The subjectivity of privacy can be prolonged and multiplied in a family, it can even become so strong that its weight is felt in the public realm; but this family 'world' can never replace the reality rising out of the sum total of aspects presented by one object to a multitude of spectators.'¹⁹⁰

We might add here that we touch upon a double structure between the world and appearances. The reality of the world-in-common is only established through the different viewpoints that are bound to appearances. Vice-versa, however, the world also is able to testify and memorialize action. It relates current action with the past and the future, offers a relative permanence to action and speech, as it also 'inspire new speech and action'.¹⁹¹

5.3.4 *The Space of Appearance and the Public Realm*

We touched once again upon a spatial requirement and endowment of Arendt's notion of action. It is not only spatial, local, and personal, it also needs to be real. It cannot descend into the virtual realm – it is only effective when it is enacted amongst others in reality. This is a point that also counts vice-versa. By real action and speech amongst others, that is upon the stage of public space, the world gains its reality and reliability. It is the innumerable perspectives upon the world that are revealed in public space that also reveal the world and all its innumerable aspects itself. Public space thus cannot be virtual only; it cannot be only a political intangible concept within political theory. It needs real appearances in real spaces. By acknowledging the need for a real stage for action, we have revealed another aspect of the relationship between action and the public realm, and public space and architecture on the other.

When arguing such a relationship between the public space (as is the concern of architecture and urban design) and the public realm (as the ideal behind such spaces, the ideal of meetings and exchange between citizens), we might be trapped in too strong an idealization of concrete spaces – I touched upon this trap previously. Arendt, however, helps us at this point. In *The Human Condition* Arendt suggests that there is a difference between the public realm and the space of appearance. Admittedly, Arendt herself makes this distinction only once, in all other places she mixes up these notions. This ambiguous way of using her notions is part of the critique she often rouses. However, at this particular point she felt the urge to differentiate between the public realm and the space of appearance – the latter precedes the first, she claims. It might seem that Arendt also makes the distinction stressed above: between a certain political ideal (the public realm) and actual space. We will not push this distinction toward a formula (since in the end it is much more mixed up than separated). It is, however, worthwhile to follow her distinction here for a while. It offers room to reflect upon physical space and architecture once again. Somewhere midway through *The Human Condition* Arendt writes that 'the space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates and precedes all formal constitution of the public realm, and the various forms of government,

that is, the various forms in which the public realm can be organized.¹⁹² Thus the distinction is clearly between a certain informality of appearances, and the need to establish a formalized public realm in regard to the durability and stability of the political community. The American political theorist Seyla Benhabib distinguishes between a phenomenological description of the spaces of gathering versus the ontological and institutional aspects of these spaces, or between the agonistic and the associational view of public space.¹⁹³ This distinction is helpful, as it helps us to see what part of the public realm is important regarding from an architectural perspective. The aspect of ‘public realm’, which Benhabib describes as ‘ontological’ or ‘agonistic’, certainly describes the political importance of the space of appearance, but – and this is crucial – the onto-logic cannot be ‘designed’. It is evoked by actual appearances. The phenomenological or associational perspective, however, is the terrain of architecture and real public spaces. In that sense, this distinction clearly strips the discourse on public space a bit from its over-estimated expectations, without immediately leaving the political perspective behind. The distinction thus helps to direct our view to the phenomenological aspects of appearance, rather than to the ambition to create political spaces. One aspect needs to be emphasized here: the transformation of a space of appearance into a public realm is not to be seen as a formula. It is not spaces of appearance transforming into public realms (symbolical spaces) – it is this which precedes the public realm. There is no public realm, in other words, without spaces of appearance.

Arendt’s emphasis, however, again and again comes back to action, with its inherent qualities of local, spatial, and personal activity. The emphasis on appearance thus can be understood as phenomenological, on what actually happens and is distinctive in everyday space. ‘From a phenomenological point of view,’ the philosopher Cecilia Sjöholm writes, ‘the analysis of appearances must be regarded to, counter to, or as resonating with social coordinates. Beings appear through gestures, movements, voices, forms, shapes, and tonalities, speaking to the senses of spectators and auditors because something captures the eye or the ear.’¹⁹⁴ These phenomenological and sensible aspects of appearance indeed bring these moments back to everyday spaces – not only to representative, symbolic and institutionalized spaces, but particularly to the café at the corner of the street, the square in the middle of a town, the shopping mall at the edge of the city, the parking lot in front of that mall, the sidewalk in front of your house – all spaces where we are within the proximity of others. I need to come back to that, since of course some places are potentially better equipped to let such appearance happen, but here it is important once again to state that in principal every space can be a space of appearance, as long as it offers proximity and openness to the plural. The first helpful aspect of this is surely that the space of appearance is not bound to any particular space, to a particular square or boulevard. It nevertheless requires a concrete physical space, since it depends upon the appearance to one another, which, as we have seen, requires physical spatiality. Appearance thus can happen ‘everywhere’: it is not bound to spaces that we would value as central or symbolic.¹⁹⁵ Appearance to one another is possible on every street corner, in every park, in the landscape – it is not limited to the square in front of the town hall, the Washington Mall or Tahrir Square. As Arendt writes: ‘wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.’¹⁹⁶ This aspect also reveals that the ‘space of appearance’ is temporal and unstable, the second aspect that needs to be stressed. It only depends upon the availability of peers amongst which to appear.

192.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 199

193.
Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, 128; Benhabib, ‘Models of Public Space’, 77

194.
Cecilia Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt, How to See Things* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2015), 8

195.
Benhabib, ‘Models of Public Space’, 78

196.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 199

197.
Ibid., 198-199

198.
Bruce Robbins, 'Introduction: The Public as Phantom', in: Bruce Robbins (ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xv

199.
Quote taken from <http://www.pps.org/blog/3-lessons-that-folk-art-teaches-us-about-the-timeless-art-of-placemaking/> [visited January 9th, 2014]

200.
Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, and Murray Silverstein, *A Pattern Language, Towns, Buildings, Construction* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1977)

'The polis, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be. 'Wherever you go, you will be a polis': these famous words became not merely the watchword of Greek colonization, they expressed the conviction that action and speech between the participants which can find its proper location anywhere. It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the world, namely the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, were men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly.'¹⁹⁷

This temporal aspect is also emphasized in other quite distinctive perspectives. Bruce Robbins, for instance, the editor of *The Phantom Public Sphere* writes: 'In proposing that publicness is a quantity appearing in the market as well as the state, and in numerous spots in between, I am suggesting that no sites are inherently or eternally public. The lines between public and private are perpetually shifting, as are the tactical advantages and disadvantages of finding oneself on one side or the other.'¹⁹⁸ Arendt's writings thus do not offer a black-and-white narrative on the relationship between the political realm and public space, between the exceptional and the everyday. The exceptional can take place in the everyday, as long as there is an interaction between appearance and peers. The space of appearance can be here and there, then and now. This also prompts our third aspect to be stressed: a loose relation to the form of space. Appearance is not dependent upon the right form, the right design, and the right location. It is certainly clear, however, that in the contemporary typologies of the suburban landscape, public space is scripted, pacified, domesticated. The public space of a gated community, a historic district, or an airport city are convenient, comfortable, limited. That makes it difficult for these spaces to offer the space of appearance, which requires the possibility of exceptions.

5.3.5 *On the Law and the Wall*

Having stated that the space of appearance is bound to space, but not bound to a particular form and location of that space, does not mean that architecture (as concerned with the design, lay-out, and physical qualities of space) is not relevant. Obviously, aspects of the form, quality, accessibility, location, amongst others – all these characteristics of public space that seems to vanish in today's landscapes and cities – play an important role in the possibilities of appearances amongst others. At first sight, we might stress, however, the relevance of design, since we can certainly agree with a well-known quote of the architectural theorist Christopher Alexander that 'most of the wonderful places of the world were not made by architects, but by the people.'¹⁹⁹ Having said that, his own approach towards architecture reveals something of the importance of the field. Alexander is well known particularly for his attempt to develop a database of 'good' urban and architectural places. This attempt shows the importance of the quality of spaces, and positions architecture as a field that is able to acquire knowledge of these spaces in order to apply it in other cases. In other words, his attempt reveals at least that his own position was never guided by indifference to the form and design of space. On the contrary, the insight that is revealed through the database was meant to contribute to future 'good' spaces.²⁰⁰ It does not require many words to state that the loose relationship between 'the space of appearance' and particular forms of public spaces must lead to indifference to the architectural

aspects of space. Such an indifference not only diminishes the cultural aspects of architecture; not only its inherent representational character,²⁰¹ but also its essential aspects of giving form, creating spaces, and shaping the possibilities to be appropriated, occupied, used (which increases the possibilities to appear amongst peers).

In fact, another passage in Arendt's reflection on action redirects our view to the notion of the public realm – even though we previously defined it as ontological, and thus not accessible for architectural design. A public realm cannot be created by design, we stated – it is established as the result of appearances. We have to rethink this statement to a certain degree. When Arendt describes the instability and unpredictability of action, she stresses this as the very 'frailty' of human affairs. This frailty is a space that secures the action – and Arendt urges limitation and stability as the very characteristics of that space. This starts first with her description of the agora: only citizens were required to participate in that space. Action and speech requires a public of peers that can be regarded as equals in utter diversity. In the *polis* public space was understood as political realm, since 'men met one another as citizens and not as private persons.' The citizens, in other words, 'receive equality by virtue of their citizenship.'²⁰² Arendt, as stated previously, never limited action to a certain class or elite: everybody is able to act, she states. She posits the councils in Hungary after the Revolution, or the town hall meetings in America, as her ideal model of political organization. These references certainly reveal aspects of limitation: town hall meetings are only effective if bound to a particular place. It is not possible to organize such meetings on the scale of the country or nation. Also in the *New York Times* architecture critic Michael Kimmelman refers to this fact when he writes: 'In his *Politics* Aristotle argued that the size of an ideal polis extended to the limits of a herald's cry. He believed that the human voice was directly linked to civic order. A healthy citizenry in a proper city required face-to-face conversation.'²⁰³ This aspect of size is obviously a serious matter in today's megalopolises, where the sheer amount of people and the sheer distance between everything is a serious difficulty regarding the possibility of a 'shared space'.²⁰⁴ It nevertheless might be clear that the unlimited growth of cities on the one hand does not make the space of appearance an easy phenomenon, nor that it has hollowed out its urgency. In the megalopolis plurality after all has got its place particularly to the inherent anonymity.²⁰⁵ The rise of the megalopolis, as well as the urbanized landscape urges to go once again at the heart of the space of appearance. As we might stress, appearance is only possible when peers are in proximity. This certainly does not mean that spaces needs to be small in order to offer a possibility of appearance – that perspective would bind appearance again to physical form. It only urges our previous statement, that appearance can take place everywhere. Even within large spaces little gatherings can offer the possibility of appearance. In turn, however, this statement has an important implication regarding architecture. We might understand from this that architecture certainly can contribute to these possibilities of appearance. In large spaces, it is less easy to gather people in proximity, whereas threshold spaces offer more convenient opportunities to connect differences. The urban fabric of public spaces, once again, cannot be seen as a continuous fluidity without any edges; it needs its internal sequence and edges, it even might need hierarchy as well as its characteristics, apart from the lack of a 'ruling' narrative (be it the state, as in the case of the Tiananmen Square, or the market, in the case of a shopping mall). However, in describing the limitation of the public space to the citizens of the agora, Arendt particularly addresses the

201.

Colin Davies, *Thinking about Architecture, An Introduction to Architectural Theory* (London, Laurence King Publishing LTD, 2011), 12: Architecture is a representative art.

202.

Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 23; see also: Dagmar Barnouw, *Visible Spaces Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience* (Baltimore/London, The John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 207

203.

Michael Kimmelman, 'Foreword', in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA), New Village Press, 2012), xiii

204.

Something of this question is echoed in the trial to establish a natural law regarding the size of cities by the urban historian Lewis Mumford in *Sticks and Stones* (1924), where he stresses the boundaries of what easily can be understood as a public unity: 'A city, properly speaking, does not exist by the accretion of houses, but by the association of human beings. When the accretion of houses reaches such a point of congestion or expansion that human association becomes difficult, the places ceases to be a city. The institutes that make up the city – schools, clubs, libraries, gymnasias, theatres, churches, and so forth – can be traced in one form or another back to primitive community: they function on the basis of immediate intercourse, and they can serve through their individual units only a limited number of people.' Lewis Mumford, *Sticks and Stones, A Study of American Architecture and Civilization* (New York, Dover Publications, 1955), 228-229

205.

cf Jan-Hendrik Bakker, *Welkom in Megapolis. Denken over wonen, stad en toekomst* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Atlas, 2008), 94; and Arnold Reijndorp, *Stadswijk, Stedenbouw en dagelijks leven* (Rotterdam: NAi Uitgevers, 2004), 143

206.
cf. Markell, 'The Rule of the People',
62

207.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198

need to appear amongst equals. Appearance, in other words, does not simply require the presence of others, but particularly of 'peers', who are not simply people 'alike' (as in relationships of kinship), but require recognition and equality. This requires spaces that are open for plurality in equality, where differences are not wiped away, but accepted, not by hierarchy but on the basis of equality. Secondly, and importantly for the argument we are developing, such open spaces that offer room for peers to meet, require a minimum recognition of common ground.²⁰⁶ Although we have posed previously that the space of appearance can come into being everywhere, it is certain that some spaces are more plausible as spaces of appearance than others. Spaces where people gather, for instance, offer more opportunities of appearance than vacant lots, whereas the town hall certainly offers more possibilities for action than the warehouse. It nevertheless can also be imagined that sometimes the warehouse provides a common ground on which appearances are possible or action is required. However, regarding the town hall – this is by chance a political space that is institutionalized. Appearances here – in the modern age in speech more than in action – are secured by the very political decision to organize meetings, where participants in the process of political decision-making are able to bring their opinions to the fore in order to persuade other participants. Arendt argues the need of a 'secure' space regarding appearance amongst peers, which is the third point we need to stress. This point brings us back to the difference between the phenomenological and the ontological aspects of the space of appearance. On the one hand, plurality itself needs to be secured in order to be a common ground for peers to meet. Action and speech, in other words, are not possible in spaces dominated by rulers, where violence is in play.

The third aspect is the need to secure the space of appearance, particularly because of the fluidity and temporality of action. As Arendt writes:

'the political realm rises directly out of acting together, the "sharing of words and deeds." Thus action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it. It is as though the wall of the polis and the boundaries of the laws were drawn around and already existing public space which, however, without such stabilizing protection could not endure, could not survive the moment of action and speech itself.'²⁰⁷

This certainly touches upon the ontological aspect of the public realm which Arendt brings here amazingly close to the field of architecture. The need to secure certain spaces derives from the fact that action and deeds do not last and only achieve tangibility when people appear to each other. Every community, from the smallest to the biggest, needs places where this action and speech can unfold on a structural basis. Although it has been stated previously that the ability to turn space into part of a political realm lies beyond the architectural capacity, the challenging perspective in the quote is the wall drawn around spaces of appearance. Arendt here comes up with an architectural metaphor, a reference to the *polis*, that immediately challenges the relationship of architecture and the public realm. She argues that walls are needed along with boundaries, in order to give stability and endurance to the public space as a political entity. Architecture is required in its quality to circumscribe space, and by doing so, immediately to define and secure that space. The public realm, in other words, needs the stability of walls and boundaries, those of laws and architecture.

At this point, we need to acknowledge that even the instability of action and speech at certain points need the stability of walls, in order not to go by unnoticed, and vanish without being heard and seen.

208.
Ibid., 197-198

209.
Ibid., 52-53

210.
Ibid., 57

‘In other words, men’s life together in the form of the *polis* seemed to assure that the most futile of human activities, action and speech, and the least tangible and most ephemeral of man-made ‘products’, the deeds and stories which are their outcome, would become imperishable. The organization of the *polis*, physically secured by the wall around the city and physiognomically guaranteed by its laws – lest the succeeding generations change its identity beyond recognition – is a kind of organized remembrance.’²⁰⁸

Emphasizing the architectural aspects of this ‘wall’ that circumscribes space, we now need to stress a short passage that I left out of Arendt’s quotes that I have extensively brought to the fore above – a very famous one, and a very clarifying one. Arendt once again takes up a spatial metaphor to describe what she has in mind:

‘To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like very in-between, relates and separates men at the same time. The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak.’²⁰⁹

Arendt thus describes the public realm as a ‘thing’ that is in-between a group of people. The thing, a table, is the metaphor for what Arendt calls ‘the world-of-things’. Seen from the perspective of the group, it is the table that they have in common. It connects them, since they are seated around. It also separates them, since everyone joining the table is seated around it, at different positions. It even limits the size of the group of people: the table is in common only for those seated around it. However, if we imagine this group seated around the table, we once again have an image of the plurality that is an integral part of public space. If appearance in public space, amongst peers, can be described as taking a seat around the table, and join the conversation, one literally inhabits a specific position at that table. In other words: all the participants that are joined around a table are speaking from different perspectives. That for Arendt is an important aspect of the public realm. ‘Being seen and being heard by others’, Arendt writes, ‘derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position.’²¹⁰ The contribution to the public realm is localized: it is grounded in one’s own position, which is evoked by nature and nurture, by genes and particular experiences. Each human being brings his or her own perspective to the fore, dwells upon his or her own experiences and convictions. It is the world that is in common, the public realm, which at once gives room to expose the differences as well as to unite these in a single figure. This image certainly evokes an agenda for architecture: to provide objects that simultaneously connect and separate those gathered around it.

The aspects of the public realm described above thus open up this notion towards the field of architecture. Architecture offers the means to circumscribe space, which offers the stability towards the public space that is needed to face the frailty of action. The means architecture offers to circumscribe spaces are a means to increase the proximity between the participants in space. This is an instrument of architecture, particularly facing contemporary society with its social realms.

In the next chapter I will come back on this metaphor. The table after all is not only a spatial metaphor, it also is a tangible object. The single perspective is at this moment quite common in the urban landscape.

Most of the areas I travelled through (virtually) in Chapters 2 and 3 are designed to optimize this single experience and perspective – often a commercial perspective: the shopping mall, the theme park, the historic district, the airport, etc.

Architecture after all is able to emphasize spaces of appearance – its very formal aspects have the opportunity to represent, negotiate or mediate differences.²¹¹ In other words, when we depend upon Arendt's concept of the space of appearance facing the context of today's political spheres as well as our contemporary (sub) urban landscape, we might understand the role of architecture as one of inter-mediation, bringing in proximity a wide ranges of differences to the public in the streets.²¹²

5.3.6 *From Action to Distraction and Back Again*

The previous sections have shown how Arendt's concept of action, public realm and space of appearance is saturated with notions of space, reality and tangibility – notions that are part and parcel of the architectural project. They have also shown that this notion of action at some point also requires the act-of-architecture: to circumscribe space in order to offer a durable, secure and stable stage for appearances. In the very first sections of this chapter, we made the opposite turn: starting by tracing the recent history of architecture, we were able to see how architects reflected upon aspects of public space. Therefore the question now is: how can we bring both lines of thought together, so that we can define the role of architecture more strongly, regarding Arendt's urgent reflection upon the spaces of appearance? In order to answer this question, let us once again look to actual public spaces.

The very moment we define 'action' as the activity of public space, we also evoke the image of political protests. Action, after all, is regularly associated with demonstrations and other forms of resistance to political decisions or business transactions. Some spaces are the regular sites of such protests: the Washington Mall, New York's Union Square, the Champs-Élysées in Paris, Taksim Square in Istanbul, Cairo's Tahrir Square, and so on. However, when one enters these spaces on regular days, there are often no protests. They can just be open spaces, often full of cars, tourists, shoppers, and employees rushing to their offices. No protests, no fierce discussions, no demonstrations, no posters – no politics at all, let alone appearance amongst peers. So even these spaces that we regard as central and political, only occasionally are used for political rallies, protests and gatherings. We even need to admit that in fact within these gatherings, it is difficult to stand out – as Arendt describes the activity of action. Most of the gatherings are so crowded that there is no room for action or speech, besides which within these actions there is often not much room for plurality: people think alike. It is not easy under such circumstances to catch the eye and bring something new to the fore. In that sense, we are trapped here in the notion of action – we are on the wrong track to grasp actual public spaces better. This track after all depends too much on the macro-political level and its rituals, which is closer to Habermas's celebration of the (critical) public sphere than to the micro-political level of Arendt's appearances. We need therefore to replace our initial intuition to celebrate the central squares and piazzas with a celebration of much more everyday spaces. In the first instance, we might regard this as the interesting distinction that is offered by the social geographer Saskia Sassen, in her reflection on the Occupy-movement:

‘The urban street as public space is to be differentiated from the piazza or the boulevard of the European tradition, a space for ritualized practices. I think of the space of “the street,” which of course included squares and any available open space, as a rawer and less ritualized space in which new forms of the

social and the political can be *made*, rather than being routinely enacted. With some conceptual stretching, we might say that politically “the street and the square” are markedly different from “the boulevards and the piazza”: the first, signal action, and the second, rituals.²¹³

As is clearly the case, the macro and the micro levels of politics, action and ritual, are in close relation with each other. The latter is preceded by the first, we might argue, in parallel with Arendt’s argument that the space of appearance precedes the public realm. The urge at this point is to start reflecting upon our idea of public life around the corner.²¹⁴

This certainly is close to Arendt’s everyday description of appearances amongst peers. Arendt never loaded this with the ideal of the public realm as an entity in which the nation as a whole appeared to one another. At the same time her stress on appearances both diminishes the great expectations as well as opens up new directions to understand public space. It first tempers the ideal behind ‘official’ public spaces as ‘democratic spaces’, of public spaces as vital elements in the political realm, as spaces where *all* people meet, discuss, and exchange perspectives in order to develop *the* public opinion. Simultaneously, it proposes other perspectives, putting forward public spaces as temporal and somehow limited spaces of appearance, places of action, room to be seen and heard, to hear and see. If the public realm, or the space of appearance is limited in size and is localized, we might do better to look to the square around the corner, the doorstep of an apartment block, the sidewalk of a street, the parking lot of a mall, the departures hall of an airport, or the waiting room of a train station. These spaces too, we must admit, are ‘empty’ on a daily base. That is, not empty of people, but empty of action. If we look closely to the social practices within these spaces, we immediately understand that public space is often used in what we might call ‘distraction’: not completely aware of those others that also cross the space towards their car or the nearest metro entrance, waiting for a connection or departure. It is only if something happens, if we bump into someone else, a person stumbles, the train has a long delay, a very attractive person walks by, or whatever, that we awaken from our distracted perception and take on a much more attentive attitude. The question might even be this: doesn’t even the limited ‘ideal’ of Arendt, of public space as stage of public action, a space of appearances, bring us too far away from the everyday experience of public spaces and practices?

It is this experience of public space in distraction that George Baird addresses in his second book on public space, that I previously announced, *Public Space*.²¹⁵ The book mirrors this experience with Arendt’s notion of ‘action’ as the modus operandi of public space. Prior to this, particularly in *The Space of Appearance*, Baird offered a few thoughts on this notion of ‘distraction’ as it is apparent in the writings of Walter Benjamin. Baird, by introducing Benjamin besides Arendt (and Habermas), stresses the fact that our common experience of the city is in a mode of disengagement and alienation. The figure by which Benjamin emphasises this ‘new’ urban condition is that of the *flâneur*, who wanders through the city as a ‘distanced and ironic figure’, an ‘alienated man’.²¹⁶ Benjamin’s urban experience runs parallel with the famous 1903 essay of George Simmel on the *Großstädte*, in which he argues that the overload of stimuli in the city compels the city-dweller to acquire a ‘blasé attitude’. The city urges the ‘individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, of external culture, and of the technique of life.’²¹⁷ The ‘blasé’ response of the city-dweller that Simmel thus recognizes means the

213. Sassen, ‘To Occupy’, 68-69

214. It is important as background to this statement to understand that Arendt’s view on public space is spatial and tangible, as well as that she brings concerns to the fore not to mourn of what is lost, but apparently to urge the reader of possibilities that are still there (although hidden). She offers not a new theory nor ideology, but a revision. By stressing everyday spaces, we can build up a revision of our view on public space bottom-up, but nevertheless always in conversation with ideas that are beyond the tangible. Cf. Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics With Arendt*, 23

215. George Baird, *Public Space: Cultural/Political Theory; Street Photography, An Interpretation by George Baird*, Amsterdam 2011, SUN Publishers. The book although published only in 2011 is actually the edited and reworked argument of what he has previously – already in 1999 (!) – delivered as the Preston Thomas Lectures at Cornell University. Another early version of this text, specifically almost limited to Chapter 2 in this book, was published as Baird, ‘On the Contemporary Question of the “Public”’ (2009).

216. Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 307

217. George Simmel, ‘Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben’ (1903), English translation: ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life,’ in: James Farganis (ed.), *Readings in Social Theory. The Classic Tradition to Postmodernism*. New York 2000, McGraw-Hill, 149. I quote here via Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Architectural Positions, Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (Amsterdam 2009: SUN Publishers), 23

218.
cf. Harvey, 'The Political Economy of
Public Space', 25

219.
George Baird, 'Praxis and Representa-
tion,' in: George Baird and Mark
Lewis (eds.), *Queues, Rendezvous,
Riots* (Alberta: Walter Philips
Gallery, 1994), 6

220.
George Baird, *Public Space: Cultural/
Political Theory; Street Photography,
An Interpretation by George Baird*
(Amsterdam: SUN Publishers, 2011),
44-45; Baird quotes from the article
Goldberger wrote for *The New York
Times*, 14 October 1996

exclusion from the nervous system of outer stimuli, which not only affects one's internal emotional life, but also one's attitude towards others.²¹⁸ In urban public space, relationships are often characterized by distance and reserve. This is still a common description of urban life today, in which the anonymity of the streets (and even unfamiliarity with neighbours) plays a central role. This condition of anonymity and distance today can also be used to describe suburban neighbourhoods, which – by the very regular use of car transportation – become dispersed as well. This condition of public space thus prompts the question of how the everyday environment – in which people either need to retreat from all the noise and the sounds and the people, the hustle and bustle (in order not to be disturbed or become crazy by all the stimuli that are offered), or want to retreat from (because they are in the position to do so and can continue to live their life comfortably and securely) – offers the opportunity to act and to appear to others. Baird brings this question not only to the domain of urban anthropology and urban sociology, to public life and social relations, but also urges this attitude of distraction towards the field of architecture. Since the city is experienced in distraction, architectural settings function simply as a décor for daily life – that is: being unnoticed by the users. They are not enjoyed or experienced in conscious and attentive engagement, let alone in concentration. This raises the question of how important architecture actually is, particularly related to the previous question on public life. Is this role on the background of public life good enough, or is there a need to offer spaces that somehow 'awake' the users from distraction, in order to get them ready for 'action'? And if so, does architecture have the capacity and instruments to do so? In other words, what aim should architecture have, regarding the modus of distraction and the importance of action, according to Arendt?

As Baird writes in his 1995 introduction to the exhibition 'Queues, Rendezvous, Riots', 'Architecture is readily able to influence its behaviour, without that audience becoming aware, let alone critical of the social and political manipulations to which it may be subjected.'²¹⁹ Even though architecture affects 'the public', it is in a hideous way. In *Public Space* Baird employs a great example of overestimating the importance of consciousness to be evoked by architecture in this regard – and I will quote him here at length, since his reflection is telling. The example is a report by the well-known American architectural critic Paul Goldberger on the opening of the Aronoff Center at the University of Cincinnati, designed by the New York architect Peter Eisenman.^[IMAGE 5.17] Goldberger writes:

'Mr Eisenman has made a career out of pushing the boundaries of architecture, designing buildings that are deliberately provocative, and he has said that he is satisfied if his buildings force people to take notice. "Walter Benjamin said that most people think of architecture casually," [Eisenman] said during the televised discussion, which was taped in the atrium of his new building. "What I like about this building is that you cannot take it casually."²²⁰

Baird reviews this quote very sharply and to the point:

'It is not surprising that an architect such as Eisenman, who is as much an intellectual as he is a professional, would make reference to the ideas of Benjamin on such an occasion. But it comes as a considerable shock to learn that, in doing so, he would so startlingly misconstrue the significance of Benjamin's famous observation. For nothing in Benjamin's writings would

ever suggest that it was advisable – or for that matter even feasible – for architects to attempt to shift the mode of perception of architecture in the opportunistic manner proposed by Eisenman. Perhaps a certain short-term shock, such as Eisenman seeks, will be achievable, but it is clear that in its inevitable aftermath, his Aronoff Center, like all other buildings in the world, will soon slip largely into that zone of “distracted” appropriation characteristic of architecture generally. What is more, even during the initial period prior to that, the response he seeks will more typically be that of visitors and critics than it will be of daily users. That an architectural thinker of his probity would take Benjamin’s argument so lightly is a startling indication of our profession’s failure to grasp its larger social significance.²²¹

221.
Ibid., 45

222.
Walter Benjamin, ‘The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in: Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books 2007), 239

Although Baird’s last remark is quite telling – architectural theorists taking philosophical notions too superficially, and by doing so overlooking the ‘reality’ of architectural questions (by which I mean the everyday reality buildings are to their users) – it is the remarks above that are important for us here. Architecture is, after the first visit to a new building, experienced in distraction. Only fellow-architects will see the building as an end in itself, and will travel all the way to see (and experience) a particular building (but they are exceptional, far away from the everyday user). We will touch upon the spatial experience of buildings in the next chapter, since I consider this aspect of experience to be quite important, also in everyday use, but for here it is important to underline the argument Baird brings to the fore. Architecture sooner or later is just the regular environment of users, and is experienced almost without notice. It seems not so obvious that a certain ‘disturbance’ of the experience-mode of distraction, let alone the opportunity to act consciously, will be delivered by a building or by the built environment as such, specifically when concentrating on the ‘everyday’ environment of the people.

This reflection by Baird first and foremost argues that architecture can hardly be used to break through the human modus of distraction to his environment and lead them to a *modus operandi* of engagement and participation. This, I would argue, is the wrong question to ask of architecture. Not because architecture can’t offer the counter-form of action, the stage for appearance, but since the opportunity to act, to appear to others as others appear to us, is offered on a different level. As I will investigate in the next Chapter, the physical is important, along with the aesthetics of the building. Architecture even has educative qualities, like the arts. However, it cannot be understood solely from this ‘teaching’ perspective, nor from an aesthetical point of view. If counted as an art, we easily get the wrong expectations of the engagement of the public. Benjamin actually comes to his emphasis on distraction because he *distances* architecture from the arts. ‘Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction,’ he writes.²²² Since the work of art requires concentration, one has to be ‘withdrawn’ from the world in order to enjoy and experience the work of art. Architecture on the other hand is exposed to the world, it is facing the streets, which are filled with noises and signs, views and disturbances – full of life. The modus of concentration which is required to enjoy the work of art, cannot be the modus of the driver, the cyclist, the hiker, the wanderer in the streets. They are users rather than enjoyers of the space, caught in a certain activity and movement. Of course, there are moments of concentration, focal points of the attitude of the participant in the streets. These at least are related to traffic and flows, to signs that organizes the street life and mobility, but then again, it is often

223.

Baird, *Public Space*, 46; Benjamin, 'The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', 240

224.

Baird, *Public Space*, 47

225.

cf Bart Verschaffel, 'Publiek/Privaat: Het krachtverlies van een metafoor', in: Bart Verschaffel, Van Hermes en Hestia, *Teksten over architectuur* (Gent: A&S/Books, 2006), 129

226.

Baird, *Public Space*, 49, 50

behaviourism organizing the actual uses of the street. If there are moments of concentration, it depends upon various factors. Something happening upon the street, touching upon a famous and monumental façade, an advertisement – but, as Baird argues, 'such instances will not be frequent enough, or sustained enough, to put into serious doubt a general pattern of public behaviour that is consistent with the principle enunciated by Benjamin.'²²³ However, Baird continues, this mode of distraction does not mean the same as 'emptiness'. Quite on the contrary: he refers again to Benjamin, who argues that this mode of distraction fully incorporates the 'bodily knowledge' of the environment. It is, and he follows Benjamin here, 'a *learned mode* of experience.'²²⁴ Within the distracted mode of experience, a *modus operandi* is active, that guides the figure through the streets and anticipates dangerous situations, while at the same time in thoughts – or in actual conversation through the extensive use of the smartphone today, we might add²²⁵ – somewhere else. Baird stresses this point a bit further than Benjamin did, in order to coin and investigate the opposite mode, that of 'concentration', which Baird understands as 'having significant features in common with Arendt's model of "action".'²²⁶ His aim then is to form a hybrid between the concepts of distraction and action. This hybrid starts with the remark that Arendt, who contrasts action with behaviour, admits that behaviour belonged to the human condition as well, although she designates behaviour to the private realm and social realm, as we have seen. We might argue that in Arendt's view, behavioural habits, which are incorporated in our body over time, somehow help us in the street. These behavioural habits parallel with the Benjamin notion of distraction, Baird claims. Baird's main question therefore is if behavioural habits have taken over street life, does this exclude the possibility of action? In order to answer this question, he offers a close reading of street-habits, through a great selection of street photography: depicting a crowd, a few individuals, a fierce debate, a marvellous play, just a terrace, or real political and revolutionary actions. The images show sometimes exceptionally but mostly quite recognizable practices, sometimes those moments that have become historic, sometimes simply images of everyday life. The photographs reveal public life, Baird argues, as a spectrum that stretches from Benjamin's distraction towards Arendt's conscious 'action'. Public practices, we can thus stress, consist of many faces and cannot be reduced to a single definition. They cannot be reduced to a single space. The space of appearance is not only present in these formal spaces that gain national and international recognition, but are also around the corner in a suburban neighbourhood, on a platform in a metro station, in a cue at the airport. Such an image is also evoked by the previously discussed book by Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search for a New Public Domain*, which also explores as a sort of sub-text a great range of photographs covering public practices in everyday situations. Although they don't explicitly discuss the images, the message seems to be the same: the public domain cannot be limited to conscious political settings, but occurs in unforeseeable moments and places, often triggered by the occurrence of something unpredicted happening or someone 'strange' appearing. A flashmob in a mall, a delay of the train, a homeless guy at the corner of the street, an accident on a playground: something that grasps the attention and disturbs the everyday behavior and comfort, challenges the spectator to become an actor.

From his analysis of the selection of street photographs, Baird concludes that within the notion of distraction there is still the split-second possibility of perception, of 'taking a position', during which a sole spectator moves from distraction towards the slightly broader notion of awareness. According to Baird, we should not therefore render distraction and action as opposing figures in daily

street life, but understand both notions in relationship to each other, as the limits of a spectrum of being present in public space. He thus stresses both notions as the limits of everyday urban practices in public space by arguing that, also according to Arendt, only ‘some of us rise to the challenge to act’ on particular moments.²²⁷ Action, we can conclude, is always characterized by a conscious presence of the human being in public space, as is the case the other way around: those present only temporarily form a public.

Arendt’s image of the public realm is that of the agora in the *polis*, the importance of the agora as a meeting point, a location of public speeches and actions. Benjamin obviously writes from a different perspective: it is the industrial city, that had expanded strongly, that had aroused the new masses. The difference between the *polis* and the mass-city of course is the anonymity of the single figure in public life, a distinction that can be rendered as the public figure of the citizen in the *polis*, versus the *flâneur* in the industrial city. One actively engaged in public life, the other gazing at it, as Benjamin describes.²²⁸ The question rightly then is how one might embed the Arendtian stress on ‘action’ within such an anonymous environment. This might not be too far away from Arendt’s description of the ‘space of appearance’, as we have investigated above. The space of appearance is temporal, not bound to any particular space. It is bound to the presence of an attentive public of peers. But can we relate this perspective to her notion of the more established public realm, in which there is a more prominent role of architecture as we have previously concluded?

Her plea for conscious ‘action’ is urged in a positive way by the recognition of action in two recent happenings that occurred around the moment she published *The Human Condition*. Actually two moments that were unforeseen, but also quite far-reaching in their effects: first the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, despite the power of the Soviet Union, and second the student activism of the ‘60s, despite the apparent American consumer society. Today we can add the 2011 happenings around the world that I discussed before (despite the disappointing turn some of these street-revolutions took – at least in the eyes of Western democracies). ‘These two dramatic – and historically unforeseeable – developments heartened her late in her career, with respect to the potentialities of a spontaneous manifestation of ‘action’, even in apparently unpropitious social circumstances,’ Baird writes.²²⁹ Public space, he therefore argues, should be understood as in-between these two terms. Although often experienced in distraction, public space also contains the opportunity of engagement and involvement, maybe even concentration and consciousness, and finally revolutionary action. It might be a split-second of challenge, but how brief, it is a challenge.

We need to underline this perspective at this point. It is an important remark that helps our understanding of the phenomenology of public space. Baird specifically stresses the every-day use as the main experience of (public) space. And rightly so. However, since he keeps both Arendt and Benjamin close together within one spectrum, this at the same time keeps the *potentialities* of public space as a political realm intact. Hence the public space is characterized by the coming and going of people, the temporalities of concerted action too. Most often these spaces are simply squares, streets, buildings, parks, but they can also be cafés, convention-centers, malls, parking lots, leisure centers, theme parks, historic districts, transit zones. Every now and then, in unforeseen ways and on unforeseen places, these spaces offer room for (political) action. When distraction and aloof behaviour is disturbed and when people are challenged and ready to act.

‘Hands up, don’t shoot!’²³⁰ [IMAGE 5.16]

227.
Ibid., 52

228.
Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 448

229.
Baird, *Public Space*, 52; cf. Baird, ‘Thoughts on “Agency”, “Utopia” and “Property” in Contemporary Architectural and Urban Theory’, 149, where he argues that Arendt in *The Human Condition* is much more optimistic than her previous *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, and that the unforeseen occurrence of the Hungarian Revolution contributed to that shift in intellectual position.

230.
Yell of the black-lives-matter demonstrations around America, after the shootings of several (unarmed) Afro-American teenagers by police-officers. The case of Trayvon Martin, that I discussed in Chapter 1, regularly is seen as the first of this range of victims. See <http://blacklivesmatter.com> [visited May 08th, 2017]

The idea of a 'parochial' space, in-between public and private, is coined by the urban sociologist Lyn Lofland. She urges the parochial as something in common in public, whereas the private is described as the communal in an intimate space, and the public space as allowing the stranger and the categorical. : Lyn H. Lofland, *The Public Realm. Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory* (New York: De Gruyter, 1998), 14; See also Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain*, 85: 'Although open to the public, these are spaces that evidently constitute the space of a certain group: whoever wanders in as a stranger feels like a guest, often unwanted.' Parochial space certainly depends upon a particular program, which attracts a particular public. Architecture in these cases often emphasize the particularity of this program. It does fit the program, rather challenging the program towards a less homogenous interpretation and presentation.

5.3.7 Spatial Improvisations

From Arendt's emphasis on the space of appearance and Baird's reading of public life – or better said: street-life – as a spectrum ranging from distraction to action, we can conclude that public space is not limited to any of the political images that dominate the discourse. As we investigated in the first chapters, the ideal of public space is drawn in idealistic tones: a public exchange of ideas, to share perspectives, to question worldviews, fierce discussions about political issues, to look after one another, and to establish public opinion. But our understanding of public space should not depend upon these ultimate figures. Public space is a stage, as Arendt argues in her phenomenological reading, but the play is temporal and not limited to one or another central or symbolic place. The public is roused on the micro-scale of everyday life, in everyday spaces. And although that might impact the macro scale of the realm of politics, the realms of the state and the market, the importance is always simply bound to local instances. We might say this is a weak reading of public space: although it is not burdened by the aim to form the ultimate purpose as defined by Habermas, 'public opinion', nevertheless still contains the important possibility of appearances, revealing plurality. Public spaces inherently offer the potential to start a play or to be engaged in a play, to start a concert, or to participate in a concert. Such a weak understanding of the relationship between public space and the public realm, that we urge here, thus is closer to the very character of action, which can never be predicted when and where to happen, nor be prescribed how to happen. In other words, this weak understanding of public space includes the important understanding that it offers room for the unforeseen and the unpredicted. It offers the possibility to the users to take initiatives, and to be involved, engaged – or simply, the possibility to act and enact. Public space is characterized by the opportunity of action, and due to the unpredictability of action, this can address both the everyday as the highly-political realm.

We might conclude that the ideal behind public space is more about the potentiality (which is a condition of space and time) of democratic practices, rather than the guarantee of it. And having stated that, we can also argue that it can occur on the very doorstep of one's dwelling, as well as on the square in front of the parliament – although it is likely to start at the doorstep, and, by gaining re-action and participants, move towards the more symbolic spaces, where a larger public touches upon it and the media will cover it. Arendt, in other words, helps us to understand the political charge of every public life in the streets and squares, parking lots and landscapes – to those everyday spaces that offer room for the everyday life of citizens.

Although it is clear that no architectural form can guarantee the space of appearance, it nevertheless is also obvious that architectural form influences the potentialities of spaces to offer room for appearances. It can increase as it is able to limit the possibilities of appearances. This of course prompts architecture – all architectural assignments – with political meaning. Each architectural intervention somehow contributes to the possibilities or impossibilities of appearances, whether or not the architectural form also contributes to the representation of that space ontologically. The question is therefore how to distinguish, or even propel 'public' spaces, which offer the potential of appearance? Before going to that question in an architectural sense, it is important once again that the architecture allows a plural public. A lack of plurality is signage of the social realm, according to Arendt, which makes her perspective critical in respect to the organization of public space in parochial terms.²³¹ A public of peers, on the other hand,

consists of a plural public, though they are recognized as equal. This equality, we now understand, is not something on the surface, it is not to be found in similar interests, backgrounds, convictions or world-views, but is a shared engagement in the world, a recognition of the commonness of the world. Some spaces certainly offer more challenges and potentialities than others, gathering a public. Cities, for instance, are much more likely to draw a plural public, than villages. After all, urban spaces are part of a network that is, in the well-known definition of Louis Wirth and the Chicago School of Sociology, 'large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals.'²³² However, even the urban spaces increasingly seem to disperse heterogeneity in favour of similarity. From gated communities to Business Districts, and from the airport to Historic Areas, even from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, often attract a particular group of people, defined by race, class, background, income, and so on.

This of course is not all about architecture – part of it is simply organization and program. The architect's task, however, is to challenge place, program and organization, we might conclude. The architectural intervention can be thought of in different ways, and it might be the ethical task of the architect to take note of the public, and to stress assignments against this background of the space of appearance, plurality and the public realm. I will return to the ethical aspects of architecture later. The architect is certainly not alone in this challenge, nor empty-handed. As the architectural debate in the pivotal fifties, which I traced above, as well as the lessons learned from Parc de La Villette in Chapter 3, have revealed, there are certainly architectural elements and directions that help to 'propel' the opportunities of appearances in public space rather than to limit them. In the fifties, to briefly summarize, architects rediscovered the importance of [1] (central) spaces of gathering, [2] architecture as the representation of such spaces, [3] the continuity in time as well as [4] the continuity in the urban network, that is how such spaces of gathering contribute to the urban fabric as a whole. This latter aspect urges succession and sequences of spaces, which is also one of the lessons learned from Parc de La Villette. To remind us, from Tschumi's design, we gained as 'preliminary lessons for designers': [1] continuity of routing both on the level of the city as on the level of the neighbourhood and park, [2] heterogeneity of program, again both on different levels, [3] ambiguity in the design of the spaces, which in Parc de La Villette was gained through the superimposition of different layers of elements, [4] continuity in time by the re-use of old elements, which connect the very site to its former use and meaning, and finally [5] the design itself, which makes from all the above a meaningful whole.

In his book *Public Space*, George Baird offers three basic conditions of public space that, to my mind, offer a background to these previously learned lessons. In order to contribute to public life, public space needs to urge visibility, propinquity, and continuity, he argues.²³³ The first condition does not only underline the need to see and to be seen, 'appearing to others as they appear to me', but also the importance of a tangible plurality. Action surely requires visibility to gain response. This requires a heterogeneous space, Baird argues, despite a temptation within modern as well as post-modern architecture to homogenize spaces, either by separating functions or publics. Although Baird here first and foremost argues against the control of space in terms of surveillance,²³⁴ we can certainly add that this also is about the experience of space not controlled from a single perspective, as for instance principles of profit, consumption or entertainment. Arendt understands this as a threat to the plurality of the public realm, a curtailment of 'man in the plural.' As touched upon previously, this not only is a threat for

232.

Louis Wirth, 'Urbanism as a Way of Life', in: *American Journal of Sociology*, vol.44, no.1 (July 1938), 8

233.

Baird, *Public Space*, 99

234.

Baird specifically reflects upon the 'Benthamite design principles', as discussed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in his *Discipline and Punish, The Birth of the Prison*, which he recognizes for instance in the Library of the History Faculty at Cambridge University, designed by James Stirling, 1964: 'Here we can see the principles of panoptic vision directly applied to the design of a library reading room. The information desk is located in such a way as to permit one attendant to maintain permanent, compressive views down all of the aisles of the radiating book stacks opposite. Following Benthamite design principles, the architecture has been made an instrumental apparatus of central surveillance.' *Ibid.*, 104

235.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 57

236.
Ibid., 57

237.
As for instance Goffman, *Behavior in Public Spaces: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings* (New York, 1963); Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (Washington D.C., Conservative Foundation, 1980) and Jan Gehl, *Life Between Buildings, Using Public Space* (Copenhagen: The Danish Architectural Press, 2006)

238.
Baird, *Public Space*, 98

239.
Ibid., 113

240.
Hajer and Reijndorp stress this as the opportunity of the 'public-domain-experience' in (some) parochial spaces: getting the opportunity to observe a particular group without the need to become one of them. Hajer and Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain*, 84-91

plurality, it also threatens the world-in-common. This world is experienced only through the innumerable perspectives on that world shared in public space. 'The reality of the public realm relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects in which the common world presents itself and for which no common measurement or denominator can ever be devised.'²³⁵ A true public space, in Arendt's perspective as we have seen, offers 'different locations' for participants to appear, to participate, and to observe.²³⁶ The heterogeneity of space – the possibility to appear in one's own proper position – thus is an important aspect of the condition of *visibility* of public space. It should be visible, or even better embody the multiple perspectives that can be employed within this space. In other words, it should embody publicness and represent the idea of the plural public. This does not mean that there is a particular architecture of the public, forms (be they 'weak' or 'strong') that can be recognized as 'plural'. We will come back to architectural form in the next chapter. Regarding public space, what first and foremost should be (made) visible and tangible, and therefore also challenged, is what we might call 'the spectacle of public life', that is: the hustle and bustle of everyday life in public. Although almost always unfolding in modes of distraction, as we have seen, this 'vivid' arousal of public life is of the utmost importance. Public space needs a vivid exploration by the users, it needs to be occupied by the public. This once again makes clear that the very architecture of public space isn't a tool to deconstruct the distracted gaze of the spectator. It is public life itself that continuously challenges the users. Playing down the role of architecture does not mean that the form, lay-out, and materiality of public space does not matter at all. Architecture also plays its role in a distracted experience: it does matter if a place has a focal point, is centralized, offers overview, opens up sight-lines or consists of height differences, if it is shiny or rough, pre-scripted or explorative.

The condition of 'visibility' as Baird stresses might be a matter of the eye, the experience of publicness also depends upon the other senses. In the second condition he distinguishes Baird focusses on the ear: *propinquity*. This condition emphasizes the nearness of human bodies not only in place and time, but also on a psychological level. Anthropologists and sociologists, as well as those inspired by them, urban designers and architects, have offered insight into the patterns of human practices in public space, have tried to measure the flows and patterns of public life.²³⁷ Within public space individuals follow their path, sometimes integrate with one another, form groups, while in other instances groups disintegrate into individuals again. They come and go, pop up somewhere and leave the stage elsewhere. They appear sometimes nearby or stay far away. Public transport is an exemplary example of this condition. If the underground is rather empty, it would be strange to choose a seat immediately next to a person one does not know, while during rush hour everybody stands so close to one another that we would call this proximity intimate if it was not in the context of a packed underground carriage. Despite such 'behavioural' measures that structures our public life, *propinquity* starts with the possibility to listen, although not yet part of the conversation – listen without 'looking as if they hearing it.'²³⁸ With this condition, Baird emphasizes two architectural figures that offer such a distanced but curious relationship to what happens elsewhere: the porch and the overview. The porch is a space that offers 'distinct social and psychological options of locations,' Baird writes. 'If alone, one may choose to hang back along the rear wall. Or, of one is in a more confident frame of mind, one may venture forward to the outer edge.'²³⁹ The porch, although itself located in the periphery of a space, offers the spectator the chance to look from a distance,²⁴⁰ but also to

slowly move from this peripheral zone into the central space. In other words, the porch offers the opportunity of appearances, from periphery to center, from almost invisibility towards central attention. Rightly, Baird briefly links this to the in-between realm as coined by Aldo van Eyck, upon which we touched previously. ‘Not quite interior, nor quite exterior; not fully exposing or declaratory of public intention, yet forward enough not to be reclusive the “in-between realm” became for Van Eyck, the quintessence of a valuable architecture.’²⁴¹ We might stress this in-between space, the threshold or the liminal space here once more. As most of today’s spaces are to be understood as largely social (in Arendt’s terms), the possibility of a plural public and heterogeneity of space obviously is at its edges, where it touches upon other (social) spaces – or even better, where several spaces overlap. The tension inherent in such an intertwining of spaces is certainly proof of its potentiality as space of appearance. Its ambiguity reveals something of the different ‘positions’ it has to offer.

The overlook is an architectural figure that emphasizes distance over the possibility to move out and appear in public. ‘The architectural condition of overlook marries visibility to a sectional organization of space that fosters downward views,’ Baird writes.²⁴² The best-known example of course is the square on the lower level of the Rockefeller Center in New York, which in the winter functions as a skate rink, in summer with other sports activities or simply as a terrace.^[IMAGE 5.18] Important, according to Baird, is its sectional organization. The pedestrian on the sidewalk of either 49th or 50th street can’t look into the sunken plaza, since it is hidden behind sunken planters, another pedestrian area, and again sunken planters. Baird argues that this spatial configuration can host both the regular public in distraction, as well as those who are distracted from it by their curiosity to see what is happening on the sunken storey.

‘The street sidewalks have the capacity to accommodate the distracted passerby in utterly conventional terms. But at the same time, they open a possible lateral downward view to a locus of some possible focal human interest (the sunken plaza below). The downward angle of such views, without the full exposure of the scene below being immediately evident. ... To observe the scene below more fully, one must move to the sunken pedestrian zone behind the first planter. Here one finds oneself on another linear stretch of pedestrian space, but this time, not so purely a “distracted” space as that from which one has just departed. To be sure, It is possible to use this passage as a short cut, but it is also possible (indeed the spatial order invites it) to linger and to contemplate the scene on the sunken plaza below. To construct a public space that has the capacity to hold “distracted” and “contemplative” conditions of visibility simultaneously together in this manner seems to me a triumph of the orchestrated social psychology of public space.’²⁴³

Finally Baird emphasizes the important condition of continuity of spaces, as he argues that the Rockefeller Center functions quite well as these pedestrian sidewalks are part of the regular New York Grid, and particularly of the sidewalk network. In other words, although the sunken plaza is somewhere in the midst of the urban block between 49th and 50th street, it is linked through both additional pedestrian paths as well as regular street sidewalks that not only form ‘the constituent components of the overall spatial order of the plaza’, but also ‘an integral component of the continuous public street grid of midtown Manhattan.’²⁴⁴ The opposite figure of this fusion of an additional square and the regular (grid) structure is of course the mall, the gated community, and the other new (sub)

^{241.} Baird, *Public Space*, 113

^{242.} *Ibid.*, 113

^{243.} *Ibid.*, 115-116

^{244.} *Ibid.*, 116

245.

Ibid., 117; See also Christine Boyer, *Cyber Cities, Visual Perception in the Age of Electronic Communication*, New York 1996, Princeton Architectural Press

246.

Baird, *Public Space*, 124

247.

Ibid., 125-126

248.

Manuel De Solà-Morales, 'Public Spaces, Collective Spaces' in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Architectural Positions, Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (Amsterdam: SUN Publishers, 2009), 87

249.

Herman Hertzberger, *Space and the Architect*, (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2000), 25

250.

Ibid., 25

urban figures that I discussed in Chapter 2. The perimeter boundary of such a building or neighbourhood abruptly ends the continuous urban public territory, thereby providing vivid worlds apart in a sea of no-man's-land.²⁴⁵ As Baird argues, even the *New Urbanist* movement, which embraces pluralism at least in theory, is affected by the trends of exclusion and separation. 'It is probably a commonplace by now', Baird writes, 'to note that such communities exclude all but the most homogeneous of populations, and thus seriously can be considered to be public at all.'²⁴⁶ He then continues to show that this

'diminished publicness has negative consequences for life inside as well as outside its boundaries. Even if we concede that gated communities have the capacity to reduce the rise of burglaries and break-ins for their residents, by the same token they have the troubling effect of generating social pathologies for some of their inhabitants. We need only to think of such social groups as teenagers and the elderly in order to realize that life for some groups "inside the gates" will be more tedious, and less engaged in the manifold reality of the world, than would be possible if the vibrant, if sometimes difficult, "plurality" that exists "outside the gates" was also to be found inside of them.'²⁴⁷

It is for this reason that Baird pleads for 'patterns of intensification', although the examples he offers only address the existing urban condition (of Paris and Toronto). His plea seems to parallel the argument of the Barcelona-based architect Manuel de Solà-Morales (1939-2012), who argues that the seeking of *coherence* amongst all urban artefacts has to be the job of architecture and urban design. He argues that public life is dispersed today towards peripheral locations and interior spaces, even in the European city. De Solà-Morales goes on to argue that 'precisely there ... can a spectrum expansion of the communal city be produced that contributes to the hypertrophy of the public space itself. The significance of the public space lies not in the degree of its expanse, its quantitative predominance or its symbolic leading role, but in connecting private, enclosed spaces, so that these spaces too can be turned into collective patrimony.'²⁴⁸

There certainly is much openness in this definition of the architectural conditions that might increase the possibilities of appearances in public space. According to Herman Hertzberger, and with this remark we will conclude this reflection, this is the very task of the architect: to create places that are simultaneously recognizable as well as open for occupation and change.²⁴⁹ This poses architecture as a balancing act: balancing between, amongst other pairs, a sharply designed proposal and a certain ambiguity of space, between recognition and openness, and between enclosure and invitation. In his description the balancing act is described as the tension between place and space, which is also the balancing act between the designer and the user. 'The thing that turns space into place,' he writes, 'is the infill given it by its occupants/users. A location then becomes a "particular" place coloured by the occurrences past and present that lend it associations.'²⁵⁰ This perspective will come back in the next chapters, where this particular continuity in time, as well as the openness of the world for intervention, occupation and appropriation, and the challenge between designer and user will be put forward as crucial elements in the relationship between architecture and the public realm. Before opening up these perspectives, one point needs attention here: the interconnectedness of public and private space.



5.19 Adolf Loos, *Haus Moller*,
Vienna, Austria, 1928, facade



5.20 Adolf Loos, *Haus Müller*,
Prague, Czech Republic, 1930, interior

5.4 DARK AND LIGHT

5.4.1 *The Origins of Architecture*

The story of ‘action’ in human history, Arendt argues, is characterized by a continuous trial of control, curtailment and limitation. The urge to limit (the consequences of) action is evoked by its very characteristics of unpredictability and unexpectedness. These attempts tried to script action in different ways: even the limited size of the *polis*, Arendt states, was meant to limit the consequences of action.²⁵¹ In medieval times as well as in the modern era, action was captured in scripts of rituals or commercial activity, or by replacing action with behavior. These interventions try to strip action of its sharp edges, of its power to evoke awareness and to change. This of course is clearly visible in the totalitarian organization of the state that Arendt previously had investigated. Recent examples of this are the limited possibilities for inhabitants in – unfortunately amongst many others – Turkey or China to take note of certain internet pages (from Wikipedia to Twitter) during accidents or protests. The longing for control is not only a political threat. Economical forces also strip the possibilities of action. Again an extreme example is the organization of *Disney World* and other theme parks, where every inch has been designed in order to streamline processes, the movement of the masses, entertaining the spectators, the efficiency of events, and the selling of products: space is limited, heated and clearly directed. In such a space it is hard, if not impossible, to act. All actions after all disturb the very objective of the space, and therefore are simply forbidden. This is the background of Sorkin’s mantra upon which we touched in Chapter 2 and 3: ‘there are no demonstrations in Disneyland’;²⁵² it makes no sense, it will have no effect, it will be stopped immediately. Such carefully planned spaces can’t deal with the unpredictable, the unplanned – it disturbs the very aim of the space.

The unpredictability of action is not only a concern of those in power, it also means something for the participant in public life. As Arendt stresses, to appear in public, and to act and re-act, requires courage. One needs the courage of acting within uncertain, unpredictable and uncontrollable processes. One does not know the effect of engagement beforehand. Arendt poses the public realm against the private realm: if uncertainty is the characteristic of the public realm, control, predictability, certainty and security are the notions that are linked to the private.²⁵³ Public space is described in colorful, shiny, light and vivid tones; on the private Arendt uses an image of darkness and withdrawal. The public establishes reality, the private prevents reality. This description certainly evokes an entirely negative image of the private realm, in favour of the public realm. It is therefore easy to overlook, or even diminish, the former realm in favour of the latter. Often, Arendt is presented as simply investigating the public realm,²⁵⁴ while it is true that she stresses the public and the private at once. Arendt actually proposes a reciprocal relationship between the public and the private: the public cannot function without a well-functioning private realm. The private, although described in darker tones, therefore has its own qualities in Arendt’s writings. She urges the private as a necessary pre-condition, as we will see, prior to public life. Arendt is not alone in her investigation of the private, Habermas and Sennett also study the private realm, but only insofar as it relates to the public.²⁵⁵ Arendt offers a perspective on the private that stretches far beyond the public realm. The private realm certainly requires more attention – not only in political theory and public life, but also in reflections upon the city and the suburb.²⁵⁶

251. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 196

252. Michael Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park, The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York, Hill and Wang, 1992), xv

253. Parts of the following paragraphs has been previously published as ‘Lebensraum’ in *DASH#11*, 2015

254. Rene Boomkens, *Een drempelwereld, Moderne ervaring en stedelijke openbaarheid* (Rotterdam, NAI Uitgeverij, 1998), 51

255. Boomkens, *Een drempelwereld*, 404

256. cf Roger Berkowitz, ‘Solitude and the Activity of Thinking’, in: Roger Berkowitz, Jeffrey Katz, and Thomas Keenan (eds.), *Thinking in Dark Times, Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics* (New York, Fordham University Press, 2010), 139

In architectural theory, however, a more balanced view upon the public and private seems to be dominating the discourse. Architecture itself, is often stressed as the longing for a home. It is commonly accepted that the very source of architecture is the human need for protection, particularly in the post-paradise era.²⁵⁷ This seems to be a reasonable perspective, particularly if we think of the very beginning of architecture, in the occupation of caves or in the construction of huts (as Marc-Antoine Laugier and lots of his Renaissance contemporaries urge as the very source of architecture).²⁵⁸ The essence of architecture thus is understood as providing a shelter against the danger of nature both physically and mentally. The human body and being is in danger ‘out there’, both literally and virtually. The human body after all is vulnerable, whereas the human being can’t stand infinite space. Architecture therefore erects walls and roofs, makes constructions in order to clad these. Particular spots are protected, meant to withdraw from the danger. Architecture’s main task therefore might be described as providing a home for the human being – for both body and mind.²⁵⁹

Architectural theorists and historians also generally agree on the idea that architecture is much more than just a shelter for body and mind. In the words of Alberto Pérez-Gómez, architecture has to be seen as ‘a place of fruition and completeness analogous to erotic experience, a place for dwelling.’²⁶⁰ This comparison with the erotic experience shouldn’t surprise the reader, since it is also a reference to the book he previously wrote: *Built Upon Love*, in which he argues that if there is an ethical and aesthetical attitude, it needs to be built upon love.²⁶¹ In the introduction to this book, he argues that architecture is ‘concerned with far more than fashionable form, affordable homes, and sustainable development; it responds to a desire for an eloquent place to dwell, one that lovingly provides a sense of order resonant with our dreams, a gift contributing to our self-understanding as humans inhabiting a mortal world.’²⁶² Once again, despite the seeming contradiction in the quote – the contrast between mere ‘affordable homes’ on the one side (the practical issues), and the resonance with ‘our dreams’ on the other (the imaginary aspects), architecture is presented as a certain ‘natural’ urgency for the human being. Architecture is not simply a practical agency in order to offer functional spaces of retreat and protection; it contributes to the experience of purpose, Pérez-Gómez has stated elsewhere. Architecture helps to fit the human being on earth by an experience of purposeful life.²⁶³ The desire to give form to our dreams and to the gift of self-understanding can be seen as stressing the aesthetical aspects of architecture – or at least these aspects beyond the natural need of protection. This is also behind the image of the hut in Laugier’s *Essais sur l’Architecture*: to discuss, besides other issues, the aesthetics of architecture.

Architecture in this view is argued as ‘naturally’, it is a ‘natural’ need of the human being, placed in a ‘natural’ relationship with the earth. The human body is bound to particular places, secured from the danger of infinite space, from nature and even from world, in a place that offers four walls to protect but also some imaginary dimension. This perspective of course echoes the four dimensions the philosopher Martin Heidegger pushes forward in his famous lecture for architects in Bamberg in 1951, in which he draws, largely on etymological argumentation, a unity between being, building and dwelling, although we will come back to that lecture in the next chapter. As the essential elements of dwelling place: the gods and the mortals, the heaven and the earth.²⁶⁴ The spirit, as well as the body, needs to dwell in a place where life in all its aspects is revealed in fullness – or should we say, is ‘at home’. These perspectives are somehow inward-looking to the human being and roots architecture as a necessary agency or instrument regarding

257.

Mark Pimlott, *The Public Interior as Idea and Project* (Heijningen: Jap Sam Books, 2016), 17

258.

Marc Antoine Laugier (1713-1769) published as the first page of his *Essai Sur l’Architecture* a drawing of a hut that became particularly famous. The drawing urges architects to grasp back on the hut as the very source of architecture.

259.

As certainly is the case, also the ‘uncanny’ of the home is part and parcel of architectural theory, particularly since the wake of modernity (as we will see later). See for instance Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny. Essays in the Modern Unhomely*. (Cambridge (Mass.)/ London: MIT Press, 1992)

260.

Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement, Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 2016), 7

261.

Note nevertheless that the notion itself, how it is coloured by Pérez-Gomez is utterly different than the sameness notion, as it is urged in the writings of the French Philosopher Georges Bataille (1897-1962), who’s reflections upon architecture – in which he uses that reference as well – has influenced French architect like Bernard Tschumi. Their evocation of the erotic experiences much more stress aspects of transgression and violence, rather than the quite romantic readings of the Pérez-Gomez.

262.

Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Built Upon Love* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 2008), 4

263.

Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement*, 30

264.

Martin Heidegger, ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’, in: Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 2001), 150

265.
Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962)

266.
Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996)

267.
Pérez-Gómez, *Built Upon Love*, 4

268.
Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement*, 7

a natural and spiritual demand of the human being and the human body. Heidegger's trial to connect being and building certainly found its fertile ground within the field of architecture, as did other perspectives upon that matter which were published in the fifties. Besides Heidegger's attempt the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty needs to be mentioned, who in his book *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), dedicates two chapters to the question of space.²⁶⁵ Building on that perspective, the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard took his argument further, in a book called *The Poetics of Space* (1957).²⁶⁶ These books, which all stress the phenomenology of space and dwelling, propose place as a defence against the threats of modernity, particularly by arguing that the modern conception of space, which affects the project of architecture and urban design, has lost its essential connection with existential space. In different words and tones, they plead for a reconnection between the existential and concrete space. In other words, these phenomenal investigations stress the space of the individual, where the larger picture, that of the community, the public, is only on secondary stage. Pérez-Gómez and other architectural theorists certainly do not leave this broader perspective aside. Immediately after the quotes above, the first opens up the scope towards the social body. In *Built Upon Love* he stresses the desire of the architect 'to design a beautiful world' as well as 'architecture's imperative to provide a better place for society.'²⁶⁷ And in *Attunement* he comes up with what he calls the 'ideal' beyond architecture: 'When most fully realized, architecture offers the gift of psychosomatic completeness, true health and well-being for the social body, a space of appearance consonant with its actions and habits.'²⁶⁸ He thus also reach beyond the individual towards a bigger picture. However, even after these remarks, it is clear that the very root of architecture in his view is on the level of natural demand, whether physically, psychosomatically or communally.

However, if we stress this picture from Arendt's perspective, it is remarkable that the arguments on both the longing for home, as well as on the broader picture, still only contain aspects of the labor-view. Arendt in turn stresses the world-of-objects, of which architecture certainly is a part as the outcome of 'work'. If the longing for a 'home' is the origin of architecture, then it should be the longing for being at-home-in-the-world. Its source is not simply the existential space, but it is the space needed for the community that requires architectural intervention and space. As from this 'public' space, in Arendt's perspective the private realm needs attention and investigation. This perspective, in which architecture is not bound to labor but to work, urges us to look upon architecture differently, and will attract our attention in the next chapter. Before we open that perspective, however, we need to investigate the private realm as it is related to the public realm, in order to understand Arendt's image of the public in a much more complete sense.

5.4.2 *Enabling Participation*

In Arendt's writings, the public and the private are in mutually need. The harsh light that is ascribed to the public realm needs the darkness of the private. Of course, the dark-and-light metaphor might cheat us at this point. The negative tone of the dark ascribed to the private indeed has its source in the privative aspect that Arendt ascribes to the private realm. If the private actively discloses the human being from participating in the public realm, this is understood by Arendt in a negative way. Arendt takes the word private back to this root: it means 'to be deprived': to be deprived from a life lived amongst peers.

‘In ancient feeling,’ she writes, ‘the privative trait of privacy, indicated in the word itself, was all-important; it meant literally a state of being deprived of something, and even of the highest and most human of man’s capacities. A man who lived only a private life, who like the slave was not permitted to enter the public realm, or like the barbarian had chosen not to establish such a realm, was not fully human. We no longer think primarily of deprivation when we use the word “privacy”, and this is partly due to the enormous enrichment of the private sphere through modern individualism.’²⁶⁹

Without the company of peers, the human being is stripped of his humanity. That is to say: only through this appearance in the public realm, in a concern for the world, will men gain reality. Only through interaction with the world and through action in public will men understand ‘who I am’ as well as ‘what the world is’. The reality of the human being as well as the reality of the common world is only revealed through appearances in the world and inter-action with peers. Arendt is negative about the private at this point, since she recognized in modern life the increasing temptation of citizens to disengage from public life and to withdraw into the private realm.

This negative perspective is nevertheless not the only perspective Arendt urges about the private. The metaphor of dark-and-light is employed by Arendt in more positive reflections upon the private, contributing in mutual ways to the functioning of the public realm. At least three important aspects of the private realm are urged by Arendt in this respect. The first regards the importance of private property: without a private realm, one cannot devote oneself to the world. It is the household that enables the citizen to enter public space. ‘Without mastering the necessities of life in the household,’ Arendt writes, ‘neither life nor the ‘good life’ is possible, but politics is never for the sake of life. As far as the members of the *polis* are concerned, household life exists for the sake of the ‘good life’ in the *polis*.’²⁷⁰ Arendt strongly argues this perspective through a reflection upon the organization of the *Polis*. In the *polis*, the ownership of a house (and household) was regarded as important in order to participate in the political realm, and therefore valued amongst the citizens in the *Polis*; this also meant that the house(hold) itself was strongly protected from all interventions by the public. In the classical city-state, the ‘power’ of the *polis* therefore was limited by the edges of the private realm. ‘What prevented the *polis* from violating the private lives of its citizens and made it hold sacred the boundaries surrounding each property,’ Arendt writes, ‘was not respect for private property as we understand it, but the fact that without owning a house, a man could not participate in the affairs of the world.’²⁷¹ A private realm and private property, in other words, are actually indispensable to commitment to the world. It is only by having the household, that the citizen would be free to participate in public. The border between the *polis*’s public space and a private property therefore was absolutely respected, and even rendered to be a sacred space.²⁷² The laws of the *polis* did not have power on private soil: it had no right to intervene in the life of the household, within the borders of private properties.

Arendt stresses with this point not only the sharp distinction between the private and the public (and how important it was to keep them apart), but also argues that a twofold leap of freedom is needed regarding participation in the world. This first leap of Arendt’s understanding of freedom is delivered by the household – the citizen needed to be a Master of a household, the owner of a private property. By mastering a household, the citizen was freed from the daily

269. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 38

270. *Ibid.*, 36-37 [emphasis in original]

271. *Ibid.*, 30; in my article ‘Lebensraum’ I oppose the emphasis on the value to own a property, a place in the world of one’s own, with the utopian and dystopian perspectives, in which property often has been regarded with suspicious. In many utopias and dystopias, private home ownership, and the corresponding idea of privacy, is suspect. Being ‘at home’ must be avoided in such a world. Privacy has been abolished or restricted, and possessions must be shared with the community at large – after all, those who become too comfortable may start pursuing different goals. Private property undermines commitment to the public good, and who knows what people get up to behind closed doors!

272. *Ibid.*, 63/64; two things are important to underline in this perspective: first of course that these boundaries were regarded so important, even almost sacred. But second, that this also meant that these boundaries, often the walls of a property, were treated as if they were ‘spaces’ – in-between space between the private property on the one hand, and the public space in the other. This figure of the border not as a line but as a space is an important concept also architecturally, regarding the public space. It somehow can be loosely associated with both Sennetts and Boomkens emphasis on the threshold, although their perspectives were developed through a very different trajectory, and thus addresses other aspects of the relationship between the public and the private. See Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye. The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 198-202; see also Boomkens, *Een drempelwereld*, 391-408

273.
cf. Arendt, *The Human Condition*,
128

274.
Ibid., 36

275.
Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen*, 93

concerns. This seems to be close to Habermas's analysis too. A different organization of work and household gave the bourgeoisie (or to be fair: the male head of the household) 'leisure time': the time to visit a salon or coffeehouse. The public sphere thus could only arise insofar as these citizens were freed from their daily practices and concerns, so that they could spend spare time at the café. This perspective certainly seems to be outdated, the moment spare time is a common good in society – a common good not guaranteed by others working for 'them' (the household, other family-members, slaves), but by those working for a surplus pay check and laws regulating the labor market. Although this could be a chance to participate, for Arendt it is a major concern. In the preface to *The Human Condition* Arendt stresses it as one of the three reasons to rethink 'our' activities and their relationship to the world. Spare time after all became leisure time – filled with entertainment, whose effect is withdrawal from the world rather than engagement in the world. It is important here to understand that Arendt not only emphasises this status of 'being freed from' as the condition of participation. Appearing in public meant not only 'to enjoy free time' that could be filled with some nice things, like hobbies,²⁷³ but requires an additional leap of renunciation: to think and act from the perspective of the polis. Freedom to Arendt thus means not only to be freed *from* the necessities of life (in other words, to have spare time), but also to be free *for* participation in public. The second leap requires engagement with the world. This is only possible, Arendt argues, by leaving one's own personal interests behind. This of course once again describes the citizens in the *Polis*. They were only able to participate in public, in the discussions about the future of their city, by a complete devotion to the public interests. On the one hand, they need their private property in order to be free, but on the other, they also need to leave it behind, in order to think from the perspective of the city.

'To leave the household', Arendt writes, 'originally in order to embark upon some adventure and glorious enterprise and later simply to devote one's life to the affairs of the city, demanded courage because only in the household was one primarily concerned with one's own life and survival. Whoever entered the political realm had first to be ready to risk his life, and too great a love for life obstructed freedom, was a sure sign of slavishness. Courage therefore became the political virtue par excellence, and only those men who possessed it could be admitted to a fellowship that was political in content and purpose.'²⁷⁴

5.4.3 *The Sacredness of the Hidden*

Although Arendt granted this virtue of courage, she also argued that this is all impossible without also having a private realm. One needs a 'station' in the world, Arendt writes in her biography of Rahel Varnhagen,²⁷⁵ which is the second aspect to be gained from her perspective on the private realm. Remember that in her view the public realm is the domain of freedom, while the private covers the necessity and the drudgery to tend to those necessities. Those who have not yet gained this freedom, who are ruled by the necessities of life, have in Arendt's view not yet arrived at 'true humanity'. They are deprived of participation outside their own subjective domain. But conversely, and this is Arendt's second point regarding the private realm, a life lived exclusively in the bright glare of the public realm will fade. It will lose depth, its ability to appear in the world. The private realm offers events and activities of human life their proper place in the world. While the *bios politikos* only can evolve in the public realm, the biological necessities of life, as well as the related life-events, need the household as its solid

and secure base. Without mastering the necessities of life in the private realm, public life would not be possible, Arendt argues. At this point we are back again to Arendt's metaphor of the darkness of the private realm. Darkness means first and foremost that something has been hidden from view, and is therefore shielded from the continuous maelstrom of public life.

‘These four walls, within which people's private life is lived, constitute a shield against the world and specifically against the public aspect of the world. They enclose a secure place, without which no living thing can thrive. This holds good ... for human life in general. Wherever the latter is consistently exposed to the world without the protection of privacy and security its vital quality is destroyed.’²⁷⁶

If this destruction is manifest anywhere, it is in the appearance of homeless people living like ghosts on the streets. Being homeless not only means living unprotected from wind and rain, it means not having a safe place where you can be more or less secure and sheltered, a place to which you can withdraw in order to recharge, before re-entering the domain of uncertainty and danger.²⁷⁷ It is against this backdrop that Arendt stresses the importance of one's own household as well as that of one's own home as a necessary condition. The darkness of the house and the blinding glare of the outside depend on each other, they are inextricably linked. Distinct from family life with its protective and educational aspects, Arendt also takes this to mean that the private realm accommodates those things in life that *cannot* appear in public.

‘The sacredness of this privacy was like the sacredness of the hidden, namely of birth and death, the beginning and the end of mortals who, like all living creatures, grow out of and return to the darkness of the underworld. The non-privative trait of the household realm originally lay in its being the realm of birth and death which must be hidden from the public realm because it harbors the things hidden from human eyes and impenetrable to human knowledge. It is hidden because man does not know where he comes from when he is born and where he goes when he dies.’²⁷⁸

Arendt thus argues that the distinction between public and private is that which must be made visible on the one hand and that which must remain invisible on the other. What appears in public acquires maximum visibility and hence reality.²⁷⁹ However, there are some things in life that need to remain hidden: the intimacy of love and friendship, the experiences of birth and death. Both the physical and the romantic belong to the realm of necessity, Arendt claims. She thus describes the private as the realm of subjective emotions and mixed feelings and of the great events of life: birth, death, love.²⁸⁰ They are too closely tied up with the needs of the individual to be made a public matter, the scholar George Kateb argues.²⁸¹ We also might render these ‘life events’, as they are called nowadays, as ‘unspeakable’: their character lies beyond language, beyond experiences that can be shared to the public at large by speech. These are private experiences, which cannot publicly be shared nor need not be announced – they need to be shared in the private sphere, amongst family and friends. Arendt thus emphasized that the private should remain private: these events ask for celebration or mourning, disillusionment or astonishment, not for public action. Put differently: the private realm provides space for the ineffable, the issues we cannot discuss or negotiate, or indeed the ones we cannot stop talking about. Those issues need a safe place, among

276. Arendt, ‘The Crisis in Education’, 183

277. Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism*, 213

278. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 62-63

279. *Ibid.*, 50

280. *Ibid.*, 77

281. cf. George Kateb, ‘Freedom and Worldliness in the Thought of Hannah Arendt’, in: *Political Theory*, vol. 5 (May, 1977) no. 2, 144

282.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 71

283.
Ibid., 52

284.
Hannah Arendt, 'The Crisis in Education', in: Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York, Penguin Books, 2006), 183

285.
Ibid., 185

286.
Heynen, *Architectuur en kritiek van de moderniteit*, 118

287.
Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 9; According to Hilde Heynen, the 'living that leaves traces' belongs to the nineteenth century and has been lost because of modernity. Benjamin's text evokes this loss, as it is suffused by nostalgia for this 'real living' based on an 'experience'. Hilde Heynen, 'Moderniteit en architectuur in het werk van Walter Benjamin', in: *Krisis*, vol. 9, no.221 (1989)

288.
cf. again Adolf Loos's view of architecture, which comes close to the role of clothing: 'The architect's general task is to provide a warm and liveable space', see: Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity, Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge (Mass)/London: MIT Press, 1994), 265.

289.
This is how the interior tends to be used in novels. Cf. Klaskie Havik, *Urban Literacy. Reading and Writing Architecture* (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2014), 42-47

290.
cf. the historian Tony Judt, who uses a specific interior (a hotel in Switzerland) to order, interpret and retain his memories as ALS increasingly reduces his mobility and mental capacities. Tony Judt, *The Memory Chalet* (New York: Penguin Press, 2010), 8

personal 'things' and their inherent memories. 'The only efficient way to guarantee the darkness of what needs to be hidden against the light of publicity is private property, a privately owned place to hide in.'²⁸²

Public life needs the private realm to recover, to reform, in order to reappear and participate in public again afterwards.²⁸³ Appearance always means appearing from a private realm into the lights of the public realm. Everything that lives, not vegetative life alone, 'emerges from darkness and, however strong its natural tendency to thrust itself into the light, it nevertheless needs the security of darkness to grow at all.'²⁸⁴ On the other hand Arendt also emphasizes that the lights of the public realm are in need of the interior of the private realm, as a sphere of education, nurturing, and all the events of life that cannot be shared publicly. As Arendt concludes: 'The more completely modern society discards the distinction between what is private and what is public, between what can thrive only in concealment and what needs to be shown to all in the full light of the public world, the more, that is, it introduces between the private and the public a social sphere in which the private is made public and vice-versa, the harder it makes things for its children, who by nature require the security of concealment in order to mature undisturbed.'²⁸⁵

This perspective echoes the reflections of the Viennese architect Adolf Loos (1870-1933) who stressed the façade as an essential element to distinguish the private sphere from the increasing business of the *großstadt*. He deliberately removed all representative aspects of the dwelling-program from the street, offering family life a rich, well decorated and comfortable interior.^[IMAGE 5.19, 5.20] The façade was left as anonymous, abstract composition. As Hilde Heynen argues, if these facades reveal something, then it should be the anonymity of the Metropolis.²⁸⁶

5.4.4 *Happy Among Small Things*

Arendt's third consideration is a bit more hidden in her writings, but it clearly comes to the fore when we revisit her writings via a perspective Walter Benjamin brought to the fore. Long before Arendt constructed the private realm as the space of the necessities of life, Walter Benjamin had also linked the interior with life itself. 'To live,' he writes in his well-known analysis of the birth of the interior, 'means to leave traces. In the interior, these are accentuated.'²⁸⁷ To live is to leave traces – there is no escape from it. Whereas in the public space those traces inevitably fade, in the interior they remain visible and tangible for the occupant, and even inject colour into life itself. Immediately before the above quotation, Benjamin writes: 'The interior is not just the universe, but also the *étui* of the private individual.'²⁸⁸ The interior is so close to man that it is like a second skin – a perfect fit. The things, from furniture to equipment, speak for themselves; they are taken for granted. The things are geared to our rhythm (of life), and vice versa. But there is more to it: the things are given meaning through living; they accommodate a story.²⁸⁹ And that is crucial: the interior comes close precisely because of the memories that attach to it. To be at home is more than eating, sleeping and working somewhere – it is to *inhabit* the house. That is to say: to make it your own, to leave traces. The interior orders memories, gives them their appropriate place. A scent can bring a lost world back to life, sounds can move or touch us, the sense of touch can guide us: these all converge in the space of the interior, thereby allowing us to share intimate experiences (for which we have no words).²⁹⁰ We can only really come 'home' via these traces of life, when life has taken possession of the interior, when we have made the interior our own, the

smells have become familiar and we can reappear into the world from there. Benjamin discusses the interior in a text in which he presents Paris as a nineteenth-century metropolis. Modernity is starting to bring innovation – symbolized by the arcades with their cast-iron constructions. And the interior comes into conscious being, Benjamin argues, through the mutability of modernity, the changes to life, work, our surroundings. It originates in the need for a place of one's own: a small but personal haven in a turbulent world that is subject to constant change. Benjamin localizes this consciousness quite precisely, placing it the reign (1830-1848) of French King Louis Philippe I. Although democratic rights had been extended and improved in France, huge corruption scandals in parliament and the worsening living conditions of the working classes prompted a second people's revolution. Benjamin stresses that around this time the modern individual experienced a separation where there was not one before: the separation between living and working, between the (domestic) interior and the workplace.²⁹¹ Both entities drifted further and further apart and, over time, became opposites. Interestingly enough, Benjamin stresses that in the workplace one deals with real life (although work is increasingly being carried out in bigger, virtual spheres), whereas within the dwelling's interior one harbours illusions.²⁹² The interior and the private person are in sharp contrast with the modern metropolis, modernization, crowds and public life. The latter invokes the former: the interior as flight. The interior is a safe haven, a familiar domain, in which one can cherish one's personal history in an otherwise cold and threatening environment. A similar analysis – no doubt inspired by the same Parisian experience as that of Benjamin, whom she met in the early 1940s in Paris, when both were on the run from German terror – can be found in *The Human Condition*, when Arendt argues that what may be irrelevant in the public realm can be extremely relevant to the individual. Arendt links this to the perceived decay of the public realm in France, as a result of which:

‘the French have become masters in the art of being happy among ‘small things’, within the space of their own four walls, between chest and bed, table and chair, dog and cat and flowerpot, extending to these things a care and tenderness which, in a world where rapid industrialization constantly kills off the things of yesterday to produce today's objects, may even appear to be the world's last, purely humane corner.’²⁹³

Arendt is not sceptical about the need for such a place in the world. On the contrary, she here has an open eye to those elements in the domestic private realm that are able to turn a house into a home: the personal belongings that are collected by the inhabitant that, in the words of Benjamin, are to be seen as the traces of life.²⁹⁴ Although it is just a minor passage in *The Human Condition*, it is clear that she recognizes both the importance of private property like a house, as well as the appropriation of the house into a certain domestic shelf, a stage for family life, a familiar place.²⁹⁵ The home protects the familiar, through its very privacy.²⁹⁶ The private realm, including its privative aspects, protects its inhabitants against the bright light of the continuously changing world. It is a familiar domain – a familiarity that is tangible in the interior. Its value is that this familiar space enables the resident to be at home in the world. After all it is also the realm of education, a place where man learns how to behave in public, moreover how to participate in the public realm.²⁹⁷ This is how we can describe the domestic sphere as well: first, it offers protection of the body and private life, and second (but no less important), it offers storage space for the traces of life.

291. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 8

292. See also: Boomkens, *Een drempele-ereld*, 94-95

293. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52

294. Juhani Pallasmaa, ‘Identity, Intimacy and Domicile – Notes on the Phenomenology of Home,’ in: David Benjamin (ed.), *The Home: Words, Interpretations, Meanings, and Environments* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), 132

295. With private property Arendt does not plea here for actually owning a house as a matter of ‘being at home in the world’. She herself never had bought a house, but always rented one. It is about making a place in the world your own, that is through ‘leaving traces’ and making the spaces familiar, through ‘dwelling’ itself, the house becomes one's own, one will embody the space, as also the spaces embodies itself in the resident.

296. Cornelis Verhoeven, ‘Wonen en thuiszijn’, in Cornelis Verhoeven and Jacques De Visscher, *Voorbij alle vanzelfsprekendheden* (Zoetermeer/Kalmthout: Uitgeverij Klement/Pelckmans, 2012), 92: ‘The elementary character of a home, household effects, living and dwelling is hard to deny, as if it means nothing. Dwelling is also to sit and to possess, to be surrounded by that what is one's own. Property is in all its contingency and un-stability an anchor that keep us and to reside, it is the ground in which we take root and our concrete mortality. Within one's property things get their meaning, and the owners relate to them. To possess itself is that relation.’ [translation from Dutch, HT]

297. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 66

298.

I guess that this is also the reason that most people want to bring some things from home when they are being treated in a hospital: we want to be surrounded by belongings that have meaning to us, specifically on moments that are existential.

299.

Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 20

300.

Beate Rössler, *The Value of Privacy*, (Cambridge (Mass.): Polity Press, 2005), 144

301.

This is not exactly a development exclusive to the last decade, as shown by Lynn Spigel in her article, 'The Suburban Home Companion: Television and the Neighborhood Ideal in Postwar America', in: Beatriz Colomina, *Sexuality & Space* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992)

The intimate and overwhelming events of life that Arendt stressed as the events of the private realm, the elements that need to be secured by the walls surrounding it, these events need to take place in spaces that are filled with our personal history and affinity, our memory and mementos. That's where we are at home and feel comfortable.²⁹⁸

Four years after the first edition of 'Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century', from which I quoted above, Walter Benjamin wrote a new version of the essay. The same quote returns, albeit with a different emphasis this time. The sentence starts off the same: 'The interior is not just the universe of the private individual; it is also his *étui*.' But then the text continues with a slight shift in focus: 'Ever since the time of Louis Philippe, the bourgeois has shown a tendency to compensate for the absence of any trace of private life in the big city. He tries to do this within the four walls of his apartment.'²⁹⁹ You might argue that the former analysis focuses on the traces of life that irrevocably take possession of the interior and are therefore accentuated. It is described as something that just happens. In the revised text, the arrangement of the space and the articulation of the traces have become a deliberate activity on the part of the occupant. The space and the things have a symbolic meaning, which is realized in a deliberate act of the individual. The occupant uses the interior as an instrument with which to mediate between life and the world. The interior has become a space of self-awareness and self-presentation, a form of *social imagination*. The interior reveals the occupant; it constitutes the presentation of the self to the world. The occupant is read through the interior. The collection and arrangement of furniture, paintings, wallpaper, carpet and books reveals the occupant's taste and style. It presents (real or constructed) wealth, a rich past or a distancing from that past. It says something about the occupants' development, or indeed their aspirations in that direction.

It has to be said, as a brief closing remark of this reflection upon the relationship between the private and the public, Arendt is practically alone in her description of the private realm as the space for the necessities of life (among which she counts not only household chores and labor, but also the economic thinking that dominates society) and the public as the domain of freedom. In today's prevailing liberal view of society those realms signify the reverse: the public as the space of restriction (being considerate of one another), the private as the domain of ultimate freedom. To come home is to take off our masks and to do as we please. This is the place where: 'we can do or not do just what we want, unobserved, undisturbed.'³⁰⁰ At the same time the distinction between public and private appears to have been hollowed out. Television brings the public debate into the living room, while the contestants in reality shows bare virtually all. Mobile phones prompt intimate conversations in the public space, whereas music enables individuals to isolate themselves, even in a public environment. Cameras watch our every move, while hardly any area of life remains hidden now that governments and hackers can monitor all of our movements via the Internet.³⁰¹ Today's technology in other words offers a completely new blurring of the boundaries between public and private. It seems to offer control to the private person, to reveal aspects of private life within the public sphere, but it also means we drastically lose control over what appears in public for the eyes of peers (or even what is revealed for the eyes of those nearby).

Modern technology, in completely different ways, reflects Arendt's concern about the sharp distinction between public and private. This also means something

regarding architecture, particularly stressing the boundary between the public and the private. Architecturally speaking, the theme of boundaries is nevertheless not new, as we have seen previously. Jane Jacobs, in her famous study of street life in her New York neighbourhood, and Richard Sennett on his analysis 'weak boundaries', that is illustrated with scenes from New York, have both urged the threshold as the crucial element, not simply of architecture, but of the city.³⁰²

302.
Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York 1992), Vintage Books; Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*

6.

WORLD. TO BE GATHERED
AROUND A TABLE

Architecture is mainly bound to the category of 'work', I stated in the previous chapter. It is important to have this perspective in mind: the message after all is that architecture is not simply the fulfilment of particular needs, but always deals with a perspective that reaches behind that need, behind urgent requirements. Architecture is in-between the private and the public, labor and action. It connects both sides of the human being. It creates the world, which is according to Arendt is always shared with others. It offers permanence to that world-in-common in a context of continuous change on the one hand (labor) and unpredictability on the other (action). It is this perspective upon work and the world it creates that is central in this chapter.

In the previous chapter we investigated the related concepts of action and public realm/space of appearance from a range of different perspectives. Although it is clear that for Arendt this pair of concepts are about plural mankind living together in a community, and how such a community is able to move forward to the future, how its political life needs to be understood, from our investigations it became clear how this requires concrete space and thus architecture, both phenomenologically as well as ontologically. Architecture, ontologically seen, represents the public and with that representation establishes public meaning and importance to the public realm, whereas architecture, if we regard the practices of appearances, either makes room or unfortunately disturbs the possibilities of appearances amongst peers. Although we were able to define aspects of concrete space that seem to enhance the possibilities of appearance, the question that was left on the table, however, was how architecture contributes to public space, not so much in its concrete forms and structures, constructions and interventions, but much more ontologically spoken. At this point, Arendt urges the perspective of work. Without the activity of work, she argues, action withers away. Without being written down, narrated in stories, or pinned down in reports (all activities that Arendt regard 'work', action vanishes quickly. Besides that: action is engagement in the world. The world, for Arendt is always a common-world. It is what the community, consisting of plural individuals, has in common. The activity of action – that is to appear amongst peers through words-and-deeds – therefore is bound to the world. The world is the object and subject of action, that is of political life. This picture of the activity of work and how that is related to the common world as object and subject of action, is absent in Habermas's perspective of the public sphere, as we have seen. In his image it is bound to the virtual spheres of state and market. Arendt's perspective nevertheless is the very perspective that offers an ontological bridge between the concept of the public realm and the field of architecture. Architecture, after all, can be understood as the very quintessential activity of human beings of transformation of the earth into that world-in-common. It offers objects that last, spaces that are open to (or prevent) gatherings, and thus is of central meaning to communities.

This chapter starts with a fascinating book of the Portuguese writer José Saramago. In his book *The Cave* he actually covers the gap between what has been the topic of chapter 2 and 3, the modern and post-modern attempts to diminish public space and capture it in environments of commerce and entertainment, of control and security, and how this prevents the user to be active, engaged, surprised on the one hand, as it also stresses the very objects, craftsmanship and mass production in regard to such a development. In other words, what Saramago stresses in his book is how the world-in-common is related to the objects that materialize this world-in-common. After this introduction to the chapter, I will investigate two previous attempts to introduce the thinking of Arendt within the field of Architecture. The first is of Kenneth Frampton, who already during the

'70s developed a provocative reflection upon the economic influences upon architecture, and how these are a threat for the 'permanence' that the architectural intervention has to offer to the world. It is fascinating, but it leaves architecture within the realm of labor and work, without stretching out to action. The second trial is more recent: Pier Vittorio Aureli urges Arendt's perspective in order to push forward his statement of the 'absolute architecture.' Again fascinating, and particularly strong in its anti-capitalist message. His argument on the particular straight-forward form of architecture, which resists the capitalist picture, is fascinating. Nevertheless, he fails to grasp the micro-scale that is inherent to Arendt's concept of action, and thus of the local space in which appearances in word and deed make sense.

