*urban architecture*
*TU Delft / 2021 - 2022*

# PEOPLE

# POWER

# POSSIBILITIES

*attitudes: an anthology of critical essays · studio glaneurs/glaneuses · research book*

# PREFACE

This project was born from the desire to encapsulate the lively discourse of the studio's engaging and provocative group research meetings in the autumn semester.

Writing, putting thoughts onto paper, seems a natural way to translate ideas and opinions into a tangible product. The result is an eclectic collection of texts written by different members of the studio, showcasing a range of unique critical perspectives and opinions.

There are three key themes that continually persist in our investigations of Maastricht through the lens of different people. These are: people, power, and possibilties.

These themes say something about what we represent as a studio, alluding to a anthropological and social approach to understanding and crtiquing urbanity.

In keeping with the studio theme of *Glaneurs/ Glaneuses*, this anthology of diverse personal "attitudes" gives us all the opportunity to *glean* knowledge and inspiration from one another.

POWER





PEOPLE

POSSIBILITIES





POSSIBILITIES

# POWER

Power relations have a substantial effect on the built environment. They determine what gets built, and who it gets built for. Who it is that ends up making these decisions is an important matter, and can influence the outcome greatly. Is the process democratic? Or is it controlled solely by a dominant body? Architecture shapes lives, and with this comes great responsibility; decisions in urban planning are not to be taken lightly.

In the context of Maastricht, the power struggles between the municipality and other actors in the city, over the future of urban development, is striking and inspires several of the essays within this anthology.

The politics of architecture are rarely debated in depth in architectural education, but it is certainly a topic worth discussing,

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# · DISPOSSESSION ·

Dispossession is the action of depriving someone of land, property, or other assets; a topic of real concern in architectural discourse as spatial inequalities continually widen.

How might we be able to foster more inclusivity in architecture? That is, aiming to provide equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized.

"But what does it mean if you cannot recognise yourself in what you see around you? If the stories on display cannot be accessed by you? Then you are not at home, you are a stranger in the city you live in. Only if we recognise the multiple realities of identities and identifications, can a city be formed that facilitates inclusivity"

*Arna Mackic, Architect*

# NO MAN'S LAND - THE IMPORTANCE OF AMBIGUITY IN TERRITORIAL URBAN FABRIC

Aaliyah Lawal

*Prologue*

The shadowed faces of three women stooping to collect dubious remains of corn against the glowing backdrop of a fruitful yet distant harvest conjures a sense of anonymity and timelessness that resonates with the societal structures of the contemporary western world. Despite its current consideration as one of the great modern art pieces of the 19th century, 'The Gleaners,' 1857 oil painting by Jean-François Millet promptly received criticism from the middle and upper classes of that period. In quick succession to the French revolution of 1848, the piece invoked immediate connotations to radical socialism; the rising socialist movement and the work's particularly large size likened it to religious and mythological artworks. This, compounded with the biblical accounts of Ruth the gleaner, lead to accusations of ennobling the rural poor (*Story behind the Picture - The Gleaners | Timeline of Waste, 2004*). Whilst the question of whether Millet's work is guilty of glorifying poverty is no longer frequented or valued as an offense within contemporary society, that concept still engages with modern concerns; Rarely is candid depiction and dignity brought to those considered as the underclass, especially on the elitist platforms that habitually exclude them.

Arguably, the underrepresentation of underprivileged in the elitist art world had minimal affects on that community, since typically, it was not a space inhabited by them. However, this text attempts to delve into alternative discriminatory trends found in existing cities, the socially fundamental territories of today's civilization. Despite their inherent dependency on the less privileged to function, global urban trends are increasingly excluding these people to a devastating effect. Through a clarification of the exclusionary mechanisms at work and attempts to oppose them, this text will also explore ways the underlying complexities of reality for the underrepresented in a city can also inform good design solutions.

*Introduction*

Through collaborative efforts, collective dreams and the assimilation of differing humanities, the city and its subsequent urban life often becomes the ultimate landscape to glean. These municipal vehicles are more than just objects representing human aspirations for new heights of wealth, intelligence, pragmatism, and ways of living. They test, regenerate, create, and destroy sociological ideals, and give birth to new and more desired ways of existing in clusters of opportunity across the world. Although 'The City,' as a paradigm, may have started as a practical landscape to foster mutually dependant relationships between differing entities, it is now commonly recognised as essential to the survival and prosperity of much of the world's population. And thus, the world is urbanising at unprecedented rates and so too is the trend to live in one. [1]

1. United Nations, *The World's Cities in 2016*, (2016), https://doi.org/10.18356/8519891f-en.

The urban politics of environment, place, egalitarianism, and urbanism are all integrally linked. The caveats of these elements accumulated into the formation of a city, provides a habitat for 54% of the global population,[2] and subsequently has a major influence over individual identity and understanding of place. The consequence, however, of building urban edifices, often directed by the 'the global super-rich', in an image that reflects our romanticism of consumption, capital, and innovation, is the simultaneous destruction of all indexes that oppose these ideals.[3] Examples of this destruction can be exemplified though reduced opportunities for gleaning, increased inaccessibility for those lacking in financial or social capital or the dismissal of regional tradition. Moreover, the increasing urbanisation and plutocratization trends and their overrepresentation of luxury and consumption are not the only propensity to be observed within current urban manifestations. In addition are trends displaying the increasing displacement, migration and place-lessness of people that is accompanied by the vulnerability, temporariness and incongruous of constant insecurity and uncatered habitats.[4] Conclusively, it seems as though many people may flock and inhabit parts of a city for a better life, but, due to is exclusionary and destructive nature, they never truly are at home.

The following text will pursue this concept through the lens of understanding boundaries. Pushed out to the peripheries, isolated from opportunities and uncatered for in the land that they live in, such dispossessed individuals are removed from their sense foundation and are unable to reobtain it within the city walls. They are 'other' and are condemned to live in a figurative and sometimes literal 'No-man's-land.' The dictionary defines the term 'No-man's-land' as a noun meaning one of three things; the disputed ground between two opposing army fronts; an unowned or unoccupied piece of land; or an area or thought or activity defined by its ambiguity.[5] The following chapters are based on these alternative interpretations of the phrase 'No-man's-land' and will question the role and the workings of a city. Additionally, it will also seek to understand urban thresholds, to communicate between the standard and the other, in hopes to create more varied and inclusive city.

*Dispossession and Spatial Equity: The disputed ground between two opposing army fronts*

Dispossession is the act of depriving someone from property, land, or other assets. It's use here, in relation to a situation of 'disputed ground between two opposing army fronts', refers to the deprivation of both the potential and inhabited land of one army front, by the quick advancement of the other. The growing gap between the rich and poor of this world feeds its own polarisation of these figurative opponents, further minimising any opportunities for them to relate to each other. Whilst, in a literal sense, these two 'sides' are not at war with each other, an understanding of how and why the world is urbanising at its current speed arguably suggests otherwise.

The cycle of capitalism relies on the perpetual investment of profits to both keep and grow wealth. This wealth, accrued in the hands of the small super-rich minority, powers the rapid growth of the urban landscape as capital investments here have become dependable places to store and accumulate even more money.[6] This investment can transcend its tangible physical value if it is also placed in a location of interest, such as a major city, if caters for the high-end and luxury markets, or even if it remains completely uninhabited. Since the location of an edifice has a profound effect on increasing its value, building in established and appealing locations primarily involves the destruction of pre-existing developments. This process of destruction and creation, more commonly referred to as dispossession by accumulation, has its most uninhibited detrimental effects on those most marginalised from political power, namely but not exclusively the poor and underprivileged.[7] According to Richard Florida, the author of 'The New Urban Crisis', the extemporary results of this practice are that 'neighbourhoods are being turned into deadened trophy districts, where the global super-rich park their money in high-end housing investments as opposed to places in which to live.' [8] Whilst this unforgiving reading of the circumstance omits the potential benefits of such developments, it is hard to ignore the apparent class dimension of this practice and the subsequent socioeconomic challenges it instils.

The acupunctural intrusions of accumulation by dispossession have a slow but noticeable effect on the local character and affordability of their location. Defined as gentrification, the appearance of new and high-end redevelopments can exact a chain reaction of other local renewals as the area becomes more desirable to live and/or spend capital in. This poses as a secondary opportunity to invest and produced more capital.[9] The manifestation of this chain reaction may involve the emergence of expensive restaurants or shops or the privatisation and commodification of local public facilities and services. In conclusion, the original inhabitants of the area become dispossessed from it; either from the heightened price of living, its recent exclusionary nature or other accessibility factors, the area becomes a non-viable place to live in and thus, they are indirectly forced to leave.[10]

Gentrification, segregation, unaffordability, and inequity are all examples of detrimental growing trends that can be observed in most cities around the globe, and they fortify the notion that these now opposing polarities that cannot coexist or find peace between them. Due to the power, influence, and financial might of the 'super-rich' when shaping and designing our cities, it is easy to assume that submission is the only response to this new world order. However the introduction of governmental regulation reform, land value taxes, and higher mandates for low-cost housing, the plutocratic colonisation of urban landscapes can successfully be interrupted.[11] National and municipal regulations will be a vital defence for the retention of the tangible and intangible benefits of a city for those in disadvantaged circumstances.

In many ways, the extent between the regulated and subsequently protected areas of the city and the areas dominated by capitalistic power forms the no-man's-land of ambiguity that many underprivileged people currently inhabit. Despite their intrinsic state of insecurity, these spaces are ones of opportunity and have the potential to manifest other values present in society. Whilst initiatives in no-man's-land can be informed and supported by governmental regulations, they have not achieved complete top-down recognition or protection. This shortfall, however, is not inherently bad. Between the gaps of two powerful authoritative forces is the opportunity for community-led experimentation, bottom-up and grassroot developments that become important testing grounds to establish new ways of living in the city. In addition to this, their smaller and

2. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World's population increasingly urban with more than half living in urban areas*, (July 2014), https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/population/world-urbanization-prospects-2014.html.

3. Chuck Collins, *The Wealth Hoarders: How Billionaires Pay Millions to Hide Trillions*, (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2021).

4. Alfredo Brillembourg, Synne Bergby, Alexis Kalagas and Ida Zeline Lien, *Motherland: Parangolé - A Journal about the Urbanised Planet (1st ed.)*, (Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2021), 16–19.

5. Collins English Dictionary definition

6. David Harvey, *Rebel cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, (London: Verso, 2012), 5-12.

7. Ibid, 16–42.

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), 6.

9. Colin Leys, "Commodification: The essence of our time," *OpenDemocracy*, April 2, 2012, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/commodification-essence-of-our-time/.

10. Aaron Betsky, "Oliver Wainwright's Solutions for Gentrification," *Architect Magazine*, October 5, 2016, https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/urbanism-planning/oliver-wainwrights-solutions-for-gentrification_o.

11. Richard Florida, "The Shape of the New Urban Crisis," *Bloomberg*, April 11, 2017, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-04-11/richard-florida-introduces-the-new-urban-crisis.

more intimate scale allow them to address specific and often underrepresented challenges found in urban life.

*Acts of rebellion; An unowned or unoccupied piece of land*

As alluded to previously, the distributional gaps of control in urban territories can often lead to specific bottom-up developments that grow between these cracks and shortfalls, hence earning their 'grassroot' label. As the majority of land and buildings within the city are owned via their lawful purchase, it would be easy to assume that the use of 'no-man's-land' in this chapter is referencing the construction of grassroot initiatives in the unowned peripheries of significant urban configurations. However, ownership does not uniformly dictate the use, function, or role of a site within an urban plan. Contrastingly, the particular occupation of an urban territory can impose, to a greater degree, specific socio-spatial responsibilities and appreciation to urban developments. Adverse possession, also known as squatting, furthermore displays a more disruptively significant and politically charged campaign, highlighting the ironic devastation of the presence of dispossession in a world that is rapidly urbanising; How can placelessness, the ability to find foundation and perpetual insecurity be present and growing issues within a climate that is rapidly constructing new places?

'Squatting is a phenomenon that has occurred throughout history, and still occurs in every place around the world where the need for space coexists with vacancy. Sometimes it is individuals looking to satisfy their most immediate needs, while elsewhere sizeable movements emerge to address these issues together. Squatting in the Netherlands developed from improvised urban interventions to an institutionalized spatial practice that allowed squatters to operate effectively in urban space.'[12]

As attested to in the Het Nieuwe Instituut's book *ARCHITECTURE OF APPROPRIATION: On squatting as spatial practice*, adverse possession occurs when spatial need coincides with spatial vacancy.[13] The consequential displacement of people by the capitalist subjugation of the city presents its own socioeconomic problems. Nevertheless, these problems must be contextualized with their environments of extreme wealth and power polarisation and the indirect segregation of such extremities. The outcomes of this condition is the vacancy and underutilisation of exclusive urban offerings alongside the exhaustion and overcrowding of accessible urban offerings.[14] As previously indicated, the submission of those without power in these circumstances may superficially present as the only viable response to this power dynamic. However, as asserted by political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott, the ideological hegemony that submission implies within a public transcript can mask numerous forms of dissent, anti-hegemonic thought and conduct present in those acquiescing. Moreover, the buried ideas of the dissenting form a hidden transcript, one that more accurately depicts their situational understanding despite being withheld in the absence of power and security.[15] The consequence of this phenomenon results in the revelation of hidden transcripts only through the advent of conflicts and acts of rebellion.

12. René Boer, Marina Otero Verzier and Katía Truijen, *Architecture of Appropriation: On Squatting as Spatial Practice*, (Rotterdam: Het Nieuwe Instituut, 2019), 15–18.

13. Ibid, 15.

14. Alissa Walker, "Richard Florida tackles the urban inequality he may have helped create," Curbed, May 3, 2017, https://archive.curbed.com/2017/5/3/15516592/richard-florida-new-urban-crisis-cities.