After these reflections upon previous trials, this chapter sets out to define the aspects of 'work', particularly through the lens of the art-work. Art, according to Arendt, after all is a particular form of work, since it essentially has no other goal than itself. Its aim is the thing itself. Art, therefore, pushes forward what essentially can be said about other things that surround us. The final paragraphs then set out to challenge architecture along these lines that previously had been stretched. Architecture, we will conclude, has something to offer to the public realm: amongst many others permanence, tangibility, plurality, exposure, spatiality, continuity, form, and change. Architecture is transition – not only the change of a particular space into a place, but also transition from inside to outside, from public to private, and from forth to back. This transition evokes these mentioned experiences, particularly those where the senses are at work. As we will see: this is an important experience. It thickens, to state it with the Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa, our understanding of the world.





6.1 West Edmonton Mall, Edmonton, Canada

6.1 THE CAVE

1.
José Saramago, *The Cave* (London: The Harvill Press, 2002); José Saramago, *A Caverna* (Lisbon: Caminho, 2000). In this book is called 'Het Schijnbestaan', literally translated to English 'Fake-existence', which resembles the final chapter of the book. However, the Portuguese and the English title somehow also evokes the image of the cave of Plato, which also is withdrawn from the hustle and bustle of the city, in order to be engaged with the 'higher' questions of the mind. In Saramago's novel, there is also withdrawal from the world, but not in order to be busy with contemplation, but with leisure, to be entertained. This is another line in the book that I do not discuss here, but that also echoes in Arendt's perspective. Thanks to Arjan Gooijer, who brought this book to my attention.

In his novel *The Cave* the Portuguese writer José de Sousa Saramago draws the late working life of potter Cipriano Algor against the background of what he generally calls 'The Centre'.¹ While the story develops, the reader discovers what 'The Centre' is: a huge building located in the city, containing everything that can be imagined. It's a shopping mall as well as apartment building, an office and leisure-dome, far bigger than similar buildings known; and still expanding. Most visitors of the Centre are inhabitants too, or vice versa: the inhabitants are the visitors. Employees are obliged to live in the building, while a job is guaranteed to all inhabitants. For the inhabitants there is no reality outside the Centre – even their windows (if they have one in the façade of the building, most of the apartments are facing the interior) cannot be opened. Living in the Centre does mean the loss of any need to go anywhere else. From everything needed, that you possibly want to have, or you are eager to experience, to everything that might be imagined can be found in the Centre: it's commercial catalogue consists of fifty five A4 volumes, each containing 1,500 pages. In other words: The Centre controls the life of the inhabitants and employees: from their house to the fireplace, from bed to desk, from work to leisure, from cafe to church, from birth to death.

Saramago, in his typical style without punctuation, draws a stunning description of the Centre at the very moment when the potter Cipriano Algor has to move to there. After years of resistance, he now is bound to live in the apartment of his daughter Marta and son-in-law (a security-employee of the Centre) Marçal.

'We're here, Marçal said unnecessarily, when he put on the hand brake. The Centre was not visible from here, but it appeared before them as soon as they turned the corner of the street where they had left the car. As chance would have it, this was the side, part, face, end or extremity reserved for residents. It was not a new sight for any of them, but there is a great difference between looking for looking's sake and looking while someone is saying to us, Two of those windows are ours, Only two, asked Marta, We can't complain, some apartments have only one, said Marçal, not to mention the ones that only have windows with a view of the inside, The inside of what, The inside of the Centre, of course, Do you mean there are apartments with windows that overlook the inside of the Centre itself, Lots of people actually prefer them, they find the view from there much more pleasant, varied and interesting, whereas from the other side you just have a view over the same rooftops and the same sky, ... They entered another lift. There are two speeds, explained Marçal, we'll go slowly to start with, He pressed the relevant button, then button number twenty, Let's go to the twentieth floor first so that you have time to appreciate the view, he said. The part of the lift that looked out over the Centre was entirely made of glass. The lift travelled slowly past the different floors, revealing a succession of arcades, shops, fancy staircases, escalators, meeting points, cafés, restaurants, terraces with tables and chairs, cinemas and theatres, discotheques, enormous television screens, endless numbers of ornaments, electronic games, balloons, fountains and other water features, platforms, hanging gardens, posters, pennants, advertising hoardings, mannequins, changing rooms, the façade of a church, the entrance to the beach, a bingo hall, a casino, a tennis court, a gymnasium, a roller coaster, a zoo, a racing track for electric cars, a cyclorama, a cascade, all waiting, all in

silence, and more shops and more arcades and more mannequins and more hanging gardens and things for which people probably didn't even know the names, as if they were ascending into paradise. And is this speed only used so that people can enjoy the view, asked Cipriano Algor, No, at this speed the lifts are used as an extra security aid, said Marçal, Isn't there enough security what with the guards, the detectors, the video cameras, and all the other snooping devices, Cipriano Algor asked again, Tens of thousands of people pass through here every day, it's important to maintain security, replied Marçal.²

2.
Ibid., 229-232

3.
Ibid., 4

4.
Ibid., 232

5.
Lieven De Cauter, 'The Capsule and the Network. Preliminary Notes for a General Theory', in: Marcel Musch and Eireen Scheurs (eds.), *Re: Generic City, OASE#54*, (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 2001), 127

The Centre is still expanding. Slowly but surely it absorbs all urban activities of the streets in the surroundings, the lives of the ordinary people living around it and the sales of the small shops which still try to compete. As stated, when people get to work in the Centre, they are obliged to live there as well, the resulting effect of the Centre on the city and its surroundings slowly becomes visible: there are magnificent artificial agricultural fields, in order to feed the Centre, huge Industrial Zones in order to produce the products sold by the Centre, and in-between those zones an emerging slum where the unhappy people live that can't work at the Centre or afford an apartment there – a zone where you'd better not slow down while driving through. 'Here, every now and then, and in the name of the classical axiom which says that necessity knows no law, a truck laden with food is held up and emptied of its contents before you can say knife.'³ Against this environment that increasingly becomes violent, or better said, is unpredictable, the interior of The Centre is rendered as 'better' – in the sense of controlled 'perfection' and 'safety'. I quote again at length:

"Contrary to what Marta and her father had expected, there was not just one corridor separating the blocks of apartments with view onto the outside world from those with a view inside. There were, in fact, two corridors and, between them, another block of apartments. ... Marta said, These people never see the light of day when they're at home, Neither do the people who have apartments with a view onto the inside of the Centre, replied Marçal, But as you said, at least they can find some distraction watching the view and the people moving about, while the others are practically enclosed, it can't be easy to live in an apartment with no natural light, breathing canned air all day, Well, you know, there are plenty of people who prefer it like that, they find the apartments more comfortable, better equipped, just to give you a few examples, they all have ultraviolet machines, atmospheric regenerators and thermostats that can regulate temperature and humidity so accurately that it's possible to keep the humidity and temperature in the apartment constant day and night, all year round, Am I glad we didn't get one of those, I don't think I could stand living there for long, said Marta, We resident guards have to make do with an ordinary apartment with windows, Well I would never have imagined that being the father-in-law of a resident guard at the Centre would prove to be the best fortune and the greatest privilege that life would offer me, said Cipriano Algor."⁴

Life, in other words, is taken to the very interior of the Centre. It is capsularized, to state it with the Belgium philosopher Lieven De Cauter, it is taken to simulation, the spectacle, to a hyper-reality.⁵ It is the evacuation of the unpredictability, the raw and rough character, and the harsh light of public space captured in the control of the interior, and the moulds of its program.

6.

Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air, The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 15

7.

of René Boomkens, *De nieuwe wanorde, Globalisering en de maakbare samenleving* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 2006), 35

8.

Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992); Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye, The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company); Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone, The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994); Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009); Richard Sennett, *Together, The Rituals, Pleasures & Politics of Cooperation* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013)

During the story it becomes clear that this strive for control and perfection also means the end of the job of the potter. Algor is a supplier of the Centre, but his products increasingly have to fulfil standards of perfection. Since he is a craftsman, producing all his pottery by his own hands, none of the produces he makes are exactly the same, let alone 'perfect'. The Centre cannot deal with the diversity of his produce; they require identical products. The 'Centre' designates the contract with him, which means that for the potter there is no other chance than to make himself a living in the apartment of his daughter and son-in-law, within the Centre itself, which he actually dislikes. The strive for perfection leads to a decline of craftsmanship (how paradoxical that actually sounds).

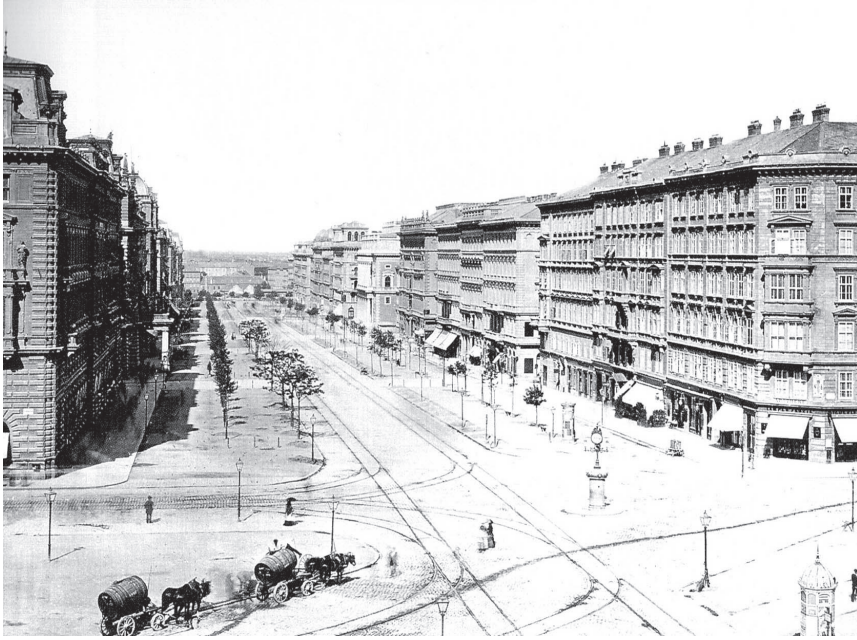
Obviously the potter in this novel a symbol of life closely connected with nature, the earth and traditions, while the 'Centre' symbolises life dominated by economic worldview and modernity: the novel is about the struggle between natural and artificial life. Such a struggle is a ground figure of modernity, as Marshall Berman argues in his book *All that is Solid Melts Into Air*.⁶ Modernity is balancing between the past and the future, local traditions and circumstances and processes of globalisation.⁷ This balancing often urges paradoxical existences, Berman argues, but certainly not in the story of Saramago. The undertone is distrust, if not disgust, of the Centre and everything that belongs to it (mass-production, placelessness, artificiality, control), in favour of what apparently loses terrain (craftsmanship, tradition, local geography, authenticity, surprise). In other words, the story narrates an unbalanced struggle: modernity is always the winning hand, but at the consequence of a literally soulless life.

Saramago's novel is one of the books that startled me, particularly evoked by his style, but much more by the relationship he draws between production and public space. Saramago shows that the changing emphasis on similarity and interchangeability of the products surrounding us, as well as their effect on the workshop (and all issues related to labor and work), relates to the increasing emphasis on security and entertainment within public space are simply two sides of the same coin. The transformation of our landscapes and cities, as well as the modification of furniture, pencils, fashion, flowerpots and pans are signage of an increasing economic attitude to the world, effect of the capitalist approach to life and community. Although this view does not have to surprise us (until his death in 2010 Saramago was a pronounced but peculiar Marxist) and although it seems reasonable, this relationship between public space and the objects surrounding us, is rarely so clearly stressed. Some of this perspective certainly is tangible in the work of Richard Sennett, who has written a lot on the changes in cities and landscapes, as well as more recently on the attitude to work and craftsmanship and cooperation.⁸ Interestingly enough, Sennett has announced that the latter two books will be followed by one that again takes the city as its focus. In other words, Sennett also stresses the close relationship between work (and the products of work) and the cities that we produce. Saramago's novel makes tangible and imaginable how these aspects are to be related: it shows how the economic principles empties life – both the individual life as well as the life of the community; the life of the city as well as that of the countryside; of the craftsman as well as of the citizen. What this perspective moreover reveals is the drastic change of attitude to the world – which as a notion is brought to us by Arendt, addressing both the object as well as the world-of-objects, the landscape and cities, as well as the product of work – due to such an economic approach. The attitude is emptied out, which causes the loss of the world itself. Losing a personal

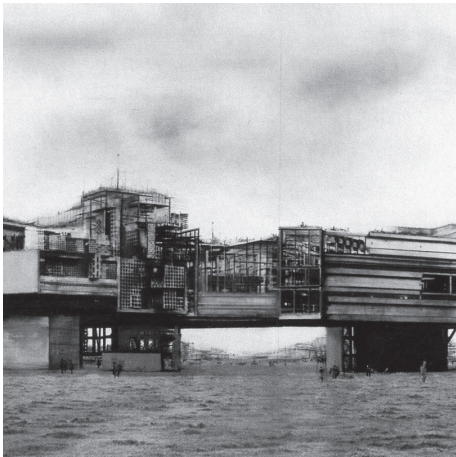
relationship with the things surrounding us causes a sense of rootlessness in the world, and vice-versa.

With that image, *The Cave* offers a literary echo of one of the main issues Arendt challenges in her book *The Human Condition*: if everything is perfect no politics is needed. If everything is controlled by economic laws, and thus does not require action and speech on the future, even personal reflection can be excluded: there only is a need to consume what is offered. One goal dominates in *The Cave*: the (economic) success of the Centre (although it is not clear who's after that, which might another echo of Arendt's *The Human Condition*: the power, invisibility and elusiveness of the no-man-ruler, bureaucracy). Everything that disturbs this goal is swept away. Within the Centre, there is no real room for unfolding your own life, developing your own stances, let alone practicing your own opinions or expressing your own individuality. Just be happy in your apartment and with all the possibilities the Centre offers. Individual happiness and collective happiness are one – there cannot be room in-between. Workers, residents, owners and visitors are understood as one happy family: they work together on this single goal (even if they are only spending time there): the success of the Centre – because its success lies in their own success, future, and happiness.

Saramago, to my mind, has offered a literary version of *The Human Condition*, stressing public space, the importance of work, the threat of the social realm, although *The Cave* misses the hopeful undertone that is important in Arendt's perspective: the power of action and its inherent promise of change, which was the central notion of the previous Chapter. In this Chapter we will investigate the other aspects that came to the fore in this novel: the relationship between production and public space – or in Arendt's terms: 'work' and 'the world'.



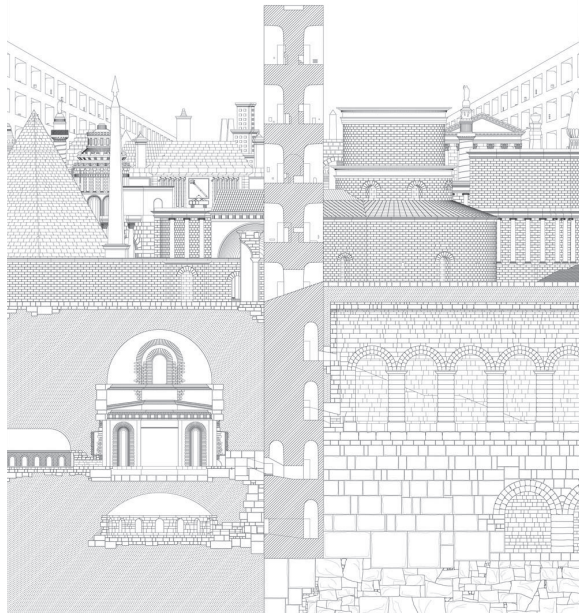
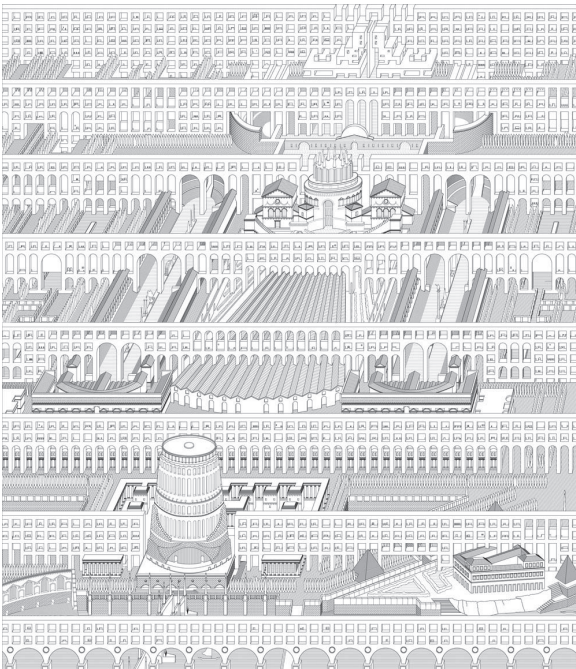
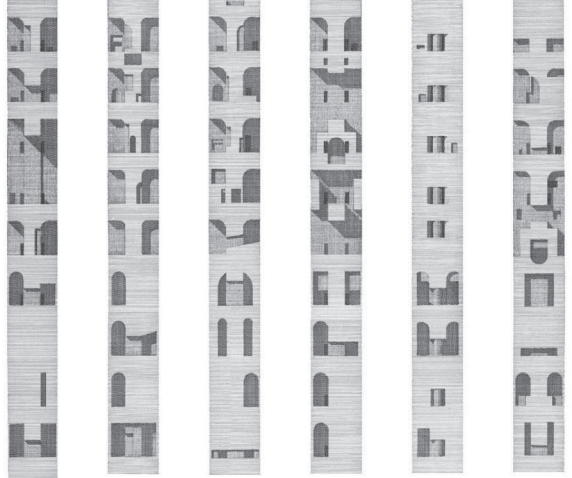
6.2 Schotterring section of the Ringstraße, Vienna, Austria, 1875



6.3 Constant Nieuwenhuis, *New Babylon*, 1956-1969



6.4 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, S.R. *Crownhall*, IIT, Chicago (Ill.), USA, 1956



6.5 Dogma, *Field of Walls*, 2012

6.2 BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE AND BUILDING

6.2.1 'That is Architecture!'

In architectural theory it is quite common to differentiate between architecture on the one hand and mere building on the other.⁹ To briefly describe this distinction: the latter categorizes the everyday constructions, the sheer functional, whereas the first addresses the outstanding constructions, those that offer a cultural 'surplus'. John Ruskin, the famous Victorian art critic, for instance, opens his book *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, with that statement: 'Architecture is the art which so disposes and adorns the edifices raised by man, for whatsoever uses that the sight of them may contribute to his mental health, power, and pleasure. It is very necessary, in the outset of all inquiry, to distinguish carefully between Architecture and Building.'¹⁰ In what follows in his introduction it becomes clear that the lack of a sharp distinction between the two would cause architecture to cease 'to be one of the fine arts'.¹¹ Building is obviously assembling building materials into an edifice. It only becomes architecture if it reaches to that cultural 'surplus': 'No one would call the last architectural which determine the height of a breastwork or the position of a bastion. But if to the stone facing of that bastion be added an unnecessary feature, as a cable moulding, *that is Architecture*. ... It may not be always easy to draw the line so sharply, because there are few buildings which have not some pretence or colour of being architectural; neither can there be any architecture which is not based on good building; but it is perfectly easy, and very necessary to keep the ideas distinct, and to understand fully that Architecture concerns itself only with those characters of an edifice which are above and beyond its common use.'¹² A similar statement is made by the British architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner in his well-known *Outline of European Architecture* when he writes 'A bicycle shed is a building, Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture.'¹³ This distinction seems to simply follow common sense. It is rather obvious that the cathedral is a meaningful building, even meaningful beyond the religious community using the building as their gathering place and place of worship, whereas the shed just is a functional entity, meaningful only for the users on a particular moment. The shed does not shape the community, the Cathedral does. It is nevertheless revealing to see that Ruskin wrote in his introduction that even the Church-building cannot be counted as architecture, if it is not more than the building pieces assembled together into a functional building. Only if the design adds a surplus, the church building can be counted as architecture. This also counts for Pevsner's take. It is not the cathedral *an sich* that is understood as architecture by him. It is Lincoln Cathedral. That means: it is a particular building, and Pevsner's judgement thus only can be applied to this particular case. Interestingly enough, the opposite is illustrated in a way more generic way. By taking *the* functional shed as example of this category of 'building', Pevsner suggests that the distinction between mere building and architecture has to be understood as the distinction between the generic and the particular. In other words, if we talk about architecture, we talk about the distinctive and particular within a sea of generic buildings. Architecture depends upon a distinctive quality, which is often tangible in our everyday language too: it has to be 'designed with a view to aesthetic appeal.'¹⁴ As the philosopher Karsten Harries, who has written extensively on architecture, remarks on Pevsner's view: this does not exclude the bicycle shed from the field of architecture. We perfectly can imagine (and we even can mention examples easily) bicycle sheds that are 'designed with a view to aesthetic appeal.'¹⁵

9. Fragments of the following paragraphs has been previously published as 'Constructing Culture' in the journal *Architectural and Culture* (2014), and re-published afterwards in the yearly overview on architectural education and research by the journal *Architectural Review* (2014): <https://www.architectural-review.com/constructing-culture-the-work-of-hannah-arendt/8673925.article>

10. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Forgotten Books, 2012), 8

11. *Ibid.*, 8

12. *Ibid.*, 9

13. Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), 15

14. *Ibid.*, 15

15. Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1997), 6

16.

Kenneth Frampton has published this article several times. The first time it is published as 'Labour, Work & Architecture' in Charles Jencks and George Baird (eds.), *Meaning in Architecture* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, The Cresset Press, 1969). A reworked version of this article is published as 'The Status of Man and the Status of His Objects: A Reading of *The Human Condition*', in Melvyn A. Hill (ed.), Hannah Arendt: *The Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979). Frampton thereafter included it in the special issue of the magazine *Architectural Design*, he edited in 1982: Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture and the Critical Present*, *Architectural Design*, no 7/8, 1982. He finally selected it as the opening of his collected writings published in 2002: Kenneth Frampton, *Labour, Work and Architecture. Collected Essays on Architecture and Design* (London/New York: Phaidon Press, 2002). In this Chapter, I refer to the last publication, as it is published as crucial part of his oeuvre, preceding the other collected essays.

17.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)

18.

In a reflection on his movement from the UK to the USA, he writes that both the architectural thinkers Thomas Stevens and Alan Colquhoun recommended him two different texts to read. The first offered him Arendt's *The Human Condition*, the second Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*. Frampton reflects: 'Arendt's double distinctions of work versus labour and public versus private were to be particularly revealing for me in as much as these categories could also be seen as paralleling the distinction we commonly make between architecture and building. However, even more meaningful in the long run was her equally seminal socio-cultural concept of the space of appearance.' In: Kenneth Frampton, 'Not Individual Property. The Ideas of Alan Colquhoun', in: Tom Avermaete, Christoph Grawe, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *OASE#87, Alan Colquhoun, Architect, Historian Critic* (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2012), 27

19.

Frampton, 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects', 22

20.

Ibid., 26

21.

Nelson Goodman, 'How Buildings Mean', in: *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.11, no.4 (1985), 643

22.

Ibid., 649: At the very moment of writing this passage, the discussion

Also the architect and architectural theorist Kenneth Frampton takes, in his article 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects',¹⁶ (that reflects upon a pivotal moment in his career as a theorist), the distinction between architecture and building, for granted. We touched upon Frampton and this particular text already in the previous chapter. Frampton after all describes Hannah Arendt's book *The Human Condition*¹⁷ as pivotal for his journey through the field of architecture, architectural theory and architectural history, as well as this article as crucial in his own oeuvre. Although he also is influenced by the *the Frankfurter Schule*, as we will see, he until today, cites Arendt as the main frame of his thinking.¹⁸ All later works are influenced by Arendt, he argues, which he urges as the very reason to place this text ahead of all other writings in the anthology of his collected writings he published in 2002.¹⁹ However, back to the distinction between mere building and architecture, that is fundamental to the perspective he develops in this article. Fair enough, we can argue, it is part of everyday language. Even the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides two definitions, Frampton states. The first definition is architecture as 'the art or science of constructing edifices for human use' and the second is architecture as 'the action and process of building'.²⁰ Intuitively, the former is understood as the cultural perspective linked to the inherent knowledge and history of the profession. After all, the use of the word 'edifice' suggests large and stately, even monumental buildings, whereas the latter definition emphasizes the art of construction, in which, strictly spoken, architects are not necessary, since it is embedded in (local) traditions and approaches. With the reference to the Dictionary, Frampton somehow urges the distinction between building and architecture as a distinction between the vernacular and the monumental. By introducing the term of the monumental, Frampton not only urges architecture as the exceptional (like Ruskin), but also the meaningful (like Pevsner). Frampton indeed comes close to the example of the cathedral in Pevsner's perspective, we might argue. The cathedral after all not only is meaningful for the religious community, it also is important for the local community, whether or not involved in that religious community. The cathedral is a landmark in the city. It is able to structure a wider area, since it dominates the skyline. The cathedral, in other words, is a significant building, which is expressed in the appearance of the building itself. The height of the building, the towers, the ornaments, the structure – they all signify this wider (and often simultaneously also the narrower) meaning of the edifice. Philosopher Nelson Goodman urges these elements of representation as the distinction between architecture and building. 'A building is a work of art', he writes, 'only insofar as it signifies, means, refers, symbolizes in some way. That may seem less than obvious, for the sheer bulk of an architectural work and its daily dedication to a practical purpose often tend to obscure its symbolic function.'²¹ Goodman is quick to relate this aspect of representation towards aesthetics, since buildings can gain significance also through occurrences, happenings, events, or other developments too. 'Even when a building does mean, that may have nothing to do with its architecture. A building of any design may come to stand for some of its causes or effects, or for some historical event that occurred in it or on its site, or for its designated use: any abattoir may symbolize slaughter, and any mausoleum, death; and a costly county courthouse may symbolize extravagance.'²²

The ambivalent understanding of architecture by architects and the public is generally accepted. Most professionals within the field of architecture understand their position as a balancing act between functionality and service on the one hand and artistic, cultural and innovative ambitions on the other. Nevertheless,

to stress the distinction between the two perspectives is a quite inadequate understanding of architecture and the concept of culture as such. It limits culture to the artistic and thus suggests that architecture is only a cultural phenomenon when it reaches beyond the everyday practices of construction to focus on its aesthetical (or cultural) ambitions. This idea is fuelled by an architectural culture, consisting of magazines, museums, galleries, blogs, and so on, focussing on buildings, models, drawings, oeuvres that stand out. Architecture has become part of a museum-culture, part of the realm of aesthetics and the fine arts. To be published or make public appearances, in this perspective, seems to be the primary measure of cultural value. And since it is almost impossible to imagine it differently, this is the very image that also is stressed in architectural education. To stand out and to be original, not to say authentic, is valued as a merit of architectural design. At this point, I however would oppose this generally accepted view, and would stress the distinction between architecture and mere building as a hideous distinction that not only blurs the ethical and political aspects of architecture, but also masks the understanding of the 'mere building practices' too. Architecture as such, and with this term I mean the whole field of building practices, should be understood, conceived and analysed as a cultural, social and political practice. To my mind, only through a broad and inclusive way of understanding architecture, we do right to the political meaning of the field and its building practices. In all architectural assignments, whether ambitious or not, the designer cannot simply be concerned with the aesthetic aspects, but moreover needs to pursue an ethical outlook on the activity of building, designing, proposing, initiating the new itself. In order to grasp this perspective, we need to develop a more profound and convincing understanding of architecture as a cultural praxis.

Already from the very early treatises on architecture, building is understood as a cultural assignment. Artistic considerations play a major and even maybe a central role in the design, as already Vitruvius (approx. 80-70 BC – 15 BC) argues. In his *De Architectura libri decem*, he puts *venustas* (delight) forward as a foundational aspect of well-building, besides two other aspects: *firmitas* (stability) and *utilitas* (commodity).²³ In his investigation of the architectural profession, Vitruvius argues that well-building always needs to incorporate these three aspects. In his text there is no such distinction between the genuine and the particular. Every assignment is addressed; every building project needs to take into account the threefold aspects. The lack of this distinction of course is not surprising. It only is from the early Renaissance onwards that the divided view upon building practices gets a foothold. Exemplary of the development in the Renaissance is the reflection of Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446), the famous builder of the dome of the Cathedral of Florence as well as the inventor of the perspective within painting, on his position as designer. He positions himself vis-à-vis his craftsman on the site. Previously there was not so great distinction between the craftsman and the master-builder. The craftsman knew what to do, even without a clear address or drawing of the master builder: they acted based on their own experience and the then regular style. Brunelleschi saw himself as the designer, distinct from the craftsman 'on the ground'. He expected craftsmen to only execute and develop what was already known. This would allow him, as architect, to be able to challenge and develop new ideas, developing new perspectives and challenging the existing, rather than applying existing knowledge through already known approaches.²⁴ The art historian G.C. Argan states that Brunelleschi 'abolished the traditional hierarchical form of the mason's lodge where the head was the co-ordinator of the specialized work of the various groups of skilled workers who made

takes place on the what is called 'guilty heritage', as for instance the home where Adolf Hitler was born. The government of Austria has announced plans to redesign and rebuilt this particular building drastically, in order to prevent the place becoming a place of pilgrimage for supporters of the extreme-right-wing worldview. Others argue that by keeping it as it is, but by adding educational program, one also would prevent this place of pilgrimage, but also would be doing right to the awful history that had taken place. The place itself has significance, even if no-one would like to be reminded of it.

23. Vitruvius, *Handboek Bouwkunde* (Amsterdam: Athenaeum – Polak & Van Genneep, 1999), 38

24. Frampton, 'The Status of Man and the Status of His Objects', 32

25.

C.G. Argan, *The Renaissance City* (New York: Braziller, 1969), 25-26; quote via Frampton, 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects', 31-32

26.

Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'The modern system of the arts', in: *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12 (1951), 498

27.

Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead* (New York: Signet, 1993)

28.

The figure of the 'starchitect' is very much debated today, but it might be summarized as a critical note about a few celebrity-architects that travel around the world, building in many different countries, and being held as 'idols' within the field of architecture. Cf. the reflection of Paul Goldberger on Frank Gehry – who is amongst this category of architects – in this excerpt of the biography he wrote on this architect in *Vanity Fair* (sept 15, 2015): 'Why Frank Gehry is Not a Starchitect': <http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2015/09/why-frank-gehry-is-not-a-starchitect> [accessed May 31st, 2017]

29.

Dana Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1992), 1

up the lodge of the masters'. This had a major effect on the work of all participants in the building process. 'Now, there was only one planner or inventor', Argan continues, 'the others were merely manual laborers. When the master mason rose to the status of sole planner, whose activity was on a par with the other humanistic disciplines, the other members of the team of masons fell from the rank of maestri in charge of the various aspects of the job to that of simple working men.'²⁵

While Vitruvius was able to draw his drawings after the building was finished, since his craftsmen on the construction site knew how to resolve all kind of questions that occur during construction (where Vitruvius would be present too), Brunelleschi required the drawing beforehand in order to address the craftsmen at the site, offering them insight in how he wanted the building to be constructed and what particular form the details and ornaments needed to have. Brunelleschi's awareness surely contributed to the image that emerged in the 18th century, and specifically within the Romantic age, of the designer as a genius – a solitary designer, uniquely gifted with imagination and creativity, distinct from the masses, able to propose new and original ideas.

In his influential article, 'The Modern System of the Arts', the German-American philosopher Paul Oskar Kristeller argues that the 18th century gave room to a distinction between fine arts and applied arts. As he argues, this is a major differentiation, which affects the appreciation as well as the assessment of art extensively. 'The Greek term for art (τέχνη) and its Latin equivalent (ars) do not specifically denote the "fine arts" in the modern sense, but were applied to all kinds of human activities which we would call crafts or sciences.'²⁶ Where in the antique world arts and crafts were united, strongly connected to craftsmanship and expertise, like in the profession of the goldsmith, as well as with a certain usefulness (for instance within the religious practice of a church, or in order to present or portray of a prominent citizen), during the 18th century the idea emerges that art is by definition both autonomous and useless.

At first sight one might categorize architecture as a profession of applied arts. Architecture after all only by exception is 'useless'. Architecture genuinely gives room to use, to program, to adaptation. Besides that, also the image of the architect as a genius, a solitary designer, is beyond reality too – this image, as evoked by the architect Howard Roark, the hero in Ayn Rand's novel *The Fountainhead*,²⁷ is still alive in the image of the 'starchitect'.²⁸ However architecture is created not by a solitary designer, an 'autonomous architect-hero', but by cooperation, by a team of professionals, an architectural office, and a range of others involved in the process of design and construction.²⁹ Architecture is a collective effort. Even new ideas applied in architecture are not dependent on a single genius, but emerge in a complex way, where previous and utterly different experiences and building practices join forces together, and merge into new and clarifying insights.

However, it is telling that the history of the arts also counted architecture as being part of the fine arts, besides sculpture, painting, poetry, and music. Back then, the philosophers and others reflecting upon the specificities of art had no hesitation to include architecture in the fine arts. The importance of aesthetics regarding the built environment was beyond dispute. I will come back to the important artistic aspect of architecture later in this chapter, however, in the 18th century, thus, everything becomes part of a rapid transition forward. The invention of the perspective did change painting, both in its structure as well as in the content displayed. The Reformation pushed the people out of their traditional and collective structures, which gave room to an increasing idea

of the self and the subjective (and, according to the famous statement of the anthropologist Max Weber, to the capitalist system that still structures Western societies).³⁰ The Enlightenment banished the religious from its central position in society (in Europe, at least). All these signs of early modernity gave room to the position of aesthetics and beauty as autonomous aspects of the arts, and idea that was enhanced by the propelling of aesthetics as one of the core themes of philosophy. In other words, the 18th century was a period of huge cultural movements, affecting the position of the arts in society. Within the frame of the increasing fragmentation of society, the artwork was valued as distinctive. As the philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff writes in his reflections upon the changes in the art-world during the 18th century: ‘The early Romantics were the first great secular analysts and critics of modernity – the first to believe that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century developments represented something distinctly new and different, and then to give a secular analysis and critique of those developments. Their typical analysis was that the coming of modernity represented the destruction of all the old social and psychological unities. Modernization is fragmentation – fragmentation of the old economic relationships, fragmentation of the old political arrangements.’³¹ This fragmentation evoked an experience of disappointment amongst the Romantics, Wolterstorff continues. ‘The emotional undertone of the Romantic social analysis was disappointment: disappointment with the new science, disappointment with the new capitalist economy, disappointment with the French Revolution and the rational politics there on display.’³² In other words, the rapid modernization cause not just fragmentation but also alienation from known structures and approaches. Wolterstorff refers to the thesis of Max Weber, arguing that the root of modernization has to be found in an instrumental rationality to the world. Only artistic creation, since it stems from imagination, withdraws from this instrumental approach. Of major importance in this perspective is that this imagination offers something that is unified, which is unique in the midst of these continuous processes of fragmentation. The artwork, in other words, is valued specifically since it is a whole, an un-fragmented entity. This un-fragmented character of the artwork indeed plays a central role in the dissertation of the philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, in which he coins the very term *aesthetics*.³³ As Karsten Harries writes, Baumgarten argues that a ‘successful work of art’ has to be seen as a ‘world’.³⁴ With this term ‘world’ he means a ‘perfectly ordered cosmos’, which means that nothing can be added nor subtracted without destroying the whole. It is as it should be, it is complete and self-justifying. Urging aesthetic delight as the end of art was revolutionary. As the painter Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) wrote: ‘La fin de l’art est la delectation.’³⁵ Although the demand of unity, that is an inherent part of the aesthetical turn, was not remarkable, since it also is marked by Aristotle as characteristic of the work of art, it is Baumgarten’s emphasis on perception that has affected the 18th century reflection on aesthetics. The beauty of the artwork has to be understood as *sensible perfection*, which means that the artwork stresses the perception of the viewer. Since it is experienced as a whole, a distinct world *an sich*, it does not refer to anything else behind. The work of art is a whole in itself – or better said: it is individual, an end in itself, and able to absorb the perceiver.³⁶ ‘Ever since Aristotle,’ Harries writes, ‘unity has been demanded of the work of art. To be sure, we must allow for complexity, tension, and incongruity, but order should triumph in the end, so what at first may appear not to belong, striking us as discordant, finally is recognized to have been absolutely necessary.’³⁷

30. Thomas Sedlacek, *Economics of Good and Evil, The Quest for Economic Meaning From Gilgamesh to Wall Street* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 45-46

31. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought, The Social Practices of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 31

32. *Ibid.*, 32

33. Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 21

34. *Ibid.*, 20

35. Quote via *ibid.*, 20

36. Quote via *ibid.*, 21-22.

37. *Ibid.*, 21

38.
cf Maarten Doorman, *De
Romantische orde* (Amsterdam:
Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2004), 173

39.
Goodman, 'How Buildings Mean', 652

40.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 39

41.
Doorman, *De Romantische orde*, 148

This perspective on the very outstanding characteristic of the works of art in a time of fragmentation affected the artwork as well as the artist. The artwork, becoming an end in itself, needed to be enjoyed in an attitude of attentive disinterestedness. The change of this attitude towards the artwork of course is visible in the emergence of the museum and the concert-hall during the 18th century: buildings where the artworks could be set apart and secured, and where citizens could enjoy (not to say absorbed by) the artworks in solitude and silence, uninterrupted – of course prepared by the very architecture of the building (stairs, atriums, white boxes) to leave the hustle and bustle of the city and gain the attitude of disinterestedness. The artist changed from genuine craftsman, amongst the carpenter and smith, to an exceptional figure in society. The artist gains *status aparte*, which means that he is expected to be a genius combining the talents of imagination and creativity and the ability to produce artworks that grasp, and, to some extent, express authentic (and somehow recognizable) experiences. The distinct position of the artwork not only was left to the work of art as a world apart, but also as a medium of expression for the artist, or recognition by the observer. The artwork became the medium to utter the personal expressions and impressions of the artist, their original view of the world, their urgent, fantastic, sublime, playful reflections on nature, culture, society and human life.³⁸ These works of art are expected to have an impact on the observer – to see the world with different eyes. 'A visit to an exhibition of paintings may transform our vision,' Nelson Goodman argues. The 'excellence of a work is a matter of enlightenment rather than of pleasure.'³⁹

One of the few times that Arendt in her writings actually gives attention to 'architecture' is when she offers a stunning analysis of this Romantic ideal beyond the artist and the Romantic emphasis on the authenticity of the individual. Almost as a side note of her analysis of the emerging awareness of the 'self', she mentions 'the astonishing flowering of poetry and music from the middle of the eighteenth century' as well as 'the rise of the novel' during the 19th century. And she continues with the statement that The Romantic age not only is the heyday of these forms of the art, that dwell upon the individual and his vicissitudes and emotions, it also is characterized by the fall and 'decline of the more public arts, especially architecture.'⁴⁰ It is this remarkable observation that we need to draw attention to. Architecture, firstly, thus is recognized by Arendt not as art per se, but as *public* art. As she mentions it, a brief remark, it seems to be very obvious. This obvious perspective, however, is challenged in the Romantic attitude. Architecture even loses its public meaning. In other words, the decline of the public realm and the rise of the social realm also affected the obvious character of architecture, which is the second perspective Arendt urges here. The very obvious, that architecture is public, is threatened by a Romantic attitude towards the arts. The fall of architecture is at the cost of more social forms of art: poetry, music and especially the novel. Although Arendt does not describe this fall of architecture with many words, we can imagine what might have been the case: it lost its self-evidence. The field became fragmented, particularly by the perplexed responses to the technological developments, the loss of shared styles, and the search for a personal handwriting in architectural design. The evident public character of architecture thus fluctuates under the pressure of society, as well as by the lack of self-understanding by the professionals, I would add. As is the case in other arts, also in architecture, the designer gained a central role, bearing the burden of expected geniuses – a perspective still tangible architectural practices today.⁴¹

I will come back on this public role of architecture, and how we still can understand the public aspects of architecture – it is not yet lost under the burden of a Romantic view. However, at this point, we need to go back to the statement of Kristeller we touched upon previously. According to him, the awareness of the arts as a realm apart of society primarily becomes clear in the erection of particular schools of art, the well-known *Academies des Beaux Arts*. Until that moment, the arts were taught via classical ateliers and workshops, where the master and his pupils together worked on the works of art. Through this master-pupil system the knowledge and skills were conveyed in the practice itself.⁴² The academies were on the contrary places where several fields of the art were simultaneously taught. The art-student not only could learn painting or sculpture, but also music and architecture. In other words, in the academies the similarities between the different fields of the arts were recognized and emphasized, rather than the differences. Both music and painting, poetry and architecture need the talent of imagination and creativity. Kristeller stresses the academies as clear break with the past. ‘Whereas modern aesthetics stresses the fact that Art cannot be learned, and thus often becomes involved in the curious endeavour to teach the unteachable, the ancients always understood Art as something that can be taught and learned.’⁴³ Also seen from the field of architecture, the erection of the academies of art as schools of architecture should be seen as pivotal. As Kenneth Frampton argues, the Enlightenment previously had given room to the division of architecture from engineering. Already in 1671 in Paris the *Académie Royale d’Architecture* was erected by king Louis XIV on instigation of Jean Baptiste Colbert. The architectural students of this academy were, Frampton writes,

‘to dedicate them to the “what”, that is, to the reification of public structures commissioned by the State.’⁴⁴ About 70 years later Jean Rodolph Perronet erected the *Ecoles des Ponts et Chaussées*. The engineering students of this *Ecole Polytechnique* ‘were to concern themselves largely with the “how”, namely, with the processual means of gaining permanent access to the realm.’⁴⁵

This distinction between architecture and engineering, between designing public buildings and designing infrastructure, Frampton quotes from the study of fortifications of studies *Vauban* by the historicists Michel Parent and Jacques Verroust, had its roots in the fortifications of medieval towns: the defence of towns and castles was the work of architects, ‘whereas the engineer was expected to not only build the siege machines but also handled them.’⁴⁶ According to Frampton, it was just a logical consequence of the changing technics and the impact on the different realms of the craftsman, to lead the field of architectural design to this division in architects and engineers. ‘The progressive invasion of the city of artifice by the machine – first the siege engine and later the locomotive, and then of course the electric tram and the automobile – accompanied the ultimate dissolution of the walled city in the middle of the nineteenth century. Aside from its monumental rhetoric and its simultaneous reduction of honorific built form to the status of being a rentable commodity, the Ringstrasse that came to replace Vienna’s fortification in the second half of the century was coincidentally the initial proving ground for the horse-drawn tram.’⁴⁷ [IMAGE 6.2] Seen from the perspective of the realm of art, the students of the academia were concerned with the ‘higher’ questions of aesthetics: style and composition, rhythm and ornament, nice and fine architectural assignments like museums and monuments. The engineers on the other hand were busy with (new) infrastructures like waterways, railways, and

42. Kristeller, *The Modern System of the Arts* 514; cf also the beautiful as well the warning description of the atelier of Antonio Stradivari, the famous violin-building by Richard Sennett in his book *The Craftsman*, 75-79. His lack of ability to share his craftsmanship with his employees, which leads to the end of the atelier at the moment of his death, Sennett calls the ‘Stradivari Syndrome’, 248

43. Kristeller, *The Modern System of the Arts*, 498

44. Frampton, ‘The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects’, 33

45. *Ibid.*, 33

46. *Ibid.*, 33

47. *Ibid.*, 33

48.

Camillo Sitte, *City Planning according to Artistic Principles: A contribution to the solution of modern problems of architecture and monumental sculpture especially with regard to the city of Vienna*, in: Camillo Sitte, George Roseborough Collins, and Christiane Crasemann Collins, *The Birth of Modern City Planning* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc, 1986)

49.

cf David Brain, 'From Public Housing to Private Communities. The Discipline of Design and the Materialization of the Public/Private Distinction in the Built Environment', in: Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (eds.), *Public and Private in Thought and Practice, Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 250: 'In the late nineteenth century, architects had responded to criticism and jurisdictional challenges, particularly with regard to the problem of housing by insisting on their claim to represent a distinctive sphere of cultural concerns. During the Depression, however, the significance of the distinction between architecture and "mere building" shifted as a result of economic and political exigencies which restricted the opportunities for architecture in the traditional sense. The design of federally subsidized urban housing made it painfully clear that the distinctively "architectural" expertise of the traditional architect was largely irrelevant. Public housing programs left little or no room for decorative elaboration or rhetorical flourishes that could be recognized as architectural within existing frameworks of justification. Furthermore, the peculiarly "public" character of public housing could not be convincingly represented in the traditional mode for marking the articulation of public and private, which had relied on the cultural symbolism of the historical styles and on monumentality as the hallmark of the public domain.'

50.

Anthony Vidler (ed.), *Architecture between Spectacle and Use* (Williamstown (Mass.): Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008)

the works of art that accompany these structures such as bridges, stations, locks and docks. Their work lead to new innovations in construction, developing new materials like wrought iron and concrete. The architects, in other words, were to dedicate themselves to the cathedral, the engineers to the bicycle shed. The concern of Camillo Sitte, which we touched upon in Chapter 3, can be understood in this perspective. Behind his urging city-form, well-designed open places, and coherence,⁴⁸ is the perspective of a designer educated at an academy, who is confronted by the increasing influence of the processual thinking of the engineer on the urban plan. Two ways of approaching the field, two different educational systems collided at that very moment in Vienne.

The situation in Vienne shows how the engineers have affected urban and architectural form. The architects somehow tangled up in an extensive discourse on the 'right' style of their designs, a question that of course was roused by the first experiences of modernity both in the everyday life in the city, as well as in the developments in technics.⁴⁹ The engineers therefore could take the lead: they designed and built infrastructure projects such as stations and bridges, making use of developments in technics and materials. With these projects, they contributed to the insight in these new developments, as well as developing new methods of building and construction. Obviously these built projects attracted attention, and even lead to the assignment for the well-known engineer Gustav Eiffel to contribute to the 1889 World Fair in Paris with the *Tour d'Eiffel*; a structure that still has a major impact on the city, annually attracting around 7 million tourists to climb the stairs or take the elevators to the top. The engineers after all affected the profession of architecture unquestionably. Nevertheless, the distinction made by Brunelleschi between the architect and the craftsman and the distinction of the 18th century between the architect and the engineer, is still tangible and affects today's field – at least in the different education programs around the world. Still, however, it is the aesthetic argument surrounding the profession, as can be witnessed in architectural culture today: the blogs, websites, magazines and *Pinterest* boards all presenting and discussing the latest projects. This aesthetic perspective is important, but if it is the only perspective left to us discussing architecture, it has become a threat for the profession. As can be seen in the blogs and magazines: architecture is mostly limited to nice photographs and renderings, moreover many of them are limited to presenting the façade, the exterior of the architectural object. Architecture in this perspective has lost its relevance to the everyday world, and has become a 'hobby' of people desperately searching for the latest development in architectural form, the newest application of technics in architectural space, and the most spectacle as an event architecture can offer.⁵⁰

6.2.2 *The Moot Point: Towards a Critical Architecture*

For Arendt this term 'hobby' has a negative sound. The term pops up twice in her discussion of the term 'labor'. Labor, as she had defined the term, is bound to the body and bound to the biological cycle of nature. Labor is needed to survive, it is a necessity of biological life and of survival. Labor for Arendt is an unworldly activity. It is needed to survive, but it does not create a 'world'. To create a world, that is, a world-in-common, the activity of 'work' is needed. The produce of work is characterized by endurance. The *homo faber* creates products that somehow are to be used, but they are also ends in themselves. A table makes lots of activities possible: to sit around it, to provide a place to have dinner, to have conversations, for children's plays, for playing games, to office-workers sitting behind a

computer, but the table survives these uses for a long time. It is not consumed by the way it is used (regularly). That short-term consumption is the very difference with the scope of labor. A bread is certainly the end of the bakery-process, but the bread is not an end in itself. The bread only survives a couple of days. It either is consumed or spoiled. According to Arendt, the rise of the social realm is bound to the increasing impact of the *animal laborans* on the world, which is tangible in the omnipresent economic approach to almost everything. As she already describes at the very end of the 1950s, the ‘consumer society’ is a serious threat, affecting the lifespan of cultural objects and, therefore, also the capacity to create a common world.⁵¹ The consumerist approach impacts the way we deal with products that previously survived the tides: they now get a short endurance too, are means in an economic system of mass production, means towards the increase of turnover and profit of the manufacturer. But this is not only a matter of production, it also is a matter of our relationship with the objects that surround us. A table now only will organize family life for a couple of years before being replaced by another, more fashionable piece. This world-less thinking affects the attitude towards the world, Arendt argues. Even in the spare time of the laborer, the freedom from laboring, Arendt writes, is spent today ‘in those strictly private and essentially worldless activities that we now call “hobbies”.’⁵² The laborer loses himself in unworldly activities, Arendt states: interiorized activities, solely bound to the personal interest of the being. So if we call architecture a ‘hobby’, as sometimes has been the case, we stress the field as becoming a playing field solely for personal interests and pleasures. This perspective certainly is exaggerated, there is nevertheless reason to be concerned, as several critics have argued. Peter Buchanan, for instance, recently argued in *Architectural Review* that the spectacular forms are ‘empty gestures’. ‘Architecture, once the encompassing mother of the arts’, he writes, ‘completed by painting and sculpture and carrier of cultural significance and meaning, has become reduced to superfluous spectacle.’⁵³ The ‘clumsy works’ and the ‘idiotic concepts’ are not ‘relevant for the pressing problems we face,’ he continues. ‘Instead it all deteriorated into a quest not for lasting relevance but rather for immediate impact and exciting novelty in dynamically gesturing form.’⁵⁴ Previously mentioned philosopher Karsten Harries actually offers an extensive analysis of aesthetics as final measurement of architecture, and concludes that if this would be the case, architecture by definition is world-less. ‘To the extent,’ he writes, ‘that the aesthetic approach governs building, works of architecture will turn a cold shoulder not only to their neighbors but to the world that would constrain them with its demands and necessities.’⁵⁵ His argument, in other words, is that the aesthetics in architecture is different than aesthetics in the arts. Whereas the arts can offer a pure idea of beauty, in architecture aesthetics is always impure. Buildings after all never can be autonomous artworks, but are constricted to necessities of construction, building codes, and use. Buildings are not there to be enjoyed in disinterested contemplation, but they will be occupied, moulded, and will become worn out over time – if people are even aware of them, Walter Benjamin urged, upon which we touched in the previous chapter.⁵⁶

Let us once again go back to the text of Kenneth Frampton, which I already earlier used to show briefly the historical roots of the distinction between architecture and mere building. This text is, quite seminal since it, as one of the first texts, introduces the thinking of Arendt towards the field and history of architecture. The text actually shows how omnipresent the attitude of the *animal laborans* is within the contemporary production of buildings. However, the text also shows the crucial role of the *Frankfurter Schule*, with philosophers like Theodor Adorno,

51. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 124

52. *Ibid.*, 118

53. Peter Buchanan, ‘Empty Gestures. Starchitecture’s Swan Song’, 27 February 2015, <https://www.architectural-review.com/archive/viewpoints/empty-gestures-starchitectures-swanson-song/8679010.article> [accessed Oktober 28th, 2016]

54. Buchanan, ‘Empty Gestures. Starchitecture’s Swan Song’, <https://www.architectural-review.com/archive/viewpoints/empty-gestures-starchitectures-swanson-song/8679010.article> [accessed Oktober 28th, 2016]

55. Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 24

56. Walter Benjamin, ‘The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in: Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books 2007), 239

57.
George Baird, *The Space of Appearance* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1995), 355-358

58.
That is remarkable, since in the previous version of this article, he had offered a definition of action, with a tiny link to architecture too: 'Her definition of *action* – as pertaining to transactions occurring between men without the intervention of things, and as corresponding essentially to plurality and to the fact that men and not man inhabit the earth – in itself specifies the existential preliminary of every building act'. Frampton, 'Labour, Work & Architecture', 151. Nathan Silver comments on these final words (the book is actually a collection of essays, upon which the contributors were able to comment – these comments are given in the margins): 'I would argue that a most essential aspect of architecture falls within the category of what Arendt calls 'action'.

59.
Frampton, 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects', 26

60.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 307

61.
Frampton, 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects', 38

Herbert Marcuse, and (later) Jürgen Habermas, in Frampton's references. The article starts with a quote of Adorno and ends with the *Festschrift* of Habermas for seventieth birthday of Marcuse, as George Baird did remark sharply.⁵⁷ That Frampton brings the *Frankfurter Schule* and Arendt close together somehow is remarkable. Arendt herself also took a distance from them, and vice-versa. However, Frampton starts, after that quote of Adorno, directly with the famous distinction of human activities Arendt urged in *The Human Condition*. He nevertheless leaves 'action' for what it is – although he first urges the distinction between the public and the private – and concentrates on labor and work.⁵⁸ Labor is repetitive, processual, impermanent and private, he argues. Work, on the other hand, is static, public and permanent. This distinction between labor and work echo's the distinction between mere building and architecture, he then states. 'An architect could hardly fail to remark,' Frampton writes, 'on the correspondence between these distinctions and the fundamental ambiguity of the term "architecture"'.⁵⁹ The ambiguity he urges at this point is reflected in the two different definitions in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, that I have presented previously. In what follows, Frampton develops a great insight in the recent history of architecture, challenging the ambiguity of the profession as the increasing influence of the *animal laborans* upon the *homo faber*. A crucial reference to Arendt for Frampton in this respect is her concern about the cyclic processes of the labor, which is destructive for the durability of the world. As she writes:

'As far as the *homo faber* was concerned, the modern shift of emphasis from the 'what' to the 'how', from the thing itself to its fabrication process, was by no means an unmixed blessing. It deprived man as maker and builder of those fixed and permanent standards and measurements which, prior to the modern age, have always served him as guides for his doing and criteria for his judgment. It is not only and perhaps not even primarily the development of the commercial society that, with the triumphal victory of exchange value over use value, first introduced the principle of interchangeability, then the relativization, and finally the devaluation, of all values. ... It was at least as decisive that man began to consider himself part and parcel of the two superhuman, all-encompassing process of nature and history, both of which seemed doomed to an infinite progress without ever reaching any inherent telos or approaching and preordained idea.'⁶⁰

This continuous accelerating process of production and consumption not only is very destructive to nature and the earth, it also causes worldlessness. It undermines the durability of the world of things, as it also is not capable to establish a permanent place in it for human inhibition. In this perspective, Frampton argues that the world-of-things began to disintegrate the very moment that each object was understood as a means to another end, mainly as a means to gain profit. Only art is disclosed from this trend, since it has to be an end in itself, if not 'vulgarized in the idiosyncratic vagaries of kitsch'.⁶¹ Frampton here indeed is close to Arendt's reflection upon the world-of-things. Also Arendt argues that the result of work somehow always is rendered as an instrument towards something else, as the table is meant to be seated around in a particular social setting. Although this use only in the long term will 'destroy' the object, the life-time of the object however is drastically shortened if not the use is the end, but a certain economic model (which is not part of the attitude of the *homo faber*, but of the *animal laborans*). Art, in a certainly idealistic image, withdraws from all this, since it is an end in itself. Arendt, in line with the development of the arts since

the Renaissance, thus discloses art from the very figure of means-towards-another end.⁶² Frampton urges this development within the field of architecture, questioning whether it also is affected by this thread of instrumentalization, and if so, if there is anything left in architecture that can be rendered worldly. The first thread Frampton exemplifies renders the impact of the process of construction and usage on the design of buildings: tower cranes affect the form, elevators and escalators likewise,⁶³ building regulations, and measures of transportation prescribe the possibilities. These restrictions are, Frampton argues, in today's practice far more affective on architecture than reflections on space and place.⁶⁴ Architecture – and here Frampton urges the loss of non-functional and non-constructural aspects of building, the reflections on space, place, culture, and aesthetics – has lost its worldliness and 'comes to be subsumed under play'. That Frampton uses here the term 'play' has a history in this text, since he previously refers to the *New Babylon* project of the Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuis as exemplifying the worldlessness of modern architecture and their preoccupation with temporality and movement.^[IMAGE 6.3] This project not so much is example of the capitalist instrumentalization of architecture, but more an articulation of the utopian strings inherent in the project of modern architecture, which also detach the profession from the world. In the *New Babylon* project, as is well known, there is no such thing as a home, there are only private rooms that can be occupied for a while. There only is a way forward, and no need to return to a certain point of beginning. There is no work either, there only is play, Constant argues.⁶⁵ In this picture of worldlessness, architectural form has lost significance, Frampton argues. Architecture after all is depicted by the representation of a contextual collectiveness, while his image of *New Babylon* imagines the opposite: it represents the construction as freeing the human being from its rootedness not only from the earth but also from its place in the world, articulating the temporal condition of modern life. In such a perspective, Frampton seems to argue, architectural form only can be understood as a highly individual question, part of the playfulness of the designer. However, the loss of worldliness and representative susceptibility for collective value that Frampton traces definitely finds its echo in the analysis of the profession by Arendt, describing the fall of architecture as public art in the Romantic age, as we have seen previously. Facing the Romantic attitude, as well as facing the Modern attitude or facing a capitalist system, the public-ness of architecture needs to be defended, we might argue. It urges Frampton to question the future of architecture:

'Whether architecture, as opposed to building, will ever be able to return to the representation of collective value is a moot point. At all events its representative role would have to be contingent on the establishment of a public realm in the political sense.'⁶⁶

Although this seems to be a quite pessimistic view, it in itself urges the intriguing combination of collective value, representation, public realm, and politics. Frampton does not leave the reader with this question, but opens up two perspectives that might help us to direct this question. He first refers to the valuing of Arendt of the council system, the *soviets* that gave the name to the latter state of the Soviet Union,⁶⁷ and secondly to the concept of communication as urged by Jürgen Habermas. 'Rationalization at the level of the institutional framework can only occur in the medium of symbolic interaction itself, that is through removing restrictions on all communication,' Frampton quotes Habermas. 'Public, unrestricted discussion, free from domination, of the suitability and desirability of

62.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 167; I will investigate Arendt's view in more detail later in this chapter.

63.

See Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York, A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994); Rem Koolhaas, *The Harvard Guide to Shopping* (Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard Graduate School of Design, 1998)

64.

Frampton, 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects', 38

65.

See also Mark Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon, The Hyper Architecture of Desire* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1998); note that Nieuwenhuis here diminishes important pre-requisites for the possibilities of a space of appearance, as we have seen in the previous chapter. These are not just spatial requirements, but also are important to the experience of 'a world-in-common'.

66.

Frampton, 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects', 40

67.

Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 241

68.

Quote via Frampton, 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects', 42. Quote is taken from Jürgen Habermas 'Technology and Science as an Ideology' in: Jürgen Habermas, *Towards a Rational Society* (Boston (Mass): Beacon Press, 1970)

69.

Frampton, 'The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects', 42; I agree with Frampton that both Arendt and Habermas urge local encounters – or a cantonal view – as basis of political life, but as I stress in the previous chapter, Arendt leaves it with that, whereas Habermas stresses the local encounters quickly to the virtuality of the macro-level of the public sphere

70.

Kenneth Frampton, 'Labour, Work & Architecture', in: Charles Jencks and George Baird (eds.), *Meaning in Architecture* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, The Cresset Press, 1969), 166

71.

Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture, A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 9

action-ordering principles and norms in the light of the socio-cultural repercussions of developing subsystems of purposive-rational action – such as communication at all levels of political and repoliticized decision making processes – is the only medium in which anything like “rationalization” is possible.’⁶⁸ Both perspectives, Frampton argues, urge a ‘decentralized, “cantonal” conception’ of the political realm. It urges to ‘return us to the dependency of political power on its social and physical constitution, that is to say, on its derivation from the living proximity of men and from the physical manifestation of their public being in built form. For architecture at least, the relevance of *The Human Condition* resides in this – in its formation of that political reciprocity that must of necessity obtain, for good or ill, between the status of men and the status of their objects.’⁶⁹ In the preliminary version of this article, that he published as ‘Labour Work & Architecture’ in 1969, this perspective was not yet at the table. The moot point in this article, however, is even more telling. ‘If, as Hannah Arendt concludes, the victory of *animal laborans* is complete,’ Frampton writes, ‘then it is necessary for us to continually question what concept architecture can possibly signify in an age which, although individualistic, in one sense is paradoxically preoccupied with the life process of the species. In doing this, I would submit, we shall need to distinguish carefully both culturally and operationally between acts of “architecture” and acts of “building” and to discretely express both “labour” and “work” within each building entity irrespective of its scale. Only in this way perhaps can we hope to eventually evolve and impart to the society a coherent structured language of the environment that is both operationally appropriate and a true reflection of our human consciousness.’⁷⁰ In both perspectives, that actually are quite pessimistic about the possibilities of the architectural manifestation and representation of human proximity and community, the telling component is the distinction between architecture and building, I would argue. His brief history of architecture certainly has to be valued on the level of revealing how much labor-thinking has shaped the building industries, both building practices and design practice is undeniable. This perspective vice-versa affirms Arendt’s own analysis of the modern age: the increasing influence of ‘labor’ over ‘work’, and with that, the replacement of the public by the social. However, the question remains if we can expect from architecture resistance towards the *animal-laborans* approach as well as a position to reflect, represent, and form public world.

The article ‘The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects’ actually can be read as the anacrusis of Frampton’s well known book *Modern Architecture, a Critical History*. Arendt is not so present in this book, which already might be concluded from its subtitle. The book offers a more in-depth interpretation of the two lines in architectural history from the 18th century onwards, and how these affected architectural practices even until today. However, as he admits in the introduction to this volume, his position is mainly evoked by the Marxist interpretation and the critical theory of the *Frankfurt School*.⁷¹ The overview he offers stresses how functionalism and instrumentalism had stripped bare the building of its meaning and significance, while the form of the building was highly affected by the instrumental approach and production processes. However also the ‘new directions’ in architecture that came to light in the 70s and 80s, the post-modern approach with its emphasis on form cannot convince Frampton. He values the emphasis of post-modernism to resist the reductive aspect of modern architecture, as well as their openness to local issues and vernacular, the exemplary project of post-modern architecture he describes however as the ‘conscious ruination of style and the cannibalization of architectural form, as though no value either traditional or otherwise can withstand for long the tendency of the

production/consumption cycle to reduce every civic institution to some kind of consumerism and to undermine every traditional quality.⁷² The impact of economic thinking, of the instrumental approach towards the built environment gained a new foothold in the architectural discourse in the 70s and 80s. As he continues: ‘Today the division of labour and the imperatives of ‘monopolized’ economy are such as to reduce the practice of architecture to large-scale packaging.’⁷³ After the first publication of this book in the 1980s, Frampton has issued newer expanded versions. In the second edition he actually added a chapter in which he proposes another direction to go: ‘Towards a Critical Regionalism,’ a term he borrowed from Alexander Tzonis and Liliane Lefaivre, who had described the work of Dimitris and Susana Antanokakis under that title.⁷⁴ The direction Frampton sketches can be read as an attempt to continue the ‘modern project’, that in the eyes of Jürgen Habermas still was still in-complete,⁷⁵ without falling in the trap of the ‘normative optimization’ and ‘the naïve utopianism of the early Modern Movement’⁷⁶ as well as from the corporate modernity that dominated the American city. Frampton argued that the local culture, which is one of the distinctive aspects of architectural projects, should be approached critically. Critical regionalism therefore is based on a paradoxical approach, Frampton admits – it urges the tension between a rooted culture and the universal civilization in a time when ‘global modernization continues to undermine, with ever increasing force, all forms of traditional, agrarian-based, autochthonous culture.’⁷⁷ However, as the critical approach urges: ‘we have to regard regional culture not as something given and relatively immutable but rather as something which has, at least today, to be self-consciously cultivated.’⁷⁸ Frampton actually evokes critical regionalism as fragmentary and a ‘marginal practice’, that brings building back to a grounded and bounded tectonic and tactile reality.⁷⁹

6.2.3 Absolute or Obsolete Architecture

Frampton is not alone in challenging architecture vis-à-vis the increasing influence of economic principles in contemporary society. Based upon the writings of Arendt the Italian architect and theorist Pier Vittorio Aureli offers a great attempt to enhance resistant practices in his 2011 provoking book *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, published about 35 years after Frampton urged his plea for a critical architecture.⁸⁰ Aureli however does not mention Frampton in his book, and develops his perspective separately. Interestingly enough, Frampton had mentioned the work of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe as an example of the ‘reduction of building to the status of industrial design on an enormous scale.’

[IMAGE 6.4] And Frampton adds: ‘Since its concerns are with optimizing production, it has little or no interest in the city.’⁸¹ For Aureli however, Mies van der Rohe – specifically due to his indifferent approach to form as well as the scale upon which his projects operated – is exemplary of what he is after: an architecture of the city. His architecture is stubborn, withdraws from everyday principles of economic thinking, Aureli argues. It defines a part (that functions within other parts that form the city), ‘without making its style.’⁸² Despite these different interpretations and evaluations of the architecture of Mies van der Rohe, they both long for a resistant architectural practice that is quite similar. Aureli starts his book with a few sentences that can be read as the acknowledgment of what had happened in the meantime. ‘Architecture has become popular in recent years,’ Aureli writes.⁸³ Since the wake of the nineties, architecture has been able to attract attention from people around the globe. Projects like the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, The Walt Disney Concert Hall, both designed by Frank Gehry, the CCTV building

72. Ibid., 307

73. Ibid., 307

74. cf Léa-Catharine Szacka, ‘Criticism From Within: Kenneth Frampton and the Retreat from Postmodernism’, in: Tom Avermaete, Veronique Patteeuw, and Christophe Van Gerrewey (eds.), *Action and Reaction in Architecture. OASE#97* (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2016), 116

75. Jürgen Habermas, ‘Modernity Versus Postmodernity’ in: *New German Critique 22* (Winter 1981); Habermas’s remark actually was a response to the Venice Biennale of 1980 ‘The Presence of the Past’, where post-modern architecture for the first time was on show. Frampton initially was part of the team that organized this exhibition, besides Paolo Portoghesi, Giovanna Massobrio, Christian Norberg-Schulz, Robert A.M. Stern and Antonio De Bonis. He however resigned, since the approach was too much a triumph of post-modernism than offered room for a critical approach to this ‘inclusive concept’. See Szacka, ‘Criticism From Within’

76. Frampton, *Modern Architecture*, 327

77. Ibid., 315

78. Ibid., 315

79. Ibid., 327

80. Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge (Mass.), MIT Press, 2011)

81. Frampton, *Modern Architecture*, 9

82. Aureli, *The possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, 44

83. Ibid., 1

84.

Pier Vittorio Aureli, 'Towards the Archipelago', Defining the Political and the Formal in Architecture,' in: *Log #11, Observations on Architecture and the Contemporary City* (New York, Anyone Corporation, Winter 2008), 91

85.

Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, 1

86.

Aureli, 'Towards the Archipelago', 91

87.

Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, .7-9; see also Pier Vittorio Aureli and Martino Tattara, 'The City as Political Form', in: Pier Vittorio Aureli and Martino Tattara, *Dogma: 11 Projects* (London: AA Publications, 2013), 17

88.

Aureli, 'Towards the Archipelago', 93-96

89.

Ibid., 96

90.

Ibid., 92-93

in Beijing by OMA/Rem Koolhaas, and The Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg by Herzog & DeMeuron, to just mention a few, have brought architecture back on the agenda of city planners and in the minds of the people. In the article 'Towards the Archipelago', published previously to his book, Aureli argues that these projects, nor the popularity of architecture, should not be taken for granted. On the contrary – there are lots of reasons to approach architecture critically.⁸⁴ What is remarkable, Aureli argues, is that the growing popularity is inversely proportional to the increasing sense of political powerlessness and cultural disillusionment many architects feel about their effective contribution to the built world.⁸⁵ Despite a cloudbursts of possibilities of forms that technically and economically can and are being built currently, today's profession has lost a certain sense of the political and social aspects of form. In a previously published article, he writes 'we need to seriously address the unequivocal social and cultural power architecture possesses to produce representations of the world through exemplary forms of built reality.'⁸⁶ Aureli's concern at this point surely is an echo of Frampton's 'moot point', although he exemplifies it differently.

Aureli develops his new perspective upon architecture by showing how economic principles have taken over the development of the city. The term city actually stems from the Roman word *civis*, which itself stems from an Indo-European etymological root that means to settle which also is the root for *civitas*. *Civis* also is the root from *civitas*, the Roman word that refers to the political gathering of citizens or the right to citizenship.⁸⁷ Although also the Greek *Polis* was a political form of community, there is a difference to mention. The Greek example consisted of a community of people that shared the same origin of place, whether the *Civitas* was a gathering of free individuals that recognized and shared a public realm – they did not necessary have a shared place of origin. A third term that Aureli mentions is that of the *urbs*, that in the Latin language simply refers to 'material organization of buildings'. It indicates a city, but only in its material form: an agglomeration of houses. If there was no *civitas* nor *polis*, no institution that gathered the inhabitants politically, the inhabitants of the agglomeration only shared the material condition of the space, the structure that supports the agglomeration. This structure is infra-structure, Aureli argues. 'The infra of the *urbs* is the space of connection and integration. In other words, *urbs* is infrastructure, the network that, starting from the reality and necessity of the habitat, unfolds and aggregates the house within an organic whole that bypasses any political spaces. Its primary purpose is the functioning of the private space of the family, which it connects to the infrastructure.'⁸⁸ In the Roman city, *urbs* and *civitas* thus are to be seen as two complementary aspects, that nevertheless in the wake of time began to overlap. Aureli argues that this overlap has been a central dilemma of cities from then on: the demand of the good functioning of the city on the one hand, and the demand for politics at the other. Today – or actually from the extension plan of Ildefonso Cerdà for the city of Barcelona (1859) onwards – the two terms lost contact: the modern approach to the urban environment concentrates on the *urbs* and forgot to also stress the crucial aspects of *civitas*, which certainly is tangible in the process of urbanisation during the last century.⁸⁹ Urbanisation, according to Aureli, is the unlimited spread of *urbs* over the landscape, the political realm has been absorbed by the economic, totalizing principle. This principle, as Aureli argues, 'does not act in the public interest, but in its own interest; furthermore, it cannot be questioned because its sphere is not the public space of the polis but the private space of the house.'⁹⁰ Aureli stresses the plan and ideas of Cerdà as a major shift in the approach of city-planning, which is fully explored and applied in the 20th century extension-plans for European cities and the urbanization of the

landscape in North America. Although in the principle of urbanization there is in theory no room for differences, in practice the increasing influence of capitalist thinking left room for two deviations: the enclave and the landmark. The enclave shows that capitalism segregates when it comes to the distribution of wealth that is gained through labor, control and exploitation. The landmark, the iconic building, also is bound to the economical approach to the urbanized landscape. These are not monuments in the ancient connotation of the word, but they are following the economical principle of urbanization. They are approached in an instrumental perspective, stripped from meaning except the representation of ‘corporate economic performance.’⁹¹ The affect is ‘indifference of cohabitation’, Aureli argues, which ‘is a way of living in urbanization.’⁹² Aureli’s critique of urban planning today once again affirms that today’s ideology, despite the post-modernist rejections of all Great Narratives, is the capitalist perspective. Economic principles are now at the root of all urban developments, even those that seem to articulate particular ‘communities’. However, the affect is, as Aureli thus urges, indifference. In other words, the urban attitude is not simply distraction, as Walter Benjamin argued and we touched upon in the previous chapter, the new urban environment even evokes indifference. Distraction still can be embedded in the world, but indifference as an attitude certainly is world-less, common-less.

The investigation of the ancient ideas on the city obviously parallels Arendt’s investigation in the public realm of these cities. In between the lines and sometimes explicit, the voice of Hannah Arendt can be heard in the text of Aureli. The increasing influence of labor on the realm of politics, the decline of ‘work’, the concern about ‘scientific’ approaches to everyday life, the affect of instrumental and economic thinking – it is all part of Aureli’s history of urban planning. Aureli however, does not leave us only with his analysis of the history of city planning and concern about the current situation, he also proposes a way out in what he calls ‘absolute architecture.’ The time has come, he states, to ‘drastically counter the very idea of urbanization.’⁹³ Instead of focusing on the territory, on the infra-structure of organizing spaces and materials, he focuses on the single architectural project. ‘There is no way back from urbanization,’ he writes. ‘The search for the contemporary agora is a pathetic endeavor that only manifests the weakness of our political understanding of the city.’⁹⁴ Due to urbanization, the city has to be seen as separated parts that are juxtaposed. Aureli then revisits a term coined by the German architect Oswald Matthias Ungers: the city as archipelago. ‘In contrast to the integrative apparatus of urbanization, the archipelago envisions the city as the agonistic struggle of parts whose forms are finite and yet, by virtue of their finiteness, are in constant relationship both with each other and with the “sea” that frames and delimits them.’⁹⁵ In his perspective the architectural project thus plays a central role. It is not a prescribed urban form that limits architecture, it is the other way around: the city emerges in the confrontation and struggle of its separate parts. In order to make his point, he uses an intriguing quote of Arendt, taken from her essay ‘Introduction *into* Politics’:

‘Man is apolitical. Politics arises between men, and so quite outside men. There is no real political substance. Politics arises in what lies between men and it is established as a relationship.’⁹⁶

In the construction of Aureli’s perspective, this is a pivotal quote. It informs him to focus on the single architectural project, rather than on the in-between that emerges after the juxtaposition of projects. ‘The political occurs in the decision of

91. Aureli, *The possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, xii

92. Aureli, ‘Towards the Archipelago’, 108

93. Aureli, *The possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, 27

94. *Ibid.*, 32

95. *Ibid.*, xi

96. I quote here via *ibid.*, 27. The quote itself is taken from Hannah Arendt, ‘Introduction *into* Politics’, in: Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 95. I will come back on this quote - and Aureli’s use of it - later.

97.
Aureli, *The possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, 27

98.
cf. Franco Purini and Stefano Milani, *Disegnare architettura = Drawing Architecture* (Bologna: Compositori, 2007)

99.
Pier Vittorio Aureli and Martino Tattara, *Dogma: 11 Projects* (London: AA Publications, 2013), 45

how to articulate the relationship, the *infra* space, the space in between,' Aureli argues. 'The space in between is a constituent aspect of the concept of form, found in the contraposition of parts.' He then formulates his conclusion: 'As there is no way to think the political within man himself, there is also no way to think the space in between in itself. The space in between can only materialize as a space of confrontation between parts. Its existence can only be decided by the parts that form its edges.'⁹⁷ This perspective urges Aureli to focus on the singularity of each architectural project, not distracted by any other urgent issues than the project itself. In other words, the archipelago city only can exist by architectural projects that are singular, or, in Aureli's terms, 'absolute'.

With this overview, I of course do not mean to discuss the argument of Aureli in every detail, but to sketch the frame in which he understands the political aspect of architecture. His view on urbanization today is neither nostalgic nor cynical, whereas his proposal is provoking and evoking. It above all is architectural, which is quite rare in the debate on the changing condition of the city and its public spaces. Aureli's proposal clearly can be understood as rooted in the European, or even Italian, tradition of reflection upon architecture and the city of Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Ludwig Hilbersheimer, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Aldo Rossi, Oswald Matthias Ungers, and the early Rem Koolhaas. In their projects, architecture often is a singular intervention, stressing the limits and their inherent conditions. With his proposal Aureli offers a way to understand architecture once again, against the background of the most important developments of the last decades within the urban territory. The construction of his point actually is not only a theoretical perspective, it also is beyond the projects of Dogma, the architectural office where he is principal. Of course, there is a distinction between more or less abstract theory, and how this is applied in practice. However, in the case of Aureli and Dogma, the written texts and the drawn projects are much in line with each other, their relationship is evident. Until now, Dogma actually only has produced so-called paper-projects: nothing has yet been build. The office itself calls the projects forms of 'architectural theory', and rightly so.

The most important instrument in the work of Dogma is the drawing.^[IMAGE 6.5] Each project is presented through a series of similar iconic, even heroic drawings and collages, which can be understood as echoes of Etienne Louis Boullée's theoretical projects, or the famous drawings of his contemporary Giovanni Battista Piranesi. Although established in Brussels, the work of Dogma also can be understood in the Italian tradition, in relationship to the well-known *Analogous City Panel* by Aldo Rossi^[IMAGE 5.11] or the series of drawings by Franco Purini.⁹⁸ Aureli and his partner Martino Tattara, the principals of Dogma, after all were educated in Venice, before opening their horizons at the beginning of the 21st century at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam and beyond. Once again, through their very particular way of presentation, once again, their works immediately remind the observer of the great tradition of drawing in architecture, and how drawings have contributed to architectural theory.

In their projects, they propose a different way of organizing the urban realm, distinct from and critical to the former economic perspective.⁹⁹ We certainly can state that their approach is 'architectural': it organizes the urban condition through formal interventions, through singular architectural projects. With a dogmatic focus on the straight line and the rectangular corner, their projects consist of enormous buildings that literally cut their way through the existing urban landscape, intersecting the existing fabric with clear and simple (but not simplistic) form. 'Instead of being an icon of diversity per se, an absolute

architecture must refuse any impetus to novelty and accept the possibility of being an instrument of separation, and thus of political action,' Aureli argues on the formal matters.¹⁰⁰ The most powerful and critical projects therefore are those that literally intersect in an existing pattern. As Aureli argues himself: 'The possibility of an absolute architecture is thus the possibility of making the city and also the possibility of understanding the city and its opposing force – urbanization – through the very finite nature of architectural form.'¹⁰¹ Via their drawings, it becomes clear how they understand their projects. The projects not only rearrange the urban fabric on the scale of the landscape through their very size and indifferent positioning, particularly on the small scale of the street and the cell, the everyday environment is rearranged. The most convincing drawings therefore are those that reveal both scales at once, showing how the non-conformist intervention co-exists with the small scale re-arrangements, and how the strict on the large scale is combined with plurality on the small scale. What is remarkable to these drawings, and what makes it different from the approach of the 1960s approach of brutalism in architecture, with its focus on the so-called 'superstructures', is that in these drawings not the structure is articulated, but the life within the structure. Repetitive elements deliver and indifferent structures, that by their occupation show significance. Beyond their projects there is the basic rule that strict planning on one scale allows freedom on other scales. It only can offer freedom of occupation on the level of the individual cell by the very strict application of rigid structure on the scale of the multiplication. That is what the drawings clearly show: they narrate the way how repetitive structure offers possibilities, create conditions for occupation and habitation. The drawings, to my mind, moreover exemplify how Aureli understands the political and the formal as the two aspects of 'absolute architecture': it is all about separation and connection, limits and relations. The drawings moreover show that such 'indifferent' forms can be instruments of connection and separation at once: they re-arrange the urban plan, are forcing distinctions and make new connections possible, reveal the existing similarity and reify new possibilities, and finally create new and plural conditions.

Certainly, the advantage of Aureli's proposal is that it brings architecture back within the question of urban development and the architectural project. After all, much of the theorists warning for the current social and political developments, leave it with that. It is not so easy to understand how architecture makes a difference – what the significance is of the architectural project. Although we cannot take the projects of Dogma as 1:1 examples of the concept of 'absolute architecture' of Aureli, these projects certainly reveal some of the ideals he has in mind when drawing his way out of the threats of urbanization. As is clear, the strength of the projects is the revelation of the various contexts of the interventions. This immediately becomes clear in both ends of the spectrum of their work. On the one end there is the project for the new capital of South Korea, a competition they won in 2005. In this project, they from the onset could define the whole form of the city. Although their huge rectangular blocks intersect with 'existing structures' and thus create differences in the landscape, that can be either a perfect condition for nature, parks, industrial zones or whatever, the strength of confrontation with the existing and intersecting on the small scale that is tangible in other projects is lost in this project. This also counts for a project that comes most close to construction: the project they delivered in 2011 on invitation to participate in a competition on social housing in Flanders. Their ideas on the very frames of the housing itself is interesting (the project is called 'frames'), but since

100. Aureli, 'Towards the Archipelago', 119

101. Aureli, *The possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, xiv

^{102.}
Aureli and Tattara, *Dogma: 11 Projects*, 52-59, 100-107

^{103.}
Aureli, 'Towards the Archipelago', 116-117

it does not act on the very large scale and only on the small scale delivers clearness in form and structure, also this project has lost its tension and criticality with the existing structures. It does not confront, nor reveal the current condition of the urbanized landscape of Flanders.¹⁰²

This remark actually reveals that the projects of Dogma need the confrontation with the situation in order to stand out. This certainly shows that even the provocative aspect of the projects, the seemingly indifferent positioning of the projects within a situation actually is based upon a site-specificity that is based upon contrast, confrontation and tension. The projects are not indifferent at all, as previously stated. They are rooted, arguably more than projects that simply follow the existing rules and patterns. The same can be said about the proposal Aureli develops in *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*. His proposal originates from a strong distinction between architecture and building. An Absolute Architectural project needs 'buildings' as its counterplan. Aureli's distinction between architecture and mere building is not just formal, neither is it based upon aesthetics or significance like in the perspectives of Ruskin and Pevsner. His distinction is the withdrawal from the economic principles that currently master spatial planning and architectural practice—building is based upon the current economic principles, whereas architecture is based upon (autonomous) architectural principles. Architecture stands out as critical project, facing and revealing the economic principles beyond building. This view brings Aureli close to Frampton, we might conclude. Architecture withdraws from the instrumental perspective that is the very root of building, absolute architecture withdraws from the instrumental perspective that is the very root of urbanization.

6.2.4 *The Political and the Archipelago*

Although the attempt to bring the form of the city back as a matter of architectural projects certainly can be valued, Aureli's reading of political substance needs more attention. At least two questions come to mind regarding the city. The first question stresses form of the city as result of the multiple 'absolute' interventions that will 'form', whereas the second urges the very 'space of appearance'. The first question urges Aureli's view beyond the single project, He is quite clear about his rejection of the overall plan for the city. One can imagine that rejection, particularly when we look to the opposite practice: the masterplan that urges a particular form of the city. Such a detailed masterplan leads to either totalitarian approaches and simplification, or to failures on the 'groundlevel' of everyday use and adaptation. It is either strict, and leaves no room for the unpredictability of construction and development, or it is prescriptive on the use, and leaves no room for appropriation. The image Aureli evokes as an alternative is that of the City as Archipelago, an image he borrows from the German architect Ungers. This archipelago city is imagined by Ungers as 'islands [which] are not just scattered fragments but are 'antithetically' established, meaning they are bound as a *whole* precisely by the way they react dialectically to each other. In this sense they form the possibility of an agonistic place, where the architecture of the city manifests and frames (limits) the possibilities of diversity by making diversity dialectical rather than hypertrophic.¹⁰³ This image of the archipelago is thus not simply the juxtaposition of different outspoken projects on the one hand, it also does not consist of the infill by singular projects of a prescribed infra-structure. It is both at once. In the archipelago, tension between the 'islands' is crucial, since the urban plan is not developed along the lines of relationships. The relationships are somehow at random. They emerge as the result of the juxtaposition. In this

future image, there therefore is much more room for chance and differences, none of them can be planned, nor foreseen. It is very well possible that fragments that overlap and intervene, open up and close down. However, the relationships are antithetical, not smooth but violent, not smart but brutal. This image of the future archipelago city is actually to be valued as simultaneously rejecting too much expectation of city planning, as well as bringing back the task of urban development to achievable plans, that is, to the architectural project. With that, Aureli acknowledges the limits of the architectural profession and ability of 'the architect'. It does not fall in totalitarian planning ideals, nor in too idealistic ideas of a connecting public space, places of community, and whatever.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, these merits are merits on their own, and not solely related to the view on the archipelago city, nor on the *civitas* as such. The overall image of the archipelago city remains based on points of density in the vast sea of the urbanisation itself.¹⁰⁵

The second aspect we therefore need to examine is the very relationship between these points of density on the map – the in-between space. Do they offer a possibility to establish a 'space of appearance', we actually might question? Such an in-between space emerges randomly, according to Aureli: randomly by the juxtaposition of elements. Certainly, the focus on the fragments can be valued, since the sheer size of the contemporary urbanized landscape does not offer any possibility for significant public spaces. The fragments somehow draw the public to a smaller scale, which might increase the possibilities to appear to one another. However, Aureli does not urge that aspect of political life. The political is in the architectural intervention, not in what happens in-between. He is right, in my opinion, to urge the political aspects of architecture (although Arendt would urge that as pre-political), but this does not mean that the in-between has no political potential. Aureli uses Arendt's previous mentioned quote in order to support his perspective. Let us once again look at this quote. 'Man is apolitical,' this quote runs in Arendt's text. 'Politics arises *between men*, and so quite *outside of men*. There is no real political substance. Politics arises in what lies *between men* and it is established as relationships.'¹⁰⁶ Aureli concludes from this quote:

"The political occurs in the decision of how to articulate the relationship, the *infra* space, the space in between. The space in between is a constituent aspect of the concept of form, found in the contraposition of parts. As there is no way to think the political within man himself, there is also no way to think the space in between in itself. The space in between can only materialize as a space of confrontation between parts. Its existence can only be decided by the parts that form its edges."¹⁰⁷

This response to Arendt's quote actually does not convince me. The tempting part, to my mind, of Aureli's conclusion is to think of architectural projects as interventions that urge – by chance – relationships. These relationships, in the concept of juxtaposition, are somehow unpredictable. To my understanding, Aureli urges them as open to occupation by the inhabitants. This also is visible in the drawings of Dogma, that I previously described. They stress the occupation of the structures of the intervention itself, as well as the confrontation between the intervention and other (existing) structures (although the relationship with the fabric wherein the intervention takes place is not occupied in the drawings – the new relationships are rather weak). The essence of juxtaposition, I would argue, as well as bring it closer to other writings of Arendt, therefore is that unforeseen spaces of appropriation and appearance can emerge – spaces that naturally bring people together, to use, enjoy, live, and therewith bring them naturally in proximity. In

104. Aureli, *The possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, 45

105. *Ibid.*, 178

106. Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics', 95 [Italics in original] Besides that Aureli leaves out the italics in his quotation, he also made a little mistake: in his quotation the last sentence is 'Politics arises in what lies between men and it is established as a relationship.' Arendt however does not render politics as a relationship but in the plural, as relationships.

107. Aureli, *The possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, 27

Interestingly enough in *The Human Condition* Arendt argues that this particularly is the image of Genesis 1, where the narrative goes that God creates man, Adam. In Genesis 2 a different story is told: the Lord creates man and woman, Adam and Eve, *them*. In the first image, the multitude of people is simply multiplication of the singular, whereas in the second narrative mankind is from its very start plural. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 8

other words, the drawings of Dogma reveal that there is not simply parts and a relationship in confrontation between these parts, but that all sorts of spaces, in-between spaces, thresholds, boundaries, edges, corridors, connections, stops, and so on and so forth come into being – often indeed by chance. In other words, there not a relationship but relationships, which materialize not simply as how the parts relate to each other, but as spaces in themselves.

Aureli thus concentrates on the buildings as a matter of architectural intervention, since the in-between, the political in itself, he argues, has no substance. To me, however, this limitation seems to me a superficial reading of both Arendt as well as the capacity of the architectural project. There might not be political substance, but there are relationships, which are the essence of the realm of politics to Arendt. They, I would stress, are the essence of the architectural project as well. If the architectural project means intervention in (existing spaces), erecting boundaries and urging differences, why would there be no room to rethink applying that to the in-between space, between different parts, too? Why should we leave out this in-between space as part of the architectural project— or even as singular object of the architectural project? The in-between space after all does not have to be the result-by-chance of other architectural interventions – the relationships that are established, or that can be established, between the different parts can very well be part of the architectural project, or can be an architectural project in itself. Already the way architectural interventions relate to their immediate surroundings (as we can see in the drawings of Dogma), are part of an architectural project. As we've seen in the previous chapter, these boundaries, edges and limits are crucial regarding the idea of public space as a space of appearance. Boundaries and thresholds, in-between spaces and edges, can be a space in itself. Within the concept of the archipelago city, which often is rendered on a large scale, these boundaries as well as the in-between spaces that are urged as completely random, lose the possibility to articulate the essential character of these outlines, as well as the possible spatial qualities, particularly on the small scale. Contrary to Aureli we therefore might stress that the act of architecture is not the autonomous and absolute intervention, but is the possibility to intervene with objects and their interest (or their in-between-ness), which means, to challenge how these objects are related to each other and the world.

But if we urge the in-between space as part of – or object of – an architectural project, how then to reflect upon Arendt's statement that 'there is no political substance', which urges Aureli to focus on the parts rather than on the infra-structure in-between? In the text 'Introduction into politics', Arendt starts to stress the difficulty within society, both on the level of politics as well as in other realms of (public) life, to acknowledge the plurality of mankind. The very quote Aureli uses indeed is part of these preliminary reflections of the text, urges a distinction between the singular man and the plurality of men. Politics is part of the latter. If there only is man, which to Arendt is not limited to the single person, but also can be the single person multiplied, there is no politics. If there is no plurality, political action and speech is not needed. 'Politics deals with the coexistence and association of *different* men,' Arendt writes. 'Men organize themselves politically according to certain essential commonalities found within or abstracted from an absolute chaos of differences.'¹⁰⁸ The history of philosophy and theology, however, have had difficulties to acknowledge the plurality of men, the latter because of the idea that the human being is created in the image of God, which means that the plural of man is man multiplied,¹⁰⁹ and the first because of the philosophers assumed that there would be something in man itself that would urge the community, equality, and rights. Arendt opposes this view, since it is based on

kinship and similarity. There is nothing political in man, she than argues. Politics only rises between *men* (which thus is plural), indeed as relationships between absolute differences. The intriguing sentence in the midst of these two statements, that there is no political substance simply means that it is not something graspable, but that it only comes into being in relationships between differences. These relationships, nevertheless are in-between men. This perspective urges Aureli to concentrate on the different parts, rather than the relationships, although this also can be evoked that he quotes a ‘relationship’ between the parts, whereas Arendt describes multiple ‘relationships’ arising between men. There is no singular relationship, but rather numerous relationships. If we apply this to the city, as Aureli does, the very intervention can both diminish or increase the potentialities of these multiple relationships, which in turn prevent or propel spaces to function as a ‘space of appearance’, I would argue, which makes this in-between an urgent architectural question.

Aureli’s view moreover does not find ground in the rest of the text of Arendt, nor in her other writings. In ‘Introduction *into* Politics’ Arendt actually stresses another term that, as I will argue, offers a broader, and to my mind, a more solid foundation for a view upon the political aspects of the architectural project. After her argument that it is not *man* but *men* that urges politics, Arendt is quick to relate the fundamental plurality of men to her notion of the world. It is not kinship, nor similarity amongst people, but the world that brings together and unites a community.