15. James C. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*, (London: Yale University Press, 2019).



It is disputable that the development and institution of squatter's rights throughout the late 20th century in the Netherlands enabled the revelation of such hidden transcripts to be excavated more easily; through the hostile takeover of unoccupied buildings the submissive could more safely build platforms to voice their hidden transcripts whilst the dominant had to resort to slower and less aggressive means to silence them.[16] This new legal dynamic is understandingly controversial because it both created and destroyed its own compilation of challenges. Firstly, the evolution of squatting law disempowered authorities and premise owners from the prompt eviction of squatters from their unapproved appropriation of space. Subsequently, this extended occupation time allowed squatters to establish new socio-spatial responses to their urban contexts, epitomising their repressed narratives and beginning civic discussions surrounding right to property vs the right to a home. Secondly, the legalisation of anti-squats within buildings that had been vacant for over a year[17] further empowered squatters to seize superficial ownership over vacant premises to drive their campaigns. This empowerment of the submissive alongside the concurrent disempowerment of the dominant allowed changes to the zeitgeist of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Conclusively, the emergence of alternative narratives represented through urban interventions allowed, overall, a more representative display of values to be reflected in the urban landscape.

The Landbouwbelang, located in the Sphinx Quarter of Maastricht, Limburg, is a squat that namely benefited from these law changes as it established itself in 2002. Despite being owned by the municipality, a collection of artists, musicians, programmers, designers, and students have since made it home, hosting a several cultural activities to showcase their work there. Described as a 'cultural freezone', their demonstrated transcript rebels against the 'throwaway' consumerist society that they ostensibly reside in[18]. Author and educator Gerdo Aquino states that 'The study of cities needs to include many points of view in order to move beyond outmoded planning diagrams that no longer describe how to improve our cities'[19]. Whilst the issues of representation and inclusivity have been fiercely fought over by urbanists outside of Aquino and, arguably, is worth such deliberation, its implementation here does not overcome the fundamental issue of ownership and spatial security that originates such debates.

As foreshadowed by Scott, 'The dominant never control the stage absolutely, but their wishes normally prevail'[20]. In 2010, the Netherlands passed a new law, eradicating all forms of adverse possession and finalising the denouement of many squats throughout the country. The squats that had not acquired a legalisation or did not possess the privilege of being able to relocate and continue their efforts were removed along with their narratives. From this chronicle of confliction, two things can be identified as true; the act of squatting is unsystematic, disruptive, temporarily causes the dispossession of property owners and is a defined act of rebellion against the common workings of city life; the act of squatting can achieve representation by exhuming hidden transcripts, pointing out the flaws in contemporary urban procedures and starting vital discourse concerning those flaws.

16. Boer et al., *Architecture of Appropriation*, 9–16.

17. Maxim Amosovo, "To squat or not to squat," *Delta*, November 12, 2009, https://www.delta.tudelft.nl/article/squat-or-not-squat.

18. Landbouwbelang Website

19. Gerdo Aquino, "The Re-Representation Of Urbanism," *Scenario Journal*, October 9, 2011, https://scenariojournal.com/article/re-representation-of-urbanism/.

20. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance*, 4.

*Openings and Affiliations: An area or thought or activity defined by its ambiguity*

The third and relating definition of 'No-man's-land' to this final chapter is 'the an area or thought or activity defined by its ambiguity'[21]. So far, this text has defined territories, opposing sides and the multi-dimensional boundaries that have been erected between them. In opposition to the definite and evident subjects of the previous chapters, this chapter will explore the ambiguous and sometimes immaterial workings of the city that produces the only archetype of 'No-man's-land' that re-establishes the act of gleaning in the city.
The identification of the standard and the other thus far has allowed this text to acknowledge the stark contrasts and contradictions present within contemporary urban landscapes. Howbeit, it misleadingly alludes that these states are fixed, mutually exclusive and opposite. Understandably, this rendering omits the presence of urban interventions that assume characteristics of both states and, most notably, it overlooks the factors that unite these two states.

The distinguishing and often partially shared factor of both states are their boundaries. As described by Kevin Lynch, 'edges may be barriers, more or less penetrable, which close one region off from another; or they may be seams, lines along which two regions are related and joined together'[22]. The ambiguous condition of a confine forms convoluted social artifact that both isolates and confirms contention between the standard and the other. Contrastingly, it also contacts and provides opportunities for introduction. Accordingly, the boundary itself forms an inherently contradictory 'No-man's-land' that declares separation whilst providing the landscape for unity. Their organisational disposition further aids the utilisation of a secondary factor that unites the standard and the other – lived individual experience.

'In order to approach otherness in an act of mutual awareness, one needs to carefully dwell on the threshold. In this transitory territory that belongs to neither of the neighbouring parts, one understands that it is necessary to feel the distance so as to be able to erect the bridge. Hostility arises from the preservation and increase of this distance while assimilation results from the obliteration of distance. Encounter is realised by keeping the necessary distance while crossing it at the same time.'[23].

As explained in Stavros Stavride's book Towards the City of Thresholds, the act of approaching the unfamiliar through the pores of a boundary can bring respect to the differences of either side whilst allowing the individual to assess, compare and acclimatize to the foreign[24]. This reading of urban encounters allows the conversation between the standard and other, hostility and assimilation, to evolve into one about interconnection. In spatial terms, this notion can be represented through the simple opening of a façade, the movement of internal private programs outdoors into the public landscape, or through the imposed movement or interaction of people through a boundary pore into another state. Furthermore, what previously could be understood as two opposing entities related by their indifference becomes defined by their relations, their boundaries that hold them and the ways in which they link them to each other.

The spatial manifestation of this notion could be intermittently observed at the Landbouwbelang. As a former warehouse, its architecture lended itself to acts of production, making and designing and granted inhabitants an excess of space to

21. Collins English Dictionary definition

22. Kevin Lynch, *The image of the city*, (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 2008), 41.

23. Stavros Stavrides, *Towards the City of Thresholds*, (New York: Common Notions, 2019), 18.

24. Ibid, 14–83.



generate a multitude of environments[25]. The architecture of the warehouse and its disconnected location to the rest of the city allowed it to retain and protect its otherness but it's physical boundaries also made opportunities for the general public to dwell in the threshold of the Landbouwbelang largely uncommon. However, when the programmatic elements of the squat did either spill out into its external surroundings, or when the general public were invited inside, the effects were impactful, disorienting and often sparked a lasting commentary within the individuals that had encountered it[26]. Subsequently, its food bank, community garden, artist exhibition space, stage and other public offerings caught the attention of photographers, authors and explorers alike, founding the organisation as an enigmatic yet captivating facet of Maastricht to be recognized[27]. Most significantly, it has become common knowledge that, if one wished to enter the structure, it is best to approach from the back of the building, along the waterfront and where the squatters had formed a bar. This seemingly insignificant appropriation of space now acts as its most sacred threshold for gathering, smoking, drinking and conversating with squatters and non-squatters alike.

Affiliation could be achieved between the isolated and othered landscape of the Landbouwbelang and the rest of the city through the perforation and decoration of its confine. Furthermore, individuals are free to mentally reject or invest in what they experience there through their ability to understand its purpose and mechanisms. As suggested by Arna Mackic, in order to design better integrated and inclusive cities, "We have to find shared points of reference in public space to bind different people to one place"[28]. This can otherwise be defined as placemaking, this can be a crucial and deeply valued process for individuals to become intimately connected to the places in their lives. Placemaking demonstrates to their engaging community just how powerful their collective vision can be[29]. When a whole region, place or city is defined by its configuration of the standard, the other and their shared networks of social opportunities, the placement of each elements becomes irrefutable. The development of socially stimulating boundary openings then implement placemaking opportunities and subsequently, a framework for a more inclusive city. The respected distance between the standard and the other is retained and the individual assignment of each state remains intact. However, their conditional network boundaries inform how each state can be read, experienced, and appreciated as a facet of the city by each individual that passes through the boundary.

*Conclusion*

This text has divided and defined the standard urban trends that respond to the capital demands of the few and neglect the essential needs of the majority. The consequences of this approach being implemented uniformly are extreme and excessive resulting in an exclusive city that is not to live in, experience, navigate or glean. The other pertains to the minor interventions that oppose the values behind capital-led urban developments and focus on gradual responses to some overlooked needs of the remaining city population. The presence of the other then constitutes for a more representative city but often further reiterates the notion of the spatial and social confinement that persists as an exclusivity problem in the city. Their interventions may offset the shortfalls of the standard,

25. Roemond, "Landbouwbelang", Issuu, https://issuu.com/agrifirm/docs/landbouwbelang/1.

26. Reece Gesumaria, *Memoirs of an American Gypsy*, (Indiana: Xlibris Corporation, 2013).

27. Frank van Valderen and Michiel Ubels, "Mijn Landbouwbelang," *Limburg Film Office*, June 9 2022, https://limburgfilmoffice.nl/limburg-filmcast-17-frank-van-valderen-michiel-ubels-mijn-landbouwbelang/.

28. Arna Mackic, "The Power of Inclusive architecture," *TED*, 2017, https://www.ted.com/talks/arna_mackic_the_power_of_inclusive_architecture.

29. Project for Public Space, "What is Placemaking?" 2007, https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking.

but their fervent opposition to their contexts allow them to remain isolated and uncomfortable in the landscape they are supposedly a part of.

Neither the standard or the other can wholly be blamed for the aforementioned problems in our rapidly urbanising cities, nor can they completely be seen as valueless. Furthermore is the unrealistic dream of complete urban reform into an currently undefined yet definitively 'better' city development. These extents may hold compelling transcripts that should be silenced or hold too much merit to be destroyed but an overarching atmosphere of disconnection and hostility can diminish any of these positives to be gleaned. Therefore, it is at the boundary of these establishments that spatial configures can implement placemaking interventions, boundary perforations and redesign the dynamic between differing yet potentially complimentary entities. Through spatial mediations we can provide opportunities for communication, deliberation and reflection for all those who are enabled the chance to experience the city's design.

Accessibility will continue to play a key negotiator for many that come to glean from the city. However, although accessibility has a fundamental influence on an individual's ability to engage with their urban environment, the municipal offerings themselves cannot ensure their own continued engagement or social significance. No architect, urban planner, government official or expert can design or implement a better city, but they can provide the opportunity for one. Nor can any specialist impose integration or the feeling of belonging within an individual, but they can facilitate inclusivity. By creating kaleidoscopic extents where each turn exhibits a different story and the multitude of them is what creates beauty, the city can be incrementally restored to its state of ultimate gleaning, interconnection, and prosperity.

02

# · AUTHENTICITY ·

Authenticity is the quality of being real or true. In the context of architecture, urban sociologist Sharon Zukin suggests that authenticity is related to the social connectedness and freedom of interaction in a space.

In authentic places, life and activity is natural; image is not controlled. In this case, how authentic do we consider Maastricht to be?

“Today, all big cities are erasing their gritty, bricks-and-mortar history to build a shiny vision of the future.”

*Sharon Zukin, Professor of Sociology, City University New York*

# SUPERFICIAL CITIES - A CRITIQUE ON AUTHENTICITY, GENTRIFICATION AND HIGH CULTURE

Lulu Song

“In a world where change is unrelenting, people long for authentic places.” [1]

This statement, made by Tate and Shannon in their book Planning for AuthentiCITIES, rings true. Whether we’ve realised it or not ourselves, the insatiable human desire for authenticity manifests in many of our everyday choices. We seek authenticity in our consumable goods, our food and drink, our art and music, and unequivocally in our touristic experiences.[2]

What are the urban consequences of such a craving for authenticity?
How has it ended up creating the opposite efffect - a culture of ‘superficiality’?
What are the social consequences? And, what does authenticity mean to Maastricht?

## *I – The Quest for Authentic Experience*

What does the mystical quality of authenticity entail?

Interpretations of the term are multifarious. Sometimes, authenticity is referred to as an asset; in a material sense it denotes originality, identity and genuineness.[3] In this regard, authenticity can be safeguarded through historic preservation. Many contemporary scholarly interpretations, however, perceive authenticity as action. Urban sociologist, Sharon Zukin, relates authenticity to social connectedness, the right to inhabit a space and freedom of interaction with that space. Authenticity in this sense is ‘a continuous process of living and working, a gradual build-up of everyday experience.’[4]

Generally speaking, most people tend to understand authenticity at the surface level, by the first definition of originality. How does this then affect our perception of urban environments? We seem to have a propensity to favour places that appear unique and special, and keep the character of their origins. We don’t like generic architecture - unremarkable towers or blocks that you feel like you could find in any city around the world - we like places with a backstory. But in modern times, we are becoming increasingly seduced by appearances and assumptions. Often, we only see “authentic” spaces from outside them, therefore judgement is based upon aesthetics.[5] Thus places that visually display their authenticity are the kinds of places that end up on our instagram feeds.

*‘As cities’ commercial corridors and downtowns start to look increasingly the same, and gentrification displaces many original neighbourhood residents, we are left with a sense that our cities are becoming “hollowed out”, bereft of the multi-faceted connections that once rooted us to our communities.’* [6]

1. Laura Tate and Brettany Shannon, *Planning for AuthentiCITIES* (New York: Routledge, 2019), back cover.

2. Ibid, 3.

3.. Maria Francesca Piazzoni, “Authenticity makes the city,” in *Planning for AuthentiCITIES*, ed. Laura Tate and Brettany Shannon (New York: Routledge, 2019), 155.

4. Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: the death and life of authentic urban places* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 220.

5. Ibid, 20.

6. Tate and Shannon, *Planning for AuthentiCITIES*, back cover.

With the rising rejection of homogeneous mass culture, comes an increasing distaste for modernism when it comes to the built environment:

*'When every new building looked like the same big glass box, old redbrick buildings and cobblestone streets gained cultural distinction.'* [7]

Cultural distinction. This is a key term; it alludes to an attribute that many modern cities are striving to obtain, because this is what they perceive authenticity to be. It is this particular attribute that attracts affluent tourists, brings in economic capital, and grants a city a global presence. But this lust for cultural distinction has, in fact, in recent times led to a movement that frankly threatens or counteracts authenticity; a movement which Sharon Zukin terms 'destination culture.'

'Destination culture' is a spectacle which centres on the prestige of creativity. What drives this is the idea that physical environments and material objects are no longer enough and 'people want more than just to consume authentic places, they want to be authentic too.' This has resulted in the world becoming increasingly enamoured of the experience of arts and culture. Cultural tourism is particularly popular amongst the wealthy and highly educated, who likely 'collect such experiences as signs of their distinction.'