‘Wherever human beings come together – be it in private or socially, be it in public or politically – a space is generated that simultaneously gather them into it and separates them from one another. Every such space has its own structure that changes over time and reveals itself in a private context as custom, in a social context as convention, and in a public context as laws, constitutions, and the like. Wherever people come together, the world thrusts itself between them, and it is in this in between space that all human affairs are conducted.’¹¹⁰

This quote actually urges three perspectives that we can relate to architecture and the in-between space. Firstly, in this quote Arendt starts to stress the laws and constitutions, the conventions and the custom that offers the form, limits, and the structure of spaces of gathering – all depending on the proper realm of the spaces. This stress on the instances that structure the spaces of gathering on each level somehow echoes Arendt’s remark on the role of laws and walls in the *Polis* that we touched upon in the previous chapter.¹¹¹ Arendt argues here that these interventions in space – setting the limits and rules of debate, securing the place of gathering itself – has to be seen as pre-political. Architecture and law-making in the *Polis* preceded the actual appearances and public life. These perquisites have to be established before one can actually speak of a ‘space of appearance’. Architecture, as the product of making, precedes the space of appearance.¹¹² In other words, architecture and lawmaking are pre-political, Arendt argues. Architects and lawmakers set the limit for space and debate, for political action. So what Aureli puts forward as a political gesture, stressing the ability to connect and separate, to limit and differentiate, in the eyes of Arendt belongs mainly to the pre-political. It is needed to circumscribe the ‘spaces of appearance’. At this point, we might indeed admit that Aureli’s reading is right: to offer the possibilities of a space of appearance, the limits have to be set. Whether this intervention is political or pre-political, I will investigate later. At this point we might state that,

110. Arendt, ‘Introduction *into* Politics’, 106

111. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198

112. *Ibid.*, 194

113.
Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics',
175

114.
Arendt, 'Introduction into Politics',
176

like quite a lot of our human activities, architecture cannot be stored in a single category of Arendt. By the very intervention of architecture in the earth, the world is created – and this world is, as Arendt argues, both the object as well as the subject of politics. At least some aspects of architecture are part of the world itself – they are not only responsible for its constitution and limitation, which is the activity of work, but also to be understood as part of political action itself: it needs public debate, and it affects the world on the long term. This urges the architectural project with political meaning. Secondly, the term 'world' by Arendt is rendered as an in-between – not so much an in-between space, but an in-between that has substance and that offers the stage for all human affairs. In other words, the in-between, which is established through relationships, parallels the world. The relationships not so much are random, but they depend upon the world that unites the community. If there is no world-in-common, no political relationships are possible. We can argue, as I will do later, that this definitely is part of the architectural project: to give form, substance, and permanence to the world. The world, which has political substance, is thirdly important as the very stage of the space of appearance. Whereas Aureli understands Arendt's argument as a reason to plea for the absolute character of architectural interventions (the parts), Arendt connects it here with the world-in-common, which establishes and secures a space of appearance. Certainly, as we touched upon in the previous chapter: this space of appearance cannot be guaranteed through architectural interventions, it can come into being everywhere. However, the world and the space of appearance are interrelated, while this perspective of the space of appearance is absent in Aureli's writing. We therefore certainly can argue that his concept of political meaning of architecture is rather abstract: it lacks this aspect of the space of appearance. His absolute architecture might be a way to withdraw and probably withstand the power of the market-approach to building and the city, but does it offer room for the 'space of appearance'? Does it offer room for inhabitants to appear amongst others, strangers but peers? As Arendt argues: 'Strictly speaking, politics is not so much about human beings as it is about the world that comes into being between them and endures beyond them.'¹¹³ The world, in other words, always is related to objects that offers endurance and commonness, but also to the inhabitants that appear on the stage of the world amongst others. If we lose this perspective of both objects and inhabitants at once (which I think is the case in Aureli's perspective and Dogma's extremely large and strict interventions), it will mean a threat for the human being itself. 'Human beings in the true sense of the word can exist only where there is a world.'¹¹⁴ In other words, the city, as opposed to urbanization and in addition to the archipelago-city, certainly is about the confrontation of parts, but also the in-between of relationships has political substance and cannot be rejected to be objects of architectural projects. The parts and the in-between together form this world, which is object of architectural intervention.

6.2.5 *For the Love of the World*

The position of Frampton and Aureli take in the field of architecture seem to differ as day and night. Whereas Frampton evokes the critical approach to building as an architecture that has to be understood as a locally bounded, tectonic and tactile and even marginal practice, Aureli directs architecture in a completely different direction. The 'absolute' urges the architect to the formal and the large scale, to repetitive structures that evokes tensions with the existing pattern of urbanization. However, hidden behind these different directions, there are remarkable similarities to be mentioned. In both of their works, architecture is marginal – not

only Frampton with his rather small projects that he proposes as examples of critical regionalism, also the absolute is understood as points of substance in the vast sea of the urbanized landscape and city. Both texts clearly evoke a distinction between the good and the bad: the good to withstand or approach critically, or even to expose and reveal the bad. Certainly only a few of the daily practices fulfill the expectations of the good. Both texts, we also can state, we thus once again touch upon the distinction between architecture and building.

Frampton most explicitly embraces the distinction, which he also reads in Arendt's differentiation between 'labor' and 'work'. In Aureli's statement the distinction is rendered as the 'instrumental' versus the 'political', which in the Arendtian terms probably might be translated as 'labor' versus 'action'. However, if we close-read Arendt's distinction, this parallel is problematic. Admittedly, the distinction Frampton makes between building and architecture, the first as being captured by economic principles and the second somehow critical to these principles, echoes in Arendt's narrative of the increasing influence of the *animal laborans* attitude on the work of the *homo faber*. Arendt indeed argues that economic principles applied upon 'work' affects the very objects of work, that previously were characterized by a *longue durée*, with ideas about consumption, which is uses in short term. Arendt certainly recognized Frampton's parallel in the field of architecture, the moment he presented this text during the 1972 conference in Toronto, with Arendt present in the audience, upon which we touched on in Chapter 4. No responses by Arendt to Frampton's presentation are known, but it is telling that it is included in the book afterwards that published a selection of the papers presented.¹¹⁵ However, although the impact of labor-thinking upon the attitude of architects, developers, commissioners and all other parties involved in architectural (and urban) projects is beyond doubt, this does not mean that architecture (or this part of the field that Frampton regards as mere building) completely is to be understood through this labor perspective. The distinction Arendt makes between the human activities on earth after all is neither a distinction between the economic and the artistic, nor between the obvious and the outstanding. And even if we acknowledge that Arendt definitely values 'action' as the 'highest' activity of the *vita activa*, she nevertheless avoids describing the activities through a bad versus good scheme. Arendt values the characteristics of each category, and challenges them similarly. If we have to summarize the distinctions, it would be as follows: labor is circular and consumptive, work linear and durable, and action interruptions in time, affective rather than materialized.¹¹⁶ The distinction between labor and work, and work and action, is thus neither the creativity, nor the complexity, nor the appreciation of the actual work or product. It solely is the temporality of the produce, its inherent durability. The works of work outlive the producer.¹¹⁷ That is an important perspective, regarding the human condition: the human being is born into an existing world, surrounded by things that already were there and will be there when he dies. For Arendt this is a very important aspect of the world:

'Work and its product, the human artefact, bestow a measure of permanence and durability upon the futility of moral life and the fleeting character of human time.'¹¹⁸

'Without this transcendence into a potential earthly immortality, no politics, strictly speaking, no common world and no public realm, is possible. ... It transcends our life-span into past and future alike; it was there before we came and will outlast our brief sojourn in it. It is what we have in common not only

115. Melvin A. Hill (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martins Press inc., 1979)

116. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7

117. cf *ibid.*, 7-8, 136

118. *Ibid.*, 8

120.
That Arendt takes this world not only metaphorically, as a philosophical term describing the metaphorical space where people can appear and where politics rises, becomes clear in her answer to Günther Graus, when he states during an interview: “World” understood always as the space in which politics can originate. Arendt responds immediately: ‘I comprehend it now in a much larger sense, as the space in which things become public, as the space in which one lives and which must look presentable. In which art appears, of course. In which all kinds of things appear.’ Hannah Arendt, “What Remains? The Language Remains.” A conversation with Günther Graus. Published in Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954, Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), 20

121.
cf. Bruno Latour, ‘From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik, or How to Make Things Public,’ in: Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (eds.), *Making Things Public, Atmospheres of Democracy* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 2005), 5

122.
Paul Holmquist, ‘Towards and Ethical Technique: Reframing Architecture’s “Critical Call” through Hannah Arendt,’ in: *The Plan Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2016), 20

123.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 136

124.
Admitted, sometimes designs of facades of particular buildings are to be recled every 10 years, which gives the commissioners the possibility to adapt the building to new (style/fashion) preferences. And remarkably enough, under pressure of the sustainability perspective, some strains in architecture investigate the possibility of building buildings with a very short lifespan in such a way and with such materials that it will affect the earth less. The idea is that a buildings program changes so quickly today, that it cannot predicted nor planned how the building will be used in a decade from now. The cradle-to-cradle attitude therefore encourages the possibility of the re-use of parts or the change of materials (for instance making use of cardboard), rather than re-use of the building as a whole.

with those who live with us, but also with those who were here before and with those who will come after us.’¹¹⁹

With work, the human being thus creates the ‘world of things’. Human beings appear – or as Heidegger would stress, are thrown – into a world of objects. These objects somehow relate to each other, as well as with the human beings in the midst of them.¹²⁰ Through the work of human beings, they intervene in that world with objects: they add new objects, but they also destroy objects. They relate to the objects and, as Arendt stresses as we will see in a moment, through the objects also to one another.¹²¹ The object, the ‘thing’ thus plays a central role in the political theory of Arendt. Things provide a world-of-things, a world-of-relationships, and by their very thing-ness provide men the permanence and the reliability it must have as the residence of mortal man and the community of men. Arendt is deeply concerned about this common world. The world, as she stressed, and the permanence it offers, is pre-condition for all political life. Action and speech establish a web of human affairs, which only can be sustained by the world-in-common. This world-in-common, in other words, ‘anticipates, embodies, and acknowledges the primary, politically constituted human reality that is necessary for action and speech to be meaningful.’¹²²

As we already understood from the critical positions of Frampton and Aureli, the increasing importance of the field of economics impacts the world-of-things, and thus also threatens the realm of politics, the community and personal lives. It changes the essential characteristics of the *world of things*. Particularly its durability is under tremendous pressure in the nowadays- society. ‘Their proper use’, Arendt claims, ‘does not cause them to disappear and they give the human artifice the stability and solidity without which it could not be relied upon to house the unstable and mortal creature which is man.’¹²³ How properties are threatened today, however, in the West cannot be compared to the attitude that can be touched upon in other parts of the world, or can be understood from historical studies. Because of growing economic pressure and laws, the production of things has become more and more the production of instruments instead of products that are to a certain extend an end in itself. The personal dimension of the things with which we surround ourselves and with which we furnish our world vanishes when ‘arts and crafts’ are replaced by mass production. That means, according to Arendt, that the ‘world of things’ nowadays is produced since it is a means towards another end, to fulfil a certain need. After use, while the need is fulfilled, there is no reason to sustain the thing, it is regard useless or at least worthless and can be thrown away. A personal relationship between the owner and the object is lacking. Due to this development, the lifespan of the ‘world of things’ is under pressure – and with that, according to Arendt, one of its most important aspects: its capacity to establish a durable world in which the human being can appear amongst others, the capacity to gather, the capacity to connect the generations of inhabitants to come and already are gone.

Although understanding building as the need for shelter and the instrumental approach of the *animal laborans* thus seems obvious, this interpretation nevertheless overlooks what actually is distinctive in Arendt’s categorization: the durability of that which is produced. The permanence of the world-of-things is its very essence. Both architecture and building, although for a major part serves biological necessities, creates the world that unites the people, as I will investigate. Even building has not yet lost its character of offering durability for a longer period – it is not yet spoiled by pure consumerism.¹²⁴ It therefore still belongs to

the category of work according to Arendt's definition, I would argue. So if we take this term of Arendt, the 'world' as the horizon of our journey through the field of architecture, we have to concentrate on this activity of 'work'. Traditionally Architecture after all produces objects that last. In this sense, we cannot make a distinction between building and architecture, as if the first would belong to the activity of labor, and the second to the activity of work (or action). In that sense, we have to reject the views of our sparring partners. Frampton literally, and Aureli in between the lines, consistently distinguish between building and architecture. They connect it to the distinction between labor on the one hand, which produces in their view the majority of the building stock, and work (Frampton) or action (Aureli) on the other hand that produces the objects that stand out or that are to create a political substance and resistance. Architecture, ranging from project inception to the design of representative buildings, and ranging from the bicycle shed to the cathedral, belongs to the category of work. To my mind, this perspective is also the basis of a remark George Baird makes on Frampton's first reflections upon Arendt's writings within the context of the field of architecture. In the margin of this publication in *Meaning and Architecture*, George Baird sharply comments on the challenge Frampton offers to architecture as opposed to building; to represent the collective (or better said: where he argues that we have to expect that from architecture as *opposed* to building), that if the victory of the *animal laborans* indeed is true, also architecture has become obsolete.¹²⁵ Although you can explain this comment in many ways, I would stress this direction: architecture and building are the two limits of a spectrum, not distinct nor unrelated, but interlocked like communicating vessels. If building has given in, then architecture as well. To my mind, the image Aureli draws is the opposite: urbanization has given in, architecture then needs to rise.

Surely, the threefold distinction Arendt emphasizes is exaggerated, at least in our everyday experiences. And we also might have a case if we don't want to limit the field of architecture to solely the production of objects that last. 'Building' also can be seen as political action to a certain extent, and the human need for shelter urges architecture to serve this biological necessity, which might be possible to mirror 'labor'. I will come back to this perspective in the next chapter, but it is good to broaden the scope already at this point. However, at the core of the profession, architecture as well as building both must be understood as belonging to *making*. Therefore, what both Frampton and Aureli brilliantly expose in the core of their writings, is the unparalleled influence and the danger of 'labor-thinking' on the profession of architecture. Through their analysis of the 'limitless instrumentalization of everything that exists',¹²⁶ which is a tough criticism on Capitalism and its habit to render everything only valuable when profitable – remember, it is 1958! –, Arendt again questions the withdrawal from the world. The lack of durability of the human artifice leads to a radical worldlessness, Arendt argues. A worldlessness that is experienced as homelessness.¹²⁷ Even in the personal home, this homelessness becomes apparent: people are continuously on the move, changing the interior, replacing furniture (with the help of big chains like IKEA), searching for improvement of life, home, and new experiences. Property, which for a long time has been understood as 'sacred', also has become a means towards another end, be it the social upheaval of the status of the owner or the search for economic profit through gathering and selling properties.

Beyond such developments from history until today Arendt recognizes a process of 'world alienation', a withdrawal from the world. 'Nothing in our time', Arendt writes, 'is more dubious ... than our attitude to the world.'¹²⁸ This

125. Frampton, 'Labour, Work & Architecture', 166

126. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p.204

127. Dana R. Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1996), 171

128. Hannah Arendt, 'On Humanity in Dark Times, Thoughts on Lessing', in: Hannah Arendt, *Man in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 4

129.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 6; cf. Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 189

130.
Arendt, 'On Humanity in Dark Times', 4

131.
Ibid., 4-5

132.
Nina Rappaport, *Vertical Urban Factory* (New York: Actar Publishers, 2016), 442; cf Victor Gruen in 1973 on the importance of the local store: 'The store offers the opportunity of a face-to-face encounter between our mass-production society and the individual. It is the place in which agricultural products and goods manufactured in factories all over the world are exchanged against the money earned in the producing process. Thus, the merchant represents the middle man between anonymous industry and the desirers, tastes and even moods of the individual. The merchant has learned through centuries that he can play this role of "broker" successfully only if he presents the merchandise, whether produced through agriculture or industry, in a most effective manner.' Victor Gruen, *Centers for the Urban Environment, Survival of the Cities* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1973), 13

133.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52

134.
Ibid., 52

135.
Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, 121

alienation of the world, she characterizes the modern attitude of the human being.¹²⁹ 'The world lies between people,' warns Arendt, 'and this in-between – much more than (as is often thought) men or even man – is today the object of the greatest concern and the most obvious upheaval in almost all the countries of the globe.'¹³⁰ Arendt actually argues that this withdrawal from the world, which does not mean only alienation, but also non-thinking, since thinking in her view is roused by the actualities of the world) might not be a problem of the individual, but it certainly is multiplied. 'With each such retreat an almost demonstrable loss to the world takes place; what is lost is the specific and usually irreplaceable in-between which should have formed between this individual and his fellow men.'¹³¹

Even the most recent trend in production, which seems to urge a perspective that takes care of the world once again through the emphasis on the narrative of the maker and the visibility of the workshop, cannot be taken for granted. This trend values local production and requires products that are uniquely, handcrafted, and well-designed. If production and product gain 'personal qualities', the relationship between the product and the owner is shaped differently. The idea is that this will change the attitude towards objects once again, from consumerism to a certain care about the objects surrounding us. Nina Rappaport in her extensive study on the history and future of factories argues that local production stresses the relationship between the producer and the consumer differently. 'Knowing the supplier and supply chain', she writes, 'contributes to consumer loyalty and benefits both sides of the consumer/supplier cycle so that the consumer becomes more aware of the social and environmental impact of the supply chain.'¹³² One does not need much imagination that this different attitude, in which loyalty is central, also is based on a different attitude to the world. This trend, nevertheless, also can be understood in the search for meaning in a globalized economy. A search for products that affect lives, that one can associate with personally, against the background of a time where everything is replaced quickly and the world transforms continuously. This seems noble, but easily can turn in just new directions to earn money and make a profit from one side, and to gain an 'identity' on the other. Of course, both aspects are not bad at all, but the combination of both is a curse for products. Trends easily change, after all. As can be seen everywhere, even this attitude can become a fashion and fades away quickly.

However, what can be learned from this 'new' trend and its emphasis on the personal relationship between maker and owner, between workshop and city, is something that finds its echo in Arendt's remark on the French interior, where everything is kept as it is, as the safe-guide in a world of increasing fragmentation and rationalism. The objects play an important role in this quote: life is nurtured between bed and chest, table (and cat).¹³³

The distinctive aspect of the category of work thus is the durability of its produce, a durability which for Arendt is a prerequisite for political action. Human life, according to Arendt, is only possible through the transformation of the 'earth' into a world. 'The world,' Arendt writes, 'is not identical with the earth or with nature, as the limited space for the movement of men and the general condition of organic life. It is related, rather, to the human artefact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go among those who inhabit the man-made world together.'¹³⁴ She builds this distinction between earth and world upon the work of her teacher Martin Heidegger.¹³⁵ But whereas in his perspective it is not entirely positive, for Arendt the world seems to be a positive anchor point. It has a central

role in her writings, particularly when she stresses this world as in common (with others). This world-in-common, or as she also calls it, the world-of-things is the aim and object of action and speech. Arendt here joins Karl Jasper's positive value of communication as opposed to Heidegger's 'existential solipsism'. Speech is needed in order to reveal the act of action.¹³⁶ In other words, being-in-the-world for Arendt is always being-in-the-world-with, while Heidegger never has taken the step towards a valuing of the others with whom we are in the world. In his writings, the world nevertheless is important, particularly as the source of knowledge. He does not situate knowledge in cognition, like Descartes did, but in existence itself, an existence that is situated in the world. Knowledge of the world inherently emerges from human beings acting, dwelling, living in the world, being-situated-in-the-world. Since we dwell in the world, as distinct from the idea that the world is ours to behold, we know the world existentially. It becomes familiar: we know how to respond, to handle. This instrumental responsiveness is essential for Heidegger's understanding of the world as a network of instrumental relationships. We are, somehow, practically involved in the world: the entities we touch upon we encounter not as merely objects, but as equipment, through their function.¹³⁷ Arendt's view seems even more directly bound to the world. She even renders a withdrawal from it not possible: 'No human life,' she writes, 'not even the life of the hermit in nature's wilderness, is possible without a world which directly or indirectly testifies to the presence of other human beings.'¹³⁸ We cannot escape nor avoid the signs and tracks of our fellow human beings. For Arendt this is not problematic, on the contrary. Arendt replaces the solitude of *Dasein*, central in Heidegger's oeuvre, by the condition of plurality of the public realm, and moreover introduces 'action' as the activity related to this public realm. Our being-in-the-world-with-others is not the condition of in-authenticity, according to Arendt, but is the space in which we appear as acting and speaking human beings. What specifically lacks in Heidegger's categories is the aspect of inter-action – that what Jaspers and Arendt learned about revalatory communication. Action, for Arendt, is not Heidegger's equipmental or instrumental approach to the world, but always *inter-action* with the world.

136.
Ibid., 120

137.
Ibid., 121

138.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 22

139.
Holmquist, 'Towards and Ethical Technique', 21

For Arendt, the most important aspect of the 'world-of-things' is that it has enduring power, which is required for the political activities she urges. She values the world thus positively as the space in which we appear to our peers as acting and speaking human beings amongst others, where we can be seen and heard through action and speech. The world therefore also has a representational aspect: 'it must acknowledge the human ideals and principles that orient action and speech in appearing, or "shining forth," as the world had in common,' Paul Holmquist writes.¹³⁹ Unlike Heidegger's instrumental approach to the world, for Arendt the world seems to be an end in itself. Or to rephrase this statement: as I have argued in the last chapter, according to Arendt action and speech are ends in themselves. They are not to be understood as instruments towards another end. However, as Arendt also argues, action and speech are bound to the world. It is not only the world that makes appearance amongst peers possible, it is also subject and object of action and speech. Action and speech is always in inter-action with the world and our peers. It is the world that brings human beings together, not only with their contemporaries but also with our predecessors and forebears. Action and speech thus need the world as stage. The world itself however is created through the intervention in the earth (and the world) by the activities of work. The world only is significant when it offers permanence, a durability that cannot be found in the earth. 'If the world is to contain a public

140.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 55

141.
Hannah Arendt, 'The Crisis in Culture', in Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 206

142.
Hannah Arendt, 'Culture and Politics', in: Hannah Arendt, *Reflections on Literature and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 190

143.
Ibid., 189

144.
Lieven De Cauter and Michiel Dehaene, 'The Space of Play, Towards a General Theory of Heterotopia', in: Michel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter (eds.), *Heterotopia and the City, Public Space in a Post-Civil Society* (London/New York: Routledge, 2008), 88

145.
Ibid., 92

146.
Arendt, 'Culture and Politics', 202.

147.
De Cauter and Dehaene, 'The Space of Play', 88

148.
cf. Arendt, 'The Crisis in Education', 171

space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only; it must transcend the life-span of mortal man.¹⁴⁰ Action and speech does not make sense after all if the subject and object of its engagement can change overnight. It is in respect to the transformation of the earth into a durable and stable world that Arendt comes up with the notion of culture.¹⁴¹ 'The earthly home,' she writes, 'becomes a world only when objects as a whole are produced and organized in such a way that they may withstand the consumptive life-process of human beings living among them – and may outlive human beings, who are mortal. We speak of culture only where this outliving is assured.'¹⁴² For Arendt, all culture starts with 'world-making'.¹⁴³

6.2.6 *The Challenge of Culture*

The word culture is, as one can imagine, rather important regarding the world-in-common. Although becoming fluid today, it still promises a certain coherence between space and time. As it includes the fields of the arts, and through the arts also reifies action, it somehow bridges from the category of work towards the category of action. Culture, and cultural buildings are not easily brought back to the black-and-white spectrum Arendt draws. Culture, after all, seems to be as much part and parcel of political life and its concern for the world, as well as supporting the *homo faber* in his production, development, innovation, articulation of the world-in-common. In this perspective it is understandable that the Belgium philosopher Lieven De Cauter and the urban designer Michiel Dehaene plea for another realm in-between the public and the private: that of the cultural.¹⁴⁴ In their reflection upon the notion *heterotopia*, as coined by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, they refer to the reading of the Polis by Hippodamus, that indeed categorizes the cultural and religious buildings as a third realm, in-between the public and the private. This realm differs from the market (private) and the state (public) and offers room for a myriad of buildings and landscapes: churches, temples, cemeteries, schools, sportsfields, museums. Interestingly enough, they argue that these buildings and places not simple distinguish in space, but also in time. They unlock the *holy-day-spaces*, as they argue: they are not about the everyday, nor about the spaces of power, but about the spaces of specific moments during the day, in life.¹⁴⁵ It is a suggestion worth keeping in mind. A echo of it can be found in Arendt's discussion on the arts, as we will touch upon later, when Arendt discusses the need to make arts accessible to the public. The frailty of work of arts, however, require specific spaces (sacred or cultural buildings) that protect these objects. Artworks, Arendt argues needs to be 'stored in sacred places – temples and churches – or by entrusting them to the care of museums and preservationists'.¹⁴⁶ It is, however, also important at this point that Arendt does not create a specific realm for these buildings, although she must have touched upon Hippodamus's description of the *Polis* and this third space. It after all is Aristotle himself who, although briefly, discusses the theory of Hippodamus on this third space in his *Politeia*.¹⁴⁷ For Arendt the cultural and sacred spaces simply belonged to the private realm, even if they clearly contributed to the citizens to prepare for and recuperate from participation in the public realm.¹⁴⁸

Arendt, in turn, comes up with a challenging reading of culture as well – a reading that also places it in-between work and action. Before I can introduce that challenge in a clear way, we need to once again look briefly to the distinction between architecture and mere building. It's quite tangible in that distinction that the first is related to a cultural practice, whereas the other part is understood

as providing an economical service or offering an engineering advise. The need to distinguish between both outer limits of the spectrum obviously is urged by the developments at both edges. On the one hand, we can trace the increasing drive to optimize the economic profits of building in many ways, whereas the architecture perspective is understood in parallel with the arts, that is, belonging to the relative freedom of the art world, in which the designer actually becomes more important than the design. In architecture the cultural value is evident, whereas within the building-scope this cultural aspect only latently exists (and often is dismissed as being expensive, un-efficient, un-functional). In the first the architect is the general authority, and has the position of the author, while in the second the architect simply is one amongst other specialists who contribute to a project as advisors in a building assignment. The problem in both cases of course is a misunderstanding of this aspect of 'culture.' It is thought as something additional, rather than something inherent to every intervention in the world. This might offer a perspective in which the distinction between architecture and building can be left behind and accepted without comment. After all, if 'culture' is limited to art or to artistic, our view upon the profession is narrowed. If we start to rethink architecture solely in relation to the work of art, we actually leave most of the products of making and intervention in the world behind, as well as the complexities of everyday life, that are subject of the architectural project as well – or that appropriate architecture at a certain moment, changing the building according to its actual needs. However, culture is not limited to the work of art nor to aesthetics. It is the other way around: art is part of a wider range of products – and only in this wider scope we can talk about culture. Moreover, culture somehow is in Arendt's distinction between labor, work, and action bridging between the latter two. Not only since they construct the world as pre-condition for political action, but also since it is through this form of culture, through the production of a world that 'testifies and memorializes action', offers them 'a relative permanence', and inspires the actor, that action is enabled.¹⁴⁹ Or to state it differently, that action makes sense. Even more: we acknowledged previously that the relationship between world and action is a loop. The world not only is a pre-condition of political life, its future also is the concern of political action. The argument I therefore want to investigate is that architecture – and from now on, I mean with that architecture and building, unless otherwise stated) ideally is a cultural praxis that intertwines in a single project artistic and cultural ambitions with the human condition of everyday life. Even the simplest and most modest constructions are important, culturally spoken. As Hannah Arendt argues in *The Human Condition*, and later specifically investigates in essays on issues related to culture, also everyday objects convey public and political significance.¹⁵⁰

This perspective – to understand the whole building-industries as part of culture – might hollow out the challenge that is beyond every 'cultural ambition'. Arendt, nevertheless, offers us a different insight in the term 'culture', that at once brings every architectural intervention in the world under high voltage. The word culture, Arendt writes in her essay 'The Crisis in Culture' actually stems from the Roman word *colere*: 'to cultivate, to dwell, to take care, to tend, and preserve.'¹⁵¹ This somehow suggests an attitude of loving care for the things that surround us, both in regard to the natural environment as well as the cultural artefacts from the past. The things surrounding us need our care and attention, protection from the overwhelming power of nature and natural growth that can even destroy the strongest concrete slabs over time. It needs a progressive approach: it is never finished, but needs constant attention, maintenance *and* renewal. Arendt writes:

149. Holmquist, 'Towards an Ethical Technique', 21

150. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chapter 2 and 4; See also Arendt, 'The Crisis in Culture'; and Arendt, 'Culture and Politics'

151. Arendt, 'The Crisis in Culture', 208

152.
Hannah Arendt, 'Franz Kafka Appreciated Anew', in: Hannah Arendt, *Reflections on Literature and culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 101

153.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 95-96

154.
Arendt, 'The Crisis in Culture', 209, cf. Arendt, 'Culture and Politics', 190.

155.
Arendt, 'Culture and Politics', 196.

156.
Ibid., 196.

'Just as surely as a house built by men according to human laws will fall into ruin as soon as men abandon it, so surely the world fabricated by men and constituted according to human and not natural laws will once again become part of nature, and will be surrendered to catastrophic destruction when man decides to become part of nature himself – a blind but highly precise instrument of natural laws.'¹⁵²

Also in *The Human Condition* Arendt urges the need of continuous interference with the world:

'The reality and reliability of the human world rest primarily on the fact that we are surrounded by things more permanent than the activity by which they were produced, and potentially even more permanent than the lives of their authors. Human life, in so far as it is world-building, is engaged in a constant process of reification, and the degree of worldliness of produced things, which all together form the human artifice, depends upon their greater or lesser permanence in the world itself.'¹⁵³

However, culture is not only about the loving care for and tenderness towards the world. Arendt is quick to bring the Greek position to the fore. The Greeks were themselves mostly aligned to the production of artefacts, a production that inherently meant the application of power and knowledge in order to disturb, violate and even tear down natural processes (of course, the Greeks could only apply that in a limited sense, compared to the seemingly ultimate power we have at our disposal).¹⁵⁴ Both perspectives belong together: turning the earth into a world needs the Greek power coupled with the Romans' care for what is already there. Culture thus is production *and* preservation. Arendt offers here a crucial insight, that continuously needs to be recalibrated and re-appropriated. We might understand this as the challenge of culture – the cultural challenge to all interventions in the world. Culture is what is already there and what we add to this world of things. It embraces the existing and aims for innovation and improvement. Both aspects of culture come together in the human being, as Arendt writes, 'insofar as he is not only a producing but also a political being.'¹⁵⁵ When urging the cultural perspective, we urge the producing and the political being at once. They belong together. Production is about the establishment and maintenance of the world through the work of our hands, we might state. Politics however is also about the establishment and maintenance of the world through action and speech. Culture, in other words, bridges between 'work' and 'action'. Culture places the products of 'work' in a larger construct, stressing their significance beyond their own realm and places them in a political perspective. This also counts the other way around: it stretches the realm of politics towards the tangible intervention and maintenance of the world-in-common. The world, we also can state, is simultaneously stage and subject of action and speech. So to put this strongly: in politics, preservation and action, care and the capacity to initiate come together. The careful handling of the past, which makes it vital today, offers the condition of acting into the future. Architecture, evidently, plays a major role in that present vitality of the past.

Arendt develops her startling insight even further: 'As such, [the political being] needs to be able to depend on production, so that it may provide lasting shelter for acting and speaking in their transience – and for the perishability of mortal life in its perishability. Politics is thus in need of culture, and acting is in need of production for the purpose of stability.'¹⁵⁶ In other words, since political

action is characterised by frailty, the world needs to be permanent in order to give room to the instability and unpredictability of human actions and inter-actions. This challenge that confronts culture is bound to all worldly objects. All produce of work, in other words, contain political meaning and significance. These objects form in a literal and metaphorical sense the world that human beings share – it also shapes the political realm. These objects offer the stability that is required for a meaningful appearance amongst peers.

This is precisely the reason that we need to reject the distinction between architecture and genuine building. As seen from the perspective of the political realm there is no difference. The political perspective challenges each part of the building industries. There cannot be a single aspect left from this perspective, as if 'building' can turn its back the political realm. This of course does mean that we cannot leave 'building' where it is, neither can we dismiss the ideas beyond 'architecture'. Even if we declare the regular building industries as the way we produce culture today, even if we declare the building industries as the result of culture today, which of course is true in some way, we have to admit that this form of culture-making is heavily dependent upon an economical view of building practices. As said before, the economic models are not the problem *an sich*, it is urging the economic aims as the very end of the building process – as if there is no urban context, no past to remember, no future left, no generations after us that also need to find their place in the world. If economic efficiency is the single outlook, we've lost sight on the common world that binds the past with the now, the here with there, the current with the future. Seen from the perspective of Arendt, stressing her argument on the political significance of the world, the regular building-industries and the genuine approaches in building need to be challenged urgently. The same counts also for the part of architecture within the building industries. If 'building' does not understand its value, what about architecture? The aesthetic approach, and if we follow Pevsner as discussed above, with his distinction between the bicycle shed and the cathedral, this approach is what distinguishes architecture from mere building, indeed urges architecture to play a role on a strict cultural and artistic level. But even these architectural approaches might have become obsolete, as Baird already urged in response to Frampton. There are actually two threats that empty-out the meaning of architecture in this respect. The first is visible in these instances that architecture is used as an economic instrument as well. Architecture is understood as a means to create an identity which can be applied to (a part of) a city, a mall, or a company. Of course, representation of identity is not something new in architecture. The meaning of architecture has always surpassed the sheer technical design of buildings and spaces – even in its most technical appearance the responsibility of architecture reaches further than the occurrence of the single detail or building. Roman villas, Gothic churches, and modern factory-building all represent something of the commissioner. Or better said: it tells something the commissioner wants to communicate. The grandeur of the villa shows the richness of the owner, the height and light of the Gothic church emphasises the holiness of the Lord, the modern corporate building shows how progressive and advanced this particular business is. Nevertheless, the difference perhaps is first that these identities suffer from the same disease as fashion and furniture: it is volatile. For a short period of time it attracts attention, but quite soon it fades away, becomes out-of-date if not obsolete, and needs to be replaced by something else that attracts attention. Frampton's question I quoted previously as to whether architecture 'ever [will] be able to return to the representation of collective value' in order to set up a

157.

As Patchen Markell notes, the threat of instrumentality as applied by Arendt on use-objects are not present in her discussion of works of art in *The Human Condition*. When she describes the work of art, there is much more of the language of the next chapter present: that of 'action'. He values Frampton's article 'The Status of Man and the Status of His Objects' in this respect: he is one of the few readers that have noted and urged the instrumental approach also applied to the arts. Markell, 'Arendt's Work', 27

158.

cf. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*; Landry, *The Creative City*

159.

Aureli, *The possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, xii

160.

Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 24

shared public realm resonates here, since architecture evidently has been affected by consumerism as well, at least because it becomes tangible in the continuous production of images within its field that are disseminated to the public. Architectural consumption is affected by the emergence of a range of websites and social media that need to publish new projects, renderings and diagrams, not just day by day, but even hour by hour, to attract visitors and advertisements. This creates a specific architectural public desiring the constant consumption of architecture. In other words, architecture has turned into entertainment; it creates objects of consumption that obscure the establishment of a new political realm. Second, we need to see how the urges of identity apply a whole set of organisational principles of efficiency, smoothness and temptation towards certain spaces and buildings. These principles reveal to be totalitarian: there is no room for alternative approaches and interpretations. Architecture as a means of attraction and leisure, of development and growth, reduces architecture to a singular view upon the world, which strips architecture bare of public meaning. The aim of consumption and an emphasis on economic profits and benefits turns architecture into a means to another end in the short term, beyond functional and programmatic issues.¹⁵⁷ Most clear is the eagerness to understand architecture as part of the 'creative industries' discourse that, through the writings of the economist Richard Florida and others,¹⁵⁸ has become a specific economic narrative. Such framing of the profession of course influences the economic lifecycle of buildings and designs and also affects contemporary architectural design approaches. The increasing impact of consumer society upon architecture seems to deepen the gap between 'artistic' aspects of architecture and everyday practices. The demands of consumer society also enhance aspects of originality and creativity as key drivers in processes of distinction and branding.

This brings us to our second threat of architecture becoming obsolete: not only when the mere building is left out of scope, this diminishes the political aspects of all architectural practices, but also when the architecture-part is limited to the perspective of the artistic this will be the case. Artistic in this case, under influence of the Romantic age, as we have seen, is bound to the designer and its oeuvre. Often the wish to create an identity by the commissioner and the name of a single designer joins forces. Well-known architects are invited to design buildings from Dubai to Beijing, from Chicago to London, from Bogotá to Laos. The design and even the building has become an element of their portfolio, a stone in their oeuvre, while for the commissioners the very architecture of their properties has become a matter of identity, iconic landmarks (the well-known name also can be a matter of significance in the building-market, to advertise with, or what Aureli called 'corporate economic performance'.)¹⁵⁹ and a place in the oeuvre of the architect. The emphasis here is thus upon the design as original idea of an individual architect. Artist and artwork, architect and architecture are merged. This threat is not only applied to the 'starchitects' operating on the scale of the globe, upon which we touched previously, but also plays a role in more locally grounded practices. Also in these situations the architect can be the 'star'. If aesthetics is the sole perspective to judge a project, or to decide about form and matter in a project, architecture has lost its meaning as well. It has become alienated from the world. As Harries writes: '*To the extent that the aesthetic approach governs building, works of architecture will turn a cold shoulder not only to their neighbours but to the world that would constrain them with its demands and necessities.*'¹⁶⁰

If the world needs to be the aim, what then does that mean for the project of architecture? In the next paragraphs, we will meander through Arendt's view

on the world-of-things and specifically on the works of art. These perspectives will reveal a couple of merits that Arendt particularly expects from works of art. The final paragraphs of this chapter then will explore these merits through the scope of the architectural profession. At this point, however, we might conclude, that addressing the significance of architecture through a distinction from mere building, as is the case in architectural culture today, leaves most of the building projects out of sight. But what about the other projects, that form by far the main part of the building industries? It is as if these projects and practices are not worth discussing and questioning, while simultaneously these for a great deal determine the everyday environments of citizens: their houses and streets, their offices and shopping malls, their hospitals and sports facilities, even their town halls and central squares. Building somehow is neglected by architectural professionals, neither being presented in the cultural realm, nor published in general newspapers and magazines, as also it is not discussed within academia, they are also left un-challenged. As if architecture is a case of architects only, and other collaborators are not responsible for the transformation and maintenance of the world. Architecture in the broadest sense of the word, however intervenes in the everyday environment of citizens, which is the responsibility of all involved in the process of building. Architecture is always the result of a collective endeavour, as I will investigate in the next chapter. However, if we challenge the political aspect of architecture, this is a goal of all building assignments, a challenge to all practices, and to all involved in these practices. Particularly, of course, for the designer, since the design, in the end, needs to connect the interests of the diverse stakeholders in a singular intervention in the world. Therefore, urging architectural significance solely through the particularities of architectural artistic (as Ruskin did, as we have seen), through the merit of delight and aesthetic appeal (like Pevsner urged, as we have seen), means narrowing the scope of architecture. It loses its basis in everyday life, as well as in the political realm, in order to fill a certain position in the realm of the arts. Often this realm is rendered a world apart, as we have seen, distinct from everyday objects and experiences. Arendt, although she acknowledges the distinctiveness of the artwork, she also keeps everyday objects and artworks close together within the category of 'work' and in their shared significance for the world. All products of making construct the world that human beings have in common. Art is part of that construction, it only is special in so far as the works of art have the capacity to push the characteristics of all other objects of 'work' to their very end, since it is particularly the work of art that is an end in itself.



6.6 Maya Lin, *Vietnam Memorial*,
Washington Mall, Washington DC, 1982



6.7 Peter Eisenman, *Holocaust Memorial*, Berlin, Germany, 2005

6.3 THE POLITICS OF ART

6.3.1 *The Most Worldly of All Tangible Things*

161.
Cecilia Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt. How to See Things* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), x

As seen from the distinction between labor and work, there indeed might be no essential difference between mere building and works of architecture, between everyday objects and works of art. These all are products of making, results of work. For Arendt artworks are specific objects, with a specific quality. The importance to claim the similar origin of the everyday objects and the works of art is the political significance that Arendt assigned to both. They turn the earth in a world, offer durability to the temporalities of political action, and form the stage for appearances amongst peers. In the image of Arendt, works of art have this capacity particularly since they are an end in themselves: they are not used for other means, which means that they are not worn-out over time. Such an image of course mostly addresses classical forms of art: sculpture and painting, whereas music, poetry and the newer forms of art like photography, video, and manifestations has a very different relationship with this aspect of the *longue duree*. We will come back on that, but let us first follow Arendt's reflection upon objects of art as pivotal objects regarding communities. Arendt connects the *longue duree* to aspects of beauty, to their aim of aesthetic appeal. Artworks are meant to challenge the human experience of aesthetics. Nevertheless, the case of aesthetics is not limited to art only, as the philosopher Cecilia Sjöholm, who recently magnificently investigated the relevance of aesthetics in Arendt's writings, argues: 'Questions of aesthetics ... cannot be reduced to art. We experience aesthetic phenomena in our everyday lives, in nature, in the sciences, and so on. Following Kant, we may talk about all those phenomena that appeal to our judgment as belonging to the field of aesthetic inquiry.'¹⁶¹

Now that we have argued not to distinguish between architecture and building but to stress the profession as a whole, it is time to value the fundamental artistic aspect of building. Although Arendt does not make distinction between regular objects like the table on the one hand, and a works of art on the other (if we solely look to the way they are made), the art work nevertheless stands out because of a series of reasons. I will stress four reasons at this point, which clarify how the work of art emphasizes the importance of the world-of-things in regard to the public realm. In other words, the art work enlightens the political aspects of all worldly objects.

The *first* of this series of perspectives Arendt draws is actually that the work of art enhances and enlarges the *permanence* of the world – we touched upon that aspect already briefly. Although the produce of work is characterized by a resistance towards the consuming life-processes, and thus are characterized by a certain *longue durée*, objects regular are use-objects. There are other ends that are fulfilled through the object. Objects are used towards other ends, and therefore will wear out over time. They will change slightly in appearance and quality, until the moment that they have lost their appropriate form, or have deteriorated too much, and need to be demolished. But even stronger, as Frampton has argued, the permanence of the objects that surround us are increasingly produced for short-term use. Thinking about furniture, for instance, chairs and tables have become products of mass production: quite cheap to purchase, often fashionable, and therefore also easily replaced (even if the object is still properly working towards the end it has been produced and bought). It is against this background

that the artwork can appear as different. The work of art after all is not a use-object. It is created as an end in itself. That is the very reason that Arendt qualifies the artwork: it has an inherent permanence. Admitted, this perspective dwells upon the 18th century change in attitude towards the arts, as I described above. Arendt embraces the importance of the artwork, since it has no other goal to fulfil than to exist. Artworks, as Arendt argues, are ends in themselves and therefore are potentially immortal.¹⁶² They are not used in the regular meaning of the word.

‘Among the things that give the human artifice the stability without which it could never be a reliable home for men are a number of objects which are strictly without any utility whatsoever and which, moreover, because they are unique, are not exchangeable and therefore defy equalization through a common denominator such as money.’¹⁶³

Artworks are there to be enjoyed, not to be consumed, neither to be traded. As soon as the artwork becomes a modus of investment, other expectations are added to the object. Strictly spoken, the panel, sculpture, painting, or poem doesn’t have any other aim than to be enjoyed. However, back to the argument Arendt offers; if we strictly look to the art-work itself, we can argue that it can survive the ages, particularly since it is not worthless after fulfilling its initial goal. In other words, it lacks an economic lifespan, it is just there. As Arendt writes: ‘because of their outstanding permanence, works of art are the most intensely worldly of all tangible things; their durability is almost untouched by the corroding effect of natural processes, since they are not subject to the use of living creatures.’¹⁶⁴ The artist is, Arendt therefore writes, the only true ‘worker’, since his produce, the artwork, essentially is ‘useless’.

‘From the viewpoint of sheer durability, artworks clearly are superior to all other things; since they stay longer in the world than anything else, they are the worldliest of all things. Moreover, they are the only things without any function in the life process of society; strictly speaking, they are fabricated not for men, but for the world which is meant to outlast the life-span of mortals, the coming and going of the generations. Not only are they not consumed like consumer goods and not used up like use objects; they are deliberately removed from the processes of consumption and usage and isolated against the sphere of human necessities.’¹⁶⁵

Useless, by the way, doesn’t mean that the work of art isn’t useful in any sense. Artworks can be ‘used’ in many different ways. This use to Arendt is different than to be consumed. Artworks are there to stay. Their very beauty preserves them from oblivion. ‘Beautiful things can perdure’, the political philosopher Kimberley Curtis writes, ‘not because they are the same to all of us, timeless and true in that universalist way, but because they are powerful but specific time-bound responses to universal dilemmas embedded in the human condition. In this sense, beautiful things have a coercive and contingent quality; their durability, as their beauty, derives from their capacity to illuminate both the historically specific and universal shape of our human dilemma’s.’¹⁶⁶ In other words, beauty evokes the challenge ‘how to save and cherish’. Nevertheless, this aspect of the *longue durée* and the importance of power most easily can be applied to sculpture and painting, rather than to music and poetry, since the first two are producing tangible things, part of the world-of-tangible-things. However, we might argue, even writing

162. Arendt, ‘The Crisis in Culture’, 206

163. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 167

164. *Ibid.*, 167

165. Arendt, ‘The Crisis of Culture’, 206

166. Kimberley Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real. Aesthetic Experience and Arendtian Politics* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 13

167.

Arendt, 'Culture and Politics', 182. Susannah Young Gottlieb, who edited this article for *Reflections on Literature and Art*, notes at this point that Arendt's distinction between life on the one hand and world on the other hand evoked lots of critical responses. Arendt replied to the critics: 'I have opposed the world to life, and because we live in a time in which there has been, and still is, an enormous overestimation of life, I have perhaps overdone the theme of love for the world, which belongs to culture as such. I do not think that I am hostile to life. Life is a magnificent thing but it is not the highest good. Whenever life is considered the highest good, life is just as soon whisked away. In our society there is a dangerous estrangement from the world, and alongside this, a terrible inability of human beings to love the world. Arendt, 'Culture and Politics', 332

168.

Ibid., 181

169.

The political philosopher Patchen Markell, has noted that in the Chapter on Work in *The Human Condition*, the paragraphs on the works of art are of different tone and are quite pivotal, since they bridge the gap from work to action, particularly in the notion of 'culture'. Patchen Markell, 'Arendt's Work', in: *College Literature*, Vol 38, no.1, (Winter 2011), 31

170.

Immanuel Kant, *Kritiek van het oordeelsvermogen* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2009), 99

171.

cf. Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought*, 12-13

172.

Arendt nevertheless acknowledges that art can be all of this, as she writes in her acceptance speech for the Lessing prize: 'For Lessing the essence of poetry was action and not, as for Herder, a force – "the magic force that affects my soul" – nor, as for Goethe, nature which has been given form.' Arendt, 'On Humanity in Dark Times', 6; the difference, as I see it, is the very personal perspective, which might make art a *hobby* of the artist, a personal expression reified, which aim is not the world, but the self of the artist. Art, I would summarize Arendt's argument, needs to be indebted in the world.

173.

cf. Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt*, 4

174.

Remember at this point once again Arendt's distinction between the Roman and the Greek approach to culture, as a distinction between intervention and maintenance. Culture requires both, and particularly in the case of the artwork,

(which produces at least texts and books) and music (offering repeatable performances) are producing artworks that unite people over time.

At this point we might stress once again that the delight of art has to be distinguished from a way of enjoying art more akin to entertainment; that we might call to be pleased by the work of art. Arendt relates pleasure to the entertainment industries, to life, to the need to fill spare time with that distracts. 'Culture relates to objects', Arendt writes, 'and is a phenomenon of the world, and pleasure relates to people and is a phenomenon of life.'¹⁶⁷ What the entertainment industries offers, quite contrary to the world of art, 'are not values to be used and exchanged; rather, they are objects of consumption as apt to be depleted as any other such object. *Panem et circenses* [bread and circuses] – these two indeed go together: both are necessary for the life-process, for its sustenance and its recovery; both are also swallowed up in this process, that is to say, they both have to be produced and performed time and again if this process is not to come to an eventual halt.'¹⁶⁸ Arendt thus argues that the offerings of the entertainment industries are bound to the biological cycle of nature, life and the human body. The work of art, on the contrary, is bound to the *longue durée* of world. It serves the world with permanence. Arendt stresses this distinction, since the pleasure industries have a great impact on the world of art as well. The longing for leisure affects not just the approach to art by spectators, nor the aim of the artists involved, but also the status of art within society. In other words, it affects the realm of culture, and by affecting cultural objects, it also is a trait for the world.

Arendt clearly, although not dissecting this aspect, understands the attitude towards art should be characterized by disinterested attention. I already touched upon that perspective above, when discussing the change in attitude towards the arts in the 18th century. It is this changing attitude that, for a great deal is influenced by the writings of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who stresses the aesthetic judgment as being disinterested.¹⁶⁹ Once again, this word can be mistaken easily. It does not mean 'inattention' – how Kant propels the term is 'not-self-interest'. Moreover, as he argues, and Arendt stresses, interest means inter-esse, which means 'what is *between us*', which thus can be public. It is in this perspective that Kant describes disinterested judgment as 'taste',¹⁷⁰ upon which we will come back in the next chapter, where we will dissect the public roles of the architect. At this point it is important to note that art requires a 'disinterested' approach, and that this dis-interested attitude essentially offers room for a public sharing of taste. Art, there for contemplation – disinterested contemplation. Disinterested has to be clearly distinguished from un-interested, which is not interested at all. The disinterested attitude is interested, but not to consume the object of attention. It is attentive and open, it is not possessive, it is an interest-ness for the sake of the object itself.¹⁷¹ It approaches the art work to desire the object and to maintain it, not to the use for another goal beyond the object itself: no self-fulfilment, no political activism, and even not the very personal expression of the self.¹⁷² Note at this point that this image of disinterestedness also is beyond Arendt's description of participating in public action and speech. Also political action needs to be rising from a disinterested attitude: it is not about personal interest and possession, about self-expression nor self-fulfilment. Arendt even urges courage as needed for appearance in public space. It is possible that one need to act against the own interests.¹⁷³

For Arendt, after all, it is important that art does not fulfil a certain aim, while it also is important that the attitude of the individual spectator and of culture as a whole does not spoil the object itself.¹⁷⁴ So the disinterested attitude

is needed in order to be attracted, but not in order to possess it, to be pleased or to consume. Nevertheless, also the art world is susceptible for consumption. 'If the entertainment industry lays claim to products of culture – and this is exactly what happens in mass culture,' Arendt writes, 'the immense danger arises that the life-process of society ... begins literally to devour the products of culture.'¹⁷⁵ Arendt then continues to argue that this does not happen through the cheap reproduction of art works, which are spread all over the world – and here Arendt certainly has thought about the famous article of her friend Walter Benjamin, on the works of art in a time of reproduction. However, when the artwork is altered and popularized, this certainly empties out the original. It affects the possibility of enjoyment of the artwork. If the image is printed on all sorts of consumer goods, the object itself somehow vanishes. If assessing a painting or a sculpture, it is not easy to get rid of the images of these knockoffs in mind.

Such a concept of art, which emphasises the *longue durée*, beauty, and art being an aim in itself, in some cases is at odds with contemporary forms of art from the 60s onwards. Video-art, event-art, graffiti art, conceptual art, and so on are not meant to last permanent 'objects'.¹⁷⁶ Their aim often lays beyond the object itself, often stressing personal or political perspectives. The inherent temporalities of these mediums are challenging the profession as well as their different aims. These objects and 'interventions' are not so easily stored in museums or art galleries, neither can they fulfil a lasting role in public space or in the urban fabric. Even the media used in these forms of art are fluid as well: advertisements, newspapers, webpages and performances. What does last other than the impact it makes on the spectator? These forms of art moreover change the position of the spectator, from an approach in disinterested contemplation, towards the direct address of the viewer, to evoke the spectator to engagement. We very well can argue that quite a lot of today's art is to be seen as political activism (besides the personal expression of personal and intimate feelings, which is, admitted, another story). In all of these 'works', the object and making of the object seems to be less important in favour of the message of the art work, or the making itself is the message. Whereas the making itself, the craftsmanship of the artist, is no longer the key towards the produce, the political stance seems to take that place. Even in the recent renewed interest in crafts and the 'making', this often is proposed as a political stance. Artists are actively present in public debates, using their works of art as medium to stress political action and engage the public.

The contemporary ideas on art surely stress the boundaries Arendt draws between the different forms of human activities. It also clearly stresses the importance of permanence, as Arendt argues. This permanence is a difficult matter as art has become personal expression or political activism. Arendt clearly has in mind these tangible objects that, although the hand of the maker is visible, evokes public resonance, that is, it is acclaimed through the commonly owned 'taste' in the Kantian sense of the word.¹⁷⁷ Only when the 'beauty' of the object evokes this common experience, the object will reach for its potential immortality.

6.3.2 *Thickening Our Understanding of the World*

The last few decades, craftsmanship and tangible production in which the artist itself is involved is re-valued. As Richard Sennett writes in his book *The Craftsman*, 'Craftsmanship may suggest a way of life that waned the advent of industrial society – but this is misleading. Craftsmanship names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake.'¹⁷⁸ This renewed

that needs to be protected from the destruction of life and cultural objects caused by the threats of modernity. If the cultural object is the only object that does not fall apart – the Romantic recognition and emphasis on the wholeness of works of art as – it needs maintenance, protection, care. See also: Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt*, 31

^{175.}
Arendt, 'Culture and Politics', 181

^{176.}
Lots of reasons can be mentioned to evoke new developments in the arts – most of them of course are inherent in the changes in society and cultural circumstances. However, also new materials, new ways of producing, new media, have to be mentioned. They all affect the appearance of art objects and offer new possibilities to the artist. Even new materials that are artificial and have a lifespan that surpasses the more 'natural' materials, are stressing the representation of permanence: plastics and polyester, for instance, are ageing and weathering badly.

^{177.}
The idea that 'taste' is not a personal matter only, but that it is rooted in community, today of course is heavily threatened. Cf. Rochelle Gurstein, *The Repeal of Reticence, America's Cultural and Legal Struggles over Free Speech, Obscenity, Sexual Liberation, and Modern Art* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 3-7

^{178.}
Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 9

179.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 173

180.
Ibid., 50

181.
Ibid., 57

interest in the crafts also means that there is a new interest in art as created and tangible objects. In the wake of the reflections above, the tangibility of the object clearly is an important aspect of Arendt's reflection on art. There is, however, much more to say about the importance of tangibility than only the inherent durability of tangible objects. This other aspect of tangibility, which is the *second* perspective Arendt draws, comes to the fore as we think of the world-of-things as the stage of appearance: it establishes a certain experience of the *reality* of the world. Like human beings need to appear to the world, also objects appear in the world. 'Everything that is', Arendt writes, 'must appear, and nothing can appear without a shape of its own; hence there is in fact no thing that does not in some way transcend its functional use, and its transcendence, its beauty or ugliness, is identical with appearing and publicly and being seen.'¹⁷⁹ The world, in other words, is full of recognizable shapes. Nothing will appear without having a shape. It is tangible, as it were – although also a text can appear, a poem, and a movie. But even these 'objects' have a certain shape. Moreover, as poems show, they often are formed by their very shape. Arendt thus stresses that the shape is accessible in the very appearance of the object. Nevertheless, how this shape affects us is more ambiguous, as we will see. However, first we need to understand that the very occurrence of appearance in Arendt's perspective has at least three important affects. First, as I stressed in the previous chapter, the appearance amongst peers assures the human being of their own reality. Only by being seen and being heard, and by seeing and hearing, the self is revealed and approved. What remains hidden in the shadow of the private realm, Arendt urges, does not gain reality. The second effect of appearance is that the plurality of men is revealed. By appearing in public, by acting and speaking, it becomes visible and audible that everybody speaks from different viewpoints and experiences. A third affect is that this does not only count for the views upon each other, and hearing other voices, it also helps to affirm the reality of the world. 'The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves.'¹⁸⁰ This somehow does mean that a multitude of views is needed in order to affirm the reality of the world, and to reveal the multitude of aspects that are inherent the world. This is the important image at this point: the similarity as well as the plurality of views, seeing the same object, but from different instances, occurrences, perspectives, trying to grasp it through different experiences. 'Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear.'¹⁸¹ Shapes are, we might conclude, in their essence layered – what can be seen from one's perspective is hard to see from another. Small objects with clear shapes in a way are more easily understood as a whole, than huge objects, for which one needs other perspectives and investigation to grasp the shape as a whole. Nevertheless, a public is needed in order to grasp all aspects of a certain object.

This perspective on tangibility and plurality, we might deepen by revisiting the metaphor of the table, that we touched upon already in the previous chapter. Although this metaphor of the table does not explicitly address works of art, but moreover stresses the importance of all objects that together form the world-of-things, it nevertheless shows how the object arranges the different perspectives around it. The object gathers, evokes, connects, and separates.

'To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who

sit around it; the world, like very in-between, relates and separates men at the same time.¹⁸²

In the previous chapter, I emphasized how spatial Arendt's idea of the public realm actually is. Her writings are full of spatial notions, when she describes this realm, and what happens in public. The table in this metaphor reveals that spatiality perfectly: sharing the table means sitting in different positions, joining a conversation means participating from a specific place. Arendt stresses the table as an in-between that connects and separates. This aspect actually reveals not only the spatiality but also the tangibility of the table, and even its specificities. The Finnish architect Kari Juhani Jormakka, who taught architectural theory in Vienna, argues that the specific design of the table is decisive. The surface, the form, the height, of the table depends on the design, in which a specific aim is addressed. A table for dinner is different than a coffee-table.¹⁸³

The table, however, is an object that is in-between the participant, in-between the different positions. By its in-between-ness, it connects and it separates. This remark is important, a crucial aspect of the world-of-things. Specifically, by this image of the table, we can understand this importance. The table is an everyday object, nevertheless it plays important roles in the life of human beings. Tables often have a central position in a living room, a dining room, a meeting room, a foyer, at a terrace. The table offers space for both formal meetings and informal gatherings, for intimate talks and for public conversations on television. The table as an object that arranges the possibilities of appearances. It gathers a public around it, and it offers a particular place to each of them. It shapes the relationships between the different seats around the table. The table relates, but also separates. It first separates the one conversation from the other. The setting around a table makes the very locus of the conversation clear. Nevertheless, it also separates the participants from each other. The table makes it impossible to transgress the boundaries between the particular locations of the participants. If one is willing to come too close to another participant, one needs to violate the very setting of the conversation. "The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak."¹⁸⁴

The metaphor of the table shows how important the tangibility of the world-of-things is, beyond offering permanence to the stage of action, it also provides the means of inter-locating, of separating and simultaneously relating human beings that appear in public. This metaphor of the table therefore emphasises public space as common ground for a community. This community however is not always present, nor is it a fixed whole. There are different gatherings around the same table, and the people gathered around can easily change. This affects the conversations, surely – but the table stays the same, and maintains its function. Often tables can be re-arranged, can be made larger or smaller, in order to offer the best circumstances for the imagined meeting. Nevertheless, the table stays as a recognizable object that those gathered around have in common. That is why Arendt renders and emphasizes this commonly owned 'world' as essentially being an in-between: gathering and simultaneously separating human beings, not only the contemporaries, but also generations, the past and the future. For Arendt it is the *world* that places us between and binds us with our contemporaries and connects us to our predecessors and the generations to come, but at this point we are back to the urgency of permanence (and maintenance).

182.
Ibid., 52-53

183.
Kari Juhani Jormakka, 'Hannah and her Sisters', in: *Thesis, Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar*, (Fall 2003), 63

184.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 52

185.
Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real*, 11

186.
Ibid., 11

187.
Ibid., 11; The quote of Maurice Merleau Ponty – I quote via Curtis – comes from *Signs* (Evanston (Ill.), Northwestern University Press, 1964), 180

188.
Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 21

Interestingly enough, the appearance in public thus not only constitutes the plurality of men (as we have seen in the previous chapter), it also offers an experience of reality of the world. This experience of the world and its real substance, certainly is a singular and individual experience (which thus differs from person to person, it is not an experience multiplied to everybody), only is revealed through appearances amongst others. The reality of the world is constituted through the ‘public’. The multitude of views of the public present reveal the reality. This also counts the other way around. Only through a multitude of views, characterized by the different positions every member of the public has in the world, the world can be understood in all its diversity – the world reveals its ‘realness’. Arendt, we might state, draws an intricate relationship between appearance, plurality and objects in common. Appearance is not only about appearance to one another, it is also objects appearing to us, in our midst. The reality of the objects only is revealed through resembling and assembling of the very object from different perspectives. This ambiguous aspect of the world-of-things of course more clearly is revealed in the work-of-art, than in a singular table. We might entertain different associations evoked by a certain outspoken or everyday design of a table, the stories told about works-of-art, however, easily exceed those told about the table.

For Arendt in this case, the aspect of beauty is still crucial to the work of art. Beauty that is recognized and commonly shared not only prevent the work of art for oblivion (and with that, losing its permanence), it also unites differently. It is not about a beauty beyond the world, a ‘pure’ aesthetics, not a beauty depending upon a dream world, but a beauty based on appearances. As political philosopher Kimberly Curtis argues, this appearance that ‘catches our breath’ is bound to a ‘fullness that moves us’, a fullness of ‘the world’s particulars *and their pregnancy*.’¹⁸⁵ The reference to the particulars of course refers back to the particular shape of each object that appears to us either as ugly or as beauty. However, what appears to be beautiful transcend the single object, and places the spectator in the world itself. It is the task of art and their very aesthetics, Curtis somehow argues, ‘to plunge into another angle on our shared world, bending, widening, making more thick, intensifying, as Arendt put it, our sense of the real.’¹⁸⁶ As from this perspective, it is important to understand that this thickening our understanding of the world, only can function, if art offers plurality too. Since the world is not singular but plural, not one dimensional but layered, art has the function to reveal utter diversity. Art somehow urges us to change position around the table, and look from different perspectives. Art offers ‘rivals for my sight’, as the French philosopher Maurice Merleau Ponty argued. And Curtis adds: ‘Our perception of the world is tumultuous, transgressive, a ribald succession of plunging and eclipsing, always manifesting astonishing variants on the same pregnant world.’¹⁸⁷

Therefore, the world-of-things, and specifically works-of-art requires active involvement, not just the view of a passive observer or consumer. In order to reveal different aspects of the work of art, as well as to enjoy the art-work, one needs to be engaged in the art work (although we also can argue that the artwork is the engagement of creator, public, curator, conservator, preservers in one object or project). One needs to cultivate a specific aesthetic sensibility by not taking everything for granted, or just search for pleasure and celebration. Baumgarten, who coined the first definition of aesthetics back in the 18th century, already argues that beauty relates to sensible attitude.¹⁸⁸ ‘To call beauty sensible’, Karsten Harries writes, ‘is to insist that our experience of it involves the senses; beauty depends on

perception.¹⁸⁹ Once again, this is not only a matter of a disinterested contemplation, it also requires a sensible engagement with the art object, in which all senses are at stake.

‘Nothing perhaps is more surprising in this world of ours than the almost infinite diversity of its appearances, the sheer entertainment value of its views, sounds, and smells, something that is hardly mentioned by the thinkers and philosophers. ... This diversity is matched by an equally astounding diverseness of sense organs among the animal species, so that what actually appears to living creatures assumes the greatest variety of form and shape: every animal species lives in a world of its own. Still, sense-endowed creatures have appearance as such common, first, an appearing world and second, and perhaps even more important, the fact that they themselves are appearing and disappearing creatures, that there always was a world before their arrival and there always will be a world after their departure.’¹⁹⁰

6.3.3 *To be Put on Display*

If we stress this argument slightly different, it is clear that in order to reveal the art-work as well as the reality of the world, the views and experiences of others are needed. Like action and speech, art needs to appear publicly in order to gain reality. Art, by definition, is bound to *public space*. It needs to be seen, heard and experienced by a multitude of people, in order to be revealed to the single observer. Actually, in the work of art ‘permanence’ becomes tangible. As Arendt writes: Nowhere else does the sheer durability of the world of things appear in such clarity, nowhere else therefore does this thing-world reveal itself so spectacularly as the non-mortal home for mortal beings.¹⁹¹ The importance is that this aspect becomes tangible: ‘It is as though worldly stability had become transparent in the permanence of art, so that premonition of immortality, not the immortality of the soul or of life but of something immortal achieved by mortal hands, has become tangible present, to shine and to be seen, to sound and to be heard, to speak and to be read.’¹⁹²

Although art can be collected by private collectors (and thus stored in private residences, archives), essentially art is a phenomenon of public space. It is, as we might argue, interrelated with politics.¹⁹³ Art and politics are interrelated, but also independent. Art after all cannot serve political issues, in the eyes of Arendt, without perishing. Art, we might argue, always constructs a relationship between the singular and the multitude, it engages the single and the public attending and reflecting upon the object, which can be understood as a similar capacity as politics. For Arendt, the work of art is not a social phenomenon, it’s is a political phenomenon.¹⁹⁴ Like action and speech, also art only by appearance in public, in a common world, ‘can fulfil their own being.’ However, if the artwork remains hidden in the private life and in private possession, Arendt states, it loses its ‘own inherent validity.’¹⁹⁵ As can be seen around the world in auctions and even in the theft of artworks, it will not lose its marketplace value – but that, for Arendt, is quite opposed to ‘fulfil its own being.’ Art would not leave a trace in the world if not being put on display, in order to be touched upon and enjoyed by the public. For Arendt, this is the very reason that artworks need to be protected from individual possessiveness by being put on display in public ‘in sacred places – temples and churches – or by entrusting them to the care of museums and preservationists.’¹⁹⁶

189.
Ibid., 21

190.
Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 20

191.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 168

192.
Ibid., 168

193.
Dagmar Barnouw, *Visible Spaces, Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience* (Baltimore/London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 22; cf. Markell, ‘Arendt’s Work’, 27

194.
Barnouw, *Visible Spaces*, 23

195.
Arendt, ‘Crisis in Culture’, 221

196.
Arendt, ‘Culture and Politics’, 202

197.
Arendt, 'Crisis in Culture', 218

198.
Ibid., 218

199.
Cecilia Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt*, 11

200.
Barnouw, *Visible Spaces*, 23

201.
Cecilia Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt*, 3

202.
Ibid., 3

203.
Ibid., 4

Though culture is not defined exclusively by art, as I argued previously, art plays an important and central role in the notion of culture. For Arendt, art is not only a matter of cultural awareness and sustenance, it is a political gesture too. 'Culture indicates that the public realm,' Arendt writes, 'which is rendered politically secure by men of action, offers its space of display to those things whose essence it is to appear and to be beautiful.'¹⁹⁷ This is not only a cultural requirement, this also has political significance. Only when art is on display, it can leave traces in the world by its very beauty, which is 'the very manifestation of imperishability', Arendt argues. The greatness of action and speech, would be futile, would even vanish, without 'the beauty, that is, the radiant glory in which potential immortality is made manifest in the human world.'¹⁹⁸ We might argue at this point that Arendt is not so much concerned about the art work itself as a central figure of culture, but by the role art works play in the world and in the public realm. 'Arendt does not distinguish between bourgeois art forms of the eighteenth century and the politically aware avant-garde of the 1960s; she sees the latter as a direct development of the former. Modern art started with a rebellion against a class society that made political agency available only to the few. Works of art bear witness to an inherent conflict that cannot be reduced to banalization. The uneasy relation between artist and society is carried into the works of art themselves and is part of their appearances. In modernity, the novel allows for agencies to present themselves in ways that would not have been visible in politics – not through making claims or demands, but through making visible.'¹⁹⁹ Art works publicly expose and somehow represent the tenderness and care for the world that is in common, while also revealing the necessity to intervene in that world to fulfil the needs of today. Or to state this differently: art works, to the extent that they are exposed and accessible to the public, articulate the 'love for the world', the worldliness of human beings, and the significance of the public realm. 'The work of art is so eminently dependent on the public realm,' Dagmar Barnouw argues in an excellent investigation of Arendt's writings, 'and participates so importantly in establishing and articulating – making visible – the political space because it signifies most intensely, most persuasively, most durably, the world of appearances.'²⁰⁰

If the work of art is bound to public space, we might argue that this means that the aspect of plurality, which is the key notion of public space as I discussed in the previous chapter, also is inherent to the works of art too. The world is full of things that, as Arendt argues, have a shape of their own. Also the experience of the world is an experience of plurality, we might argue. Our perception of the world is formed through its plurality. This plurality, as Arendt argues in *The Life of the Mind*, and as we already touched upon previously, is perceived through our senses. As Cecilia Sjöholm argues, Arendt's 'stress on appearances introduces sense-perception, embodiment, and appearance – in short, what we could call *aesthesis* – as aspects of the public sphere.'²⁰¹ Aesthetics in arts, in other words, goes far beyond the experience of beauty. It is an experience that is open to the world. However, the plurality of the world of things thus echoes the plural character of society, and reveals how the 'world is constituted by a multitude of appearances.'²⁰² What art makes visible and tangible, we might state, is the 'sheer joy to be found in a multitude of appearances.'²⁰³ At this point, we thus touch upon the previous aspect of art: enhancing, thickening our understanding of the world. We might add to this remark, that art thickens our understanding of the common world in all its plurality. Moreover, the plurality of the artifice not only influences our perception of the world, it also conditions the human being.

‘The world in which the vita active spends itself consist of things produced by human activities; but the things that owe their existence exclusively to men nevertheless constantly condition their human makers. ... Whatever enters the human world of its own accord or is drawing into it by human effort becomes part of the human condition. ... The objectivity of the world – its object- or thing-character – and the human condition supplement each other; because human existence is conditioned existence, it would be impossible without things, and things would be a heap of unrelated articles, a non-world, if they were not the conditioners of human existence.’²⁰⁴

Architects of course cannot read a passage like this without hearing the echo of Winston Churchill’s famous quote: ‘we shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us.’ Churchill actually stated it in parliament during a debate on the rebuilding of the Commons Chamber. He actually stated that the particular rectangular form of the room caused the two-party system in the UK.²⁰⁵ Appearing in a world that is characterized by plurality thus conditions the human being. The levelling effect of globalization and economic thinking, the impact of efficiency on the world-of-things, and the impact of measures of security in today’s landscape and cities – as also the roman *The Cave* of José Saramago explores – is not just a matter of limiting the number of differences, it also has an effect on the human condition.

Although plurality is at the core of appearance, Arendt does also stresses the necessity of a certain common ground in society. She finds that common ground in Immanuel Kant’s notion of taste, that we touched upon earlier. In agreement with him, Arendt presupposes the existence of a common sense rooted in the human community – in Latin the *sensus communis*, literally the sense that is commonly owned or ‘community sense’.²⁰⁶ Common sense helps us to orient ourselves in the world in commonness, but this common sense is not simply sense-data, it is a sense based in commonness. ‘Judging according to the *sensus communis* does not mean agreeing on a common theme or solution but rather striving toward a sense of realness,’ Cecilia Sjöholm writes. ‘Such sharing can only be achieved through a certain readiness to be impinged on with regards to sense-perception; the question of judgment is intertwined with that of how we see things.’²⁰⁷ This *sensus communis* appears through the development of what Kant calls taste: the knowledge beyond the human capacity to judge or to differentiate between good and less good. ‘Taste decides among qualities, Arendt writes, ‘and can fully develop only where a sense of quality – the ability to discern evidence of the beautiful – is generally present. Once that is the case, it is solely up to taste, with its ever-active judgment of things in the world, to establish boundaries and provide a human meaning for the cultural realm.’²⁰⁸ Taste thus does not depend upon the knowledge of truth but upon the capacity to convince. Therefore, taste depends upon the human ability to judge from different perspectives, which is only possible on the basis of a *sensus communis*. The capacity to judge can only exist and is fed in the public realm where people appear to each other and where the things can be seen and understood from different perspectives.²⁰⁹ Arendt sees a close relationship between political and aesthetic judgment, action and speech, before gaining responses, also it is about convincing peers to act-with-the-actor, to act-in-concert. What cautiously comes to light at this point is the evocative aspect of works of art. Art, in other words, evokes different viewpoints, offers other perspectives. It therefore helps the spectator to look from different perspectives. It enhances the views the spectator has with opening up un-thought-of and

204. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 9

205. <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/building/palace/architecture/palacestructure/churchill/> [accessed, November 19th, 2016] cf. also Reynier Banham, who argued that architecture ‘is more than a commentary on the human condition – along with war and peace and love and death and pestilence and birth, abundance, disaster and the air we breathe, it is the human condition.’ Quoted via Jonathan Hill, *Actions of Architecture, Architects and Creative Users* (London: Routledge, 2003), 10

206. Arendt, ‘Culture and Politics’, 199.

207. Cecilia Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt*, XIII

208. Arendt, ‘Culture and Politics’, 201.

209. Arendt, ‘Culture and Politics’, 199

210.

cf. T.S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), 23; In the library of Arendt, that was moved to the library of Bard College after her death, I found a copy of this book. Arendt somehow added quite a lot of question marks in the margins of the text. Amongst the underlined passages, stressed with an exclamation mark, are these passages: "It is a recurrent theme of this essay, that a people should be neither too united nor too divided, if its culture is to flourish. Excess of division may be due to decadence and may also lead to tyranny: either excess will prevent further development in culture. The proper degree of unity and of diversity cannot be determined for all peoples at all times." (49) "At this point I introduce a new notion: that of the vital importance for a society of friction between its parts." (58)

211.

Sjöholm, *Doing Aesthetics with Arendt*, 12

212.

This of course is not a new position designated to the field of arts. For instance, the Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa stresses art as the room for evocation in Western society. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand, Existential and Embodies Wisdom in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley and Sons, 2009), 148

before un-accessible viewpoints. It imagines and makes tangible the differences that can be touched upon. It urges the viewer to approach things differently, to see other aspects and to embrace other angles. It is not only thickening the understanding of the world, it also is broadening the scope of the spectator. Enabling the viewer to position oneself for a moment differently, to explore different paths and other points of view. The role of the artist, besides producing objects that last, is using his creative brain: to broaden the scope and push existing boundaries.²¹⁰ We therefore might state: art educates (the human being to be a good citizen) – although this word education evokes an 'active' attitude by the public. The 'educative' task, however, starts with the way artworks condition the human being, like other objects do. This point is clearly addressed by Cecilia Sjöholm, when she thinks through Arendt's view upon aesthetics.

'Our perception develops through art. The importance of art lies in the way that it is implicated in the reality we perceive, extending shadows from the imaginary world to the world of the living. Art is made to appear, sometimes through the invisible threads of disappearance through its sensible qualities, it makes public space a product of aesthetics, implying an invisible web of forms of being that help produce our perception. When the public sphere is minimized and exploited, art escapes more and more into intimate details. At the same time, these details are made public. Since the public sphere is conditioning our view of things, art in general upholds a pivotal place for the development of perception. If public space did not exist, it would appear that there would be no art. But Arendt argues the other way around. Without art, public space would be even more perverted. In times when public space is threatened, those that act politically or with their art will appear shadowy, as if they occupy mere corners of our vision rather than the focal point of our consciousness. But the marginal character of art in public space is an illusion; art occupies a crucial role for both the maintenance and function of publicness. Art and literature displaces the way in which publicness is to be conceived.'²¹¹

Works of art in this perspective are exemplary too: they are ends in themselves, and therefore equipped to reach forward, to open up new perspectives and to push the boundaries of the known. At this point, we are back to the Greek approach to culture actually emphasises this educative aspect. It evokes the Roman approach of tenderness. Art transcends and incites the established and known societal structures and constructions and explores the thresholds of human creativity. Art, in the Greek sense, needs to experiment, reflect and unmask, stimulate, inspire and imagine, open up new perspectives, without losing the ability to communicate with the public. Art educates the public to look from different viewpoints.²¹² The crucial perspective on the arts and culture that the Greek offers us is this aim of evocation, communication and education of the human being into a citizen. Culture, in the broadest sense refines and enhances our personal taste. It educates us to distinguish between the good and the less good, helps us to think from different perspectives and moulds our capacity to judge, which is not only important with respect to the evaluation of the artwork but also a crucial political capacity.

Art works need a public, since they are articulations of the permanent world, since their tangibility is revealed through sensory perception, and since they express 'love for the world'. This is a matter of paintings and sculptures, drawings and poems, music and models – fragile works, as we can imagine. Only a few of the art works produced can survive in public space: a few artworks in parks,

on central squares, at the entrance of a village. The materiality of these works is resistant: stone or bronze, metal or wood, although the latter material needs maintenance quite often, or the concept of the work of art is the deterioration over time. Even the bronze art works require maintenance – also they are weathering, aging, or are threatened by thieves or vandals. The relationship between art and public space, therefore urges culture as process of development, progress as well as maintenance once again. All artworks not only need to be protected from individual possessiveness, but also from natural processes, given that everything that exists will deteriorate. This is the very reason that works of art need to be stored in ‘in sacred places – temples and churches – or by entrusting them to the care of museums and preservationists.’²¹³ Here we touch again upon the double meaning of culture. Culture, as we have seen, is the continuous balancing between maintenance and intervention, restoration and renewal. It is part of culture to approach artworks with a tender care. Part of this attitude, however, requires the intervention of architecture. Architecture after all creates these spaces where artworks can be put on display and presented publicly, as it immediately offers the very protection from the public works of art need – as through their outer appearance to the world, these buildings represent the artworks, that are shielded inside, to the public.

Arendt nevertheless does not reflect on the museum as institution extensively. She just recognizes the need of protected space to secure the fragility of artworks. These spaces are culturally and politically relevant, as we have seen. Lewis Mumford therefore argued that museums were a symbol of the cities capacity to care for its past and to maintain monuments, which has to be seen as ‘one of the great values of the big city.’²¹⁴ We can briefly address the art institution and its role in society from the point of view from Arendt. The first role for the institution taking care of those artworks that are assigned as singular and important in a particular culture. That what stands out needs protection. Besides that, artworks are regularly fragile. A building and all sorts of other necessities are needed to protect them against the climate and light, against public use and theft.

A second role for the art-institution in society comes to the fore: the museum is not only for protection of the art work, but actually also needs to make artworks accessible. That is: it opens up to the public, and helps the public to approach art. The doors are opened, a tour is provided, there is a place to store bags and jackets, the right light is directed to the art-works, an exposition draws lines through series of art-works, and so on. The building offers the right mood for the spectator, by its very design. It often is designed in a way to separate the visitor from the everyday experience, from the hustle and bustle of the street and city in which it is located. The path to the museum already contributes to that separation: the grandeur of the building, stairs in front of the entrance, the entrance itself, the spaces and the stairs, the white walls and how the light comes in. Some museums are located far away from cities, in the woods or along the coast – the time it takes to visit the venue is part of the experience of being away from the city and its requirements. It all helps the visitor to change the view from instrumental to contemplation, to set the right atmosphere in order to enjoy the artworks. The museum itself, we might argue, is ‘a symbol of permanent place and of suspended time.’²¹⁵ Modern art somehow stressed the authority of the museum as art institution. It does not fit in the regular art-history, nor does it fit in the way museums regularly present art. Modern art does not fit in the regular categories of the arts – they even stress the boundary between art and ordinary life. It stresses the permanence that once was secured by the museum buildings. The

213. Arendt, ‘Culture and Politics’, 202.

214. Lewis Mumford, *The City in History, Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects* (San Diego: Harcourt Inc., 1989), 562; Morton White and Lucia White, *The Intellectual Versus the City, From Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press/MIT Press, 1962), 207

215. Wolterstorff, *Art Rethought*, 58

216.
cf *Ibid.*, 63

217.
cf. Michael Cunningham, *By Nightfall*
(New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux,
2010)

218.
cf. Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of
Experience. Art Gallery Interiors
from 1800-2000* (New Haven/
London: Yale University Press, 2009)

219.
De Cauter and Dehaene, 'The Space
of Play', 88

220.
Ibid., 93

quiet steadiness of the art-object is replaced by performances, rapid impressions, temporal installations, ephemeral ideas. 'Where no museum can meet the old expectations any longer, each museum allows exhibitions to let these incompatible demands have their say in a sequence of every imaginable conception.'²¹⁶

The museum, however, still is a powerful figure in society and the art world, and specifically the few museums that play a major role in that landscape: the MoMa, the Guggenheim, the Getty, the Tate, and so on. The names have even become brands that are spread successfully to other places. Besides the museum as a treasure house, which treasure is the collection of unique objects, the museum thus has become an institution that mediated between the arts and the public. They offer the means to approach and understand art. Not only by being a building where art is on display, but also by their selection procedures, curatorial practices and research activities. After all, selecting works for the collection, or curating an exhibition, is somehow telling a story. To curate and exhibition is to set the lines and to draw narratives, in order to regale the public by new perspectives, awe and recognition. The museum we might state, also has an educational task as well. The way the museum offers artworks back to the public is contributing to the capacity of taste, of judging between good and less good, to gaining affinity with beauty.

Yet, the very 'process' of making the art work accessible to the public of course has a major effect on the world of arts, which cannot be under estimated. From the moment the museum took over (to some extent) the role of temples and churches since the 18th century by being a place of art collections and exposing artworks, the museum influenced extensively the way art has been judged. Objects that were added to the museum collection gained the status of art, whereas those outside the museum were overlooked. Older works, that were previously on display and in use somewhere else, now selected for being part of the collection of a museum, lost their social context as well as their role amongst the public through their use. In other words, the museum has become the institution that judges the art world, in a sense that being bought by a museum counts for an artist as proof of 'success'.²¹⁷ At least, the effect of being in the picture of the museum world has consequences for the market value of the works.

But this is only a reflection, by now, on the institution of art, which is the museum. However, this is also a matter of architecture. It is through architectural intervention how the relationship between the works of art, the spaces of art, and the world and the public is established. The grandeur of the first museums somehow competed with the grandeur of churches, temples, and town halls, whereas newer museums sometimes compete with shopping malls and airports. It does matter if the museum-spaces are hidden behind impressive steps, or are brought into the vicinity of a shopping public.²¹⁸

At this point we come close to the plea of De Cauter and Dehaene to understand of sacred and cultural spaces and places as realm in-between the private and public in which space and time are in close relationship, but set apart from the everyday experience and use.²¹⁹ Since they read this in-between realm as 'other space', through the lenses of Foucault's notion of heterotopia, they urge the ability of this realm not only to offer alternative space, but also *alternating* spaces.²²⁰ These alternating practices, that are enabled in these 'other spaces' are distinct from action, that belongs to the public realm, and labor and work, that belong to the private, as they argue, could be described by the activity of 'play' – a term

they borrow from Johan Huizinga's well known book *Homo Ludens* (1938). Play requires liminal spaces, they argue: 'a space that, in its formal separation from the rest of the world present a realm of instability and possibility. That space which is the seedbed of culture, its condition and possibility – from ritual to theatre – provides a clearing within the conventional order of society, sheltered from the normalizing forces of the everyday.'²²¹ This perspective actually helps to understand Arendt's image of the cultural and sacred spaces, not simply as storage spaces for the arts, where they can survive the tides, but also as contributing – indeed – to the recuperation of the human being, and to encourage him to appear in public. It is in this way that – as De Cauter and Dehaene argue, the culture precedes political life, and the cultural space precedes the legal public space.²²² Although this image helps to understand the merit of cultural and sacred spaces, their image nevertheless directs towards the image of the public sphere as urged by Habermas: these 'other space' after all is a contested space, they argue, that is threatened by the state and the market.²²³ They of course urge these spaces against the contemporary state of the cultural and sacred domain in Western society.

6.3.4 Reification, Condensation, Transformation, Transfiguration, Imagination

Until now we have touched upon the permanence, the importance of tangibility, and the need of public exposure. These are all in-direct relationships to the realm of the political. These aspects establish this realm by offering the world a certain permanence, against the overwhelming power of nature and of the cycle of nature. Or they unfold the reality of the world. It urges us to see from different perspectives, in order to enlarge our understanding of the world and its appearances. The arts, as exemplary for the world-of-things, in that sense create the stage, the prerequisite for significant political action and speech. *The Human Condition*, however, somehow also urges a perspective that offers a more direct relationship between political action and the arts. 'The objective status of the cultural world,' Arendt writes, 'which, insofar as it contains tangible things – books and paintings, statues, buildings and music – comprehends, and gives testimony to, the entire recorded past of countries, nations, and ultimately mankind.'²²⁴ Arendt thus values the *homo faber* in this perspective, as a crucial figure. On the one hand, the *animal laborans* needs the *homo faber* to ease labor and remove pain. On the other: 'if mortals need his help to erect a home on earth, acting and speaking men need the help of *homo faber* in his highest capacity, that is, the help of the artist, of poets and historiographers, of monument-builders or writers, because without them the only product of their activity, the story they enact and tell, would not survive at all.'²²⁵ Action and speech, those activities that Arendt counts to be political, doesn't leave traces if not reified in art-works, in stories or paintings, in documents and movies.

[Action and speech] do not "produce," bring forth anything, they are as futile as life itself. In order to become worldly things, that is, deeds and facts and events and patterns of thoughts or ideas, they must first be seen, heard, and remembered and then transformed, reified as it were, into things – into sayings of poetry, the written page or the printed book, into paintings or sculpture, into all sorts of records, documents, and monument. The whole factual world of human affairs depends for its reality and its continued existence, first upon the presence of others who have seen and heard and

^{221.}
Ibid., 96.

^{222.}
Ibid., 96

^{223.}
Ibid., 99; this reference to Habermas is even more clear in their description of these spaces as 'club-spaces'. Although they are reluctant in applying this description, it is clear that the 'club' is similar to the salons and coffee-house meetings Habermas uses as his reference to describe the public sphere. For Arendt, as I argue previously, these spaces are described as part of the realm of the social. It is clear that De Cauter and Dehaene keep distance to that description (and its implication), as they also urge the threat of the application of political and economical laws within the realm of culture. Ibid., 99

^{224.}
Hannah Arendt, 'Walter Benjamin', in: Hannah Arendt, *Man in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 202

^{225.}
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 173

226.
Ibid., 95

227.
Ibid., 8

228.
Ibid., 167

229.
Markell, 'Arendt's Work', 32; Arendt,
The Human Condition, 170

230.
Adolf Loos, 'Architectuur', in: Hilde
Heynen, André Loeckx, Lieven De
Cauter, Karina Van Herck (red.),
'Dat is architectuur', *Sleutelteksten
uit de twintigste eeuw* (Rotterdam:
Uitgeverij 010, 2004), 62

will remember, and, second, on the transformation of the intangible into the tangibility of things.'²²⁶

This once again seems to refer to quite classical works of art that depicted happenings from the past, celebrated victories of the army, honoured the great deeds of the emperor and his troops. Arendt, looking to the activities of men, argues that the happenings of the world are not urged by the cycle of nature, nor by the intervention of the *homo faber*, but only are put in motion by action and speech. 'Action, in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history.'²²⁷ This of course is first urged by the community that is the context of political action and speech. Only where people gather to form a unity, act and react, and thus acknowledge their common ground, remembrance of a certain past of that community is possible. This means a certain agreement on that past and the urge to remember. Stories told need recognition and acclaim. They should urge the need to every now and then re-tell the story and therewith pass this remembrance of history to next generations. This secondly is important, since action and speech don't have any substance of their own: they only can be traced if it is reified in narratives, paintings, sculptures, and so on. To make sense of happenings is to find a story-line, we might argue. That is the very capacity of art: to stress the story-lines of things happening. Without works of art, after all, like poems or prose, monuments or paintings, action and speech will remain superfluous. The artwork thus at least is useful for mankind as the tangible and durable reification of action and speech.²²⁸ In this perspective, it is worth noting a slight change in the terms Arendt uses in respect to use-objects in the first parts of her exploration of the products of work in *The Human Condition*. As Patchen Markell notes, she first urges objects with the notion of 'durability', but when it comes to the works of art, she uses the term 'permanence'. As he argues, this image is pivotal, it means that physical durability of the genuine object has been supplemented with 'permanence', 'which is a function of the "memorability" of tangible things.'²²⁹

In this process of remembering, art works – tangible objects exposed in public space – play a major role. Particularly of course the statues of heroes from the past that are erected on central spaces in the urban fabric. However, we also immediately think of architecture in this case, particularly on monuments and memorials, those architectural and figures and landscapes that give room to remembrance of certain happenings in the past. These monuments urged the Viennese architect Adolf Loos his famous call: 'That is Architecture!'²³⁰ With that statement, he actually argued that architecture, in the sense of a work of art, was limited to the monument, since the monument – in the example he gives of small rectangular hill found in the woods – somehow immediately is recognized as a place of remembrance. The visitor immediately fell silent, he argues. The very form of the monument urges respect. For Loos, this recognition is the very essence of art. All other assignments, according to him, cannot represent such commonly understood meaning, and therefore cannot be counted to the arts.

However, monuments regularly represent a heroic or terrifying past, and are able to gather and unite the public is not only grounded in the shared remembrance, but also in a shared recognition. The very form of the object evokes recognition, it represents the happening urged to be remembered – this representation of course is fuelled by the regular activities organized on that spot, which often are presented to the public through mass media. People visit these works, often particular sites or constructions, to honour that very happening.

The Vietnam Memorial by Maya Lin at the Washington Mall is a great example, [IMAGE 6.5] alike the memorial on Ground Zero to remember the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers, designed by Ron Arad. Even for those who don't know somebody personally involved, to see the names on the wall or on the banisters around the void, even feeling the carved letters, to slowly walk down the path in Washington, or to stare to the falling water at Ground Zero, one experiences respect, awe, reverence, even sorrow and pain.

For monuments and memorials, the power of architecture indeed cannot be underestimated. Often one would think of the particular shapes that evoke awe by the spectator: a classical language, rhythm, height, symmetry, grandeur. Recent memorials, however, have explored other aspects of (landscape) architecture too. The Vietnam monument, mentioned previously uses a slope to create the wall with names – it cuts the soil of the Washington Mall. The Ground Zero memorial uses impressive walls of falling water, to accentuate the voids that remain as remembrance to the towers. The sound of the water drowns out the noise of the city. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, designed by the American architect Peter Eisenman, covers a whole urban block, remarkably located at the Hannah Arendt Straße in the urban space that formerly gave room to the Berlin Wall, with dark concrete slabs.^[IMAGE 6.6] The slabs, although all are 92 cm wide and 2,3 m long, all differ slightly in height since they are tilted differently. Also the ground level – the paths in-between the pillars – go up-and-down. Walking down these paths at length, the visitor is experiencing alienation and disposition. In his reflection on his winning design, Eisenman argued that, according to him, it was impossible to offer a 'regular' monument. What can represent the slaughtering of so many people? So many times a single human being? 'The enormous scale of the holocaust, and Hiroshima after it, is such that any attempt to represent that horror by tradition architectural means is inevitably inadequate.'²³¹ There is no symbol that can express the depth of the holocaust. He therefore explains his project as follows: 'The memory of the holocaust today can only be a living condition in which the past remains active in the present.'²³² The core idea is that people walking through the monument, amongst the slabs, indeed experience something of alienation and solitude.²³³ Not that this can evoke something that is reminiscent of the holocaust, but being separated from the urban fabric and becoming a single human being, alone –will be evoked by the monument. 'The time of the experience of the individual will be the same today as it is fifty years from today. The monument grants no further understanding of the holocaust because no understanding is possible.'²³⁴ Representation in this case is not immediately bound to an object: it is the totality of objects that evoke an experience that tries to share the impossibility of the monument.

These examples of monuments somehow show that the appearance of a thing bears meaning beyond the material, construction, and program itself. Meaning and material form belongs together – material form reifies its meaning into tangible objects. Of course, meaning is pushed towards its very end in the monument, where meaning even overshadows the thing itself. This does not mean that form is not important. On the contrary, it is the form, and particularly form that is experienced as beautiful, that offers the form its meaning within a community over time. Arendt stresses that aspect of beauty by taking the example of a cathedral. 'The cathedrals,' she writes, 'were built *ad maiorem gloriam Dei*; while they as buildings certainly served the needs of the community, their elaborate beauty can never be explained by these needs, which could have been served quite as well by any nondescript building. Their beauty transcended all needs and made them last through the centuries; but while beauty, the beauty

231.