Consequently, cities are now using this 'cultural' notion of authenticity to brand themselves and the experiences that they offer. Places are becoming increasingly designed, packaged, themed and marketed with an economic incentive based on this perception of authenticity, rather than being allowed to develop naturally.[8]

'Like the aspirational consumption of contemporary consumers who buy high-status goods in the hope of expressing the high status they would like to have, cities engage in aspirational production, producing more modern art museums, arts festivals, hipster districts, and cafes – all because they want to be different.' [9]

The paradox of this urban phenomenon is that despite trying so hard to be different, all end up doing the same. Cities always tend to recreate the same three generic cultural spaces: the mass culture space of shopping and entertainment, the high culture space of modern art museums, and the hip culture space of creative, alternative and indie districts.[10] What is quite ironic about modern art museums is that although they have replaced factories as a symbol of collective wealth and pride for the city[11], they don't really serve the local people or communities; they rather cater towards tourists and outsiders.

Another issue with this approach to urban planning is that local identity is reduced to an ornament. Authenticity is 'paid for, encapsulated, mummified, located and displayed to attract tourists rather than to shelter continuities of tradition or the lives of its historic creators.'[12]

Forced attempts at 'cultural distinction' therefore does not result in creating places that are authentic at all. The outcome is instead a sense of superficiality, rather than the 'realness' which we aspire to achieve.

7. Zukin, *Naked City*, 14.

8. Paul L. Knox, "Creating Ordinary Places: Slow Cities in a Fast World," *Journal of Urban Design* 10, no. 1 (February 2005): 4.

9. Sharon Zukin, "Destination Culture: How Globalisation makes all cities look the same," *Inaugural Working Paper Series of Centre for Urban Studies, Trinity College* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 9.

10. Ibid, 11.

11. Ibid, 7.

12. UNCHS, *Cities in a Globalizing World* (London: Earthscan), 38.



II – A Catalyst for Gentrification

Many authorities seem to believe that cities can, through 'a magical injection of culture,' be transformed into dynamic destinations.[13] But who really benefits from culture-led regeneration?

When the idea of authenticity through cultural distinction takes a stronghold position, cities slowly become a playground for the rich and powerful. Conceived spaces of authenticity run the risk of becoming hegemonic and exclusionary because they are often not free to access, establish normalising sets of behaviours that control citizens, and marginalise those who do not look or act in accordance with those norms.[14] Authenticity then becomes a cultural form of power, a tool 'to control not just the look but the use of real urban places: neighbourhoods, parks, community gardens, shopping streets.'[15]

The end result, in many cases, is that the city's old local working class and middle-lower class residents suffer more than they gain from urban regeneration driven by the translation of neighbourhood identity into a brand. This is due to matters of displacement and gentrification. The lifestyles of poorer local residents no longer fit with the branded image of the city, and economic pressure pushes them towards the periphery; they can no longer afford to live or work in their original location.

A case to keep in mind is Bilbao: the revitalisation of the city's waterfront was initiated by the arrival of the Guggenheim Museum in 1997, designed by 'starchitect' Frank Gehry. In spite of the museum itself replacing a former shipyard, Gehry's shiny steel design intended to capture the spirit of the city's industrial heritage in a contemporary, abstract form. The museum was a huge success, catapulting Bilbao into worldwide fame. It drew in 4 million tourists within the first 3 years of its opening and helped to generate about £500 million in economic activity.[16]

Nevertheless, locals remain disenchanted with the city's new centrepiece. Ticket prices are high for citizens of Bilbao, where the youth employment rate is 60 percent. Spanish tourists are even priced out by high hotel prices, meaning that international visitors to Bilbao make up the majority.[17] There thus is a stark disconnect between Bilbao's urban revitalisation and its domestic population.

'I've never been to the Guggenheim. It's for tourists."[18]

Housing prices in Bilbao have also subsequently soared. In Abando, the city's central district, the cost of used flats on the open market rose by 74 per cent between 1998 and 2000.[19] Though the city has achieved huge economic gains, the benefits do not trickle down to the poor; existing social and spatial inequalities have instead been accentuated.

A common misconception about gentrification is that it is driven by financial forces, but there is another term for that which would be 'land grabbing'; there is a distinction between this and gentrification. Land grabbing is when properties are bought out by private investors, who might then increase rental prices, thereby pushing out native working class communities and denying them access to affordable housing stock. What drives gentrification though is creative

13. Andy C. Pratt, "Urban Regeneration: From the Arts 'Feel Good' Factor to the Cultural Economy: A Case Study of Hoxton, London," *Urban Studies* 46, no. 5&6 (May 2009), 1041.

14. Piazonni, "Authenticity makes the City," 155-156.

15. Zukin, *Naked City*, xiii.

16. "Guggenheim Museum Bilbao," *Wikipedia*, accessed January 1, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guggenheim_Museum_Bilbao.

17. Zukin, "Destination Culture," 18.

18. Denny Lee, "Bilbao, 10 Years Later," *The New York Times*, September 23, 2007.

19. Lorenzo Vicario and P. Manuel Martinez Monje, "Another 'Guggenheim Effect'? The Generation of a Potentially Gentrifiable Neighbourhood in Bilbao," *Urban Studies* 40, no. 12 (November 2003), 2388.

and cultural capital, the allure of the 'authentic.' Thus, creative districts actually have a big part to play in the process of gentrification.

Social scientists have summarised the general process into 3 stages:[20]

Stage 1: The Artistic Phase
Alternative young people, artists, creative professionals and LGBT communities move into a neighbourhood for its affordability and tolerance. The newcomers initially consider themselves as guests in a working-class neighbourhood and with their creative skillset, these people are able to renovate deteriorated properties and former industrial structures, breathing a new life into them.

Stage 2: The Mixed Phase
A socially and culturally conscious middle class (for instance, teachers and journalists) move in. They are not as radical as the first arrivals, but they are attracted by the vibrancy created by them. There is now a sufficient clientele for shops and restaurants, which are newly established to serve the tastes of the middle class. In this phase, the original working-class residents become vulnerable to gradual exclusion as they face rising rents.

Stage 3: The Fashionable phase
A wealthier upper-class, consisting of the likes of private sector managers and bankers, move in. They care less about community participation in the diverse and mixed neighbourhood, and are rather more interested in the high status that the place has now acquired. Real estate prices increase yet again, excluding all original residents and most of the types of people who settled during the first two stages.

This story was first enacted in cities like London and New York, but since then, gentrification has expanded around the globe.[21] In the 1960s, America went through an urban crisis where cities began losing increasing numbers of their affluent and ethnically whiter families to the suburbs, where there was access to bigger homes, backyards, and better schools. Public officials of New York reached out to business executives to forge a new strategy for growth; this strategy was to use 'authenticity' as a selling point.[22]

The media glamorised the 'sensual variety of urban life' in old neighbourhoods of the city[23], showing that they had the authenticity that suburbanites had lost. Soon, gracious brownstone or redbrick houses and industrial loft buildings were inhabited and fixed up by the likes of artists, writers and musicians. But, as the bohemian character of these communities grew, and grittiness and hipster culture became increasingly aestheticized, these parts of the city began to appeal 'not only to committed participants, but also to sporadic consumers.'[24]

The migration of increasingly wealthy residents, who consume authenticity but don't generate it, resulted in the displacement of the artists that built up the character of the neighbourhoods in the first place. This new urban class consumes authenticity, but doesn't generate it; they are enamoured by the area's distinctive identity, but ultimately destroy it.

20. Stefan Metaal, "Gentrification, an Overview," *Journal for Architecture OASE* 73, (July 2007), 7-28.

21. Ibid, 8.

22. Zukin, *Naked City*, 4-5.

23. Ibid, 16.

24. Richard Lloyd, *Neo-Bohemia: art and commerce in the postindustrial city* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 104.



III– Maastricht - a city of beautiful facades

Whilst Bilbao and New York may present stark examples of gentrification, the process also exists in more nuanced forms, as we will see when we examine the case of Maastricht in the Netherlands. The difference, as put by social sciences professor Dr Jeroen Moes of Maastricht University, between the USA and the Netherlands is that gentrification in the Netherlands is 'planned' – that is to say the municipality has an active part to play in the process.

Located in the southernmost tip of the province of Limburg and bordered by the neighbouring countries of Belgium and Germany, the city of Maastricht has for a while seemed to suffer from an identity crisis. It is officially a Dutch city, but in many ways, it is not 'Dutch' at all - people in Maastricht whom I've spoken to all seem eager to emphasise this point. Kaan, a shop attendant in Stokstraat tells us that the pace of life here is more 'leisurely' and 'relaxed.' In a similar fashion, people from other Dutch regions likewise view Maastricht as a foreign city with a central European orientation: "Maastricht is nice - it doesn't feel like you're in the Netherlands anymore!"

Maastricht's historical roots lie in the glass and ceramics manufacturing industry, but the city has, since the end of the 20th century, shifted towards the service sector with a blossoming tourism industry.[25] The historical city centre is filled with shops, restaurants and bars, and the city maintains it's festive reputation with large scale events such as the TEFAF, one of the biggest antiquities fairs in the world and the Preuvenemint, which is a festival organized around local food culture, that draws more than 100,000 visitors every year.[26]

Despite being such a lively and attractive place for tourists, Maastricht cannot seem to attract its own permanent residents. The province of Limburg has, for years, been facing the issue of a shrinking population, and Maastricht, despite being the capital city, is not an exception to this. The total population of Maastricht has remained stagnant since 2000 at around 120 000 residents, but this figure masks a substantial change in population composition: the proportion of students and residents above the age of 55 has been rapidly increasing; the number of middle-aged working residents and children have notably decreased.[27]

If there are so many students now in Maastricht, why are they not staying? There is clearly something missing with regards to the quality of life in the city if graduated students are heading off in droves to the Randstad, or abroad.[28] It seems that Maastricht has perhaps fallen victim to the plight of 'destination culture', as the city is struggling to offer an authentic lived experience. I argue for the case that this is largely owing to Maastricht's persistent preoccupation with image.

It all started in the 1960s when, in order to establish a new pristine, pretty image for the city centre, the municipality began clearing out the dilapidated central neighbourhood of Stokstraatkwartier; this was, at the time, essentially an overpopulated urban slum that was taking up a prime location in the city. The municipality evicted all of the original residents, redistributing them to the outskirts of the city, mainly to the neighbourhoods of Mariaberg and Wittewrouwenveld, as well as the 'woonschool' of De Ravelijn where the most

25. "In Maastricht, the success of tourism is no longer under debate," Hospitality On, accessed January 13, 2022, https://hospitality-on.com/en/activites-hotelieres/maastricht-success-tourism-no-longer-under-debate.

26. Ibid.

27. Cody Hochstenbach, Marco Bontje and Vlad Mykhnenko, "3S RECIPE - Smart Shrinkage Solutions: Maastricht (NL)" (Policy Brief #1. Resilient Urban Economy & Municipal Finance, University of Amsterdam, 2020), 2.

28. Jos Cortenraad, "Maastricht after graduation: to stay or to go?," *UMagazine*, June 2021, 31.

problematic residents were taught how to 'live properly.' Other parts of the Stokstraatkwartier were treated with more care: the charming facades of the 17th and 18th century houses were preserved and renovated. By completion in 1973, Stokstraatkwartier had been transformed into a clean and nostalgic luxury shopping district, with an air of exclusivity. Could this image be any more opposite to the what the neighbourhood once was?[29]

The new sparkly version of Stokstraatkwartier indeed succeeded in its mission of drawing in more tourists, but at what cost? The people that were displaced did not magically disappear, and Mariaberg and Wittewrouwenveld continue to be comparatively poor areas, with lower social and economic status, to this day. Commercialisation of the city centre has instigated tensions between locals and cosmopolitans; locals now feel a sense of detachment from the city centre and do not tend to visit often.[30] The most worrying aspect is that the municipality does not appear to have learned its lessons from the case of Stokstraatkwartier; new major urban development plans, such as proposed high-end residential blocks in Wittenvrouwenveld, are threatening to gentrify these areas.[31] The social effects on these neighbourhoods are currently being studied by the University of Maastricht in their Neighbourhoods in Transition research project.

The redevelopment of the Ceramique district, commencing a few decades later in the 1990s, was another major urban renewal that centred on image. Urban designer, Jo Coenen, assembled a troop of internationally renowned architects who designed detached building blocks on a rigid orthogonal grid. The historical factory buildings of the Societe Ceramique, which gave the new neighbourhood its name, were demolished to make place for these new 'modern monuments' of distinguished architectural taste which put Maastricht on the architecture map. But beyond the riverfront strip of green, backdropped by Luigi Snozzi's elongated residential block, the 'Sophisticated Ceramique bursting with energy'[32] starts to look quite lifeless and dull. The streets are virtually empty, aside from periodical sightings of architecture students and enthusiasts who might revel in the fame and prestige of the development, but residents themselves are more concerned with the lack of social spaces.[33] In my opinion, the industrial scale of the streetscape feels unrelatable, and building blocks with divergent architectural styles have no dialogue with each other. The Ceramique district feels not so much like a thriving residential neighbourhood, but a desperate cry for attention.

The Belvedere Plan is Maastricht's latest major urban redevelopment project, and the municipality's third attempt at getting it right. Following the development of Ceramique, which completely erased the history of its site, the municipality became a lot more concerned about preserving history in the Belvedere Plan, also a renewal of a former industrial area.[34] The first phase of the plan began in 2013, with the redevelopment of the Sphinxkwartier area. Here, the preservation of industrial monuments became the number one priority; old buildings were renovated and fitted out with new functions. Examples include an old carpentry factory, now used as a music performance venue (Musikgieterij) and architecture museum (Bureau Europa); the old inner city harbour, now occupied by restaurants and cafes (t'Bassin); an old energy generation building now used as an arthouse cinema (Lumiere); and the old Sphinx factory which now houses the 'Student Hotel' franchise and office spaces (The Eiffel Building). Designs for the new high-end residential buildings in the area are required to reference the authentic history of the area through it's materiality and form.

29. Deniz Mutlu, "Project Ceramique / Maastricht; Reassessment of a Regeneration Project," (Masters Thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2015), 20-22.

30. In coversation with Dr Jeroen Moes, Maastricht University, December 15, 2021.

31. Ibid.

32. Title of blog entry, on Maastricht's tourism website: https://www.visitmaastricht.com/blog/maastricht/sophisticated-ceramique-bursting-with-energy.

33. Dennis Hambeukers, "Je moet van Céramique niet iets proberen te maken wat het niet is," *Archined*, March 24, 2011, https://www.archined.nl/2011/03/je-moet-van-ceramique-niet-iets-proberen-te-maken-wat-het-niet-is/.

34. In coversation with Erwin Gerardu, Belvedere Information Centre, September 10, 2021.



Like many other cities around the world, the municipality of Maastricht is convinced that the creative class is essential for the vitality of the city. Their aim is to transform the area into a hip, alternative and creative cultural zone[35], which will attract a younger demographic to remain in the city; this harks back to our examination earlier of the commonly perception that an 'injection of culture' can endow a place with authenticity and spirit. Sphinxkwartier's new 'industrial and rugged' identity is being extensively marketed and branded, with its own dedicated website, but it seems as though this trendy industrial sheen alone is not enough to generate a lively atmosphere for the area: locals report that restaurants in the Bassin are already going out of business due to very low footfall.[36]

The issue with Sphinxkwartier is that, just like the city centre, it is completely saturated with spaces for consumption, rather than for living everyday life. There needs to be spaces for appropriation, spaces to create, spaces of freedom. It is ironic then, that the one existing freezone which is operating in the area - the Landbouwbelang - the municipality has already decided to shut down. The Landbouwbelang is a former industrial building, taken over by squatters in 2002, and since then the creative and liberal community has transformed the site into a vibrant cultural freezone that hosts a variety of different functions such as a foodbank, artists studio, exhibition spaces and music venue. The building is currently the main attractor of visitors to the area of Sphinxkwartier[37], but the authentic qualities of the Landbouwbelang are undermined by the municipality who have this year launched an £18 million tender seeking proposals for a new mixed-use development on the valuable site. We see that in eyes of the authorities, historical preservation is essential, however the preservation of existing communities is clearly not.

In conclusion, blinded by the relentless pursuit for a seductive image, the city of Maastricht descends towards a state of superficiality. In the words of Rem Koolhaas: 'a perpetual quest for "character" grinds successful identities down to meaningless dust.'[38] However, if some shifts in mindset are made by the municipality/key decision makers/officials, there is no reason why we cannot have a positive outlook for the future of the city. Maastricht must let itself recognise and learn from its past mistakes. It is time for the city to outgrow its old marketing slogan of 'Sjiek en sjoen' (translating to 'fancy and beautiful' in the local dialect). Although we live in an increasingly ocularcentric world, it is imperative to resist the seduction. Let us look beyond the aesthetics and really consider how to create an urban environment in which people can engage and interact, not just consume; let us give space for local communities to flourish and protect the socially vulnerable groups of the city from displacement. In this way, Maastricht can create a fundamentally more authentic experience for its inhabitants.

35. Ibid.

36. In conversation with Armand Wachelder, Landbouwbelang, November 22, 2021.

37. Ibid.

38. Rem Koolhaas, "The Generic City," in S, M, L, XL, ed. Jennifer Sigler (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1995), 1248.

03

# · PERMANENCE ·

Defined as the state of lasting for a long time or for all time in the future.

In the context of the following text, permanence does not refer to the material durability of architecture, but rather the stability of its occupants. In this sense, it is the enduring capability to call a place “home”.

“This is capitalism’s constant urban conundrum: what makes cities profitable is inherently at odds with the needs of the poor and middle classes (who are needed for a city to function), and centrally located land has inherent value if it can be made amenable to the rich.”

*Peter Moskowitz, New York Journalist*



Permanence and temporarility generate more and more discussion within the field of architecture. Debates opposing heritage sites preserved in a frozen state to our condition of an ever faster changing society. Questioning whether it is more sustainable to design long lasting structures or temporary architectures to be dismantled, whether we should replace or adapt the outdated. Interrogating the cycles of our cities and architectures, from site development, gentrification, and urban renewal to flexibility of programmes and material lifespans. We design modular buildings and temporary pavilions, it’s true but most of the time we build houses for generations to come, towers to last 200 years and monuments to be admired in a far future. **Architecture is permanent.**

When investigating the idea of permanence in architecture earlier this year I have raised the questions: who uses and occupies our cites? how permanent is this occupation and what places are occupied? what means are involved? In a search for new ways of thinking, temporary architectures and cheap ways to occupy the permanent structures of our cities, I made an observation: the poor and the homeless do generally not have any access to permanence. In an attempt to find an architectural teaching from the homeless condition, to learn about appropriation with only the bare minimum, I discovered instead that the homeless are dispossessed of the stability provided by a permanent home to call their own. Temples, castles, churches, palaces; the lasting structures belong to the rich and powerful. Benches, shelters, sheds, and tents; the temporary structures belong to the poor and the rejected. Architects and planners are directly involved in this power dynamic: we design benches to not be possibly slept on, we install spikes under bridges and rocks along our highways. Through hostile architecture we increase the struggle of the homeless, we reduce their right to rest, we condemn them to wandering. Architects must act now, we must call for better conditions for the homeless and inclusive cities, we must call for permanence. **Permanence matters.**

Currently a factory occupies a large section of the northern part of the city of Maastricht: this is the SAPPI (South Africa pulp and paper industry). This industrial area will, in a certain future, be abandoned by its activity leaving behind a whole neighbourhood of industrial leftovers, and a densely build area. So many roofs, so many floors and so much more walls will remain, asking to be occupied again. Urban planners will undertake the design of a new neighbourhood for the city and artists, clubs and craft beer brewery’s will be allowed to occupy the area in the meanwhile. Capital will within maybe 15 years gradually push out the original pioneers of the site, typically through multi-million investments and the construction of characterless housing or corporate office buildings. These interventions will in turn define and structure the newly created neighbourhood for maybe 150 years. This is the process of gentrification, characterised by an improvement of the building and homes, a shift from rental to ownership, an augmentation of costs of living and replacement or displacement of lower-class populations by higher classes (Hamnet, 1991). This shows how the lower classes do generally not have access to permanence within this process, because those who do can pay for it. **Permanence is a commodity.**

One can now think: don't we act to fight homelessness? And some even might state: we are already giving enough... of course we do provide for the homeless. Municipalities build shelters and the red cross distributes food, in rare cases they get even access to housing. This short-term help cycle is characteristic of what is called the continuum of care through with most western countries try to cope with homelessness. Unfortunately, these types of programs are plagued by access barriers, keeping those in need from reaching serious help and long-term support. Instead, many homeless people remain caught in a routine wandering between shelters. **Permanence is rarely provided.**

How can one find stability in life without a roof over his head, and a place to call his own? Homeless people undergo a day-to-day struggle against hunger, cold, and sleep. Will a single stay at a shelter change a life? Does a single meal satiate a whole week? Home is the place to eat, to stay warm and to rest. Again, I am asking, how can you find stability in life without a home. Today we treat homeless people as if they should deserve a certain level of help, instead we should think about concrete action that empower the dispossessed, actions that can give a real chance, we must provide stability. Housing First is a system opposing itself to the continuum of care, it aims at first providing permanence, by giving a home to those in need before undergoing any other actions (Housing first Europe hub). By doing so all access barriers are removed while giving the homeless a real chance. Housing First has proven its efficiency, it has almost eradicated homeless in Finland and it is proven to be less expensive on the long run. Housing First is an example of how a permanence and stability can radically chance a life! **Permanence is a right.**

I call upon our cities to become inclusive now! I call upon our municipalities to consider real actions against homelessness! And I call upon our architects and planners to think permanent places where the disposed can find safety, rest, and stability!

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04

# · CARE ·

Care is something to do with empathy
Gentle, tolerant, compassionate, feminist, responsive

Care is something to do with safety
Trusted, protected, sheltered, peaceful, free, privacy

Care is something to do with comfort
Comfortable, ease, simple, intuitive, understandable, calm, soft, restful

Care is something to do with inclusivity
Common, shared, open, welcoming, accessible, sociable, public, mixed-use, diverse, flexible, adaptable, changeable

Care is something to do with simplicity
Low-cost, easy to maintain, low-tech, modest, human scale, familiar, people-friendly, everyday

Care is something to do with ecology
Low carbon footprint, durable, natural, sustainable, green

Care in architecture is about ease and comfort in everyday life.

“To be a good architect, you have to love people because architecture is an applied art and deals with the framework of people’s lives”

*Ralph Erskine, British architect and planner*

# CARE ARCHITECTURE - A EXAMINATION OF THE CAPITALISTIC APPROACH TO BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

Nina Kempa

*Introduction*

The globally dominant economic model of uninterrupted growth is causing a deadly undermining of life support systems on earth and distancing humanity from successfully overcoming the climate crisis, and at the same time, from a satisfying level of lifestyle for the growing numbers of the population. However, the recent pandemic has shed light on that problem. Does the interest in caring and care as new foundations for the functioning of human societies herald a real change? Could the “care” factor be considered a fundamental feature and value in the building and city planning process? Being aware that in a world where almost everything is marketed, even the noblest ideas can be purged from their content and monetised. For example, we have observed how the concept of “sustainable development” has become an empty phrase in architecture over the decades. Now, we can ask ourselves: how to seriously pursue this profession for the sake of people and the world? It seems that there is no change without the whole paradigm shift.

*I - Do we care?*

*Profession*

It can be stated that caring is at the very core of architecture itself, since the dawn of time, it has been orientated on creating a shelter and protecting humans from the outside world and its threats. However, today we do not have to fight the elements to survive, so what could we consider caring architecture?

As is shown in the definition, the interpretation of care is vast. But to get into the core of its meaning, we could say that the goal of care is to put more attention to everyday life. People still have to work, travel, shop and do all the other chores, but with a bit of empathy put into designing those scenes, it can be done with more comfort and dignity. However, today, this value is strongly underrated as a general feature and also as an architectural approach.

*“Today’s demands on architectural production under the conditions of accelerated neoliberal capitalism, oligarchism and authoritarian populism are extremely averse to the ethics of interdependence. Financialisation, commodification, gentrification, touristification and aggressively iconic spectacularisation dominate the architecture market and dictate the pressures on the profession.”*

*- Elke Krasny, professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, 2019*

*Practice*

We can now ask what “care” means in the architectural realm. Translating it to the built environment, caring architecture creates sustainable spaces. However, it moves beyond the general sense of sustainability and understands it on many levels. It takes into account not only materiality and its impact, but all of the

1. Alvar Aalto, 1997

processes during the life span of the building - ecological imprint, materials origin, energy footprint, site impact and also considers the well-being of all people involved - construction labourers, maintenance workers, installers. Finally, it also regards how a structure will be maintained, repaired and eventually demolished to reuse as much as possible.

But the relation to the natural environment and the building itself is not the only element. The recent pandemic experience while being closed at home, with usually inadequate infrastructure for the new, mixed-use spaces that needed quick adaptation for work, school, and quarantine space, showed how often insufficient our living spaces are. It confronted how those efficient on paper buildings are not so efficient in present life when the reality can change unexpectedly. While being healthy and young, preferably without the burden of having a family, we do not experience significant inconveniences. However, when we stop being this ideal user, we could encounter problems, and our surroundings could be one of them. Then, maybe putting a little care into creating the more emphatic spaces, spaces that minimises boundaries and obstacles and bring ease to everyday life could be beneficiary because at some moment in life maybe we will need to use them as well.

*"Every decision is in some way a compromise which can be attained most readily if we consider human beings at their weakest"*

*- Alvar Aalto, 1997*

As a result, creating the places of interactions and platforms for connections allows for a juxtaposition of differences. To achieve that, it is crucial to revise the architect's role and reveal the work process to the public - democratising by being open to society's participation. This and empathetic observation could be the way to create diverse and accessible people-friendly spaces. Although, the whole system is built not to gratify and appreciate those non-economic values. Therefore, we can ask ourselves, do we (as a society) care?

## *II - Does Maastricht care?*

*Context*

The city of Maastricht has a dynamic past. Rich in heritage and spatially pleasant surroundings, build the identity of the place. Located in the very south of the Netherlands, between Belgium and Germany, this thriving city has, for many years, been the face of the cultural centre of the diverse society open for expats, tourists and students. Historically, the city's economy was based on the manufacturing and industry, being the leading producer of ceramic and glass. Today this is a fading memory, the remaining industry moves further from the Center and the main economy is focused on services and tourism. However, Maastricht's image of an old, charming town with narrow streets shaped by beautiful stone facades remains the same.

However, there is also a second side to that picture. Like numerous other cities, Maastricht is not free from the common problems. First of all, the shrinking population - maybe it is on the contrary to the rather overpopulation trend that is present worldwide, however, in this situation, the decreasing or even



more stagnant number shows a bit different issue. Despite that the number of inhabitants does not grow, the whole composition changes, and the population is ageing. However, the average age is lowered because of the huge number of students that are present in the city. This altogether creates a need for adjusting the space and what the city offers to actual users. In the current trend this need will only grow, however the city's ambitions are not covering them on many levels. This highlights the great housing crisis, which is not visible at first glance. But the whole demographic structure is determined by it because young and middle-aged people (mainly meaning younger adults and families with children) are pushed out from the city to the outskirts. This is the effect of not sufficient amount of affordable housing that is generated by the municipality's planning politics since the 1960s.

*Reality*

Then, the main goal was to create a "pretty" city. The non-sufficient elements have been put on the outskirts, hidden from the sight, and the city itself was shaped to attract more wealthy inhabitants, at the same time gradually turning the market to reach the current state when the housing prices are not in a range of the average person. The latest redevelopment project - the Belvédère plan is following that spirit - to create fashionable, creative and popular spaces. However, based mainly on services and consumption, it does not create the space for other activities, it does not provide any other values. Moreover, at the same time, it displaces the authentic culture, that built the area's identity in the first place. This leads to further gentrification. This is what exactly is taking place in the city, in Boschstraatkwartier. The mentioned plan is aiming to sell and redevelop the squatter building - Landbouwbelang (LBB) which means to demolish the existing and replace it with a new dwelling complex. The LBB's community inhabits the old, industrial building and in its vast spaces creates the lively, creative and liberal cultural freestone. They provide not only housing (limited) but also hosts many functions, indoors and outdoors, such as artists' studios, exhibition spaces, workshops, music studio, guest rooms for visitors, a food bank, a bar and a party venue. Probably anyone who has ever visited Maastricht has been or heard about this space, in fact, the community and what it provides is one of the main attractions, however, it does not change the municipality's view. The main argument for the demolition is the poor state of the building, which is only partially true - the main structure is in a satisfactory state, however, adjusting the massive concrete building to the current needs would be a costly process. The main reason is that no investor, including the site owner - the municipality, wants to put money into something that does not provide instant profit.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stands:

*"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."*[2]

But this is often only a statement, especially in cities like Maastricht that are struggling with the housing crisis and are not able to provide enough places for living. Today, many students do not have permanent housing and less wealthy

2. Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

inhabitants are slowly pushed outside the city, even to the neighbouring towns in Belgium or Germany. This accurately illustrates of what happens while the predatory system uses a fundamental human right as an investment opportunity. What is left is often mediocre, devoid of diversity and enhancing the segregation space.