Peter Eisenman, 'Time Warps, The Monument', in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (Amsterdam: SUN publishers, 2009), 245

232.

Ibid., 245

233.

of the un-thought-of use by children (and adults), to use the pillars as their playground, jumping from the one to the other. Quentin Stevens, 'Why Berlin's Holocaust Memorial is such a popular playground', in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds, *Into the Open, OASE #77*, (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2008)

234.

Eisenman, 'Time Warps', 247

235.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 187

236.
Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 88

237.
Arendt, 'On Humanity in Dark Times', 21

238.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 188

239.
Arendt, 'On Humanity in Dark Times', 21

of a cathedral like the beauty of any secular building, transcends the needs and functions, it never transcends the world, even if the content of the work happens to be religious.'

The relationship between action and speech and the way these are reified in art of course is not just a matter of memorials and monuments that decorate squares and parks. In previous times the painting and sculpture were important too, as well as poems and reports. 'The specific content as well as the general meaning of action and speech', Arendt writes, 'may take various forms of reification in art works which glorify a deed or an accomplishment and, by transformation and condensation, show some extraordinary event in its full significance. However, the specific revelatory quality of action and speech, the implicit manifestation of the agent and speaker, is so indissolubly tied to the living flux of acting and speaking that it can be represented and 'reified' only through a kind of reproduction, the imitation or *mimesis*, which according to Aristotle prevails in all arts but is actually appropriate only to the drama, whose very name (from the Greek verb *dran*, 'to act') indicates that ply-acting actually is an imitation of acting.'²³⁵

Today the newspaper and television, photo and movie play a major role in documenting the history and passing the remembrance. Live registration of action and speech. The camera and the new media somehow have democratized remembrance – it is not any longer the exclusive domain of the artist. Every human being has the opportunity to document the happenings of one's own life, although the happenings of a society, of a people, of a history now is the domain of journalists and historians.

One of the important urgencies that journalists and historians share with artists is the will to explore the human capacity of story-telling, and particularly to reveal particular narratives in a wider scope. These stories, as told in the narrative of an article, a documentary, a painting, a sculpture, and so on, are important for the human appearance in action and speech. As Arendt emphasised, to be involved in action means also being involved in a process that is elusive and uncontrollable. Besides the response to actions being unpredictable, also our actions become part of a 'web of actions', it intermingles with actions of other persons responses and re-actions. It even can become part of a train of actions and re-actions that urge for other aims and other perspectives than intended. This web of actions cannot be seen in its totality, even its direction is not easy to understand, until the moment that others try to unravel the chain, or actors have withdrawn from the stage.²³⁶ As Arendt writes in her essay on Lessing: 'In contradiction to other elements peculiar to action – above all to the preconceived goals, the compelling motives, and the guiding principles, all of which become visible in the course of action – the meaning of a committed act is revealed only when the action itself has come to an end and become a story susceptible to narration.'²³⁷ Painting a picture and carving a sculpture are part of that process of unravelling, like the playwright at the stage is. Even more, Arendt pushes the play forward as the imitation of the political sphere. 'This is ... why the theater is the political art par excellence; only there is the political sphere of human life transposed into art. By the same token, it is the only art whose sole subject is man in his relationship to others.'²³⁸ Arendt stresses particularly the tragedy, since it represents, as she writes, a process of recognition. What is important in this respect, is that this finding the words and images is not to master the past. It cannot be mastered, Arendt argues, only glimpses of that past can be evoked by the right words and images. 'We can no more master the past than we can undo it. But we can reconcile ourselves to it.'²³⁹ Today, however we might argue that the movie has

taken over, although the spectator is quite passive in this relationship. However, lots of films over the last decades have been screened, dissecting the chain of responses that are evoked by individual action and resistance.²⁴⁰

Clearly the role of art as narrator goes beyond political action. As already touched upon it also relates to history, and, as we can state, also the future. Arendt once wrote that literature spanned from stories that reveal the ‘no longer’ to those that address the ‘not yet’. Marcel Proust exemplified the first category, whereas Franz Kafka represented the second.²⁴¹ As Arendt argues in *The Human Condition* art is evoked thought. She immediately states that although thoughts are related to feelings, art is not an expression of particular and personal feelings. This Arendt recognized amongst her contemporary art world, in which art more and more is seen as a private expression of the artist.²⁴² For Arendt, as I stressed earlier, the artwork as individual expression is nothing more than a *hobby* of the artist, which is in a way meaningless for the public as a whole. It does not address the world. Arendt is quite concerned about the contemporary arts, particularly since they lost, as she writes in ‘The Crisis of Culture’ their most important and elemental quality, which is to grasp and move the reader or the spectator over the centuries.²⁴³ This we first might read as being moved by the work of art, so that we literally are touched, that we are moved emotionally, that our senses are thrilled, and our thoughts are challenged. However, what Arendt states over here is also the power that goes beyond our personal approach. It grasps the spectator now and previously, tomorrow and in the future. That power is part and parcel of the very worldliness of art. There exists a common world in-between the spectator and artist, the reader and the writer, which is evoked by the art work – although the very experiences differ from person to person. Their nevertheless is a commonality in this experience. The narrative grasps the viewer – but this spectator is not a singular figure. He represents the world, Arendt argues, even more, he represents the ‘worldly space which has come into being between the artist or writer and his fellow men as a world common to them.’²⁴⁴

Art, in a particular way, makes the world fit for action and speech. As Arendt writes: ‘In order to be what the world is always meant to be, a home for men during their life on earth, the human artifice must be a place fit for action and speech.’²⁴⁵ Art, of course, contributes that that ‘home’ fit for action and speech by offering objects that ensures the permanence of the world. But moreover, art also contributes with objects that offer possibilities of speech. This is an important aspect that Arendt urges. In her speech on Lessing, she argues that the world by itself is not humane, ‘just because it is made by human beings, and it does not become humane just because the human voice sounds in it, but only when it has become the object of discourse.’²⁴⁶ The public realm is the very space of that discourse, a space where the discourse continuously goes on. This is not a matter of babbling, but of engagement with the world. ‘We humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves only by speaking of it, and in the course of speaking of it we learn to be human.’²⁴⁷ Art, with its character of narration, contributes that process of ‘humanizing’, particular since it finds its very ground in the thought of the artist. But although ‘works of art are thought things, ... this does not prevent their being things.’²⁴⁸ In order to create art, thought transforms the feelings, until the moment that they ‘are fit to enter the world and to be transformed into things, to become reified.’ Once again, we see here this model of reification: action needs the reification of the arts, thoughts do as well.²⁴⁹ Art and reification are intermingled – arts in certain senses reifies what otherwise remains ungraspable. Arendt

240.

To mention randomly a few names from the past two decades: *Hotel Rwanda*, (2004, directed by Terry George), *Sophie Scholl, Die Letzte Tage* (2005, directed by Marc Ruthemond), *Milk* (2008, directed by Sean Penn),

241.

Arendt, ‘No Longer and Not Yet’, 122

242

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 39

243.

Arendt, ‘The Crisis of Culture’, 199

244.

Arendt, ‘On Humanity in Dark Times’, 7

245.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 173

246.

Arendt, ‘On Humanity in Dark Times’, 24

247.

Ibid., 25

248.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 169

249.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 168

further stresses this process of reification, when she argues that this reification is not just 'mere transformation', but that it actually has to be seen as 'transfiguration, a veritable metamorphosis in which it is as though the course of nature which will that all fire burn to ashes is reverted and even dust can burst into flames.'²⁵⁰ These latter words are a reference to the poem 'Magic' by Rilke, which somehow describes the burning power of the arts. However, the importance of art thus is the making tangible of what otherwise would vanish easily. The tangibility in this respect offers existence and permanence to the thought-thing, the remembrance, or – indeed – the imagination of possibilities. Thought, we might argue, in this respect, is the capacity of imagination: to imagine after all being able to see things that are not yet, but also those that are no longer. By making them tangible, fit for appearing in the world, the artist contributes to the conditioning of the public realm.

As a brief conclusion, at this point, we need to stress the threefold understanding of reality and how it is revealed that is behind Arendt's reflection upon the works of art. First it is our individual senses that reveal the world to us, particularly if they are joined together and form the sixth sense – this assures us from the reality of the world. Secondly, not everything that is real also appears (although what appears needs to have a shape on its own). The human web of relationships, which is real, does not appear. Lots of the phenomenon that do not appear nevertheless influence the world beyond imagination – we touched upon a few of such phenomena: commodification, consumerism, cupidity. Some of the phenomena, however, like that of the human web of relationships, can be made tangible through the work of art. The table, for instance, somehow reifies the relationships of the people gathered around for dinner, work or conversations. Finally, it is these perspectives together, the sense-experiences of the world (which not only experience the objects that appear to us, but somehow also the phenomena beyond) which are shared, shapes the commonness of the world, shapes the *sensus communis*, which helps us to orient in the world.



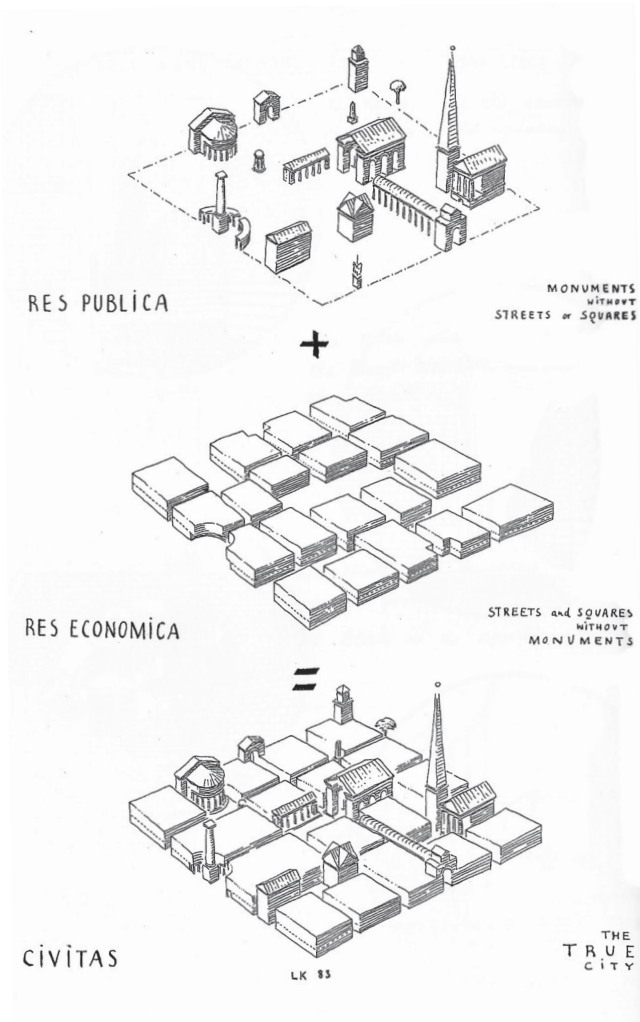
6.8 Frank Lloyd Wright, Kaufmann House
Falling Water, Mill Run (PA), USA, 1939



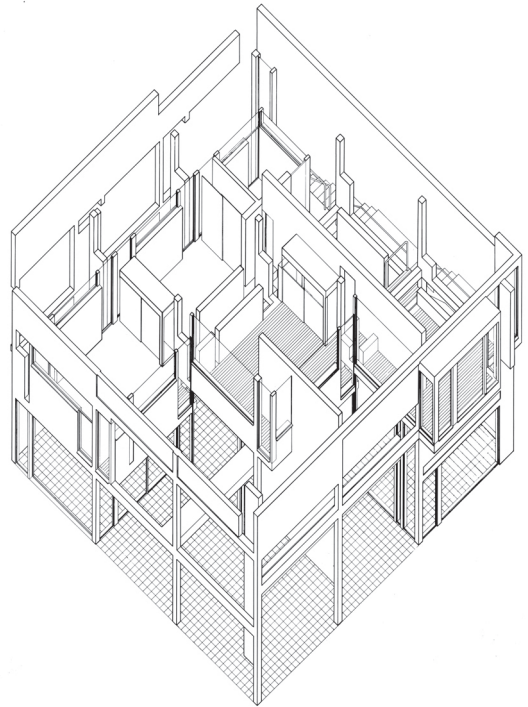
6.9 Bruno Taut, Hugo Häring und Otto Rudolph Salvisberg,
Onkel Tom's Hutte/Waldsiedlung Zehlendorf, Berlin, Germany 1926-1931



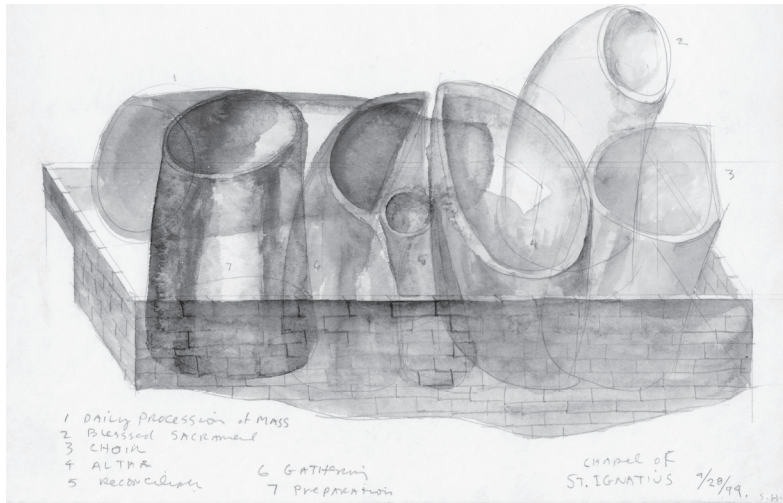
6.10 Jørn Utzon, *Fredensborg Houses*,
Fredensborg, Denmark, 1953



6.11 Sketch by Léon Krier explaining the 'construction' of the Classical city



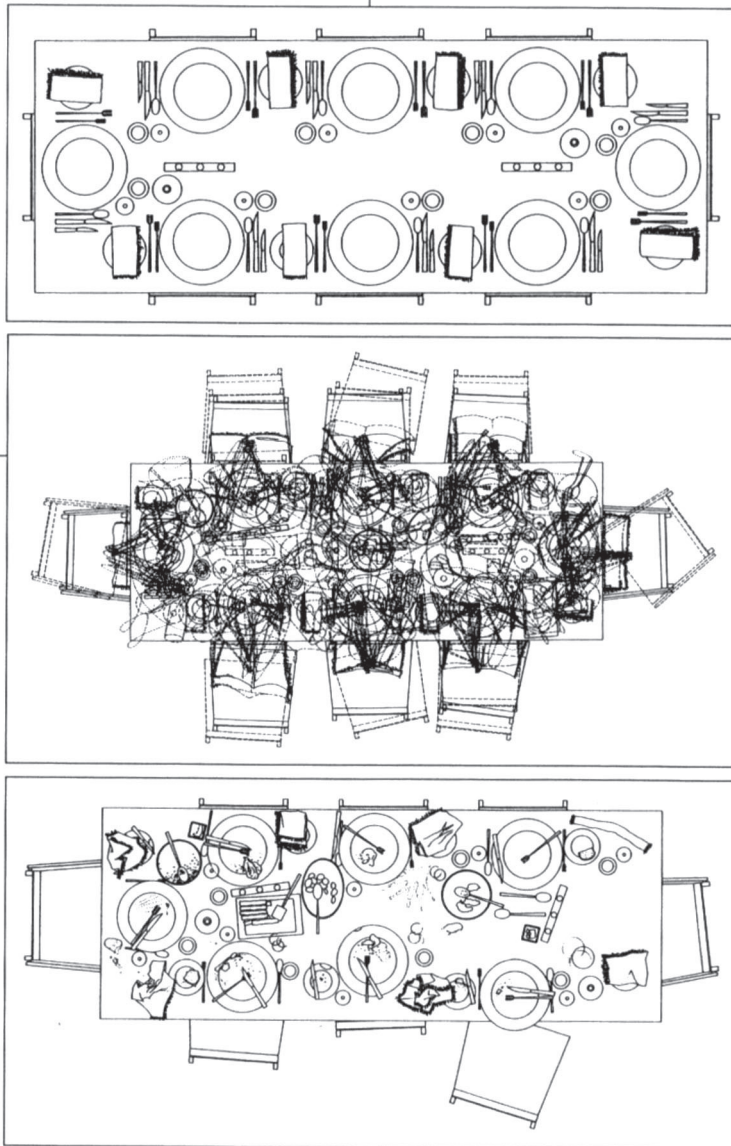
6.12 Peter Eisenman, *House II*, Hardwick (VT), USA, 1970, axonometric drawing



6.13 Steven Holl, Chapel of St Ignatius, Seattle (WA), USA, 1997, water color sketch



6.14 Peter Zumthor, Kolumba Art Museum, Cologne, Germany, 2007



6.15 Sarah Wigglesworth, *Dining Table*, 1998

6.4 THE PROMISE OF ARCHITECTURE

6.4.1 *Matter that Matter*

Now that we have discussed the role of art in relationship to the world, we first need to again stress that even if Arendt understands works of art as exceptional, Arendt does not set them apart in a distinctive category. The activities of the artist still belong to ‘work’, she states.²⁵¹ Moreover, Arendt urges the relationship with works of art and other objects that form the world-of-things. Works of art only are exemplary examples of objects created by work. What the world-of-things offers to the human being is ultimately visible and tangible in the artworks. This of course can also be stated vice-versa: where art delivers permanence to the world, objects do so too (even despite the more extensive use of everyday objects, and their shorter lifespan). Art can teach us a sense of the world; other objects can do as well. Of course, it is not the single object, nor the single art-work that bears this capacity. It is the series of objects that surround us, as well as the series that art works that are being put on display, that form the world-in-common and the stage for appearances, that teach us differences, plurality, remembrances, and offer us the experience of reality of the world. We therefore better can state: the *world* has the potential to offer these experiences – the exceptional work of art and regular objects alike and together.

Although the activity of ‘action’ is at the core of *The Human Condition*, it also is true that the real objective is the world.²⁵² It is the world that is shared and that forms the stage for appearances, the context of action and speech. But not only is the world the décor and ground of action and speech, it also is (often) the object of action and speech. In other words, the shared world, according to Arendt, is the ultimate horizon of the realm of politics. The world is both the stage of action, as well as it is the world of matter. ‘Action and speech’, she writes,

‘go on between men, as they are directed toward them, and they retain their agent-revealing capacity even if their content is exclusively ‘objective,’ concerned with the matters of the world of things in which men move, which physically lies between them and out of which arise their specific, objective interests. These interests constitute, in the word’s most literal significance, something which is *inter-est*, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together. Most action and speech is concerned with this in-between, which varies with each group of people, so that most words and deeds are *about* some worldly objective reality in addition to being a disclosure of the acting and speaking agent.’²⁵³

In Arendt’s view of the public realm, objects thus play an important role. In many cases ‘objects’ are able to unite the people in a common aim or concern. A lovely medieval inner city can bring together a range of different people with different backgrounds and interests, protesting against the threat of increasing mass tourism. One of the last parks left in the core of a metropolis can evoke days of protests against a government that has launched the plan to cover every square inch of it. A community garden attracts different inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Tangible things around us evoke engagement within us. If threatened, we are concerned, upset. Things can move us.

Arendt of course is also aware of the intangibility beyond these objects. How the objects are related, and how this all together is related in a ‘web of human relationships’, is the second condition of the public realm, as she argues:

251.
cf. Markell, ‘Arendt’s Work’, 33; In the next chapter I will discuss the question whether the work of the artist (and the architect) not also can be seen as part of the activity of ‘action’.

252.
cf. Markell, ‘Arendt’s Work’, 18 – Markell actually argues that *The Human Condition* not so much is about the threefold distinction labor-work-action, but about two pairs of distinctions: labor-work and work-action. In both cases, work offer the pivotal perspective.

253.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 182-183

254.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*,
182-183

255.
Latour, 'From Realpolitik to
Dingpolitik', 5-6 [emphasis in
original]

'Since this disclosure of the subject is an integral part of all, even the most 'objective' intercourse, the physical, worldly in-between along with its interests is overlaid and, as it were, overgrown with an altogether different in-between which consists of deeds and words and owes its origin exclusively to men's acting and speaking directly to one another, This second, subjective in-between is not tangible, since there are no tangible objects into which it could solidify' the process of acting and speaking can leave behind no such results and end products. But for all its intangibility, this in-between is no less real that the world of things we visibly have in common. We call this reality the 'web' of human relationships, indicating by the metaphor its somewhat intangible quality.²⁵⁴

Arendt here thus stresses objects as significant elements in the web of human relationships and therefore of political life. To my mind, this concern finds its echo in the more recent trial of the French philosopher Bruno Latour to re-connect academia, the sciences, and amongst them also the political theorists, back to the reality of everyday life. In his introductory article 'From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik' to the collection of essays, wherein this attempt is gathered, he argues that most of the political theorists overlook the importance of objects for our daily life. I quote Latour at length:

'It's not unfair to say, that political philosophy has often been the victim of a strong object-avoidance tendency. From Hobbes to Rawls, from Rousseau to Habermas, many procedures have been devised to assemble the relevant parties, to authorize them to contract, to check their degree of representativity, to discover the ideal speech conditions, to detect the legitimate closure, to write the good constitution. But when it comes down to what is at issue, namely the object of concern that brings them together, not a word is uttered. In a strange way, political science is mute just at the moment when the objects of concern should be brought in and made to speak up loudly. Contrary to what the powerful etymology of their most cherished world should imply, their *res publica* does not seem to be loaded with too many things. Procedures to authorize and legitimize are important, but it's only half of what is needed to assemble. The other half lies in the issues themselves, in the *matters* that matter, in the *res* that creates a *public* around it.²⁵⁵

And he continues a bit further with a striking image of the concern for the world as aim of politics:

'To be crowded with objects that nonetheless are not really integrated into our definition of politics is even more tellingly visible in the famous fresco painted by Lorenzetti in Siena's city hall. Many scholars have deciphered for us the complex meaning of the emblems representing the Good and the Bad Government, and have traced their complex genealogy. But what is most striking for a contemporary eye is the massive presence of cities, landscapes, animals, merchants, dancers, and the ubiquitous rendering of light and space. The Bad Government is not simply illustrated by the devilish figure of Discordia, but also through the dark light, the destroyed city, the ravaged landscape and the suffocating people. The Good Government is not simply personified by the various emblems of Virtue and Concordia but also through the transparency of light, its well-kept architecture, its well-tended landscape, its diversity of animals, the ease of its commercial relations, its thriving arts.

Far from being simply a décor for the emblems, the fresco requests us to a subtle ecology of Good and Bad Government.²⁵⁶

256.
Ibid., 6-7

257.
Ibid., 7

This reminds us of the strong relationship in the writings of Arendt of culture and the world, upon which we touched previously. All culture is world-building, we at that moment concluded. This of course also means that there is a strong relationship between the realm of politics and the urge of culture. Taking care of the world that already exists, to maintain it carefully, to be concerned about the world is one of the main aims of action and speech. In a final quote of Latour, this perspective is put under pressure in today's circumstances:

‘Modern visitors, attuned to the new issues of bad air, hazy lights, destroyed ecosystems, ruined architecture, abandoned industries and delocalized trades are certainly ready to include in their definition of politics a whole new ecology loaded with things. Where has political philosophy turned its distracted gaze while so many objects were drawn under its very nose?’²⁵⁷

The writings of Arendt, to my mind, urge these questions too. Particularly if we stress these thoughts towards the field of architecture. We even can call her model of the public realm architectural. It is not only very spatial, as we discussed in the previous chapter, it also is characterized by the world-in-common: materialized with objects that somehow relate to each other and to those appearing in it. In other words, the public realm in Arendt's view is both spatial and tangible. Arendt's *res publica*, we might state in the light of Latour's stress on the importance of 'things', is not an intangible sphere, it is a space, filled with objects that matter to us.

Having stated that the model of the public realm Arendt describes can be understood as 'architectural' does not mean that the public realm is in the hands of architects – we concluded that already in the previous chapter. It is somehow, but to a limited sense: architecture increases or diminishes the possibilities of appearances. The public realm, nevertheless, is strongly related to the (public) spaces that architects and their commissioners design, develop, and construct. Architecture is intervening in the earth and in the world, in order to make it fit for human inhibition. The very practices of inhibition (and with that appearances) turn these spaces into spaces of appearance, which turns the web of object- and human relationships in a world that mediates between human beings. This of course means that architecture, in its broadest sense, always is a cultural and political practice. It is intervening, which always is accompanied by a certain violence, in existing structures and organisms, while it also immediately – and the cultural aspect urges this – needs to take care of the existing world and ecologies.

Despite the attention Arendt delivers to cultural objects and practices, and despite her emphasises on the exemplary character of artworks, she only urges the role of architecture in a limited sense. To state that architecture plays a major role in the construction of the world, however, is to state the obvious. It is not easy to think of another product of making, another product amongst objects and things, that has so much influence on the world and its appearance, the world as we know it, the world as it appears to us, as architecture. Architecture organizes this world, both the exceptional places since it gives form to museums and cathedrals, to parliaments and memorials, as well as the everyday environment, since it gives form to housing neighborhoods and parking lots, to shopping malls and business

districts. This all there, simply out in the open, around the corner, in front of the door. It is not hidden within the four walls of museums and galleries, where one needs to decide to go to. Architecture can hardly be possessed by a single one, it cannot be hidden, it is somewhere and it somehow appears in public, or it should be hidden after huge walls and behind trees in the midst of a ranch, an estate or a garden. But even the garden, ranch and estate, that parcel of the globe that has been occupied by private possession, somewhere has edges with public space, often articulated by walls and fences, porches and gates. And, if we look differently, since the world is not only what exists and has significance at this very moment, it also connects the human being with the past and the future. The aspect of time and permanence is the public significance of even the hidden architectural construction in the midst of a ranch or estate.

This is the very contribution of every architectural project to the world: to offer permanence in time, to connect the past, the now and the future. This also is the very argument that all assignments are culturally – maintenance and renewal – significant. All objects of architecture that we construct contribute to the experience of permanence. Even the smallest building occupies a place in the world for a while, and conditions the world for a certain family (and their servants) as well as for generations to come – even if the estate is meant to be withdrawn from that very world-in-common. Architecture, which ranges from the house to the organization of the landscape and the formal border that is represented through the wall or the fence, is an intermediary between the human being and the common world, between the private and the public, here and there, now and times that will come.

However, this statement that ‘every construction of architecture’ poses questions to the edges of the profession. On the one hand to constructions that evidently are temporary: stages for a festival, temporal constructions for a biennale, proposals that never will be built, and all other parts of what some call ‘paper architecture,’ parts of the profession that does not leave immediate ‘objects’ out there, but are stuck in drawings and proposals. Even these contributions are important to relate to the experience of the world. Although they do not literally contribute to the experience of history, as the inner city of Rome does, they offer provocative insights in possible futures (or how in previous times the future was thoughts). These temporal constructions and paper-proposals can offer more extreme experiments and statements, and therewith offer innovation and renewal, discussion and reflection. They evoke imagination, fuel the important conversation about the world, and connect to the future.

In the final paragraphs of this chapter, the field of architecture is investigated, particularly through the question of what it effectively contributes to the world-in-common. Together these paragraphs form a kaleidoscopic perspective upon the field, sometimes in extensive discussion with particular views, sometimes through the sketch of a certain horizon, and sometimes offering an overview of a particular theme. Each of these paragraphs can be a distinctive study, offering an opening to more reflection and investigation. However, what is presented here can only be a brief reflection upon these particular themes, grasping bits and pieces from the field of architecture, relating them with Arendt’s reflection upon the world-in-common.

6.4.2 *Worldliness and Architecture*

Architecture in the perspective of Arendt might lack the very exemplary aspects of art, since architecture is not without function. It is not detached from

use-practices that threaten the permanence of the object, since by their very use, buildings slowly but surely deteriorate. Clearly enough, there is not so much more permanent and public than architecture. Although not always and not everywhere the existing structures have been handled with care, architecture nevertheless offers a strong connection with the past and the future. Furthermore, architecture essentially might be utilitarian, that is, it serves a certain purpose. Nevertheless, architecture also stretches beyond that purpose towards the realm of the cultural and artistic: ‘the function of a building may be purely utilitarian,’ the architects Robert McCarter and Juhani Pallasmaa write in their apology of architecture, ‘or purely ritual and symbolic, yet it always serves a specific intention. But in addition to its utilitarian purposes, architecture has a significant existential and mental task; man-made structures domesticate space for human occupation by turning anonymous, uniform and limitless natural space into distinct places of human significance.’²⁵⁸ It is important in this case that the meaning of a particular building somehow is related to the function of that very building. Nevertheless, this relationship is somewhat ambiguous. Functions, after all, can change, and today even more easily than before. In most cases, architectural forms stay the same, while new functions adapt to these shapes. This has been stressed by the Italian architect Aldo Rossi, who stressed this fluidity of function as compared to the architectural forms on the level of the city, but also from a very different view by the French architect Bernard Tschumi. ‘Architecture is constantly subject to reinterpretation,’ he writes in an article meaningfully entitled ‘De-, Dis-, Ex-’. In no way can architecture today claim permanence of meaning. Churches are turned into movie houses, banks into yuppie restaurants, hat factories into artists’ studios, subway tunnels into nightclubs, and sometimes nightclubs into churches. The supposed cause-and-effect relationship between function and form (“form follows function”) is forever condemned the day function becomes almost as transient as those magazines and mass media images in which architecture now appears as such a fashionable object.²⁵⁹ In an interview with Enrique Walker, he added to this perspective that the actual occupation only can offer meaning to the architectural project. Meaning, he argues, is actually not in the hands of the architect. ‘Architecture acquires meaning only after it is inhabited – used *and* misused. Its meaning changes all the time. As an architect, one can encourage certain conditions for this use and misuse that will potentially entail a meaning, but one has absolutely no control over meaning. If certain things are used in one society for one purpose and in another society for another purpose, they do not have the same meaning; if the context is gone, the meaning is gone. ... I always insist on the notion that architecture may have a meaning but form does not.’²⁶⁰

However, thinking of architecture in the world, and the exceptional capacity of mediating between the human being and the world and its inhabitants, between the past and the future, it obviously has to be said that, compared to art, architecture does not need to be put on display. It simply is there. Architecture ‘can’t help exposing itself’, we might state with the Belgium architectural critic Geert Bekaert. He interestingly adds that even when architects try to be *more* present, ‘when it is made too present, it becomes annoying.’²⁶¹ This of course urges the very everydayness of architecture. It is there when we are at home, it is on our way to work, it is at our work, it is there when we go shopping, and it also is there when we need to be ‘lifted-up’ and go to a museum (or a church). The architecture of all these places might not attract our attention, we might experience it in distraction, particularly if it is our everyday environment. We can walk, cycle, drive around without really noticing the environment. Although experienced in distraction, it

258.

Robert McCarter and Juhani Pallasmaa, *Understanding Architecture. A Primer on Architecture as Experience* (London Phaidon Press Limited, 2012), 11

259.

Bernard Tschumi, ‘De-, Dis-, Ex-’, in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge (Mass.)/ London: The MIT Press, 1996), 216-217

260.

Enrique Walker, *Tschumi on Architecture, Conversations with Enrique Walker* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2006), 60-61

261.

Christophe Van Gerrewey and Véronique Patteuw, “Architecture Can’t Help Exposing Itself”: In Conversation with Geert Bekaert’, in: *Exhibitions, Showing and Producing Architecture, OASE#88* (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2012), 112

262.
Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism, A Study in the History of Taste* (New York/London., W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 168

263.
Colin Davis, *Thinking about Architecture, An Introduction to Architectural Theory* (London: Laurence King Publishing LTD, 2011), 68

264.
McCarter and Pallasmaa, *Understanding Architecture*, 11

265.
Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 46

266.
McCarter and Pallasmaa, *Understanding Architecture*, 403

267.
Ibid., 11

268.
cf. Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings, A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 271

nevertheless conditions us as human beings. Architecture is the context of daily life from which we cannot withdraw. This, we might state, is the merit of architecture, as compared to the art: it literally forms a world-of-things, it stresses the distinction between at home and in the world, it shapes the spaces of our life: the world, the public space, the home, the neighbourhood, the city, the landscape. It offers room for appearance in public, for the movement in the world, although, as history has shown, it also can destroy the possibilities of meaningful appearances and movement. Geoffrey Scott argues: ‘The functions of the arts, at many points, overlap; architecture has much that it holds in common with sculpture, and more that it shares with music. But it has also its peculiar province and a pleasure which is typically its own. It has the monopoly of space. Architecture alone of the Arts can give space its full value. It can surround us with a void of three dimensions; and whatever delight may be derived from that is the gift of architecture alone. Painting can depict space; poetry ... can recall its image; music can give us its analogy, but architecture deals with space directly; it uses space as a material and sets us in the midst.’²⁶²

The importance of spatiality of the world – not only in the tangible sense, but also in its virtual entity – cannot be underestimated. Thinking itself is bound to space, just since the human being is bound to the world, bound to time and space. ‘Thought itself seems in some essential way to be spatial and structural,’ the architectural theorist Colin Davis writes, ‘just like architecture. It is spatial and structural because it is the expression of beings who can only experience and understand the world through their spatial and structural bodies. The objective world proposed by science probably exists, but we can never know for sure. The only world that we can know directly is the subjective world of our bodies and minds, the world of our dwelling, and it is this world that architecture shapes and modifies.’²⁶³ Therefore, architecture has in my opinion more than every-thing else the distinctive capacity to connect the human being with the world, as well as with its peers that also appear in the world, in an immediate and sensible way. As the architects McCarter and Pallasmaa argue: ‘architectural space mediates between the world at large and the human domain, the physical and the mental, the material and the spiritual. Architecture’s task is to provide our domicile in natural space. Architecture creates horizons and frames of reference for the perception and understanding of the world.’²⁶⁴ The French philosopher Bachelard even puts this more strongly: ‘[The house] is an instrument with which to confront the cosmos.’²⁶⁵

Having the distinction of Arendt between earth and world in mind, we actually miss in these two perspectives the particularities of the world. Surely, buildings offer shelter, are protecting the inhabitant from heavy weather and all sorts of other dangers that can be imagined. ‘Mentally, we cannot exist in limitless, anonymous, undefined and meaningless space, McCarter and Pallasmaa state.’²⁶⁶ The architectural intervention thus indeed might first be understood as intervention in the cosmos, somehow against nature, in order to make place for dwelling, for the human being to survive. This place is both existentially as well as mentally needed, they argue. ‘Man-made structures domesticate space for human occupation by turning anonymous, uniform and limitless natural space into distinct places of human significance. Equally importantly, they make endless time tolerable by giving duration its human measure.’²⁶⁷ This idea of architecture as creating places which somehow brings together space and time derive from the 1951 lecture ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’ that has evoked lots of responses within the profession of architecture.²⁶⁸ The lecture was addressed to an audience

of architects, who gathered to discuss the housing crisis after the war. Heidegger, in his lecture comes up with a totally different crisis of housing: the crisis of dwelling.²⁶⁹ Architecture ought to make room ‘for settlement and lodging’, he argued. By the definition of a boundary, architecture frees the space, so that it can be occupied. ‘A boundary is not that at which something stops, but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presenting*.’²⁷⁰ During the lecture Heidegger exemplifies the architectural intervention by analysing the construction of a bridge – an image that has become well known in the meantime.

“The bridge swings over the stream “with ease and power.” It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge expressly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. Nor do the banks stretch along the stream as indifferent border strips of the dry land. With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other’s neighbourhood. The bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the stream. Thus it guides and attends the stream through the meadows. Resting upright in the stream’s bed, the bridge-piers bear the swing of the arches that leave the stream’s waters to run their course. The waters may wander on quiet and gay, the sky’s floods from storm or thaw may shoot past the piers in torrential waves – the bridge is ready for the sky’s weather and its fickle nature. Even when the bridge covers the stream, it holds its flow up to the sky by taking it for a moment under the vaulted gateway and then setting it free once more.”²⁷¹

The moment the bridge is constructed is also the very moment of possibilities of use:

“The bridge lets the stream run its course and at the same time grants their way to mortals so that they may come and go from shore to shore. Bridges lead in many ways. The city bridge leads from the precincts of the castle to the cathedral square; the river bridge near the country town brings wagons and horse teams to the surrounding villages. The old stone bridge’s humble brook crossing gives to the harvest wagon its passage from the fields into the village and carries the lumber cart from the field path to the road. The highway bridge is tied to the network of long-distance traffic, paced as calculated for maximum yield.”²⁷²

Heidegger thus stresses how architecture unlocks a place, that is, it reveals characteristics that already were present but not yet tangible. The essence of the lecture nevertheless is that modern architecture has lost this connection with a particular place, and this on the one hand can be seen as an effect of modernity, but also impacts the human being. The core essence of the lecture can be summarized, as Colin Davis does, that ‘all beings, including human beings, need somewhere to be.’²⁷³ This of course comes close to the previously discussed fundamental ‘thrown-ness’ of the human being. Heidegger argues that one needs to exist somewhere, that is, is rooted somewhere, to be able to think, as well as to build. Due to modernity the human being nevertheless has become uprooted, causing the alienation of the human being, and the destruction of place, which stops people to really dwell (and modern architecture is somehow presented as a proof

269.

In a letter to Arendt, Heidegger writes that the work on this lecture caused changes in his thinking: ‘As theme I did choose ‘Building – Dwelling – Thinking.’ Since I wanted to keep it simple, not to talk for too long, requires only more work. If it was only for this lecture, but through such occurrences the whole approach always shifts. Many things need to be left out. The cases are pretty simple, but nevertheless for the “natural institution” completely invisible.’ *Hannah Arendt – Martin Heidegger, Brieven en andere getuigenissen 1925-1975* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Atlas, 2004), 142 [Translation from Dutch, HT]. In another letter, that succeeds the above mentioned letter, he announces to Arendt that he will send her the lecture, that was published by then, and asks for a response. *Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Brieven 1925-1975*, 146. There is no answer known from Arendt responding to that question.

270.

Martin Heidegger, ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’, in: Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 2001), 152

271.

Ibid., 150

272.

Ibid., 150

273.

Davis, *Thinking about Architecture*, 68

274.

Hilde Heynen, *Architectuur en kritiek van de moderniteit* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 2001), 30-38; cf Christian Norberg-Schulz, 'Architectuur als vergaring en verlijfelijking,' in: Jacques De Visscher, and Raf De Saeger (eds.), *Wonen, Architectuur in het denken van Martin Heidegger* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 1991), 12

275.

Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 147: 'The hope for man in his singularity lay in the fact that not man but men inhabit the earth and form a world between them. It is human worldliness that will save men from the pitfalls of human nature.'

276.

Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 91

of that uprootedness). The alienation of the world thus causes a crisis of dwelling, encompassing an existential crisis. Although Heidegger also plays the metaphysical card emphasising 'place' as a 'square' that in its four vertexes assembles the heaven and the earth, the mortal and the immortal. The dwelling-crisis particularly causes the decreasing eligibility for these four aspects that Heidegger sees as the very characteristics of dwelling.

As said, the lecture has evoked lots of responses by architects. Hilde Heynen in her revealing study of modernity and architecture shows the spectrum of responses, with on the one hand Peter Eisenman and Massimiliano Cacciari, who argued that architecture is not capable to mediate once again between the human being and a particular location, and on the other hand Christian Norberg-Schulz, who defended the opposite position. With the introduction of the term *Genius Loci* he urged architecture to take note of the 'ghost' of a particular place, the characteristics of the context through which it is distinguished from other locations.²⁷⁴ As has become clear before, Arendt's distinction between earth and world is derived from the writings of Heidegger. Somehow alike Heidegger, she also was critical of the developments in technology and science. This is particularly visible in the introduction to *The Human Condition*, where she not only discusses the achievement of Yuri Gagarin as a sign of the withdrawal from the world, but also stumbles upon the contemporary sciences and the impenetrable language that often is used to discuss their findings. However, Arendt's direction is not back to the earth (and the mysterious character of the earth). On the contrary, if Arendt stresses the alienation of Modern man, it is not alienation of the earth, but withdrawal from the world. The human being is not rooted in a particular place on earth, but is part of the web of human interactions and relationships. The earth, in that perspective, is only one of the many more relationships there are and that condition the human being. It is, in her view, not man living on earth, but men living in the world.²⁷⁵ When we think once again of this notion of the world, we immediately see how the world is detached from a particular place, as well as being regarded as a shared world. There is no world without technics, tools to intervene in the earth in order to make a place to dwell, moreover, to make a place to appear to others. This notion of the world thus not only acknowledges (development of) technique, of tools and instruments, but also binds the human beings first and foremost to other human beings, and the individual to the earth. The world changes by every object that is added or removed. It can be constructed everywhere, everywhere it is needed. Although Arendt does talk sometimes about the 'the undisputable thereness of objects',²⁷⁶ this does not mean that she also stresses the particular place of objects on earth. She stresses the reality of the world, the tangibility of objects, which, since they are real and tangible, are 'there', that is, in the world as distinct from the virtual realm of ideas. The 'thereness' thus is important as aspect of the world whose reality is real and thus requires to be 'there'. This aspect however mainly stresses the very difference with the world of ideas, which is intangible, constructed through the human activity of thinking. Architecture, in other words, reveals the world. It has revelatory capacity, to show the world to its inhabitants.

It depends on human beings – inhabitants of the earth – to construct the world, and to the inhabitants of the world, to maintain the world. It depends upon human beings to produce a common world, objects that enable appearance and withdrawal. Arendt of course does not plea for an 'anything-goes' mentality towards the world and nature. Since the world is in common, not only with contemporaries, but also with the past and the future, and if this *longue durée* is the essence of the common experience and the prerequisite for appearance and

politics, as we have argued previously, care for the world is crucial. Here we touch upon Arendt's definition of culture once again: culture challenges how 'we' treat the world by this double perspective of renewal and maintenance, intervention and care. Acknowledging that violence to the world is needed in order to make it fit for human habitation also in the future, to give room to new requirements, but never without leaving care for the existing behind. The care that is inherent in culture for the existent world immediately also affects the way we deal with the world. This is an important correction, I would argue: the world first and foremost binds us together, even before it binds us to the earth. We even might argue that it even binds us more to particular 'things', than to a particular place. It binds us for a while to a home, to a particular location, from which we appear in the world. In that sense, we have to reject the views that urge architecture to deal with the *Genius Loci*, which was introduced by the Norwegian architect Christian Norberg-Schulz as we have seen before, if this means that we have to reveal the particular characteristics of a natural place and if stated that this will solve the uprootedness of the human being. Architecture needs to relate to the world, rather than to the *Genius Loci*. If it urges to deal with the particular characteristics of the world in a particular place, if it tries to restore the worldliness at a particular place, which to my mind is behind the Critical Regionalist approach of Kenneth Frampton, who urged architects to deal critically with local characteristics (in architecture) as we touched upon previously, we might agree upon that perspective. This little direction surely does not exclude the trial to strengthen, by one or another architectural or worldly intervention, the relationship earth-world, as for instance is done in the famous Kaufmann House Falling Water by Frank Lloyd Wright, the urban plan of Onkel Tom's Hutte by Bruno Taut and Hugo Häring, or in the Fredenborg Housing project in Denmark by Jørn Utzon.^[IMAGE 6.8, 6.9, 6.10]

Besides the Jewish perspective, as urged by Levinas, which might be behind Arendt's perspective too, her own uprootedness, caused by her forced emigration, probably offered her even more insight: that to be bound to the world does not mean to be exclusively bound to a certain place on earth. Bound to the world probably means to occupy and to be engaged in a particular place for a period of time. World-bound, for Arendt is world-orientated, to be engaged in the world and to be involved in its happenings.

The architectural intervention in the world certainly affects the world and the earth. Admittedly, Arendt does not so much stress the ecological effects of the world, and how the world violates nature. She acknowledges this violence, but never the less is mainly concerned about the world, and how this common world seems to vanish. However, as previously discussed, her notion of culture, which somehow mediates between her categories of work and action, provides the frame for these interventions: the cultural perspective forces a handling with care, but also to handle anyway.²⁷⁷ This of course also counts for the way we deal with the earth. The care that is applied to the world, as common to the community of people, also means a careful approach to the natural sources that also affect human life. To apply modern means, to strive for certain goals, but not to lose oneself in these means, and also to be aware of the possible destructions, side effects. It always needs to be oriented on the world (and its inhabitants).²⁷⁸ Heidegger's impact on the field of architecture is still tangible today, for instance, in the writings of McCarter and Pallasmaa. In their book *Understanding Architecture*, they emphasise that, 'for our mental constitution and environmental perception, as well as for our innate structuring of the world.'²⁷⁹ Architecture places someone on a particular place – it is from there on space is discovered,

277.

cf Young-Ah Gottlieb, 'Introduction', pp.xxv-xxvi, where she investigates the notion of violence, and how that, in the case of the Greeks, how these both celebrated the artist as to take distance for the application of violence. 'A case for culture can be made, therefore, only when the perspective of the artist is carefully constrained. Arendt interprets a paradox at the heart of ancient Greek politics in this regard: "It was as if the Greeks could say in one and the same breath: 'He who has not seen the Zeus of Phidias at Olympia has lived in vain', and: 'People like Phidias, namely sculptors, really should not be granted citizenship.'" With this same paradox in mind, Arendt interprets a remark of Hölderlin to which Heidegger had previously drawn attention: "When Holderlin called poetry the 'most innocent' occupation, he may have been thinking of the violence inherent in all other art forms. But, of course, the poet violates his material as well; he does not sing like the bird living in the tree."

278.

cf. Barnouw, *Visible Spaces*, p.196: 'But the point is ... that she saw recognition of the importance of a nurturing earth as essential to the quality of human life and that she therefore stressed the need to pose and discuss questions of scientific and technological development in the public sphere of the political and not hide them in the private sphere of the laboratory. It is in this context that she expressed fears about the loss of speech, since the "truths" of modern scientific exploration and mastery of the world can no longer be expressed in 'normal' – that is, shared – speech and thought.'

279.

McCarter and Pallasmaa, *Understanding Architecture*, 403

280.
Ibid., 403

281.
Ibid., 403

282.
cf J.B. Jackson who stresses the importance of not a single view, but the plural experience that creates the meaningful landscape. This also counts for the world, as well as for a city: 'A coherent, workable landscape evolves where there is a coherent definition not of man but of man's relation to the world and to his fellow men.' John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Landscapes, Selected writings of J.B. Jackson* (Amherst (Mass.): University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), 9

explored. However, the very experience of space is through a 'mosaic of places', they argue. This means, as I would stress, through a series of other places that are revealed by other means and interventions. Architecture's first aim might be to conquer space, mediating between nature and the body, it's primary calling is creating the world, that is, to create a common world. With McCarter and Pallasmaa, we might understand that the experience of the world is not smooth and continuous space, but rather a 'mosaic of places, next to and nested inside each other; it is not a continuous, unstructured and homogeneous space devoid of meanings.'²⁸⁰ The experience of the mosaic of course is still the perspective of the individual. Their text somehow stays on the level of the experience of the individual. 'Physical space becomes habitable and lived space as we turn it into a collection of places, and project specific meanings on these experiential entities; natural space is articulated into experiential places. We cannot even grasp, describe or remember space as such, but we grasp and remember places.'²⁸¹ At this point, I guess that we can enhance Arendt's understanding of the world, as well as the argument of McCarter and Pallasmaa. Arendt urges the common-ness of the world beyond individual experiences and urgencies. We might state that the mosaics of all inhabitants superimposed upon each other deliver a structure of the world that is meaningful.²⁸² It brings together the mosaic places into a fabric of 'interventions', that is: products of making. The term fabric, here, means to my understanding, that there is a certain entity that is able to join together a whole spectrum of differences, join together all sorts of patterns, connections, distinctions, ruptures. We might state at this point that essentially architecture is intervening in space, by making place. The very merit of architecture then is creating the world as a fabric, or landscape – a permanent structure that joins places together. Not in a finite whole, but in infinite opportunities of appearances to one another. Looking the other way around: the space of appearance, as we have touched upon previously is also not particularly smooth not continuous, but consists of all sorts of (temporal) places. These too, together can be described as a mosaic as well.

Architecture indeed offers a mediation between the natural circumstances, but it is also the proper place from where one approaches the public realm and appears into the world. One does not appear from a particular place on earth, but in the world. It is architecture's merit, as distinguished from other activities of work, even from the artwork, to place the human being so directly and so experientially in a relationship with the world and our fellow human beings, the generations of the past and those that follow us. The city in this respect is the most prominent and permanent assembly of the production of places: streets, squares, parks, landscapes, buildings and interiors. Particularly in the city, the experiences of the mosaic of places has a strong permanence, since constructed structures survive ages. They even give room to change in use and context, and are able to transform within their own limits. And, even more, there is no other cultural artefact that influences and establishes so extensively the everyday human and their particular experiences and therewith, also, the cultural and – as urged above – moral horizon of a community.

The first important perspective upon architecture, as urged to us by the writings of Arendt, we might therefore define as the appearance of architecture in daily life. Although we often experience architecture in distraction, as we have seen in the previous chapter, this does not mean that the appearance does not matter. On the contrary – particularly if experienced in distraction, as an everyday commodity, architecture determines extensively our view of the world: we are

still conditioned by the landscape, the city, our neighbourhood, our home, our school, the path to work, and so on. We can distinguish here both a passive and an active determination, I would argue. The active one is simply that architecture places the inhabitant in the world, literally. The world just opens up differently for those living in a gated community as compared to those living in a suburb that is accessible to everyone. One sees the world differently from the 38th floor of a Skyscraper in the business district of Shanghai than from the 3rd floor of an apartment building in the outskirts of that city. In other words, how our own place is related to the world determines quite a bit of our view of the world, or even more, of our experience of the world. If we cycle to school, take public transport, or go by car it affects our view too. Particularly if we take these commodities for granted, since neighbours, friends, family, colleagues more or less live and work in the same conditions, and we are not or only in a minor way confronted with otherness. One of the main responses in the fields of architectural theory and urban sociology to the separation that is described by these examples is to stress the superfluous character of such environments – I extensively discussed these perspectives in my journey through the American landscape in Chapter 2. The tone of this Chapter somehow was pessimistic: the exclusion of otherness in the domain of dwelling, working and leisure seems to propel a negative spiral that emphasizes security over openness, and anxiety over curiosity. The extension of that journey in Chapter 3 showed that there might be hope for a ‘solution’, since today there is more interest in differences and plurality. Urban cores, that always have been the locus of plurality, are even embraced today – although this engagement seems to have an undertone of economic profit and expectation. In all these discussions, architecture is latently existent. It is urged, since urban planning and design is the job of architecture, but nevertheless, architecture cannot stop anxiety, nor can it evoke ‘real’ moments of exchange between people of different backgrounds. That is all part of the perceived and lived space, we might argue with a reference to the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, not of the conceived space.²⁸³

6.4.3 Representation(s) of Time

The passive way architecture defines our perception of the world as, like all other objects, and specifically works of art, it has an inherent narrative. Architecture represents something. Architectural forms somehow communicate a certain message: it reveals something of its relationship to the world, to its contexts, to a certain culture – as well as revealing something from that culture. The message of the building is rooted in the context at large. Architecture cannot withdraw itself from that context, but in most cases it just emphasises this context.²⁸⁴ Vincent Scully somehow also urges this division between the active and the passive aspects of architecture, when he first argues in his book *Modern Architecture*: ‘Modern architecture is a product of Western civilization. It began to take shape during the later eighteenth century, with the democratic and industrial revolutions that formed the modern age. Like all architecture, it has attempted to create a special environment for human life and to imagine the thoughts and actions of human beings as they have wished to believe themselves to be.’²⁸⁵ Architecture thus actively tries to embody a particular world-view. This is what architects do, together with their clients and other parties involved in a building project. The architect strives for possibilities to accommodate the current needs, according to the current values. But there is more – particularly in modern architecture, this also is how they understood their work actively. Modern architecture often was

283.

Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 38-39

284.

See for instance J.B. Jackson in zijn inleiding tot *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time*: ‘the contemporary American landscape can no longer be seen as a composition of well-defined individual spaces – farms, counties, states, territories, and ecological regions – but as the zones of influence and control of roads, streets, highways: arteries which dominate and nourish and hold a landscape together and provide it with instant accessibility. This mean, I think, that architecture no longer provides the important symbols. Architecture in its oldest and most formal sense has ceased, at least in our newest landscapes, to symbolize hierarchy and permanence and sacredness and collective identity; and so far the road or highway has not taken over those roles.’ Jackson, *A Sense of Place*, viii

285.

Vincent Scully jr, *Modern Architecture, The Architecture of Democracy* (New York: Georg Braziller, 1989), 10

286.
Ibid., 10

287.
Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1982) 21

defended with a reference to the *zeitgeist* – architecture needed to fit properly in that very period: it could evoke a future perspective, but could not re-address the past. This modern agenda has been criticized from post-modernity onwards. However, this is not just the architect that takes the *zeitgeist* as a certain style, it also – but a bit more hidden – is part of culture *an sich*. In what we have seen above, architecture makes time present and tangible. It reveals the continuity of time, which so important to Arendt’s concept of the world-in-common, connecting the past with the now, the now with the future. This presence of time is tangible in the change of approaches, styles, materials, deterioration, ruins and new additions. As is clear, however, due to new techniques, materials, demands, each time has its way of organizing, of emphasis on process, design, and construction – which all affect the outcome of the particular architectural project. In this specificity the presence of time exists: everything after all is simply bound to that very time and location, to that particular team of client, designers and constructors. All parties involved agree upon these aspects that are underneath the approach, the aim, and the limits of the project. This affirmation to the prevailing cultural, political and economic values, however, often it is hidden and left unsaid. It’s in the air, so to say. It is this ‘air’ that in the end is expressed in the building too. This, we might argue, is an image of the passive way architecture shapes our view of the world. As Scully continues: ‘Modern architecture has mirrored the tensions of this state of mind and has itself embodied the character of the age that produced them. It has acted much more than a simple reflection of its society. Like all art, it has revealed some of the basic truths of the human condition and again, like all art, has played a part in changing and reforming that condition itself. From its first beginnings it has shown us to ourselves as modern men and told us what we are and want to be.’²⁸⁶ Architecture thus reveals something of the urgencies beyond it – the value systems that have shaped buildings. And by their very being, these buildings form the conditions of those communities in the midst of which they have been placed.

Therefore, at this point, we at least need to stress the importance of the ‘well-conceived’ space (although for Lefebvre and his Marxist theory, this was the very category to be critiqued). With well-conceived, we do not mean to state that all parts of a neighborhood need to be clean and ordered. Those spaces in neighborhoods, at the edge of towns, or in abandoned areas, that first seem to be a mess, on secondary view can propose opportunities. The most well-designed environments after all (and if we have to pinpoint these, we can think of Singapore, The Netherlands or Switzerland, also bare the seed of boringness and over-design – if everything is static, nothing can happen or no personal initiative will be allowed). This only immediately reveals how certain appearances evoke thoughts and expectations. Therefore, what is meant with the well-conceived is at least that some of the collective and public facilities and structures are well designed and easily accessible. We might argue that this needs to be the case for all constructions that are being built. ‘Aesthetic intention and the creation of better surroundings’, after all, ‘are the two permanent characteristics of architecture,’ as the Italian architect Aldo Rossi states.²⁸⁷ However, in a time that aesthetic intention is not applied to all structures, let alone if the aspect of the better surroundings can be applied to all structures as well, we might make a difference if in a certain neighbourhood a school, a library and a football-playing field stand out, if there are bicycle lanes and sidewalks to be occupied, if there is a nice green structure, a playing field, or other well-designed facilities. It is, for instance, telling if the library has an impressive hall with books all around, as well as a nice counter where one can read, study and meet. It communicates

diversity, creativity and dynamics if the school has an open auditorium as its central core. The building can reveal permanence in a world that is experienced as fluid. This point might seem to introduce the argument of the absolute architecture of Pier Vittorio Aureli, that I discussed earlier, but only on a smaller scale: a few outstanding buildings will save the neighbourhood. But on the contrary: whereas Aureli stresses the differences, and the autonomous architecture as an counter project that is able to reveal the mere practices surrounding it, the argument that I develop here is that it is the public buildings in particular that need ‘thoughtful’ architecture.²⁸⁸ It of course is not limited to public buildings only – these buildings also challenge the neighbouring properties, as they do their neighbouring properties, and yes, together they challenge a whole borough, neighbourhood, area to understand the intermediate function of architecture. This of course is also a challenge for the owner of the petrol station, the coffee-corner, the restaurant, the supermarket, and even of the factory that is settled on distance of the city. Their architecture does matter too.

However, to start somewhere affecting the world-view of inhabitants, public buildings are exemplary, just like the artworks being exemplary to all objects. If buildings are architecturally outstanding, this is not meant to reveal the mere character of the environment, but in order to ‘shape’, to state it with Churchill, the users. The architecture of such well-designed buildings and other facilities, after all, represent a certain world-view too. They are tangible messages about the connection with the world beyond their very location. The architecture represents how society values such facilities. Even in a distracted experience of such buildings or landscapes, one is affected by their very appearance. If architecture shapes the world, the inhabitants of that world are shaped by architecture, by how architecture relates to its location, to other properties, to the urban fabric, to infrastructure, how it behaves to the past, and how it offers possibilities of occupation and appropriation. Generally spoken, at this point we can agree with Ronald Beiner when he challenges architecture: ‘if the effect of an ensemble of architectural creation is not the constitution of some kind of polis, at least ideally, then the idea of architecture as a source of citizenship is a hollow one.’²⁸⁹

One of the features that architecture represents unmarked certainly is the durability – if not permanence – of the world. ‘Architecture’, the Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa argues, ‘detaches us from the present and allows us to experience the slow, firm flow of time and tradition.’²⁹⁰ This experience particularly is experienced in cities, and, as Aldo Rossi argues in his book *The Architecture of the City*, vis-à-vis the background of monuments. As we already have seen in the previous chapter, he starts to make a case of typology – that most architectural forms are based on a principle. Over time the forms used and designed change, but the change is within certain limits. These forms essentially are based on a fundamental type. In the second part of his book, he changes the focus to the experience of the urban form. There is not so much in the world more durable than urban form, that is, the structure and form of the urban fabric. It is as though we are in the city now, but through these patterns, and even due to the historical buildings and particularly the monuments, we still partly experience the past. ‘The past’, he argues, ‘is partly being experienced now.’²⁹¹ In his concluding chapter, he actually comes up with a brilliant summary of permanence of the city as a process of involvement, engagement, and affection:

‘Urban Architecture ... is willed as such; thus the Italian piazzas of the Renaissance cannot be explained either in terms of their function or by

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I refer here to the intriguing definitions that both Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Louis Kahn offered. The first urged architecture as ‘the thoughtful bringing together of two stones’ (Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, ‘On Restraint in Design’, in: *New York Herald Tribune*, 28 June 1959), the second as ‘the thoughtful making of spaces.’ (Quote via Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Publishers, 2009), 118)

289.

Ronald Beiner, ‘Our Relationship with Architecture as a Mode of Shared Citizenship: Some Arendtian Thoughts’, in: *Techné, Research in Philosophy and Technology*, n01 (Virginia Tech, Fall 2007)

290.

Pallasmaa, ‘Architecture of the Seven Senses’, in: Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa, and Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Questions of Perception, Phenomenology of Architecture* (Tokyo/San Francisco: A+U Publishing Co. Ltd./William Stout Publishers, 2006), 31

291.

Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 57-59

292.
Ibid., 162

293.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 55

chance. Although these piazzas are means in the formation of the city, such elements which originally start out as means tend to be come ends'; ultimately they are the city. Thus the city has as its end itself alone, and there is nothing else to explain beyond the fact of its own presence in its own artefacts. This mode of being implies a will to exist in a specific way and to continue in that way.'²⁹²

This I think is sharp description of the objects that surround us – this process certainly is not limited to urban form, neither to the Renaissance city, nor to Classical Architectural forms, but is also applicable to the objects in our home, those things that matter to us – are transformed from being a result of work, produced to fulfil a certain end, towards a thing that evokes our 'affection', to which we are attached, that is, towards a certain end. However, these sites where the past literally is perceived, offer certainly a different experience of the world than these neighbourhoods that seem to suggest that everything can be replaced elsewhere overnight: cardboard houses that do not even touch the ground – their message is simply that they can be changed easily.

6.4.4 *The Case of Krier*

This cardboard architecture does not have to be rejected, somehow. For a certain moment of time, in a specific case, this can be the perfect answer to a spatial request. There is something to say for an architecture that has less impact on the environment, both literally at that very spot, as well as on the broader scale by making use of renewable materials, elements that can easily be changed, removed, reworked and replaced. The durability of the world Arendt urges, however, cannot be replaced by an ultimate emphasis on sustainability. Permanence is the goal – and this permanence particularly is bound to the experience of the past, and the recognition of the future in that what architecture offers today. The experience of the past has been questioned in Modern architecture at least until the emergence of Post-Modern architecture in the early 70s. To my mind, one of the most eloquent and prominent defenders of this view is Léon Krier, whom we already touched upon in the previous chapter. In his academic work he emphasizes the importance of the durability of urban forms, and blames modern architecture to have a 'blind spot' in this occasion. He underlines the importance of the durability of urban form with a wonderful quote from Arendt, taken from *The Human Condition*, which we already discussed previously:

'If the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only. It must transcend the lifespan of mortal man, without the transcendence into a potential earthly immortality, no politics, strictly speaking, no common world and no public realm is possible.'²⁹³

Krier refers to this wonderful quote, which seems to literally challenge the field of architecture, since he recognized in the modern approach to architecture first an aversion of traditional architectural styles, and second a decreasing lifespan of architectural objects. Both observations seem to challenge the characteristic of the *longue duree*. Krier urges architects to turn back to traditional styles of architecture, and specifically to the style of the architecture of the Classic period. His statement somehow is that modern architecture has proven not to be durable, since their lay-out turned out to be a too-perfect fit for a particular program,

and thus does not offer room for change in time. Modern architecture, rightly so, has offered trials, big failures, but also great successes. The buildings proved to be adaptable, to new circumstances and new uses. Krier is not alone in his critical perspective upon modernism, and particularly on functionalism, as we have seen in the opening paragraphs of the previous chapter. Other perspectives either stress flexibility, sometimes at the cost of a durable structure, in other cases stressing the construction versus the finishing (or infill) of the building, by offering more (space) than required, in other cases by stressing the spatial experience as lasting.²⁹⁴ Léon Krier nevertheless is the most pointed and sharp defender of the reactionary ‘return to the future’. Krier always, and certainly stubbornly, has stressed his view, even if it was against the majority of thinking in architecture, as well as rousing disdain and disregard as a response. His perspective, although vented with flair and humor, has been followed with every move. One of the revealing discussions he joined actually has been transcribed. In this conversation with the American architect Peter Eisenman, the latter stated:

‘I think a beautiful building is a modern building.’

And Krier responds:

‘That is a contradiction in terms.’

Eisenman:

‘Who is to judge?’

Krier:

‘You!’

And Eisenman again:

‘Then there are no judges?’

Krier answers:

‘One must be one’s own judge because other judges are unreliable.’

Eisenman then comes up with a harsh judgment made by Krier:

‘But you once said that people who design modern buildings will probably burn in hell. You then become their judge.’

Krier defends his statement:

‘Yes. Rather, they force others to live in their hell.’

And Eisenman again:

‘How can you know that? Who puts you in touch with those facts?’

And Krier finally:

‘I just observe how and where architects live; they rarely live in their own buildings or in new towns. That is only a fine point.’²⁹⁵

In his writings and through his built projects, he urged to re-introduce classical architectural forms, whereas, briefly spoken, modern architecture has done everything possible to get rid of these forms. Krier actually stressed the classical approach to architecture as one full of architectural wisdom and knowledge, based on ages of experiences with (city) building.^[IMAGE 6.11] His arguments therefore often come down on joking with the achievements of modern architecture. ‘Some people are about to keep alive a little awareness, memory and intelligence’, he for instance writes in the final lines of his article ‘The Blind Spot’, ‘in an age where under the joint banners of ‘education’, ‘efficiency’, and ‘security’, the memory and faculties of what we know as humanity are systematically drowned in the immensity of entertaining stupidity on the one hand, brutality and destruction on the other, where “without restriction can nowhere be anything produced of importance”’.²⁹⁶

Krier developed actually an attractive technique in order to communicate the deficiencies of modern architecture as compared to the classical examples

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I briefly mention here a range of possibilities that have been explored in the past, not intended as a closed list of possibilities. I nevertheless of course think of different responses in time, as for instance: in the experimental architecture of Archigram, the writings of John Habraken (*De dragers en de mensen*), the work of the French office Lacaton & Vassal, the work of the British office of David Chipperfield.

295.

Peter Eisenman and Léon Krier, ‘Eisenman and Krier, A Conversation’, in: Cynthia Davidson (eds.), *Eisenman/Krier: Two Ideologies, A Conference at the Yale School of Architecture* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2004), 37

296.

Léon Krier, ‘The Blind Spot’, in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (Amsterdam, SUN publishers, 2009), 187; The last part of the sentence is a quote taken from Karl Marx’s famous book *Capital* (1867)

297.
See for instance the images that accompanies his investigation in modern and classical architecture: Léon Krier, *Architecture, Choice or Fate* (Windsor (Berkshire): Papadakis Publisher, 1989), for instance page 28, 33, 34, 58, 60, 70,

298.
Krier, 'The Blind Spot,' 181

299.
Ibid., 183

300.
Joan Ockman, 'Between Utopia's and Ideologies', in: Cynthia Davidson (eds.), *Eisenman/Krier: Two Ideologies, A Conference at the Yale School of Architecture* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2004), 12

301.
Krier, *Architecture, Choice or Fate*, 49

302.
Ibid., 125

immediately: a series of cartoons, called 'Drawings on principles of urbanity and the public sphere.' The cartoons for instance show generic forms of modern architecture for even a house, a school or a concert hall, lacks of detailing, and homogeneous environments, immediately opposed by classical examples that show different typologies for each program, appropriate pluralism in structure and construction of urban environments, details revealing themselves through movement, whereas in comments he writes that the difference is in the approach to scale, being qualitative (in the example of the classical form) or quantitative (the modern approach).²⁹⁷ According to Krier, the modern approach cannot be regarded architecture at all. 'Architecture', he writes, 'consists essentially of a body of knowledge concerning the material transformation of nature into buildings and in turn, the translation of an imitative system of building into an art of building.'²⁹⁸ The addition of 'modern' or 'postmodern' is rubbish, he argues. But he even is more concerned by the lack in education, but also in practice, of attention to this 'circulation of knowledge about the transformation of nature and making architecture. Therefore, 'architecture and building,' he claims, 'which once promised the ultimate shelter for man against the afflictions of nature, is reduced to a mere problem of packaging and industrial gadgetry.'²⁹⁹ It has lost, in other words, its power of producing space (shelter for the body), and is replaced by mere design. This of course is not just the bankruptcy of architecture, but also of the city. Krier, as well as his younger brother Rob Krier, therefore aims to reconstruct the city along 'romantic-reactionary lines', a return to the preindustrial world.³⁰⁰ Specifically, the early examples of his own work, as for instance his contribution to 'Roma Interrotta' (1977) ^[IMAGE 5.11, 5.12] or his proposal for the 1976 competition on *Parc La Villette* in Paris shows emphasis on public space and monumental structures: axes and colonnades cutting through a fine maze urban fabric, public buildings, quite monumentally designed by abstracting and reconsidering classical examples, strategically placed amidst the vast mass of urban housing. The Roma Interrotta plan even comes up with a new type of public building, that is building and square at once. 'It provides', Krier writes, engines for urban centrality and marks both the plan and skyline of the city.³⁰¹ Through such images well-defined public space emerges, that nevertheless clearly appear as part of a fabric too. Besides these squares that sometimes are dominated by a covered structure, colonnades, obelisks also the attention to 'natural' environments of lakes and rivers, accompanied by the designs of bridges and embankments, walls and boulevards, attracts attention. It is remarkable that this quite fresh approach is lost in the newer projects, as for instance the urban lay-out of the British New Town Poundbury, in favour of a more direct application of the classical forms and structures of cities and buildings. It is even more remarkable, that although he suggests that urban fragments should accommodate the pedestrian – it's size should not be bigger than about 10 minutes walk, within this distance the primary services should be located and that the city should be constructed out of such autonomous fragments (that share the secondary services on the level of a borough, and some urban functions, like the airport, the administration, and cultural facilities, on the level of the city)³⁰² – the perspectives he draws in order to present his own work often lacks people visible, or when visible, it is never busy on the streets. The extinction is the 1987 painting on Atlantis, where the stairs and the balconies, and even the temple on top are heavily crowded – this painting actually reveals how empty Krier's cities are in his other drawings.

The cartoons Krier draws on urban structures show how he distinguishes between monuments – the public buildings – on the one hand, and the other structures

on the other. He reveals this point actually quite well also in the discussion with Eisenman, cited previously. Eisenman asks Krier:

‘Why is architecture about living in buildings? Building concerns shelter, construction, defying the laws of gravity, providing accommodation. Building can solve many functions – whether it is a building as an ocean liner, a building as a castle, or a building as a log cabin. A work of architecture is necessarily a building, but in itself a building is not a significant condition to define architecture. That is, since a building is not architecture, architecture must be something more than building, in the same way that literature is more than journalism. But if we would agree that people do not need to live in architecture but in buildings, then what is architecture if it is not a necessary part of living?’

Krier responds:

‘It is, obviously, not enough to have fine houses; a city also needs temples and monuments. Architecture is not concerned with the private realm. It shapes the public domain, the common world.’

Eisenman tries it once again:

‘Would you agree what if we built a “public” wall, anything could be clipped on behind it?’

Then Krier comes with a certain final answer:

‘Even if it becomes a public enterprise, housing is not a subject for “architecture”; it is not monumental. Twisted minds wanted housing to be the “monument of the twentieth century.” But housing is the sum of private functions that even in great number become no more interesting when put on public display. There is nothing grand, ceremonious, or important about housing. That is why its monumentalization is always painfully boring, meaningless, and false.’³⁰³

This answer on the one hand seems to parallel the distinction once made by Kenneth Frampton that we discussed previously: the distinction between architecture and building as being evoked by labor (which is dominated by the economic perspective) and work (that creates the works of art). The monumental belongs to architecture, the everyday does not. Of course – as his drawings show – the everyday is needed in order to form together with the monumental the *civitas*, but the essence of the *civitas* are the monuments that somehow symbolises the *res publica*. This perspective becomes even clearer in the book *Architecture, Choice of Fate?* where he explicitly argues that ‘all traditional architecture clearly distinguishes between public and/or sacred buildings, on the one hand, and utilitarian and/or private buildings, on the other. The former express the qualities of institutions – dignity, solemnity, grandeur for the *res publica* and the *res sacra*; the latter, the more modest private activities of housing, commerce and industry in the *res private* and the *res economica*.’³⁰⁴ Here we hear also the echo of Pier Vittorio Aureli – although we have to admit that it has to be urged vice-versa – Krier long ago made this point, whereas Aureli’s argument on absolute architecture is from a few years back. However, we even might find another parallel in the thoughts of Arendt, now making a distinction between the everyday as part of work and the monumental as part of political actions, particularly when she explicitly excludes the social from the realm of politics. In the discussion in Toronto, that has been helpful in exploring the work of Arendt in Chapter 4, the issue of social housing (sic) is taken as example of this division between the political and the social. First Arendt’s friend Mary McCarthy questions Arendt

303.
Eisenman and Krier, ‘Eisenman and Krier, A Conversation’, 37

304.
Krier, *Architecture, Choice of Fate*, 31

about her very image the public realm of action and speech.

'What is somebody supposed to do on the public stage, in the public space, if he does not concern himself with the social? That is, what's left?'³⁰⁵

Others support McCarthy, by arguing that this distinction between the political and the social is not defensible consistently. Arendt however replies by stating that life is changing constantly and that this means that every time, and even every location urges different issues to be discussed in public. She also argues that public debate only can deal with uncertainty – if things are certain, there is nothing to be discussed. I will come back to that issue of (un)certainly, but here Arendt actually offers a great example of what she has in mind:

'There are things where the right measures can be figured out. These things can really be administered and are not then subject to public debate. Public debate can only deal with things which – if we put it negatively – we cannot figure out with certainty. Otherwise, if we can figure it out with certainty, why do we all need to get together? Take a town-hall meeting. There is question, for instance of where to put the bridge. This can be decided either from above, or it can be done by debate. In case there really is an open question where it is better to put the bridge, it can be decided better by debate than from above.'

But then she adds:

'On the other hand, it seems to me also quite clear that no amount of speeches and discussions and debates – or what is unfortunately taking their place: research committees, which are an excuse for doing nothing – that none of these things will be able to solve the very grave social problems which the big cities pose to us.'

Another of the participants, Albrecht Wellmer, joins the discussion now:

'I would ask you to give one example in our time of a social problem which is not at the same time a political problem.'

Arendt replies by taking the housing problem as an example:

'The social problem is certainly adequate housing. But the question of whether this adequate housing means integration or not is certainly a political question. With every one of these questions there is a double face. And one of these faces should not be subject to debate. There shouldn't be any debate about the question that everybody should have decent housing.'

Then George Baird helps Arendt with stressing the situation in Britain, by stating that the disconnection between actions by the British government regarding the housing stock, and the inhabitants actually living there. Arendt appreciates his intervention:

'I think this example is helpful in showing this double fact of which I have talked in a very concrete way. The political issue is that these people love their neighbourhood and don't want to move, even if you give them one more bathroom. This is indeed entirely a debateable question, and a public issue, and should be decided publicly and not from above.'³⁰⁶

Of course, this conversation brings us in another direction, but Krier distancing himself from the housing question reminded me of this conversation. There might be a distinction between the public and the sacred place on the one hand, and the everyday structures of housing on the other – this does not mean that the latter is not a public issue at all. Particularly the everyday environment of inhabitants has to be the topic of discussion in public space. It matters where 'we' will build the bridge. It matters how our everyday environment is designed (and this cannot float on a few iconic buildings, I would argue). If we tend to engage with the world, if we need to embrace the (architectural) objects surrounding us, not to spoil them

but to keep them, I would argue that we cannot make a harsh distinction between the everyday street and the market square – not on the basis of Frampton and Aureli, neither as urged by Krier.

I particularly would argue that Krier in his scheme's and theory is focussed way too much on historical forms that together shape the structure of the town. Monumental buildings are connected through streets and squares, in his image. We can celebrate this more holistic approach: a series of single buildings does not form a city, a *civitas*. There is need for an underlying structure: the relationships between the buildings need emphasis and articulation. Nevertheless, in the schemes of Krier, the façades of the buildings that form the urban structure are more related to city-scape and the classical or traditional architectural language, than to the programs behind the façades. In other words, the façades are a means towards the structure of the town, and hide, somehow, the programs behind in a disconnected interior world. This is an important perspective, challenging the limitation Krier seems to put forward regarding the representation of the *longue duree* to traditional or Classical architectural styles. There is no reason to not believe the possibility of modern architecture to represent the continuity of time. Permanence still is a feature of architecture, not limited to the traditional language of architecture, despite the increasing emphasis on the contemporaneity of architecture and the decreasing lifespan of architectural objects. We even might be critical of this language, particularly after the concern of Frampton and Aureli, since the classical style architecture has become an economical means in the hands of developers, and is often used only to offer a nice 'view', covering heavy programs of mass consumption that are as temporal as ever. The question might even be such 'fake' Classical façades does not do harm to the idea of the *longue duree*. We will come back to this issue, but this already shows how the term *longue duree* can be understood in significantly different ways. The quote of Arendt, that was put forward by Krier, in my opinion does not support his plea per se. It certainly emphasizes the importance of the *longue duree* for the public realm ('If the world has to contain a public realm...'), but does not say anything about current assignments, and how these should relate (both structurally and formally) to the existing structures, nor how they should look like. As is very well known, contrasting forms added to existing structures reveal the continuity of such an old structure even better than the existing structure alone (and renovated perfectly). New additions, new forms, new materials, in other words, can reveal the *longue duree* of the existing in very clear ways, and therefore help to offer experiences of permanence of the world. Moreover, such additions or new interventions not only link to the past, they also connect with the future, particularly through their new forms, materials, innovation.³⁰⁷

Moreover, to my mind, there should be another important aspect added, and that is the urge Arendt offers on the very shape each object needs to have: a shape of its own.³⁰⁸ By emphasizing this aspect – that everything has a shape of its own –, Arendt stresses the joint notions of appearance and recognition. Appearance and recognition belong together. What appears needs to be recognized, in order to contribute significantly to the world. If we stress this pair to the classical architectural style, we first might admit that here indeed every 'building' has its own shape. A town hall does not look like a house, a temple not like a bathhouse. Krier, in a couple of his drawings, urges how form became formless in modern architecture, where villa's and offices, town halls and theatres apparently looked the same. On the other hand, also Krier's proposals have a loose relationship

307.

cf. Beiner, 'Our Relationship to Architecture', where he writes: 'Can modern architecture be as effective as the centuries-old architecture of the most exemplary European cities in building a civic home, while simultaneously being true to itself as modern? Of course it can. But those responsible for such architecture (which in the final reckoning means all of us) *must be much more aware* of the civic purposes that are at stake here, and must come to an understanding of architecture as the deliberate expression of civic identity rather than as just serving purposes other than those that define us as citizens.'

308.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 173

309.
Baird, *The Space of Appearance*,
345, 339

310.
Ibid., 344; The Atlantis project
actually is one of the early projects
of Léon Krier. More recently Krier
emphasis even more strongly the
architectural language of the Classical
approach as the 'only' just way to
build the city. One might argue that
he has taken his approach more
seriously. His sketches are revealing
and often hilarious.

311.
Markell, 'Arendt's Work', 31-32

between program and form (note that the strongest relationship between these two pairs actually can be found in functionalism, where this relationship is emphasized through the formula Form follows Function). The classical city after all, which is his ultimate reference, is not just a matter of form. It is the interplay and interaction of form and program, of the scale of the urban and the scale of the single building, the façade as separating and connecting private to the public, the urban structure and the multiple elements cities consist of. In other words, it is not just the classical form that offers the required permanence to the public realm. It is the presence of 'shapes of their own' within a larger structure that is characterized by a series of thresholds, of tension between public and private, connection and disconnection. Streets and squares will not function as public spaces if there is only a thin façade that smoothly structures it, and that has no relationship at all with the spaces behind. Public space will become superfluous too, if there is no threshold that connects an interior-space and the exterior world. I therefore agree with George Baird when he describes the works of Léon Krier as quite ironic, specifically when the architecture purely relies on the 'iconographic power of the facade.'³⁰⁹ As Baird states, the Krier proposal, particularly that of the Atlantis project, but is even clearer in the building of Poundbury, which is planned on the very edge of Dorchester, seems to offer a resort, a space of withdrawal from the harsh light of the world. 'It is, after all, in the first instance a resort, not a quarter in any traditional sense', he writes of Krier's Atlantis project; 'It thereby places its author's increasingly historicists formal vocabulary at the service of a recreational consumerism that cannot be conclusively detached from the values of Baudrillard's Disneyland.'³¹⁰

For Arendt, as we've seen, the relationship between an object and its appearance is very direct. As Patchen Markell urges: 'In fact, Arendt goes one step further: she even suggests that the usefulness of an object and its appearance are not separate aspects of the object – as though an "appearance" were like a decorative façade, layered on top of but not deeply connected to an instrumental structure but inseparably related: "The standard by which a thing's excellence is judged," she says, "is never mere usefulness, as though an ugly table will fulfil the same function as a handsome one, but its adequacy or inadequacy to what it should look like." To attend to a thing's appearance, in other words, is not to turn away from but to enrich the question of what it's good for: usefulness is more than mere usefulness.'³¹¹

The importance of the *longue duree* of architecture, as its very contribution to the world, to my mind is beyond dispute. However, this idea of the *longue duree* certainly cannot be brought back to a particular style of architecture, as if the most appreciated of the public will survive the tides of use, taste, and renewal. As we have touched upon previously, the permanence of architecture, and with that the representation of time, is as much part of build environment of various cities, as well as in the knowledge that is inherent in architectural typologies. Moreover, the representation of time cannot be limited to the past only, buildings, drawings, models, and all other outcomes of architectural thinking immediately connect with the future.

However, architecture is not just the mediation in time, between generations, it also mediates in the present. It is able to engage people to a certain place too, as is argued by Rossi. Buildings offer special places in the community, particularly if they are outspoken, well-designed, welcoming and accessible. People are simply able to attach to buildings and sites. This of course is not a new viewpoint. The Canadian architectural theorist Alberto Pérez-Gómez for instance argues that

‘it was the architect’s job to make you feel at home in the city, to intensify your purpose and belonging, through the *institutions* that framed daily life. Indeed, this was the part of life that truly mattered, as it involved our social body, our being with others that reflected back a sense of purpose through our actions.’³¹² If there is matter that matters, architecture matters above all. It mediates between the individual and the world, the family and the political, the private and the public. Architecture determines the worldview and world-experience. ‘Architecture,’ Pérez-Gomez specifies later, ‘was responsible for circumscribing social life and establishing limits *within* which one could *place* oneself.’³¹³

312.
Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement, Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: MIT Press, 2016), 3 [emphasis is mine]

313.
Ibid., 3 [emphasis is mine]

6.4.5 *The Architectural Event*

When we look at the essential qualities of architecture in this respect, the second perspective we need to acknowledge is this aspect of establishing limits. By defining the limits, architecture intervenes with a certain ‘violence’ in the world and the earth. Architecture after all is a profession of discrimination. It erects walls in order to distinguish – distinguish between the outer ends that I mentioned above: the here and the there. This of course is also a distinction between private property and public property, or between different spaces in public, or to distinguish between space in the private realm. It is the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, between spaces that are shaped to house a particular function and spaces that are left for collective and plural use and occupation. Architectural intervention thus makes distinctions in space. Distinctions that are sharp or weak, between public and private, of within the public and the private. This means that by architectural interventions there is not just ‘the public’ and ‘the private’, but a range public and private spaces. Often, the distinction between public and private is urged as a ‘binary’ code, as Arendt does. One term offers what the other lacks, and vice versa – and a sharp line is imagined between both entities. That is, as I have argued in the former chapter, is not true – the boundary is way more blurred. There definitely is a pivotal moment of an edge that is seen as private and what certainly is public, but as also is clear, it is not just a matter of black and white. Some spaces are more private than others, also some spaces are more public than others. The public-private distinction, in other words, is a continuum: the edges are blurred, and most spaces have public and private aspects. Architectural interventions create differences within these spheres as well, not only between these realms. However, that is not what should be urged at this point. As we will see, also Arendt defines a ‘space’ in-between: the threshold. This threshold, that I will discuss in a moment, actually articulates the tension between the different entities on both sides of the boundary. It suggests that spaces inherit certain aspects and qualities: distinct conditions, images, positions, and possibilities. What emerges here, as an image, is very relevant for the understanding of ‘what architecture does’. When I suggest that ‘what architecture does’ fundamentally can be described as making the distinction between two entities, that means that architecture actively creates conditions. The fundamental conditions are public and private, but often the distinctions made are not that oppositional, but can better be described as being more or less public or private, although sometimes the distinction needs to be as sharp as possible.

This reflection upon the very act of architecture renders the image of the simultaneity of space and frame at once. The architectural intervention is a spatial intervention, it distinguishes differences, creates edges, borders and thresholds, and with that conditions spaces. The intervention itself delineates and pulls a line. This line both separates and connects in the same gesture the distinct conditions

^{314.}
cf Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place, A Philosophical History* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1998), xiii

^{315.}
Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 15

^{316.}
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 194-195

on both sides. How this line is designed and materialized, which means, how it organizes both the separation and the connection physically belongs to the very core of architecture. These interventions in space thus divides infinite space into several distinct (but often also connected) entities and/or enhancing specific conditions of (the) space(s). Architecture thus creates 'space', one could say, or probably better said: spaces. Often, as we have seen already previously, architecture is understood as unveiling place as opposed to space: identifiably places excavated out of infinite space.³¹⁴ But stated like this it is not completely true. It is not demarcating a place that can be identified, an enclosed court in a sea of infinite space. What happens outside that enclosed wall also changes of character and identity. The creation of one entity after all immediately also creates another as well. This 'sounds bizarre', Henri Lefebvre admits in his book *The Production of Space*.³¹⁵ We almost automatically hold it true that 'space' is prior to the intervention of place. It is important however, to be more precise here. Architecture is not the god-like creation of space out of the cosmos, infinite space, it is intervention in the earth and the world, to put it in Arendt's terms, in space that is already more or less identifiable, but not yet ready to be occupied. So what we actually mean by the statement that by interventions (in space) spaces are produced, it means that the conditions have been changed, which gives room to other activities, experiences, and is offered for occupation. This not only counts for only one side of the wall, the conditions of the other side change as well. In other words, and to bring it back to Arendt's perspective, the world itself changes by every intervention. Every line that is drawn, every wall erected, every roof lifted, adds to the world a changing condition, not only of the space enclosed or covered, both also of the spaces connected to it. This is even a matter of these architectural interventions that in the end do not create more or less enclosed and covered spaces, it is also true for the construction of monuments, obelisks and bridges. Once again, the sharpest distinction between particular distinctions is that between public and private. Architecture however also distinguishes within each realm. It differentiates the street from the square, the atrium in the shopping mall from the parking lot, and the private garden from the living room.

As touched upon previously, the capacity to discriminate, to limit and secure space and create room, Arendt understands as *pre-political* activity: 'Before men began to act, a definite space had to be secured and a structure built where all subsequent actions could take place, the space being the public realm of the *polis* and its structure the law; legislator and architect belonged in the same category.'³¹⁶ Arendt speaks here about the origins of the Greek *polis* (which differs from the Roman situation and reflection upon that, where law-making was part of the political life of the city-state). However, she thus argues that public spaces first need to be designed, which is the *work* of architects, and defined, which is the *work* of legislators, before political life can take place within it. The wall somehow is the physical articulation of the law: it literally stresses the boundaries of the law, to where the law is applicable. By this articulation, it creates united space differentiated from other spaces. We might state that the promise of architecture is in the making visible and tangible of united space – the very capacity of architecture is the make physical the virtual aspects beyond reality, that nevertheless affects the world extensively. By materializing these aspects, they also become accessible by human beings – that is, ready to discuss and to stress.

Arendt however argues that this design and definition was not object of discussion – it was just recognized as prerequisite for a meaningful appearance in action and speech. 'The wall originally was identified with this boundary line,

which in ancient times was still actual a space, a kind of no man's land between the private and the public, sheltering and protecting both realms while, at the same time, separating them from each other. The law of the *polis*, to be sure, transcended this ancient understanding from which, however, it retained its original spatial significance. ... It was quite literally a wall, without which there might have been an agglomeration of houses, a town (*asty*), but not a city, a political community. The wall-like law was sacred, but only the enclosure was political.³¹⁷ This intriguing perspective thus unites wall-making and law-making on their very basis of defining the boundary line, that is important in order to define both the public and the private realm. The design and definition, by setting the limits, has a major impact on the debates and possibilities. Therefore, Arendt argues, 'it is true that Plato and Aristotle elevated law-making and city-building to the highest rank of political life.'³¹⁸ Interestingly enough, Arendt continues from here to discuss the Socratic school, which embraced these activities of legislation and foundation. 'To them, legislating and the execution of decisions by vote are the most legitimate political activities because in them "act like craftsman".' For Arendt this means actually a withdrawing from the intangibilities of action and speech, in favour of 'making (*poiēsis*), which they prefer because of its greater reliability.'³¹⁹ For Arendt this is once again a response to the unpredictability and uncontrollable aspects of action, trying to predict, control, and secure and the outcome of political processes.

Nevertheless, this example shows how intrinsically work and action are related, and that the edge between both categories is blurred, or even might be rendered as continuous. Architecture in the end might be focussed on the making, but a huge part of the profession is less tangible. I will discuss this in the next chapter, when I will focus on the more intangible aspects of architecture and particularly on the role of the designer. At this point, however, it is good to know that architecture of course is about making, about constructing building, but that it also is about taking initiatives and launching proposals, which we might parallel with action and speech. At least, these aspects of the architectural profession are accompanied with action and speech.

However, Arendt once had urged the writings of Karl Jaspers as 'spatial' and therefore 'political'. To think spatially, she argued, is to think politically. Not because it is concerned by a specific site, space, or (political) program, but because it is bound to the *world* and the people in it.³²⁰ Of course, the spatial in Jaspers writings, as well as in her own writings, cannot be brought back to the architectural matter of space and place, it nevertheless urges the very spatiality that is bound to the world and the people in it. The human being is a spatial being, bound to space and place. Intervention in space, spaces created for inhibition, therefore need to be politically urged. Architecture, by definition, therefore needs to be stressed politically, in all events. This particularly is the case, since the architectural intervention in space is meant to create room for things to happen. Essentially architecture is a profession that not only constructs a place, but also creates room to be left open for occupation and appropriation, or to state with the formidable title of one of the books of the Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger: to create space and to leave room.³²¹

In a more precise way, this also is what the philosopher Edward Casey puts forward as essential to architecture, based on a close reading of the works of the French architect Bernard Tschumi, who designed the *Parc de La Vilette* in Paris that I extensively investigated in a previous chapter. Tschumi himself has often described his architecture as 'events', more a happening than a thing.³²² Casey

317.
Ibid., 63-64

318.
Ibid., 195

319.
Ibid., 195

320.
Hannah Arendt, 'Karl Jaspers, A Laudatio', in: Hannah Arendt, *Man in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 79

321.
Herman Hertzberger, *Ruimte maken, Ruimte laten* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 1996)

322.
Walker, *Tschumi on Architecture*, 59

323.

Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 313
[emphasis in original]

324.

Roger Scruton, 'Public Space and the Classical Vernacular', in: Nathan Glazer and Mark Lilla (eds.), *The Public Face of Architecture, Civic Culture and Public Space* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 16

325.

Robert Venturi, *Comeplexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 86

326.

cf. Georg Simmel, 'Bridge and Door' in: *Theory, Culture & Society*, 11:5-10, 1994

327.

Bart Verschaffel, 'Publiek/Privaat: Het krachtverlies van een metafoor', in: Bart Verschaffel, *Van Hermes en Hestia, Teksten over architectuur* (Gent: A&S/Books, 2006), 125

then writes: 'In the case of architecture an event is not only something that takes place (*a lieu*); it also gives place (*donne lieu*), gives room for things to happen.'³²³ Tschumi himself urged his statement by arguing that architecture is as much about the space as about the events that take place in that very space. Having that quote in mind, Casey continues by stressing the dynamics of events: there is always movement at stake in the 'events' that happen in space.

The American architect Robert Venturi, although stressed differently, also argued that the passage is the architectural event, not of architecture itself. As a response to modern architectural approaches, which can be characterized by the slogan 'form follows function', and therefore by a design-approach that ideally works from the inside outwards, he urges the designer to work in both directions. In modern architecture the ideal was a smooth conversion from outside to inside and vice versa, which was often symbolized by huge glass walls and the use of exterior materials in the interior. Venturi questions this ideal of smoothness by stressing the tension that emerge by erecting a wall, by making a division, and by creating different conditions. The outer space, the public façade, as one can argue obviously, needs another architectural treatment than the intimate space of a home on the other side of the wall. The requirements that the interior-space request from the 'wall' after all are in most cases of a very different order than the requirements requested by the space on the other side. As the philosopher Roger Scruton argues: 'the boundaries of the private [realm] ... consist in shelter and protection, and in the intimate vigilance of inner walls. The inner walls of a house are the most important sign of the domestic life that takes place in it. The color scheme, pictures, and ornaments tell us how the occupant perceives the boundaries of the family. For some, these boundaries are open into another, larger world. For others, they provide a mirror, which points always inward, the security of home.'³²⁴ Venturi thus rightly urges the different conditions of both sides of the wall, which of course fit in his ideal of an architecture that is complex and that even gives place to contradictions, when he pushes forward the argument on designing in both directions.