*III - How to care?*

What makes some architectural interventions successful? Why are some modern, newly designed cities and districts a failure? At the same time, many unplanned, built without architects settlements have created long-lasting, inclusive and lively communities.

The known example of this approach is Brazil's strategy to clear the favelas (suburban shantytowns). The plan was good only in theory. The city wanted to reduce the number of those settlements because of a lack of control over them and, as a result, the possibility of growing crime and lower safety. But on the other hand, people created strong networks of connections and bonded neighbourhoods that shared chores and responsibilities like cooking or childcare. Favelas have no zoning regulations because they're technically illegal residential zones so that people could work out of their homes running small businesses. For some groups, it was a crucial element of being economically independent. For example, women could work while being at home, like cutting hair or preparing lunch plates. When they were moved into new social housing complexes, they were not allowed to do this work and were often miles away from the city centre, with poor public transport and no childcare options. Some schemes designed to improve quality of life actually harm some social groups, usually those more vulnerable ones, like in this example - women, because they fail to account for complex conditions like gender differences, specific needs of particular groups and many more[2].

In this case and many similar, the key was the flexibility and the ability to adapt to ever-changing needs instead of stiff and provided from the outside structure that does not understand the current realm. To avoid that, we need to acknowledge and embrace the challenges that are given and deal with them. Understanding requires a better connection to the conditions around us and awareness of them. To face the changes and crisis as the pandemic, climate change and its effects as the migration and rapid urbanisation, and many others, we need better understanding - better relationships with people, the place and the planet. And a base of those relationships is care: for ourselves, each other, and objects or spaces[3]. This altogether could increase the sustainability of the communities and settlements by creating bonded neighbourhoods full of life.

A successful but maybe not so spectacular example of this approach is Margarete Schutte-Lihotzky estate in Vienna. City planning has for several decades taken into account many "soft" aspects for several decades, for example, gender, as different cultural roles determine different needs in the city. In the 90s, the first housing estate built following this idea was Frauen-Werk-Stadt (Women-Work-City), also known as the Margarete Schutte-Lihotzky estate, in honour of the first Austrian architect, the creator of the famous Frankfurt kitchen. The whole estate (urban layout but also individual buildings) was designed by women, with Franziska Ullmann as the author of the master plan. How is urban planning designed for women different from the average building development? Aesthetics and form are determined here by the style that prevailed at the time of its construction, but what is noticeable is that there are many highly functional design solutions, helpful in everyday use. The estate includes three courtyards with entrances to staircases. The courtyards are narrow and tightly built, so we have a clear division where children can play, also the inner side is restricted only for the pedestrians. It improves the safety, and the shape makes the whole complex easy to get neighbourhood control. The entire design aimed to make life easier, therefore estate is linked with the public transport infrastructure, has a police station and two kindergartens, and a grocery store within walking distance. Besides, there is a separate green area for play and leisure. Also, all level differences in the landscape are evenly distributed, and each step has a ramp instead of stairs. This example shows how simple and modest strategies could influence everyday life, and in the end, what is really more important?[4]

*Conclusion*

As was mentioned before, the definition of care is very vast and there is no one way to achieve it. Caring architecture considers how it fits within a complex web of the current conditions and the future prospects. It aims to find itself in the network of interconnected people and nature. As one element of the space, it cannot be isolated from what determines it - the political, social and cultural fabric. In the architectural discourse, we are still more focused on the relations with spaces and nature, but as much important and most influential for the life quality and general well-being is the connection of people to other people. Knowing that the only sure thing is change, we need a flexible framework that can adapt and change with us. It may sound utopian in our current economic and political realm, but as it is shown, it is not impossible. Therefore, we should decide what and how to build, but first, we have to know what sort of world we want to live in.

*"We shape our buildings, and afterwards, our buildings shape us"*
*- Winston Churchill, 1943*

2. The story about Brazil's favelas sourced from Caroline Criao Perez, *Invisible women: Exposing Data Bias in the world design for men*, (Vintage Publishing, 2019).

3. The definition of care based on the ethical theory - Ethics of Care by Carol Gilligan..

4. The description of Margarete-Schütte-Lihotzky-Hof sourced from https://www.wienerwohnen.at/hof/306/306.html, accessed: 12.06.2022.

05

# · APPROPRIATION ·

This can include the taking of another's property for one's own purposes (either legally or illegally, short-term or long-term), or through highlighting abandoned or unoccupied space.

“Design is as precise in its outcome as it is obscure in its process, and it sheds fragile evidence.”

*Kersten Geers, Belgian architect*



# CALL FOR DIRECT ACTION: STATIC PROJECTION VS DYNAMIC APPROPRIATION

*“…critical attention is shifted from architecture as a matter of fact to architecture as a matter of concern. As matter of fact, buildings can be subjected to rules and methods, and they can be treated as objects on their terms. As matters of concern, they enter into socially embedded networks, in which the consequences of architecture are of much more significance than the objects of architecture.”*

*- Bruno Latour*

In a general and local context where the developmental logic of neoliberal urbanism creates more conflicts than solutions, and architecture doesn’t engage enough with ‘local’ political and social contexts, the need to re-consider the potential for architects to be influential and transformative agents of (existing) space grows pressing. Also, the process concerns the re-definition of the architect’s role in the architectural practice. Challenging ‘mainstream’ architecture means fighting norms that shut down other ways of thinking and operating. In fact, in this conflictual environment, many architects find themselves reduced to simple decorative participants improving the marketability of developers’ projects.

This critique aims to re-evaluate the potential and influence of the architects in the definition of the urban and social space. Lets look specifically at the context of the Sappi factory in Maastricht.

*Plans for the Paper Factory*

The site we were asked to approach, the north part of the city of Maastricht - especially its important industrial heritage - is a disputed (battle)field where past influential parties are living their last days after a long time of existence and resistence. Situated there currently is the SAPPI (South African Pulp & Paper Industry). The site is too big for the company. Consequently, Sappi initiates a selling process in 2003 for its unused spaces and the municipality shows its interest in buying parts of the industrial sites. The Landbouwbelang is one of these.

The Landbouwbelang is a squatted grain storage located within the site, erected in 1939. In the 1970s, it was abandoned and thirty years later, it caught the attention of the artistic community and was squatted. Today, this place is home to 18 people living and working together to create art, music and many other creative ventures. They host concerts, parties and workshops, creating an important cultural spot (“cultural free zone”) in Maastricht. Laying next to the Sappi factory, it illustrates the industrial character of the city. During the years of its operation, its community established a foundation and tries to negotiate with the municipality about the future of its establishment. Although still a non-legalised place for living and working, the LBB has been a significant point on the cultural, artistic, and social scene for twenty years.

Despite this and despite having an important cultural presence in Maastricht, the community is often threatened with expulsion. Now, because of the Belvédère project initiative, the city council wants to continue the district metamorphosis and redevelop the squat and its surrounding area into a – different – living and cultural quarter. The planned partial demolition of the Landbouwbelang and the purchase of the SAPPI industrial area will provide space for a massive urban redevelopment with new living, commercial and cultural buildings and public infrastructures. The municipality forgets that these 'derelict' spaces are not secluded objects, they are bound up with the people around them.

*The Alternatives?*

The biggest problem of a Masterplan is its generalisation of the reality, its projection in a final state of a specific area that does not consider the transition, the long process to reach (if it does ever) this completeness. Reality is complex, the city is never sleeping. Throughout history, vacant buildings have been part of the urban fabric. As the result of the industrial relocation outside of city borders, these buildings were left behind, although some of them have been transformed due to their ideal location, once people reconsidered the city as an attractive environment, not the polluted, dangerous one it used to be.

In this latent state of inactivity, waiting for a reconversion to be intended, initiatives regarding a temporary use of a building are more and more observed as the urban reconversion is accelerating, though it is not new. As explored by Dieter Leyssen in his essay "Meanwhile Use as an Act of Resistance", meanwhile use might be related to a form of informal urbanism involving ephemeral structures, cheap materials in an empirical approach of architecture without architects. Meanwhile use is ephemeral and concerns an occupation that moves away from its predicted purpose. Meanwhile use appears during a period of instability marked by the necessary redevelopment of a site in contradiction to a stable period when a building is used for what it has been built for.

As an example, the Circularium project in Brussels shows a certain interest. The Circularium is a temporary incubator for start-ups located in a former D'leteren garage of 25.000 m2. As the owner plans to redevelop the site into a new neighbourhood, 51N4E, a Brussels-based architecture office, proposed temporary use of the site considering the potential it represents during the further development of the new program. The strategy was to catalogue existing potentials and values in order to target interested users for a period of five years. Although the concept explored here aims to propose a space dedicated to young start-ups or small companies with a small budget, this process is also intended to maximise the rentability of the site and keep buildings preserved meanwhile investors are searched and project elaboration is processed.

There is also something to learn from the squatters of the Landbouwbelang: their movements within their 'cultural free-zone' illustrates the constant search and reimagining of their Utopia.

Over many years, residents of the Landbouwbelang are free to expand and shape their homes as they please, only restricted by pre-existing structures and



available materials. The second floor of the LBB has largely been appropriated as artist studios, allowing both resident artists and visiting artists to use the environment to create. This space anchors the creative atmosphere of the building and ties into the art exhibition spaces in the big hall and the basement.

The figure of the occupant! *"When I came in here, and when they accepted me, I got an assignment to build my own room. This is how everything got built. Nowadays, we have so many rooms that people don't have to build a home for themselves anymore. This place wouldn't be what it is without people. Because we are the residents, we take the responsibility of doing all the work, hosting everything and coordinating everything. Doing all the maintenance. It's almost like owning the building. Living and working in this place is the core of everything that we do. Living and working are, for us, a non-negotiable aspect of this place."*

The example of the Landbouwbelang is a striking difference in approach (alternative) between the incremental evolution of the Sappi site and the urban transformation proposal planned by the municipality. A continuous incremental evolution defines the factory, based on an expansion linked with the necessity to host a new machine or to store more materials. It's a perfect case study of how such an old industrial site manages to reinvent itself in order to ever more optimise its production process.

Even more so, the factory used to be contained within a limited perimeter. To deal with such constraints, buildings were elevated (as some of them still wear the stigmas of such transformation today). The evolution, therefore, is dynamic, based on a specific need at a specific moment. When the function is no longer required, the warehouse program is changed, or it is demolished to make space for more modern infrastructure. The cheapness of such buildings makes it more simple to decide whether to keep a warehouse or demolish it. When the structure is too costly to tear down, its extension is considered, especially in an urban context, where the land is precious.

On the other hand, instead, the municipality plan underlines a vision of perfection of the city in its most general aspect, a goal to reach. The confrontation of approaches raises questions regarding the static and rigid role of Masterplanning in a society more dynamic than ever.

In that respect, how can a master plan made twenty or thirty years ago expect to overcome the present and future needs of such a changing community? Did urban developers predict the Covid-19 pandemic and its future consequences on the spread of remote working? Needs and constraints change fast, an urban project should be able to react and absorb those changes.

*Call for Direct Action*

We believe the conditions of the Sappi site can accommodate deeper thinking about a direct urban re-appropriation of vacant factory buildings. What we aim to propose is not a temporary occupation made to keep buildings maintained before the beginning of the renovation phase. It is, instead, a strategy of direct action underlining the smallest intervention possible to make the site pleasant

to live, work and be entertained in. A framework made to absorb changing conditions in opposition to the proposed static masterplan and the social structure of the inhabitants.

In a time when the future of the factory is even more uncertain, Sappi is facing a crossroads with two main directions. The first one – and most obvious – is to wait for the highest bidder, with a significant risk of the building's value decrease due to the lack of use and maintenance. On the other side, we 'propose' an alternative, or, a second direction.

This urban proposal relies on a simple finding: the southern part of the paper factory in Maastricht is mostly vacant for some years now. Such buildings used to host productive, storage and administrative functions but does the decision of Sappi to not exploit them mean they have to be torn down?

In a context where sustainable solutions, especially in the built environment, are awarded, our position is to consider the built environment in its whole as a resource, waiting to be exploited. These structures are valuable beyond a supposed industrial heritage interest.

The speculation regarding such structures actually illustrates a critical change in the vision of what we design for. Is it to create space? A volume? Or is to create time? A temporary occupation? Flexibility is a critical condition for a building to survive.

# PEOPLE

The city above all is a ‘social product’, structuring and structured within the built environment. While the urban architecture studio has approached the theme of gleaning and the given industrial site in Maastricht through various lenses, an overarching position considered across the studio has always been anthropic.

While this could be due to the absence of the same in the existing, the presence of an anthropologist, or just a series of mere coincidences (mostly not), this reinstates the relation as well as the potential of people, the built, and the unbuilt within the urban fabric.

Contributions to this section emphasises few of these positions, both with respect to Maastricht as well as the larger urban fabric.

06

# · EVERYDAY ·

encountered or used routinely or typically

However, it could also be,

A set of functions which connect and join together systems that might appear to be distinct…The everyday is therefore the most universal and the most unique condition, the most social and the most individuated,the most obvious and the best hidden.

A tool of the commons against the growing alienation as a result of the capitalistic modern society.

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.
.

The everyday is banal, it is ambiguous, it is anonymous, it is familiar, it is temporal, it is the concrete reality.

“The city of the bus driver or the pedestrian does not resemble that of an automobile owner.”

*Margaret Crawford, Professor of Architecture, UC Berkeley*



Karthika Ranjit

*… She wakes up, gets ready for work, gets the family ready for the day, scans the newspaper while rushing through her morning coffee, wishes her husband good luck for his presentation, and leaves to catch the bus. As the elevator door opens and she enters the foyer, she is pleasantly greeted by the guard on her way out. The bus stop is just a five minute walk, through the wayside park, and across the road, now busy with the growing morning traffic. As she walks, she sees the city slowly stretching itself awake with older people enjoying the quiet park, fellow adults off to work, young children ambling along to school, and a few stores already opening up their doors for those early risers. The bus stop fills with people waiting to board the Bus 5 scheduled to arrive in five minutes. She is lucky today as she gets a window seat in the bus from where she watches the city zoom past her in the opposite direction. Fifteen minutes later, she makes her way through the people and hops off the bus at her stop. Crossing yet another busy street, she makes her way through to work …*

The short account of a protagonist's morning sequences her everyday routine from the spaces within her house, through the urban setting of a wayside park, into her space of work. Though a normal routine, the very banality of the same reveals a little bit more with each reading. A second reading of the same could reveal the glimpses of other narratives embedded within its canvas, hidden in plain sight as they go about their own banal routines. A third could lend to further considerations of the series of spaces within which these acts actually spatialize. Yet another could further speculate that if there are these many narratives, and even more acts within this banal setting of the everyday, would they all react to the settings similarly? How does the everyday (space) alter for each individual?

The city is above all a social product,[1] with tangible traces of decisions translated across the built and the unbuilt environment. It is constructed through multitudes of narratives as banal as these, of people from all walks of life, creating an incredible human(e) story of the present city. Within this, the overlap of their routines creates everyday spaces of interaction and collision, characterized by the inherent attributes of anonymity, ambiguity, and yet familiarity. Such spaces of social transitions theorize as spaces of possibilities, with the banal acts of the everyday routines showcasing the desires yet to be achieved. Yet, the same space of possibilities spatialise differently for each user. While the wayside park is just a shaded path for the protagonist in the narrative, it is a space of relaxation for the elderly, and a space of interaction for the children. Further, the same everyday space of the bus shelter is vastly different for the bus driver as compared to the one waiting for the bus. Ben Highmore speaks of this relational nature of the everyday through his text of the 'Ordinary lives…'[2] highlighting the role of context and time in determining how one person's ordinary could potentially be another person's extra-ordinary. While accepting this relational nature and the inherent qualities such as the multiplicity of the everyday, could there be more aspects that dictate these lived experiences differences?

1. Margaret Crawford, Introduction to Everyday Urbanism (New York, Monacelli Press, 1999), 10.

2. Ben Highmore, Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday, (Oxon, Virginia, Routledge, 2011

Mapping these different routines, results in the creation of what Henri Lefebvre referred to as the social geography of the city.[3] This creates a tapestry of the people, their social strata, their habits, and their interactions within the urban fabric. While staying true to the ambiguous nature, this map clearly determines how different spaces are habited by different people at different times. Above all, it brings to the forefront how 'the burdens and pleasures of the everyday are distributed unevenly, according to class, age, race, and gender', leading to the concept the French theorist (Henri Lefebvre) termed as the victims of the Everyday.[4] One such example of victims were women, and while the reality has (hopefully) begun to change for the better, historically the everyday routine of a woman was inhibited to the domestic realms. The everyday spaces within the larger urban setting were hence more male dominant and consequently moulded for the latter's needs. Further, the everyday routine of an immigrant, or that of a person from a low-income group of the society is vastly different from that of a comfortable middle-class employee. These differences materialize as everyday spaces that are frequented more by some over the other, and while this heterogeneity does makes up the identity of the city, the politics of the same results in the question of whose everyday (space) is actually regarded and whose is disregarded.

The politics of the everyday, due to its very everydayness, finds itself in all realms of public and domestic life. Within the spatial realms, this is translated in various scales from the totality of the city, to that of the various neighborhoods, their buildings, and their material realities. As stated previously, while the various 'everydays' build up the heterogeneity of the city, in reality this dwells within (inspite of) the urban plans constituting various parcels of neighborhoods, designated by the authorities. Here, the question of 'whose' determines the social sustainability of the urban plan. However, planners and designers tend to negate the lived experiences of the many, considered by them as trivial, in their process of striving for the bigger picture of the city, centered around the elite few. This results in an abstract urban fabric where the designers, by virtue of ignorance, attempt at restricting the innate ambiguous nature of the everyday into their separate socio-economic domains. This attempt at curbing the lived experiences of the many in the (invariably monetary) quest of satisfying the few translates into spaces prone to gentrification as well as spaces of neglect. While the everyday thrives inspite of these impositions, this results in cities with segregated communities.

While within the larger scale of urbanism, the decisions of policies determine whose everyday is regarded, within neighbhourhoods, the built environment portrays these decisions through the programs, the morphologies, and the structure of the community. If the professional dwells only in the abstract realms of Architecture,[5] detaching themselves from the everyday lives, consequently the built environment would reflect this, and become one consisting of largely abstract expressions of these individuals with little considerations to the lived experiences of the many. While there is no space that is truly public, and inclusivity within the spatial realm is always questionable, the considerations of the many rather than the few would always translate into more everyday spaces that overlap with this larger majority. These would spatialize as buildings catering to both the ordinary as well as the extra ordinary programs for the different members of the community, buildings that respond to the context rather than those that are economic commodities for the elite, and spaces that allow for all

3. Margaret Crawford, Introduction to Everyday Urbanism (New York, Monacelli Press, 1999), 11.

4. Ibid, 10.

5. Realm of high design and theory. Dell Upton, Architecture in Everyday Life, New Literary History, Vol 33. (The Johns Hopkins Press, 2002)



inherent qualities of the everyday to thrive.

The choice of 'whose' everyday shall be considered continues through these two scales of the city and the built environment to the very human scale of materials that one dwells alongside. As Andres Jaques portrays in his works within the 'Office of Political Innovation'[6] the choice of every element within the spatial realm showcases a decision. This could be as mundane as the choice of local brick as a façade to allow for the sense of familiarity to the children within a neighbourhood school, or the choice of ramps within a public space. These decisions, however mundane, inevitably portray whose everyday was/was not considered.

*Sounds of children playing somewhere above me*
*The bench swerves around the four trees*
*Trees seem to be birch, should confirm one day*
*My neighbours on the bench seem to be enjoying the sun as well*
*A parent with her toddler sits next to me checking the kindergarten entry,*
*must be time to pick her child up*

This short piece portrays subtle changes in the observation of the park in Maastricht.[7] These shifts in the typologies of user groups inhabiting the space, the activities occurring within, and subtly the very character of the space, indicate a presence of a catalyst. The children, the play, and the liveliness within this post-industrial setting suggest the presence of a new program, and consequently a sense of neighborhood. While the specific program could be speculated, the essence is in the transformation seen through these ordinary observations, reflected through the suggestions of everyday lives of the child, the parent, the neighbour, and more.

As previously stated, the banal acts of the everyday hints at the desires of the many that are yet to be achieved, the power of translating these desires are seen within the social and political realms. The tangible translations of these acts spatialized within the city would hence lead to the alterations in the spatial order, and consequently the character of the space. Following this, while architecture alone cannot alter these politics of the everyday and hence the social constructs of the city, its relation to the everyday as the catalyst and the backdrop for the banal acts to spatialize, emphasizes its position in answering the foremost question.

On that account; *A primary school in a postindustrial quarter of a southern Dutch city of Maastricht, 'Whose everyday?'*

6. A multidisciplinary architectural office based in New York.

7. A southern city in Limburg, the Netherlands.

07

# · FOOD ·

“any nutritious substance that people or animals eat or drink or that plants absorb in order to maintain life and growth”

Cities are as much of a compilation of configurations of brick, concrete, and steel structures as much as they are of humans, trees, and birds. Without life, cities cannot exists, and without food, life cannot persist. Food and humans are intertwined, food is embodied in our cultures, identity, and relations. Food is a part of our being. Yet, the topic of food and space, is a topic that is under-researched, with so much potential in contributing to the public realm. This essay seeks to explore the relationship between Food and Urban Life, in the Past, present, as well as in the future.

“The market square was always where the city was at its liveliest: the place where the political, commercial and social structures that underpinned urban life came together to create the greatest manifestation of urbanity itself.”

*Carolyn Steel, British architect and author*

# FOOD & URBAN LIFE: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Mawee Pornpunyalert

*Applehegge, Peerhegge, Achter het vleehuis, Kersenmarkt, Graanmarkt…*

Food shaped Maastricht, as it did to every pre-industrial city. Before the railways, food was engraved into the anatomy of pre-industrial urban plans. These cities grew from spaces where food was traded, bargained, and exchanged, turning these into the ultimate spaces of encounter and exchange. Through food, they turned into places where people from all walks of life would come to trade in food, goods, news, and opinions, into what was later known as market(places).

Markets are the heart of the cities, fueled by the roads leading up to them, like arteries carrying the cities’ lifeblood. A closer reading of the ancient map of Maastricht reveals how food once reached the city. Located at the city centre was(is) the market square. With an advantage of being located along the Maas, some produces were transported through the river. While others were from nearby locations which has, in a quite literal sense, engraved its presence on the city until today through street names. The streets bleeding out from the market itself were named after the produces they offered. Meat was from *Achter het vleehuis*, a few streets south of the market to ensure freshness, while apples and pears were brought into the market by crossing the *Sint Servaasbrug* bridge from the area of Appleshegge and Peerhegge, which were once a flourishing farmland, now a residential neighbourhood.

Prior to the formation of cities, food brought people together phyiscally and socially, and continued to do so as urban centres evolved. As the market is where people from all walks of life cross paths, the Maastricht market receives people from Germany and Belgium which flock to the market to get their hands on the fresh fish from the B*EP & Co UW Visspecialist stand*. The inclusive nature of the market creates social encounters and fosters tolerance of the “other”. Bonded by the common human needs for food, and sociability, markets act as ‘social glues’ without which, society could not thrive. It is no coincidence that many of the most prominent public spaces in history, ‘the Athenian agora and Roman forum to Les Halles in Paris, Covent Garden in London, La Boqueria in Barcelona or Marrakesh’s Jemaa el-Fnaa’,[1] were originally, or remained, food markets. The rise of the industrial age saw the decline of markets. With the introduction of trains, supermarkets slowly began to replace what was once the ‘social glue’ of the society.[2] Les Halles in Paris was erased from the public realm in 1971 and replaced by the Westfield Forum des Halles, a large shopping centre with a major supermarket chain. One by one, markets are being replaced by supermarkets which, unlike markets, have no civic role to play. There is no civic life to aisles lined with shelves filled with produces from anonymous producers.

“Human life has been designed out of the city, leaving us to live in an empty shell.’[3]

1. Steel, Carolyn. 2021. “Food And The Future Of Public Space”. Publicspace. https://www.publicspace.org/multimedia/-/post/food-and-the-future-of-public-space.

2. Wiskerke, J. S. C, Saline Verhoeven, and Leo Reijnen. 2018. Flourishing Foodscapes. Valiz.

In the West, the underlying structures that shape society are no longer visible. Most of the food that sustain us arrive in the dead of night, travelling invisibly and anonymously down specialised "chill chains" to replenish supermarket shelves while we sleep. Food provisioning spaces that once brought life and character to the city have been pushed out of the city. Street life isn't the only casualty of food's disappearance from cities, another tragic loss is the smell of the streetscape which mould memories and character of the city. With the absence of food provisioning spaces within the cities, it can be hard to realise quite how dead some cities have become as nothing embodies life quite like food does.

But "wherever food markets survive, they bring quality to urban life- a sense of belonging, engagement, and character",[4] rings true in the case of Maastricht. Standing in the middle of the market square on Thursday feels completely different to the Friday. Same place, the only difference is the presence of food stalls which bring urban life to the square, fostering a sense of **social cohesion yet urban friction**. The feeling of bleakness, on Thursday, is erased by the sound of the chatter, the smell of food, and the sight of life. When the market is on, the square is always where the city is at its liveliest, the presence on urbanity bleeds out and draws people in like a magnet. Traditional food activities of provisioning and trading are chaotic, but a 'necessary chaos' to the urban life.[5] For all the mess, noise, and nuisance, and the lusty, messy, negotiated public space, markets embraces every aspect of human existence, 'they are capable of juxtaposing in a single space, several aspects of life that are in themselves incompatible.' [7] In the recent decades, the market in Maastricht has seen a decrease in the number of food stalls, one could only imagine how extraordinary this 'commonplace' was like prior to the tragic decline of markets.

Although food has been erased out of our cities' anatomy, in the last decade, the relationship between city and food is gradually changing as a response to the challenges emerged from the modern system. Food is now increasingly recognised in the field of built environment as a critical topic in urban planning. Foodscape, Green Corridor, Edible Urbanism, are just few of the many alternative concepts, models, typologies, and approaches that are widely mentioned in today's urban planning. But we have also seen a kind of 'group think' which although has seen the power of food in fostering urban renewal, yet has a belief that 'such spatial practices are symptomatic of a nostalgic past, which could not expect to influence contemporary, go-ahead city form.' [8]

Despite the contradicting views, it is clear that food has always been the greatest animator and shaper of public space, and indeed of cities themselves. Planning the city through the lens of food can ease many of our current social, economic, environmental, and spatial challenges within cities whether it is climate change social inequalities, or public health . Food has the power to turn a space into a place, 'the place where the political, commercial and social structures that underpinned urban life came together to create the greatest manifestation of urbanity itself.' [9]

3. Steel, Carolyn. 2013. Hungry City. London: Vintage Books. p.116

4. ibid, p.111

5.ibid, p.120

6. ibid, p. 133

7. "Food And The City". 2016. Urban Design Autumn 2016 (140). p.16

8. Wiskerke, J. S. C, Saline Verhoeven, and Leo Reijnen. 2018. Flourishing Foodscapes. Valiz.

9. Steel, Carolyn. 2021. "Food And The Future Of Public Space". Publicspace. https://www.publicspace.org/multimedia/-/post/food-and-the-future-of-public-space.

08

# · EDGES ·

The edge is a transitional space that connects the interior and the exterior. The boundary which separates the two worlds is being blurred, by the occupation and appropriation of people.

“The architect must imagine for each window, a person at the sill, for each door a person passing through.”

*Gio Ponti, Italian architect, teacher, writer*



Many people see Maastricht as a city of beautiful facades. This is indeed also true for me, but there is something more to these facades that fascinates me, more than their appearance or symbolic representations. It is the spaces they embody and the stories happened there. Despite a facade being the border of a building that separates the interior and exterior, architects never drew it as a single line. A wall always has a thickness, and it, therefore, creates a space. These spaces could be easily forgotten or ignored as they might only have a thickness of a couple of centimeters.