'Designing from the outside in, as well as the inside out, create necessary tensions, which help make architecture. Since the inside is different from the outside, the wall – the point of change – becomes an architectural event. Architecture occurs at the meeting of interior and exterior forces of use and space. These interior and environmental forces are both general and particular, generic and circumstantial. Architecture as the wall between the inside and the outside becomes the spatial record of this resolution and its drama.'³²⁵

The wall is a moment of change. The very materiality and spatiality of the wall mediates between the outside and the inside, whereas the particular architecture articulates the moment of distinction, passage, and tension. We might argue that beyond the wall, it is the door, the window, the threshold that go beyond that event.³²⁶ After all, the designing of architecture is more than just giving form to space or material, it is making divisions between spaces and giving place, structure, and order to things. Of course, it is only by means of that division – the wall – that space, the place, is created, with a spatial condition of its own.³²⁷ But if it is the wall that unites within itself the tension between the private and the public, between indoors and outdoors, this only really becomes visible in the window, and felt in the door. There, on the threshold and in the movement of the

door, and by the very passage of the threshold, the essence of the entire architectural construction is concentrated. Not only the boundary is penetrated here, but it also becomes accessible and can be crossed. This is where the conditions of indoors and outdoors collide, without there being any material to intercept that collision. The threshold, in other words, is the articulation of the capacity of objects to connect, whereas the wall is the articulation of separation. Together they might articulate the essence of architecture: to connect and separate at once. This phrase certainly reminds us of the very essence of the world, in Arendt's perspective, which also has the capacity to connect and separate at once. Architecture here thus comes to the fore as the very intervention in the world that is able to enhance that capacity of the world (although also the flipside is completely clear too: it also can disturb the capacity of the world to connect and to separate). However, we now also have gained the insight of another perspective of Arendt, the very space of appearance. It requires, we can state, a 'space', a movement through that space, to appear. This threshold-space in-between the one condition (of withdrawal) and the other (of appearance) necessary is a tangible space, a liminal space in-between. It is this tangibility of the liminal space that generates the alteration from one condition to another, as well making this alteration tangible. It is through such a passage of a threshold-space that Arendt's appearance amongst peers gets tangibility. As previously argued: the safety and security of the private and the blinding light of the public need each other, and they are inseparably connected by the door and the threshold. This is not only an architectural image, but it is the very architectural moment beyond the space of appearance. The space of appearance requires articulation of the particular conditions, which is the very chance of architectural intervention. Architecture is able to articulate the very moment of transition, and with that it is able to urge awareness of this moment, of appearance in public.

This address of the wall as a moment of change, a matter of space, time and tension, reminds us of the description of Arendt of the wall that circumscribed the public realm in the polis, as already quoted previously. Arendt of course urges the public face of that wall, since this exterior is important for the city. However, its first function was to demarcate the private, to hide the interior of the private realm, which has no public significance. She then writes that the exterior

'appears in the realm of the city through the boundaries between one household and the other. The wall originally was identified with this boundary line, which in ancient times was still actual a space, a kind of no man's land between the private and the public, sheltering and protecting both realms while, at the same time, separating them from each other.'³²⁸

Also in this perspective, the moment of passage is a moment of space and time: the threshold is urged as in-between, as a no-mans-land: it therefore neither belongs to the public or private. Transgressing the boundary, we might think, was literally an event, a passage from the public to the private, or an appearance from the private into the public. In his reflections on the threshold, Dutch philosopher Cornelis Verhoeven discusses the Roman word for threshold, 'limen'. According to him, 'sublimis', which means 'exalted', derives from 'super limen' and thus has a connection with the step over the threshold.³²⁹ 'Sublime' is what the experience of stepping over the threshold might be, moving from the private domain, from the very own spot in the world, and stepping into the public world, as well as coming home. Sublime is the experience beyond the edge. The threshold and the door

328. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 63-64

329. Cornelis Verhoeven, 'Stilstaan bij de drempel', in: Jacques De Vischer (ed.), *Over de drempel, van architectonisch minimum tot symbolisch maximum* (Best/Leuven: Uitgeverij Damon/Kritak, 1998), 20

330.

On the ambiguity of boundaries in the architecture of Loos, see Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity, Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge (Mass)/London: MIT Press, 1994), 233-281; Baird, *The Space of Appearance*, 35; Heijnen, *Architectuur en kritiek van de moderniteit*, 111

331.

John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1994), 9

symbolize this – they give it space, articulate the transition and tension. A line that becomes space.

It is remarkable how close Arendt's reflections on the private domain are to Adolf Loos's ideas about living in the modern metropolis (around 1900). The Viennese architect emphasizes the boundary between public and private, and turns it into a feature, to shield the interior from public life. The dividing line between public and private, between inside and outside, is once again sacred. The house offers a platform and an enclosure to accommodate the vicissitudes of family life. Expressionless and inaccessible, the house defends itself against the constant flux and transience of public life. At the same time, Loos plays a complex game with this boundary, by placing the most intimate spaces directly behind the façade and by offering a view of the entrance, while blocking the outside view in other, less intimate spaces.³³⁰

However, threshold spaces are not only to be found at the façade, at one's doorstep, but actually also can be found within the sphere of the city. In the modern city, however, as J.B. Jackson has argued, the threshold is fading away, along with the the 'rites of passage' that accompanied once these moments of passage. In his critique on the modern design of cities, which aim towards smoothness and equality, he urges the importance of differences:

'But the real consequence of the rebuilding of our cities is not architectural: it is the emphasis on accessibility, the gradual but total destruction of the distinction between the life of the street and the life lived behind the façade. What has taken place is the elimination of those immemorial rites of passage that were once the hallmarks of our culture. Those architectural monuments – the church, the university, the office or place of work, the public building, the restricted residential area, all once characterized by a degree of isolation and internal privacy, are now wide open and accessible to the street. The elimination of rites of passage started modestly enough with the drive-in business. Then the territory became a parking lot; the church became a building open to all, offering instant salvation; the library let us into the stacks; the public building welcomed us with consumer-friendly decorations; the supermarket did away with clerks; the hospital let us wander at will. The doorman, the receptionist, the head waiter, the host all vanished, and the only rite of passage that survived was the insertion of a magnetized credit card.'³³¹

A certain urge also comes to the fore in the intriguing study *Een Drempelwereld* Dutch philosopher René Boomkens, although this perspective might be typified as a bit more hopeful. Boomkens urges the importance of the threshold, particularly as an ambivalent space between the public and the private. Against the background of a city and landscape that challenges both the public and the private realm, the in-between space offers the openness for 'a collection of urban practices'. These practices that Boomkens urge as important for public life, might very well consist of the marginal practices in front of garages, on parking lots, or at street-sides, alike those that Margaret Crawford has described in her article 'Everyday Urbanism'. These are not the regular and official 'rituals', that often are described as the public life. This not immediately seems to be the 'appearance in action and speech', nor as the 'exchange of ideas', but it is these practices that offer the possibility of appearance and of exchange. It is these practices that thicken our understanding of the world, by their very visibility of plurality and temporality. As Crawford writes, the marginal spaces that are occupied by 'street

vendors and garage sales, in the often illegal demarcation of specific uses, in temporal events, and so on, ... continuously change meaning. [They] are continuously reorganized and reinterpreted by users (obviously even the seasons does affect this).³³² Although, Crawford argues, these spaces often are perceived in distraction, and therefore do not easily reveal their meaning for public life, their meaning however unfolds through the repetitious acts of everyday life. The spaces are not symbolically representative, neither are they architecturally outspoken or articulated – it is nevertheless these marginal, or threshold spaces, that offer meaning and diversity to the contemporary city.³³³ As Boomkens argues: ‘The threshold space is the domain where the modern experience can actually take place as an open and unpredictable connection between the modern individual’s free development and his individual identity’s incorporation into an open network of meaningful collective contexts, the mass culture of the urban public domain. Modern experience depends on the survival of the association between and the relative autonomy of the private and the public sphere. It will be doomed if one of them tips the scales.’³³⁴

6.4.6 To Feel Out Space

As we have defined the wall and thresholds as architectural events par excellence, we nevertheless might define the purpose of architecture as the spaces and places that are created by these events. Walls, floors, roofs, terraces, windows, doors, stairs, balconies – all these architectural elements are contributing towards a certain demarcation of edges and boundaries that by their very intervention create different possibilities. The more defined the space is, the more it can be controlled in form, in climate, in sphere, in appearance, and, to some degree, in use. Thus, the more defined space is, the more it is controlled ‘top-down’. Vice versa this also seems reasonable: the more ambiguous spaces are (less clearly defined and controlled), the more open they are for occupation and appropriation by the users. However, to formulate ‘space’ as the purpose of architecture has not been common in architectural theory until the 19th century. Of course, previously the aim of architecture was to create space too, but space itself was seen as void, somehow the residue of the architectural treatment of the outer walls. The architectural historian Adrian Forty in his excellent book *Words and Buildings*, calls the first approach to ‘space’ in architecture, that originally comes up with the attempt of the German architect Gottfried Semper.³³⁵ Semper is the first to introduce the term ‘space’ in the field of architecture during the 1890s. This notion, like the notion of ‘time’ as well, thus is intimately connected with the development of modernism, as a tool to distinguish the modern from the traditional or classical approaches.³³⁶ Semper suggest that the material in architecture, the walls, the facades, the floor, the ceiling, is secondary to space. ‘The wall,’ he wrote, ‘is that architectural element that formally represents and makes visible the *enclosed space*.’³³⁷ Adrian Forty shows that the notion Semper and his contemporaries actually discuss as ‘enclosed space’ is the German word ‘Raum’, the term that also is stressed by Martin Heidegger as we’ve touched upon. In the German language, however, ‘Raum’ not only signifies a material enclosure but also describes a philosophical category, a property of the mind.³³⁸ Through the translation of ‘Raum’ into the English ‘space’, Forty suggests, certain ambiguity in the everyday usage of the term in the field was roused. However, as Forty states, Semper might depend upon the theory of aesthetics of the philosopher Hegel, since ‘enclosed space’ in Hegel’s theory was a matter of functionality, and therefore distinct from the ability of aesthetics and idea-bearing, specifically in architecture.³³⁹ Hegel thus suggests

332. Margaret Crawford, ‘Everyday Urbanism’, in: Philipp Oswalt, Klaus Overmeyer, Philipp Misselwitz (eds.), *Urban Catalysts, The Power of Temporary Use* (Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2013), 152

333. *Ibid.*, 152

334. René Boomkens, *Een drempelwereld, Moderne ervaring en stedelijke openbaarheid* (Rotterdam: NAI Uitgeverij, 1998), 430

335. Camillo Sitte for instance Discusses Semper’s (not executed) idea for the ‘Zwinger’ in Dresden extensively in his *City Planning according to Artistic Principles* (in: George R. Collins and Christiane Crasemann Collins, Camillo Sitte, *The Birth of Modern City Planning* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc., 1986), 254-256). These ideas already earlier he explored, as for instance in an article that he published in the *Neuws Wiener Tagblatt* in 1885, entitled ‘Gottfried Semper’s ideen über Städtanlagen’. He even had published an obituary commemorating the death of Semper in 1879 in the *Salzburger Zeitung*. The writings of Semper are recently republished: Camillo Sitte, *Schriften zu Städtebau und Architektur. Camillo Sitte Gesamtausgabe, Band 2* (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2010). These articles are found respectively pp.220-224, and 181-184

336. Explicitly so in the reading of Siegfried Giedion in the reading and advocating of modern architecture: *Space, Time and Architecture, The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 2008) in itself opposed by titles like Richard Weston’s *Materials, Form and Architecture* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2008)

337. Forty, *Words and Buildings*, 257

338. *Ibid.*, 256

339. *Ibid.*, 257

340.
Quoted via Ibid., 259

341.
Quoted via Ibid., 261

342.
Bruno Zevi, *Architecture as Space, How to Look at Architecture* (New York: Horizon Press, 1957), 22; Zevi of course does not mean that the viewer of Painting and Sculpture is not bodily affected by the artwork. In the case of modern art, and specifically if thought about constructions, installations, and events, on the work of for instance James Turrell, Richard Serra, Olafur Eliasson, amongst many others. Their work is able to evoke sensible experiences. Artworks, even those in 2 dimensions, also establish a relationship between space and the body, but what lacks, and of course that is what Zevi means, is the body inhabiting space, that is the real difference.

343.
Compare to Sitte, who in his introduction also emphasizes the relationship between 'enclosed space' and the human body: 'Anyone who has enjoyed the charms of an ancient city would hardly disagree with this idea of the strong influence of physical setting on the human soul.' Sitte, *City Planning according to its Artistic Principles*, 141

344.
Zevi, *Architecture as Space*, 27

345.
Which of course opposes the famous phrase of the Viennese architect Adolf Loos the very moment he describes a tomb: 'That is architecture.' Interestingly enough, both Loos and Zevi understand 'architecture' as the making of enclosed space, *Raum*

that material, and it's structure, composition, textures, it's beauty represents ideas, but space in itself lacks the ability to be representative. When Semper thus suggests that 'space' is the future of architecture, he immediately but implicitly questions the role of representation in architecture. As Forty shows, these aspects are addressed in different lines – and as we will see, in both of these lines the bodily experience of space is central too – that emerges from the German debate at the closing of the 19th century as well. First is a perspective that is derived from Immanuel Kant's *The Critique of Pure Reason* in which he emphasized space, indeed, as a completely philosophical category, a capacity of the mind. This idea is propelled in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, who defines space as a 'force field generated by the dynamism of bodily movement'³⁴⁰ The third line of approach actually starts with the philosopher Theodor Lipps, who emphasize space as being a dematerialized object. 'The beauty of spatial forms is my ability to live out an ideal sense of free movement in it.'³⁴¹

This idea of space as 'enclosure' is often is taken as the model for architecture, as for instance in influential book *Architecture as Space* of the Italian historian Bruno Zevi. Zevi emphasizes architecture as distinct from other professions and cultural fields specifically because of its spatiality. Of course, other cultural fields do work in three dimensions, but only architecture, he suggests, dwells upon the relationship of the three dimensions with the human body. 'Painting functions in two dimensions,' he writes, 'even if it can suggest three or four. Sculpture works in three dimensions, but man remains apart, looking on from the outside. Architecture, however, is like a great hollowed-out sculpture which man enters and apprehends by moving about within it.'³⁴² In other words, what architecture distinguishes from other fields is *inhabitation* of space and sculpture. It offers a different object-subject relationship, which acknowledges this occupation and inhabitation as a bodily experience of space. Zevi strongly emphasizes that this experience is a bodily experience – space only can be grasped, and architecture only can be understood through this experience of the body. Space influences the bodily senses, architecture thus only reveals through sum of our sensorial experiences.³⁴³

Zevi here actually opposes a tradition of architectural history that focuses on the material and compositional aspects of architecture, but in the meantime overlooks its very spatiality – all these approaches that classify the structure, the order, the composition, the façade, the decoration – as well as theorists judging architecture from fields like sociology, philosophy, politics and so on, but also in the meantime overlooking the very specific character of architecture, lacking to understand that architecture develops and communicates knowledge through projects in time. Zevi is quick to state that the value of architecture is not limited to space *per se*, but indeed additionally can be judged through fields of economics, social sciences, technics, and even approached through ethics, functionality, and decorative arts. His aim, nevertheless, is that every judgement of architecture specifically should acknowledge its spatiality, specifically as 'interior space', he adds. The bodily experience, in this respect, thus means 'moving about within the building.'³⁴⁴ He therefore remarkably but very explicitly excludes from the domain of architecture these forms of constructions that do not enclose spaces: the obelisk, the monument, and the bridge,³⁴⁵ as well as the images of buildings that precedes the building-process, the models and sketches, drawings and renderings, that he only renders as representations of architecture, not being architecture itself. The first category we had at hand previously, in discussing the role of remembrance as a particular aspect of the arts, which also has a strong

relationship with works that can be counted as architectural. On the second I will come back to in the next chapter, since these products of architectural work somehow represent the more intangible period of architectural processes, which find their parallel in action and speech. What is, however, the importance of Zevi's limitation of architecture to enclosed space, is his argument that we only can talk about architecture in the sense of the *experience* of space, which should be materialized since it is in no other way can be communicated, showed, and revealed. He admits that this interior-space, to which he limits architecture, not exclusively is the interior of a building. It can very well be urban space as well. 'The experience of space ... has its extension in the city, in the streets, squares, alleys and parks, in the playgrounds and in the gardens, wherever man has defined or limited a *void* and so has created an enclosed space.'³⁴⁶ Interior space thus, in Zevi's vocabulary, means enclosed space.

However, his statement on the representation of architecture, which can never reveal the qualities of the 'real' architectural spaces it represents, brings him close to both Adolf Loos, Steen Eiler Rasmussen, as well as our contemporaries like Alberto Pérez-Gómez, Steven Holl and Juhani Pallasmaa, who all argue in different words that architecture will only reveal in movement, at the moment of entering a space, moving from one condition to the other. This perspective actually, in all moment in time, critiques a certain omnipresent approach to architecture, and particular architectural representation, that limits it to the realm of visible perception. Architecture, as we can recognize today, often is represented by sublime photos or renderings, often at twilight, when the sky has a particular luminosity, that is reflected in the building. The lights are on, the building shines out in its immediate surroundings. The photographer or those who were setting up the render, have found the perfect spots around the building to enlighten the particularities and the genius of the design. Such a series of images address the building as a whole, their aim is to articulate the particular shapes of exterior and interior. However, these images don't necessarily represent how the building is experienced in reality.³⁴⁷ Not only, since buildings are regularly walked past in distraction, as we have seen in the previous chapter, but also the experience of building is always limited to particular parts of it. We might see one façade, but don't see the other three. We might see it from the street, but not in bird's eye perspective. We might see the entrance hall, the atrium, a corridor and an office space, but we don't see these spaces in connection to the other levels or wings of the building, the board room, the canteen, etc. . Our everyday experience of the built environment is, if not distracted, than certainly fragmented. Nevertheless, this fragmented and distracted experience is not limited to the visual.

The architectural critic Mark Wigley, in an issue of the Berlin based journal *Daidalos* dedicated to the theme 'atmosphere' has urged bodily experiences as the 'central objective of the architect'.³⁴⁸ Atmosphere is the term that comprises the different perceptive qualities of a space. However, atmosphere in itself is a problematic issue, Wigley admits: it entails by definition a certain ambiguity. The experience of a particular atmosphere is personal: the experience seems to differ from person to person. It therefore is difficult to capture, and particularly impossible to design. Experiences until a certain level can be designed, as the engineers behind theme parks and their 'event-architecture' show. This nevertheless is not so much the perspective Wigley has in mind, when he urges the profession to revisit this term. Indeed, atmosphere until that moment somehow was neglected in the debates on architecture and its merits. It nevertheless also is a recurring topic: *Stimmung* has been urged in Romanticism, it has been

346.
Zevi, *Architecture as Space*, 29

347.
cf. Goodman, 'How Buildings Mean', 650

348.
Mark Wigley, 'Architecture of Atmosphere', in: *Constructing Atmospheres: Daidalos*, no. 68, (Berlin: 1998)

349.

In his book *The Sympathy of Things* the Dutch architect Lars Spuybroek also stresses the lack of 'experience' in architecture, through the limitation of architecture to the visual aspects. He stresses experience mostly as a quality of aesthetics, which he, with references to amongst others, John Ruskin wants to re-introduce in architecture. His architectural aim is to develop a certain renewed gothic understanding in architecture, where decoration and structure merge, where the ribs of a column can transform in the girder of the arch. 'We reached a point where the body and its experience became totally irrelevant,' he writes, 'merely an experience to personally "have", like a dirty secret. We have become completely alienated from the aesthetic in its original meaning, which simply concerns the feelings we have in the presence of designed things, be they paintings or teapots. There is no hope for a little repair work being enough. So much has been destroyed and neglected that we will have to reconstruct a whole edifice and learn to speak a language nobody understands anymore, and simply keep on speaking it until we are heard.' Lars Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things, Ruskin and the Ecology of Design* (Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/NAI Publishers, 2011), 145-146

350.

Juhani Pallasmaa, 'Toward Architecture of Humility, On the Value of Experience', in: Willima S. Saunders (ed.), *Judging Architectural Value, A Harvard Design Magazine Reader* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 99

351.

Gernot Böhme, 'Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence in Space', in: Klaske Havik, Gus Tielens, and Hans Teerds, (eds.), *Building Atmosphere, OASE #91* (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2013), 27

352.

Ibid., 27

353.

Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement, Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: MIT Press, 2016), 18

354.

Pallasmaa, 'Architecture of the Seven Senses', 34

part of the legacy of Adolf Loos, it was addressed by the Danish architect Steen Eiler Rasmussen in the seventies, and at the end of the nineties, at the climax of conceptual architecture, it emerges again as a critical note to the then current objective of architecture.

Today the emphasis on atmosphere is a response to the omnipresent stress on the visual aspects of architecture. As touched upon before, the aesthetic approach that crowds the profession leads to an emphasis on the appearance of the building, which comes to the fore in the nice renderings and photographs that are used to present buildings.³⁴⁹ Pallasmaa argues that the limitation of architecture to a graspable image is also limiting the understanding of architecture. 'We become voyeurs obsessed with visuality, blind not only to architecture's social reality but also to its functional, economic, and technological realities, which inevitably determine the design of buildings and cities. Our detachment from experiential sensory reality maroons us in theoretical, intellectual, and conceptual realms.'³⁵⁰

In an issue of the magazine *OASE* on the theme of atmosphere, 15 years after the publication of *Daidalos*, the German philosopher Gernot Böhme – who had also contributed to the *Daidalos*-publication previously – defined atmosphere as 'the space of mindful physical presence into which one enters or finds oneself, owing to the type of experience involved.'³⁵¹ He added that the relationship between space and the experience of space is particularly loose. 'Sensitivity', he writes, 'hinges on the sense one has of the space where one is. Needless to say, space is not just my sense of it, namely the mood. The space also has an objective constitution and much of what belongs to it is not part of my sensitivity. And likewise how I feel is not only defined by my sensing where I am, as my own mood always comes into play, and my body constantly brings forth feelings that shape my condition.'³⁵² However, since the atmosphere if the space affects the body and mind, it is important to take atmosphere seriously – even if it cannot be controlled nor prescribed.

The impressive book *Attunement* of the Canadian theorist Alberto Pérez-Gómez, who we already touched upon, also takes this notion of atmosphere, in order to urge the relationship between architecture, location in the world and its inhabitants. He adds to what already has been described that atmosphere is neither objective nor totally subjective.³⁵³ It's there, and it evokes bodily sensations, while how these sensations come together has a close relationship with previous experiences of the human being at hand. 'The authenticity of architectural experience,' Pallasmaa writes, 'is grounded in the tectonic language of building and the comprehensibility of the act of construction to the senses, We behold, touch, listen and measure the world with our entire bodily existence, and the experiential world is organized and articulated around the center of the body.'³⁵⁴ Atmosphere indeed is perceived in sensible ways, but this perception is evoked by the tectonic language of the building – that is by the strong relationship between the spatial, material, constructional, structural and tactile qualities. In other words, how all the different aspects of architecture come together and form a whole. In the experience of space, it is the experience of a totality, where colour and tactile aspects of the used materials work together with the spatial structure and the spatial composition.

Spaces certainly evoke particular atmospheres and images to the inhabitants and users. These images are particularly grasped and explored in literature or film, where the atmosphere of a room is used to construct the right *mood* for events

that (are going to) happen. As Klaske Havik writes in her startling book *Urban Literacy* ‘Literary writers prove to be able to *read* places and spaces, cities and landscapes at different levels. Seen from the point of view of literary characters with their own memories and emotions, space in literature is almost by definition “lived” space.’³⁵⁵ These atmospheres, as we all know, are momentary: the same space in a movie is different when the film-music swells, as do the voices, the breath of person, and so on, or if darkness falls, and only a few lights are turned on. Coming home in darkness offers a different experience than coming home in a totally enlightened entrance hall. We thus might argue there is no law-of-perception: this architectural tectonics evoke an experience that is both ambiguous and instable, strongly related to the matter of time and temporalities.³⁵⁶ The Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, in whose work the theme of atmosphere is explicitly stressed, argues that the human capacity to respond to atmosphere works straight away. ‘We are capable,’ he writes in his book *Atmospheres*, ‘of immediate appreciation, of a spontaneous emotional response, of rejecting things in a flash.’³⁵⁷ Zumthor thus somehow locates the receptive knowledge within the human body, a certain instinct that is needed to survive. This somehow corresponds to how Juhani Pallasmaa urges the human body as a receptor of knowledge – and if it functions well, also of responses. ‘We are connected with the world through our senses,’ he writes. ‘The sense are not merely passive receptors of stimuli, and the body is not only a point of viewing the world from a central perspective. Neither is the head the sole locus of cognitive thinking, as our sense and entire bodily being directly structure, produce and store silent existential knowledge. The human body is a knowing entity.’³⁵⁸ As is clear in Zumthor’s stress of the immediate capacity of the human body to respond to differences, as enhanced through the remark of Pallasmaa on the body as a knowing entity, we might argue that atmosphere always presupposes a certain motion by a human body. Even sitting in a room, the experience of that very space is in movement, before one sits, after all, one has entered the room, has walked to that chair, and has been seated. But even from that very moment on, motion is involved: feeling our heart beating, blinking our eyes, putting our hand on the elbow-rest, turning the page of a book, a conversation that goes on. And in the meantime, light and temperature slightly change, particularly if there is a direct connection with other spaces and the world outside. Our body again and again adapts to the change in atmosphere – in short how the architectural tectonics appear to us.

However, the moment atmosphere reveals itself most strongly is the very moment of crossing a threshold. This moment of transition, as I called it previously, is the transition from one sphere into another, the appearance in public or the coming home at home. Such a passage is not a static moment, everything changes, often even the mood. The human being appears in the world, amongst peers, or one discloses himself from the world, and comes home amongst the familiar persons and things. This is a moment of movement, from one sphere into another, across thresholds. Such an ‘entrance’ into the world or vice versa is not just a mental moment of transition between our private and public lives, it is also something more basic: a physical and physiological moment of transition. Imagine that very moment of entering the home: Our eyes have to blink momentarily; the sound changes, as do the smells. Still holding the doorknob in one hand, we reach for the light switch, look for the mail, take off a jacket, put away a bag. All of our senses are alert. Earlier experiences, memories stored in our bodies, come to the fore. The distinctive aspect in this description of bodily experience of space and transition, of limits and movement is the intermediate relationship of specifically physical and concrete aspects with other

355. Klaske Havik, *Urban Literacy, Reading and Writing Architecture* (Rotterdam: nai 010 Publishers, 2014), 23 [emphasis in original]

356. Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement*, 18

357. Peter Zumthor, *Atmospheres* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2006), 13

358. Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand*, 13

359.
McCarter and Pallasmaa, *Under-
standing Architecture*, 14

360.
Ibid., 15

361.
Steven Holl, 'Questions of Perception,
Phenomenology of Architecture', in:
Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa, and
Alberto, Pérez-Gómez, *Questions of
Perception, Phenomenology of Archi-
tecture* (Tokyo/San Francisco: A+U
Publishing Co. Ltd./William Stout
Publishers, 2006), 40

362.
Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement*, 20

363.
Holl, 'Questions of Perception', 41

364.
Ibid., 41

intangible aspects that are virtually aroused. 'As we enter an architectural space,' McCarter and Pallasmaa write, 'an immediate unconscious projection, identification and exchange takes place; we occupy the space and the space settles in us. We grasp the space through our senses and we measure it with our bodies and movements. We project our body scheme, personal memories and meanings into the space; the space extends the experience of our bodies beyond our skin, and the physical space and our mental spaces fuse with each other.'³⁵⁹ We feel out the space, physically, physiologically and mentally. We take its measure and taste the atmosphere. In a single perception, the space impresses itself upon us, and reveals its reality. 'The sensory experience of space normally arises from visual boundaries, light and shadow, but also the echo of a space, as well as the haptic and olfactory qualities that contribute greatly to the experiences of monumentality or intimacy, harshness or affability, rejection or invitation.'³⁶⁰ The bodily experience of this form and formation of spaces, it is the experience of the space at once.

Also the American architect Steven Holl, who in his career shifted from a typological approach of architecture towards one concentrated on the sensorial experience of space, argues that 'architecture holds the power to inspire and transform our day-to-day existence. The everyday act of pressing a door handle and opening into a light-washed room can become profound when experienced through sensitized consciousness. To see, to feel these physicalities is to become the subject of the senses.'³⁶¹ Although the atmosphere of the space can be ambiguous and temporal, we might argue, the experience nevertheless can be lasting. Many people are reminded of certain happenings in spaces by simple things like a particular piece of music, a certain smell, or even a certain touch. This lasting presence of the experience of atmosphere, Pérez-Gómez argues, only will happen if form and material – architectural tectonics – articulate the appropriate intention of that very space.³⁶² Also Holl underlines the close relationship between architecture as building, that is: as distinct from the arts, from a purely aesthetic approach, and the staying power of architectural atmosphere. He first argues that 'architecture, more fully than other art forms, engages the immediacy of our sensory perceptions. The passage of time; light, shadow and transparency; color phenomena, texture, materials and detail all participate in the complete experience of architecture.'³⁶³ He then also distinguishes architecture from natural sciences. 'Questions of architectural perception,' he continues, 'underlie questions of intention. The "intentionality" sets architecture apart from a pure phenomenology that is manifest for the natural sciences. Whatever the perception of a built work – whether it be troubling, intriguing, or banal – the mental energy which produced it is ultimately deficient unless intent is articulated.'³⁶⁴

The Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, in his will to capture the intangibilities of atmosphere in the previously mentioned book, urges a few aspects that are important in architectural design, which somehow can be summarized as a thoughtful approach to space, structure, material and the tactility of the material. He urges issues such as sound and smell, temperature and the surroundings, but also a certain tension between interior and exterior, between composure and seduction, differences in intimacy, and particularly also how the light falls. In his practice, he actually urges a different way of design – his employees, as is described in the extensive interview that is published in the *OASE* issue on Atmosphere, need to un-learn everything learned in architecture schools: that is, to rationally discuss design interventions. 'I think it is a pity that the education of architects is so academic and based on rhetoric: in many cases, it does not connect

to the real work. Architects coming from the university make drawings, but they don't really know what they are doing. They know how it looks in reality, how it will be, how it sounds, and so forth. I think this is not good for the profession of architecture.³⁶⁵ Zumthor clearly believes that atmosphere only can be achieved, when the actual architectural design is evoked by intuition and a sensibility to the design itself. This approach today is exceptional. Modern architects try to objectify design-choices, even if they are trivial, they are presented by series of schemes where all decisions are granted a certain logic.³⁶⁶ Atmosphere, since it is ungraspable and partly subjective, has been a difficult phenomenon for modern architects, particularly since architectural schools urge students to rationalize and objectify their design processes.³⁶⁷

This quite recent debate in architecture on atmosphere somehow does remind us of the urgency Arendt ascribes to the sensible perception of the art work. A sensible perception, I would argue, always is spatial and, as I stressed, in motion. After all, it addresses not only sight, but also the other senses, which makes it a spatial experience. The motion-part is clearly important as somehow this comes to the fore when Arendt starts to address the activity of thinking, in what was meant to be a study on thinking, willing, and judging, *The Life of the Mind*, but this was not finished due to her death. As we have already seen, Arendt starts to embed the activity of thinking not in the world of ideas and theory, but in the tangible world, which is evoked by experiences. At this point Arendt follows the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, although she already previously, like in *The Human Condition*, argues that thinking needs to be evoked by the humble and stumble of the world. She understands the thinking capacity as evoked by things happening, in the midst of the world. To be engaged, she argued, to be involved in the hustle and bustle of the world, is the incentive of thinking. Thinking is not roused by grasping some sort of truth beyond the world, it is not setting up a (closed) theory, but is roused by the world itself, by actualities, and by everyday occurrences, but mostly by happenings that strike our view, breath and senses. Arendt in *The Life of the Mind* stresses the importance of the five senses. In order to set up her argument, Arendt reflects upon the famous statement of Descartes on the relationship between thinking, being and certainty. But where he finds certainty about the world in the activity of thinking itself, Arendt argues that it is our senses that deliver us this certainty. When our senses are touched all together and all at once, when we are thrilled in a kind of literal sense, all sensuous experiences resemble a sort of a sixth sense, which is the sense of the world, the sense of reality. In other words, we are not aware of the world by one or other theoretical leap, but that we are assured of the reality of the world by the combination of smell, taste, view, hearing and touch. The world becomes real to us through these senses, it lifts our confidence about the reality of the world. Of course, it is not only our single and singular experience that informs and assures us about the reality of the world. Once again Arendt places the single human being in the midst of the community. This is an important move – most architectural theorists urge the individual experience, but forget to bring that back to the world and its inhabitants. But this is an utterly important move, in order to get struck in to all the personal little things that pop up. We are assured when we experience the single object with our five senses (and although different experiences, we grasp it as one identity)

‘In a world of appearances, filled with error and semblance, reality is guaranteed by this three-fold commonness: the five senses, utterly different

365.

Klaske Havik and Gus Tielens, 'Concentrated Confidence, A Visit to Peter Zumthor', in: Klaske Havik, Gus Tielens and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Building Atmosphere, OASE #91* (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2013), 73-75

366.

This particularly is roused by the approach of OMA/Rem Koolhaas during the 90s and early 2000, and is adopted by former employees of this office, amongst others, particularly in the work of MVRDV, BIG, and REX. In their work, the diagram, or a series of the scheme, has become an indispensable part of the design-process, as well as of the communication of the project to both the client and others involved in the process of construction, as well as to the public at large. The importance of the diagram in the communication to the first group once was emphasized by Winy Maas during a lecture in Delft. He revealed that the working methods of MVRDV is that project is brought back to one conceptual drawing, a diagram, on which every party involved agrees. From there on, every design-decision is brought back to that diagram. In other words, the diagram is pivotal in each design-decision and discussion. Maas stated only to be satisfied when the commissioner not only agrees upon that diagram, but also is able to explain the building through the use of that 'simple' diagram. Delft, 18 February, 2016 – lecture on the design and construction of *De Markthal*, Rotterdam, as part of the series *Delft Lectures on Architectural Design*.

367.

Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement*, 18

368.
Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 50

369.
Pallasmaa, 'Architecture of the Seven Senses', 31

370.
Holl, 'Questions of Perception', 41

371.
Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement*, 30

372.
Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 20

from each other, have the same object in common; members of the same species have the context in common that endows every single object with its particular meaning; and all other sense-endowed beings, through perceiving this object from utterly different perspectives, agree on its identity. Out of this threefold commonness arises the *sensation* of reality.³⁶⁸

There it is: others should agree on the meaning and identity of the object that is experience. What is important at this point is not just that we only can assure us from reality if we are part of a larger community, it is also that the perspectives in the community are different: we are at different points, looking at the same object. Arendt elsewhere emphasizes the importance of a different standpoint, of differentiation. Plurality, she argues, is the heart of mankind, and thus our perspective of the same object is different. But only through the different perspectives, we can grasp the object, grasp reality.

This remark by Arendt urges us to broaden the discussion in architecture. Often, as can be clearly seen upon above, the perspective on atmosphere is drawn via the single body experiencing space. Arendt somehow only takes this single experience seriously if it is mirrored to the public experiences. The reality of the world, to which architecture as we might conclude by now, can contribute as no other object(s), only is assured if the single experience is emphasized in public. Pallasmaa argues for instance that the phenomenal perception of architecture makes us aware of our own solitude.³⁶⁹ Architecture definitely can do, but it will enrich this experience by also putting the human being, the visitor, the user, the inhabitant, back in the world. As Steven Holl states his agenda: 'the challenge for architecture is ... to heighten experience while simultaneously expressing meaning; and to develop this duality in response to the particularities of site and circumstances.'³⁷⁰ Something similar is urged by Pérez-Gómez, when he states that 'excellent architecture, one that may reveal life as purposeful, accommodates the space of desire without trying to foreclose it. ... It accommodates and furthers the appropriate moods for focal actions ... that allow humans the possibilities of *being present*.'³⁷¹

6.4.7 *Infinite Diversity*

The possibility of being present of course is at the very heart of Arendt's writings. Being present is appearing in public. Public space is characterized not only by the plurality of people appearing into it, but is itself, as we have seen, also characterized by objects that have a shape of their own, and that in their terms offer plurality as the very image of public space as well. 'Nothing perhaps is more surprising in this world of ours,' Arendt states, 'than the almost infinite diversity of its appearances, the sheer entertainment value of its views, sounds, and smells.'³⁷² However, the appearance of objects, and our perception of these objects, is questioned in philosophy since Descartes finds the only possible ground to say something about reality is not in reality itself, but only in his thinking. Reality could only be described as 'it seems to me'. Arendt, in *The Life of the Mind* starts to discuss Descartes position, also because she is eager to overcome his singular and subjective position. The public as reference of the perception of reality is important to Arendt.

Arendt in *The Human Condition* stresses this appearance in the world as an act of the will, for which a certain courage is required. In *The Life of the Mind* Arendt nevertheless stresses appearing in public as an urge, which she recognized

in all living things, men and animals simultaneously. ‘The urge toward self-display – to respond by showing to the overwhelming effect of being shown – seems to be common to men and animals,’ she writes. She then continues to stress once again the importance of the world. ‘And just as the actor depends upon stage, fellow-actors, and spectators, to make his entrance, every living thing depends upon a world that solidly appears as the location for its own appearance, on fellow-creatures to play with, and on spectators to acknowledge and recognize its existence.’³⁷³ Without the world (and its inhabitants), there would not be a proper place of action and speech, there would be no place of appearance. Without the world, there is nobody that can be met, nothing to be seen and heard, no one that can see and hear. It is the world that is the proper place, for the human being to appear on stage. This ‘urge of self-display’ is at this point in Arendt’s writings, the very distinction between the living beings and lifeless matter. Only the living being is possessed, as she writes, by an urge of self-display. This urge to appear in public, or amongst species that recognize this appearance, ‘answers the fact of one’s own appearingness,’ Arendt writes. ‘Living things make their appearance like actors on a stage set for them. The stage is common to all who are alive, but it seems different to each species, different also to each individual specimen.’³⁷⁴ In accordance with Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Pérez-Gómez urges appearance of the human being not so much as an urge, but as a desire. The ‘distinctly human desire’, he writes, ‘is a “desire for desire, or desire for recognition.”’. This desire for recognition is precisely what motivates Hannah Arendt’s “space of appearance,” the fundamental characteristic of public space and the kernel of architecture.’³⁷⁵ When urging public space as the kernel of architecture, we might once again take the metaphor of the table, and the appearance of guests around it that join the conversation. As stated previously, the very revealing aspect of this image is not only that the table connects and separates simultaneously, but also that the very seating of people around it shows in tangible ways the different perspectives the participants bring to the table. They look from different perspectives, they contribute from a different place and their voice sounds from another angle. In other words, the participants each occupy a different place. For Arendt this is important, since only these multitude of views together can reveal something of the world. The very moment Arendt starts to think through the activity of thinking, this multitude of views becomes important again for Arendt.

Also in *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt urges this aspect, when she argues that the singular perspective somehow stays in the dark. In her words: ‘Seeming – the it-seems-to-me, *dokei moi* – is the mode, perhaps the only possible one, in which an appearing world is acknowledged and perceived.’³⁷⁶ This also is the way we appear in the world: when we appear, we *seem* to others. However, how we ‘seem to others’ is varied, it depends on the standpoint of the spectators – where the others sit at the table. It is not that all these perspectives together form the reality, that the different ‘seeming perspectives’ together lose their ‘seeming’ character. ‘Every appearing thing acquires, by virtue of its appearingness, a kind of disguise that may indeed – but does not have to – hide or disfigure it. Seeming corresponds to the fact that every appearance, its identity notwithstanding, is perceived by a plurality of spectators.’³⁷⁷ What distinguishes the human being from the other living beings of course is the appearance in action and speech, which is not only an appearance as a mere ‘surface’, or form, but also reveals something of the inner life of the human being, of the world-of-thoughts. This point shows exactly that the appearance in public is not only a matter of desire, it definitely is also something of will. One only stands up and speaks if one finds its

373.
Ibid., 21-22

374.
Ibid., 21

375.
Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement*, 30

376.
Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 21

377.
Ibid., 21

378.
Ibid., 34

379.
Ibid., 50

380.
Ibid., 50

381.
Ibid., 50 [emphasis in original]

opinion fit for to be shared publicly. “This element of deliberate choice in what to show and what to hide seems specifically human. Up to a point we can choose how to appear to others and this appearance is by no means the outward manifestation of an inner dispositions; if it were, we probably would all act and speak alike. Distinction and individuation occur through speech, the use of verbs and nouns, and these are not products or “symbols” of the soul but of the mind.”³⁷⁸

The perspective upon the reality of the world Arendt sketches here depends upon what Merleau-Ponty has called ‘perceptual faith’: the certainty about appearance of other objects and our perception of them, is supported by our own appearance and others perceiving us. The importance here is that this ‘faith’ opens a path to acknowledge a shared perception of the same object, although from different perspectives. Moreover, this also means that the perceiving subject does not have to be afraid that the world is only an illusion (as is the very reason Descartes developed his famous ground for assurance of reality in the thinking-self), and that the different senses betrays the perceiving subject. On the contrary, the perceptual faith urges the five senses as working closely together, and that from this sensible perception, the reality of the world unfolds.

“The reality of what I perceive is guaranteed by its worldly context, which includes others who perceive as I do, on the one hand, and by working together of my five senses on the other. What since Thomas Aquinas we call common sense, the *sensus communis*, is a kind of sixth sense needed to keep my five senses together and guarantee that it is the same object that I see, touch, taste, smell, and hear; it is the “one faculty [that extends to all objects of the five senses.”³⁷⁹

The *sensus communis* is important here:

“This same sense, a mysterious “sixth sense” because it cannot be localized as a bodily organ, fits the sensations of my strictly private five senses – so private that sensations in their mere sensational quality and intensity are incommunicable – into a common world shared by others. The subjectivity of the it-seems-to-me is remedied by the fact that the same object also appears to others though its mode of appearance may be different. ... Though each single object appears in a different perspective to each individual, the context in which it appears is the same for the whole species.”³⁸⁰

Arendt then continues to offer a view of her understanding of reality:

“In a world of appearances, filled with error and semblances, reality is guaranteed by this threefold commonness: the five senses, utterly different from each other, have the same object in common; members of the same species have the context in common that endows every single object with its particular meaning; and all other sense endowed beings, though perceiving this object from utterly different perspectives, agree on its identity. Out of this threefold commonness arises the *sensation* of reality.”³⁸¹

Architecture certainly is bound to appearance too, since it forms the world itself. It is simply there, although evoked, designed, constructed, established by the very urge and desire of commissioners, designers, developers, and others involved in the building process. It is and appears to all those appearing in it. By itself it

affects the five senses, it even thrills the sixth sense, we might propel as a chance of architecture.

However, in this world, where semblance is a serious option, how does architecture contribute to the perception of reality, not only by affecting the five senses, but also by urging this ‘mysterious’ sixth sense? Let us once again look to the metaphor of the table that I already stressed previously. If the table functions as an in-between during a conversation, what happens when there is nobody seated around it? What about the empty table? Since this is also an everyday image, one can imagine that the empty table is actually welcoming for use again. The chairs are empty, ready to be used again. The places around the table are empty – open for occupation once again. The table somehow shows the image of opportunity: here is a place to be seated, a place that can be shared with others, a place that offers a common experience (of speaking and listening, eating and drinking). The empty table is the promise of something that can happen, the image of possibilities and opportunities.

As one can imagine, these meetings and gatherings will not happen, or are totally different in character, if the table is lacking. Tables, either placed in the midst of a room, or alongside a wall, evoke attention, and welcome people to take a place around it. Almost naturally, the setting of a conversation is set up, fuelled by bottles and plates, glasses and napkins on the table. The table somehow is able to arrange the space. It creates a possibility of unitedness (the table unites those that eat together) and of openness (put your cards on the table). It also separates those sitting around the table from the rest of the room. Tables have many forms – it seems to be an obvious remark, but nevertheless, thinking about the table shows that these differences affect the formal or informal setting of a conversation. A small table in a café can be rather intimate, whereas a large eating table can offer a large group a united presence. The table set up in U-form or O-form is regular for meetings, but does not function too well for a real exchange of thoughts. The round table, on the contrary, is most appropriate for discussions. A low table is associated with cosiness, whereas the desk is the formal setting for an interview. What happens upon the table, the arrangement of glasses and plates, food and drinks, bottles and napkins, is telling too. At a nice dinner, initially, the table is set up; the silver is in its right places, as well as the glasses. Chandeliers are set in their position, as well as the chairs lined up. The well-set table is welcoming its guests. It is promising. After dinner, this setting has been distorted drastically. In this setting of a mess, it shows something of what happened. The chaos is the tangible memory of intense conversations, interlaced with foods and drinks.³⁸²

By an intriguing association on this matter, the American architect Colin Rowe reveals another aspect of the table. He aligns Arendt’s quote on the table with a picture drawn by Le Corbusier. Rowe actually starts with the remark that the table somehow is vanishing in modern life, as compared to the central role it played in family and public life. In that sense, the table is even more a metaphor of what happened in public space.

“The table which has vanished has become the preeminent contemporary datum of life. “No longer separated, but entirely unrelated ... by anything concrete,” the vanished table is, of course, the vanished *res publica*, that public realm which, formerly, related and separated both objects and individuals, which simultaneously established community and illustrated identity. So if not absolutely traumatic, the effective disappearance of the *res publica* is at least disturbing.”³⁸³

382.
cf. Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: MIT Press, 2009)

383.
Colin Rowe, ‘The Vanished City’, in: Colin Rowe, *As I Was Saying, Recollections and Miscellaneous Essays, Voll III: Urbanistics*, (Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press, 1996), 244

384.

Rowe, 'The Vanished City', 244; The quote of Le Corbusier is taken by Rowe from, *Précisions*, Paris: Crès, 1930, p.9: 'Observez un jour ... observez dans un petit cass-crouste populaire, deux ou trois convives ayant pris leur café et causant. La table est couverte encore de verres, de bouteilles, d'assiettes, l'huile, le sel, le poivre, la serviette, e rond de serviette, etc. Voyez l'ordre fata qui met tous ces objets en rapport les un avec les autres; il sont tout servi, ils ont été saisi par la main de l'un ou de l'autre des convives; les distances qui les séparent sont la mesure de la vie: C'est une composition mathématique agencée; il n'y a pas un lieu faux, un hiatus, une tromperie.' [Translation from French, HT]

385.

The understanding of commonalities in this direction is not far from the stress Arendt offers, as we have seen before, on appearances and recognition, of objects that have their own proper shape. 'Everything that is', Arendt writes, 'must appear, and nothing can appear without a shape of its own; hence there is in fact no thing that does not in some way transcend its functional use, and its transcendence, its beauty or ugliness, is identical with appearing and publicly and being seen.' Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 173. To my mind, this perspective also stresses the need for a shared recognition of appearances, of commonality that is within the objects surrounding us.

386.

Rowe, 'The Vanished City', 244-245

Having said that, Rowe brings to mind the quote of Le Corbusier:

'Imagine a particular moment, ... touching upon a small popular lunch, two or three acquaintances having a chat over their coffee. The table is still covered with glasses, with bottles, with plates, the cruet, the salt, the pepper, a napkin, the napkin ring, etc. See the order which places all of the objects in a relationship, one with the other. They've all been served; they were seized by the hand of one or the other of the acquaintances. The distances which separate them are the measures of life: it is an intentional mathematical composition; there is no faux place, no hiatus, no mistake.'³⁸⁴

Where Arendt's table gathers people and makes a chat possible – or better said, a discussion – the table of Le Corbusier is first and foremost a platform to put things upon, make them manifest in the room (or on the picture, in this case), to articulate a certain happening, or to propel that very activity. These objects in hindsight convey a message. There are plates and bottles, and all sorts of other objects in their proper place, that by their setting emphasize the message of 'lunch', and the people around it, behind the empty bottles with their cups of coffee convey the message of 'chat'. Both pictures evoke an interesting joint perspective: whereas Arendt concentrates on the table as platform of conversation, Le Corbusier stresses the commonalities of the objects on the table, that is: shared everyday objects that are able to gather people through recognition.³⁸⁵ This thus completes Arendt's image, whereas she urges the multitude of aspects that belong to the world, Le Corbusier somehow shows how the objects also function as commodities, evoking certain use and attitude. Both aspects need to be stressed together. They appeal in the same sense, as Rowe argues – and I quote at length:

'For, with their alternative images of the table what they both specify is a field for interaction. The table (I think they both imply) promotes a convergence of interest; and, with the surrounding persons sufficiently primed (this is Corbu's contribution), it becomes apparent that the table, as a version of the *res publica*, is the great agent, perhaps the only agent, which is likely to produce political settlement, interesting dialogue, useful dialectic, and important debate. The table, which in both cases, is the evident field of interaction, is also, surely, that essential ground which is postulated by Gestalt psychology as the primary datum of experience. It is that ground in terms of which figure emerges into prominence, which serves as a framework in which figure is suspended, which 'relates' and 'separates', which not only supports figure but also qualifies it. So Arendt and Le Corbusier, with a comparable table, present us with two quite different grounds. Arendt's ground is mostly socio-political and her figures, I am sure, are mostly individuals; while Corbu's ground is mostly socio-aesthetic and his figures, one might guess, are mostly objects. So the one table is mostly about people and the other mostly about things; but, since they are both related to compatible arguments about freedom and order, private happiness and the more public structures which act to guarantee it, personally I find it immensely easy to place these two tables side by side in the same restaurant and to imagine a movement between them, listening to their different conversations and deriving invaluable impressions from both.'³⁸⁶

Both parallel pictures of tables reveal something of the world-of-things that is commonly owned by men. It gathers and separates, not only through the table itself, but also by the very setting of objects on the table, that can evoke certain

approaches. Nevertheless, appearing in an occurrence around the table, around the different objects that evoke a certain response, reveal at once the plurality of those involved, the layered-ness of the world-of-things, and the reality of the world.

Both perspectives also address the ‘reality’ of architecture, with first starts with the materiality of the intervention in space. It is the tangible object, that is the agent in the gathering. It offers shared expectations, and arranges the gathering in space, it arranges the situation in such a way that it evokes the gathering, the dinner, the conversations. Secondly also sets up relationships between the objects and human beings in that space, the ‘events’ that will violate the space and vice versa.³⁸⁷ [IMAGE 6.15] This of course is not different in architecture than in building. Both practices are again the same if we look from this perspective. Architecture – and I thus also mean building – is maybe the most far-fledged instrument of constructing a world in the human hands. Buildings not only provide durability, they also function as objects that are able to gather people, which offer permanence and evoke diversity. What it actually does, when it intervenes in nature, is to be seen as acts of discrimination. Architects erect walls in order to create different circumstances, inside and outside, public and private.³⁸⁸ Architectural interventions by their very definition always separate and connect – separate a certain place from space, connect (and attract) a certain group of users. A wall divides space in two, a door connects both. A place is paved with stones and covered with a roof, and suddenly it’s a gathering space in a village, a square or a courtyard. A porch is erected, and people are attracted to enter.

Architecture, however, is not just the frame or the décor around or at the back of what happens inside or outside. It also arranges the spaces, and arranges the objects in the room. They get their proper place within the space. Like the objects on the table convey a certain message, also the architecture of the space, as well as the arrangements of ‘things’ in the space represent something. It can be inviting or rejecting, it can be familiar or alienating, it can evoke a certain attitude or approach, or it can leave us cold. The appearance of space affect the human being, although these appearances are not often layered in itself, and, even by their shape and size, can only be grasped through multiple viewpoints. Buildings are multi-layered, surfaces can be shallow and deep simultaneously.³⁸⁹ Upon this ambiguity, I will come back in the next chapter. At this perspective, also the Japanese architect Yoshiharu Tsukamoto offered an intriguing insight in his text ‘Commonalities of Architecture’. He argues that this idea of commonality is not so much talked about in architecture, but that the idea is quite powerful for what architecture actually does. Only Louis Kahn uses the term, when he delivers an argument that people are regularly moved by ancient constructions. Kahn argues that human beings are connected to one another by things, and specifically by those that transcend time and place. These are commonalities, he argues. Similar ideas Tsukamoto finds in some thoughts of Jørn Utzon, who argues that ‘the present is linked to the past by the intelligence of human begins embedded in architecture.’³⁹⁰ At this point we touch upon another reflection on durability. The world – that is: this world-of-things that the human being inherit – contains human intelligence, and the human being deals with that intelligence unnoticed. This idea of shared human intelligence that somehow can judge the surroundings, although not directly linked to architecture, is also pushed forward by Arendt in her reflection upon the need of politics in the quote I already used earlier. ‘Politics deals with the coexistence and association of *different* men,’ Arendt writes. ‘Men organize themselves politically according to certain essential commonalities found within or abstracted from an absolute chaos of differences.’³⁹¹ The world-

387.

cf. Bernard Tschumi, ‘Violence of Architecture’ and Bernard Tschumi, ‘Spaces and Events’ in: Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge (Mass.)/ London: The MIT Press, 1996)

388.

Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, 86

389.

cf. David Leatherbarrow, ‘Facing and Spacing’: Michael Asgaard Anderson and Henrik Oxvig (eds.), *Paradoxes of Appearing, Essays on Art, Architecture, and Philosophy* (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2009)

390.

Tsukamoto, ‘Commonalities of Architecture’, in: Atelier Bow-Wow, *Commonalities: Productions of Behaviors* (Tokyo: LIXIL, 2014)

391.

Arendt, ‘Introduction into Politics’, 95

in-common is essential in this perspective: it enables a reality in which action and speech can take place, makes sense and is effective. This commonality of this reality depends upon the 'fabricated common world.'³⁹²

7.

DESIGN. ARCHITECTURAL
AGENCY BETWEEN WORK,
ACTION AND THINKING

Hannah Arendt wrote her book *The Human Condition* in order to think through human activities on earth. In her introduction to the book, she brings this back to the simple aim that the book is ‘nothing more than to think what we are doing’. As became clear in the previous chapters, behind this question there is a serious concern about the world. The world-in-common is the object of political life, the activity of action. The world, however, is established by ‘work’, the work of the maker, the craftsman, which creates objects with a certain lifespan, offering permanence to the world as the stage for political life. Labor is the enduring activity which is bound to survival – it is too much focused on the singular person to create a world-in-common. Arendt reads the history of the West against this background, and argues that this history shows that the West not only overlooked/undervalued the particular characteristics of action by applying the work-attitude framework to the realm of politics (an instrumentalized pattern), but also that the permanence of the world-in-common was threatened by applying the cyclic attitude of labor to the realm of work. Until now, we have been concerned with the world-as-it-appears to us, or particularly, to the city and architecture, and what it contributes to that world-in-common. In this chapter, we turn our scope to the world-as-it-comes-into-being: to the processes behind the world that materialize the human inhabitation of it. In this sense, we simply follow the trajectory that Arendt defines in *The Human Condition* – we now need to look, as she did, to the activities behind architecture as a world-constructor: to simply ‘think what we are doing’ as architects.

This chapter therefore dives into (contemporary) architectural practices, which first require further clarification. It is, after all, not only architectural practices that define the build environment. All sorts of constructions – from the smallest to the largest – are collective efforts. It is not a matter of simply the ideas of an architect, but instead the ideas of architects, clients, politicians, civil servants, users, developers, activist groups, constructors and many others that form an inherent part of each design process, and are thus behind all sorts of buildings. And although we mention it here as ‘ideas’, these are of course much larger than simply ‘design-ideas’ or conceptual images of the very building at hand. There are local traditions and building conventions to consider, possibilities offered by technology, limitations in the budget, limitations in a particular site, specific building requirements, rules of local governments, and so on. In other words, behind every building lies a complex matrix of codes, rules, considerations, and reasoning which cannot be reduced to a ‘simple’ decisive idea. However, behind each building there is a ‘design’, whether it is made by an architect or not. There are ideas of how to offer space to a particular program, how to use a building or how to position it in an existing structure. Regularly, the architect generates a design in which all of these different requirements come together, creating a potential scheme and structure wherein all these aspects are brought into a particular balance, upon which every participant in the building process can agree. As it can be imagined, the attitude of the architect is important in this case, as is the attitude of the commissioner who somehow ‘chooses’ the architect to generate this design.

If we challenge the world in terms of the scope of architecture, it therefore is customary to focus on the process of design. In this chapter we again look at the distinction between work and action. Architectural design is evidently a form of ‘work’, but it also important to ask whether aspects of design can instead be understood as a form of ‘action’. In the second part of this chapter the scope is widened further, by taking into account Arendt’s threefold use of the activity of ‘thinking’ – which she had excluded from *The Human Condition*, instead

becoming the topic of her unfinished study *The Life of The Mind*. This threefold model of thinking offers a challenging perspective in rethinking the characteristics of architectural design, as it also challenges the 'roles' the architect can take within the processes of the reification of the world.



7.1 Hans Teerds, *Entrance Pavilion for the Cemetery of Blankenberge*, Blankenberge, Belgium, 2010

7.1 IN-BETWEEN CITY AND CEMETERY

My experiences in architectural practice are somewhat limited. Besides a couple of years working on different projects, ranging from the design of public spaces towards the renovation of an old wooden countryhouse, I worked for about seven years on the design and construction of an entrance pavilion to the cemetery of Blankenberge, a coastal city in Belgium. The assignment started with the wish to improve the sanitary services. It thus was a rather small assignment, but within the context of a cemetery, the theme challenged me. A cemetery, after all, is a special place within the plan of a city. Although cemeteries are not often our favourite places to visit, they have a common meaning for everyone, even for those that not have buried loved ones there. If the cemetery stands to represent something, it is the mortality of the human being and the finite nature of life. It makes death tangible in the plan of the city; visible to those who pass by. The cemetery is mostly visited as a place to consciously mourn – sometimes momentarily during the burial of someone, or for others more regularly in visiting and taking care of a grave. In Blankenberge, a little square (used as parking) connected the cemetery with a road that directly leads to the center of the city. The edge between square and cemetery was articulated by an enclosing wall, along with the entrance as an open fence. In this case, there was only space available at the entrance to the area of the cemetery, where it is of course inappropriate to walk immediately into the toilets at the threshold between city and cemetery. From the beginning onwards, the idea was that we needed to define and shape the entrance as a threshold, but that we also needed to hide the mass used to create this threshold. As we found out in the beginning, there was room to slightly extend the program. There was a small office for the two employees who take care of the cemetery hidden at one of its edges. The replacement of this office would grant the employees more visibility, which could also be better traced by visitors gaining an overview of what happens at the cemetery. By designing the two functions as separate pavilions on each side of the entrance, and by adding two covered (but open) places offering some seating to the visitors, an in-between space was created. This in-between, framed by two little pavilions, also represents the in-between between city and cemetery: an emphasized threshold, a space of its own. The two buildings were literally understood as masses moulding this in-between, and were completely covered with a relatively dark, horizontal wooden slats – hiding also the entrances and windows behind. The horizontal lines deceive the spectator: the buildings seem to be larger than they really are.

Although the project was limited in its scale and complexity, the actual process of design to completion took more than seven years. To state this as being an easy process would be an understatement. All sorts of problems needed to be tackled during the path to construction: from cultural differences to a lack of experience on my part, a tight budget versus greater ambitions, and a changing program with changing employees (and even changing political tides) on the side of the commissioner: the municipality of Blankenberge. I nevertheless did everything myself (since the budget was so tight): from drawings to negotiations, from formalizing all of the specifications to the chairing of meetings at the construction site and a final review of the executed work. It has been a challenging training ground, and I would certainly organize things differently next time now I have a sense of the traps that might be present along the way, but it was worth it.

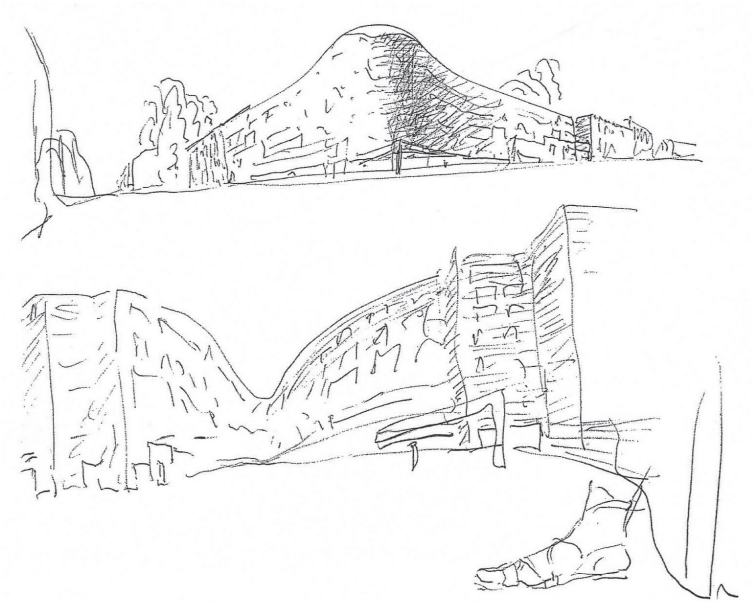
I feel very privileged to have designed a little building such as this. Although it is small it has a broader meaning, one that hopefully contributes unconsciously

to the experience of visitors to the cemetery, enriching their passage from city to cemetery and vice versa to the liveability of the city. The significance of architecture in this case is almost tangible. Everyone can understand the importance of the threshold between these distinct conditions. Although I did not have to convince the commissioner of the significance of thoughtful design, the budget was not raised to the height that I felt was reasonable.

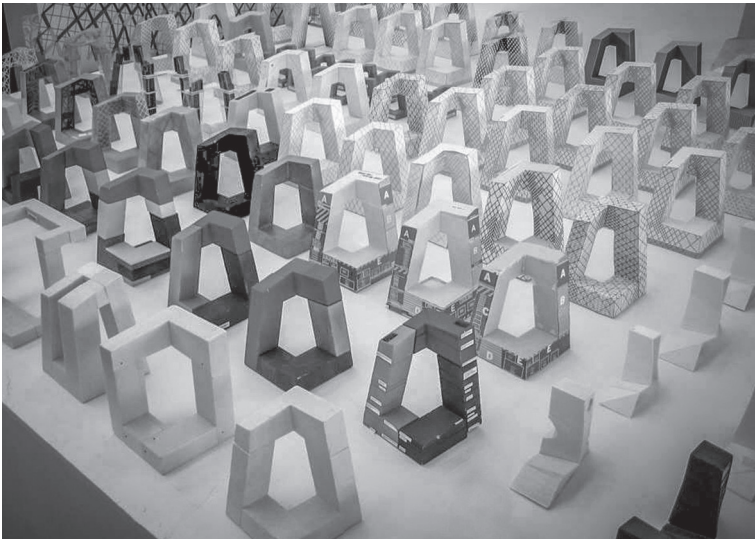
However, together ‘we’ could make a building that expresses the threshold as a zone of transition. Indeed: together, *we* could make *this* building. When thinking of the final result, the question is nevertheless: how did we end up here? Even in this simple building it is not just me as the designer; there was an intensive discussion with other actors and stakeholders regarding how the building needed to be. Flipping through my sketchbooks for the project, there is a clear ‘development’ of drawing and thinking. Nevertheless, it is in ruptures that the final form has been found. Ruptures are somehow the signage of the aftermath of a good discussion, or a brainwave, or other intangible developments that cannot really be reproduced. Needless to say, the commissioner of the building (the city-architect of Blankenberge and his assistants) has had a major impact. Not only in their responses to my proposals, but also by stressing the limitations of the budget and clarifying their objectives. The talks with the Flemish architect I needed to consult were also important in order to build, as a Dutchman, in Flanders. There was also the contractor and his suppliers, with their specific knowledge of wood, foundations, and electrical appliances. Although their input was important, it is not easy to define how this affected the final result, however their knowledge translated first into the design, the drawings, and into the final built reality.

I started the project together with Hannes Vandermeer, a Flemish landscape architect I did not know before. However, from our first meeting onwards, we shared the same outlook on the assignment. We discussed extensively the layout of the cemetery and its unique position in the city. The new pavilion should not be simply an incident, we thought, but part of a plan for the whole park, and should stress the in-between position of the cemetery between city and landscape. The next phase was finding the right location for the sanitary unit. After studying several locations, the entrance itself seemed to be the most logical option. While working on this entrance-zone lots of possibilities were considered: a single pavilion, a double-height pavilion, a double-height pavilion with a viewpoint, a literal porch, a long pavilion, two short pavilions, or a meandering wall that could in some points offer space for the program. As time passed and it became clear that the overall vision would not be translated into a concrete project without the re-design of the entrance. Unfortunately, the landscape architect needed to withdraw as discussions on the pavilion continued. However, we began the discussion by urging the need for other facilities at the entrance, upon which the municipality also agreed that the space for employees could be better moved to a more central location. On their side, the commissioner also looked through the previous sketches, and expressed a preference for one of the previous proposals: the design of a pavilion that actually created a porch. This proposal was indeed humble, seeking only to enhance the overall experience of the cemetery itself, through offering only a few new walls that (after aging) would soon fade away and merge to be part of the landscape where the trees and tombs are dominant. Part of the strength of this design was that it could be understood as part of a family of interventions, but since these other interventions could not be executed, what would be the strength of this single intervention? I therefore agreed upon the wish of the municipal architect to articulate the boundary between city and cemetery

more strongly. Looking back, we can see that this was the right move at the right moment. It became clear that the entrance still needed to provide room for cars and even trucks to enter the cemetery, and following more insight into the possibilities of the budget we slowly moved towards a completely wooden construction of two pavilions to emphasize 'heaviness' and mass using slats as façade, and to cover the sheltered with seats. The character of the intervention became increasingly clear during the process, particularly while deciding upon materials for the façade, the interior, the floor, lighting, and windows. Thinking of materials allows us to materialize our ideas. It articulates tangibility, the textures and the tectonics of what will eventually become a real building.



7.2 Álvaro Siza, Sketch of *Wohnhaus Schlesisches Tor*, Berlin, Germany, 1984



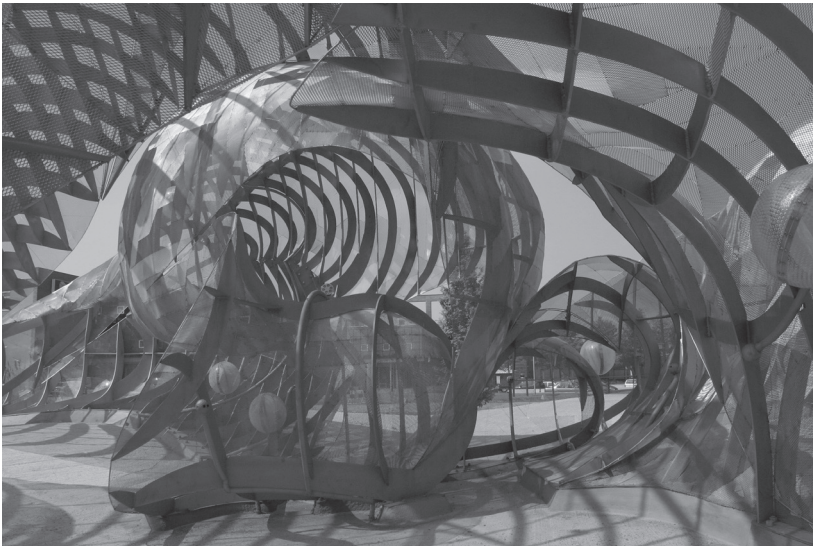
7.3 Rem Koolhaas/OMA/Cecil Balmond, *CCTV Building*, Beijing, China (2008), models shown at the Content Exhibition, Berlin, Germany, 2003



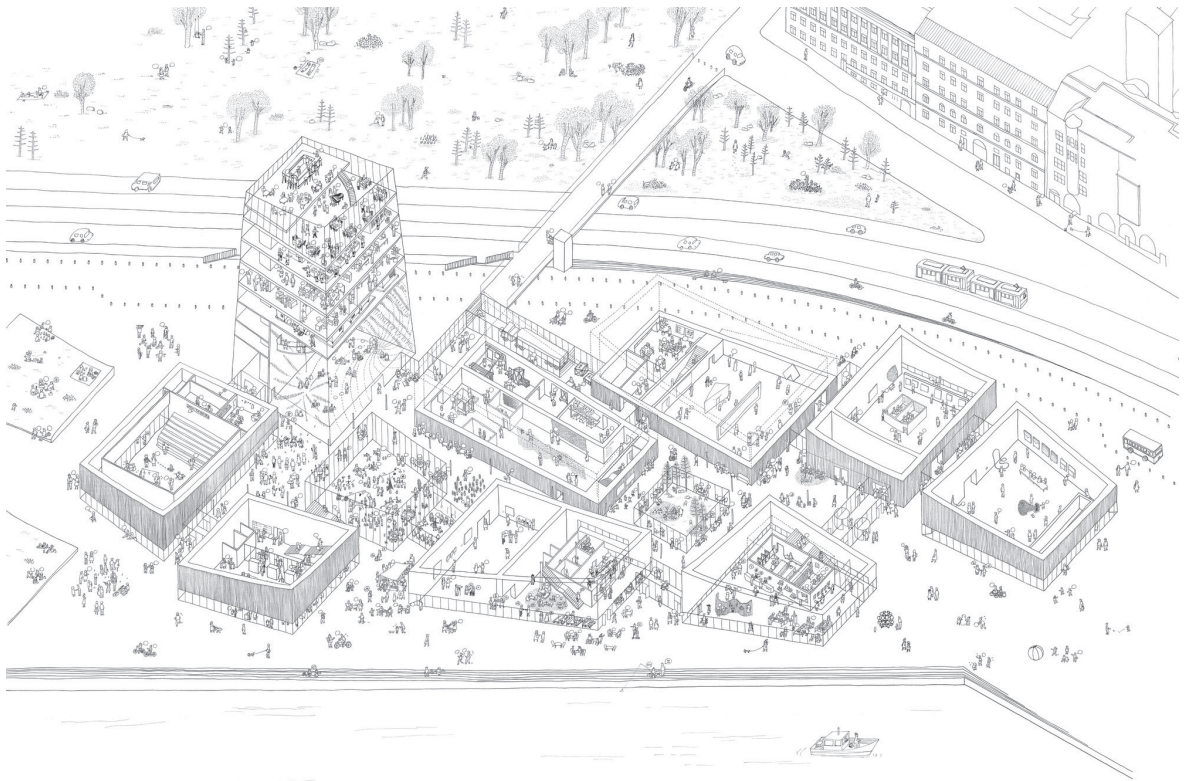
7.4 Caruso St. John Architects, *Arosa Sporttheatre*, Graubunden, Switzerland, 2000, research model



7.5 Rural Studio, *Glass Chapel*,
Masons Bend (AL), USA, 2000



7.6 Lars Spuybroek/NOX, *Son-O-House*,
Son en Breugel, The Netherlands, 2002



A DAY AT GUGGENHEIM HELSINKI

7.7 Moreau Kusunoki's winning entry for the *Guggenheim Helsinki* Competition, Helsinki, Finland, 2015

7.2 TO THINK WHAT WE ARE DOING

7.2.1 Reification of the Public World

In the previous chapters, particularly in the second and third (where I discuss the contemporary landscape and city), and in the fifth and sixth (where I discuss the notions of ‘public space’ and the ‘world’), I focussed on architecture as it exists in the built environment; constructions that literally form the world and our everyday environment. This investigation also includes reflections on architecture as a *process*. Architecture, of course, is not only the built environment. Architecture is also the construction of the built environment. To state it in terms of the architectural historian Fil Hearn, it is all of the *Ideas that Shape Buildings*:¹ landscapes, cities, gardens, squares, streets – even our past and future. Ideas here should not be taken too strictly. Buildings do not always come into being as a result of outspoken ideas. Changing requirements, needs, businesses, etc. require interventions in the built environment, while the process of design is often also defined by the search for ideas, or the search for shapes that facilitate the required program in relation to the immediate situation of the site. Technological possibilities, cultural standards and economic principles along with other codes and conventions all contribute to forming the built environment as well as to new architectural proposals. All of this belongs to the world of architecture, or better said, to the ‘thinking’ of the architect. This ‘thinking’ of the architect is the object of study in this chapter, which will focus much more on the process behind construction than on the actual built situation. This shift in view from the object to the work behind the object will not offer a ‘solution’ to the urgencies stressed in the first chapters, nor will it offer instruments to handle political, social, economic, cultural and contextual questions. As was stated in the previous chapters, there is no single solution or fixed answer. The relationship between the tangible world (created by architecture) versus the political realm (the space of appearance and the public realm) needs to be continually discussed. There are only lines-of-thought, fields of attention, and perspectives to be discovered, adopted and adapted. The Arendtian lines of thought bring us now to the activity that lies behind every building and landscape; behind all architectural artefacts. Conceiving the architectural object is of utmost importance regarding the commonness of the world. Architecture is not only the tangible construction of the world, but is also the idea ‘to construct’; the future interventions in the same tangible world. It is a project, a design activity, it is the need and eagerness to intervene in the world; developing interventions that adapt to the world according to observable and imagined future needs. Emphasizing architecture means not only to emphasize the built environment, but also the ideas behind this environment, as well as the will to intervene and to adapt circumstances to new and future needs. If this will to intervene is a central notion in architecture, architecture greatly regards the developments of plans and designs for future intervention.

There is no architectural artefact without design, although obviously not every design is drawn beforehand, let alone drawn by an architect, urban designer or landscape architect.² It is an important fact that building and construction cannot exist without a plan. If architecture is part of the world, and if this world is matter that matters, the content of these plans and how these plans are conceived are significant. This is not only significant in architectural terms, but is significant for the public as well. Better said: these plans are politically important. This somehow substantiates the pessimistic and slightly optimistic narratives explored

1. Fil Hearn, *Ideas that Shaped Buildings* (Cambridge (Mass.), MIT Press, 2003)

2. As I already argued, these non-architect-driven approaches are a part of architecture too. After all, even such local and folklore practices are reifying ideas. Plans are sometimes consciously designed and sometimes more hidden. These non-architectural architectures have attracted the attention of architects from Le Corbusier onwards. Le Corbusier himself traveled ‘the orient’ (Southern, Central and Eastern Europe) in 1911 in order to be inspired by local traditions and vernacular culture, and to take distance from technological aesthetics – his diary was published after his death as *Le Voyage d’Orient*; see also the interest in primitive cultures by members of *Team X*, such as the Dogon culture by Aldo van Eyck [Francis Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck, The Shape of Relativity* (Amsterdam, Architectura & Natura, 1998), 380–391] or in everyday Moroccan culture by the French office of Candillis Jasic and Woods [Tom Avermaete, *Another Modern, The Post-war Architecture and Urbanism of Candillis-Jasic-Woods* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005), 70–107]; See also the exhibition *Architecture without Architects* at the MoMa organized by Bernard Rudofsky, which presented the non-architectural architectures as approaches to be learnt from, or as correction to an overly autonomous approach to architecture. Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture without Architects. An Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture* (Garden City/New York: Doubleday & Compagny Inc., 1964); See also today’s interest in slums, for instance shown in the stunning book by Urban Think Thank and the photographer Iwan Baan on the occupation of the un-finished Torre David in Caracas: Alfredo Brillembourg and Hubert Klumpner (eds.), *Torre David: Informal Vertical Communities* (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2012)

in chapter two and three on the state of contemporary landscapes and cities and their diminishing public spaces. Behind the ‘new’ and often commercial spaces of the mall and the theme park, the business district and the edge city, the historic district and the gated community that replace the formerly public spaces of streets, squares and parks, are plans, designs, and ideas on how to organize space and to what end this organisation serves. These spaces are not necessarily always (completely) designed by architects, but there is often a plan that is carefully executed. It might be in these cases that design resembles engineering: applying formulas or following well-known paths or empirically proved methods and schemes. The design might be fuelled by economic models focused more on efficiency and increasing profit (ideas about ‘how to sell things’), by the aims of security and exclusivity, ideas about identity and authenticity, or location and local traditions. Ultimately however, there are designers designing spaces, objects, and structures, whether they are architects or not. In other words, it is not only ideas about architecture, the world, or businesses that are decisive in architectural design. All sorts of restrictions and opportunities are at stake in the path of design. Even within the frame of architectural perspectives, there are innovations, developments, conventions, restrictions and opportunities to be dealt with, offering surprisingly new perspectives to the architect for meeting new challenges.³ Architects are always facing a set of restrictions, but there always is a horizon of opportunities and possibilities. Although the playing field of the designers and engineers involved might be narrow, set within the strict borders offered to them by their commissioners, there is always room for design. However, since design is a matter of human beings – and not robots – working on particular assignments trying to find the right answers to the client’s request, this means that there is room to highlight the design, the aims and the methods incorporated by those that are actually drawing the plans, as well as by those actually executing the project. Since human beings are involved, there is room to reflect on ‘what he or she is doing’. To emphasise the room to think and reflect might involve the introduction of a form of working ethics within the processes of development and design. This is partly true and the ethics of architectural design form part of what is discussed in this chapter. However, this turning toward investigating ‘what we are doing’ is not only part of an ethical outlook, but also addresses the field on a more general level. Phrasing the idea beyond a chapter like this of course immediately reminds us of Arendt’s very brief summary of *The Human Condition*: her aim to consider ‘what we are doing’.⁴ *The Human Condition* does not work towards providing a ‘working ethics’. The narrative of this book works on a much more general level. It does not address the single laborer, nor does it stress a particular worker. It describes the human being as a laborer, it describes what it initially means to *work*. The book does not address a particular laborer or worker at specific moments to act differently. Instead, it offers an analysis of the structure of today’s communities, and also urges us to reflect upon the more particular questions of our own attitudes to the world. To think about ‘what we are doing’ thus not only urges a philosophical outlook but also evokes moral questions. It first urges for a broader view; to explore the what-question and to understand what it means to be involved in architecture. Secondly, by mirroring this understanding, this what-question immediately evokes the how-question: how do we do what are doing?

The need to reflect on ‘what we are doing’ within the field of architecture, particularly if we want to stress the public aspects of architecture, is therefore offered as part of the Arendtian line of thought that we develop here. Arendt outlines the

3. See for this point: Like Bijlsma et al (eds.), *Convention, OASE #49/50* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 1998); Tom Avermaete, David de Bruijn and Job Floris (eds.), *Codes and Continuities, OASE #92* (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2014)

4. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 5

5.

Arendt of course was not the first to address this contemporary scope, and surely not the last. Particularly economic thriving within contemporary Western culture has been discussed widely. To mention just a few – a rare selection: Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000); Naomi Klein, *No Logo, De strijd tegen de dwang van de wereldmerken* (Rotterdam: Leminiscaat, 2002); Noreena Hertz, *De stille overname, De globalisering en het einde van de democratie* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Contact, 2002); Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Roaring Nineties* (New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002); Thomas Sedlacek, *Economics of Good and Evil, The Quest for Economic Meaning From Gilgamesh to Wall Street* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

6.

Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978)

7.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 139

close relation between production and labor: the product and the work behind it. Accordingly, to reflect on what we are doing also means to reflect on how we are doing what we do. Arendt stresses that particular aspects of distinct forms of human activity affect the very product of that activity: the attitude of the laborer (and his focus on the short term, replace-ability, and consumption) threatens the permanence of ‘things’ if applied to the activity of work, while the attitude of the worker (and his focus on production, end-products and control) threatens the aim, character and objective of action, if applied to the realm of politics. Once again, Arendt does not describe these threats to a single person, as if the single *homo faber* would approach his work like an *animal laborans*, a labourer can never construct a house that lasts, and if a craftsman could not also appear in public. What threatens the world is the attitude of the laborer, and their understanding of the objects that surround us as nothing more than disposables as part of an ongoing economic cycle, manifesting in society as they are applied to the production of objects and other aspects of life. What threatens politics is the replacement of inherent characteristics – the uncontrollable and unpredictable aspects of action – by ideas that belong to ‘work’; by the eagerness to control action and to secure the path that leads to a particular aim. Arendt argues that each of these realms have their merits and practices, and is problematic when applied to another realm. It is not the single person that applies the means and aims of one category to the other. It is society as a whole, driven by an economic attitude that applies the characteristics of labor to the production of all products, which uses it as a lens to understand and direct decisions made in politics.⁵

As I have argued in the previous chapter, when thinking of architecture, we are somehow bound to the category of work. At this point, however, we need to challenge these categories. Aspects of ‘work’ might also be understood as ‘action’ and ‘speech’. Moreover, in order to understand the activity of design, we also need to challenge the activity of thinking. The means of conceiving a building, after all, is often challenged by a combination of working with the hands (drawing) and the mind (reflection). Arendt excluded ‘thinking’ from *The Human Condition*, but studied it later, in her unfinished study on the nature of thinking, *The Life of the Mind*.⁶

In the previous chapter I concentrated on architecture – to design, to construct and to build – as belonging to the category of making. The first image Arendt offers of ‘work’, particularly in the first part of the chapter on work in *The Human Condition*, is one of ‘fabrication’ and ‘reification’. This fabrication is not smooth or natural; rather it forces the *homo faber* to violate natural processes and to destroy nature.⁷ If we think of architecture with the help of these notions, we can immediately agree upon the idea that architecture is reification. It takes materials from the earth, processes them ‘violently’, and brings them together in order to form spaces that can be occupied, inhibited, and used. For architecture trees are cut, raw materials are excavated, heated, melted, poured out, mixed, rolled, cut, and so on. Through forcefully intervening in the earth in one place (although this part often lies out of sight within the profession), architecture intervenes elsewhere by bringing together these processed materials to construct a home, street, or bridge. If work is reification, we can state that the work of architects can literally be described as the reification of social, cultural, disciplinary, political, typological, and technical ideas, along with wishes, requirements, adaptations, conventions, traditions, etc. When an assignment is offered, the architect will conduct extensive conversations with the commissioner and with future users, who will share their dreams, needs and expectations as well as the requirements

the building needs to fulfil. The work of the architect is therefore to imagine the future life of that building – to reify the dreams of the commissioner. The architect uses stories and references (taking his client on a tour or showing examples of possibilities) moulded many times over in order to draw proposals that can be presented to the client. This moulding represents the moment of reification: from intangible to tangible, from formless to form and shape, from being hidden to be exposed in public. Drawing and other forms of communication are quite important in this instance. The pencil (or indeed the knife, the saw, the mouse and drawing pad) is therefore the instrument of reification. What comes out of the mind of the architect cannot stay in the abstract world of ideas. It needs to be materialized; made present in the world. It needs to arrive tangibly in the form of sketches and drawings, which help the client to discuss their direction and interpretation of the ideas and requirements. Reification, in other words, is a process that develops slowly through the solipsist activity of drawing as well as through conversation with stakeholders in the design process. The process of reification leads to constructions that in themselves reify the ideas (and needs) beyond the building itself. Construction reifies the commissioner's wishes and dreams into a tangible, stable, durable, useable form, immediately revealing ideas about the function of the building. The house reifies the home, where its form reveals the life of the house. It makes the working place tangible in the world, through which it reveals how society approaches work.

If architecture is reification, it reifies both the dwelling place and the communal space. It reifies the need of the individual to protect himself from the elements as it also reifies the structures that enable people to appear in public (to state it in terms used by Arendt). If we use the perspective outlined in previous chapters, we need to state that the first does not mean anything if it is not accompanied by the 'larger' reification of the second. Architectural reification lifts the single human being from his natural circumstances and dangers to place him in a worldly structure; one that connects the single with the multitude.

7.2.2 *The Work of Our Hands*

Work, secondly, is described by Arendt as the 'work of our hands' through which we are 'lord and master' over materials and objects.⁸ This notion of course is very close to what has been stated above about processing materials in order to make space. However, to be 'lord and master' seems to suggest a broader understanding of this of processing materials. It is the 'masterly-processing' of materials. Work, in other words, requires skills. In the previous chapter, we already touched upon a particular quote from the German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, in which this 'masterly' position is also tangible, where he argues that architecture comes into being the very moment two bricks are carefully brought together.⁹ This perspective clearly stresses the careful and thoughtful aspects of architecture. It does not bring materials together randomly or by chance, but it is done according to a plan. It is not just creating any space; it is the thoughtful creation of space. Or we can better state: it is masterfully done. It requires skills. Bringing two bricks together moreover evokes an inherent idea of working with our hands. Bricks have already themselves taken materials from the earth and processed them violently in such a way that they gain resistance against the spoiling power of nature. But secondly, it also urges the image of taking the bricks and bringing them together; creating order out of chaos by human intervention through bodily work. To see architecture as the work of hands, of bodies constructing (stone) walls is outlined

8. Ibid., 139

9. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 'On Restraint in Design' in: *New York Herald Tribune* (28 June 1959)

10.

Rudolph Schwartz, *The Church Incarnate, The Sacred Function of Christian Architecture* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1958), 26-27; Mies van der Rohe actually wrote a brief Foreword to the English translation of this book, in which he argues that the text should not only be read by those interested in religious architecture, but that Schwartz offered a perspective that illuminates 'the whole problem of architecture' generally.

11.

Quote via Stan Allan, *Practice: Architecture, Technique + Representation* (Abingdon/New York, Routledge, 2009), 3

12.

Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in: Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971)

13.

A well-known practice that urges the relationship between design and actual construction is Rural Studio in Alabama. Samuel Mockbee, also brought this idea to the education of architects, particularly to Auburn University, where he became a professor in 1991. His urge to intertwine design and actual construction is driven by social engagement, particularly with poverty in the American South. As he argues: 'Architecture won't begin to alleviate all of these social woes. But what is necessary is a willingness to seek solutions to poverty in its own context, not outside it. What is required is the replacement of abstract opinions with knowledge based on real human contact and personal realization applied to the work and place.' Samuel Mockbee, 'The Rural Studio', in: Krista A. Sykes (eds.), *Constructing a New Agenda, Architectural Theory 1993-2009* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 114. With thanks to Lyke Florentinus, who brought this practice first to my attention; See also the well-known Chilean architectural school in Valparaiso that has made this connection between design and construction as its mark, but from a completely different urgency. See Patricio Del Real, 'Wandering Around', in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, Nancy Meijmans, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *On Territories, OASE#80* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2009)

14.

Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 20

in a colloquial passage written by the German architect Rudolph Schwartz, in which he emphasizes the relationship between construction and the human body:

'The art of building is ... done with the whole body. The labourers lift up the materials, place them one on top of the other and join them together. They execute movements which correspond to the forms of the growing part of the building and then deposit these movements in the building materials. In this way the act of raising turns to upright structure. The workers go over the wall with the trowel, and out of their stroking motion comes a skin of color or plaster. They saw and plane the wood, draw and forge the iron. Each limb of the body moves in its particular way and all of them together create the building as a second body.'¹⁰

This ideal image of conceiving a building and constructing it somehow by one's own hands was certainly not the standard image of architectural practice the moment Schwartz wrote this passage (at the end of the 30s). At first hand, it seems to be drained with nostalgia. After all, since Filippo Brunelleschi distanced himself from his craftsmanship, and thereby also from the actual construction site, there is a gap between the office of the architect (where buildings, urban plans, and other 'objects' are conceived through drawings and models), and the real site where the building actually is constructed. As Robin Evans has argued, 'architects do not make buildings, they make drawings for buildings.'¹¹ The quote of Schwartz nevertheless also can be understood differently at second thought: the importance of the relationship between body and construction actually urges a connection between designing, building, thinking and making – something Martin Heidegger also urged as touched upon in the previous chapter.¹² There are still practices and architecture schools or programs that emphasize these relationships by offering design-and-build courses and services.¹³ However besides these few offices and educational programs, we might interpret this quote differently: not so much as describing an actual construction site, but as describing architectural knowledge in its root form, founded on the relationship between body and material, between body and space. Around 80 years on from Schwartz's writing of this remark, actual construction is still referred to in Dutch and German as 'handwerk'.¹⁴ Even at the moment robotics are being introduced in all sorts of production processes, including within the construction industries, a great deal of building is nevertheless still done by the hands of craftsmen on site. Architecture might be enriched by all sorts of computational models and pre-fabricated materials, but on the construction site it can still be described as the careful bringing together of bricks by skilled hands. Even within more contemporary methods, construction needs craftsmen to join together steel trusses, to pour concrete, to cover the naked wall. In other words, the profession still depends on, for most of its assignments and building methods, craftsmen working on the construction site; on human bodies mastering materials to create space.

However, the contemporary construction site is also threatened by redefining embodied work as labor. Where craftsmen formerly constructed the building from foundation to finishing, today the process of construction is divided into bits and pieces, where particularly skilled craftsmen execute only a limited number of operations. Behind this process, increasing requirements of control and efficiency are also at stake. A similar process can be observed in mass production, where the fabrication process is divided to small repetitive tasks for each of the employees. According to Arendt, however, this means to break 'work' into to mechanized tasks, which are perfectly controllable and most efficient (as a result,

we can add, that particularly due to this process these tasks are susceptible to be taken over by robots in the near future). This means that the direct relationship between the *homo faber* and his product has been lost, in favour of control and efficiency.¹⁵ Work has become labor, Arendt argues. Mechanization uses only the labor capacity of the human being; the power and efficiency of rhythmical repetition that the single body can offer. Mass production, which is of course the most tangible form of this thinking, channels ‘natural forces’, Arendt argues, understanding production as a continuous, almost natural process. Within this perspective, all standards that come from the category of work have lost their relevance. It is this process of diminishing the *homo faber* into an *animal laborans* and that an impact on the world. This transformation might even be understood literally, if we see images and hear stories of and the terrible working-conditions of dressmakers in Bangladesh or India, cell-phone production in China, or even the de-humanized environments of business districts at the outskirts of many cities in Europe.¹⁶ ‘One thing is certain’, Arendt writes in a colloquial passage,

‘the continuous automatic process of manufacturing has not only done away with the “unwarranted assumption” that “human hands guided by human brains represent the optimum efficiency,” but with the much more important assumption that the things of the world around us should depend upon human design and be built in accordance with human standards of beauty. In place of utility and beauty, which are the standards of the world, we have come to design products that still fulfil certain “basic functions” but whose shape will be primarily determined by the operation of the machine. The “basic functions” are of course the functions of the human animal’s life, but the product itself – not only its variations but even the “total change to a new product” – will depend entirely upon the capacity of the machine.’¹⁷

The impact of changes likewise on the art of construction is beyond discussion. Efficient production of building materials affects the formal possibilities of buildings, as does the efficient production of buildings themselves. In other words, the propelling emphasis on efficiency behind building practices is tangible – affecting the full range of construction, from the production of materials to the process of building itself, from the implementation of tools and instruments to the limitations of manpower. Efficient use of cranes and other instruments needed on the building site has affected the layout of streets and the architecture of slabs. The size of the lorry limits the possibilities of spatial articulation. On site, the limited responsibilities of each craftsman has a large effect on the quality of the final object. These aspects place more questions on the possibilities and the position of the designer. Insisting upon these remarks does not mean however that we must overlook the opposite effect as well. The invention of new materials has obviously had its impact on architecture – it is not an overestimation to describe this impact ‘beyond imagination’. Without the introduction of reinforced concrete, steel trusses, cranes, elevators and escalators, there would have been no skyscrapers and warehouses, the large span of the Golden Gate Bridge would not have been achieved, nor the sculptural forms that Brutalism has offered to the world.¹⁸

This is an important horizon. Within the field of architecture there clearly is a strong relationship between instrument and process, tool and objective, (new) materials and result. This urges us once more to consider ‘what we are doing’ as architects, since it questions the role of the designer in-between these codes,

15. Here we are once again go back to José Saramago’s novel *The Cave*, in which this aim of efficiency is at the core of the narrative, which we discussed in the previous chapter. The aim of control, perfection and efficiency is at the cost of differences, variation, and the presence of the *homo faber* in the work itself. José Saramago, *The Cave* (London: The Harvill Press, 2002)

16. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 150; Klein, *No Logo*, 234-264

17. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 151-152; Arendt quotes here John Diebold, who was an American businessman, a pioneer in the field of automation. John Diebold, *Automation: The Advent of the Automatic Factory* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1952), 67, 38-45

18. See for instance Adrian Forty, *Concrete and Culture, A Material History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016); Nick Bullock, *Building the Post War World. Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Britain* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002)

19.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*,
151-152

20.
Ibid., 140

conventions, standards, rules and developments. What role can the architect have? What position can design occupy in-between these forces? What if these developments disturb the significance of design? Arendt, after all, argues in the quote cited above, that the 'world around us should depend upon human design and be built in accordance with human standards of either utility or beauty.'¹⁹ This can be used as a perfect description of architectural work: providing the design for particular objects in the world without making a particular distinction between utility or beauty, but searching instead for the perfect balance between the two.