The following text records events that I have observed around these borders, human interactions encircling these invisible edges.

*Edges of an Italian shop*

When we walked in the southern part of the city center of Maastricht, away from the most touristic places, we discovered an Italian shop. It had a brick facade with a plinth made of stone and wood, which is quite common in its context. However, there was something more that made it very special.

We met a group of Italian students as we stood in front of the store. After a short conversation with them, we realized that this was where a lot of Italian people would meet up in Maastricht. The shop owner originated from Puglia, and the authentic food products in the store were what made this shop into a meeting place for the Italian community in Maastricht.

Architecturally, the facade too contributes to the creation of such a space. The plinth of the facade consists of the entrance door to the shop, and has within it a shop front window. Food products are placed behind this shopfront window, which becomes a display for the passers-by. People tend to stop in front of the window and hence more likely to step into the shop.

The front door of the shop is more than just an entry point. The shop owner has two sons. They are seen to enjoy running around the insides and as well as the outsides of the shop. Once tired, they rest on the front door sill, even with customers walking in or out of the shop.

The edge that separates the interior and the exterior thus starts to blur. The shop spills out onto the street and even into its neighborhood. The door sill of the neighbors become a sitting place for the customers. During lunch, the shop owner grabs a chair and joins her customers outside on the street. The facade brings the customers into the shop while extending the interior onto the street. The story of the edges begins when the line becomes spaces.

*Edges of the city*

A building has facades, and so does a city. Maastricht, as a city built along a river, the waterfront naturally becomes the facade of the city. As most people enter the city center from the east, the west bank of river Maas could be seen as the main facade.

The facade of a building is an edge that separates the inside and outside. The waterfront is an edge that separates land and water. Similar to the facade of the Italian shop, the waterfront provides people the first impression of the city. Humans are naturally attracted to water. Water invites us to meditate while it moves, and its reflectiveness transports us into another world. Quentin Stevens has associated the waterfront with the concept of escapism. He sees the waterfront as a place where people would go to escape from daily life in the conventional urban context. [1]

The Maas riverbanks were used quite different in the past. This main facade of the city was more connected to the water. The edge which separated the land and the water was softer and more informal. In 17th century, the waterfront was where the trades took place and where people would arrive in the city by boat. In 19th century, people of all age groups would go fishing on warm days. In winters, the canal froze, and people started ice skating.

However, nowadays the most waterfront is planned, with designated uses - where one should sit and where one should walk. The Maas waterfront too is partially occupied by private enterprises such as coffee shops and boat tour services. Nevertheless, people still find places on the waterfront and use them in their way. Some people sit on the quay wall, reading books while moving with the setting sun. There are people who still walk along the water to find a place for fishing.

A city also has back facades. Different types of water bodies have partially defined the back facades of Maastricht. The Sphinx quarter, which lies within walking distance to the north of the city center, was an industrial area organized by a system of waterways that facilitates the logistics for the industries. This water system consists of the Bassin, an inner harbor; the Lage Fronten Park, the former moat of the fortification and the Zuid-Willemsvaart, a canal connecting the Bassin with Belgium.

These water bodies have also shifted in their functions as the city went through a history of fortification and industrialization. The Bassin made its way into a cultural hub with restaurants and cafes. At the Bassin, I met a Chinese man who came from Aachen for fishing because it was easier to obtain a fishing license in the Netherlands. The Lage Fronten Park is a preserved piece of nature within the built environment. The edges of the Zuid-Willemsvaart, a canal that was mainly used for industrial purposes, are now occupied by private boathouses, with the domestic life spilled out onto the banks of the canal, in the forms of terraces and extra storage spaces. The linearity of the canal also provides an ideal environment for rowers.

1. Quentin Stevens, *Activating Urban Waterfronts: Planning and Design for Inclusive, Engaging and Adaptable Public Spaces*, (Routledge, 2020), 50.



In the case of the Italian store, the edge is a transitional space that connects the interior and the exterior. The boundary which separates the two worlds is being blurred, by the occupation and appropriation of people. The waterfront, on the other hand, is a harder boundary. There is limited interaction between humans and water, and it usually also doesn't function as a transitional space between the water, the land, and the buildings.

These observations invite me to wonder *could the waterfront learns from the Italian store? And what could architecture contribute to the creation of space on the waterfront?*

09

# · COLLECTIVE MEMORY ·

Collective memory is a shared representation of memories, knowledge and information of a social group that is significantly associated with the group's identity. In architectural discourse, it addresses questions on how means of space relates to its creation. The city's collective memory focuses more on the narratives than the physical layers of the city tissue.

“In the City of Collective Memory, we are particularly interested in the creation of meaningful and imaginative public spaces.”

*M. Christine Boyer, Author, The City of Collective Memory*

# THE CITY AS A SPACE FOR MEMORY CREATION

Oliwia Tatara

Collective memory is a shared representation of a group’s past based on a common identity. It helps us understand why things happen in the past and how they inform our future through the associations of symbols, accounts, records, and images that help construct a community identity. In architectural discourse, it addresses questions on how space affects its creation by people. The city’s collective memory focuses more on the narratives than the physical layers of the city tissue. Still, these narratives do not belong to prominent icons or historical events. On the contrary, collective memory accommodates humble monuments, ephemeral forms, and incongruous leftover pieces of the city’s past, which historians or preservers tend to diminish often.

In the face of the housing, economic and environmental crisis, the question of man’s relationship and engagement with the collective memory is often unspoken. Newly built structures that disregard the contexts become big obstacles to the memory travels of humans. The reconnection, the understanding of the environments we inhabit strongly depends on the language of architecture we decide to use. In that sense, we as architects need to learn to read buildings and their materiality in more accommodative practices. To do that, we should revise the tools we use to read the existing contexts and believe that the subject of our work exists in what surrounds us. We must keep asking ourselves how much our ideas depend on altering the existing context, seeing the building not only by its physical layers but also by the narratives that have grown over time, which we might want to weave into the threads we decide to carry on.

It seems that today architects create overly intricate architectural forms in environments that already contain their own complexity. Modern cities and their social and historical strata are an entangled puzzle that is already difficult to read. Maybe the starting point should be to reverse our questioning, making it more effortless, and boil it down to simple recontextualizations. Instead of starting anew, maybe our work should have the characteristic of a collage, an ensemble of elements at hand. In that way, we might create more space for people to reconnect with the city’s collective memory, for travels in its past through reconstructed connotations to the past.

*Where is the factory ?*

The history of the Sphinx and Sappi factories that together form the industrial district of Maastricht reveals its strong mark on the structural, economic, and urban development of the city. Since the Sphinx ceramics industry finished its activity, its grounds underwent many changes posing questions about its traces in the newly built developments. What was kept? The readings of archival maps and photographs of the factory reveal the layering of additions and extensions and juxtaposition of all types of roof shapes, stuck together in the strangest geometric configurations. Unfortunately, the factory fabric that used to be integrated within the city with a canal and the network of smaller alleys remain

only visible in archival materials. After arriving in Maastricht, it is hard to discover the presence of a former pottery manufactory.

Today, the Sphinx exists only in a few incongruous objects, such as the entrance gate and renovated sphinx building. Cognitive reading of that place is unlikely to happen on its own. The extensive demolition resulted in carte blanche, an empty field, the writing of which needed the invention of a new vocabulary. Despite the attractive housing offer, it is difficult to speak about the identity of newly built housing estates. The attitude, resulted in rather forced borders between the old city fabric, new housing estates, and former factory terrains. The edges are neither transitional nor fluid. The city story is interrupted. That place used to serve for labor and living of the factory workers. Not present are hidden courtyards and gardens, no indication of Maastricht's typical city farm, and no motives of the spectacular carnival or rich theatrical history of the city are present. A wide range of threads to take on were disregarded. That newly formed fragment of the city exists more as a single thread, which,does not inform or reference the stories formerly contained therein.

Those three territories exist as separate, incapable of communicating. In January 2021, Sappi, a paper factory located next to the Sphinx site, announced its closure and selling off its land. The proximity of the industrial district to the city center establishes new challenges. Is there an alternative to how we stitch this industrial puzzle with the city's tissue without making the same mistakes? How do we start this conversation?

"The present environment is tending towards both extreme visual simplicity and extreme functional complexity. This double and opposite movement is eroding our emotional transaction with and comprehension of objects."[1]
The quote from the book "Adhocism: the Case for Improvisation" by Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver reflects the role of architecture in our emotional association with a place. In their book, the authors criticize the architectural compositions in which excessive unification and blurring of meetings of urban layers limit our emotional or intellectual involvement with objects and buildings.

*Simple but not simplistic*

Jenks and Silver introduce 'ad hock', at hand invention, a tendency to establish temporary, spontaneous measures. Although they may seem to point to somewhat provisional, interim solutions, their proposal draws on the simplicity and logic of using systems well-known and simply present. The needed objects for the new assemblage are already there. The role of an architect is one of a bricoleur, to use what is there to the farthermost limits, introducing new only when absolutely necessary. The use of pre-existing systems makes the becoming of the objects comprehendible and simplistic. Accomplishing it requires a careful reading of the context. Combining elements should always clearly indicate where these come from and what they were used for before. They explain the method in the example of a dining chair made up of a tractor seat, insulating foam, and wheels. Even though the method seems trivial, adhocism demands being selective. Practicing adhocism starts when we focus less on creating and replacing and more on improving and persisting.

1. Jencks, C., & Silver, N. *Adhocism*, expanded and updated edition, (Amsterdam University Press, 2013).



This technique seems very relevant in the current architectural discourse. The sustainability issues, the dilemma between adaptation versus new, dynamic changes in societal patterns urge us to seek an architectural language where the re-use and careful reading of the existing can develop environments for architecture seen as a cultural construct and its reconnection with people. If the role of an architect is a creation of meaningful places, then why don't we treat those new challenges to build upon the contextual and historical intricacy of the place? The new complex, programmatic and technological requirements should become the characters of building narratives, not appearing as self-driven purposes. Our architectural interventions might be based on adding a new component under which the narrative's characters will acquire a new meaning. Reformulation of relations between technological and cultural layers should be done more on mutual enablement than exclusion.

This holistic approach tends to be marginalized, especially when facing the housing crisis, overpopulation of cities, and rapid urbanization. That is also the case with the Sphinx terrains. We are looking for solutions that will give an immediate response to the growing demands for the future of people and the city. The given answers tend to offer a narrow set of references in their visual characteristics, maximizing the effort to meet the requirements centered around numbers. Although they are great inventions, optimization processes, repetitiveness, and more simplistic assembly methods have defeated the architectural process aiming at generic buildings, placeless. The contextless architecture will deprive us of the tools of our work that enable people's emotional reference to it.

These issues cause a domino effect. Side consequences can be visible also in how we approach public places. Their formulation happens punctually, inorganic, with overly standardized or overly complicated briefs that pose expectations that users might be unwilling to meet as they limit their freedom and the possibility of choices. The big contradiction of such 'reinvented' public space is that it imposes how we should use it and experience it emotionally. Examples can also be seen in the city of Maastricht. In a talk with Lucy Willems, the local guide and activist, she expressed her frustration with the city center becoming a luxurious shopping district. The city's historical part is now a series of beautiful facades with displays of expensive designer clothes.

*Memory is social*

*"The public realm of the City of Collective Memory should entail a continuous urban topography, a spatial structure that covers both rich and poor places, honorific and humble monuments, permanent and ephemeral forms, and should include places for public assemblage and public debate, as well as private memory walks and personal retreats."*

In the book "The city of collective memory," Christine Boyer describes a series of different visual and rational models by which the urban conditions have been identified, described, and planned. She proposes reading the city in many layers, not only those of the physically built-up objects of the past but as an endless source of information. Boyer distinguishes three important "maps": one

common to the traditional city—the city as a work of art; the modern city— as panorama; and one typical to the contemporary city—the city as spectacle. Boyer considers memory as a social construct and explains that we should turn more to its anthropological feature. Memory is not shrouded in the history of great individuals or specific events. What is important to her is how and where the memory is created.

"*Treasures are to be found in the artifacts of cities, in the deep structures that configure their form. These Geddes claimed were the real reasons for preserving a city's architectural history – not because some notable person slept there or a historic event occurred in the town, but instead because these possessions revealed the city's social and physical formation.*"[2]

*The role of an architect*

On the website of "The Belvedere," the urban plan for the sphinxkwartier, we can read, "It is an unpolished and stubborn part of Maastricht. Three hundred eighty new homes for the southern part of the Sphinx."[3] The gigantic urban redevelopment of this part of the city, unfortunately, did not allow for taking what they call "stubbornness" as one of its most remarkable qualities. The memory of this place, its work, and the markers it left on the city are hard to grasp. Why do we choose to demolish when we encounter resistance? Perhaps, because it is easy, quick, and most importantly, measurable.

I believe that in that sense, we must learn to see the opportunities in the leftover pieces of the city. More minor urban challenges allow for more inclusion, taking more variables into account, perhaps preventing us from making big shouty statements. The architecture of the leftover pieces focuses then on telling a story in a new context without a need to make up one. As Boyer and the authors of adhocism point out, the existing stories and systems are simply familiar. They are persuasive enough.

Maybe what we create as architects should relate more to a polyphonic novel than an authorship work. The neutral narrator tells the story, and each of the characters' voices is equally spoken. With this approach, maybe we could become more conceivable, inviting the context as a co-author of our works.

2. Boyer, M. C., *The City of Collective Memory*, (Amsterdam University Press, 2013).

3. The Belvedere Website: https://www.belvedere-maastricht.nl/en/menu/sphinxkwartier/living-sphinxkwartier.

10

# · EMPATHY ·

The capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference, that is, the capacity to place oneself in another's position.

Empathy in the architectural design process could be the key to a more enjoyable urban environment.

“People ignore designs that ignore people”

*Frank Chimero, Designer and Writer, NYC*



During my Bachelor studies, the student cohort was once asked by the Head of Architecture, what is the most important quality that an architect should have? The conclusion after a few rounds of collective voting was that this quality should be *curiosity* (chosen by a large majority) - the natural instinct to explore, investigate and learn.

The Head of Architecture then made the argument for the quality of *integrity*: as architects, he said, we hold a huge responsibility for the lived experiences of many people, and so we must practice honesty and we must also have strong moral and ethical principles.