Although the architect as a worker today can be distinguished from the craftsman on the construction site, Arendt would not regard their 'work' differently. This distinction is not so much that of a clean office and a dirty working space. Both aspects of architecture are regarded fabrication and reification, and still can be understood as 'the work of our hands', to be 'lord and master' of materials. Most of the fabrication of architectural offices is obviously focused on this particular aspect of the world that Arendt stresses in the quote above; the need for human design behind every object that enters the world. There is 'office-work' preceding the work on the construction site. 'The actual work of fabrication,' she writes, 'is performed under the guidance of a model in accordance with which the object is constructed'. This model can be an image held by the eye or in the mind, or a blueprint in which the image has already found its tentative materialization through work.'²⁰ It is obvious architectural work can be best understood as mainly focused on this development of 'designs'. It is these 'designs' that are the thoughtful and careful aspects of architecture: bricks are not coming together randomly, they are placed carefully, according to a pre-conceived plan. Spaces are made in particular forms, according to a thoughtful plan. This does not mean that construction is not a part of architecture; architecture is limited by thoughtfulness and carefulness in the act of construction. This would limit architecture to the deliberations of the mind. I will come back on this aspect of thinking and reflexivity as an aspect of architectural design in the last part of this chapter, but at this point we need to reject such a limitation. Architecture should be regarded in all of its broad aspects, from the daily study of precedents to the careful task of drawing, from the reflection upon requirements to the evaluation of a construction site and discussing of possibilities with a client. All of this belongs to the category of work, and it is important to state that clearly, particularly when facing contemporary practices in the building industries in which architectural offices receive very limited assignments from their clients; to only deliver the design, sometimes only the design of the façade of a particular building, while the efficient layout of the building and the execution of the design is offered to consultancy offices. This is a limitation of architecture in delivering beauty; an artistic statement, an iconic image, without offering responsibility for the whole; the layout, the processing, the construction, the integration of interior and exterior appearance. This is once again a limitation of architecture in terms of the 'beauty' of 'buildings', or even to make them acceptable to the public. Although this seems to address architecture on the level of thinking and imagination, it actually rejects the unity of design and overlooks characteristics of architecture that are otherwise hidden. It does not understand architecture as a complete entity, the design process as work of hands and reflections of the mind, reflections upon program, situation and future, and the work of hands to offer a program its proper appearance in the world in its particular place – an appearance that is not limited to the façade but one that unites outside and inside, from the interior to the exterior. It is disconnected from the building itself as something made and conceived separately – in other words

it stays superficial, limiting architecture to the thickness of its skin. It clearly approaches architecture through the lens of labor: after all, the skin can be quickly re-designed if it is no longer in style. This is again an example of what is discussed above in the division of processes in making small parts, and the loss of a worldly understanding of fabrication. ‘The mastery of structure and material and the presence of skilled craftsmanship are essential to good architecture,’ Pallasmaa states. ‘The general weakening of our sense of tectonic reality – a weakening intimately related to the emphasis on surface and appearance – is caused partly by the diminishing role of craft in construction but even more so by the growing power of contractors and by the increasing importance of short term economics at the expense of architectural value. Architecture is too often viewed as a short-lived speculative commodity, rather than as a cultural and metaphysical manifestation that frames our collective understanding and values. Although projects that question or deride this significant social role are now celebrated. But architecture cannot escape its foundations in real experience: ‘In an age of simulation and virtual reality, we still long for a home.’²¹

It is remarkable to note that the ‘space where the architect works’ is regularly is called an ‘office’ (or ‘bureau’ in Dutch, which in English means a ‘desk’). By using this term ‘office’, it is clear that the ‘work’ of architects today can be mainly described as ‘office-work’: a desk, a desktop, and lots of meetings. Some architects have called their office an ‘atelier’ (like the French Architect Jean Nouvel, who has called his firm Ateliers Jean Nouvel) or ‘studio’ (like Herman Hertzberger, who called his firm Architectuurstudio Herman Hertzberger), while architecture-schools have named particular parts of their buildings a ‘laboratory’ (like the Architectural Laboratory of Princeton University, where students can test building systems, technology, materials). These alternative descriptions of the architectural office and of education spaces certainly evoke a different atmosphere: it refers to the working places of artists (where the artist creates his artworks, where assistants work together, or where the master-craftsman teaches skills to his/her protégés), or it refers to the working place of the scientist; where the new and the unknown is discovered, tested, and stressed, and where future knowledge is produced. Sometimes even the word agency is used, which evokes the image of action (and protest), to be active not inside the office or behind a desk, but outside, and to work with collaborators, inhabitants, and other interested parties on the revival of post-industrial spaces, abandoned environments or another given part of the city. However, all of these words evoke spaces that offer room for working with hands and working together. These are not offices with a corridor and a range of spaces apart, but large spaces that make communication possible – to see and hear what happens elsewhere, to collaborate, to bump into each other, to use your hands, Within these large spaces lie models and drawings. There are photographs and memos, rough sketches, working drawings, books – all of which shows work-in-progress. These spaces breathe a different atmosphere too. Architectural offices are more often not clean, white, well-organized spaces (although some offices reveal images of their working-spaces as if celebrating a minimalist outlook), but are instead rough spaces, where smells and sound reveal the making of models, the cutting of wood, card, and foam.

However, imagine the situation of an architect receiving the assignment from a client to design a particular building, for instance the entrance pavilion to a cemetery. The architect starts to have conversations with the client, with users of the cemetery, as well as with the employees that actually work there or with

21.

Juhani Pallasmaa, ‘Toward and Architecture of Humility, On the Value of Experience’, in: William S. Saunders (ed.), *Judging Architectural Value, A Harvard Design Magazine Reader* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, 101

22.

With 'form', I of course do not mean the formal shape, but I have instead a broader meaning in mind – the form of the intervention, which is materialized in plans, sections, ideas about atmosphere, sequence, routing, and so on.

23.

Robert Gutman, 'Architecture: The Entrepreneurial Profession' in: Dana Cuff and John Wriedt (eds.), *Architecture from the Outside in, Selected essays by Robert Gutman* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 37

24.

Dana Cuff, *Architecture, The Story of Practice* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: The MIT Press, 1992), 13

neighbours, and begins to start analysing, sketching, drawing more precisely, building models, sketching again, adjusting the design by talking again to the parties involved, sketching again, and drawing the design more precisely yet again, but at a certain level he/she comes back to the commissioner with an initial plan, after which the process develops in cycles of design adjustment until the appropriate 'form' has been found.²² The process described here relates to the image of 'the romantic loner', as the sociologist Robert Gutman has described it, which was the case in my project in Blankenberge. In this case, the architect acts as a 'free, independent practitioner, operating more or less on his own, and cultivating personal relationships with an understanding and appreciative client.'²³ However if an office with several employees receives an assignment the process will work differently. Where the employees present their research and their design proposals for approval to the architect involved, there is internal debate and discussion within the office; collaboration on the project addressing the given assignments, insights gained by employees or by the 'master-architect' to direct the employees in proceeding with their work. This image is of course much closer to everyday reality, in which architecture must always be stressed as a collective effort. 'The design of our built environment emerges from collective action,' Dana Cuff states in her reflection upon architectural practices. 'Typically design is believed to be an individual's creative effort, conjuring up images of late nights at the drawing board. Indeed, this is a significant part of making buildings, but it is not sufficient to explain the design process. Those who argue that the individual architect determines *what* the building will be, and all such issues of practice, clients, and collective action concern *how* the design will be implemented, are simply separating content from method, form from means, while overlooking the integral balance necessarily struck between them.'²⁴

The process of drawing and redrawing is initiated by the work of our hands. It is taking sketch-paper and draping it over the plan of an area, picking up lines that are important in the environment not just once, but several times, each time emphasising different aspects, until one is able to grasp the essential local characteristics. It is to take pictures of the environment, to make notes and sketches that emphasize its remarkable aspects. It is taking the drawings of the plan, the sketches, and the photos and superimposing them, drawing them again or making collages. It is printing the map on a different scale and drawing the context once again. It is making brief sketches of ideas that come to mind for a possible intervention. It consists even of making sketches that may not immediately seem to fit, but are nevertheless produced by the hand. It is drawing the required programmatic spaces and their relationships, exploring different relationships, and superimposing them on their given location. It can be the analysis of a building that is near, or programmatically/architecturally close, to what comes to mind. Such sketches can be quick, one over another, drawn with a soft and thick pencil. Other architects will use a hard and sharp pencil, as well as a ruler. One will use gridded paper with a marker, whereas another will use fine liners of differently-sized pen points. The dark and quick lines reveal emotion, while straight and light lines evoke precision. The Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa stresses that this process of design, of drawing lines on paper, of emphasising characteristics, of propelling possible interventions as a form of embodied imagination, developing a special relationship between what is drawn by the hand and what is evoked in the mind of the designer. Architecture, he writes, 'is a product of the knowing hand. The hand grasps the physicality and materiality and turns it into a concrete image. In the arduous processes of designing, the hand often takes the lead in probing for a

vision, a vague inking that it eventually turns into a sketch, a materialisation of an idea. The pencil in the architect's hand is a bridge between the imagining mind and the image that appears on the sheet of paper.²⁵ In his book *The Thinking Hand* he stresses this relationship between hand and mind, particularly with the activity of drawing in mind. He argues that the mediation between image and mind through pencil and hand vanishes at the moment of design. Imagination takes over, and the hand materializes what is imagined. The architect, he argues, does not see only lines, rather 'he is envisioning the object itself, and in his mind holding the object in his hand or occupying the space being designed. During the design process, the architect occupies the very structure that the lines of the drawing represent.'²⁶ Nevertheless, the process of sketching and imagining is uncontrollable. Drawing, he states, is an embodied act – an 'act' here is as unpredictable as an 'action' described by Arendt. 'When sketching an imagined space, or an object being design, the hand is in a direct and delicate collaboration and interplay with mental imagery. The image arises simultaneously with an internal mental image and the sketch mediated by the hand. It is impossible to know which appeared first, the line of the drawing on the paper or the thought, or a consciousness of an intention. In a way, the image seems to draw itself through the human hand.'²⁷ This 'work of our hands' is, according to Pallasmaa, translates literally to 'work with our hands'. The sociologist and urban designer Richard Sennett, in his well-known 2008 study on craftsmanship, also stresses the importance of 'handwerk' when he quotes a 'young architect' employed at MIT who observed 'when you draw a site, when you put in the counter lines and the trees, it becomes ingrained in your mind. You come to know the site in a way that is not possible with the computer. ... You get to know a terrain by tracing and retracing it, not by letting the computer "regenerate" it for you.'²⁸ It is very significant that Sennett presents this remark as stated by an architect (a practitioner, not a theorist) who is young (it is not a matter of false nostalgia) who works at MIT (which is a very innovative and progressive school of architecture). The point is that architecture – intervention in the world – requires effort, extensive research, close reading, and careful mapping of traces. Architecture, as it is rooted in the world, is not so much about the ideas of the genius; the image of the Romantic age of the artist as we have seen in the previous chapter, but is instead descriptive of extensive 'handwerk', reiterating the challenges of existing ideas and desires.

Lots of architects have reflected on the important matter of drawing for the profession of architecture in similar perspectives. 'For me,' Samuel Mockbee argued for instance, 'drawing and painting are the initial influences for the making of architecture. The sketch is always out front. It sees ahead and deeper into what is already on the paper.'²⁹ To most architects this perspective is recognizable, although every architect may use different words, produce different drawings, and even use different tools to draw. The American architect Steven Holl is well known due to his watercolours.³⁰ [IMAGE 6.13] Le Corbusier, as well as Oscar Niemeyer, was able to draw using only a small number lines to illustrate his preliminary ideas. Herman Hertzberger is known because of his series of sketches that mediate between the overarching idea and the subservient ideas or details.³¹ The fine-lined drawings of Alvaro Siza, which sometimes address his projects but often reify scenes from a café, profiles of people, or portraits, have also gained attention.³² [IMAGE 7.2] Interestingly enough, Siza argues that these sketches, although having nothing to do with architecture, help his work to look better, to see and to understand. Drawing, he states, is a tool used to develop the acuity of vision. The capacity of the architect, he argues, is to be able to see.³³ However, this list of architects and their particular methods of notation are obviously random

25.

Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand, Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Chichester: Wiley and Sons, 2009), 59

26.

Ibid., 59

27.

Ibid., 91-92

28.

Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 40

29.

Mockbee, 'The Rural Studio', 112

30.

cf. Steven Holl, *Written in Water* (Baden: Lars Müller Publisher, 2002)

31.

cf. Herman Van Bergeijk and Deborah Hauptman, *Notations of Herman Hertzberger* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 1998)

32.

In an interview he has positions his habit of drawing daily against the pressure of running an architectural practice: 'What I mean is there's a lot of pressure and determination to solve problems. And drawing frees you and lets you leave it all behind. It's therefore a question of relaxing, resting, and giving your mind a break. Apart from the city drawings and landscapes, as an architect I greatly need to feel the spirit of the city, the place in which I'm working. You can understand many things through drawing. The advantage of drawings is that you can be analytical and get to feel the environment all at the same time. Through drawing you can detect the general feeling of the environment, therefore it's not just by chance ... that I put people in many of my drawing.' A bit further in the interview, he refers to a reflection of Alvaro Aalto on drawing: 'Alvar Aalto says that "at times from things disconnected from the project in question, and have nothing to do with it, something comes out that allows you continue on with the project." And it's true. I feel exactly the same way. Ideas can often originate even from drawings that have nothing to do with architecture. What I mean is that drawing is a mix of work and pleasure.' Raul Betti and Greta Ruffino (eds.), *Alvaro Siza, Viagem sem Programa Interviews and Portraits* (Bologna: Red Publishing, 2012), [no pagenumbers added]

33.

cf. <http://www.arcspace.com/the-architects-studio/alvaro-siza-sketches/> [visited December 21, 2016]

34. Mockbee, 'The Rural Studio', 112

35. Zeuler R.M. de A. Lima, *Lina Bo Bardi* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2013), 74

36. Albenya Yaneva, *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture. An Ethnography of Design* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2009), 11

37. Rem Koolhaas/OMA, *Content*, exhibition in The Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin 2013

and very limited, since they focus only on hand drawings and sketches. This particular imagination of the design process and the work of our hands belongs to a particular way of designing in which, as Mockbee stated, the hand visualizes what is in the mind of the designer, or seems to capture ideas before they are even understood by the same mind. It is, in other words, a reciprocal process – the mind is in conversation with the hand. Mockbee urges that such sketches, for him, always embody emotion. They are not conceptual, rational, nor theoretically driven. 'In the beginning,' he states, 'it is important to allow the imagination to move freely without any influence from a preconceived form. It's a mark that suggests the possibility of an idea. For me, it's the act of drawing that allows the hand to come into accord with the heart.'³⁴ This of course urges a certain form of ethics in architecture, a stance that is more close to the actual work of the designer. This perspective, although different, is also stressed by the architect Lina Bo Bardi. 'Architecture, as an art of design, lives off drawing,' she states. 'However, not in the sense of an artwork [but] in the [mathematical] sense it had in the Renaissance.' She insists on avoiding pictorial representation, criticizing students who 'draw in threaded lines; when not in impressionistic chiaroscuro' and architects who use 'spectacular presentation'. Instead, she calls for simplicity. To her, drawing has a moral purpose: 'Professional ethics start with artistic modesty.'³⁵

Although drawing is stressed here to urge architectural design as a work of our hands, this of course is not the only way to propel imagination and to grasp the assignment at hand. There are multiple ways to design and multiple tools that can be used, for instance the use of physical 3D models. Models sometimes are used to investigate the project as an object, or to explore smaller details, to stimulate the light or to make something tangible in order to test what was initially in the mind of the designer. Whereas drawing is a quicker instrument used to visualize what is imagined, the advantage of the model – which of course is a much slower instrument for materializing ideas – is its third dimension: its physicality. Once again, this is a matter of the hand working on the project as if it were an object in a workable format. The promise of the model is that it can be viewed as a whole. It can be held at eye-level so that the designer can see (perhaps through) the object at eye-level as well. It has its own materials, depth and texture. It immediately evokes the imagination, as do lines on paper – it shows immediately how certain we can be about ideas regarding section and sequence, layout and structure, coming together or needing to be revisited once more. Models are often more easily understood by non-architects as well, while most of the drawings produced by the architectural office only serve to enlighten the profession itself. However the model is also not completely realistic. Due to pragmatic and practical circumstances, adaptations are needed in terms of materials and construction. Often, as an instrument of production, models abstract what is meant, emphasizing particular aspects of light, space, or exterior, and are simply cut out of card, wood or foam. The sociologist Albenya Yaneva, who studied the practice of Rem Koolhaas and his office OMA, emphasizes that the tables full of models from previous projects in his Rotterdam office are central points in the space. The start of each project is always a gathering of several architects and engineers arranged around such a table.³⁶ This symbolizes that to work on new cases is not so much a completely new start, but is instead the act of building upon previous experiences and proposals. The model used as part of the working methods of Koolhaas is also important, as he has revealed in the exhibition *Content*,³⁷ where he showed the colloquial amount of working models made by his office, such as for the proposed

extension to the Marcel Breuer-designed building of the Whitney Museum in Manhattan. Every idea and every slightly different detail in a design is reified in a model. This series of models offers Koolhaas the opportunity to judge the design quickly, and to direct his assistants in the right direction.³⁸ ^[IMAGE 7.3] This series of models shows that Koolhaas is searching for buildings as objects, for architecture as a type of spectacle, for mind-blowing structures and impressive construction. OMA's models also show that there is no alternative so easily accessible to the human mind, so easily affecting our imagination of possibilities. As Adam Caruso, one of the principals of the London based office Caruso St. John (which works often with models), argues: 'Working with models is an open way of working; we [he refers to Peter St. John, the other principal of the office, HT], both can easily make changes to the model. ... A model embodies ideas quite literally. It forces you to resolve things in three dimensions to some degree. But it is simultaneously still "open": you can see other things, discover other possibilities in it.'³⁹ As he continues his explanation for choosing the model as in instrument of design, he argues that the model is closest alternative to an empirical investigation of acquired ideas, one that allows us to transform these ideas towards real architectural interventions. As he explains in reference to their project Brick House (London, UK, 2001-2005): 'We studied a range of lighting situations in different parts of the house. You can only get a feeling for this through a kind of empirical investigation. Trial and error, investigating again and again how light falls in the models. With Photoshop and drawing you just can lie. There is no cause and effect. With rendering programs there is, but they are too hyperreal for us. Working with a model is much faster: you can cut a window in a wall, or you can put tracing paper on the skylights and see what the effect is. And it's real!'⁴⁰ Caruso thus not only stresses the 'reality' of the model – the physicality and its three-dimensionality, but also urges the immediate relationship between what the hands are producing and what the mind registers. What models offer, compared to the drawing, we might state, is this accessible view of the whole and its physicality. This concept of accessibility is important: it is partly evoked by the abstraction that is needed to build the model, by the tension between the urge for realism in its physicality and the adaptations made for scale and aim, between the object in itself as well as its means towards another end. It can be completed through imagination – or better said: it evokes imagination.^[IMAGE 7.4] This is the most important characteristic of the model, Peter Eisenman argues in his preface to the catalogue of the 1976 exhibition *Idea as Model*, the capacity to render the imagined visible and to provide space for the unexpected.⁴¹ Moreover, models – as well as drawings – have a life of their own. They are not simply tools in a process of design, nor are they simply a representation of a particular proposal, but they have their own merits, their own role within the architectural office (a role that differs from office to office), and they can even be an end in themselves. This is an important insight: in the field of architecture, the end is not only the construction of a particular building, but also the in-between moments or processes that may not lead to a constructed building are part of the field. Models, sketches, drawings, diagrams, and all other products that come out of the hands of the designer contribute to architectural knowledge, to the imagination of the future, to propelling potentialities – or better said: insight into the world.

Even today, this particular form of architectural work and practice is for a large part still the work of our hands, despite the work of our hands being increasingly replaced by the computer, the CAD model and the 3D printer. It is important to see how models and drawings are still present in architectural offices, even in

38.

Rem Koolhaas, Brendan McGetrick, Simon Brown, *Content* (Köln: Taschen Verlag, 2004) See also Jan Willem Neutelings and Michiel Riedijk, *At Work. Neutelings Riedijk Architects* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2005)

39.

Job Floris and Hans Teerds, 'On Models and Images. An Interview with Adam Caruso' in: Anne Holthrop, Job Floris, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Models, The Idea, the Representation and the Visionary, OASE #84* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2011), 129

40.

Ibid., 129

41.

Peter Eisenman, 'Preface', in: Richard Pommer, Kenneth Frampton and Silvia Kolbowski (eds.), *Idea as Model*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1981), 1

42.

Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand*, 57

43.

For a discussion on (subjective) experience versus 'to-be-experienced', in German language the difference between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, see Gerard Visser, *De druk van de beleving. Filosofie en kunst in een domein van overgang en ondergang* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij SUN, 1998), 26-30

44.

With that term I of course refer to Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner, How Professionals Think in Action* (London: Ashgate, 2013)

those offices that are completely are digitalized, where drawings almost never are printed, and where models are also digital, where models are assembled not by the designers themselves, but printed or outsourced to specialist firms. To be surrounded by tangible 'products' in the office-space seems to be important, not only to reveal produced buildings to clients that come to visit the office, but also to make present the 'end' of the work for the workers themselves. Whereas drawings offer only particular viewpoints (and therefore fragmented imagery of the object) the model presents the entire project. As Pallasmaa argues, 'physical models are incomparable aids in the design process of the architect and the designer. The three-dimensional material model speaks to the hand and the body as powerfully as to the eye, and the very process of constructing a model simulates the process of construction.'⁴² This insight suggests that, even in a time of increased automation and instrumentalization, to approach architectural design still as hand-work, to work with hand-cutted (working) models as well as with hand-sketched drawings, remains at the root of our divergent contemporary practices.

However, I wish to take us back once again to the process of design as it is meant to become, to lord and master over materials and space. The intriguing aspect of the final plan is that, despite the interaction with the client, with future users, with neighbours and all other advisors, it can be described as the particular view of a particular designer. This counts more for the initial plan, presented and adjusted afterwards, but the final plan is still something that cannot be described as the single answer to a question. Another designer, although similar in contact with the client, users, and others involved, may come up with a completely different proposal. Even the same designer would not come up with the same plan twice. In other words, the plan that is presented represents the best response to the assignment the designer can think of at that particular moment. This 'best solution' of course is affected not just by the program and the request of the clients (architectural design is not maths), but by the architect's subjective interpretation of his/her assignments, which is informed by the experience and skills of the designer, by his/her worldview or architectural convictions, by personal taste or objectives.

We might describe this aspect of design as the subjective aspect of architecture. The term subjective may of course move us in a wrong direction. After all, our experience of architecture is also subjective. No two human beings share the exact same experience while entering a space. The subjective nature of sensuous experience, which is discussed extensively within the fields of philosophy, psychology, and anthropology, is important within our reflections upon the relationship between architecture and the world.⁴³ However, at this point we address the subjectivity of the design activity – the subjective reflection upon the assignment, the subjective judgment of a particular site, the subjective desire that fuels the design process and so on. As already mentioned, no two architects will draw the same proposal, even if they are given at the very same moment the very same assignment. In other words, the assignment-brief will already be read subjectively. It might be unexpected to stress this point, but the subjective nature of this aspect of design is important. Against certain developments in the broader field of architecture, developments that try to make design more objective and more evidence-based, we have to understand that the subjectivity of design; ideas that are craved, discussed, challenged, proposed, and accepted by people, binds this work to the world. I even will go as far as to call it the worldliness condition of architectural intervention. Architecture is work, not labor. Or better stated, it is 'reflective work'⁴⁴ which cannot be automated – or which can only be automated

at the cost of its worldliness. Arendt's notion of the 'world', even if we see it as the 'world-in-common', does not thrive upon objectification. On the contrary, it requires the subjective reflection of the professional. The act of caring for the world, which Arendt stresses as the very essence of culture, requires subjective but knowledgeable interventions.

This remark should not be read as a plea for a design-ethics of 'everything goes and anything is possible.' On the contrary, we can better understand this as an observation, which is also supported by the critical response of Arendt to mass production and the trend to divide every process of making into small, simple steps (which shows a tendency towards objectification and efficiency, as we touched upon in the previous chapter via José Saramago's novel *The Cave*). Each of these steps requires a simple operation carried out by someone involved, handling a machine or putting some parts together. There is responsibility, but only on the level of the single jackscrew. This model produces only similar things, there only is a single prototype that is simply multiplied to unprecedented levels. The opposite approach means that the worker is addressed in his skills for delivering something for which he can take full responsibility of the whole product. Such production depends on personal knowledge and craftsmanship that is acquired in the past, first and foremost through work carried out on previous projects, but also through childhood experiences and the architectural education obtained. Here we touch upon another aspect of the relationship between the human body and construction, as is emphasized in Schwartz and Mies van der Rohe's perspectives. This is not simply limited to my own experiences, although it is substantiated by being involved in construction, and the production of sketches, drawings and models. The knowledge of space, which is partly related to the other subjective aspect of architecture; the sensuous experience of space and place, is challenged by the expertise that is embodied within the field of architecture, an expertise that is acquired over time. This begins with the pre-modern period, in which the architect was not yet separate from the construction site, later followed by the personal experiences of spaces and materials. The human body and mind acquires this information, while architectural education and training helps to tap into what has been referred to by Michael Polanyi as *tacit* knowledge; to make it profitable and ready for use.⁴⁵ The conception of a building and the construction of it, along with the knowledge of how to build it, has become part of architectural knowledge, which is processed in the drawings that are offered to the craftsman on the site.

However, particularly in situations within architectural practice, the proposed design always reveals the particular position of the designer facing the acquired project. This position always reflects the program and location, on program and representation. The design, to state it vice versa, reveals something of the position of the designer themselves. This also makes it difficult for designers to look at their designs from a distance and to truly reflect upon what they are doing. I will return to this last remark later, since it is an important aspect of architecture acting as a public good; to be able to critically judge one's own designs.

7.2.3 *Innovation and Instrumentalization*

Juhani Pallasmaa, Richard Sennett, Samuel Mockbee and Adam Caruso, all stress the importance of physical working with hands: to draw, to sketch, and to construct models. Mockbee, as we have seen previously, goes one step further. He also urges architects to actually work with and amongst their clients. As is well-known, his Rural Studio stands shoulder to shoulder with their clients at the

45. Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago (Ill.): Chicago University Press, 2013); with thanks to my former colleague in Delft, Lara Schrijver, who established a research-group investigating tacit knowledge in architecture, for this reference. Polanyi's concept of knowledge that is inherited and difficult to share, is an important perspective in respect to the act of design. There is much expertise within the designer that is not easily shared, but that certainly thrives intuition and judgment within the process: from visiting the site to drawing the first sketches, and from talking to the client to talking to the contractor.

46.

Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, Jeremy Till, *Spatial Agency, Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2011), 193

47.

Andrea Oppenheimer Dean and Timothy Hursley, *Rural Studio. Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 4

48.

Stan Allen, *Practice: Architecture, Technique + Representation* (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2009), 3

49.

Floris and Teerds, 'On Models and Images', 129

construction site. Although prepared in their office space, their drawings are often adapted at the construction site itself, depending upon the available materials and remarks of the client. ^[IMAGE 7.5] This direct relationship between preparation and adaptation, and the dependency upon available materials is encouraged by the environmental philosophy of the office. They work with cheap materials, often donated as left-overs or salvaged from elsewhere, such as from stray bales or car tires. Rural Studio was established in the early nineties, after experience in his own private architectural firm Mockbee/Coker of the increasing amount of work for wealthier people, where it became difficult to find the necessary funding to develop affordable housing for the very poor inhabitants of the American South. With his studio at the Auburn University, he was able to combine pedagogical insight with social compassion, bringing students into the field to design and build houses or small collective buildings, for which they even needed to find funding in order to construct them.⁴⁶ Students thus were learning not simply to draw a building, but to draw it with the client literally looking over their shoulder, the person for whom the building had to work. This characterizes Mockbee's ideal of the architect: to work together, architects and clients alike, with materials 'as found' or 'as given'. This character of course has to do with the critical and social position Mockbee has taken in the field of architecture: to work against poverty with the poor themselves, to be critical towards the status quo. As Mockbee argues, the spirit behind Rural Studio was an eagerness to 'push architecture, social improvement, education, arts, and ideas about the environment.'⁴⁷ For Mockbee, as we have seen, architectural design is a process of aligning the hand with the heart.

The more common approach in architecture, however, is for architects to design and draw, and for craftsmen on the construction site to take the drawings and construct the building according to the plans given to them. Although the architect will be involved in the construction via attending meetings, explaining ideas, and checking the actual construction, the role of the architect is in general quite distanced from the actual construction. The main instrument possessed by the architect to process the construction of the imagined building is the drawing. Similar to the model, the drawings is also an abstraction of reality, particularly since it brings a 3D reality into 2D representations of layout and sections, renderings of particular viewpoints. 'Projections', as Stan Allen calls the drawing, 'are the architect's means to negotiate the gap between idea and material: a series of techniques through which the architect manages to transform reality by necessarily indirect means.'⁴⁸ As buildings become more complex and the architect becomes more distanced from actual practice, more instruments are needed to gain information as well as to communicate imagination. There are of course many other instruments than the drawing that can be used, as touched upon previously: drawings, working drawings, collages, photographic surveys, infographics, diagrams, mass models, sketch models, games, and so on. There is of course also a second layer of tools active in the hands of the designer: the literal extensions of the hands of the architect that draws lines and cuts foam: pencils, rulers, straight edges, French curves, compasses, paper, as well as card, wood, foam, knives, scissors, glue, and so on. Most of these instruments and tools are tangible – indeed things that can be grasped, transported, presented, used, thrown away and taken up once again. However, diagrams and infographics also show that a new instrument, the computer, has entered the practice of architecture. Caruso, in the interview quoted above, stresses the impact of the computer, and reveals that he does not yet embrace the possibilities the computer offers.⁴⁹ He places particular emphasis on rendering-programs, which he states as being

hyperreal. He makes this remark just before he stresses once again the importance of physicality, which is represented in the limited character of the model – which, as is known, is the preferred design-instrument of his design-method. He does not only like the tangibility of the model, but also the certain amateurism of cutting and gluing, as is clear in his examples of their working with models. Cutting windows or taping their openings afterwards shows a clear image of work-in-progress, of investigation and exploration of possibilities, of having new ideas or defining alternatives before testing them immediately. The computer model and its rendering programs do not have the same limitations. Windows can be made everywhere, they can be made immediately bigger and smaller if needed, and even in the middle of such a process the outcome is always smooth and crisp; suggesting finality. It is hyperreal, Caruso states, since it has lost the resistance of the hand-mind connection, which although somewhat difficult and inefficient, has the quality of immediately understanding of our actions.⁵⁰ Or, to state it differently: it lacks the sensuousness of what we are doing, although the newest techniques try to overcome this through augmented reality or even the possibility to be bodily and sensibly stimulated in the actions within virtual reality.

These new techniques, particularly developed and applied during the last decades, effectively and actively thrive upon the hands of the designer from what has been made apart. I mean this in a literal sense first and only in a second instance metaphorically: most of the steps in design described above are being done in and with the computer, and do not end in producing a particular drawing. Of course, the hand is doing things with the keyboard and the mouse, just like a drawing pencil on a drawing-board, but the result is tangible (outside the frame of the computer) only at the end of the process. In the newest processes, there does not need to be a tangible working drawing that shows the wall in the construction site: it is processed in real-time to the constructor (or even to the robot that laser-cuts the required pieces) without the interaction of a craftsman. Of course, neat diagrams are produced, along with nice renderings and other images that may even reach photographic quality. However, in the newest techniques the craftsmen is not involved, and the architect only serves to communicate the ideas to the commissioner and the public. The new techniques affect not only the process but also the final product of making, we can argue. Architectural design moves slowly from the series of sketches and drawings to smooth and clear-cut diagrams, to 3D computational models, mappings and analysis, to visualizations and the elaboration of data.⁵¹ Architectural design thereafter loses its character of processing a series of trial-and-error developments that form a tangible series of in-between products, rather than only a singular, crisp-ended project. There is something hidden in the series of hand drawings, sketches and models, which can be put on the table to literally represent a series that reveals the development of ideas and reflections – something that is no longer tangible within the use of only diagrams and infographics as a replacement.⁵²

Although these new instruments and design methods can still be described as ‘work of our hands’, Pallasmaa and Sennett also urge for criticism in the introduction of the computer within the design process, particularly regarding the loss of the hand-mind connection, as we have seen before. The computer, they argue, can be of help, but ultimately design is a product of ‘hand-werk’. It is driven by the body and mind and by embodied knowledge. ‘The architect moves about freely in the imagined structure, however large and complex it may be, as if walking in a building and touching all its surfaces and sensing their materiality and texture’, Pallasmaa states in his aforementioned book *The Thinking Hand*. He

50.
Ibid., 129

51.
On the methods of ‘mapping’, see the introductory article of my Delft colleague Marc Schoonderbeek to the book *Border Conditions*, in which he urges mapping as method ‘in order to make the immanent spatial conditions [of a particular complex and ambiguous place] accessible [to the designer], while at the same time remaining faithful to the complexity and multiplicity of the phenomena and properties at hand.’ Schoonderbeek thus argues that the method of mapping is able to reveal all sorts of contextual characteristics, which is not limited to space and phenomenological, but includes cultural, sociological and political conditions, without simplifying the matter. It thus acknowledges the complexity of the world, in this case particularly in what he has called border-conditions, which was the central theme of the research program and design-studio’s he offered for more than a decade at the Delft University, and of which this book reveals particular results. The accessibility that is stressed as the merit of mapping actually is the map itself: it brings together in an ‘almost tangible’ drawing [the map] a measured, circumscribed and demarcated territory. What he actually means is that the map is able to bring together very different and subjective experiences of a particular situation, a journey and its findings, personal spatial experiences and observations, particularly by bringing these back to the measurable territory and by stressing the translation of these subjective perspectives and observations in a ‘comprehensive notation system’. In other words, mappings intermediates between complexity and simplification, subjectivity and measurability, experience and projection. Marc Schoonderbeek, ‘The Microscope as Hammer’ in: Marc Schoonderbeek (ed.), *Border Conditions*, (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura Press, 2010), 27

52.
The office of Rem Koolhaas certainly has had a leading role in the implementation of new techniques of analyzing, particularly through the establishing of AMO, the research driven counterpart of OMA. The methods and approaches developed at AMO and OMA has been pushed to their limits by former employees, as in the work of MVRDV and BIG.

53.
Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand*, 59

54.
Pallasmaa, 'Toward and Architecture of Humility', 99

55.
Antoine Picon, 'Architecture and the Virtual: Towards a New Materiality', in: A. Krista Sykes (ed.), *Constructing a New Agenda, Architectural Theory 1993-2009* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 283

56.
Picon, 'Architecture and the Virtual', 286-287

57.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 139, 144

58.
The American architect Greg Lynn presents this seeking for other forms as a matter of connecting two opposite responses to modernity that however try to deal both with context as well as with the heterogeneity that is inherent to life and to the world. On the one hand, he urges the architecture of Venturi, Scott Brown, as well as the deconstructivist-approach, as urging heterogeneity. On the other hand, he urges the (critical) regionalism approach of Kenneth Frampton, as trying to overcome heterogeneity with emphasizing a unifying intervention. The new possibilities in architecture, Lynn argues, is that it offers the possibility to do both at once. 'To arrest differences in conflicting forms', he argues, 'often precludes many of the more complex possible connections of the forms of architecture to larger cultural fields. A more pliant architectural sensibility values alliances, rather than conflicts, between elements. Pliancy implies first an internal flexibility and second a dependence on external forces for self-definition.' Greg Lynn, 'Architectural Curvilinearity: The Folded, the Pliant, and the Supple', in: A. Krista Sykes (ed.), *Constructing a New Agenda, Architectural Theory 1993-2009* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 35; See also the perspective Kas Oosterhuis develops, for instance in *Architecture Goes Wild*. His perspective seems to be even more intrigued by new possibilities and new technologies, by which it, to my mind, has become close to object-design rather than architectural design. Kas Oosterhuis, *Architecture Goes Wild* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2002)

surprisingly adds an important note: 'This is an intimacy that is surely difficult, if not impossible, to simulate through computer-aided means of modelling and simulation.'⁵³ In other words, the computer cannot replace the intimacy of addressing all of the senses at once, something that happens by pushing a pencil on paper and drawing a line, nor can it replace the power that is needed to handle the knife and to cut the card or to fold the paper – or indeed the precision that is needed (as I experienced to my annoyance) to glue transparent plastics onto a frail wooden structure. 'By reinforcing visual manipulation and graphic production, computer imaging further detaches architecture from its multisensory essence; as design tools, computers can encourage mere visual manipulation and make us neglect our powers of empathy and imagination.'⁵⁴ The architectural historian Antoine Picon also reinforces this point, because he not only recognizes the gap between the intuition of the architect or urban designer (trained in the using that which exists between paper and reality) versus the computerized reality and its changes to architecture and materiality via computer aided design, but also that new 'forms' are possible to produce nowadays that do not fit within the ordinary perceptions of the people that will inhabit the project.⁵⁵ This urges Picon to stress architecture's responsibility to the world once more. Architects need a critical attitude to what they do and how they do it, to what they add to the world and to the everyday spaces of the people inhabiting it.⁵⁶

Arendt is rightly presented amongst philosophers that are critically investigating contemporary technological developments, and is critical about the impact of new technologies in the world. However, this does not mean that she rejects technical developments. On the contrary, the third image that Arendt provides of the human activity of work is innovation, which she immediately relates to the urgency to develop instruments that help to master nature and materials; tools that reduce the burden of labor and propel the work of the *homo faber*.⁵⁷ Innovation somehow belongs to the heart of human nature – it always retains an important aspect of the evolving civilization and culture. Innovation is evoked by the eagerness to change situations in order to make them more comfortable, more adaptable, more workable and less dangerous. Innovation means the invention of new instruments for *homo faber*. To develop tools, Arendt argues, is an activity bound to the world. Innovation is part of the worldliness of the *homo faber*. Tools, as Pallasmaa argues, are extensions of the human being; extensions of working hands. Instruments help to enhance particular skills and to empower human capacities. In architecture the use of tools is quite common. On the building site, there of course are the huge range of regular tools – even tools that are for most human beings quite familiar: the hammer, the screwdriver, the drilling machine, lamps, heaters, scaffolding, cranes, concrete mixers, and so on. Also in the architectural office, there are instruments in use: the computer, sketch paper, pencils, markers, knives, printers and plotters, etc. Although drawings and models can be understood as final products as well, they can also be seen as means towards another end. Most models and drawings, however, represent steps in the process of design, used to investigate certain ideas, and to share these ideas to others involved in the processes of design and construction.

The computer, and in particular drawing programs and communication programs (as well as the meeting between the two in the today's fashionable BIM-model), is regularly presented as a contemporary instrument that is beneficial to design and for working together, as well as enabling complex, otherwise unbuildable non-Euclidian geometries to be made.⁵⁸ The computer as an instrument of archi-

tectural design thus has a mixture of objectives, on the level of the actual design affecting the formal outcome of the design process, as well as on the design as a communal effort or in trying to overcome the subjective aspects of architectural design. I will come back to the latter objective later, but a good example of the first objective might be the ambition of Lars Spuybroek to re-introduce the formal ambitions of the Gothic style in architecture, as he has extensively discussed in his books *The Architecture of Continuity* and *The Sympathy of Things*.⁵⁹ [IMAGE
7.6] Although a certain form is also part of the work of Kas Oosterhuis in his more recent explanations of his objectives, the idea of form is less present in favour of an idea of working together real-time on a very complex and fluid project, while a fluctuating spatial experience in time seems to be introduced. Interestingly enough, the formal ambitions of Spuybroek are extensively embedded in architectural theory and history, and the perspective of Oosterhuis departs from the field of architecture particularly by stressing the technological possibilities of the virtual environment offered by the increasing speed and capacity of the computer and of social networks.

These tools, however, may gain status not as a means to a certain end (which clearly describes tools), but as ends in themselves. However, Arnedt argues that an ongoing emphasis on efficiency and automatization shifts this perspective and turns it upside-down. The human being has become an extension of the tool. Both Sennett and Pallasmaa, in their emphasis on ‘embodied work’ and ‘craftsmanship’, warn against a similar threat, probably due to a certain resistance towards today’s practices, and particularly to the effect of the computer on architectural design. This is somewhat similar to Arendt’s response to automatization in America’s during the 1950s.

This concern also lies behind the critical texts written by Pallasmaa and Sennett. Pallasmaa criticizes today’s architectural practices, not only in *The Thinking Hand* (in which he is concentrating on the design process), but also in his reflections of superfluous objectives in architecture today, for instance in *The Eyes of the Skin*, in which he focuses on the sensuous experience of spaces.⁶⁰ In both perspectives of attention, he urges for the full embodiment of architecture, not only in the sensuousness of buildings and spaces, but also in the sensuousness of design itself. These two aspects belong together, according to Pallasmaa: ‘When sketching an imagined space, or an object being designed, the hand is in a direct and delicate collaboration and interplay with mental imagery. The image arises simultaneously with an internal mental image and the sketch mediated by the hand.’⁶¹ Pallasmaa’s concern, which compels him to stress the importance of the embodiment of architecture, is of course triggered by the introduction of the computer in design. He does not deny the benefits of the computer within architectural design; rather it is the particular un-embodiment of architectural design through the full-use of the computer that threatens the object of architecture. ‘The hand with a charcoal, pencil or pen creates a direct haptic connection between the object, its representation and the designer’s mind; the manual sketch, drawing or physical models is moulded in the same flesh of physical materiality that the material object being designed and the architect himself embody, whereas computer operations and imagery take place in a mathematicised and abstracted immaterial world.’⁶²

Sennett provides a bit of a broader societal scope in *The Craftsman*, stressing the importance of material culture within today’s society. This brings him close Arendt’s concern in *The Human Condition*. As he argues himself in the prologue of his book, the reader is urged to see his contribution as a critical response to Arendt’s treatment of work in *The Human Condition*. Sennett has been a student

59. Lars Spuybroek, *The Architecture of Continuity: Essays and Conversations* (Rotterdam: V2_Publishing, 2008) and Lars Spuybroek, *The Sympathy of Things, Ruskin and the Ecology of Design* (Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/NAI Publishers, 2011)

60. Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin. Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: Wiley, 2005)

61. Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand*, 91

62. Ibid., 95-96

63.
Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 1

64.
Ibid., 1

65.
Ibid., 40

66.
Ibid., 287

67.
Ibid., 287

of Arendt at *The University of Chicago*, and he opens this book by touching upon her somewhere on a street in the Upper West Side of Manhattan in 1962, just after the Cuban missile crisis, when ‘the world was on the brink of the atomic war.’⁶³ This missile crisis worried them, Sennett tells, but also confirmed Arendt’s conviction that what people make should be a topic of public debate. Sennett later writes: ‘She wanted me to draw the right lesson: people who make things usually don’t understand what they are doing.’⁶⁴ In *The Human Condition* Arendt indeed urges the need for political reflection on what is actually done, after she first makes the case that the human being only knows what he makes himself. However in the contemporary situation, she argues that this is not true anymore. Or better said, this is not true anymore in regard to the sciences: the concern of Arendt here is not so much about focusing on the craftsman creating objects, but instead on the scientist investigating the smallest details and the largest outlooks. The long-term impact of the knowledge developed cannot be predicted during the moment of investigation and development. Science has offered an insight into the smallest details, which can actually have an impact on the biggest scale possible, and can even lead to the destruction of man himself. The nuclear developments act as proof to her, as Sennett also writes, that one cannot expect reflection from the scientists and engineers themselves. The scientific attitude is actually an eagerness to know, that is: to do whatever is possible. She thereafter argues that the need for reflection upon what man can or can’t do should be discussed publicly. Sennett rightly questions if the public is ‘skilled’ enough to understand the problem at hand, and his answer is that reflection should be part of the role of the craftsman and the worker. He then proposes that his book is making the case that ‘people can learn about themselves through the things they make, that material cultures matter.’⁶⁵ He proposes this as a correction to Arendt, a correction that may not only have been evoked by the ‘distrust’ felt by Arendt in the worker as Sennett argues, but also since (as he has shown in his previous books on cities and city life that we’ve touched upon previously) he has an even deeper pessimism than Arendt toward the vitality of the public realm. To my mind, Sennett is too brief in his rejection of Arendt’s concern. This is not only because Arendt is not addressing the craftsman per se (instead the scientist is discussed – both in Sennett’s anecdote, but also in her book *The Human Condition*), but also that there is a real tension in society between developments in science and in public reflection upon such developments, where it is not immediately obvious that the scientists themselves are able and willing to start a public discourse on their own approaches, methods, and investigations in terms of their cultural and societal impact. Moreover, Sennett’s negative reading of Arendt’s ‘distrust’ does not value the pivotal role played by material culture and its various aspects in her writings. In *The Human Condition* she argues that ‘what we make’ conditions the human being. The world helps us to survive, but it is not simply a prerequisite for public life. It affects the human being extensively, the human body and mind, and also the human community and public life. Because of this affect, Arendt stresses that a continuous process of public reflection is required. This is particularly the case when considering the increasing influence of the labor attitude within the realm of work, where responsibilities are unclear or scattered. Sennett does not follow Arendt in this distinction between labor and work. He even argues that he wants to ‘rescue the *animal laborans* from the contempt with which Hannah Arendt treated him.’⁶⁶ The perspective he draws is as follows: ‘The working animal can be enriched by the skills and dignified by the spirit of craftsmanship.’⁶⁷ Although Arendt also uses the term ‘craftsman’, she uses it simply as a synonym for the notion of the *homo faber*. In the writings

of Sennett, the position of the craftsman is to be understood as somewhere in-between the *animal laborans* and the *homo faber* – we might state that the distinction is blurred. A baker can of course be a craftsman in his own view, just like a carpenter may be as well. As long as the image of the craftsman emphasizes a certain repetition in their work, where expertise builds upon this repetition in practice, a skill can be developed over time. The actual aim of Sennett is revealed in the last chapters of his book, in which he challenges craftsmen to also reflect (as part of an ethical attitude) upon their work. With his emphasis on the craftsman, he highlights the importance of the development of skills in order to become a good craftsman. Concerning the attitude of the craftsman, for Sennett, this always is a matter of the ‘good’ versus the ‘bad’ craftsman in terms of the skilled or the unskilled craftsman, the craftsman that does not rest in his/her behaviour and repetition, but instead seeks to innovate and experiment. This idea of craftsmanship is stimulating, particularly within the field of architecture, where the term urges architects to properly deal with materials and spaces, with details and construction, to work physically and mentally on the development of a plan that fits the human being. Nevertheless, the question remains if Sennett’s model also covers the researcher in a laboratory. There is a certain expertise, which in the sciences is not immediately covered by repetitive skills but mainly lies in specific knowledge, often captured in a language that is distinct from everyday speech. Bridging the gap towards the public will be difficult, obviously not only from the scientist to the public, but also the other way around. We might argue that Sennett’s model indeed offers a challenge to the sciences – but Arendt’s perspective does this as well: to make it a part of public discussion, the scientist will need to appear in public and make his attempts known in a language that is commonly understood.

However, this model of craftsmanship is difficult and even limiting – particular when thinking of jobs that hardly require any particular skills, or those that do not offer the possibility for reflection and innovation, the types of experiment and talent urged by Sennett as the aspects of craftsmanship. This craftsmanship only partly covers the image of labor and work – and thus leaves part of the activities of the human being uncovered. Moreover, Arendt does not so much stress a difference between the *animal laborans* and the worker if it regards the capacity to think, to reflect, and to act ethically. She was concerned about this capacity, surely – but this concern is applicable to all jobs. Here Arendt stresses in particular the limitations of the role that can be inhabited by the worker, if his position in the production process is limited to the smaller parts of fabrication, parts that in themselves do not have a certain independency.⁶⁸ We also can state that if the repetition of labor enters the field, love for the world is losing terrain. In other words, Sennett’s attempt to rethink craftsmanship is not that far from Arendt’s urge to address work as distinct from labor. Similarly to Arendt, Sennett is also concerned about developments in technology and technics. If Sennett pushes for reflection as part of the attitude of the craftsman, this is in practice quite difficult, particularly regarding the implementation of new technologies. As for instance in the case above, discussing the importance of ‘handwerk’ in design, Sennett shows his concern towards the lack of the ‘embodying’ of the object of study. ‘Instrumentalization’ of the design-process starts to affect the outcome of the design process, Sennett warns, from the misunderstanding of scale, to troubles with materiality and the failure to grasp actual space and its requirements.⁶⁹ This concern is outlined in many more passages which also address concern for the cycle of the sciences, which is not often driven by the eagerness to know, nor by love for the world, but rather: ‘the passion to race drives science; those in the

68. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 143

69. Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 40-42; see also Pallasmaa, who argues that the computer seduces the designer to false precision as well as to apparent finiteness. Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand*, 96

70.
Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 251

71.
Out of the review of Mark Lamster on the book of Phyllis Lambert, *Building Seagram*, in the *New York Times*, this nice story is urged on Phyllis Lambert, when she was 26: 'It was then that she reeled off a missive to her father, a response to his own letter outlining plans for a New York skyscraper. She was not impressed with the undistinguished modern box his architects proposed and let him know: "This letter starts with one word repeated very emphatically," she wrote, "NO NO NO NO NO." Seven more pages followed, in which Ms Lambert alternately scolded, cajoled and lectured her father on architectural history and civic responsibility. There was "nothing whatsoever commendable" in the proposed design, she wrote. "You must put up a building which expresses the best of the society in which you live, and at the same time your hopes for the betterment of this society.'" http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/07/arts/design/building-seagram-phyllis-lamberts-new-architecture-book.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 [accessed April 11th, 2013]

72.
See Christoph Grafe, David de Bruijn, Job Floris and Gus Tielens (eds.), *Commissioning Architecture. OASE #83* (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2010)

grip of this competitive obsession easily lose sight of the value and purpose of what they are doing. They are not thinking in craftsman-time, the slow time that enables reflection.⁷⁰

7.2.4 *The Architectural Entrepreneur*

Until now, we have spoken about architecture and the architect with the image of gaining a commission to design an architectural artefact in mind. In this image, there is a particular client with a certain need, who chooses a specific designer to offer a proposal that answers this need. We need to describe this process cautiously – particularly regarding the client and the specific designer – since the proposal offered has as much to do with the client's preferences, knowledge and approach as with those of the designer. A client is not likely to choose an architectural firm that offers designs which do not fit to the profile they have in mind. Prince Charles specifically asked Léon Krier to design Poundbury; his reactionary response to contemporary urban planning. On the other hand, Krier is not likely to be asked by Apple to design their new head office in Sacramento – a commission offered to Norman Foster, whose high-tech approach to architecture is much closer to the image Apple has built for itself. In other words, the view held by the client towards architecture foregoes the design of the building. Architects often and rightly urge their role not as one of simply designing, but also as one of educating the client. For instance, they may offer the client insight into their spatial needs and the ways in which architecture is able to respond. Although this applies in most cases, behind all great buildings that fill the lists of architectural wonders are strong clients with a particular vision for what their building needed to be and which architect was best placed to fulfil that need.⁷¹ Seen the other way around, those that particularly knew which architecture could answer the needs not yet clear.⁷² Good architecture, in other words, requires good clients, good commissionership, and a strong feeling of working together. This reveals the inherent relativity of architecture: if the response to a particular need differs from office to office, from designer to designer, and even from client to client, it is clear that there is no single 'truth' out there. Architecture does not offer a singular solution, but offers multiple directions in which particular responses can be found. As I argued previously: this diversity of responses belongs to the worldly aspects of architecture. The wide range of different options produced in response to particular questions become more clearly tangible in competitions, which are a regular occurrence in architectural practice. Clients sometimes ask a selection of offices to present their approach to architecture and to show their portfolio in order to judge their knowledge of particular issues or their architectural style. Sometimes offices are already asked to develop a first direction on the basis of the requested program and the characteristics of the site. The client then chooses the direction (practice) he likes the most. Sometimes these competitions are more open; juries are asked to make judgements and even the public is sometimes able to vote. The Guggenheim Museum recently sought to open a branch in Helsinki for the design of the building they launched in 2014 as part of an open competition. An unbelievable number of 1,715 anonymous entries was hand in, from which the French office Moreau Kusunoki Architects was chosen as the winner.^[IMAGE 7.7] Unfortunately, in 2016, the project was cancelled – it nevertheless remains staggering to have had 1,715 different responses to the Museum's need and vision for the particular characteristics of the proposed site in Helsinki. The image that comes to mind here is of course once again the subjective aspects of architecture. Subjective qualities are not only rooted in the design approach

of the architect, but are also decisive on the level of the client and other parties involved in commissioning projects. The American sociologist Robert Gutman, who addresses the architectural profession extensively, has urged this point as pivotal to the image of the profession in society. Architecture cannot be compared to other businesses or to other services in society like those offered by lawyers and doctors, nor can it be compared to strict engineering work. The subjective part in architecture, both on the level of the architect and the client, makes the profession vulnerable.⁷³ He therefore urges architects to think more realistically about the features of their work and to be honest about the difficulties of promises made in architecture. He also argues that this vulnerability emphasizes the need of the architect to ‘go out in the community and seek work; he cannot rely on people coming to him.’ Architecture, he continues, has to be seen as an entrepreneurial profession: ‘The challenge to the architect is to find a way of creating a desire on the part of the public to use his services in preference to the services of another type of building designer.’⁷⁴ The architect, in other words, needs to reach out to the public, primarily due to business-reasons, but also due to other reasons made clear by Arendt’s writings which I will discuss later. However, at this point it might be clearer to state that in order to get (new) commissions, the public – the potential clients – have to be informed about particular approaches and knowledge shared on behalf of the architect. The idea of creating desires, the perspective offered by Gutman, is frequently entering the market, showing the possibilities of the office and the particular elements your office has to offer. There is, in other words, a continuous need to profile the office to the public at large. However with his idea of ‘creating desire’, Gutman also means that the architect has to expand his/her scope, rather than narrow it down to the ‘beautifying’ of what other practices have designed, which is the same trend in building practices argued above and in the previous chapter. Gutman refers to architectural firms as good examples of expanding the scope of their portfolio within project development itself, or that start to present themselves as experts in exhibition design. Other more recent examples can be mentioned more easily: offices that also take responsibility for construction work on site, for construction management, or even for building maintenance and business development. Other offices such as OMA have established distinct research branches. Furthermore, other architects have expanded their expertise to completely different design practices, such as graphic design or product design. Others have tried to find a niche in the market whose needs require a particular form of expertise. Examples of this include assignments in healthcare and transportation, which are so complex that previous experience in similar projects is often requested by the clients. Other offices also experiment with particular materials or construction techniques, from 3D printing to cardboard, and from CNC-milling and clay moulding.

The article written by Gutman is intriguing: describing a market for architecture that is weak and suspicious, one that urges architecture to simultaneously be more honest in its achievements, as well as to its inherent qualities which need to be made public. He substantiates this question and perspective further in tracing two responses to the shrinking market: the architectural practice understood as a (regular) business enterprise, and on the other hand the architect presenting themselves as an artist. Gutman is concerned about both of these directions. The first is often unable to distinguish itself from other service providers in construction and building design and may not easily discuss issues of aesthetics in personal terms, while the second is often captured by an image of autonomous architecture, as developed throughout the twentieth century, as well as by ideas of

73. Robert Gutman, ‘Architecture: The Entrepreneurial Profession’ in Dana Cuff and John Wriedt (eds.), *Architecture from the Outside in, Selected essays by Robert Gutman* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 35

74. *Ibid.*, 36

75.
Ibid., 41

76.
Ibid., 42

77.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 159

78.
Ibid., 160

79.
Ibid., 160

80.
Ibid., 161

81.
Ibid., 162

82.
Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 248

self-expression.⁷⁵ Gutman of course urges a path in-between the two: architecture as an entrepreneurial processes as well as a form of artistic practice – architecture as, in his words, ‘makers of buildings who are also makers of form.’⁷⁶

Arendt also asserts the view that the ‘market’ is closely related to the activity of ‘work’, which represents the fourth aspect of work she provides in *The Human Condition*. In her discussion of the market, it is clear that Arendt is concerned about the impact of the market on the product and production of work. The market, as she argues, has become the public space of the idea of politics in the modern age, which is not based on action and speech, but on law-enforcement and governmental administration. The central component in this system is not the citizen, but the *homo faber*, who works ‘for the people at large.’⁷⁷ This is not particularly modern, Arendt admits, as antiquity also knew of such ‘communities’, where the central public space, the *agora*, was not a place where citizens would meet, but ‘a market place where craftsmen could show and exchange their products.’⁷⁸ ‘Tyrants’, Arendt argues, tried to frustrate the *agora* as the meeting place of citizens, where citizens idled ‘their time away’ by talking about public issues. They thereafter sought ‘to transform the *agora* into an assemblage of shops like the bazaars of oriental despotism.’⁷⁹ Arendt stresses that these spaces, unlike today’s shopping malls and districts, were characterized by the visibility of production. Not only the goods were on display, but also the processes of production were exposed – similarly to the medieval trade and crafts districts she cites.

The visibility of production within these markets collides with what Arendt calls the ‘splendid isolation’ of the worker. The *homo faber* is only able to relate to other people ‘by exchanging his products with theirs’.⁸⁰ Togetherness as offered in public space, like ‘acting in concert and speaking with each other’, is not possible for the workman: ‘Only when he stops working and his product is finished can he abandon his isolation’.⁸¹ It is therefore the case that production itself needs to be isolated from the public realm. The particular concern Arendt urges here is not so much the presence of spectators but, particularly in the modern age, the rise of the social, in which the competence and the excellence of the *homo faber* comes under suspicion. This is particularly the case when enforcing the division of operations in the process of production, operations that can be handled by unskilled labor where the expertise of the *homo faber* is hollowed out. This compels Arendt to assert that work cannot mean teamwork. The only company available to the carpenter and the potter is the patron – an assistant relationship, where the master educates his unskilled assistant until he/she acquires the same skills. In his book *The Craftsman* Richard Sennett also discusses the relationship between masters and assistants, using the particular example of the famous violin builder Stradivarius to show how important it is for the craftsman and the durability of his practice to be able to share ideas, approaches, and sensitivities.⁸² However, such a relationship within the workshop is not structural, it is temporal; it is only there until the assistant is able to master their ideas and materials as well.

At first sight this image drawn by Arendt seems outdated, particularly when addressing the production of small objects, like that of the carpenter in his workshop constructing a table, or a potter shaping clay into a vase. Arendt’s remark about teamwork does not seem able to be easily applied to the field of architecture – architecture is almost by definition a matter of teamwork. Constructing a building is a common effort, not only a matter for an architect working in isolation in his office. Even within the office there is a form of teamwork, where the master architect makes decisions and other architects

produce proposals. At second thought however there are other aspects worth evaluating. The first aspect is probably a common experience amongst workers. If constructing a wooden table, one is indeed concentrated on the material and the tools at hand. Even if spectators are around, while working the mind stays focused on the hands; how they threaten the wood, and how the ideas in mind are materialized. In the process of design, the mind also is concentrated on what the hands are doing. Only after having finished a sketch, or a series of sketches that investigate a certain aspect of the future building, can it be understood and presented. Designing clearly is not only when the hands touch paper, a keyboard, or a knife to cut cardboard, but is also a process in the mind, as famous myths of design often state: the breakthrough in a process of design comes in the middle of the night, or when taking a shower. However, even these untraceable and unpredictable moments require the sketchbook to capture the idea with words or sketches. Only these can be presented and discussed, the isolation of the worker can be abandoned only if the actual 'work' is stopped and that particular 'product is finished'. Although design work is thus almost always a collective effort, a continuous discussion between designer(s), assistants, clients, tenants, the public, and the actual act of drawing is pursued in isolation

83.
cf Richard Sennett, *Together, The Rituals, Pleasures & Politics of Cooperation* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013)

84.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 161

It is interesting to see that *The Craftsman* is intended by Sennett to be the first book in a series of three – the second book actually investigates, 'the pleasures of co-operation'.⁸³ The last book is announced as one which investigates the city. Since it is preceded by these books on craftsmanship and cooperation, we can imagine that this book will present the city as a work of human hands, one of both craftsmanship and common effort. In similar thoughts, architecture can indeed be described as both the work of the craftsman as the process of collaboration in order to construct the building. If we look to the construction site, it is a coming and going of diverse craftsmen – from carpenters to plumbers, electricians and bricklayers. They are actually informed through the working drawings made by the architect involved, who will also check to see if everything is done according to these drawings. If we then look to the production of these drawings, this is again a somewhat common effort, in which commissioners (as we have seen), advisors, and constructors, together with the architect place the required information as clearly and completely as possible on paper.

Here we touch upon a second aspect of Arendt's urge for the isolation of the *homo faber*. Work, in the image of Arendt, reifies ideas. It is therefore the case that the single craftsman must master this idea. 'This isolation from others,' Arendt writes, 'is the necessary life condition for every mastership which consists in being alone with the "idea", the mental image of the thing to be.'⁸⁴ Within the classical image of the design and building process described above, the architect is the figure that needs to be 'alone with the idea,' which from a general viewpoint defends, updates, and adjusts the original idea, until it brings together all sorts of complex, and often mutually contradicting wishes, needs and requirements, ultimately controlling the actual construction if it fits the original idea. The architect here thus works in a certain isolation (although this isolation might be in the form of an office with multiple employees working on the project), using the drawings as products with which he is able to relate to others (although admittedly not so much a relationship of exchanged products).

I specifically define the description above as one of common and traditional architectural design processes, since the architect here has been given the general role of design and coordination. Arendt's concern about exposing production is

85.
Ibid., 161

86.
cf. Awan, Schneider, Till, *Spatial Agency*, 28: 'Buildings are all too easily appropriated into the commodity exchange of the marketplace: "progressive", "innovative", "efficient", "iconic" or "landmark" buildings are seen to have higher exchange value within this system, and it is thus that the signifiers of progress, innovation, efficiency and income generation have become the hallmarks of successful architects in times of fiscal growth.'

87.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 163-164

88.
Ibid., 162

not so much in the spectator's interest, but in those that diminish the boundaries between being a spectator and being an actor. The rise of the social realm, Arendt writes, urged spectators not to be 'content with beholding, judging and admiring,' but to 'wish to be admitted to the company of the craftsman and to participate as equals in the work process.'⁸⁵ This could only be achieved when the ideas beyond work were not valued; the expertise and knowledge needed to progress towards real objects. This actually involved the division of labor, in which unskilled workmen were made responsible for only a small part of production. As stated before, this happened also in architecture: it easily can be seen that tasks in architecture are split into smaller sub-assignments, where the architect loses control over the whole. Nowadays, a contractor or a building manager organizes the sub-assignments towards a finished whole. Their role and outlook is very different to that of the architect and their unifying view, hovering the process. In this 'new' constitution, the architect is simply asked to produce ideas rather than designs, or to produce designs rather than be involved in the execution of construction. In such processes, the wholeness of the idea, as well as the consistency between the idea as a 'product' and the constructed building as a 'product' is often lost.

Within such 'new' processes where the role of architecture is limited towards delivering only ideas, architecture is better understood as only an additional quality to the building process. Architects develop ideas through which the building can differ from another building: nice brickwork details, an attractive cantilever, or a surprising shape. This additional quality can be understood as a means of attracting attention, so that the market value of the building rises or to make it easier to convince municipalities to permit the developer and contractor to construct the particular building. Architecture is therefore asked to produce shiny images and tempting views of an uncertain future. The market value lies, in other words, not in that architects are 'makers of building who are also makers of form', but instead in their power to create tempting images. Within this perspective we might state that architecture has its particular value in its 'image', which is attractive commercially, through which the architect is also valuable, since he is able to produce this image.⁸⁶

According to Arendt, this term 'value' depends on the 'exchange market', since value always is relative: valuable only in terms of exchange. It can only be determined in relation to other products offered by the market. In other words, the display within the market of goods is essential to increasing the value of the products themselves. Only if the goods are exposed and the products made public can their value can be established: 'For it is only in the exchange market, where everything can be exchanged for something else, that all things ... becomes "values." This value consists solely in the part of the public realm where things appear as commodities; it is neither labor nor work, capital nor profit, nor is it a material which bestows value upon an object, but only and exclusively the public realm where it appears to be demanded or neglected.'⁸⁷ Predating the commercial society which emerged during the earlier stages of the modern age, the 'exchange market' could be understood as a public realm 'connected with the activity of the *homo faber*'.⁸⁸ It was a meeting place where the products were central, and where the craftsmen related to other craftsmen and other people through their products. However, the commercial society changed this perspective from 'conspicuous production' to 'conspicuous consumption', which affected the relationship between the producer and the product, as well as between that which exists between the product and the public. 'The people who met on the exchange market, to be sure,' Arendt states, 'were no longer the fabricators themselves, and they did

not meet as persons but as owners of commodities and exchange values, as Marx abundantly pointed out. In a society where exchange of products has become the chief public activity, even the laborers, because they are confronted with “money or commodity owners,” become proprietors, “owners of their labor power.”⁸⁹ In the first part of this quote, Arendt argues that although the workshop of the craftsman previously required isolation from the public realm, it was the craftsman himself that represented the link with the public realm. He himself entered the market in order to sell his products. This personal relationship between the craftsman, his products and the public was particularly important. The craftsman could be approached immediately and could be held accountable for his produce. Arendt therefore highlights that due to modernity and mass production, the distinction between production and community, between the producer and the public, has increased. Arendt also argues that the disappearance of production from public view causes problems with regards to the public responsibility of producers and consumers. Production has been moved out of sight, first to the edges of the city and later to other regions and countries, or today to the free-trade-zones in what are often referred to as ‘third-world’ countries. To the craftsmen, the clients became invisible (and as vice-versa). Products were produced only for the market, and the market pushed private-use towards consumption. This clear process of hiding production has resulted in a lack of responsibility felt both by the producers as well as the consumers, highlighting issues such as the deplorable circumstances of the laborers, lack of labor-rights, the use of child-labor, and pollution of the environment.

The second part of Arendt’s quote emphasizes that the central role of the market in society not only changes products from use-objects to consumable goods, but also affects people themselves. It changes the whole scope of society. Craftsmen were once valued because of their production and the quality of their produce. Laborers were valued because they could offer labor-power. However all of this, from the products to the labor force, was not intrinsically valuable since value is always relative to other commodities offered. It is valued on the exchange market, related to other products, to the skills of other craftsmen, and to other laborers offering their labor-power. Arendt actually opposes this notion of ‘value’, which is relative, to the notion of ‘worth’, which is intrinsic to the product itself. ‘Worth’, as she states, has a longer tradition but has since been replaced in commercial perspectives by ‘value’, giving particularly room to the economic sciences. The introduction of value however, actually requires the devaluation of the objects themselves. Arendt presupposes this, referring to the distinction between value and worth by the philosopher John Locke, in which the ‘worth’ of objects is distinct from their ‘value.’⁹⁰ In other words, the worth of the object is intrinsic to the object, whereas value is something added to it. The ‘intrinsic worth of a thing’, Arendt stresses, ‘can be changed only through the change of the thing itself – thus one ruins the worth of a table by depriving it of one of its legs – whereas “the marketable value” of a commodity is altered by “the alteration of some proportion which that commodity bears to something else”.’⁹¹ Arendt quotes Locke in this instance, adding that such a distinction is obvious, but that it has disappeared in modernity: ‘This distinction [between worth and value, HT] exists, of course, in all but the most primitive societies, but in the modern age the former disappearance more and more in favor of the latter.’⁹² This intrinsic worth is lost, again due to modernity and the increasing emphasis on the exchange-market, since everything is made in relative terms to other commodities. Arendt argues that the loss of ‘intrinsic’ worth has caused a ‘deep source of uneasiness’, not so much in terms of relativity, ‘but rather the fact that *homo faber*, whose whole

89.
Ibid., 162

90.
Ibid., 164

91.
Ibid., 164; Arendt quotes Locke from: John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, sec. 22 (in *The Human Condition* it is not clear to which edition Arendt refers. In the Arendt-library, which is housed at Bard College, however, we find the following edition: John Locke, *Two Treatises of Civil Government* (New York 1949, Dutton); Arendt apparently later bought another version of this book, since in her library also a 1963 version can be found: John Locke, *Two Treatises of Civil Government, A Critical Edition with an Introduction and Apparatus Criticus* (Cambridge: University Press, 1963)

92.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 164 (note 34)

93.
Ibid., 166

94.
Ibid., 167

activity is determined by constant use of yardsticks, measurements, rules and standards, could not bear the loss of “absolute” standards or yardsticks.’⁹³ Arendt is concerned at this point: her image of the world and the importance she attributes to durability are in danger if there intrinsic worth no longer exists. Arendt also states that without standards and universal rules, no world could be erected by men. The world, in other words, is threatened on the one hand by instrumentalization, which judges the world and its commodities through their usefulness, and on the other hand through the perspective of the market, which judges the world and its commodities through their exchange value. Both perspectives are tied closely together, and according to Arendt, the last actually develops from the first.

It is at this point that Arendt introduces works of art as a particular realm of the *homo faber*: as yet unspoiled by instrumentalization or the exchange market. Arendt describes art as ‘a number of objects which are strictly without any utility whatsoever and which, moreover, because they are unique, are not exchangeable and therefore defy equalization through a common denominator such as money; if they enter the exchange market, they can only be arbitrarily priced.’⁹⁴ As touched upon in the previous chapter, the question remains if this perspective still counts for the arts and for the production of works of art. Art is not judged by its usefulness and its value on the exchange market (as we have at least seen in theory), but draws also from the perspective of use as well as of value. An artwork is intended to be enjoyed in solitude, and not to be used or consumed. Nevertheless, we can also argue that art has grown away from the *homo faber* perspective, for instance in viewing the close connection between the artist and the client as lost. This simultaneously increases the importance of the art-market, in which the work of art has become a marketable commodity; an object in which to invest. In the ideal view, art is not produced for clients, let alone for investors. It is produced for itself, and only in a second instance is there a client, or a museum that presents the artist to a general public of spectators. However in theory this seems to be different. Not only does art solely produce objects that withstand the times and tides, but it also incorporates productions that are temporarily on show, and which within short notice gain urgent attention. There also the inherent urgency to acquire attention and to appear in the market so that clients (be it private collectors or public museums) can buy the pieces. In other words, art produced for art’s sake must nevertheless appear in the market in order to enable clients to buy it; to gain attraction and interest by the public or to make a name for yourself. Commissioned art-work is also a common figure – although one needs to have already established at that point a certain level of public acknowledgement. Building owners sometimes ask artists to do something in their entrance corridor or to beautify a façade. Municipalities ask for interventions in urban space to brighten up a park or square. NGO’s ask artists to draw attention to certain social issues through paintings or other manifestations. Museums might also ask artists to produce something for their particular exhibition. In all of these cases, the artist is asked because of the particular qualities of the art works – because of the name he has made for himself. The artist, we might state, however, has created a certain freedom around himself: what assignments are interesting to accept? What fits the oeuvre? How will it allow the artist to express himself? etc. Such ‘freedom of practice’ of course is more difficult in architecture. As I stated in the previous chapter, architecture has something to offer. It is the most public construction of the world; essentially enduring the tides, it offers lasting experiences, articulates spaces to meet and to withdraw, and so on. However, it is

also vulnerable to the threats of labor-thinking: it suffers from instrumentalization, partitioning, and client-contractor relationships. In architecture indeed the relationship with clients has been a central issue. Only a very small part of architectural production is produced without a commissioner. The series of drawings by Daniel Libeskind or the early paintings of Zaha Hadid were created without someone commissioning them. They are produced as experiments with form and expression, with content and approach. Although they have been important within the profession (and not only in the practices of the aforementioned architects and their offices), these represent experiments carried out early in their careers. Some offices launch unsolicited projects for which they search for a client in order to actually be able to construct them. In other words, the relationship with particular clients cannot be underestimated. Not only due to canonical architecture, which certainly had visionary commissioners, but also the other way around. The crisis in architecture in the 70s, which was stressed by Gutman in his reflection on the future of architecture, was caused by clients disappointed by high architectural promises, and their unfulfilled expectations.⁹⁵ We can state that it was not only the dismissal of architects as the chief designers which gave way to engineers and constructors, but also the design of certain buildings (plants, warehouses, dwellings), as well as the establishment of professions located in-between the client and the architect (such as building managers, project developers, and so on) which rose out of this disappointment. Architects were limited to their role within the building process, while the sorrows and concern of clients were 'managed' or taken over by these new professions.

In our focus on the work of the hands of the architect, and of the tools and instruments of architecture, we might easily tend to think of the architect in his office, his atelier, or studio, behind a screen or a piece of sketch paper. Admittedly, in the image of Rural Studio and some of the more contemporary practices, the architect is also actually constructing and building on site. The standard image however is that the architect receives a commission from a client, and then starts working, designing, drawing, consulting, presenting, and even constructing. This of course is a very limited and romantic perspective. It urges for close relationships with clients, and also imagines design as the making of things personally, or the making of personal things. It is the divided perspective that actually seems to be the common view of the 'market' today, where there is much less direct contact with the client if a building manager is in-between, or if there is the need to produce for the market (if the future user is not yet known) where the project developer is also the client. However, in all of these cases, architecture depends upon clients, whether they are the future users or not.

This image of the dependency relies particularly upon clients, which are stressed by Mockbee as one of the weak points of architecture. 'Architects should always be in the initial critical decision-making position in order to challenge the power of the status quo,' he urged. 'We need to understand that when a decision is made, a position has already been taken. Architects should not be consigned to only problem-solving after the fact.'⁹⁶ He therefore presses for the awareness of designers in their dependency on the status quo. This perspective is of course also supportive of the writings on space by Henri Lefebvre⁹⁷ which we already touched upon, and it is also part of *Critical Theory*, upon which both Jürgen Habermas and David Harvey, also touched upon in previous chapters, stand. There are power relations in society, and architecture is in most cases dependent upon these power relations. Mockbee tried to overcome these relations not just by working for the poor but also with them, as well as by urging his students to find

95. Gutman, 'Architecture: The Entrepreneurial Profession', 36

96. Mockbee, 'The Rural Studio', 109

97. For example Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991)

98.
Awan, Schneider, Till, *Spatial Agency*

99.
Allen, *Practice*, p.XIV

100.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 177

funding for the projects to be constructed with them. The practice of Mockbee and Rural Studio, although still is quite rare in architecture, has inspired others to approach architecture in a more active way as well. Particularly since the financial and economic crisis, these alternative practices have gained attention and value. In the aforementioned book *Spatial Agency*, Awan, Schneider and Till give a succinct overview of contemporary practices along with historic examples of such an active approach to architecture.⁹⁸ These offices often work together with inhabitants on all sorts of aspects of a project; projects that are also often initiated by the architect themselves, or by inhabitants, citizens, or other professions that recognize the potentiality of a certain place or practice. These projects are often 'close to home', affecting the direct environment of those that initiate the project. Their aim cannot be easily valued through the market, but they can nevertheless be of great 'worth' to those inhabiting the space. These elements suggest that alternative practices are often small practices. The aforementioned book is full of examples of small initiatives, which through their approach, materials, and aesthetics suggest a degree of temporariness. It is hard to see how these practices also can be applied to bigger and more complex projects. Even offices that have been better involved and have developed alternative practices often turn to standard approaches when offered a position by developers or political institutions within the development process of a larger project. Stan Allan also supports such a shift in architecture. 'One of the urgent consequences of this more pragmatic approach would be to move us away from the private world of the architect's design process, and its preoccupation with questions of meaning, and the politics of identity, to an open discussion of architecture's agency in the public sphere.'⁹⁹ Here we again touch upon the need for architects to leave their offices and appear in public. Not just for business reasons, but also to discuss their approach to the world. It is not simply the particular desire of the designer, it is something that needs to be made public in order to be part of the debate over the future. However, besides that urgent publicness of architecture, at this point we might state that such 'new' developments in architecture that occupy this niche in the built environment requires a certain type of pragmatism from the architect. Architecture here is not about big gestures and sublime desires, but about the pragmatic response to particular needs, or even to recognize and propel these needs and possibilities, and to act pragmatically and publicly.

However, particularly in these alternative practices, the architect is not just addressed as a designer, but also as a professional that has knowledge and expertise to share. The architect understands the spatial aspects of urban and social issues, and is able to respond actively to these needs. In other words, the architect is required to be someone able to initiate change, to make unsolicited proposals, or to gather inhabitants to work together on spatial interventions. To state this differently: the architect as an initiator deals with the human condition of natality; the capacity to start anew and to propose new ideas. Natality, we might state, is the very condition of design and construction. At the root of architecture lies 'the principle of beginning.'¹⁰⁰ To take initiatives and to reveal the full range of possibilities can be understood as part of this action as well. It is work and action happening at once. This position actually fits the architect very well. The word 'architect' itself not only means master-builder, but also 'beginner' (of new and previously unconceived buildings). This is a crucial perspective that renders the architect as both master and beginner, as someone who knows what to do as well as someone who knows how to start something new. Taking the initiative is, as Arendt argues, one of the main characteristics and merits of all human activities,

but it is ‘action that has the closest connection with the human condition of natality. ... Since action is the political activity par excellence, natality, and not mortality, may be the central category of political, as distinguished from meta-physical, thought.’¹⁰¹ The proposal of an idea, to display it publicly, is in my opinion a form of action. One needs to work on the presentation of the idea (or the range of ideas); and this is strictly a form of working. However in the moment of appearance in public, of pitching ideas, public speaking is crucial. One does not have control over the outcome. It is unpredictable how the public, the politicians, the neighbours, the engaged society, or the professionals, will react. Therefore, taking the initiative might be the capacity of the designer or the responsibility of the commissioner, but it is also always a question to the public. It is worth discussing publicly. Initiatives regarding where to intervene and how to intervene, in order to set borders and define spaces, affect the world, and are therefore a matter of public concern.

101.
Ibid., 9

102.
Awan, Schneider, Till, *Spatial Agency*, 32

It is particularly within this perspective that Awan, Schneider, and Till reveal, in these ‘alternative practices’ the aspect of ‘beginning’ that has clearly come to light. Where it is hidden in the regular processes of building and construction, the ability to initiate is at the heart of architecture acting as an agency. The architect as an agent, as Awan, Schneider and Till argue, affects change ‘through the empowering of others, allowing them to engage in their spatial environments in ways previous unknown or unavailable to them, opening up new freedoms and potentials as a result of reconfigures social space.’¹⁰² I would summarize these aspects of the profession as entrepreneurial, in that they implore the architect to leave his safe cocoon and begin to participate in society. This is not only in order to create market demand for of business reasons. As Gutman argues, during the financial and economic crisis from 2008 onwards much more ‘alternative’ practices were established and sought publicity. This moving out into public view, actively participating in processes of change, is also the aspect of architecture that needs to originates from love for the world and its inhabitants. It is at this point that the active role of architecture in creating a world-in-common, creating a shared world through common effort, is particularly visible in bottom-up projects, becoming tangible at the scale of its inhabitants and their everyday environments. Admittedly, we do not talk here about the importance of aesthetic quality. What is pivotal however, is that the space becomes visible as a common effort and a shared responsibility. Nevertheless, questions remain over what specific knowledge and expertise architecture has to offer such (bottom-up) local and social processes.



7.8 Rural Studio, constructing the *Shiles House*, Hale County (AL), USA, 2002



7.9 The *Prinzessinnengarten*, Berlin, Germany, 2009

7.3 ARCHITECTURAL AGENCY

7.3.1 *The Joy of Action and the Experience of Change*

After discussing works of art as ‘the most intensely worldly of all tangible things’, Arendt directs her thoughts towards the activity of ‘action’. As is clear for now, in *The Human Condition*, Arendt emphasizes the distinction between labor, work and action for several reasons. The most important is that beyond these activities different approaches to the world are tangible, and by mixing these approaches, or better said, by applying these approaches to a different domain of action, the promise of each realm is threatened. Arendt reads modern society through this lens, and understands that the development of the consumerist society results from the *animal laborans* entering the workspace of the *homo faber*, which affects production and the product itself. She also saw aspects of the *animal laborans* in the realm of politics, by placing life itself at the very aim of political action by making it easier and more long-lasting. The same counts for the *homo faber* entering the realm of politics, judging the world through evaluating the aspects of usefulness and beauty.¹⁰³ ‘Fabrication, but not action or speech, always involves means and ends; in fact, the category of means and ends derives its legitimacy from the sphere of making and fabricating where a clearly recognizable end, the final product, determines and organizes everything that plays part in the process – the material, the tools, the activity itself, and even the persons participating in it; they all become mere means toward the end and they are justified as such.’¹⁰⁴ Arendt regards both approaches as a form of alienation from the world itself, which is the appropriate aim of action, and thus repeatedly highlights the strict division between activities, unless her critics otherwise stated that in real life these categories of activities are often blurred. As outlined in the previous chapter, culture in the writings of Arendt is positioned between work and action. Culture, after all, is the careful approach to the past, as well as the creation of the world as distinct from the earth. Culture, can therefore be seen as the starting point for politics.¹⁰⁵

Until this point, I have stressed the impact of labor-thinking on architecture, and have argued that architecture, from the primitive hut to the airport building, from the square to the park, from building to landscape, and from design to construction, should be approached through the category of work. If we lose this perspective, we tend to limit architecture to the beautification of buildings or to simply designing aspect of construction. Architecture is worldly construction, which contains both the development of ideas, plans, designs, as well as the implementation of these as interventions in the world. The source of architecture is not only the love for construction, for usefulness, or its aesthetics, nor is it simply the combination of these three categories of building according to Vitruvius. It is love for the world and its inhabitants.

However, as touched upon above, architecture also can be understood as an agent of renewal, change, and activism, twisted with a certain sense of anarchism, rejecting the status quo and acting publicly. I have categorized these entrepreneurial aspects above as active participants in society. Some of the urgencies behind these practices can indeed be categorized as responses to the economic and financial crises that hit the world from 2008 onwards (in The Netherlands), which have had a major impact on the business case of architecture. Of course, this direction was not new in architecture. Particularly in the work of Team 10,

^{103.} Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 167

^{104.} Hannah Arendt, ‘The Crisis in Culture’ in: Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 217

^{105.} *Ibid.*, 211;

106.

cf Indira Van 't Klooster, *Reactivate! Vernieuwers van de Nederlandse Architectuur* (Haarlem/Amsterdam: Trancity x Valiz, 2013), 27-30

107.

see for instance Philipp Oswalt, Klaus Overmeyer, and Philipp Misselwitz (eds.), *Urban Catalysts, The Power of Temporary Use* (Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2013), 11-13, where they urge their alternative approach to architecture and the city, their focus of temporary use, with the developments of 'increasingly unstable, deinstitutionalized ways of life', changing working structures, and cultures of migration.

108.

Ron Shiffman and Jeffrey Hou, 'A Call for Actions,' in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA), New Village Press, 2012), 384

109.

Shiffman, Hou, 'A Call for Actions', 385

and specifically in the work of its Italian member Giancarlo di Carlo, participatory processes were developed. However, from 2008 onwards, statistics for the architectural market in The Netherlands were beyond imagination: big offices became small offices, and investments in buildings and other architectural artefacts were halved, while the number of architectural offices doubled. Of course, all of the fired employees from the big offices who did not find another job elsewhere started their own office. These figures show how urgent it was to go out and actively search for demand in the market, and to expand the focus to other business cases. This response seems to follow what has been traced above during the seventies by Gutman: some offices started to develop different methods of design and construction, and others expanded their horizon to graphic design, whilst others started to do unsolicited work, and others started close collaborations with project developers next to their offices, or even became project developers themselves.¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless it is not right to say that these practices are only appropriate in response to the limited situation in the market. Beyond these practices, there is surely concern for the environment and for social empathy. This is tangible in the words of Mockbee that we have touched upon previously, or in the changing conditions of society and its impact on cities and spaces.¹⁰⁷ The obvious question at this stage is whether these alternative practices ultimately show how political architecture actually exists. These approaches often are praised because of their aspects of protest; for their particular activist participation in the public space, as I have described in Chapter 3. 'It's time to translate ideas into action', as stated by Ronald Shiffman and Jeffrey How architects (landscape architects, designers and planners) in their response to the Occupy movement. 'As designers and planners who create places, what can we do to protect and promote the public realm? How can we help bring about a more just and egalitarian society?'¹⁰⁸ Their answer asks architects to share their knowledge and outlook with local communities, in helping them to recognize, judge, reclaim and occupy public spaces; to remove barriers that complicate not only their accessibility but also their participation, to allow for differences in open space, and to ultimately reveal inequalities in society. They press for architects and urban designers to 'act as engaged citizens through participation and leadership in their neighborhoods, communities, and professional forums.'¹⁰⁹ This calls for (architectural) action, thereby explicitly urging the architect to engage politically and socially with their own community, to share his/her knowledge and to empower their communities.

'Action' is regularly read as a certain form of resistance against the ruling powers. The images that often first come to mind consists of protest, resistance, of a critical response, one that emphasizes alternatives to the status quo. In his reflection on architecture Mockbee is explicit in this idea, as are Shiffman and Hou in their agenda for the future architectural inheritance of the occupy movement.^[IMAGE 7.8] This reading of action as public activism certainly echoes Jürgen Habermas's image of the public sphere as a counter-sphere. As we have seen previously, in the chapter emphasizing the differences between Arendt's model of the public realm and Habermas's model of the public sphere, this counter-sphere has been rendered by Habermas as a critical sphere, acting against both the state as well as the market. This model has been inspired by the philosophical traditions of the *Frankfurter Schule*, the philosophical family of thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and later as part of the younger generation, Jürgen Habermas. The *Frankfurter Schule*, was indebted to the perspectives of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, developing a broad critical response to philosophy, sciences and culture – critical partic-

ularly to the economic developments in political and everyday life. Aside from Habermas's ideas regarding the public sphere, the *Frankfurter Schule* has been very influential within the field of architecture. Even before the notion of the public sphere was introduced, architectural discourse already pressed for the need of architecture to act as a critical practice. Particularly in the United States during the 70s and 80s, the architect and theorist Peter Eisenman, along with theorist Michael Hays, introduced *Critical Theory* as developed by the *Frankfurter Schule* into the architectural discourse. This is also the case for Hilde Heynen and her important book *Architecture and Modernity, A Critique*, who takes the *Critical Theory* as her starting point.¹¹⁰ *Critical Theory* finds its basis in Marxist theory, and develops critical responses to capitalist society, social emancipation and mass society. Eisenman and Hays were particularly inspired by the Italian architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri and the philosopher Frederic Jameson, who translated the principles of the *Frankfurter Schule* towards the context of architecture. Based on their writings, Eisenman and Hays, along with Michael Sorkin and Kenneth Frampton, urged for a critical response to 'reality' in the project of building, and explored such resistances in the architectural concepts of post-modernism, deconstructivism and critical regionalism. However, as George Baird remarks in 'Criticality and Its Discontents' (his reflection on the shifting American discourse during the early 2000s), their impact on the discourse largely remained theoretical: or in the form of architectural installations on show in museums, or explored in writings and drawings.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, Baird, as he responds with his article to the Eisenman protégés Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting who in their 'Notes Around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism', advocated for an end to critical theory in favor of a projective approach to architecture, warning that this more pragmatic perspective might lose aspects of critique and theory. In their text, Somol and Whiting don't so much distance themselves from any definition of architecture, but rather distance themselves from the autonomy of architecture. That is to say that they distance themselves from the view that architecture is a professional field depending completely on its own rules, convictions, and conventions. They are at the very core of the discipline, but even these positions depend upon perspectives, developments, and powers from beyond the discipline. 'If critical dialectics established architecture's autonomy as a means of defining architecture's field or discipline', they write, 'a Doppler architecture acknowledges the adaptive synthesis of architecture's many contingencies. Rather than isolating a singular autonomy, the Doppler focuses upon the effects and exchanges of architecture's inherent multiplicities: material, program, writing, atmosphere, form, technologies, economics, etc.'¹¹² Not only by using this metaphor of the Doppler Effect, which opposes a dialectic method (developed by the philosophers of the *Frankfurter Schule*), but also with the distinction between 'hot' and 'cool' modes of the discipline (as outlined by the cultural theorist Marshall McLuhan), they distance themselves from the critical approach. 'Critical architecture is hot in the sense that it is preoccupied with separating itself from normative, background or anonymous conditions of production, and with articulating difference.' Opposed to this, a cool approach to architecture is actually much more blurred, relaxed and easy. It even requires 'the participation of the user.'¹¹³ Baird responds to this with the question of whether it might in fact be too relaxed. Where is architecture left if it simply goes with the flow? After all, he writes, 'without it [that is: the aspects of theory and critique, HT], I predict that this new architecture will devolve to the "merely" pragmatic, and to the "merely" decorative, with astonishing speed.'¹¹⁴

110. Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1999)

111. George Baird, 'Criticality and its Discontents (2004)', in: George Baird, *Writings on Architecture and the City* (London: Artifice Books, 2015), 264

112. Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting, 'Notes Around the Doppler Effect' 'Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism', in: *Perspecta, Vol.33, Mining Autonomy* (2002), 75

113. *Ibid.*, 76

114. Baird, 'Criticality and Its Discontents', 268

115.
cf Kim Dovey, *Becoming Places, Urbanism / Architecture / Identity / Power* (London: Routledge, 2009), 122; Yaneva, *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, 20

116.
quote via Baird, 'Criticality and Its Discontents', 265;

117.
quote via *Ibid.*, 263

118.
See the editorial of Tom Avermaete, David de Bruijn and Job Floris (eds.), *Codes and Continuities, OASE #92* (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2014)

119.
Mockbee, 'The Rural Studio', 109

120.
I discussed this introduction already in Chapter 3. Michael Kimmelman, 'Foreword', in: Ron Shiffman, Rick Bell, Lance Lay Brown, and Lynne Elizabeth (eds.), *Beyond Zucotti Park, Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* (Oakland (CA), New Village Press, 2012), xv

In the text of Somol and Whiting Baird, we can read the influence of the 'real-politiker' Rem Koolhaas, as he calls the Dutch architect. Indeed, Koolhaas has repeatedly emphasized his approach to architecture as one of engaging reality, and his practice as one that is 'surfing the waves of capital'; a 'go with the flow' form of economic, cultural and political circumstances,¹¹⁵ and stresses that 'our most interesting engagements are uncritical, emphatic engagements, which deal with the sometimes insane difficulty of an architectural project to deal with the incredible accumulation of economic, cultural, political but also logistical issues.'¹¹⁶ At the very core of Koolhaas's architectural perspective, there might be the conviction that 'in the deepest motivations of architecture' there is 'something that cannot be critical.'¹¹⁷ We do not have to agree upon Koolhaas's perspective to admit that the relationship between architecture and the critical stance against reality is uneasy within architectural projects. The tools that the architect has at hand, or viewing architecture itself as a tool, is a rather difficult means of criticality regarding the existing situation, the required program, or the desires of the commissioner and the wishes of a community. Projects may actually offer only a weak form of criticism. This is why Manfredo Tafuri, an Italian philosopher who discusses architecture extensively, urged that the critical view lies within the typology of buildings. New typologies can be understood as critical towards the previous versions; they develop, and although they also contain codes and continuities, they contain cultural stances.¹¹⁸ However, regarding the possibilities that are critical within architecture, Mockbee argues that, 'courage has gone out of the profession, but we tend to be narrow in the scope of our thinking and underestimate our natural capacity to be subversive leaders and teachers. In other words, the more we practice, the more restricted we become in our critical thinking and our life styles. Critical thought requires looking beyond architecture towards and enhanced understanding of the whole to which it belongs.'¹¹⁹

This type of difficulty, although very different, is also tangible in the call for action by Shiffman and Hou. Their statement, although one that can surely be described as echoing Critical Theory in its resistance towards the status quo that defines the capitalist society, distances itself from the theoretical approaches of Eisenman and Hays. In his writings, Eisenman is mostly concerned with architecture itself, and never describes the architectural project as an instrument of social engagement and renewal, while Shiffman and Hou appear to push architecture away from its autonomous status toward a concern about design. They urge architects to share their architectural knowledge with the wider community, to empower the participation of the community in public issues, to solve barriers and to reveal inequality (in terms of public space). Although their message springs from a social commitment with local communities and from resistance to both the market and also to the higher levels of the political realm and bureaucracy (that allow spaces to be privatized and to formalize inequity in society), it is not clear how concrete architectural projects can respond to these threats of inequality, exclusivity, and commerce in democratic societies. Their manifesto addresses architecture as a body of knowledge rather than as a design practice. It therefore does not answer the final question asked by architectural journalist Michael Kimmelman at the opening of the book, to which Shiffman's and Hou's have added as an epilogue, how and what to design: 'How do we create [public space]?'¹²⁰ In other words, they do not propel a specific architectural approach, but rather propel architecture as a form of social engagement. Their critical response to society is also seen in their engagement with the occupy movement.

This is somewhat echoed in the overview offered by Awan, Schneider and Till in the aforementioned book *Spatial Agency*, as well as in their online database of alternative practices; of bottom-up-projects and do-it-yourself approaches which accompany the book, which can therefore be read as an agenda for an architecture of engagement, pressing for a certain approach towards the architectural field. Their collection nevertheless also reveals the difficulties of the relationship between the architectural project and the critical stance against the status quo, particularly since the offices collected seem to offer a limited architectural stance, being limited particularly to small and often temporal practices.¹²¹ This is of course unsurprising, since most of the examples are rooted in particular communities, with which the architect develops the project in close collaboration. The outcome of these projects is often close to the architecture of Rural Studio, where the approach to projects is similar. These examples often have a social agenda or propel an environmental outlook. An exemplary project – although not developed by an architect – is *Prinzessinnengarten* in Berlin, where an empty lot was transformed into an urban gardening site, initiated by two local students and with the help of hundreds of neighbors.¹²² [IMAGE 7.9] One of the first examples of the recent interest in urban gardening, the project is temporal – as long as the lot stays ‘empty’. The project emphasizes this approach: the plants are in barrels or boxes, often from unexpected (and re-used) materials, and the cafe is located in shipping containers. Festivals attract people to the place, and lots of volunteers take care of the greenery, flowers, vegetables, paths, seeds, coffee and meals. In other words, it is locally sourced: the quality and the potentiality of the site was recognized not only by the initiators, but also by those that came after the first advertisement requiring help to clear and clean the site. Together with these volunteers, the site was appropriated, the plants were ordered, and a greenhouse was built. The appearance of all of this appears to show literal resistance – resistance to the crisp, clean, fresh order that is inherent in corporate architectural projects. Projects like the *Prinzessinnengarten* show the absence of an overarching detailed plan, and therefore also show the unpredictability and indeterminate aspects of this architectural approach, which is otherwise in mainstream architecture covered by even more drawings, details, descriptions, and rules. These alternative projects offer a working landscape, an intervention of use and adaptation, places to meet, to eat, and to work together (in urban farming). Although this stimulating environment offered by *Spatial Agency* reveals that an alternative approach to architecture, to the city, to communities, and to social and environmental problems is possible (and is not limited to a few offices), the difficulty which it also reveals lies in how to upscale this approach to larger and more complicated projects. Or should we conclude that this architectural approach is destined to be applied solely in community-based, relatively small interventions into public space? The overview, besides activating architects as agents in (public space), shows how difficult it is to take a critical position within larger and more complex architectural projects. Therefore, we might question if architectural agency can also be thought of in different perspectives, in a way that can also be applied to more corporate and complex projects.

The call for action by Shiffman and Hou, as well as these alternative practices, invite architecture to understand itself as an agency, with architects as actors amongst other participants in public space. It urges architecture to act as a body of knowledge rather than as merely a building or design. Some aspects of this perspective appear to align with Arendt’s particular approach to action. In her reflections upon the student protests of the 60s, Arendt emphasizes the

121.
See <http://spatialagency.net/database/> [visited January 2nd, 2016]

122.
See for a more elaborate discussion on this project: Hans Teerds and Johan van der Zwart, *Levend landschap, Manifest voor stad en land* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SUN, 2012)

123.
Hannah Arendt (and Adalbert Reif), 'Some Notions on Politics and Revolution' in: Arendt, Hannah, *Crisis of the Republic* (San Diego/ New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1969), 202

124.
Ibid., 216

125.
Ibid., 232

126.
See Chapter 4 and 5 for a discussion upon the difference between the political and social in Arendt's writings

127.
Arendt, 'Some Notions on Politics and Revolution', 232

128.
Ibid., 232

community base of action: students gathering and affecting other students at other campuses. This highlights the common base upon which action grows: a type of public realm is established that allows participants within these communities to appear to each other and to 'act in concert'. This actually evokes the experience of 'joy in action', Arendt states, as well as the experience of 'being able to change things'.¹²³ She cites examples of co-operative systems that have already been applied in Denmark and Israel, or the 'system of self-management' in Yugoslavia, as well as the council-system that worked for a short time after the revolution in Russia, where the proper networks and systems that allow participants to appear in public space through action gained a response.¹²⁴ Arendt understands these local communities to be effective forms of bottom-up organization that can affect not only their everyday environment, but other levels in society as well. It is therefore the case that Arendt urges the council towards self-organization, which, through local or particular initiatives, is free and spatial, allowing for appearance, and enabling action and response. We might state that the alternative practice in architecture seems to create a similar basis of collaboration within a single project. Participation in the development of design and construction forms a 'world', be it local or limited, where participants can meet, discuss, appear, and act. The project itself, a truly collective effort that can be described as a common, not only attracts participants to the process of intervention, but can also offer a space of appearance. The common engages inhabitants to continue their collaboration and to sustain the possibility of appearance, enduring their relationship with the world.

However, Arendt also distances herself from other forms of organization, which she describes as staying on the level of amateurism and never reaching for impact on other levels in society. 'To prevent a misunderstanding that easily occur today', Arendt writes, 'I must say that the communes of hippies and dropouts have nothing to do with this. On the contrary, a renunciation of the whole of public life, of politics in general, is at their foundation; they are refuges for people who have suffered political shipwreck – and as such they are completely justified on personal grounds. I find the form of these communes often very grotesque, ... but I understand them and have nothing against them. Politically they are meaningless.'¹²⁵ It is the sixties, hippies, squatters, and others formed small communities, living together and sharing everything, sometimes also promoting social issues like the housing shortage. Arendt clearly distances herself from these communities – for her they were not organized politically but socially.¹²⁶ In contrast, she proposes the councils, with which she refers to as the organization of public life in Hungary during the short period after the revolution in 1956, and she also engages with the American system of town hall meetings that was set up after the American Revolution. 'The councils desire the exact opposite, even if they begin very small – as neighborhood councils, professional councils, councils within factories, apartment houses, and so on. ... The councils say: We want to participate, we want to debate, we want to make our voices heard in public, and we want to have a possibility to determine the political course of our country.'¹²⁷ The councils work if they guarantee the participants in having a public space, where one is able to share thoughts and opinions, but is also able to decide which of the participants would be chosen to represent them in other councils or on other public spaces.¹²⁸

This critical remark of Arendt on the hippiecommunities asks for alternative architecture not to distance itself from 'reality'. This is echoed in Manfredo Tafuri's remark on the difference between avant-garde and experimental architecture. The first is, according to Tafuri, always absolute, withdrawn from reality,

trying to replace reality with a new, different reality. Experimental architecture on the other hand, opposes existing approaches in architecture, attempting to shift the general direction and challenge accepted practice. Experimental architecture is not a statement: it is engaged in the existing world. It is not a turn away from the world, but a turn towards it, engaging in its reality.¹²⁹ This turn towards the world is also emphasized in the introduction to the overview of ‘alternative practices’, where Awan, Schneider, Till argue: ‘agents acts with intent but that intent is necessarily shaped and reshaped by the context within which the agent is working.’¹³⁰ This also forms a part of Mockbee’s statement on architecture and social compassion. ‘Physical poverty,’ he writes, ‘is not an abstraction, but we almost never think of impoverishment as evidence of a world that exists. Much less do we imagine that it’s a condition from which we may draw enlightenment in a very practical way. ... Architecture won’t begin to alleviate all of these social woes. But what is necessary is a willingness to seek solutions to poverty in its own context, not outside it. What is required is the replacement of abstract opinions with knowledge based on real human contact and personal realization applied to the work and place.’¹³¹

Arendt’s critical response to the ‘hippie communities’ obviously sprang from the lack of worldliness she saw in these communities, as well as from her critical attitude towards the social agenda that was often behind these activist and anarchist practices. Her well-known book *On Revolution*, which on the one hand analyses the American and the French revolution, but on the other hand distances itself between these two in favor of the American (since the American tried to develop another political system out of the revolution whereas the Frenchman failed to do so), in the second instance there is a harsh critique regarding the social agenda as perverting the essence of politics.¹³² Arendt does not urge the protesters to withdraw from the social system, but instead advocates a turn to the world and its relationships, emphasizing the need to think about public participation and political structures. The social agenda empties the realm of politics with its focus on life and social improvement (belonging to the labor perspective of becoming dominant in society). On the contrary, the aim of politics is the world and its sustenance, where the social agenda is bound to life and its survival. A politics based on social issues, she argues, is a politics based on compassion. However Arendt rejects this motivation as the basis of a political system. Compassion is a private matter, part of one’s private life, it cannot be a matter for the public life of a community, she argues. Behind her rejection of ‘social issues’ as ‘political issues’ lies again her distinction between labor and work as well as that which exists between labor and action. This also reinforces her critical response to the ideologies of capitalism (which we touched upon previously) and of socialism. Both are rooted in a labor approach to the world, and so both are expropriate their inhabitants. Capitalism is turning people into ‘slaves’ of consumption, whereas communism makes them completely dependent upon the state.¹³³

As stated previously, some of the projects presented as ‘architectural agency’ could be supported by Arendt’s reflections. But what about the ‘call for action’ of Shiffman and Hou? Their social agenda is obvious, and might be critically judged by Arendt as not suitable for public action. However, their call is also first and foremost not an aim to withdraw from reality in order to address the great (social) injustices in society. Moreover, what they emphasize is the importance to make visible – even tangible – what is hidden in capitalist and/or consumerist mass society. It tries to address publicly the effect of mass society within the community. Their approach, I would argue, particularly regarding what they

129.

I touched upon this distinction that is urged by Tafuri that he proposes in *Design and Utopia* via Avermaete, ‘The Architecture of the “Commons”, Towards a New Definition of the Architectural Project’, in: Tom Avermaete, Kirsten Hannema, Hans van der Heijden and Edwin Oostmeijet (eds.), *Architectuur in Nederland, Jaarboek 2015/2016* (Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2016), 39

130.

Awan, Schneider, Till, *Spatial Agency*, 31

131.

Mockbee, ‘The Rural Studio’, 113-114

132.

Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006),

133.

Arendt, ‘Some Notes on Politics and Revolution’, 211-215; most commentators urge Arendt’s position as ‘bad judgment’ in social issues. Not only her book *On Revolution* roused fierce responses particularly on its judgement of the social issues, but particularly also her stubborn reflection opposing the forced desegregation of a school in Little Rock, Arkansas. Hannah Arendt ‘Reflections on Little Rock’ in Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007); cf. Richard H. King, *Arendt and America* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 165-166

134.

Awan, Schneider, Till, *Spatial Agency*, 32 [italics in original]

135.

Seyla Benhabib, 'Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Hannah Arendt's Thought', in: Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (eds.), *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics, Themes From Kant and Arendt* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 200

expect from architects, can be viewed along with the aspects that Arendt brings to the fore. Although critical of the system, their aim is to empower society's inhabitants to act; to appear in public space, to reclaim spaces, to withdraw barriers of participation, to occupy. Particularly in terms of the relationship with a local community, this sharing of knowledge with the community recognizes opportunities to go out and unite, to enable appearance, which form the aspects that echo Arendt's critical approach to protests. This is an important aspect of the call to 'act' sounded by Shiffman and Hou: where empowering means not acting only from behind a particular community, but a means of strengthening the given community from within. It is not designing or designating a particular future from above, but is instead standing side by side and sharing architectural knowledge. In other words it is not top-down in its aim to bring the community to a higher level of action toward future perspectives.

Empowerment is also an important feature that Awan, Schneider and Till recognize in their alternative practices. 'The agent', they write, 'is one who effects change through the *empowerment* of others, allowing them to engage in their spatial environments in ways previously unknown or unavailable to them, opening up new freedoms and potentials as a result of reconfigured social space'.¹³⁴ The latter term, 'social space', refers to the threefold distinction Lefebvre understands when regarding spatial issues, and as touched upon before, presses for the transformation of space not only as in the hands of architects, but as a collective and mutual effort, in which the users themselves are as affective as the ideas of the designer. However, to make this accessible and to empower the act of participation along with all of the other aspects expected from Shiffman and Hou in architecture, should we categorize this as political action, or as another aspect of the pre-political condition of architecture?

What does this mean if we bring the question of architectural action back to the Arendtian terms of 'work' and 'action'? The relationship between the Arendtian terms of 'action' and 'architecture' is quite difficult. Although Arendt is also very critical about the status quo, she does not promote 'action' as the formation of an alternative sphere. Arendt views 'action' as proposing something close to the fundamental natality of life. It is to offer something new; to start again, to take initiatives, to act in public so that others can react and support. Only if action becomes 'action in concert' can change be expected. It is particularly within this last view that the importance of 'action in concert' or 'empowerment' is at stake. Empowering the community with architectural knowledge certainly helps the community to actively engage in public space, helping them to act out their concerns towards public space. This empowerment of the people might be seen as pre-political, encouraging the given set of inhabitants and cultivating public participation amongst them.¹³⁵ Within such community, acting in public gains a response either in terms of applause or rejection. To occupy a space in order to change it, to remove the barriers that exclude particular groups from participating, can surely be described as a form of 'action', but all of this can only be described as architecture in a limited sense. However, to take the initiative and expand upon ideas about the future of these spaces, to bring these concepts to the fore in public space in order to be discussed, might then be described as architecture intervening actively in public space; urging for a new form of discourse for the future. These can be described as the political aspects of an architectural project, of architecture as 'action'.

Until now we have asked if architecture can be understood not solely as ‘work’, but also as ‘action’. Although this question is addressed by practices that show a similar approach to the profession as Rural Studio, as well as in the ‘Call for Action’ by Shiffman and Hou, we cannot answer this question by viewing the possible aspects of action only within these practices. These practices actually reveal aspects of architecture that remain hidden in the other parts of the architectural field. ‘Alternative practices’ bring different aspects of the architectural project to the fore, where in ‘mainstream’ architecture (and whatever it incorporates) other aspects are central. We’ve touched upon the centrality of architecture and construction as collective effort, its rootedness in a particular situation (based upon local context, community and condition), the public agenda of a project, as well as the unpredictability of the architectural process. Mainstream architecture on the other hand promotes the value of design, the centrality of a plan, the role of the designer, the tangibility of the object, and the durability of architecture. If we compare these alternative and mainstream approaches (which is admittedly a simplification in both limits of the spectrum), we can state that the first concept deals more strongly with the process of architecture, whereas the second places an emphasis on architecture as an object. The process-driven approach might offer more room for ‘action’, whereas the second appears to be limited to ‘work’. However, the first leads to objects as well, whereas the second also outlines the process that leads to the tangible object – a process that is, after all, the job of the architect. In other words, these aspects are central in establishing the role in the second too, but are more hidden, while the aspects that emphasize the object are also present in alternative practices. The emphasis on temporal intervention, environmental questions, social issues, and other important aspects of the object (which I have discussed in the previous chapters), sometimes remain out of sight. In contrast to this, the aspects of the process, the fundamental public agenda, the humble position of the designer, and the unpredictability of design and construction need to be stressed more clearly in the everyday approach to architecture.

Particularly in terms of the public aspect of architecture, its fundamental publicness should be addressed at this point. Whether architecture is political or pre-political, it is by definition public. It intervenes in order to change the earth into the dwelling place of human beings, or it intervenes into the world in order to maintain it. It creates objects that define the living space of inhabitants today, yesterday and tomorrow. It intervenes in space in order to erect boundaries or different conditions, and so on. The project of architecture therefore never is private but always public. Therefore, the architectural plan needs to be made public, and not simply presented as part of the exchange market, in order to enable its inhabitants to acquire a new home, the firm new offices, its investors new properties, and its architects new assignments. It should also be presented within the public realm in order to enable inhabitants, civilians, and all other stakeholders to discuss the project politically. Since architecture intervenes in the world, from time to time the architect needs to suspend work on the design in order to make drawings, texts, models, diagrams, movies and sketches that present the idea to the public. The architect has to stop working in order to present the plans to the world, to discuss them and to listen to feedback – even from those that are not involved in the design-process itself. Often, these moments are formalized, as projects require permits from (local) governments, are published in newspapers, or are presented to the neighborhood as part of a fair hearing. However, these moments of presentation to the public, to gain support or gather opinion, are in architecture not valued as central moments, but are often described as resistant, needlessly difficult and bureaucratic. The public

136.

Hannah Arendt, 'Karl Jaspers. A Laudatio' in: Hannah Arendt, 'On Humanity in Dark Times, Thoughts on Lessing', in: Hannah Arendt *Man in Dark Times*, New York 1993 (ds Harcourt Brace & Company)

137.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 39

138.

cf. Anthony Flint, *Wrestling with Moses, How Jane Jacobs Too On New York's Maters Builder and Transformed the American City* (New York: Random House, 2009)

139.

Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1981); see also in the Dutch context the flaming essay of poet Gerrit Komrij, *Het boze oog* (Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers, 1983); See also Jonathan Meades in *The Guardian*, September 18th, 2012: 'Architecture, the most public of endeavours, is practiced by people who inhabit a smugly hermetic milieu which is cultish. If this sounds far-fetched, just consider the way initiates of this cult describe outsiders as the lay public, lay writers and so on: it's the language of priesthood. And like all cults its primary interest is its own interests, that is to say its survival, and the triumph of its values – which means building. Architects, architectural critics, architectural theorists, the architectural press (which is little more than a deferential PR machine) – the entire quasi-cult is cozily conjoined by mutual dependence and by an ingrown, verruca-like jargon which derives from the more dubious end of American academe.' <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2012/sep/18/architects-cities-jonathan-meades> [visited November 1st, 2012]

presentation, however, can also be described as 'action'. The plan, after all, makes tangible the future treatment to the world that is at hand, which will define the world for future generations. This treatment, since it is not only a private but also a public matter, needs to be discussed publicly, stretching beyond political approval it need be.

The reason to stress the significance of the work of the architect is that at the root of architecture, which mainly consists of work and can be understood as pre-political, but should also be at least partly-considered as a form of 'action', which therefore is political. This political aspect particularly urges architects to consider their approach to the project; to think not only of what has to be done, but also of how it should be done. Architectural design is after all a significant *activity* in the world, as it exists and will exist.

7.3.2 To Think Spatially About the World

Architecture contributes to the world-in-common. This 'contribution' is highly affective, as is argued previously: the objects of architecture are both public and spatial. Political and spatial qualities actually belong to each other, as Arendt argued in her reflection upon Karl Jasper's writings. The world is spatial and is characterized by its inhabitants.¹³⁶ This public character of architecture today however is questionable. Architecture was once the most public of the arts, but it has lost this status acquired in the Romantic age. Arendt does not really clarify this remark with 'contemporary' examples, only adding that it is replaced by the novel that is interested in the social and the intimate.¹³⁷ We can therefore plausibly state that if we look around today, the loss of this public character to the scattered appearance of architectural objects, listens to the even more scattered discourse within the architectural profession on its aims and objectives, particularly when we touch upon the tension that exists between society and the architectural profession. There seems to be a lack of shared perspective; no common ground upon which architects, society, and the public can construct the world together. This lack of shared perspective is not only present between the professional field and society, but even within the architectural field it is hard to find shared perspectives. Architects might even disagree upon their starting points as fundamental assumptions differ from practice to practice. Some architects regard architecture to be an autonomous field, others argue that it is heteronomous, depending upon (amongst others) societal, cultural, and economic contexts. Others argue that architecture needs to engage in social issues, or understand it as a highly personal objective. The outcome of each assignment can be tempting and stylish, dynamic or formal, traditional or futuristic, extravert or introvert, understated or monumental, morphed and blurred, welcoming and securing, tiny or enormous – it only reveals in architecture today how important seemingly trivial details can be: the particular hand of the designer, the taste of the commissioner, the approach of the contractor, the preference of an alderman, and so on. Today, the impasse between the professional and the public is tangible in the form of competitions, where besides a professional jury the public is also allowed to choose a 'winner'. The choice of the public often differs as does the choice of the jury. Or to state it differently, the 'taste' of the public differs from that of the professionals. Architecture cannot be reduced to a matter of taste (if we understand this as a narrow definition, as we will see); the gap between 'the public' and 'the professional' has a long pedigree in architecture. It is also tangible in Jane Jacobs' resistance against the plans of Robert Moses,¹³⁸ or in the sharp reflections of Tom Wolfe on the profession.¹³⁹ However, where more

common ground could previously be found, at least amongst architects, today the profession itself is scattered, and it seems to be a house divided against itself. This position makes it hard to turn architecture into a public issue – or even to understand it as a public issue. It prevents architects from understanding ‘what they are doing’, to grasp the very public character of their profession, as it also hides the public aspects of architecture from public view. These discussions urge architects to continuously redefine their self-understanding vis-à-vis with society, to discuss the roles they could inherit, the positions they take.¹⁴⁰ Today, the question of the roles of the architect and the role of architecture is again on the table. It can be seen in attempts to engage with public issues, in ‘empowering’ communities, and in all sorts of other engagements with the world. In these movements, small amounts of the public character are at least once again revealed.

This brief reflection upon the increasing gap between architecture and the public from the Romantic age onwards, (as we have seen in the previous chapter)¹⁴¹ propelled by modernity, leads to the question as to whether architecture can ever gain this public character again? It is this question that Frampton also formulated in his reflection upon *The Human Condition*. ‘Whether architecture,’ he writes, ‘will ever be able to return to the representation of collective value is a moot point.’¹⁴²

In order to sketch an outline of the relevance of the public character of architecture as a process, as a product of making, and as a construction of the world that needs to be set within the public discourse, we might start with the argument which we have touched upon previously: architecture as pre-political activity. As a reminder: Arendt talked about the establishment of the Greek *Polis*. Before public life was at stake, public space needed to be secured. Public spaces simultaneously require a wall (which articulates the boundaries of public space) and a law (which organizes public life).¹⁴³ This perspective of the act of architecture therefore stresses the potential of erecting walls and articulating boundaries, of articulating spaces that offer room for appearances, and spaces for certain communities that are formative for that community. Architecture in this perspective not only offers the potential for the community to organize itself, but also to articulate the given community. This is of course not only a matter of outer walls (edges, boundaries, porches, changes in materials or even patterns in the pavement, and so on), but also of buildings that symbolizes that community. The cathedral of Pevsner, upon which we touched in the previous chapter, certainly has such meaning, as does the town hall of a local community, or the canteen of a soccer club. Nevertheless, this is of course related to the origins of the *Polis*. What about the already existing *Polis*, and the initiative to add a courthouse, a canopy or a temple to the agora? In other words, do we need to see architecture as pre-political only? Is this definition too narrow? We can certainly argue that there are at least a couple of aspects of the initiative, design, and construction of a wall, a public building that are politically-defined as well. I will come back to this later, but at this point we can argue that if Arendt refers to architecture as pre-political, this is only in a situation that is pre-political; before there is a *polis* that can house a political body. However the moment there is a *polis* which offers room to a particular political body, every intervention in this *polis* needs to be discussed in public, amongst those participating in the political body.

The pre-political activity of constructing a wall preceding the establishment of a certain communal space is of course related to the activity of work. It is after all an intervention in the world, moreover in constructing a world-in-common. It is

140.

cf. Tom Avermaete, ‘The Architect and the Public. Empowering People in Postwar Architecture Culture’, in: *Hunch 14, Publicity* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers/Berlage Institute, 2010)

141.

Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 39

142.

Kenneth Frampton, ‘The Status of Man and the Status of his Objects’, in: Kenneth Frampton, *Labour, Work and Architecture. Collected Essays on Architecture and Design* (London/ New York: Phaidon Press, 2002), 40

143.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198

144.
Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1982), 162

145.
cf. Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 76

important to once again stress perspective as our second fundamental consideration. As we argued in the previous chapter, it is important to keep this in mind, and to not only stress the limitations of architecture understood as work. Work in all sorts of perspectives is indeed pre-political. It creates a world-in-common which represents the stage for public life. It offers to this world the permanence needed for the instability and unpredictability of public life, of appearances, of action and of speech.

However, architecture is certainly a cultural activity, which as stated previously, is somewhat understood within the activity of work, but stretches towards the activity of action and the realm of the political. This is the third perspective: as architecture strongly contributes to the twofold image of culture, intervention and care, to the renewal and maintenance of the world-in-common, it also needs to be an issue of public and political concern.

Finally, we can also argue that behind the intervention that is at the heart of the architectural project, aspects of 'action' can also be traced. I would argue that the initiative to intervene, or the reasoning behind the design, evokes a form of sketching and drawing that is political in itself. This is the reason it needs to be discussed further in public. It changes the world and affects the *polis*. Moreover, it creates the *polis*. 'If the architecture of urban artefacts,' the Italian architect Aldo Rossi writes in the final paragraphs of his well-known 1966 book *The Architecture of the City*, 'is the construction of the city, how can politics, which constitutes the decisive moment, be absent from this construction? ... Who chooses the image of a city if not the city itself – and always and only through its political institutions.'¹⁴⁴ These four considerations of architecture and the political realm can be summarized with the conclusion that the pre-political and the political, along with work and action, co-exist within architecture. The construction of a wall is pre-political and political at the same time.

These considerations certainly emphasize the gap between architecture and the public once more: one that cannot be taken for granted. Architecture is too important to leave it with that. Architecture requires serious effort to bridge this gap, relying on architects to involve the public in their proposals, but also requiring effort from the public to be involved in their environment (or better said, to be involved in the world).

Through this challenge we also can observe from a slightly different angle. The merit of work, Arendt argues, is to offer permanence to the world, as well as a sense of 'being at home' in the world. As we have seen previously, works of art are particularly important in this respect.¹⁴⁵ Building upon this perspective, we can argue that the merits of architecture place particular stress on the spatial aspects of the world. Or to state it differently: architects think spatially; offering a particular understanding and knowledge of and for the world. We can take this literally, since it occurs when architects talk to clients: they immediately think or imagine spaces for a certain purpose or wish. That is what happens when architects visit a particular site; they immediately think of the spatial characteristics, and how these can be adopted, exposed, or countered within the required intervention. That is also what happens when the architect touches upon a particular problem in the news – they think in terms of spaces that might help to counter the given problem. This is also what happened when I and my colleague conducted our first visit to the cemetery in Blankenberge – and also during the many other visits that followed. We immediately questioned the structure of the cemetery. Although it was blurred, if not hidden, we recognised its spatial qualities. It is because of this that we could read the space (although

we understood it better after studying the plan, reading about the history, and seeing how the cemetery has been expanded over time). Our training as architects and landscape architects helped us to think of spatial interventions through which these qualities could be revealed, and how these interventions could help to improve the spatial quality of the cemetery, or how the structure could be made tangible and or could help to increase the functionality and comfort of the cemetery, so that it could be more than just a cemetery but also an environment that offers the possibility to stay for a while; to find some rest and quietness. Spatial thinking is also triggered beyond actual assignments, as for instance through reading about developments in society in a newspaper, or evoked by particular items in the news. When architects read about the changing methods of teaching at primary schools, to take an example, they think about the consequences this has for the school building and for the classroom. They are able to develop the spatial conditions that offer the correct room for these new methods of teaching.¹⁴⁶ This might also be what happens when architects arrive somewhere and all they see is a parking lot with a blank wall and a small entrance-door. They think about the possibilities of that space, and how this could be achieved in far more welcoming and socially-secure ways. This is what happens when architects participate in a debate; they come up with spatial examples that make abstract ideas more tangible. This is even of use in situations of war, where architects (and their spatial knowledge) are able to trace where bullets may have come from, or who might be responsible for certain bombings.¹⁴⁷

We might state that to think spatially is to think in a particular way. Of course, I will discuss this later in this chapter, as the capacity to think spatially is a certain talent which is somewhat enhanced through training and education. However, to think spatially is particularly valuable because it is closely related to the experiences of the human body. This body is spatial in itself; it requires a space in which to function. The human body always relates to space in particular ways, and it is this which is inherent in experiences that are highlighted within the practice of architecture, that are dissected in order to construct a certain level of expertise and knowledge regarding the spatiality of the world. As the German architect Rudolph Schwartz argues in addition to the relationship between the body and actual building:

‘What then comes into being is first and foremost circumscribed space – shelter, living space, ceremonial space, a space which replaces the space of the world. We could almost say, and indeed it is true, that building is based on the inner spaciousness of the body, on the knowledge of its extent and the form of its growth, on the knowledge of its articulation and of its power to expand. Indeed it is with the body that we experience building, with the outstretched arms and the pacing feet, with the roving glance and with the ear, and above all else in breathing. Space is dancingly experienced.’¹⁴⁸

Space is bound to the human body. We experience space through our bodily senses: through our feet dancing in the room, our hands touching the doorknob, our eyes looking out of a window, our ears hearing the wind blowing in the curtains, or the smell of coffee that even offers an experience of taste. However, again via the Schwartz perspective, although delightful and obvious, it is bound to the individual experience, to the relation of the individual and particular space. It therefore lacks the same outward look as previously discussed, where it is no longer the individual and the earth, but the human being and the world, where the

146.

I could have referred to many other (architectural) assignments, as for instance the city-hall, the buildings of the parliament, the changing environment of offices, the impact of new infrastructure, and so on. However, the architecture of schools are and have been discussed extensively amongst architects. Particularly we have to mention the work of Herman Hertzberger here, who have been years ahead the societal debate with his design for a series of Montessori-schools from the 70s onwards. The impact of these designs is not to be overlooked: all schools designed after the early 2000s onwards had to acknowledge somehow the teachings of Hertzberger on the design of schools.

147.

Great examples of a distinctive use of spatial and architectural knowledge are for instance the research-group Forensic Architecture, at the Goldsmith University in London: <http://www.forensic-architecture.org>, the research group Center for Spatial Research at Columbia University in New York: <http://c4sr.columbia.edu>, and the Amsterdam based architect Jan Willem Petersen and his office Specialist Operations, <http://www.specialistoperations.eu>

148.

Schwartz, *The Church Incarnate*, 27

149.
Arendt, 'Karl Jaspers, A Laudatio', 79

150.
Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge (Mass.)/ London: MIT Press, 1997)

151.
Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, 4

human body is placed within the world which is in common with others, as the spatial experience of the room and of bodies. When we argue that architecture is rooted in the world and that the very aim of architecture is one of creating spaces, we might conclude that the aim of architecture is the spatiality of the world itself. If we argue that architects think spatially, we argue that they think about the world in spatial ways; imagining the world-in-common by imagining spaces. To me, this is a pivotal point that requires a slightly different approach to the public character of architecture, in addition to the four considerations we have defined above. Arendt also values the importance of spatial thinking. As we might expect, her idea of 'spatial thinking' was not so much related to architecture, but to politics. We have already touched upon this perspective briefly: 'spatiality' comes up in Arendt's writings as she dissects the writings of one of her teachers, the German philosopher Karl Jaspers. She characterizes his thinking as 'spatial', and she clarifies what she has in mind with that characteristic: it is bound to the world and to its inhabitants.¹⁴⁹ In other words, Jasper's thinking is spatial, not because it is rooted in a particular space that exists (this is of course important against the background of the German pre-war emphasis on the *heimat*, which somewhat affected the thinking of her other teacher Martin Heidegger), but because it always relates to the world and its inhabitants. On the one hand this lifts Jasper's thinking away from those that define the authentic self as rooted in a particular place or distinct from the humble and stumble of everyday reality, but also from those that never leave the realm of ideas and theories; whose ideas never become tangible. In Arendt's perspective, to think spatially is to think about the world and its inhabitants; of the table and all of those sitting around it. The world is spatial, and the inhabitants of the world need this spatiality to take their particular positions around the table; to take their position in the *world*. It also means that this thinking is not focused on the individual self, but on the world that is in common, and on the plurality of its inhabitants that share the world, and how they relate to the world (and others).

Although Arendt stresses here the writings of Jasper, the work of a particular philosopher, we can view this as a perspective of the architectural approach to the world. If something needs to be used to characterize architecture as public art, it is the calling to think and act spatially, to imagine the world-in-common through spaces, as we defined above. We can now deepen this perspective by adding that thinking spatially is to think about the world and its inhabitants. Furthermore, architects not only think but also propose and act; they intervene in the world from a perspective that is bound to the world and its inhabitants. We might argue that the 'ethical function of architecture', from the title of Karsten Harries' reflection upon the architectural profession,¹⁵⁰ if it is bound to the world and its inhabitants, is to make these inhabitants 'feel at home in the world'. Harries explains the title as follows: 'Should architecture not continue to help us find our place and way in an ever more disorienting world? In this sense I shall speak of the ethical function of architecture. "Ethical" derives from "ethos." By a person's ethos we mean his or her character, nature, or disposition. Similarly we speak of a community's ethos, referring to the spirit that presides over its activities. "Ethos" here names the way human beings exist in the world: their way of dwelling. By the ethical function of architecture I mean its task to help articulate a common ethos.'¹⁵¹ With this in mind, we can more clearly state our conclusion: architecture's aim is to make inhabitants feel at home in the world, as it also serves to offer them common spaces of appearance and to find their way in the world. This ethical outlook finds its support in, as Paul Holmquist argues, its 'capacity to spatially reconcile the perspectives of human plurality into a common reality

through fabrication.¹⁵² This perspective means that architects should not to limit their perspectives only to architectural intervention, composition, or space, but to all of these aspects, perspectives, and ideas, which needs to be challenged against a background of ‘the world and its inhabitants’. By urging that ‘spatial’ refers the world *and* its inhabitants, it incorporates the web of relationships that is fundamental to the world and its inhabitants.

This also means that architects offer proposals for transformation of the world by changing the web of relationships, but that their role (although not their impact) is somewhat limited (‘One cannot change man ... but one can change the constitution of the world,’ Paul Holmquist writes. And he add a beautiful quote of Arendt: ‘... and “hope that the rest will take care of itself.”’¹⁵³ After their ‘work’ (the intervention), it is up to the inhabitants to occupy this intervention. By their occupation of the architectural object, by their use of it, the object changes indefinitely. Only through this occupation and use the architectural projects may they become part of the world-in-common. ‘The architect only starts’, the British architect and educator Jeremy Till writes in his fascinating book *Architecture Depends*, ‘what time and others continue’.¹⁵⁴ Till argues that architecture which incorporates these aspects of continuous change and transformation in the built environment, allows its users and inhabitants to more easily appropriate the buildings and spaces – and for examples of ‘unfinished’ architecture that he recognizes (for instance) in the early works of Herman Hertzberger.¹⁵⁵ This challenge to architecture, as Till sees it, should not be read as a challenge to the object of design, but rather as challenge to the attitude of the designer. Architects should account for the appropriation of use over time. Transformation will inevitably happen through occupation. In other words, there is a close relation between world and how it is produced by its inhabitants. The architect plays a significant (but not the final) role in this production. This perspective echoes the notion of social space coined by the French Philosopher Henri Lefebvre. The notion of spatiality, insofar as it depends upon the world and its inhabitants, acknowledges that architects are not the only ‘spacemakers’ in the world. Space, somehow, is a ‘shared enterprise’¹⁵⁶ – from the very beginning to the conception of (future) spaces, it is not only architects who conceive spaces, but commissioners are also involved, as well as other stakeholders. This also accounts for the use of space. Existing space is continuously redeveloped in dynamic processes. The architect is not the only one in charge. The use is defined by the users, and this will inevitably affect the space. They will change the panels or add other elements, disturbing and redesigning the patterns and compositions of all of these spaces.¹⁵⁷ A final point that can be made here is that space is always to be seen as political. As Awan, Schneider and Till describe: it is political because it affects the lives of its inhabitants and users. There is no neutrality in space: ‘This apparent natruality and abstraction is simply not the case: social space, as inherently political, is charged with the dynamics of power/empowerment, interaction/isolation, control/freedom, and so on.’¹⁵⁸ This is of course particularly true for the (architectural) practices that more extensively involve the public, outlined for instance in the aforementioned example of the *Prinsessinnengarten*. This is also articulated through the aesthetics of temporality as well as in the unfinished character of each project, which is particularly suited to these sorts of projects.

Nevertheless, this also questions the ‘world’ as we described before as offering continuity in time (and space), even amongst generations. Instead of an ethical outlook towards the aim of a design process, we might also state that what is central in the alternative practice – the production of the intervention as a collective and community effort – is in mainstream practices hidden

152.

Paul Holmquist, ‘Towards an Ethical Technique: Reframing Architecture’s “Critical Call” through Hannah Arendt,’ in: *The Plan Journal*, no 1, vol 1, 2016, 25

153.

Ibid., 26; the quote of Arendt comes from her essay, ‘Introduction into Politics, 106

154.

Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: MIT Press, 2009), 106

155.

Ibid., 108

156.

Awan, Schneider, Till, *Spatial Agency*, 29

157.

Ibid., 29

158.

Ibid., 30

159.
Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 59

160.
See for instance Michiel Riedijk (ed.), *Architecture as a Craft, Architecture, Drawing, Model and Position* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij SUN, 2010)

161.
Alberto Pérez-Gomes, *Built Upon Love. Architectural Longing after ethics and aesthetics* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 2008), 207

162.
Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 11

(or neglected) within the time-frame of production but is still happening. The building will be transformed over time by its given users; by the public as well as by its owners (who will make the drastic transformations, however the users will change the building on a daily basis through their presence and engagement). In other words, the world is inevitably in a continuous state of transformation. This transformation can be seen as the adaptation of the world to the practices of the now and the future. Transformation, in other words, is needed in order to guarantee the permanence of the world. The monumental buildings that colour our memory of cities for ages, that form the background of our urban experiences, and which are stressed by Aldo Rossi as the very continuity of time and space,¹⁵⁹ reveal this paradox. Historical cities are examples of the smooth transformation between the simultaneous processes of endurance and transformation.

Although these reasons clearly stress the importance of understanding ‘spatial thinking’ in a broad sense, with Arendt in mind we might add to this the important perspective of the world itself. It does not only affect the lives of its inhabitants (as it forms the spaces of house and home, street and mall, school and hospital), but it also impacts the world, which is not only ours, but something we hold in common through time. Once again, to think spatially is to think about the world and its inhabitants. If we need to emphasize ‘what architects do’, for now it can be seen through this perspective: architects think spatially about the world, which exists not only in the present but also in the past and future, not only in terms of objects, but always in terms of objects in relation with their inhabitants, which for them represent not just their spaces and objects, but their home.

7.3.3 ‘Even If Nobody is Watching!’

Now that we have several reasons that address the ‘ethical function of architecture’ in the world and its inhabitants, particularly in all sorts of spatial aspects, it is necessary to stress once again the very activity of design. Design is the instrument of architecture, the instrument to intervene and transform – an instrument that intentionally initiates transformative processes. Design also can be described as the lenses through which architects think. If they think spatially – as I have argued architects do – it is not just thinking ‘in’ spaces, it is also thinking in materials, techniques, installations, as well as in contexts, histories, cultures. They think of uses and users, of skylines and the ground level, of elevators and escalators, of lighting and sustainability. They think of forms, relationships and sequences, of compositions, structures and elements, of routes, roofs, and entrances. In other words, architects think in terms of possibilities and interventions, imagining what ‘it’ might become. This is not simply a matter of ‘imagination’ – this imagination must be fuelled by architectural knowledge. Against this background, architectural design today is increasingly emphasized as craftsmanship. Design as a practice that can be trained, developed and enhanced.¹⁶⁰ Rightly so, architectural design indeed requires the development of skills. It also requires the expanding of one’s imagination. Architectural thinking is *intentional* thinking, which requires knowledge of spaces and interventions, of the history of the profession, of architecture, the city and the landscape, as much as it requires the ability to imagine its future.¹⁶¹

Richard Sennett also argues that craftsmanship not only means to acquire a particular skill, but also a certain reflection upon the impact of what one is doing. An ethical attitude is part of craftsmanship.¹⁶² If we think of architectural design as a practice, we might argue that design and reflection are two different elements within the architectural office. We might argue that this reflection is part

of the design process, but that reflection also requires distance to the process of design. ‘Every good craftsman conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking; his dialogue evolves into sustaining habits, and these habits establish a rhythm between problem solving and problem finding.’¹⁶³ The design itself is the application of certain skills upon a particular assignment – the skill of a continuous process of analysis and drawing, of re-drawing and enhancing, of stressing imagination and limitation. The outcome of that process, which is simultaneously cyclical and parallel, relating to different scales, searching for new insights, is the – in the eyes of the designer – best possible answer to a particular question of a client or brief. As is clear: this answer changes from designer to designer, based upon skill, insight, theoretical outlook, previous experiences and objectives. Inherent to the design is thus a certain position, as well as the personal traits of the designer.

It becomes clear that architecture is a practice that needs to take responsibility for the world. I would state, therefore, that architectural practice cannot operate without a reflective component, although everyday practice reveals how difficult it is to integrate moments of reflection within the hustle and bustle of the office and the design trajectory. Nevertheless, architecture not only needs to make designs public and enable the public to respond to proposals, it also requires it to be a reflective practice in itself. Architecture, by ‘acts-of-the-will’, impacts the world and its inhabitants with its proposals, interventions and constructions, not only for today, but also for tomorrow. Architecture transforms the existing, and therefore impacts on the future. We might conclude that architects (and others involved in the process of construction), bear a responsibility to the public as well as public responsibility. That is: architects bear responsibility for the world. The responsibility to deal with the world, particularly in the case of (registered) architects. To join a register of architects, to get permission to build in a certain state or city, is taking responsibility, to act professionally, to develop a responsible attitude to the world. In everyday practice, in moments of extreme stress and busyness, the architect still has to take this world into account. This opens up an ethical perspective on the profession, urging the architect to communicate with the public, to engage the public in their plans, to offer accessibility of the plans to the public.

Again, others who produce products that enrich the world, that intervene in the world, that add, replace or even destroy objects, must also bear this responsibility. But architects, with their practice of spatial formation, are playing *hors category* of worldly practices – beyond categorization.

If we start to think of an ethical perspective, it is clear that this must to be applied to all building assignments. All interventions that affect the world have to be seen as architectural – there is nothing that can be disclosed from this perspective, as discussed in the previous chapter, a conclusion that is reiterated by the several perspectives upon the worldliness of architecture and architectural design offered in this chapter. Most of the aspects addressed in the previous chapter are not tools that can immediately be applied in order to construct a ‘world’ which offers permanence, a sense of reality, or an image of plurality. These are aspects inherent in architecture, but nevertheless disappearing in our understanding of the profession today. There is no single answer or approach, no particular form or shape, no single material or texture that offers a final answer to the problems faced. It is not possible to rationalize architecture (that is: we can make it more rational, but we cannot bring it back to a formula, to maths) particularly as the – I repeat again – ‘ethical function of architecture’ is the world and its inhabitants,

164.
Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*,
38-39

165.
Geoffrey Scott, *The Architecture of
Humanism, A Study in the History
of Taste* (New York/London: W.W.
Norton & Company, 1999); Tom
Spector, *The Ethical Architect. The
Dilemma of Contemporary Practice*
(New York: Princeton Architectural
Press, 2001)

166.
Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 25

which are two phenomena that are inherently plural. It cannot be rationalized, but it is urged to be 'relationalized' - to be engaged with the world and to relate to its inhabitants. Architecturally we can speak of the socio-spatial relationship. This relationship can be discussed, investigated, it can be addressed and discussed, but can never be reduced to mere statistics and other finite scientific perspectives. Human life, and particularly that of a community, cannot be brought back to a formula. We might have increasing insight into the effect of form and color, of climate and tectonics, but lived space, as well as perceived space, always differs from the conceived space, to state Lefebvre's reflection on 'social space'.¹⁶⁴ The socio-spatial relationship cannot be prescribed.

This conclusion is the very reason to stress the cultural component of architecture. As we stated in the previous chapter that a distinction between architecture and building does not make sense in regard to the 'construction of the world', here we understand the reach of this perspective. Even the 'mere-building' practices must be challenged by the same cultural perspective. The artistic aspect of architecture offers room to adopt local qualities and characteristics of community, without reducing it to a finite form and prescribed experiences and usage. If understood from this perspective, the artistic (that is to say that every architectural object differs, since it is designed for that particular spot and with that community and usage in mind) offers the freedom to discover and explore, to occupy and appropriate. Admittedly, some architectural approaches offer more space to discover and explore, to occupy and appropriate than others. But in its totality, the plurality of architecture is one of the tangible aspects of the limitless differences fundamental to the world. This, once again, raises discussion of the very publicness of the process of architectural design. It is offered to the world not as a science of facts (which are difficult to discuss), but as a way to deal with differences (which are urgent to discuss).

I will return to this 'scientific' aspect, but we must first stress the public perspective that is inherent to all architectural assignments as an ethical challenge. If architecture is artistic, but should not be treated solely aesthetically, and if architecture is a service, but cannot be treated in the limiting way of just another expert at the table – what then? At this point, I would recall the writings of Geoffrey Scott and Tom Spector on the humanist and ethics of architecture respectively.¹⁶⁵ They do not so much differentiate between architecture and building, between the everyday and the exceptional, but urge architecture as craftsmanship, whose inherent drive is to achieve good work. As Sennett writes: craftsmanship 'is focussed on achieving quality, on doing good work, which is the craftsman's primordial mark of identity.'¹⁶⁶ Scott and Spector both argue for this perspective too, by taking the three-fold elements of well-building as proposed by Vitruvius, which they regard as still valid for all assignments. Architectural aesthetics is not something separate to the structural and the functional question in a project. They argue not for the division between the genuine and the exceptional, but between the genuine and the excellent. This is not simply in line with Vitruvius's principle of well-building, but also offers a more balanced approach to the built environment, in which the three aspects play a simultaneously crucial role. Unlike Ruskin, Scott and Spector don't see the aesthetic aspect of architecture as just useless decoration beyond common use, neither do they put it forward as the ultimate decisive characteristic as Pevsner did, but understand it as an integral aspect of building. The aesthetics of architecture is related to its other aspects, to commodity and firmness. Architectural aesthetics, as Scott argues, is urged by a pure aesthetic impulse. This impulse nevertheless

does not culminate in a purely aesthetic result, ‘for it has to deal with a concrete basis which is utilitarian.’¹⁶⁷ And as Spector stresses, only these projects that are well-designed, where aesthetics and use, aesthetics and construction, join forces, leave us speechless.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, if we stress the profession of architecture as the urge of well-building, we stress a whole field of professions that are involved in (the transformation of) the built environment. All participants in the building industries are included in this perspective. This helps each participant to position themselves vis-à-vis the aim of well-building, in order to apply the aspects of commodity, firmness and delight into every assignment at hand. This makes reasonable sense, since this brings architecture and building back to a single perspective. Both intervene in the world that is in common, which means that both bear responsibility for the world in common, for the care for the world, its past and its future. Whenever we split the building industries into a part that is playing around in the realm of the arts, and a part that is disclosed from such a delight, the challenges that occupy the first do not apply to the second. This means that both distinct realms lose their indebtedness to the world. The first loses its contact with the reality of users and society, the second loses the understanding of each assignment as an intervention in a common world. Keeping both sides of the spectrum of building close together at least encourages each participants in the building industry to do their best and deliver a good job.

Although Vitruvius’s terms *firmitas*, *utilitas*, and *venustas* are still understood as valid today, there are certainly aspect that can be added to these three term, which are evoked through the new issues faced by contemporary practice. Spector introduces two extra themes, context and style, as relevant for architecture today. The latter is less important for our perspective, the first, however, anticipates the increasing globalized playing field of architectural design.¹⁶⁹ Although architecture can be understood as ‘the most context-sensitive of the arts’, from the very beginning of modern architecture the idea of context has been questioned and emphasized. It started with transgression of the local boundaries through international publications, conferences that brought together similar outlooks, and exhibitions showing similarities of approaches and attitudes – and thereafter architects that travelled the world, conceiving projects in different countries and for different cultures. Modern architecture became an ‘international style’, which in turn evoked the responses of ‘postmodernism, traditionalism, historicism, and environmental- and social-activist movements’, which ‘all have contributed formidable critiques of modernism’s unsympathetic attitude toward pre-modern buildings and urban patterns.’¹⁷⁰ The question of context is today embraced more than ever, particularly in the situation where heritage has been promoted as the central assignment of the future in the West, as well as the unsurpassed growth of cities in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Both situations, however, show how difficult it is to deal with local circumstances without falling into the trap of nostalgia or in a perspective that only duplicate the achievements of Western architecture in a very different cultural circumstance. This somehow, to my mind, is also behind the now famous slogan coined by Rem Koolhaas, ‘Fuck Context’.¹⁷¹ As in his other writings, this is not a paradigm to be followed, it is simply an observation. It once again shows his attitude of the ‘realpolitiker’. Simply a sharp reading of today’s situation, particularly on the increasing assignments in architecture and the city for huge, often non-site-specific programs, like warehouses, malls and airports.

The question of style is a bit more difficult, but is definitely worth challenging. Spector urges style as a theme that mediates between architecture as an expression of the self, and ‘the self to be not an isolated individual but a

167.

Scott, *The Architecture of Humanism*, 17

168.

Spector, *The Ethical Architect*, 173

169.

See for an extensive introduction to this team the dissertation of my colleague Esin Kömez Daglioglu, *Reclaiming Context: Architectural Theory, Pedagogy and Practice since 1950* (Delft: Delft University of Technology, 2017)

170.

Spector, *The Ethical Architect*, 159; for a nuanced view upon local approaches to modernity, see Tom Avermaete, David de Bruijn, and Job Floris (eds.), *Codes and Continuities, OASE#92* (Rotterdam: nai10 Publishers, 2014); for an extensive discussion on working across boundaries, see Tom Avermaete, Viviana d’Auria, Klaske Havik and Lidewij Lenders (eds.), *Crossing Boundaries, Transcultural Practices in Architecture and Urbanism, OASE#95* (Rotterdam: nai10 Publishers, 2015)

171.

Rem Koolhaas, ‘Bigness’, in: Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1998), 502

172.
Spector, *The Ethical Architect*, 202

173.
Ibid., 189

174.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 57

175.
Spector, *The Ethical Architect*, 197

176.
Ibid., 198

177.
Mockbee, 'The Rural Studio', 108

178.
Mockbee, 'The Rural Studio', 155; his call to architectural professionals 'even if nobody is watching' actually reminds of Arendt's discussion on compassion and, which she urges cannot become public, let alone public matter. In a reference to Jesus' words 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth' [Mathew 6:3], she argues that goodness needs to remain hidden. 'For it is manifest', Arendt writes, 'that the momenta good work becomes known and public, it loses its specific character of goodness, of being done for nothing but goodness' sake. When goodness appears openly, it is no longer goodness, though it may still be useful as organized charity or an act of solidarity.' Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 74

participant in community struggle.¹⁷² Behind this remark there is the acknowledgement that a single individual only can acquire an incomplete picture of the world via others, which is 'to accept that one will never conclusively prove anything, that only only constructs provisional, fallible, although hopefully durable narratives.'¹⁷³ This view resonates with the introduction of the metaphor of the table by Arendt, discussed intensively in the previous chapters, which shows that only 'where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear.'¹⁷⁴ Despite the unease about style in the modern and contemporary Western world, there still is a certain 'approving of the fact of style', Spector states.¹⁷⁵ Spector argues that 'style' has to be understood as a 'coherent vocabulary of techniques, forms, and conventions.'¹⁷⁶ A style urges others to participate in it – and with that perspective Spector tries to overcome arbitrariness in design, and it also enables other to follow a certain approach, it makes the architectural response to certain questions and assignments accessible to discussion.

Particularly because of this latter aspect, I would support Spector's proposal as a category to be added to the Vitruvius trias. Architecture, when seen as constructing and intervening in the world, has to be seen as serving the inhabitants of the world, the public. This means that all works of architecture should also be seen as being a public servant. The ethics behind each building project is not only on the level of the construction, the utility, the aesthetics, the context and the particular approach to the design-assignment that acknowledges the tension between the singular designer and the collective world, but also on the public responsibility inherent to architecture. How does this particular project not only serve the client, but also contribute to the world-in-common? Each building project serves the public, it contributes to the world-of-things, to the world in common, the world that we inherited from previous generations and that we offer to the next. The architect, in this sense, is challenged to be a *public servant*. As Mockbee urges:

'If architecture is going to inspire a community, or stimulate the status quo into making responsible environmental and social structural changes now and in the future, it will take what I call the "subversive leadership" of academicians and practitioners to remind the student of architecture that theory and practice are not only interwoven with one's culture but with the responsibility of shaping the environment, of breaking up social complacency, and of challenging the power of the status quo.'¹⁷⁷

Although the public view does not necessarily always rival the status quo, it challenges the attitude of the architect to always look further than the clients interests. It urges an ethical perspective upon architecture. 'Go above and beyond the call of a "smoothly functioning conscience";' Mockbee challenges architectural students, to 'help those who aren't likely to help you in return and do so even if nobody is watching!'¹⁷⁸

Spector's view on ethics in architectural design is conceived on the basis of contract-theory, which is based on the writings of the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, and adjusted by contemporary philosophers John Rawls and David Gauthier. In architecture, much is organized through contracts: the relationship with a client and with the contractor all are covered by well-defined contracts. However, the contract with society is implicit rather than defined by

applicable rules. It is a matter of ethics, Spector argues. He mirrors this contract-model to the model that can be derived from conflict-theory, in which in lack of a contract between the professional and society, the context is taken as starting point. Since there is a matter of power relationships at stake, there always is a possibility of conflict in these situations. Conflict-theory is critical to professionalization, which is seen as a mechanism of control and self-defence.¹⁷⁹ Spector rejects conflict-theory, as within architecture the conflict is not so much about a struggle for power, but a struggle for 'beauty of the built environment in the face of the an-aesthetic values of capitalism, or how to represent the interests of groups that are not present during design, or how to bring meaning to desultory suburban landscapes.'¹⁸⁰ Spector takes this struggle as an image of the architect today: the position of the architect is always a little uneasy, positioned somewhere between the client on the one hand and the public on the other. If architecture is not just a mere provision of a service to the client by an 'expert' on space, a role that can be understood both in a limited as well as in an expanded sense, but within the context of aesthetics, culture, thus acknowledging a relationship with the public as well, then there is an inherent conflict in each assignment. Spector argues that the ethical outlook of the architect on his profession therefore can either be based on the conflict-theory, which sprang from the writings of Karl Marx, or from the contract-theory, based on the writings of Thomas Hobbes and John Rawls. Spector rejects the first: the conflict-theory originally addresses the conflict between classes, with an aim of resisting the ruling power. Spector reads this, when applied to the field of architecture, as simply protecting ones own interests, which he argues is egocentric.¹⁸¹ The conflict theory does not validates the public interest of architecture. He therefore accepts the contract-theory as his starting point:

“The ethical dilemmas faced by architects arise from the conditions under which architecture is practiced. The conflicts between private and public interests that come to the fore in design deliberations typically cannot be resolved without ignoring or arbitrarily narrowing the scope of legitimate claims. The conflict model tempts architects to accept the truth that “power rules” and to quit worrying about making arbitrary decisions, but architects have demonstrated an unwillingness to give in to such temptation, and with good reason. A contractual model, grounded in the notion of professional ethics, generates a more satisfying response to the dilemmas posed by professional practice: why fraudulent practice is unacceptable, why professionals worry over their “duty”, why changing the terms of practice is such a hazardous undertaking, and how professionals can justify exclusivity on ethical grounds.”¹⁸²

Certainly, one of the main problems with the contract-theory is that there is no 'real' contract with the public. A contract requires two 'solid' parties, but there is no solid 'public' – there is no 'public will' – that can be one of the parties in the contractual relationship. Spector certainly choses the contract-theory since he finds the conflict-model too indifferent. In his text, however, it is clear that his model is somewhere in between: it promotes a responsibility to 'the public', but also argues that design always means dealing with conflicts of interests, which will never be in harmony. Decisions have to be taken, and these decisions never can do 'right' to all interests. This last remark is greatly important for the reflection upon architecture and ethics Spector develops, a perspective that I would stress as well. I, however, don't opt for the contract-model. Arendt's image of public life relates

179. Spector, *The Ethical Architect*, 11

180. *Ibid.*, 13

181. *Ibid.*, 10-11

182. *Ibid.*, 30-31

183.
Ibid., 30-31

184.
cf also Pérez-Gomes, *Built upon Love*, 207

185.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 300

much more to conflict than to contract. To participate is to have the courage to appear amongst other, and to engage in unpredictable processes that even can turn against one. ‘The public’ are not one of the stakeholders at the table during the design-process, or could be in the form of the (local) board or government that have to give permission to construct the proposed building. Although in the democratic political system the (local) board or government can be understood as representing the public, in reality the public often feels misunderstood by (local) authorities, particularly regarding a project ‘in my backyard’. The contract with the public can therefore be understood as ‘virtual’. An ethical outlook could be that the architect is required to inform himself about public opinion, and not take so much for granted what the commissioner, the politician, or studies on a neighborhood bring to the fore. This might also be the perspective of Spector, since he promotes the ‘public will’,¹⁸³ although it is not clear how virtual or solid he understands this aim. However, as already stated, this is a difficult outlook. The will of the public is divided, and it is not easy to grasp into a single perspective. What might be of profit for one (a new motorway which helps to avoid a traffic jam), can harm the another (since his house needs to be demolished). In other words, the public is fragmented, and its voice is dispersed, interests often countering each other. Since there is no ‘public will’, the public cannot be offered authority in the process of design.

Another option might be that the architect always regards architecture as a public project – not because of a certain public, nor a particular public will, but because the architect bears responsibility for the common world and its inhabitants. Since the world connect us with our neighbors, our predecessors and our successors, the public interest of each intervention in the world is evident. Because of his work, which is intervening in a given and common world, the architect bears the responsibility to that common perspective.¹⁸⁴ The common perspective demands that the architect thinks from as many positions as possible, as I will argue later, where his approach should be balanced between the Greek and the Roman attitude towards culture: in imagining the future and an acknowledgment of history and community. As is clear, this perspective acknowledges the distinct perspectives and opposite interests within an ethical outlook on the design-process. This perspective acknowledges much more the conflict-model, where the ethical aspect here must be found in a professional attitude and knowledge of the profession, that enables the architect to act and decide within this field of contradictory interests.

Architectural design, as Spector argues and we can certainly agree upon, will always fail to fulfil every requirement, and therefore the design is always characterized by a certain uneasiness. This can be agreed upon: this is not only a matter of different stakeholders (also those not literally at the table), but it is inherent in the Greek and Roman perspectives too. Intervention in most cases are at odds with the significance of taking care of the given world. The question of ethics, in this view, is thus a question of balancing requirements, as well as accepting this fundamental unease. We can agree upon this ‘contract-model’, since it at least positions architecture as publicly relevant. However, the need for a ‘virtual contract’ is a sign that within modern times, as Arendt argues, reason and rationality have parted company.¹⁸⁵ Spector, to my mind, does not really give reason to value the ‘contract with society’, other than that it is a fundamental issue within architectural practice. He starts his analysis with the remark that the obligation of the architect ‘arises from and responds to two sets of needs. Individual members of society require someone to construct buildings that

presumably accord with their needs, and the public at large requires someone to protect it from the potentially devastating effects of poor and insensitive building practices.¹⁸⁶ Arendt's notion of the world-in-common offers more context and tangibility to the responsibility of architectural designers than a general but virtual 'contract' with the public against 'the danger of shoddy and insensitive buildings'¹⁸⁷ might offer. It is not simply another contract at the table, besides those with the client and the contractor, that urges the architect to act responsibly in regard for 'the world out there'. The architect himself bears responsibility for the world and its inhabitants, of which the architect and his designs are part and parcel. Architecture is a public matter, but it is important not to regard this as something distinct, something to be added to the desires that fuel the design, another perspective that needs to be taken into account. It is inherent to the work, it is at the table all the time, and thus should always be part of the conversations around that table. The architect, like the commissioner, the user or the contractor, should not distinguish themselves from the public – their views should be shaped by an understanding of being an inhabitant of a world-in-common. By arguing that architecture is a public matter that needs to be made public, we at once argue that besides being part of the public, the architect is also a public figure. The architect bears responsibility with his concrete proposals and designs to reveal possibilities and shape the future of the world, affecting its inhabitants. The necessity is to present these proposals in a way that the public, not trained in reading drawings or reading architectural texts, is able to understand and to discuss. 'Architectural design as well as writing and criticism, should acknowledge the need for civic responsibility,' also Pallasmaa argues, and he adds to this statement a remarkable direction for architecture to go.¹⁸⁸ 'Architecture should strengthen the reliability and comprehensibility of the world. In this sense, architecture is fundamentally a conservative art; it materializes and preserves the mytho-poetic ground of constructing and inhabiting space, thus framing human existence and action. Through establishing a horizon of existential understanding, architecture encourages us to turn our attention away from architecture itself: authentic architecture suggests images of ideal life.'¹⁸⁹ If architecture, indeed, is a public art, and it should be part and parcel of public debate, as I argued above, this is not simply a matter of choosing a particular form and material. It is not a matter of organizing a public-questionnaire on the different proposals after a competition. The public debate about architecture, as Pallasmaa rightly argues, should move away from the architectural temptations of shiny renderings. What is at stake in this discussion is future life in the world. How is this world-in-between understood, and how does it simultaneously relate and separate its inhabitants? What intervention will strengthen the world-in-common? What intervention maintains the world as well as proposes a careful renewal?

186. Spector, *The Ethical Architect*, 6

187. *Ibid.*, 5

188. Pallasmaa, 'Toward and Architecture of Humility', 101

189. Pallasmaa, 'Toward and Architecture of Humility', 101



7.10 Lucien Kroll, *Administration-school building for the University of Louvain-la-Neuve*, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, 1970



7.11 Gerrit Rietveld, *Rietveld-Schröderhuis*,
Utrecht, The Netherlands, 1924



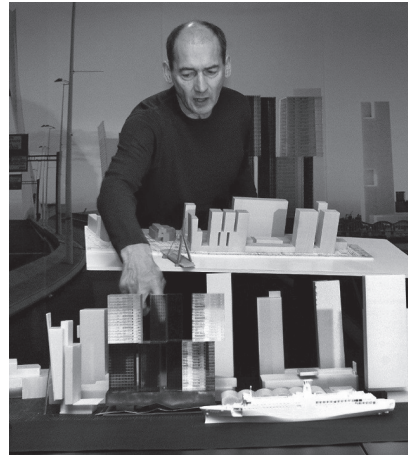
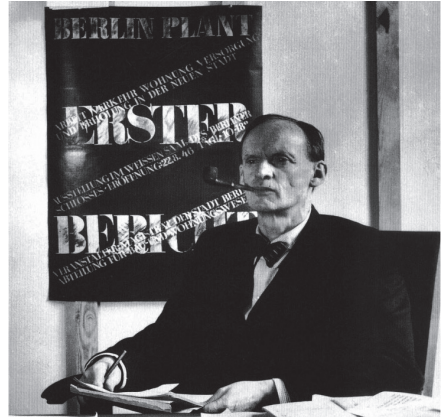
7.12 Christopher Alexander, *Amazon Village*.
Student Housing, commissioned as part of the
Oregon Experiment, Eugene (OR), USA, 1970



7.13 Cornelis van Eesteren, *Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan*
Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1934



7.14 Jon Jerde Partnership, *Kanyon*
(Shopping Mall), Istanbul, Turkey, 2006



7.15 Architects at work: Louis Kahn, Hans Scharoun, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Rem Koolhaas

7.4 ON TWISTS AND TURNS

7.4.1 *The Fundamental Uneasiness of Architectural Design*

There is something crucial in the notion of uneasiness that Spector describes in the position of the architect. The architect is always in between something. The design is serving the client, but also resistant to a singular perspective on the building assignment. It is not only an answer to the needs of the client, it also responds to a particular place. The commissioner may come along with (architectural) references, but also the designer has his experiences, wishes and preferences. It is intervening in the world, but also taking care of the world. Architecture thus – the architect, the architectural office – always acquires an in-between position, which requires a balancing of the interests of the project and an acknowledgment of the impact of the project in different directions. The uneasiness can first be traced in the relationship between the architect and the commissioner, but is also characteristic of the process itself. In the example of the pavilion, that opened this chapter, the project-group was very small. It was me, the designer, and my colleague, the landscape-architect, in the first part of the process in discussion with the city-architect of Blankenberge and his employees. I had a wonderful collaboration with the fellow designer: our individual ideas were quite close to each other, and could be merged together in a single perspective rather fluently. Later, there was me as the designer, in conversation with the municipality as the commissioner, alongside an engineering office that did the structural calculations. Later a Belgium architect stepped in to offer advice and knowledge on the local situation, and in the final phase the contractor was involved with his knowledge of constructing in wood and questions on how I actually wanted some of the details. This was a very easy organization – all advice and responses came to my desk, and I had to define how this (new) information should be implemented in the design, how the design needed to be transformed, or how the design could even be made better – or more realistic – through the processing of this information.

Design processes differ as day and night: this was a small project, and thus could be done by a single designer. Regularly this is not the case. Often there are more designers, an office, more advisors and experts, more people hired by the commissioner to guide or to comment on the project. And of course, particularly in these larger interventions, the project-team can be beyond imagination. The projects may start with lots of discussions with a large group of people, it may start with a project brief that even has more than 1000 pages of specifications. To structure a complex process like this is actually a profession in itself. As is very clear, particularly in these projects, within the complex organization of an architectural project like this, there is a tension between the advisors and the designers. This tension can be in the office, where there are engineers that do the maths, and designers that try to come to a coherent design that answers the needs of the client and that assembles the information, requirements and characteristics of a particular location and program. What is here described as coherent often means that it is also coherent for the office of the designer, within the oeuvre of the bureau. Particularly when a chief designer has a name to protect, a name that attracts particular clients, the 'style' of that designer is important. Although they may run offices with 50, even 1000 employees, the name of the chief designer, the 'starchitect', is important: from Norman Foster to Jeanine Gang – it is their name, their approach, their style, that the client want to have attached to their building and that cities want to add to their image. The uneasiness presented by Spector is

tangible in every detail of this process, although most probably disappeared from the level of the chief designer. If it is his signature that one wants, he or she does not approach his own language, attitude, style critically. Designers, of course, will be critical on the result of the design, since it is their name that is bound to the designs that often are made by employees. The chief-designer will every now and then give comments, give directions to go, and finally will approve the design, before it is presented to a commissioner, the city, the public. There is of course uneasiness in the tension between the design-assistants and the architect in chief, as well as between the intentions of the design-office and the other parties at the table. Does the aesthetic ambition unite the participants, or is it an end in itself? Do the aesthetics have a social basis, or is it part of the ego of the architect? I would argue that in all of these moments, such uneasiness is important: it challenges the architect to find a balance between the personal and the public, the functional and economic aspects, the aesthetic and the ethical aspects. Where we speak of balance, we might better think of the highest achievable quality of the project, so that it indeed serves the client but also takes care for the world.

The complexity of these 'traditional' project-designs today has been countered not only by particular managers, but also by computational programs, that allow the participants to work together in real-time. I will discuss this later, since by this approach, it is possible to exclude the uneasiness of design, that I would stress as an important factor for those dealing with the world. Today, assignments can also be very different, where architects take initiatives by themselves, stress certain conditions that can be improved, and try to tempt possible parties to be involved in the process and to invest in the project. In these projects the architect seems to be free to do whatever he thinks is just, but since he is supported by other parties that need to be involved and thus also to be satisfied, the freedom is not unlimited. It is different, of course, when money no longer matters. This may well have been the case in the projects of the famous architect and developer John Portmann in Atlanta, San Francisco and elsewhere. If you are your own commissioner, it is not so easy to arrange the talking-back essential to a project, the resistance to certain decisions by the commissioner. Only society – and how it is organized – is then a player that need to be faced. And this is an important point: in each project there is the public realm, the world and its inhabitants, that – although silently – ask the most troublesome questions. Is intervention needed? Is this form the best this place, this situation, this program, can get?

This matter of balancing between particularly the public and the private aspects, between the ego of the architect and the wishes of the commissioner, between the commissioner and the user, between the subjective and the objective, has been a central theme within architectural practice as well, particularly during the seventies and eighties when 'participation' became the buzzword within architectural and urban design. Urban renewal processes tried to involve (future) inhabitants in the design-process. Particularly the work of the Belgium architect Lucien Kroll is distinctive in this period – his buildings for the Catholic University of Louvain in Brussels have become the very image of participation in architecture.^[IMAGE 7.10] As he writes on his approach: 'We instinctively avoided every kind of authoritarian imposition threatening the landscape: bureaucracy, closed working methods, isolation, factory processes, ordering systems, etc. This did not amount to a deliberate renunciation of art or architecture but rather to acceptance of a world of openness, cooperation, osmosis, empathy, mimesis and fluidity.'¹⁹⁰ The theme of participation is back on the agenda today, as we have seen in the statement for a projective architecture that is evoked out of uneasiness with a

191.

Robert Gutman, 'The Designer in Architectural Practice', in: Dana Cuff and John Wriedt (eds.), *Architecture from the Outside in, Selected essays by Robert Gutman* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 66; Gutman actually argues that this also is a process not only self-critical, but also formally structured within offices, amongst designers, and in educational situations.

192.

Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand*, 17

particular emphasis on the autonomy of architecture, as well as in the collection of 'alternative practices', where architecture is understood as an agency that empowers inhabitants and allows them to participate in processes of change in their own environment that rises out of social concern. Between these time-periods, as well as today, (re)newed emphasis on architectural form can be found, as well as a new interest in the specificities of architectural knowledge, and a re-evaluation of artistic approaches that become tangible in the differentiated and broad approaches of conceptual, rational, formal, and computational architecture. These approaches in architecture spring from a certain uneasiness with the profession: they can be understood as challenging the particularity of architecture, and often aim to make the design-process more objective. In other words, what actually is inherent to architectural design in all its diversity is a fundamental experience of uneasiness with architecture, architectural design, the architectural intervention. Although this urge is understandable, this uneasiness is inherent to the ungraspable process of design. As I have argued previously, the subjective is undeniably and inseparably bound to the architectural intervention in the world, it only can be countered at the cost of applying the labor attitude to the design process. After all, architectural design, as it deals with the world, always deals with facts as well as (personal) impressions, with information and (individual) expressions, with the past and the future, the now and imagination. In other words, design only for a part of it is traceable and verifiable. Its core is subjective. The hand of the designer – which interprets and makes use of his imagination – cannot be excluded from the result. As we nevertheless see, this 'hand of the designer' also makes architectural design vulnerable for the exchange market, as well as offers a certain difficulty in the communication to the world, in explaining the ideas, images and plans to the public.

The design-process does not follow a strict journey, a linear path in time, a prescribed manual. The design-process is characterized by ruptures, twists and turns. Looking backward on the design process of the entrance pavilions of the cemetery in Blankenberge, these ruptures are clear, but not graspable. Lots of drawings have been made, besides little models and sketches. But how do you move from one sketch to the other? Often it might be to stress a single idea that stood out in the previous drawing, or that came to mind through association. The sociologist Robert Gutman, upon whom we touched previously, stresses this as a continuous process of replacing one design for another, erasing the previous. The design process thus hurts somehow, it is self-critical, he states in his 'psychodynamic' reading of the design process. This capacity to be self-critical is essential to the designer, he argues: not to be satisfied too easily.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, what is drawn and what is tested through drawing and modelling, is in the hands of the drawer. Or better said, it comes out of the hand of the drawer, which is driven by architectural knowledge and evoked through the human capacity of imagination.¹⁹² The aim of the design-process, with all its twists and turns, the investigation of side-paths and details, with all its ungraspable moments that in the end seem to be significant, is meant to come to a point where an architectural project can be defined as addressing all the aspects involved in the assignment.

The personal aspect of architectural design often evoke the question as to whether architecture is or can become a scientific practice. This desire is further evoked by the dependency upon practices in the field, as within the academic sphere. Architecture is pushed forward not by theories, but by local and personal practices, that recognize similar approaches to other offices. Architecture, particularly at ground level, within offices and particular assignments, creates innovation

and opens up new perspectives. In other words, highly personal approaches, initiated through subjective fascinations, pushes architecture forward. This often is a matter of chance: a particular assignment arrives at the right time on the desk of a particular architect. Architect and commissioner find each other, work well together, and therefore enrich the world with new constructions and other perspectives, new insight and innovation. As in the case of the widely known Rietveld-Schröderhuis in Utrecht, which is not only the result of a wonderful working-together by the architect Gerrit Rietveld and the commissioner, Mrs Schröder, but also the coming together of the particular knowledge of Rietveld as a carpenter, a furniture maker, and the ambition and ideas of Schröder. ^[IMAGE 7.11]

However, there have been many proposals that have tried to diminish the personal factor in architectural design. The personal after all makes the design un-accessible, ungraspable, subjective. A great example, but not so much adopted by the professional field, can be found in the writings of Christopher Alexander, and particularly in *The Timeless Way of Building* and *A Pattern Language*. As the title of the first of this series of books suggest, Alexander was looking for aspects in architecture that can be regarded as timeless. Too often, we might argue, architecture is vulnerable for all to fashionable forms and structures, which means: it will not satisfy for long, and soon will be outdated. On the basis of the theoretical foundation that was laid down in his first book, Alexander presents ‘a possible pattern language’ in the second part of the study.¹⁹³ It is important that he already presents this language firstly as one amongst other possible languages that could be derived from the previous study, and secondly that he literally understands it as a language that not only helps to design, but also to talk. ‘You can use it to work with your neighbours,’ he writes, ‘to improve your town and neighbourhood. You can use it to design a house for yourself, with your family; or to work with other people to design an office or a workshop or a public building like a school. And you can use it to guide you in the actual process of construction.’¹⁹⁴ This quote stresses the need for a particular language of architecture amongst other languages, meaning that Alexander admits that there is a particular subjectivity involved in architectural design. The need of a language, which means: to speak and to act (design) coherently, is to be able to explain it to the neighbors. This is an important remark, which stresses the subjectivity to always come back to the level of everyday conversations. This does not mean that architecture should be simplified in order to be explained to the neighbours, but that what is said, explained, and aimed for, through the language, should be accessible (and imaginable) not only to architects, but also to a lay-public. The language Alexander presents is based on his own experiences, he writes, distilled from his own building and planning practices, particularly in the design of the Campus of Oregon University in Eugene, as he has investigated in *The Oregon Experiment*, a book he published as the final part of the triptych. ^[IMAGE 7.12] However, and this is actually shown by the detailed number of patterns presented, the systematic presentation, the ‘scientific’ approach here, is beyond the subjectivity to bring all lessons learned and derived from personal practice into a coherent and significant system.

Alexander’s approach to structure the process of design, or better said, to offer classified information to the designer, is to stress empirical reflection on the different aspects of architecture – what models work, what patterns of urban structures effect public life positively, how to design an entrance, and so on. Although his ‘language’ did not really attract many followers, his aim of acquiring more information on what actually ‘works’ in practice, has had many followers, up until today. We already touched upon the Danish architect Jan Gehl, who

193. Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, and Murray Silverstein, *A Pattern Language, Towns, Buildings, Construction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), x

194. *Ibid.*, x

195.
Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*,
35; Grassi, *De logische constructie
van de architectuur* (Nijmegen:
Uitgeverij SUN, 1997)

196.
cf. for example Meta Berghauer
Pont and Per Haupt, *Spacematrix*,
Space, Density and Urban Form
(Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2010);
Johan Van der Zwart, *Building for
a Better Hospital, Value-adding
Management & Design of Healthcare
Real Estate, A+BE#13* (Delft: Delft
University of Technology, 2014)

precisely investigated and described public spaces that attract people, that can be seen as not only transit-zones, but also as places of destination. One also can think of the work of Aldo Rossi, upon whom we also touched, as well as his Italian contemporary, Giorgio Grassi, and their investigation on architectural typology.¹⁹⁵ There is the investigation into density, the data on healthy environments, and so on – all sorts of information that has become available to architects and others within design-processes, to be inserted, to propel knowledgeable possibilities.¹⁹⁶

Another approach can be mentioned too: the trial to open the design-process to other experts within the theme that underlines a certain project. New information technology offers a computational approach to design, in which all participants can work together on a single drawing, so that the knowledge of each is immediately inserted into the project. Traditionally – which is also how the design for the entrance-pavilion to the cemetery can be described – the architect is the central figure in the process. The architect needs to acquire the right information from all experts, and bring them together in a certain order and hierarchy. The design is presented to the participants, to other designers in the office, to the commissioners, to experts in the field of construction, acoustics, light, physics, and so on – even also to governing instances – responses are gained and processed in the next phase of design. This cycle continues, until the project is built and delivered to the client. The design-process somehow is a process of continuously re-working all the acquired information. As can be imagined, sometimes information that is acquired half-way through the process stresses the ideas until then, and the hand of the designer is very influential on what actually is done with the acquired information. The new computational models, as for instance the well-known BIM-model, somehow try to objectify the design-process by stressing the processing of information. Although within these models the designer still can hold a general position, a veto on the aesthetics, the positions of all participants nevertheless is more or less the same. They add their insights into the same model, so that the new information is immediately processed in every detail of the project. This, of course, also counts to changes in programs or requirements – a simple change of parameters, as the users explain often, immediately implements these changes in the design.

These approaches are interesting, and offer new insights to architecture, even new forms to the profession, as is in the case of computational design. One of the main questions that needs to be asked in all this, I would argue, is how to keep the uneasiness of design ‘alive’. If architectural design is seen as to just a case of applying the right architectural form to best answer the question of the assignment of the case, then it starts to be like the filling in of a formula, following strict paths in a certain linear way. Whilst this may be efficient and propelling, it leaves no room for creativity, nor for the critical attitude of the designer. But even more, one can argue that in these cases where the computational program is presented as the solution to overcome the deficiencies of design, a critical perspective upon the project itself, as well as a fundamentally self-critical attitude towards design, easily vanishes. In these cases, although evoked by an uneasiness about the all-too-personal hand of the designer, a perspective upon the ethics of architecture is left behind. An ethical stance, however, is part of the profession itself, and cannot be outsourced to computers or robots – although computers and robots can be programmed to prevent the human being from failing (in certain ways).

Uneasiness however, I stress once again, is at the heart of each intervention in the world. It is the essence of the balance between violence and care, that Arendt defines as the heart of culture. It is in the tension between a personal 'language' and ambitions and the particular architectural assignment, between the service to clients and the 'ethical function of architecture' to serve the world. As Diane Ghirardo argues: the first question that needs to be addressed in all assignments is if there is any need of the design.¹⁹⁷ Or as the theorist Ignasi De Solá-Morales writes (on the particular spaces he calls *Terrain Vague*):

'the role of the architect is inevitably problematic. Architecture's destiny has always been colonization, the imposing of limits, order, form, the introduction into strange space of the elements of identity necessary to make it recognizable, identical, universal. In essence, architecture acts as instrument of organization, of rationalization, of productive efficiency capable of transforming the uncivilized into the cultivated, the fallow into the productive, the void into the built. When architecture and urban design project their desire onto a vacant space, a *terrain vague*, it seems that they are incapable of doing anything other than introducing violent transformations, changing estrangement into citizenship and striving at all costs to dissolve away the uncontaminated magic of the obsolete in the realism of efficacy.'¹⁹⁸

These perspectives actively encourage the need to start design with a critical question to the self, to commissioners and to others involved. Design starts to postpone the eagerness to design (an eagerness that is part of the designers very character).

Uneasiness – and resistance – nevertheless is also a propelling aspect of design. As stated previously, the creative aspect of architectural design is important. The scientific method somehow always is a methods of generalizing results. Even in the well-thought through project of Alexander, the very knowledge acquired in the University of Oregon case is a particular situation, with a particular public in a particular time. How can information gained from this case also help other cases? Well, it can, but only by creatively working on the information, mirroring the Oregon situation to the case at hand, to a different context. Creativity is needed in order to face the plurality of the world and its inhabitants. To generalize, as Arendt has stated upon the social sciences, is a threat: it discloses what actually matters, that is what is different, outstanding, maybe even disturbing.¹⁹⁹ Architecture, on the contrary, by its very heart and essence has to deal with the different, the outstanding, the characteristic

This means that inherent to architecture is a fundamental subjectivity. Only a 'subjective' response can deal with the outstanding. Other responses search for similarities and generic trends. Although it is good to have these in mind during a design process – an important part of architectural knowledge is certainly the knowledge contained in precedent, which makes the study of architectural history an important part of architectural education – the design-response should select, judge, adapt, challenge, and adjust precedents to particular characteristics of the site, program, ambitions and context of study.

Subjectivity, however, is not only fundamental to architecture, it also is a valuable aspect of architecture. The subjective core of design offers the world diversity, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is fundamental to the world. Diversity, we might state, is the insoluble worldliness condition of architecture: to enhance diversity, to reveal differences of the world, and to

197. cf. Diane Ghirardo, 'Bedrog in de architectuur, De stand van de Amerikaanse kritiek. Een Manifest,' in: *Archis*, no 10 (Oktober 1998)

198. Ignasi De Solá-Morales Rubió, 'Terrain Vague' in: Cynthia C. Davidson (ed.), *Anyplace* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: MIT Press, 1995)

199. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 42

200.

See Vincent van Rossum, *Het Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan van Amsterdam, Geschiedenis en Ontwerp* (Rotterdam/Den Haag: NAI Uitgeverij and EFL Stichting, 1993)

201.

See also the chapter 'Arriving in Style' in *Arrival City*, the book of Canadian journalist Doug Saunders on the issue of migration, and how that relates to cities, on the particular history of these urban extensions in Amsterdam and their plural inhabitants: Doug Saunders, *Arrival City, The Final Migration and our Next World* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2010)

offer distinctive conditions for its inhabitants are at the very heart of the architectural project as a world-building profession. This subjectivity, however, also evokes uncertainty and again uneasiness for the designer. It is not only one of the uneasy aspects to be explained, presented, and communicated when architectural projects are made public, it also – if rightly understood – causes uneasiness at the very moment of design. The uneasiness is not simply the close relationship between the design and the designer (which makes it difficult to judge the design from different standpoints, to present the design publicly, and to be open to comments), but also from a historical perspective. Let's explain this through an example, how the (recent) history of architecture promotes (or should promote) a valuable uneasiness amongst designers, by looking towards the post war urban extensions of The Netherlands (and certainly also abroad). Almost all cities in The Netherlands have these neighborhoods: built at the end of the fifties and during the sixties, characterized by often low-rise and sometimes high-rise apartment slabs within a green urban layout. They are based upon the Modernistic principles of the Athens Charter, which we discussed in Chapter Five. In The Netherlands, the General Extension plan for Amsterdam (1934), designed by Cornelis Van Eesteren is most well-known.²⁰⁰ [IMAGE 7.13] It formed the layout for the garden cities built in the West of the city immediately after World War II, as well the Bijlmermeer, built at the end of the seventies. These neighbourhoods were rationally planned on the basis of mathematics, combined with new technologies and construction methods. Although designed with good intent, in some cases articulating social ambitions and emancipatory ideologies, these neighbourhoods seem to fail to survive new insights into architecture and the built environment, or have become dangerous neighbourhoods, at least in the eyes of spectators. Some of these neighbourhoods and buildings have been torn down, and replaced by other buildings that offer more diversity and a stronger conceptual whole, or a seemingly more authentic image.²⁰¹ The mathematic approach, based on functionality, no longer provides the world that is in common. It does not offer the image of 'ideal life', as Pallasmaa portrayed architecture previously, in the eyes of the contemporary inhabitants. Today, diversity is required. This example promotes the idea of a particular uneasiness beyond architecture: it shows how important the architectural project is in the long term. It forms a world, an everyday space for families. However, it also shows how it can fail, how poorly it can provide a living space for its inhabitants today, let alone a public space in which the inhabitants can meet, can appear to one another. In the Dutch cases it, after all, is not too bad, if compared for instance to the *banlieus* in France. This example also reveals the distinction between built form and architectural ideas. Even the mathematical, technological, rational approach, in which the handwriting of the designer seems to be limited, rapidly becomes outdated. In other words, architectural ideas – even those that seem rather objective – appear to be fluid. Insights and ambitions changes with the times and tides of architectural fashion. The architecture itself however remains to be decisive for its inhabitants for a longer period. This should also give the architect today a certain prudence. How long can the shiny apartment complexes and office towers that are being built from Shanghai to Dubai, the spectacular shopping malls being built from Istanbul to Los Angeles, stand the tides of taste, the changing images of good life? [IMAGE 7.14] For how long are the material appearances supported by the ideas behind them? The history of architecture thus reveals how the profession is characterized by a continuous development of ideas, insights and aims. But none of these seem to have a certain finality, and can become outdated soon.

The profession, to push this argument forward, is defined by uncertainty, which also urges the uneasiness of the design process. It does not need many words to argue that architectural design, since it is imagining the future, is by definition based on dealing with uncertainties. Design, after all, can be described as trying to define the future, to prescribe certain processes, and to steer in a particular direction. To be responsible for such power certainly evokes aspects of uncertainty – particularly when considering the last couple of decades of architectural history, which has revealed the possibility of large failure with the best intentions. ‘In architecture,’ the architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable writes, ‘the Law of Unexpected Consequences applies.’²⁰²

The design process itself can be described as a process of uncertainty. Design, after all, is not a linear process, but with its twists and turns it shows how ungraspable the process is. Even in the small assignment of the pavilion described above, new insights came along the route, largely effecting the design. To deal with a changing program and increasing insight, of which the twists and turns of the design-process are the tangible and intangible witnesses, requires skill. It means that along the process ideas cannot be poured in concrete, but need to be flexible or even need to be able to be put aside, exchanged for other directions.

7.4.2 To Think Them Anew

This ability to deal with the uncertainty of design – which for a large part is also the capacity to understand what one is actually proposing – is certainly part of the skill the craftsman develops over time. Despite the need to streamline design processes, facing the complex projects that are being constructed around the world today (I would not deny that need), I nevertheless would stress the activity of design as a particular human capacity that we have to value as central to the architectural project, and which cannot be taken over by bots and computers. We might call this capacity ‘talent’, since it is clear that not everybody possesses the capacity to design. But I also mean something different here. As stated previously, the need for a creative assessment of the materials and information at hand is important, particularly because of the fundamental plurality of the world and its inhabitants. Something personal is important. But how to understand this personal input against the uneasiness that is fundamental to the architectural project and that is evoked in the very act of design? I would here like to promote designing as a particular form of thinking, willing and judging. Or to state it differently: designing is this relationship of the hand and the mind within which imagination as well as experience and skill (architectural knowledge previously acquired) is utilized to think, to judge, define and propose.

In his image of the good craftsman, which we discussed previously, Richard Sennett stresses the continuous dialogue between practicing and thinking. It is doing with the hands what is conceived in the mind, but it also is reflecting with the mind upon what is achieved with the hands. This internal process of conceiving, making, reflecting not only integrates the ethical attitude in the work and the approach to work itself, as is argued above, it also means that working in practices is a continual learning process, in which work does not become behaviour or automation but nevertheless establishes skill and insight. ‘Every good craftsman conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking; his dialogue evolves into sustaining habits, and these habits establish a rhythm between problem solving and problem finding.’²⁰³ Architects, if they are experienced, have developed their own way of designing, of approaching assignments, of stressing problems and investigating possible solutions. It is their

^{202.}

Ada Louise Huxtable, *On Architecture, Collected Reflections on a Century of Change* (New York: Walker & Company, 2008), xvii

^{203.}

Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 9

204.
cf. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 80

205.
Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand*, 92

206.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 5

207.
See for instance *Ibid.*, 76

208.
Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 4

own skill that has been developed over time, that becomes rooted in the relationship between the eye, the mind, and the hand. Of course, this particular approach can also become a fixed way of doing, which loses its flexibility as well as the joy of surprise. It is, as Sennett shows, a continuous dialogue, to shape the skills even after decades of experiences in the field.

Whereas the image of craftsmanship encourages a dialogue between working and thinking over time, it might also be taken as a model of the design process itself: a dialogue between the mind and the drawing hand – how the mind steers the hand, how the hand draws on paper, and how the mind reflects upon what is achieved on paper.²⁰⁴ The mind engages with what happens on paper: it urges the direction the hand goes, but can also be surprised by what comes to the fore if the hand withdraws from the paper and reveals what has been drawn. Some figures, previously sketched out in the mind, on paper turns to reveal something else than the mind had imagined. That is, probably also the reason why drawing is still needed, not only to communicate ideas with others, but also with the self: although things can be thought through in the mind, paper often disturbs this ideal picture— what has been drawn on paper offers new perspectives and opens other insights, sometimes just because things on paper are not as ideal as in the mind, or the hand cannot draw as nicely as one can imagine in the mind. Reflecting upon this process that balances the mind’s imagination and the skill (and knowledge) of the hand, which Sennett calls the dialogue between thinking and working, urges the question of how to understand this ‘thinking’ aspect of design, this intangible process in the mind, that directs our hand and reflects upon what appears on paper.²⁰⁵ In *The Human Condition* Arendt did not address this aspect of thinking, since, as she argued in the prologue to this volume, she was not completely convinced if thinking was a capacity that could be ascribed to everybody.²⁰⁶ Nevertheless, also in *The Human Condition*, the activity of thinking is tangibly present, particularly through the metaphor of a dialogue in which the ‘I’ is in conversation with the ‘self’.²⁰⁷ The Eichmann trial, which she covered for *The New Yorker*, again roused Arendt’s concern about the thinking capacity: Eichmann did not show any trace of this thinking capacity, this conversation with the self. If she was struck by something in this trial, it was indeed this ‘absence of thinking’. Her review of the process roused critical responses, particularly since she argued that whoever does not think also cannot feel guilty – does not understand his wrongdoings, cannot grasp what he is doing. That is what she called, the banality of evil: ‘it was not stupidity but *thoughtlessness*,’ she writes in her reflection upon the critical responses.²⁰⁸ For Arendt this was the incentive to take up the challenge to think through this activity of thinking, which she then, for her study, divided into three different activities of the human mind: thinking, willing and judging. As has been stated previously, only the first two unfortunately were thought through, before she died suddenly in 1975 – from her thoughts on judging we are dependent upon a few articles that address this capacity of the human mind, as well as on notes for lectures she offered students of the New School in New York and at the University of Chicago.

However, particular aspects of her thoughts on thinking and judging are very relevant to put forward as urgent aspects of the design process. Arendt actually starts to admit that the capacity of thinking should be thought of as a general capacity of the human being. Man, she writes, has the incentive to think. ‘By this I mean,’ Arendt writes, ‘that man has an inclination and, unless pressed by more urgent needs of living, even a need (Kant’s “need of reason”) to think beyond the limitations of knowledge, to do more with his intellectual abilities, his brain

power, than to use them as an instrument for knowing and doing.²⁰⁹ However, assuming that everybody has the capacity to think also means the opposite: everybody also has the capacity to refrain from thinking regardless of how smart someone is. This of course is what she recognizes in Eichmann, an ordinary man, not a wicked one.

Arendt therefore also distinguished, a distinction she borrows from Immanuel Kant, between thinking and knowing, between reason and the urge to think, between theorizing and the will to understand.²¹⁰ Knowing of course, seems to be something that can be acquired. Although it certainly is through that knowledge is limitless, it is something that can be shared. Knowing is possessing, one can argue, it is roused by the ‘thirst for knowledge’. Arendt therefore argues that knowing can also be regarded as world-construction. It collects ‘things’ that can be shared, that can be acquired by others as well. ‘The activity itself leaves behind a growing treasure of knowledge that is retained and kept in store by every civilization as part and parcel of its world. The activity of knowing is no less a world-building activity than the building of houses.’²¹¹ Thinking is not about acquiring knowledge or mere wisdom. The activity of thinking does not possess something. On the contrary, it is urged by a need to think, the urge to understand, which is evoked by real experiences.²¹² Or as Arendt writes to her friend Mary McCarthy: ‘thinking starts after an experience of truth has struck home, so to speak.’²¹³ Thinking, according to Arendt, is a human capacity, which requires solitude and contemplation. But, in opposition to the philosophical tradition, and especially also to her teacher Martin Heidegger, it is not a solitude that has to be seen as a withdrawal from the world in order to conceptualize the ‘truth’ beyond the world, nor is it rational and logical reasoning in order to conceive a cognitive truth, as scientists mostly see it. Thinking, according to Arendt, addresses reality itself: it is evoked by daily (sensible) experiences as well as the ‘interruptions or outbreaks of history’. So thinking is not ‘just having some thoughts in mind,’ nor developing a certain theory – especially not following particular dogmas. With thinking Arendt thus did not mean ‘theorizing’, or ‘reasoning’. Reasoning has a particular aim – its process is closed, based on a particular doctrine or goal. Thinking, on the other hand, does not offer a final ‘code’. On the contrary, thinking for Arendt was the capacity to break with existing strains of thoughts and to think for ‘oneself’.

The political theorist Wout Cornelissen traces in Arendt’s writings three forms of thinking.²¹⁴ Arendt herself did not conceptualize these three forms, but his distinction is clear, and enlightens three aspects that we can surely use as a frame to challenge a ‘thoughtful’ – to use once again the word of Mies van der Rohe – approach to architectural design.

The first form he traces is what we touched upon already, the dialogue between ‘me and myself’, distinct from voices around. As Cornelissen argues, this is the motif that is already present in her early writings, and remains until dissecting ‘thinking’ itself in *The Life of The Mind*. This is the most common image in Arendt’s oeuvre, an image that is linked to the figures of Socrates. The second motif he traces is based upon Immanuel Kant’s notion of ‘enlarged mentality’. ‘Whereas dialectical thinking presupposes a duality, the “two-in-one”, Cornelissen writes, ‘representative thinking attempts to “represent” the plurality of perspectives that are present in and constitute the public realm.’²¹⁵ The final motif is only tangible in Arendt’s biography of Walter Benjamin, where Arendt writes about ‘poetic thinking’, or ‘thinking in metaphors’.

These three forms of thinking are substantial in architectural design as we will see. As stated previously, thinking, for Arendt, is not so much philosophy

209.

Hannah Arendt, ‘Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture’, in: *Social Research*, vol. 38 no. 3 (New York: The New School, Autumn 1971), 421

210.

cf Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 14

211.

Arendt, ‘Thinking and Moral Considerations’, 423

212.

Hannah Arendt, ‘On Hannah Arendt’, in: Melvyn A. Hill (ed.), *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*, (New York: St. Martins Press inc., 1979), 308

213.

Between Friends, The correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy 1949-1975 (London: Secker & Warburg, 1995), 24

214.

Wout Cornelissen, ‘Thinking in Metaphors’, in: Roger Berkowitz and Ian Storey (eds.), *Artifacts of Thinking, Reading Hannah Arendt’s Denktagebuch* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 76-78

215.

Ibid., 76

216.
Arendt, 'Thinking and Moral Considerations', 421-422

217.
Ibid., 423

218.
Ibid., 423

219.
Ibid., 418

220.
Ibid., 421-422

221.
As quoted in Arendt, 'The Crisis in Culture', 216

per se. It is evoked by actualities. "The inclination or the need to think ... even if aroused by none of the time-honoured metaphysical, unanswerable "ultimate questions", leaves nothing so tangible behind, nor can it be stilled by allegedly definite insights of "wise men."²¹⁶ The need to think, Arendt argues, and here she clearly urges thinking as an internal dialogue, is only roused if something is absent. 'Thinking', Arendt writes, 'always deals with objects that are absent, removed from direct sense perception.'²¹⁷ The sense perception offers 'food for thought', Arendt argues, but the very moment of sensible perception, no thought is needed. This absence of the object of thought, once again, is very important for Arendt. This means that thinking is a particular process of imagining the object that is absent. 'An object of thought,' Arendt continues, 'is always a re-presentation, that is, something or somebody that is actually absent and present only to the mind which, by virtue of imagination, can make it present in the form of an image.'²¹⁸ While thinking is roused by absence of the immediate object, it is nevertheless described by Arendt 'examining and reflecting upon whatever happens to come to pass, regardless of specific content and quite independent of results.'²¹⁹ This examining is sometimes called meditation, but can also be described as pondering: it goes in circles, without any end – or it should be the very moment in the circle that the same question is pushed forward once again. It can be described as consciously tasting food or wine: it goes in circles around the mouth, thoughtfully dissecting the elements, which sometimes rouse memories, sometimes offer the experience of being paralyzed by the unthought-of great combinations of different tastes that the taste-organ explores. This going in circles is important. Thinking somehow never stops. The urge to think requires the human being to think again and again. "The need to think can be satisfied only through thinking, and the thoughts which I had yesterday will be satisfying this need today only to the extent that I can think them anew."²²⁰ This also means that thinking is open to surprise, to unpredicted perspectives, and does not fall short in doctrines and prejudices – on the contrary, it takes such doctrines and prejudices in order to ponder them. The aim of this internal dialogue, as described by Arendt, is a living in agreement with oneself. Or as said by Socrates – whom Arendt cites in agreement: 'Since I am one, it is better for me to disagree with the whole world than to be in disagreement with myself.'²²¹ In other words, thinking is clearing the mind of general collective thoughts, common premises, the presuppositions, opinions, and prejudices. Prejudices can be important as first responses, but always have to be thought through again.

In her description of 'thinking', Arendt argues that the thinking mind, with its capacity to imagine the absent objects, take up the words our language offers us, wherein concepts are hidden – frozen, Arendt actually states. Thinking is pondering this word, thinking it over, and unfreezing the concepts that are hidden within it. In a nice passage, Arendt takes up the word *house*, which, as she states, can mean an apartment in the city as well as a family house in the suburb, it can mean a cottage in the village or a palace for a king. A tent, however, is not a house. She then writes:

"The house in and by itself ... that which makes us use the word for all these particular and very different buildings, is never seen, neither by the eyes of the body nor by the eyes of the mind; every imagined house, be it ever so abstract, having the bare minimum to make it recognizable, is already a particular house. This house as such, of which we must have a notion in order to recognize particular buildings as house, has been explained in different ways and called by different names in the history of philosophy. ... The point

here is that it implies something considerably less tangible than the structure perceived by our eyes. It implies “housing somebody” and being “dwelt in” as no tent could house or serve as a dwelling place which is put up today and taken tomorrow. ... The word house ... is a word that could not exist unless one presupposes thinking about being housed, dwelling, having a home. As a word, house is shorthand for all these things, the kind of shorthand without which thinking and its characteristic swiftness ... would not be possible at all. The word house is something like a frozen thought which thinking must unfreeze, defrost as it were, whenever it wants to find out its original meaning.²²²

222.
Arendt, 'Thinking and Moral Considerations', 430-431

223.
Ibid., 434

224.
Dagmar Barnouw, *Visible Spaces, Hannah Arendt and the German-Jewish Experience* (Baltimore/London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 11

This thus does not mean deliberately thinking, it means meditation upon the concepts, trying to grasp whatever meaning is enclosed in it. Arendt stresses that this thinking process can either arouse us, that is, awaken us, or it can paralyze us, that is perplex us. The aim of thinking is not so much to come to a particular result – the end however can be that the new insights offer us something fresh and satisfying, or something new but disturbing, if not frightening. Thinking takes the frozen concepts and reveals their hidden perspectives – it means that thinking can have ‘a destructive, undermining effect on all established criteria, values, measurements for good and evil, in short on those customs and rules of conduct we treat of in morals and ethics.’²²³ Courage is needed for this conversation, particularly with the opportunity that thinking disturbs us. According to Arendt, however, this conversation with the self needs to be seen as a conscious thinking, that is a thinking that is aware of the self. It is through such a conscious thinking that the conscience is formed, this inherited ethical outlook that steers the human being in his actions, but only so far as the human being does not refrain from thinking.

This pondering on thinking, as we might call it, actually raises the question of whether the process in the mind within the dialogue between the hand and the eyes of the mind can be understood as ‘thinking’ at all, since designing is not just a dialogue within the ‘I’ and ‘myself’, this ‘two-in-one-discourse’,²²⁴ but also stretches to the hand and the paper – it does something, it has a particular goal. However, on the other side, designing is not merely reasoning, nor can it be described as a thirst for knowledge. Even more, much of what has been described as the activity of thinking can also be recognized while designing. If it is not thinking, designing at least parallels this activity. Designing is not a linear process that, through reasoning, leads to a particular end. Designing itself goes much more in circles until the moment decisions are made, although one might ask of circularity if this is still true within these design-processes that are organized so that each participant works in ‘real time’ within the same drawing. Design, however, regularly goes in circles, not knowing where to look, but again and again pondering upon the question at hand, the site, the structure and the proposed program in order to produce possibilities and to alter findings. Although it actually makes something – that is: drawings, models, schemes – what happens is that the mind translates these drawings into images of real spaces and real experiences, or vice versa, it imagines real spaces and steers the hand to grasp what is imagined in the mind. The hand draws 2D what the eyes of the mind see in 3D, an imagination that is fed by one’s own experience in the field, but even more by singular sense perceptions upon previous experiences. Can we take that as indeed thinking, roused by absence, using imagination to re-present the object that is absent? Thinking stops doing, Arendt states: it absorbs the attention. Maybe on short notice, we can see that in design too: the designer is easily

absorbed by the design-process, where sometimes the hand has to stop in order to let the mind go over what actually has been achieved on paper. And if Arendt talks about the power of thinking to arouse or even to paralyze the thinker – this is what happens in a design process too – mostly when being away from paper or the office, as is known from anecdotes of having ideas that seem to be a break-through during the night, while taking a shower, or sitting at a bar (that's why sometimes these ideas are drawn on napkins, beverage coasters, paper bags that can be found on the plane, and so on). It also is through this process that even such break-throughs lose their shininess after waking up the following morning and thinking them through once again. As Arendt states about 'thinking', a design idea 'which I had yesterday will be satisfying ... only to the extent that I can think them anew' today.²²⁵ Finally, design-thinking, if we can call it that, can also be described as 'defrosting' and activating of a broad horizon of aspects of architecture: while designing buildings, all sorts of knowledge and experiences comes to mind: typologies bound to particular program, previously experienced atmospheres, knowledge of plans, sections, sequences, routings of other buildings, a range of examples of entrances, of living rooms, of atriums, of the relationship between building and landscape, notions about space, context, structure, use, knowledge of sound, climate, construction, texture, and so on. Paired with ambitions bound to the particular project the architect unfreezes these notions and knowledge consciously, in order to bring them together anew and convincingly. He unfreezes the notions, he unfreezes knowledge, in order to find out how their essence can be understood in relation to this particular assignment and situation.

Design until now is described as the dialogue between the hand and the mind, fuelled by certain considerations from elsewhere (given in the assignment, or urged in the imagination of the self), which is accompanied by a dialogue within the designer, between the me-and-myself. Both dialogues go in circles, the one feeds the other, and vice versa. The description however reveals that this limitation to the dialogical model is not true. It already urges that within design, the architect also thinks from other perspectives: it is in a certain conversation with others involved in the design process. This seems to be evident – there are after all meetings organized in which the designer presents his design, where he discusses the design and takes note of the comments and responses to it. If designing, he would have his client and other stakeholders in mind, if it is not for ideological reasons, it should be for entrepreneurial reasons (if not running the risk of a cancelled project that does not meet the requirements). Moreover, as we have urged previously, architecture is never a private matter, not from the commissioner or from the designer. It always intervenes in the world, affects the public realm, addresses the public. Therefore, while designing 'the world and its inhabitants' should be present at the drawing table – present in the thinking and the drawing, in each dialogue and conversation. Although not literally present, the public should be imagined at the very moment the mind steers the hand, and while the hand – skilfully – draws. In other words, design requires, beyond the capacity to think dialogically, the capacity to think from different perspectives, this 'enlarged mentality' that is part of Arendt's second motif of thinking. The description however also urges the third motif of thinking: what evokes the future images is imagination, which is fuelled by precedents and 'metaphors'. Cornelissen describes this motif as follows: 'What it fundamentally refers to is the recognition that thought is conducted in language, and that language is essentially metaphorical. In *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt devotes two full chapters to metaphor. By thinking in metaphors, that is, by "transferring"

(*metapherein*) words we use to grasp visible experiences within the external world of appearances to invisible concepts within the internal world of the mind, we may establish or re-establish some form of correspondence between ourselves and the world.²²⁶ This certainly is also a model that is beyond architectural design. By taking architectural knowledge, that is the language of architecture as it is inherent in precedents, in concepts and spaces, in elements and structures, in materials and techniques, and transferring these to the particular assignment at hand, the designer grasps experiences in order to ponder them in the mind, as well as establishes a correspondence between the design at hand and the reality of the world.

226.
Cornelissen, 'Thinking in Metaphors', 77

227.
Arendt, 'Thinking and Moral Considerations', 418

228.
Ibid., 441

229.
Ibid., 442

230.
Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 215

Designing thus somehow uses this “two-in-one” perspective, to initiate a conversation with the self on all sorts of aspects that are at stake in the assignment at hand, as it is also immediately urged to think from different perspectives, as it also ‘thinks in metaphors’, poetically. It ponders references and imaginations that come to mind. It draws possibilities and challenges them regarding use, construction, materials, economic possibilities and other pragmatic questions. Design, in other words, bridges between the three motifs that are hidden in Arendt’s reflection upon thinking. It is a dialogue with the self, we might state, which is initiated through the enlarged mentality, the ability to think from other perspectives, as well as by the pondering on precedents, metaphors, and other conceptual images and imaginations that are constitutive for the desire that fuels the activity of design.

7.4.3 *To Design is to Judge*

Designing has to be described as going in circles. At certain moments, however, decisions are taken. That’s when a particular possibility that is investigated satisfies the designer, not just today, but also tomorrow. These moments in which decisions are made are contrary to thinking, which just keeps on pondering. It can better be described as judgment: taking decisions is judging upon the materials at hand. In these moments, the mind investigates within the proposal whether it matches the ambitions and requirements that are embedded in the project. Judging is the third term that Arendt would have stressed in her investigations of the faculty of the mind, close to her second motif of thinking upon which we touched in the previous paragraphs.

The first important aspect of judgment, as compared to thinking, is that judgment is always concerned with particulars. Thinking deals with the general, but if it has to steer actions, to take initiatives and to propel beginnings, decisions should be made about the particulars: the doing, the aim, the moment, the place. In judging, the pros and contras are being weighed in order to come to action. Judgment is described mostly as the ability of the human being to ‘tell the right from wrong, beautiful from ugly.’²²⁷ Of course, judgment is not separate from thinking. It depends upon the faculty of thought. Arendt ‘pondered’ that statement strongly in the article cited extensively above, ‘Thinking and Moral Consideration’, which she wrote after the controversy roused by her review of the Eichmann trial. Moral judgment, she argues, depends upon the conscience, which is shaped by this conscious mind. Conscious literally means, Arendt states, ‘to know with myself,’²²⁸ that is: this dialogue between the ‘I’ and the self urges a conscious mind. ‘Consciousness is not the same as thinking; but without it thinking would be impossible.’²²⁹ The conscience, which is often urged as ‘the divine voice of either God or reason’²³⁰ is thus proposed here as depending upon this dialogue

231.
Arendt, 'Thinking and Moral Considerations', 418

232.
Benhabib, 'Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics', 196

233.
Arendt, 'The Crisis of Culture', 216; cf Benhabib, 'Judgment and Politics and Arendt's thought', 191

234.
Arendt, 'The Crisis of Culture', 211

235.
Hannah Arendt, 'Culture and Politics', in: Hannah Arendt, *Reflections on Literature and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 200-201

236.
Barnouw, *Visible Spaces*, 19

237.
Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 62 – the quote of Immanuel Kant is taken from his *Critique of Judgment*, § 50

between the I and the self, the courage to think, to be aroused and to be paralyzed. Conscience actually means 'a kind of knowledge that is' not only acquired through thinking, but also 'actualized in every thinking process.'²³¹

For 'design' we however do need another perspective, which is offered by Arendt too. Arendt looked for other instances, since conscience is not of help in the political realm. She therefore develops the notion of taste, which, as compared with the 'voice' of conscience, is rather 'silent'. The conscience offers 'universal and moral principles', taste however urges a situational case study.²³² Arendt touched upon 'taste' via the aesthetic theory of Immanuel Kant. In his model of aesthetic judgement, Arendt recognized a parallel with political judgment.²³³ 'Could it be that taste belongs among the political faculties?' Arendt asks in her reflection upon culture. 'Could it be that this right love of beauty, the proper kind of intercourse with beautiful things – the *cultura animi* which makes man fit to take care of the things of the world, and which Cicero, in contradistinction to the Greeks, ascribed to philosophy – has something to do with politics?'²³⁴ Arendt describes taste as the faculty of the human being to

'decide what the world qua world is supposed to look and sound like, how it is supposed to be looked at and listened to, independently of its usefulness or our existential interests in it. Taste evaluates the world according to its worldliness. Instead of concerning itself with either the sensual life or with the moral self, it opposes both and proposes a pure "disinterested" interest in the world. ... Taste decides among qualities, and can fully develop only where a sense of quality – the ability to discern evidence of the beautiful – is generally present. Once that is the case, it is solely up to taste, with its ever-active judgment of things in the world, to establish boundaries and provide a human meaning for the cultural realm.'²³⁵

Judgment of the materials at hand is the central faculty in the public realm: to judge actions and speech in order to respond properly. 'The greatest danger of the realm of morals and politics, then, is indifference, the refusal to choose between right and wrong, the withdrawal from judging as an activity supported by and supportive of community.'²³⁶

The relationship of this idea of 'taste' of what is at stake in politics find its source in the conviction that within politics, as is the case with aesthetics and its quest for meaning, there is no ultimate truth. To be grasped by beauty is not to be grasped by truth, but by something convincing. Beauty cannot be theorized, reasoned, but it needs convincing speech, it needs to be narrated, convincingly presented. Therefore, deciding what beauty actually is is first and foremost a political activity, which also depends upon (action and) convincing speech. Taste, in other words, should not be taken here as the very personal outlook on the world, by which I decide what I do or don't like and on which no discussion is possible. Taste, on the contrary, Arendt explains, is general. It, and Arendt quotes Kant here, 'brings clearness and order; it makes the ideas susceptible of being permanently and generally assented to, and capable of being flowed by others, and of an ever progressing culture.'²³⁷ This faculty of taste thus is not simply intuition or talent, but can and needs to be trained and enhanced. We might even state that intuition, which seems to be at hand in the very moment of the mind steering the hand, the hand drawing lines, is formed through taste – it becomes part of the skills of the craftsman.

Judgment, for Arendt, is not reasoning, it is also not applying some sort of theoretical frame. The arguments beyond judgment are not linear but holistic.

Arendt stresses a few aspects important in this capacity to judge. Judgment is not so much about ‘truth’, that is, not about truths in a Platonic sense, or in a Hegelian perspective: something which is beyond reality, which is in warfare with reality. Judgment on the contrary is about ‘reality’, and this reality only appears (or becomes real) when different viewpoints are shared, and where they are seen from different viewpoints. The faculty of taste is important in this respect, Arendt argues. In order to activate ‘taste’, Kant urged another way of thinking, which does not encircle the self, but makes others present in the process of thinking itself. Seen from this perspective, it is not enough, Arendt writes, to be in agreement with one’s own self, but which consisted of being able to “think in the place of everybody else” and which he therefore called “enlarged mentality” (*eine erweiterte Denkungsart*).²³⁸ This process of thinking thus literally re-places the ‘I’ to other positions, but doesn’t replace the I with another, or the one subjective perspective with another perspective. It moves to other places around the table in order to think from these places. In order to move oneself to another position, one needs this ‘enlarged mentality’. Arendt saw this ‘enlarged mentality’, Seyla Benhabib states, as ‘the model for the kind of intersubjective validity we could hope for in public realm.’²³⁹

Arendt thus argues that judgment is the ability to look from different perspectives, ‘to think from the standpoint of everyone else’ as well as the ability to ‘reflect upon one’s own judgment from a universal standpoint’. Here we once again touch upon the metaphor of the table: by making judgments, one not only looks from the single perspective of one’s own place, but also – almost literally – places oneself in another position at the table, in order to look and descend from there as well. Arendt urges this perspective particularly, since this active thinking from different perspectives, which she defines as judgments, means that judgment doesn’t apply to my very singular perspective, but seeks agreement with other perspectives. ‘The power of judgment rests on a potential agreement with others, and the thinking process which is active is judging something is not, like the thought process of pure reasoning, a dialogue between me and myself, but finds itself always and primarily, even if I am quite alone in making up my mind, in an anticipated communication with others with whom I know I must finally come to some agreement.’²⁴⁰ The goal of the ‘enlarged mentality’ therefore is not to be empathic but to search for political agreement and acclaim. Judgment derives its validity, writes Arendt, only through such agreement. Only through such agreement judgment ‘can liberate itself from the “subjective private conditions,” that is, from the idiosyncrasies which naturally determine the outlook of each individual in his privacy and are legitimate as long as they are only privately held opinions, but which are not fit to enter the market place, and lack all validity in the public realm.’²⁴¹ Judgment thus takes these private opinions, and confronts them with opinions that are gained from other perspectives. Contrary to thinking as previously defined, which was roused by something absent, judgment therefore requires the ‘presence’ of others, Arendt argues.

“This enlarged way of thinking, which as judgment knows how to transcend its own individual limitations, on the other hand cannot function in strict isolation or solitude; it needs the presence of others “in whose place” it must think, whose perspectives it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all. As logic, to be sound, depends on the presence of the self, so judgment, to be valid, depends on the presence of others. Hence judgment is endowed with a certain specific validity but is never universally valid.”²⁴²

238. Arendt, ‘The Crisis of Culture’, 217

239. Benhabib, ‘Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics’, 194

240. Arendt, ‘The Crisis of Culture’, 217

241. Ibid., 217

242. Ibid., 217

243.
Benhabib, 'Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics', 198

244.
Arendt, 'The Crisis of Culture', 219

245.
Barnouw, *Visible Spaces*, 17

246.
Arendt, 'The Crisis of Culture', 218

247.
Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 70

248.
Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press, 1989), 175

Arendt clearly has the public realm in mind, in which others are present through action and speech, and where the judging spectator has to take a decision on their own position, on which perspective to support, on what is the right thing to do. This is applying the political activity of judging, by hearing what one says, but also by being able to place oneself in that position, in order to judge the validity of that perspective. This process of judgment thus is an addition to the dialogue motif of thinking, the Socrates model, as we defined previously. It is urged by being present and hearing voices and seeing actions, being affected by what one sees and hears. In this perspective the human faculty of imagination is decisive. Imagination is needed in order to replace oneself into another position. It is also needed to make the absent present, that is to re-present the absent object. Imagination makes the invisible visible for the eye of the mind. "To "think from the perspective of everyone else", Benhabib writes, "is to know "how to listen" to what the other is saying, or when the voices of others are absent, to imagine to oneself a conversation with the other as my dialogue partner."²⁴³

Political activity and participation, we might state, require the ability of the human being not only to look from their own limited position, but also to move oneself to another position. This process of replacing oneself of course somehow tries to accept and actualize other perspectives too in one's judgment, it nevertheless does not exclude one's own position. 'In aesthetic no less than in political judgments, a decision is made, and although this decision is always determined by a certain subjectivity, by the simple fact that each person occupies a place of his own from which he looks upon and judges the world, it also derives from the fact that the world itself is an objective datum, something common to all its inhabitants.'²⁴⁴ Nevertheless, judgment cannot be taught, educated. It is developed in practice, since it deals with particulars.²⁴⁵

The Greeks called this enlarged mentality, which enables us to look from different perspectives, 'insight', Arendt states, by which she means that it is not based on 'speculative thought', but by 'common sense.' This does not so much mean something that is commonly acceptable, but much more related to the senses of the body itself. In French, Arendt states, common sense is called 'le bon sens', which literally means 'the good sense'. Arendt takes this 'good sense' quite literally: a sense besides the five bodily senses, which 'discloses to us the nature of the world insofar as it is a common world, we owe to it the fact that our strictly private and "subjective" five senses and their sensory data can adjust themselves to a nonsubjective and "objective" world which we have in common and share with others.'²⁴⁶ Arendt therefore argues that common sense should be taken as 'community sense': it is shared within a particular community.²⁴⁷ This also means that taste is seen within this community – it is not distinct from it. This community-based idea of taste today is quite difficult, as for instance Habermas argues. 'The sounding board of an educated stratum tutored in the public use of reason has been shattered; the public is split apart in minorities of specialists who put their reason to use non-publicly and the great mass of consumers whose receptiveness is public but uncritical. Consequently, it completely lacks the form of communication specific to a public.'²⁴⁸ Even beyond this shattered condition, a community-based taste requires training of this public, which today is at stake as well. 'Clearly we need a kind of civic education that emphasizes the distinctive nature of these public questions in architecture, and we need to raise public and professional taste. Western democratic societies no longer have the design tastes of kings or despots or robber barons or civic aristocrats to rely on. In a democratic age civic and aesthetic education will be the final arbiters – the education of architects, planners, public officials, and private corporations, to be sure, but also

the education of the general public, which now has the power to intervene at so many places in the process of planning and design.²⁴⁹

Arendt's idea of 'common sense' is quite intriguing. She does not urge it as an extra mental capacity (of the mind), but literally a sense for the world, rooted in a human community. 'Judging', Arendt therefore adds, 'is one, of not the most, important activity in which this sharing-the-world-with-others come to pass.'²⁵⁰ As an important conclusion, Arendt urges in her Lectures on Kant that such political judgment therefore need to be generally 'communicable'. Since this *sensus communis* is shared with others, rooted in a community, it is open for dispute and communication.²⁵¹ 'The faculty that guides this communicability is taste ... The condition *sine qua non* for the existence of beautiful objects is communicability; the judgment of the spectator creates the space without which no such objects could appear at all.'²⁵²

Judgment is only possible if one not only takes part in the conversation from one strict place at the table (to use this metaphor once more), but is also able to imagine oneself sitting in another chair, without losing the particular position at the table. To think from other viewpoints requires different and challenging capacities from the human being: courage (to think for oneself and to judge from one's own perspective), imagination and creativity in order to explore different viewpoints), experience, 'culture' or community (on the basis of which a judgment obtains validity) and finally communication (the community should be able to discuss the judgment, the judge should be able to explain its decisions). Judgment, to stress it differently, is possible only within a *community*. Besides thinking, besides this idea of 'to think for oneself', the community, not to say common ground, is needed in order to judge. Although judgment needs courage, imagination, creativity and experience, judgement only gets its validity within the context of a certain culture and community, and only through communication.

Arendt's thoughts on political judgement also offer a model to understand the moments of decision within the process of design. This of course is not to our surprise, since the very root of her thoughts on political judgment are borrowed from aesthetic judgment. Also Benhabib argues that this idea of judgment is at stake within the 'domains of law, aesthetics, medicine, therapy, music, the military and the hermeneutic interpretation of texts' judgment is at stake.²⁵³ Design requires decisions, judgment over all the materials on what is important, what should be articulated, how to connect and how to separate parts, the environment, the private and the public. But as she states, within these mentioned domains 'we seem ready to admit that those exercising judgment are in a possession of a special body of knowledge, and of a particular expertise or experience related to the frequent exercise of this body of knowledge. The exercise of judgment in these domains evokes immediately a distinction between the experts or the practitioners and a lay public that is neither in possession of this specialized body of knowledge nor experienced in its exercise.'²⁵⁴ Obviously, this is at stake in architecture too. Since it is the job of the architect to deal with architecture on a daily base, since he is educated and experienced, he has acquired expertise over time, knowledge of materials and conditions, of precedents and references (since architects historically have dealt with space, and the knowledge acquired through these efforts is embodied through education and practice), has trained his imagination in possible futures, has the capacity to take initiatives of change, is familiar with interventions in the world – and the design of all this – he might be understood

249.

Taken from the introduction to Nathan Glazer and Mark Lilla (eds), *The Public Face of Architecture, Civic Culture and Public Space* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), xv

250.

Arendt, 'The Crisis of Culture', 218

251.

Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 72

252.

Ibid., 63

253.

Benhabib, 'Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics', 186

254.

Ibid., 186

as an expert of spatial and material design. The architect knows what it means to draw a line.

In design the combination of (developed) taste and such mentioned skills helps the designer to judge more quickly, to trust his intuition while reading a drawing, visiting a site, talking to a client, and hearing comments from a particular audience. The perspective however of the public, or the 'world and its inhabitants' as the horizon of design, urges us to think of political judgment rather than aesthetical judgment as the model of architectural design and decision-making. To design is to take all sorts of information, and to look from different perspectives – to (almost literally) take the position of other stakeholders, and not in the least the very horizon of architecture, the world and its inhabitants, and to be able to communicate about it, to force public discussion. Designing is thinking in the place of anybody else, but not in order to come to an average outcome. A decision is needed on the materials, on the insight gained through the 'acts of displacement'. This decision can be made through previously acquired architectural knowledge – but since it responds to all possible viewpoints (around the table), it also can be expected that the decision is communicable to a wider audience. However, to make a decision, to judge the acquired information, evokes again this uneasiness. There is always something in the decision that could not get the aspired position, form, attention. To judge, after all, cannot mean to please every participant.

This model of design = judgment allows the architect to involve 'the public' even in the first sketches. The horizon of the public is not something to add to his 'thinking', but is at the core of that 'thinking'. Architectural thinking, we might state, is thinking from the perspective of the world-and-its-inhabitants first.

7.4.4 *The Public Practice of the Professional*

In this model of design = judgment, the architect, while part of and participating in the world, is challenged as a professional. Architecture is needed as a profession, with a particular body of knowledge that is gained through history and practice. The American philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre coined the term 'social practice' in this respect. The term 'practice' is generally taken as 'an action or performance, but the term also implies a method of action, in the sense of habitual, customary, or routine,' Dana Cuff writes in her reflection upon architecture as a practice. 'A professional practice,' she continues, 'is the customary performance of professional activities. This definition suggests ... [that] architectural practice emerges through complex interactions among interested parties, from which the documents for a future building emerge. ... The idea of routinely performed activities suggests that the actions stem from routine knowledge and that they mean something within a specified context. Practice is the embodiment, indeed the expression, of the practitioner's everyday knowledge.'²⁵⁵ We might state that it is not only the professional's everyday knowledge, which is crucial, but also the everyday knowledge of the public, the community, the commissioner and user, is essential. The architect has knowledge, both as a professional as well as a human being, but also needs the knowledge that is inherent in communities and their participants, the users and inhabitants. Their knowledge of everyday use is crucial.

With the term 'social' MacIntyre argues the participant in a social practice is not a stand-alone figure. 'By a "practice",' he writes, 'I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course

of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human power to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the end of goods involved, are systematically extended.²⁵⁶ The established 'practice' thus means that there is already a certain know-how developed in the past, as well as certain approaches, which all contribute to the shared knowledge of that specific activity. The new practitioner has to relate to that knowledge, even if these achievements from the past are challenged by the individual participant, or by the entering of other players to that field, it is a certain set of knowledge that is challenged, transformed, and appropriated. In other words, practitioners are never without context: they work in social circles, that is amongst other professionals, within the history of the very profession, but also in relation to the world, to which their work is applied, to the community of inhabitants, to which their work is constitutive. That also is the reason MacIntyre does not call it simply 'practice', but emphasizes the social character of these activities. Participating in a social practice means inserting oneself into a practice that already exists, that has a history and a tradition, even if this tradition is highly challenged by new forms of communication, new methods of working, new tools of production, new materials with which to create. In other words, to participate in architecture means to deal with an established body of knowledge, ideas about craftsmanship, perspectives on good and bad practices, better and worse performances – and even if one is going to challenge all of these, one relates to it as well. However, in all this, social practices depend upon a certain community of practice, which all contributes to an accumulative understanding of knowledge.

The gap between architects and public, upon which we touched above, therefore needn't surprise us. The only surprise might be that the complaints of the public, as given words by Jacobs or Wolfe, often is the blaming of the architect not of a position in an ivory tower, but to be captured by dogmatic systems that hinder the grasp on reality and to see the world as it is, its social – or in the perspective of Arendt, public – structures, and to respond adequately. Architecture is vulnerable for 'blind spots', as Léon Krier blamed modern architecture as we have seen before.²⁵⁷ These blind spots of course are general threats for every expert in every domain: to stop looking, hearing, seeing, sensing – to stop thinking and to replace that with only reasoning or applying a particular theory. In medicine this pitfall can be life-threatening; in architecture it is world-threatening. This then is the challenge to architecture: not to fall in love with oneself nor with what one is doing, nor to fall in love with architecture (and its limited scope), but to fall in love with the world and its inhabitants. It is particularly this dealing with the world and its inhabitants that urges the architect not simply to judge because of expertise, not simply applying aesthetical judgment, but to see each decisive moment in design as applying political judgment on the material at hand as well. By taking the world and its inhabitants as the horizon of architecture, which thus urges political rather than aesthetical judgment, a couple of aspects of this world are at stake. First, architecture deals with the everyday spaces of the people. This challenges the role of the architect within these spaces.²⁵⁸ Although the architect can be described as being an expert in spatial issues, he does not have the ultimate knowledge of the space at hand. The space is rarely inhabited by the architect himself. His distance can be refreshing, but it is also easy to overlook the aspects that matter to the inhabitants. This of course is the point made by the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, upon which we touched previously. The delineation of space is not particular for architects, he argued, since all people appropriate,

256.

Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 187

257.

Léon Krier, 'The Blind Spot,' in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (Amsterdam: SUN publishers, 2009), 187

258.

cf Jonathan Hill, *Actions of Architecture, Architects and Creative Users* (London: Routledge, 2003), 3: 'To acquire social status and financial security architects need a defined area of knowledge, with precise contents and limits, in which they can prove expertise. One of the aims of the architectural profession is to further the idea that only architects make buildings and spaces that deserve the title architecture, suggesting that the user is predictable and has no part in the creation of architecture. The user is an important consideration in the architect's design process. But the user is also a threat to the architect because the user's actions may undermine the architect's claim to be the sole author of architecture.'

259.

Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 300

260.

cf. the reflection of Tom Avermaete and Klaske Havik upon the work of the French architect Bernard Tschumi, when they write: 'Tschumi seems to suggest that architecture has an independent character, a semi-autonomy, in relation to the social realm. In his texts architecture is indeed conceived as 'rhetoric'; in other words, a matter that does not rely on demonstrable or tested truths, but rather is concerned with persuasion, popular perception and commonplaces regarding the social.' Tom Avermaete & Klaske Havik, 'Accommodating the Public Sphere. Bernard Tschumi's Dynamic Definition of Architecture,' in: Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik, and Hans Teerds (eds.), *Into the Open, Accommodating the Public*, OASE#77 (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2008), 50

261.

Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 7

262.

Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 80

demarcate and engage with space. There is, in other words, no such a thing as the authority of the architect in space.²⁵⁹

Secondly, the world is defined by differences and plurality. This urges architecture, despite its body of knowledge that exists to back up the designer, and despite the skills that are developed over time by the designer, to be thought of anew in each assignment. After all, not only is the program that needs to be added to the world different, but the particular place in which the new program will be embedded is different. The world and its inhabitants at that particular place are different, which means that general thoughts are not applicable, but should be defined according to these particular differences. Architecture is dealing with differences and uncertainties, which as stated previously urges the designer to take an uncomfortable position, to make design uneasy. Lastly, although the need to rethink this particular place and this particular program, and to come up with a particular proposal is clear, this proposal is never the only intervention possible. Design does not lead to any truth – it is thoughtful and careful, in the words of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Louis Kahn, but there is no truth behind the proposals the architect does. It is for this reason that the design needs to convince the world for its applicability – it needs to convince the world and its inhabitants that this proposal is the right intervention in the right spot (on the right moment). Architecture, like speech in the public realm, therefore is urged by the needs to seek agreement amongst the public.²⁶⁰

These aspects encourage not only taking decisions on the basis of expertise, they also require the capacity to judge politically. This perspective immediately situates all architectural intervention – ranging from the small bottom-up initiatives in neighborhoods to the vast top-down infrastructural projects for our territories, and from the first commissioning initiatives to the long-term exploitation – under the high tension of a *political* perspective. Space is political, and intervening in space thus implies a political position. This urge to take a position is obviously not a prerogative of the architect, but as a professional intervening in space the architect is constantly challenged to articulate his position.

It therefore is that within design the architect not only needs his skills and expertise, he also needs the enlarged mentality of which Arendt speaks as the capacity needed for political judgment. While designing, the architect needs to be able not only to look from other perspectives, but also to take these other places as positions to think from, to place himself in the other places around the table. This is at stake when the architect thinks about the assignment, when he needs to think from the perspective of others, from client to future users. Every perspective, however, should be rooted in the understanding of the world and its inhabitants, the perspective of the public, as the ultimate horizon of the architectural project. Although the public is not literally at the table, the architect still has to find ways to make them present, to imagine his project as part of the world, in the moments of decision. Imagination of course is central in this process of architectural design. To imagine the future and to dwell upon possibilities of use and engagement. To imagine the public and what is convincing from this perspective. To imagine the past, and how architecture takes care of it, to imagine the world and to understand how the intervention maintains the world as a common entity. 'The imagination is today', Arjun Appadurai writes, 'a staging ground for action, and not only for escape.'²⁶¹ Imagination brings the absent to the mind, re-presents it as an inner *image*. Imagination is always particular and concrete – it does not stay on the level of abstractions, but really imagines 'this' particular object, use, aspect. Imagination therefore itself is also communicable, Arendt argues.²⁶²

The need to imagine the public within the design process as present at the table, besides all other stakeholders, is not just another moral perspective, an ethical stand. It is an active demand, since exploring this perspective and activating this imagination will help to communicate the design, the judgement, in the end. As is the case in political judgment, the architect needs to seek agreement amongst the public on his design. The architect, in other words, needs to go out in public, needs to appear amongst others, in order to explain his proposal. This is evidently a moment of unpredictability and vulnerability. To present the design is to make oneself vulnerable to the judgment of others. However, to make public the proposal means to start a process of argumentation in order to persuade the public to agree upon that proposal. In this respect, the ability to communicate about the project, the profession, the starting points, and the aims is pivotal. It should be presented in ways that involve the public and help them to reflect upon it, if not literally participate. Only in this way will the gap be bridged between the expert and the layman, which here is actual and urgent because it is the layman whose life is affected but the intervention of the expert.

Of course, the above descriptions of design, the design process as circular, where the subjective part is urged as part of the worldliness of architecture and in which judgment is urged as the very moment 'the public' is at the table too, somehow is an ambivalent description of a design process. With its focus on a singular designer and design as a matter of dialogue, mostly between the eyes of the mind and the work of the hand, it can even be dismissed as romantic. The reality is more complex, although this model is still valid for larger offices, where a master architect directs assistants, who actually conduct the investigation into parts of the design. Even in these cases, the assistants do the work, have their internal dialogue, but after all have to explain what has come out of their specific investigation, and how it contributes to the project. However, it might be so that in other cases, design processes are less circular, and can better be described as an amplitude, in which the design process goes from one aspect to another, smoothly or with interruptions, but in which progress is tangible. It could even be that this description fits architectural design mostly, particularly since designing works towards a certain end, as well as this end sometimes already becomes vaguely visible to the eyes of the mind at the very beginning of a design process. As I narrated about the first couple of visits to the cemetery in Blankenberge, it quickly became clear how height differences could be enhanced in order to make the park clearer and more comfortable. Architects think spatially, and often also in terms of interventions. From the first call and meeting with a client, the readings of the program brief, the visit to the site, the investigation of references, and so on, the architect begins to imagine the future building – and this imagination of course directs the thinking process. This direction forwards to a certain end is certainly part of the computerized design processes, in which all participants work together on the same drawing. Such a process cannot go in circles, although it can and will go in twists and turns, but it will steadily go forward. However, in all these cases, the thinking itself goes in circles, as there are particular moments of judgment on the materials at hand too. There are also other examples known, or architects who develop the design of the building only in their mind, and start drawing only at the very end. Other designers use particular methods in order to grasp the assignment better, or to evoke imagination, or to prevent them to take pre-cooked approaches and decisions, to challenge them to look for different directions that are not immediately at hand. In each design process, however, whichever methods are used and whichever tool is developed, there is thinking involved as well as

263.
Benhabib, 'Judgment and the Moral
Foundations of Politics', 198

264.
Pérez-Gomes, *Built upon Love*,
208-209

reflection, there is judgment on materials at hand, and decision on what form, what intervention, what direction, what approach will fit best in this case, to the client's needs and to fit other requirements involved in the project. Particularly these moments of judgment – which are central in all forms of design processes – are urging the 'enlarged mentality' of the designer or whoever is to judge (particularly in more commercially driven or within computer aided design processes, it is not always clear who has the authority to judge. Even if there is a designer, it is no longer automatically the 'designer' who decides upon the design).

Now that we have urged this 'enlarged mentality' as a central tool of the mind within design processes, as a characteristic of the (public) professional, in order to do right by all parties involved in the development of a building, but also as the very tool that also imagined the public as a party involved in the design, it is also important to stress that this 'thinking' from other places should not be understood as searching for an average position, exactly in the midst of all other places around the table, nor does it search for 'truths' or does it expect 'objectified' judgments. The required decision is not a matter of balancing so that each position is represented, nor that ultimate truth is revealed. As Benhabib writes, the 'capacity for judgment is not empathy, ... for it does not mean emotionally assuming or accepting the point of view of the other.'²⁶³ This is particularly not the case in architectural design. On the contrary – designing is, like judging, not mathematical. It is not seeking out averages or compromises; it works with particulars, which means that the outcome needs to be particular as well. Design requires imagination – imagination to think from other perspectives, but also imagination to think intentionally about the future. And although imagination is (and remains) 'subjective', 'it is not an evil,' Alberto Pérez-Gomes writes, 'distorting device that can be replaced by an objective consensual framework.' As he argues, imagination is the faculty through which ethics are introduced into design, as it is the faculty of the human being that introduces love and compassion. 'The embodied author with specific cultural roots is also capable of poetic speech, of making beyond the confines of a narrow style, ideology or nationality.'²⁶⁴ Design essentially cannot be rationalized, nor can it be robotized. Designing is a process in which the designer looks from all positions at the table, in order to make a political judgment, that is, a judgment that is communicable and searches for agreement, but one also rooted in imagination, love and compassion, in which a poetic dimension is tangible. In this judgment the expertise, the knowledge of architecture – of what it means to draw a line – is needed. We might state: this knowledge of architecture, as it is activated in the social practices of architecture, is one of the positions at the table. At these moments the taste of the designer which is grounded in a particular community, upon a 'sensus communis', pairs forces with skills, experiences and the capacity to apply a body of knowledge. Taste, developed in conversation with others, in a particular context, in a particular time, will help to overcome the solely subjective perspective without losing its particulars. In the moment of design, taste joins forces with architectural knowledge and the skills of the designer, which is translated into intuition, in order to judge the insights gained from all other perspectives. Although this very moment can be experienced as a black box (since it is not mathematics and cannot be 'proven' or even processed anew), it is also urged by the need of communicability. This communicability is not something that Arendt develops solely in the context of judgment, but also is hidden in the chapter on Work in *The Human Condition*, Patchen Markell states. Also the produce and production of work gained overtime a certain publicness and the need of communicability. Where work had originally been addressed as

a matter of form-giving mastery exercised in isolation, by the end of the chapter *homo faber's* sovereignty has been qualified in at least one crucial respect: his last act, it seems, is to show his work in public – that is, to surrender it, figuratively or literally, to its users and judges.²⁶⁵

The very activity of architectural design needs, besides work, the activities of the mind: thinking, willing, and judging. Designing, which is the work of hands, also requires continuous dialogue between the hand and the mind, between what the hand offers to the eyes of the mind, and the directions the mind gives to the hand. This is a matter of thinking, willing and judging at once.²⁶⁶ Thinking can be linked to the investigation of the commission, the field, the site, the context, while willing is the development of a particular (architectural) aim in response to a certain site and assignment. Judgment of course is in-between both entities, judging the investigation as well as reflecting on the developing process. If we take political judgment as a model of making design decisions, it requires the capacity of the enlarged mentality, through which the designer is able to displace himself. We might describe this as a dialogue between all sorts of parties involved in the project – even those that are not literally at the table, ranging from the client to the future user, the context to the public, the social practices of architecture itself, as well as other cultures themselves. These invisible aspects, these participants that does not literally contribute to the design, which are not literally stakeholders of a project, require the faculty of imagination to see, with the inner eye, their position at the table, and to hear, with the inner ear, their important voices. Since judgment is dealing with the relationship between reality and plurality, the ability to judge architecturally is also the ability to reframe commissions, tasks, and projects into *public* realities. This perspective first urges the need make the ‘public’ present within the process of design, but also to make the architectural design present in public. Architecture is a public endeavor – it is political by definition: it affects the world and its inhabitants, and therefore needs to be discussed politically, made present in the political discourse.

265.

Patchen Markell, ‘Arendt’s Work: On the Architecture of *The Human Condition*’, in: *College Literature*, Vol 38, no.1 (Winter 2011), 32

266.

cf. Barnouw, *Visible Spaces*, 18

8.

AT HOME IN THE WORLD.

A CONCLUSION IN SEVEN
STATEMENTS

It has been a long trajectory, from the entrance to *The Retreat at Twin Lakes* in Sanford (FL.), the gated community that figured as the starting point of this journey, to the drawing boards and minds of architects, at the end of the previous chapter. Besides the gated community, we touched upon other forms of enclaves in the new urbanized landscape, understood that the enclave offers a world-in-itself, although withdrawn from the world-in-common. We stopped in the city, in order to investigate the new interest in urbanity and plurality, but we also considered the backside of this development: again an increasing segregation in society. We touched upon architecture in all this: the architecture of the enclave, of critique upon that enclave, of the infrastructure in-between, and how architecture is used to promote cities, places, particular programs within the renewed urban downtowns. As a final step of these explorations through the landscape and the city, we analyzed the design of Bernard Tschumi, in order to see how architectural intervention is able to open up a site for distinctive uses and different publics. Yet we also came to understand that no place can live up to the ideals of public space being a meeting place for all, a space that gives room to all sorts of practices. It was at that moment that Hannah Arendt joined us along the route. Arendt stressed the importance of the local and the small, rather than the virtual and the meta – we came to understand that public space is meeting-space, space of appearance amongst others. Although this is often taken as a metaphor, it cannot remain just that; if we take the notion of the public realm as essential to the realm of politics, there is clearly a need for actual spaces, where people appear to one another. Arendt would state that this is performed, through action and speech – yet this also requires real spaces. At this point, architecture comes in again. Architecture offers room for things to happen, it plays the vital role of separating the public from the private.

Arendt also offers another argument: since action and speech do not have any substance of their own – they require more than just recording in order to leave traces – they require a certain permanency as a context. Action and speech are bound to the world (in Arendt's terms, she means with it the world-in-common, which actually is a world-or-things) – they are played out in public space, but they have the world-in-common as object. This only makes sense if the world has a certain permanence, and does not change overnight. It is objects, made by our hands, the results of fabrication, that offer this permanence to the world. Arendt, in this perspective particularly stresses works of art, since they are not spoiled through use. All other products of work are somehow not an end in themselves, they are meant to be used. Arendt stresses that this is not just that they are useful, nor that they can be misused, but that they wear out and deteriorate. The work of art differs principally from this: it is an end in itself, and thus theoretically is the most ultimate permanent product of our hands. To bridge this perspective to the field of architecture, we have to admit that architecture is meant to be used, and thus that it wears out over time. Even the most permanent structures, that since ancient times have determined the appearance of cities like Rome or Athens, or archeologic sites like Petra or Machu Picchu, deteriorate through weather conditions, climate change, and environmental pollution. The latter clearly counts for artworks as well: if they are not protected from the elements, their lifespan is even shorter than the bold structures of stone, concrete, steel, wood, and glass. However, besides this condition, the durable aspect of architecture might be found in those features that are not merely useful – although the not-useful in architecture should not be thought of as something added to the useful structure. Architecture is not something exceptional added to constructions, it is the whole. In other words, architecture integrates aspects of use and aesthetics, functionality

and sensuous experiences, of the everyday and the extraordinary. And through that wholeness, architecture articulates aspects beyond its function. It particularly reifies permanence, and so it is, in the everyday environment, the presence of permanence.

Arendt not only stresses works-of-art as being an exemplary product of work, they also represent the fundamental condition of the world's plurality. Works of art appear as forms of their own, as they are produced by artists shaping their materials – from words to stones, from paint to music, but also count for more activist practices – through their own experiences and their own interpretations of the world, and their own incentive to create. Moreover, and this is the aspect that is central in Arendt's scope: no-one sees the works of art the same, since everyone looks at it from their own position in the world. It is only through multiple interpretations, that we might touch upon the reality of the work of art (and of the world). This of course counts for architecture as well – even more so in the everyday environment, which is shaped through architectural interventions. Architecture comes close to the human body: it offers literal contact with the world, sensuous experiences of private and public spaces. Architecture thickens our understanding of the world. Such reflections brought us to the understanding that the aim of architecture is the world (and its inhabitants), which is stressed in the final chapter, 'the act of design'. If the world and its inhabitants are the goal of the profession, what does this then mean for the way we design; for the subjectivity of architecture and how that might relate to the public practice that architecture is? This is how we ended up at the drawing board, and within the minds of architects.

With this journey in mind, what happens when we now look backwards? With the drawing board in mind, we challenge the practices of architects and urge them to act as public figures, to approach assignments against the background of the 'world and its inhabitants'. We touched upon that latter perspective as a description of what Arendt called 'spatial'. This spatiality is by definition political – in the context of the world and the people in it, 'space' is essential to appearance. Arendt speaks here particularly of a thinking – Arendt uses this metaphor in order to describe the writings of the German philosopher Karl Jaspers – that is spatial, that aims to create spaces in which 'the *humanitas* of man can appear pure and luminous'.¹ I argued that this 'spatiality' very well can be taken as the ultimate aim of architecture too: architecture in its essence is bound to the world and the people in it, and its ultimate perspective is to create 'spaces of appearance'. There are three essential directions for architecture hidden in this brief description.

The first is offered by Arendt's use of the term 'world', she literally stresses that 'world' and 'the people in it' belong together. This emphasis underlines how Arendt understands the world. World, for Arendt, always is in common. It is what we, and our predecessors, have made from the earth, the natural circumstances of the globe, in order to make it fit for human life. This effort mainly consists of things, that offer a context of permanence in contrast to the cycle of nature. The world is created through 'work', Arendt argues – and here we have another distinction, between labor (which is the activity bound to survival), work (which is the activity that create things that last, and thus together form the world), and action (which is the action bound to the realm of politics). Architecture is one of the most important tools in this perspective. It literally creates circumstances of living, as well as offering a permanent place on earth for the people that inhabit the world. But since the world is never the world of a singular individual, it

1. Hannah Arendt, 'Karl Jaspers. A Laudatio' in: Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 79 [emphasis in original]

always is commonly owned, not only with our contemporaries, but also with our predecessors and with those that will come after us, the community of men is the fundamental frame through which we need to understand architecture. Architecture does not originate in the individual and his needs (nor his survival), but in the community: it offers common ground to a community by articulating what is in common (and creating spaces of appearance) and simultaneously helps the human exist in the world, amongst others.

The second direction is the term 'space of appearance'. I shortened the description Arendt offered about the work of Jaspers to this term, which she uses to describe the space in which action can unfold. Careful not to leave the *humanitas* behind, spaces of appearance are ultimately the spaces where *humanitas* can come to light. I preferred however to use the shortened version since that is the term Arendt uses again and again in order to describe the public sphere, where people meet politically through action and speech. Action and speech only make sense if acted and spoken in public, amongst others who are able to see and hear and to respond. This is the brief description of political life: appearing in public, participating in the ongoing debate through action and speech, enacting re-action and responses – it is this action and re-action, action in concert, that offers the possibility of change. This 'space of appearance' is not something that can be left to the virtual realm: it is about real appearances, and thus requires real spaces. Although such 'spaces of appearance' can come into being everywhere, the very moment people appear to one another in action and speech, this nevertheless offers a framework for the architectural project. To contribute to the world-in-common means to contribute to communal spaces, wherein the 'space of appearance' is possible to occur. To create spaces of appearance is the aim of architecture.

Thirdly, if architecture is bound to the world, and spaces of appearance are its ultimate aim, this influences the professional perspective of the architect. These two aspects hold ethical connotations. The ambition of the architect, which is translated in the ambition of the architectural project, is not neutral. It simultaneously is clear that the architect only is in charge to a certain level. Architecture after all is a common effort: the vision of the client, the rules of the municipality, the limits of the financier, the wishes of users, and so on, all play a part in the decision making process. How the architect responds to these other players in the processes of taking initiatives, developing ideas, constructing designs, is informed by his ethical position. The aim here is to challenge all projects from a public perspective. As I have argued, this is part of what Arendt (although building upon the esthetical theory of Immanuel Kant) called the 'enlarged mentality', the political attitude beyond doubt. This capacity to look from different perspectives, to literally replace oneself to perspectives of others, belongs to the heart of architectural design. It is not simply required to be able to think from a perspective of the user, the neighbour, the commissioner and so on, it is part of the essence of architecture as a profession built upon imagination. Political thinking, in that sense, is part and parcel of the capacity to imagine, without which architectural design does not make sense. Therefore, it is an ethical challenge to position the project of 'architecture' in the world and the people in it, and to construct the potential spaces of appearance. But it also is simply the required method in order to make *architecture*, instead of art or simply building. This latter remark refers to a common distinction made in architectural theory and everyday language, between architecture as an artistic profession, and architecture as a service-profession. The first creates architecture, the second only mere-buildings. From the perspective developed above, it is clear that this distinction cannot hold. Not only

because it is ethically questionable, but also since it overlooks the essential characteristics of design and construction.

If we take ‘the world and its inhabitants’ as the very horizon of architecture, we might derive from our trajectory through the dispersed landscape, the segregated city, and the field of architecture, seven statements that somehow deepen our understanding of the ‘space of appearance’, the agency of architecture, and the essential characteristics of the architectural project. These statements together form a ‘fragmented’ conclusion – as stated in the introductory reflections, this study is not meant to deliver a theory. Arendt opposed strongly the inclination to theorize, with which she meant the ambition to come to a closed system, wherein all possible questions and problems are (meant to be) answered and solved. The choice to conclude in statements is meant not to close the discussion, but to contribute to the ongoing debate within the field of architecture, philosophy and political theory. It is open ended, like the work of architecture itself: design never is done. Each statement will be briefly introduced through a particular quote of Arendt, which is then addressed from an architectural perspective. The statements can be read separately, and are to be understood as challenges to re-think particular issues, to reflect upon certain practices and phenomena. They are meant to push arguments further, or propose new perspectives in approaching the discussion, and thus to evoke responses and re-actions.

1.

‘The reality of the public realm relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspective and aspects in which the common world presents itself and for which no common measurement or denominator can ever be devised. For though the common world is the common meeting ground of all, those who are present have different location in it, and the location of one can no more coincide with the location of another than the location of two objects. Being seen and being heard by others derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position. This is the meaning of public life, compared to which even the richest and most satisfying family life can offer only the prolongation or multiplication of one’s own position with its attending aspects and perspectives.’²

According to Arendt, the central condition of the public realm is plurality. The journey through the contemporary landscape and city, as described in Chapter 2 and 3, has shown how plurality, in particular, remains a central question regarding today’s public places. The post-modern suburban landscape is divided in enclaves, between residential, working, and leisurely environments that together do not form a city, nor a landscape. In the enclave-world this plurality obviously is threatened. Enclaves, after all, arrange spaces through similarity: what is considered strange – the stranger – is, as far as possible, excluded from these spaces. In the enclave landscape, similar people live in the same neighbourhood, do their shopping in the same mall, go to same café. Therefore, in the debate on contemporary landscapes, it is most often the aspect of discrimination behind this system that is addressed: increasingly ‘public spaces’ are only accessible to a selected group of people, whereas others, the strange and the poor, are bound to the left-over spaces, which then turn into ‘dangerous’ no-mans-lands in-between the more exclusive spaces. Even in the city, where plurality is presented as an essential foundation behind the economic theories that a decade ago offered a new narrative on the future of the city, plurality is at stake. It is the backside of the new popularity of density, proximity, and choice. Lots of cities quickly turns into enclaves too – enclaves for the lower classes in the outskirts, the inner cities for the higher classes. The problem touched upon in these chapters is not only this division of space, but particularly the impossibility of the ideals behind democracy, where people with different backgrounds and different narratives in live gather together and exchange ideas. The democratic ideal behind public space thus is a space actually used by the broadest variety of people possible. The focus in the contemporary debate on public space is thus mostly concentrated on the issue of accessibility: are strangers welcome? Arendt is also very critical upon the inclination to organize a community by similarity. The essential characteristic of political organization to Arendt is indeed plurality. The decisive characteristic of the Greek *Polis*, which is the reference Arendt dwells upon, is the break with kinship as the principle of organization beyond the agglomeration of houses. Arendt argues that the resistance against plurality is not something new, but already was at stake in the successors of the Greek and Roman City states, as it is today in the contemporary organization of nation states and their bureaucracies: they are organized like families, in social realms, Arendt argues.

However, for Arendt plurality is the essential characteristic of the public realm. Yet this does not entirely depend upon the accessibility of the public realm, since Arendt calls for an alternative understanding of these differences.

Today plurality is often understood in a limited way as the differences between classes, races, gender, ownership or the various views upon politics, God or capital. Arendt, however, urges a plurality that simply enlightens the differences between men. Thus Arendt's plurality depends upon the human being itself. This plurality might not be immediately visible: it comes to the fore through action and speech. We reveal our utter differentness through the way we act and how we speak, where we stand and what our perspective is. Arendt argues that everybody acts and speaks distinctly, fueled by nurture and nature, by experience and experiences, by our very location in the world.

3.
Ibid., 57
4.
Ibid., 57
5.
Ibid., 50

This plurality, Arendt thus argues, is crucial particularly because of the opportunity of others being around 'who see what we see and hear what we hear.'³ That is the very difference between the private and social realm: to be amongst likeminded only offers repetition, prolongation, multiplication. To participate in public life, amongst others, offers the possibility to be heard and be seen by others, from other positions, and to acknowledge these positions and get to know the common world. Participating in public life in this way assures the reality of the world, Arendt argues, and that is the essential characteristic. 'Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity,' Arendt writes, 'so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear.'⁴ The world becomes real for those participating in it, as well as the other way around: only what appears in public becomes real as well, since only then can it be seen and heard by others. 'Everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity. For us appearance – something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves – constitutes reality.'⁵

Arendt is thus not so much concerned about the possible or restricted accessibilities of public space, but the social dimension of the enclaves, which require and expect like-mindedness and therefore restrict the possibility of action and speech, through the emphasis on, for instance, the individual or entertainment. Action and speech, however, is the joint-activity, through which plurality unfolds. Architecturally spoken, this means that the enclave, as an architectural figure, indeed offers a limited version of public space and public life. To be surrounded by likeminded fellow human beings within a simulated environment, does not contribute to the experience of reality – the reality of the world and the reality of the self.

Participation in the world and the condition of plurality of public space are intertwined. To participate in public, through action and speech, establishes plurality, whereas the plural public offers the participant the experience of reality of the world and of the self. It therefore is not so much the accessibility of public space that is at stake, but the possibility to appear in public and to inhabit one's own position within that space.

2.

‘The space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predates and precedes all formal constitutions of the public realm and the various forms of government, that is, the various forms in which the public realm can be organized. Its peculiarity is that, unlike the spaces which are the work of our hands, it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men – as in the case of great catastrophes when the body politic of a people is destroyed – but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.’⁶

To appear amongst others, who are different in both word and deed, is the crucial moment and movement in Arendt’s perspective. I call this ‘moment and movement’, since this is what brings it close to the profession and agency of architecture. Appearance is a particular moment and experience that essentially reveals differences, although within the frame of equality. Appearance only make sense if it is amongst peers, who are able to respond to what they see and hear. This is important, since action and speech do not make sense without being seen and heard – without response action does not impact the world. Action, if it will not immediately vanish, needs to be seen by others – and it only will have impact when it develops into ‘action in concert’. This image Arendt derived from the agora in the Greek and Roman city states, a central square in the city, surrounded by all sorts of public buildings, where the citizens were expected to participate in the matters of the city. Admittedly, the citizens that were allowed to participate were a very limited group of householders. Most inhabitants of the city, in other words, were excluded from the deliberations about the city on the agora. Although Arendt uses this reference, she is quite clear in her insistence that participating in the world is a capacity of everyone, and that to not participate means to miss the opportunity to become fully human. The important point here is that Arendt’s notion of action and speech is bound to real spaces, although not to one or a few particular places, like the agora. On the contrary, sensible action and speech can potentially happen anywhere where people are gathered, though only for the time being that people are gathered there. As is clear in this image of space: the space of appearance is not fixed or formal, nor a space that endures: it is flexible and limited, yet also local and tangible, bound to human bodies in space. Although it can be understood as detached from any particular space, it is not virtual. It requires tangible space: since it does not rely solely upon conversation, debate or discussion during which opinions are shared (this can be left to media, be it the newspaper, television shows, the internet or social media) but is also about being heard *and* seen. This requires a ‘space’ where one appears to another, where action can be seen, judged and re-enacted.

The space of appearance also requires movement: to appear is not a permanent existence nor experience, but rather is to be understood as transition from one realm to another. Arendt literally describes it as a transition from the darkness of the private realm into the lights of the public. The dark-and-light in this metaphor is not simply a distinction between good and bad, it rather is a distinction between the realm of the hidden (and what needs to stay hidden) and the realm in which everything becomes visible. Moreover, as Arendt argues, no one can live solely in the public realm. Life loses depth, becomes shallow, transparent. To participate in

the world, one needs a private place in order to recover, recuperate, be educated, and be prepared for participating in the world – besides this the private also gives room to aspects of life – birth and death, pain and love – that need to remain hidden, and cannot appear in words and deeds. But as nobody can survive the harsh light of public space, a life completely lived in the private sphere loses its reality too. It loses contact with the plural perspectives upon the common world. Thus appearance is the act of appearing in the world, the transition from one sphere toward another (and backward again).

These perspectives, which locate the space of appearance in real spaces (although in rather fluid and temporal ways) and appearance itself as an experience of transition, are related to architecture. Architecture does not create the space of appearance itself. Its capacity is limited to actively generating conditions for the space of appearance to occur. Architecture can embed space in larger structures, can make it easily accessible, can stress centrality or connectivity, can offer space fit for occupation. The reverse is also true: architecture can hinder the space of appearance coming into being, by restricting space, use, access, occupation.

This once again leads us to our reflection upon the enclave-landscape and the segregated city. When taking ‘action’ to mean a horizon of public space, it is clear that this is bound to particular spaces, bound to particular bodies of actors and spectators, and bound to particular publics. Action requires public as it also requires space, but it does not require a particular space – that is, a particular space designed for action only. Since the space of appearance is not bound to potentialities or restrictions, nor any fixed and symbolic place, it can happen at any corner of the city, even in front of garage boxes in suburban gated communities. When people bump into each other or gather together, it is potentially there. Action, in other words, is a local activity – or better said: it is localized, bound to a certain place and space. This also means that the space of appearance is limited, limited in size by what can actually be seen and heard. There is, in other words, a need for spatial and temporal proximity. The space of appearance is only there if a public is able to see, hear and interact between themselves. It comes and goes with the public’s gathering together (or being, by chance, in a space close together when something happens). This means that such meaningful gatherings potentially occur through something (unpredictable) happening in a particular space: an event in the park, a manifestation in a square, a protest in the street, a flash mob in the mall, an accident on the interstate, a delay in the train. This actually offers room for a less pessimistic perspective upon the possibilities of public realm in our current urban condition, even in the dispersed landscape. If action and speech is available around the corner, it is possible anywhere where ‘a public’ can emerge, where spectators can become actors, sharing experiences of actions or occurrences in space.

In the quote above, Arendt introduces a distinction between the public realm and the space of appearance. The latter somehow describes what happens, is phenomenological. The first, however, offers a much more ontological perspective, urging the ‘realm’ of organization. However, to experience this appearing to others, is the fundamental experience of the public realm, relating those appearing, and being appeared, to the world-in-common. The moment of appearance, in other words, is the experience of being seen and heard - of plurality and potential change. This experience is thus essential, and architecture can contribute to it. Although the space of appearance is not fixed to any particular space, architecture can contribute to the potential experience of appearance, by stressing the threshold

between one realm and the other, particularly the threshold between private and public , which essentially needs to be crossed back and forth.

Hannah Arendt's concept of the 'space of appearance' is spatial, local, temporal and articulated. Since it is bound to the gathering of people, it is not in the hands of architects to create these spaces. However, what architecture does is to generate the potentialities of spaces, to become a 'space of appearance' once in a while. The opposite is also true: architecture is able to hinder a space from becoming a 'space of appearance'.

3.

“The political realm rises directly out of acting together, the “sharing of words and deeds.” Thus action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it. It is as though the wall of the polis and the boundaries of the laws were drawn around an already existing public space which, however, without such stabilizing protection could not endure, could not survive the moment of action and speech itself.”⁷

The act of architecture is to intervene by shaping the world – erecting the boundaries between the public and the private. Architecture therefore both separates and differentiates yet also connects and unites. Through these very interventions, spaces are formed – spaces that can be used, that bring people into a certain proximity, and that eventually can function as a space of appearance. Although in the beginning Arendt strongly differentiates between tangible spaces, that are shaped through our hands, and the space of appearance, she now urges the importance of ‘institutions’ and ‘physical interventions’ in maintaining the public realm, the potential space of appearance, in existence. In other words, although the space of appearance is bound to the flows of a public gathering, it is nevertheless important to sustain the potentiality of public spaces in order to gather a public. Moreover, the wall of the polis is not simply a fixed border that secured the public space of the polis, it also literally reified this space: made it tangible. The public realm is not simply the experience of appearances only; it is a crucial aspect of political organization. Only through acting together, the world-in-common is established. But although this action and speech thus establishes the world, it in itself needs a permanent place of encounter. A secured space, where action is visible and speech can be heard, in order to gain response, and reaction. After all, architecture is the construction of the wall, and symbolizes the intervention on the earth that establishes space and shapes the world – and thus represents public space; makes it tangible, visible, and contributes to its characteristics. This aspect we can call the pre-political aspect of architecture. It secures a space, in order to offer room to political life. Nevertheless, this pre-political aspect is not merely a technical intervention: architecture after all represents; it articulates aspects, conveys a message. The philosopher Karsten Harries rightly argues that the very task of architecture is ‘to help articulate a common ethos.’⁸

Architecture thus is able to communicate the importance of the public realm. Common facilities are crucial – even those of the lowest esteem like the sandpit, or the basketball court, play a role in the optimistic perspective that journalist Thomas Friedman draws: of life in local communities and public spaces in an age of acceleration and globalization.⁹ Even in times of communities falling apart, such spatial and tangible facilities are little magnets in the (sub)urban fabric. To create space is crucial: particular spaces have the capacity to mediate between inhabitants, to engage people to a certain place, particularly if it offers attractive, welcoming and accessible spaces. Such places ‘intensify’ the experience of ‘purpose and belonging’, in the words of the Canadian architectural theorist Alberto Pérez-Gomez.¹⁰ A particular important aspect of this experience however, is also the durability of architectural interventions in the world. These spaces and objects not only mediate between users today, but also connect them with the past and the future. Arendt’s notion of ‘action and speech’ needs a durable world as its stage. Action does not make sense if the world changes over night, she argues.

7. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 198

8. Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: MIT Press, 1997), 4; Harries defines ‘ethos’ as the ‘character, nature, dispositions, ... the spirit that presides over it.’

9. Thomas L. Friedman, *Thank you for Being Late, An Optimist Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), 379

10. Alberto Pérez-Gomez, *Attunement, Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge (Mass.)/London: MIT Press, 2016), 4

This experience of (relative) permanence seems to be increasingly important when regarding communities in an age of acceleration. A community only can thrive if there is a common structure behind it, that is durable and reliable.

The merit of architecture, in regards to the world-in-common, is its spatiality, durability, and tangibility. By articulating these values, it stresses the public realm as the essential experience of political life and the 'space of appearance' as its cornerstone.

4.

‘These four walls, within which people’s private life is lived, constitute a shield against the world and specifically against the public aspect of the world. They enclose a secure place, without which no living thing can thrive.’¹¹

11. Hannah Arendt, ‘The Crisis in Education’, in: Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 183

The space of appearance is challenging and rough. To appear in action and speech, after all, requires attention – it requires participation in an ongoing discourse, in inter-action with others, gaining support or resistance. The space of appearance challenges those appearing in it, to again and again be alert, move forwards, to transcend borders and to play it hard. Arendt acknowledges the public realm as an exhausting environment of participation. Courage is needed, she even states, in order to appear. In the quote above, she stresses the need of a private place in the world, which functions as a shield against the comprehensiveness of the world. In the protection of the private realm, one is able to recuperate, to reflect and to recover, to be educated and to be prepared, in order to appear in the world once again. Human life is destroyed if it is ‘consistently exposed to the world without the protection of privacy’.¹² Privacy thus is a necessary condition for the human body – privacy and publicity therefore belong together, they are intrinsically linked.

12. Arendt, ‘The Crisis in Education’, 183

13. Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1978), 80

Practically seen, this can be understood as an act of balancing. The home functions as the base from where the world is explored, from where one participates in the world. In Arendt’s writing, this perspective also resembles her distinction between labor, work and action. Whereas action is bound to public space, labor belongs to the private sphere. It is concerned with survival, to eat, drink, and reproduce, particularly aspects that also are bound to the hideousness of the domestic realm. Work somehow is in-between: Arendt often has ‘work-with-the-hands’ in mind, which somehow requires isolation from the world. However, production literally forms the world, much in the same way that the craftsman also needs to go out with his produce, in order to sell them at the market.

Architecture is obviously not the only profession dealing with the world, the public, and the private realm, and nor the only profession offering the circumstances to somehow be ‘at home’ in the world. The ‘somehow’ here is important. Arendt’s aim ‘to be at home in the world’, does not particularly refer to the philosopher Martin Heidegger’s emphasis on the importance of the dwelling place, which has had an important influence on architectural discourse. In Heidegger’s perspective, dwelling means to be rooted somewhere on earth, to *be* somewhere, to exist. Heidegger places this existential need for a dwelling place against the threats of modernity, that had made the human being alienated from spaces, footloose. For Heidegger, moreover, the world with all its rumour and developments, the *they* of the world, disturbs the authenticity of the self.¹³ In Arendt’s notion of the world, however, change, disturbance, and the *They* are at the very root of her perspective. Although the world is characterized by its *longue durée*, it nevertheless continuously changes by what we, human beings, add to it. Each generation deals with the world, changes it according to new circumstances and requirements, adds to the structure and demolishes those things that have become invaluable. If ‘to-be-at-home’ means to be in a place where ‘everything is in its place’, which somehow is behind the perspective Heidegger developed, one can never be ‘at home’ in the world. These two terms simply contradict each other. The world always challenges this condition of ‘being-at-home. To be at home in

the world means to deal with it – not to withdraw but to engage with what is ‘out there’.

This is the meaning of being at home in the world: to trust the permanence of the world, to explore the communal world (through the development of daily patterns), to adapt to the new, and even to add things to the world by oneself. For this, a home is needed. Thus if architecture contributes to the community and to communal life, it is via the threshold between the public and the private realm, which on the one hand shapes the potential space of appearance but immediately also makes it possible to withdraw and to appear. This is the moment of appearance, of transgression, which is crucial: it is a movement, an experience of the common world and its tangibility, which ‘thickens our understanding of the world.’

Thresholds are matters of space, time, and tension, as well as moments of change, charge and transgression. They are the essential tool of architecture in establishing relations to the public realm.

5.

‘Particular questions must receive particular answers.’¹⁴

Architecture deals with the world – a world-in-common that is shaped through time by particular human interventions. Human beings have responded to natural conditions. Because of the particularities of these conditions around the world, as well as depending upon the attitude towards the earth and the world; the development of certain techniques and cultures, the interventions differ from place to place, from culture to culture. Architecture, in other words, deals with differences. In architectural theory this is called the very ‘context’ of architecture, which consists not only of the particular local situation, but also the historic, cultural and political situation. Architecture by necessity deals with particularities. There is no generic in architecture, nor any neutral space. It is formed by its commissioners, shaped by particular program, evoked by the architect, constructed by a constructor – on particular places in a particular moment of time. This certainly means that architecture – although it is technically possible – can’t generate generic designs as response to a particular situation. Architecture, on the contrary, by its very heart and essence has to deal with the different, the outstanding and the characteristic. This makes it impossible for architecture to become completely robotised, although much effort is done by particular architects to develop scripts in such a way that they themselves are removed from the process, to make it more objective. However, this apparent difficulty with the subjectivity of architecture, cannot be solved by leaving design simply to parameters. Although the parameters change from time to time and place to place (and thus there always will be a different outcome), the process leaves no room for any subjective interpretation (or the subjective of the writer of the program). This interpretation, however, is crucial in design. The balance between parameters is not fixed, it requires interpretation of the designer. We therefore even might state that it is fundamentally subjective: it after all is the particular view of the designer (design team) as a response to a client’s needs regarding a particular situation (in space and time). This subjectivism needs to be carefully exploited. Diversity is at the root of architectural worldliness – this is the calling of architecture: to reveal differences of the world and offer distinctive conditions for its inhabitants, and to establish ‘thresholds’ where these differences are becoming tangible. This does not mean that particular figures which contribute to the exploration of threshold-experiences can be traced. *Park de La Vilette*, which we discussed in Chapter 3, offered insight into a range of tools that the designer, the French architect Bernard Tschumi, had used; ranging from the diversity in program; the connection between different routes; the embedding in the urban structure; and the superposition of very different aspects, constructions, paths. The main tool, however, was that Tschumi was able to bring these aspects together, not in a solid design, but in an open-ended superimposition. This offered ranges of ambiguous spaces, which held the potential for occupation by the users. And so in Chapter 5 we came to touch upon George Baird’s reflections on public space. He urged three aspects: visibility, propinquity and continuity, as key factors of the transition from a distracted public towards a public that is able to appear to one another. These are urgent directions to be applied in the design of public space, but nevertheless cannot be ‘laws’ that are robotically implied in all urban design assignments.

The worldliness condition of architecture is subjectivity.

14. Quote of Arendt from a lecture in 1966. Quoted via Jerome Kohn ‘Introduction to Responsibility and Judgment’ in: Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), VII

6.

15.
Hannah Arendt, 'Culture and Politics',
in: Hannah Arendt, *Reflections on
Literature and culture* (Stanford:
Stanford University Press, 2007), 190

'The earthly home becomes a world only when objects as a whole are produced and organized in such a way that they may withstand the consumptive life-process of human beings living among them – and may outlive human beings, who are mortal. We speak of culture only where this outliving is assured, and we speak of artworks only where we are confronted with objects that are always present in their facticity and their quality, independently of all functional or utilitarian aspects.'¹⁵

Architecture essentially creates spaces and differences by defining boundaries. Paradoxically it also immediately creates, articulates, and celebrates connections. A boundary is not simply the defining outline of a space, the 'four walls that constitute a shield against the world', it also is the membrane, the threshold to other spaces and to the world. These thresholds can be thin and transparent, thick and if stretched, even become spatial, a space in itself. To understand boundaries as thresholds is important, not only as the moment of transition from one realm to another, but also as the essential image of newly established relationships. Architecture does not simply create spaces: it creates spaces in a particular order. A building is ordered to give room to particular programs (even to different programs over time). The world is ordered alike – to offer room and structure for the community of human beings. Such order can't be limited to a particular appearance: neither to Classical principles, nor to the Modern rejection of these principles. There is order in the chaos of medieval urban centers as well as in do-It-yourself communal projects – even if they appear orderless. There is infra-structure, (limited forms of) hierarchy, and differences in permanence and durability.

This aspect of permanence, is particularly stressed by Arendt as important for the world-in-common. The important characteristic of the commonness of the world, according to Arendt, is that we not only share the world with contemporaries, but also with predecessors and successors. This commonness is prerequisite for all political life. Culture plays a significant role here. Culture as a term, in Arendt's writing, bridges between the human activities of work and action, between production of things and political participation. Culture thus has a double face.

First, for Arendt culture orders products-of-work in such a way that it offers permanence to the world, as home for men. In this respect Arendt urges the work-of-art, which, as an end in itself, should not be vulnerable to processes of consumption. As consumption and mass-production has joined forces (and Arendt saw this developing), the lifespans of products are shortened, and with that the possibility of establishing the world. A cultural approach, according to Arendt, should withstand this development within new processes of production and intervention, through the fundamental characteristic of caring for the world. Even in the age of acceleration and globalization, culture is able to offer the experience of being-at-home in the world.

Secondly, culture reaches from the activity of work to the activity of action and speech, not only because objects (and particularly works-of-art) can represent and reify action and speech, but particularly since through intervention, culture can literally construct the world-in-common. To imagine the future, to take care of the past, to stress the present, to challenge change, to recognize possibilities – this all is at the very heart of culture, of works-of-art. By defining order and

bringing interventions and objects together in particular relationships, a certain permanence is enforced upon the world, against processes of deterioration, decay, and consumption.

16.
Ibid., 199

If we bring both perspectives to a reflection upon architecture, we must first stress the permanence of buildings. If architecture is permanent, it merges the aspect of un-useful (as we could learn from the work-of-art) with the functionality of architecture. There is a healthy tension here within the architectural project: it is meant to be used, but never can be brought back to that particular use only, since it also shapes the world for decades, or even better, ages. This particularly is important since the intertwined relationship between culture and the world becomes at stake. It is not only a matter of adding things to the world that last, it is also a matter of a reciprocal relationship. We shape the world, while the world shapes us. Cultural artefacts shape our view of the world, whereas our world simultaneously is shaped through our view, through the artefacts we contribute to it. Our view is shaped through the way we deal with the world in both conscious and unconscious ways.

Architecture plays an important role in this respect: after all it shapes the everyday environment of people – although these often are experienced in distraction – as well as the extraordinary places, which are visited in conscious ways. Both, nevertheless, leave marks on the particular experiences of the world. The human senses play an important role in this respect, since the human being has a sensible relationship with the world. This sensibility is not a matter of intellectual rhetoric, but of inhabitation, of a sensible experience of the world. This experience shapes our understanding of the world, as it also offers the experience of reality. The five bodily senses, Arendt argues, working together, offer a sort-of sixth sense, which reveals to us the reality of the world. The world, this commonly-owned world, is not a matter of objects and relationships that surround us, but of sensuous and immediate experiences through which reality is revealed. Arendt therefore also stresses this sensible experiences as the unfolding of common sense, a sense based in the community of human beings. The *sensus communis*, Arendt writes, ‘alone deserves credit for the fact that our private and “subjective” five senses and their data are fitted to a non-subjective, “objectively” common world that we may share and evaluate together with others.’¹⁶

We might add that no other cultural object influences the five bodily senses so extensively and continuously than architecture. It is not only the capacity of outstanding edifices to deliver representational spaces and constructions that bind together human communities, but also the task and capacity of every building and construction, since they create the everyday environment. From this point onwards, we can define architecture as a cultural praxis, which suggests order, in order to create a world which is resistant to processes of time, which articulates relationships, which offers room for things to happen, and with all this offers the sensible experience of reality. This is the political urgency of architecture: it offers the apprehension of reality in which the five bodily senses are simultaneously addressed. This also is a calling to architecture: it needs to embrace this sensuous character of building. The main task of architecture as a cultural practice is, therefore, to understand *every* intervention in the light of society and culture, the world and its inhabitants, in which purely functional and economic considerations are relevant but not decisive. ‘Without, however, the beauty of cultural things’, Arendt writes, ‘and without the radiant splendour in which a politically articulated

permanence and a potential imperishability of the world manifest themselves, the political as a whole could not last.¹⁷

Architecture is a cultural practice, since it offers room for things to happen. It articulates relationships and orders the world, as it also enables experiences of reality through spatial, aesthetic and sensuous experiences.

7.

“This enlarged way of thinking, which as judgment knows how to transcend its own individual limitations, on the other hand cannot function in strict isolation or solitude; it needs the presence of others “in whose place” it must think, whose perspectives it must take into consideration, and without whom it never has the opportunity to operate at all. As logic, to be sound, depends on the presence of the self, so judgment, to be valid, depends on the presence of others. Hence judgment is endowed with a certain specific validity but is never universally valid.”¹⁸

18. Hannah Arendt, ‘The Crisis in Culture’, in: Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 217

19. Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 67

Architecture addresses two important perspectives upon the world. It is the construction that offers order, that resists processes of time. It offers spaces for living and working, for communal practices and rituals – it constructs the world. Architecture, however is not only built structure, it also is the ideas behind it: the processes of taking initiatives, developing ideas, imagining possible futures, the activity of design, the drawing of sketches and working drawings, the detailing of constructions and the construction of proposals. These latter activities are crucial. It is through this process of imagination and design that the world is created. The cultural perspective Arendt offer, stresses a particular order to give permanence to the world – an order that calls for a care of the past and openness for the future. The crucial process of design (as well as all other aspects of taking initiatives and developing plans), can be challenged with a reference to Arendt’s reflections upon political judgment. Politics, Arendt states, is not a realm of ‘truth’ but of validity and persuasion. Political judgment, Arendt states, is bound to a certain community. One judges ‘as a member of this community and not as a member of a supersensible world.’¹⁹ To judge rightly, one needs to take other perspectives, which are present in in the commonly-shared world too, into account. This is not simply thinking-about other perspectives, but literally re-thinking from these other perspectives. Judgement, Arendt thus argues, not only thinks from the own position in the world, but also thinks from the place of others. It is not enough to simply hear what one says, but the one who judges needs to replace oneself, in order to judge the validity of that very perspective. Here Arendt again offers a description of the value of the space of appearance, which is essentially plural, since everyone appears in it, in its specific position. We only can think from other perspectives if we participate in this space of appearance, if we are able to detect other positions in the world.

This ability to replace oneself certainly urges the importance of imagination. Judgment requires imagination: the capacity to see from other positions and to imagine these perspectives at hand. However, this process is not built on speculative thought, Arendt states, but requires ‘common sense’. In Arendt’s perspective, this means a sense grounded in the community. Judgment, therefore, Arendt argues, needs to be communicable and public. Moreover, since it has positioned oneself in different positions, it takes the public into account, and becomes immediately communicable. It can also communicate from different positions. Nevertheless, the crucial point here is, that judgment is not simply the average of all positions investigated: it judges, it makes up its mind and passes judgment. This judgment on one hand is based upon the community-sense, and thus is communicable, yet also requires a position in itself. It is not a technical nor technocratic process, but requires the judge to be involved, and to judge upon reasonable expertise. To judge starts with acknowledging diversity. It needs a space to reflect, think, approach differences, as it eventually also introduces

expertise. However, a prerequisite of such judgment is its communicability: it needs to be accessible and plausible for other 'stakeholders' as well.

Here we are back to architectural design and intervention. Designing is judging over the materials at hand. But since it deals with the world, which is common to its inhabitants, it is by definition 'political'. It bears responsibility to the commonness of the world, the experience of reality, and the shape of public space, as it is also responsible in its interaction with the past and its imagination of the future. Designing, therefore, is taking these perspectives into account: not only that of the personal preferences of the designer, the client, and other stakeholders; but also the world as it has become today through the actions of predecessors; the world as it is common to us; and the world as it will be in the context of (a sensible) future community. Thus designing is replacing oneself, in order to be able to inhabit the perspectives of other stakeholders, to make a reasonable judgment. But as is clear; after thinking from different positions, the architect needs to judge not by a simple technocratic balancing of perspectives, but based upon his expertise as architect; upon his architectural knowledge of the world gained over time; through study and analysis, experiences and training. This immediately urges the designer to make designs (and design-steps) public, to make them accessible to the public in order to discuss these proposals. Design needs to be communicable, since it needs to be publicly discussed.²⁰ There is nevertheless a tension between judgment and stakeholders in the process: design takes decisions and they will always evoke dissent.

As might be clear, this being-a-public-figure of the architect requires an extra leap from the profession and the professional instruments of communication. Although drawings and models can explain often more than words, they might also hide more than is required. The tension between the professional and the public offers room for architectural criticism, which investigates architecture as public intervention in the world-in-common. Architectural criticism somehow has a double urgency today: it needs to publicly express the significance of architecture for the world, as well as challenge the architect (and all those involved in the architectural project) to understand its public calling.

Architecture is by definition a public (and thus political) practice. It therefore requires, besides imagination and architectural knowledge, common sense, an enlarged mentality and critical (self-) reflection.

Together these statements do not offer a closed theory. After all, each could be extended with dozens of other quotes, that re-phrase similar thoughts, or add additional perspectives. Nevertheless, these seven quotes of Arendt, followed by their brief discussions which turn towards architectural statements, are able to largely cover what has been investigated, explored, discovered, and concluded in this study. Moreover, they are presented in a particular order, and form a direction to understand architecture within its pre-political and political framework, to understand its public face (and fate), and to understand its cultural aim: ranging from the question of the public realm and the space of appearance, to the understanding of the architectural profession as beholding a particular knowledge of the world, which is used and explicated in processes of research and design. Through this direction, that stresses 'the world' as the aim of architecture, and 'the public' as frame of architectural design, it offers a response to the basic question proposed in the introduction of this study, in line with Arendt's ambition behind *The Human Condition*: 'what are we – architects and architecture – actually doing?'²¹ Architecture, so might be the answer, contributes in a crucial way to the experience of the public and the commonness of the world. As a cultural practice, it also is a public practice in itself. This of course immediately formulates an ethical frame regarding the architectural project: it is not an end in itself, but it contributes to the world and its inhabitants. It contributes to the possibility 'to be at home in the world'. This frame actually proposes the capacity of architecture to represent the commonness of the world – and to offer the experience of commonness. The essential figure here is the 'space of appearance', which is not created by architecture, but emerges only through the gathering of people. However, architecture contributes to the possibility of this 'space of appearance' to emerge (as it also can hinder this space to emerge). The crucial architectural element in this perspective is the threshold – architecture after all is the art of creating differences, erecting borders, making enclosures, and making new connections and establishing relations.

21.
Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 5



The Stevenson Library at the campus of Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, October 15, 2015.
The addition and porch is designed by the office of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown (1993)

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Hans Teerds (Zwijndrecht, NL, 1976) studied Architecture and Urban Design at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of the Delft University of Technology. After finalizing his graduation project, which dealt with landscape, architecture and heritage regarding the vacant Sugarfactory in Halfweg (NL), he was nominated to join the 'Meesterproef', a trajectory organized by the Dutch and Flemish statearchitects to offer young talents in architecture and the arts small commissions. After a few years working in practice upon that commission, the entrance pavillion to the cemetery of Blankenberge (B), as well as other projects, he started to teach at the Chair of Public Building, and later at the Chair of Methods and Analysis at the Delft University of Technology. He also started a PHD project in which he investigated the field architecture and its public and political aspects through the lens of the writings of Hannah Arendt, with a special focus to public spaces and public buildings. For that matter, he was during the fall of 2009 a Visiting Research Fellow at the Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson (NY). He publishes frequently on architecture, urbanism and landscape in a broad range of media and is member of the editorial boards of the architectural magazines *OASE* and *DASH*.

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The modern emphasis on authenticity and the individual not only caused an ‘astonishing flowering of poetry and music’ and ‘the rise of the novel’, philosopher Hannah Arendt states in her well-known book *The Human Condition*, but also the fall and ‘decline of the more public arts, especially architecture.’ In this study Hans Teerds takes up the challenge to address the public aspects of architecture, as they emerge from the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt. Starting from a reflection upon the contemporary urban landscape and its seemingly loss of public space, he challenges the contemporary theoretical discourses on the fall of the public character of architecture and public spaces.

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