Years later, having been exposed to many new ways of thinking, I would like to propose a new answer - one that was never a part of the original conversation. *Empathy.*

I am critical of the perception of the architect as an individual author-hero, yet this is often the way the profession is portrayed by the media; the stereotypical image of a solitary white male sat at his office at night, bent over a table strewn with drawings and sketches, just as in the 1949 American film, *The Fountainhead*. We must not fail to also mention the existence of numerous documentaries celebrating the lives of prominent architectural figures: *Sketches of Frank Gehry; My Architect* (Louis Kahn); *How Much Does Your Building Weigh, Mr Foster?*; *Infinite Space: The Architecture of John Lautner; Jorn Utzon: The Man & the Architect; Big Time* (Bjarke Ingels), to name just a few. These films applaud the genius of the individual, celebrate their life and practices, but rarely focus on the social impact of the architecture itself.

The idea of authorship of design is a rather dangerous one, as it promotes the culture of architectural celebrity and egocentric design which resorts to big gestures and aesthetic spectacles rather than addressing everyday experiences. Rem Koolhaas once said: “Architecture is a dangerous mix of power and importance.”[1] This statement is true in many ways but can be interpreted in a number of forms. For some architects, it results in them/ this leads to them taking themselves too seriously. In 2004, Daniel Libeskind released an autobiography entitled Breaking Ground: Adventures in Life and Architecture, which documents his childhood, his years as a student and his major professional challenges. In this book, he describes his creative process in such a way:

*“Sometimes, I can be working on a drawing for weeks, making hundreds of sketches, when, with no warning at all, it happens: A perfect form emerges”*[2]

In similar fashion, in his documentary, Big Time, Bjarke Ingels sketches on a large sheet of paper in his office and exclaims with enthusiasm: *“There is nothing more amazing than building buildings, that you try to imagine what kind of city or world it is you want to live in, and then you build it brick by brick. Just because you did it, that now becomes how the world is.”*

1. Quoted from article on RTF: https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/rtf-fresh-perspectives/a1389-ego-vs-essential-architecture/.

2. Daniel Liebeskind, Breaking Ground: Adventures in Life and Architecture, (London: John Murray Press, 2004), 7.

It seems a little naïve to believe it is that straightforward; that the world is shapeable by architects alone; that the ideas of a single person or a small group of people is sufficient for envisioning the way other people should live.

*Participation*

In a profession in which one's work touches so many different lives, architects cannot simply think for themselves and for their preconceived visions, they must also consider the feelings and perspectives of others, particularly of those whose lives will be greatly affected by the decisions that they make. To quote Oscar Niemeyer: *"The architect's role is to fight for a better world, where he can produce an architecture that serves everyone and not just a group of privileged people."*

What does empathy mean in the context of architecture, and how might it help to achieve Niemeyer's noble goal?

Empathy is the ability to understand how others feel, see things from their point of view and imagine yourself in their place. As architects we are not usually designing for ourselves, therefore a thorough understanding of the needs of the users is not only a prerequisite to the design process, but also a matter of focusing basic choices. Opting for an abstract notion of the user – the universal human being – is lazy and neglects the opportunity for a richer design.

How do we obtain more specific knowledge? By reaching out and talking to people, communicating with them, and involving them in the design process.

Participatory practices were first introduced on a more substantial scale into planning and design processes in the 1960s, spearheaded by voices such as N. John Habraken and Giancarlo De Carlo. De Carlo's social housing project, Nuovo Villaggio Matteoti (1969-1974) in Terni, an industrial town close to Rome, was one of the first cases of participatory design in Italy. The design team held meetings with the 1800 prospective inhabitants - steelworkers and their families – heavily involving them in the decision-making processes.[3] This practice reflected De Carlo's stance on promoting democracy in the design process and connecting with the users. Community engagement and public participation are especially important in the context of residential developments, community projects and urban planning processes, yet in current times, they are not always viewed as an essential procedure by developers. To them, the participatory process may seem a hinderance,as it "confronts architects with issues that they may otherwise have preferred to either hide from, or else delay dealing with, for as long as possible."[4]

If we don't consider the requirements of future occupants of the buildings we design, and if image overrules, then comes a dangerous disconnect between design and reality. Jeremy Till mocks this spectacle in his essay *The Negotiation of Hope*:

*"When it all goes wrong afterwards, when reality truly does upset the ideal, one can always resort to the publication of a monograph to resuscitate and perpetuate the mythology of a perfected state of architectural production."*[4]

3.. Charitonidou, M. "Revisiting Giancarlo De Carlo's Participatory Design Approach: From the Representation of Designers to the Representation of Users," *Heritage* 4, (2021): 985–1004.

4. Jeremy Till, "The Negotiation of Hope," in *Architecture and Participation*, ed. Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu, and Jeremy Till, (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2005).



*Education*

Empathy and understanding are not values that are particularly encouraged in architecture schools; more emphasis is placed instead on technical skill, graphic representation and design concept. De Carlo observes in his essay Architecture's Public, that there is 'a tendency for academic architecture to isolate itself in its own discourse.'[5] It is true that architectural education has become somewhat of a cult phenomenon, from which certain problematic traits arise. Firstly, there is the over-competitive nature of architecture schools, which not only results in unhealthy work regimes but also sees students constantly trying to outdo one another for better grades. The academic focus on individual gradings leads to students keeping ideas and knowledge to themselves as opposed to sharing and learning from their peers or working to find solutions to problems together. Another problem is the aura of elitism and exclusivity surrounding the field of architecture. Sometimes we become so engrossed within the bubble of academic architecture, that we disconnect from real world issues and become out of touch with reality. Architectural concepts begin to take on an abstract form and overpower projects; unnecessarily complex words are used to describe simple ideas.

I wish that it would be mandatory requirement for architecture schools to implement public and community engagement into their curriculum, in the same way that they often do with technical subjects, because learning to communicate architectural ideas with non-architects is an extremely underrated skill. There is precedence to show that such an idea is feasible, and can be very successful: the University of Sheffield runs a unique 'Live Projects' course in its Masters of Architecture programme, in which students are assigned to work and collaborate with clients that may include local community groups, charities, health organisations and regional authorities, on real life projects that respond to budget, brief and time. Since inception in 1999, the initiative has seen the completion of over 150 projects.

Taken from the 'Live Projects' website, the University of Sheffield explains the purpose of the educational iniative:

*"Live Projects are important in educating architects of the future. Too often architectural education happens in the abstract and pursues a set of ideals that are often removed from the concerns of the everyday world... The Live Projects also get the students out of the ivory tower of academia and into the real world... Live Projects establish an awareness of the social responsibility of the architect."*[6]

There is mutual benefit and gain: students learn from the process, and community clients with limited funding are able to gain valuable tools and ideas that they may not ordinarily be able to attain.

The last issue that I want to bring up on the topic of architectural education relates to diversity. Diversity and the notion of empathy are connected in a way: a more diverse body of students means exposure to a greater number of different perspectives and opinions which we can learn from. However, diversity applies not only in the sense of gender or nationalities, but also in the sense of economic status. Unfortunately, architectural education remains an elusive and inaccessible option for many students from poorer backgrounds because of the

5. Giancarlo de Carlo, "Architecture's Public," in *Architecture and Participation*, ed. Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu, and Jeremy Till, (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2005).

6. The Live Projects website: https://liveprojects.ssoa.uk/about/.

high costs involved in study (model making materials, printing costs, travel costs for site visits, software licenses), and this results in homogeneity based on class, which is not a good thing for the architectural profession. Is it right for a specific echelon of people to be designing for the entire population? Think about it... the architects designing social housing are never people who have lived in social housing themselves.

*Conclusion*

In the context of architecture, empathy could be the antidote to ego. With the way that many of us have been taught in our architectural education, it can certainly be an internal struggle for us as architects to relinquish control and involve other people in our design decisions. Especially at a time when the role and responsibilities of the architect are continually being challenged by developers and project managers, what would be left to architects if the public is allowed control over the design?

We need to recognize that the concept of empathy isn't necessarily about taking comments from public participation literally, and letting everyone design what they want – architects, through years painstaking education, do have greater expertise in architectural planning than the general public, so it makes sense for them to take the lead with design - what is more crucial is communication and transparency in the design process.

Members of the public can be very sceptical of plans for development in places that are important to them, often treating new plans as a villain to be fought[7]. It is therefore imperative for there to be meaningful exchange and discussion between the architect and the users. We must make sure ordinary people's voices are heard and acknowledged. The role of the architect should be seen as an **agent**, rather than an author.

7. MONU Magazine. "Distributing Power: Jeremy Till on the Complex Necessity of Participatory Urbanism" *ArchDaily*, 18 February 2016, https://www.archdaily.com/782319/distributing-power-jeremy-till-on-the-complex-necessity-of-participatory-urbanism.

# POSSIBILITIES

Throughout the anthology, many issues have been identified and many observations have been made. But it is in the spirit of the Urban Architecture studio to look to the future of the built environment with optimism and an open mind.

What could be done differently, what new ideas and approaches could be put forward?

Architecture isn’t static, is is ever evolving; sticking to the canon only inhibits progress.

Every member of the studio has shaped a personal and deliberate response to the future of the Sappi area and its surroundings - all different, yet all valuable, There are endless possibilities.

11

# · LANGUAGE ·

We capture, translate and express our thoughts, feelings, and desires to the outside world through the use of language. Imagination is the objective where writing and architecture collide as both try to translate and convey a form of the imaginative. One translates into language and the other into space, literature articulates where architecture seems to retreat in silence.

Both literature and architecture are in the core rooted to the act of creation, the aim to convey a meaning which is merely translated into an aesthetic composition of components, either consistent out of words or materials.

“I am a storyteller.”

*Patrick van Caeckenbergh, Belgian artist*



We capture, translate and express our thoughts, feelings, and desires to the outside world through the use of language. We have taught ourselves to communicate through the framework of language - a technical construction of linguistic components of combining letters and words to create sentences and stories that are meant to capture, translate, and express ourselves. Our language expands our knowledge of the individual, the other, and the world, yet simultaneously isolates us from the ones that do not share a similar language. The fable of the Tower of Babel, illustrates this blessing of language,as well as the obstacle it can also become;

*“But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”* [1]

The story recalls the complexity, and importance of language as the creation of unity among us - though with the aspiration of the biblical lesson to be deciphered. Language is a tool of man that in itself can be seen as the structural element of life and meaning. It is therefore that we familiarize ourselves at a young age with the phenomena of language, its sound and pace of the spoken words. We learn through echoing our surroundings, yet the repetition of letters and words over time broaden the knowledge, and instead of merely echoing, we can suddenly convey our own constructed meaning to the outside world. In the specificity and selection of the words, its sequence and its pace, we choose to express ourselves in a manner that is closely related to the socio-cultural situation we find ourselves in.[2] Even more, language becomes more than just a medium of communication, we not only use it to convey our word to the outside world, it also becomes the means in how we explain our perception, recall our memories, and express our trail of thought to ourselves. Hence, language is a part of us, it is intimately entangled with the self and our identity as a person.

The art of language is more often explored through the act of writing. Works of poetry and storytelling seek contemplation or guidance in the understanding of the valuable themes of life, like the meaning of death, or the euphoria of love and lost. We either write in solitude, or we write to manifest and convey to another.

*‘I write in order to pursue myself.’* [3]

To write for oneself can structure and ease the mind. The exploration of finding the individual voice can be an internal affair, and by transferring the mind to paper we make it tangible, frozen, and confronting. The act of filling the page by writing can be seen as the journey itself,[4] moreover we encountering the self. We tend to explore and to evolve through the act of writing; to find the own mind.

1. Genesis, chapter 1

2. Perez - Gomez in Havik et al., Built upon Love: Architectural Longing After Ethics and Aesthetics, Amsterdam University Press, 2016.

3. Henri Michaux (George Perec, & J. Sturrock, Species of Spaces and Other Pieces, Van Haren Publishing, 2008.

Likewise, Wim Cuypers [5] describes the book as a physical occurrence where the author merely tries to capture his understanding or meaning of the world. The act of writing thereby profoundly becomes a desire to speak or to articulate, and on the other hand one to be heard. Writing therefore is a conscience and structured act of communicating, and the words are carefully deliberated before they are fixed in ink. The writing illuminates of desire that the reader will solely read the enclosed meaning of the author. Even so the book is read uniquely by every reader, the story seized by the personal memories, fears, and desires. The reading is captured by the imagination of the percipient.

Imagination is the objective where writing and architecture collide as both try to translate and convey a form of the imaginative. One translates into language and the other into space, literature articulates where architecture seems to retreat in silence. Both literature and architecture are in the core rooted to the act of creation, the aim to convey a meaning which is merely translated into an aesthetic composition of components, either consistent out of words or materials.

Since the intimate reading of literature holds the capability to enrich the perception of architecture. Writers and poets are skilled in describing, imagining, and translating their observations of life, cities, and spaces. Their written words are the traces for their implacable eye for detail, in which aspects of our surroundings, spaces, and places all of a sudden become apparent. The writer aims to isolate and subsume the thoughts of the reader temporarily from reality. The poetic imagination alone has the capacity to escape reality and, temporarily, find solitude in another time and place.

*the past has been, the present is,*
*and the future could be.* [6]

A scenario where 'what if' leads the mind, and illustrates the desire of change. The terminology of utopia comes to mind; an ideal world which remains only to exist in the mind or frozen on paper. In the poem On the Difficulty of Imagining an Ideal City by George Perec,[7] we gain the understanding of the contradiction of the utopia. The utopian world, as illustrated by Perec, would always be enslaved to the temporality of the time we live in and the restrains of the individual mind.

The restrains, or limits, in which we have to consider the phenomenology of the imagination is only natural in relation to the perceptive. The imagination can be awakened, inspired, and guided through our senses. For instance, stimulation of the imagination by the dimness of light and shadow, or the traces of particular odours can recall memory and vision which have long thought to be forgotten. Awareness is to be recalled for the constant interaction of perception, memory, and imagination.[8] Still the imaginative remains intangible, even though it might be originated in the sensory realm, we ought not be surprised that the sensed experience suppresses the poetic image.[9]

Then the imagination is genesis of the individual mind and being, yet is conditioned by the perceptive realm of our surroundings. But view is rarely seen in the architectural translation or visualization. The value of the "what if", the undefined territory that we leave to be imagined, is missing in the common representation of architecture nowadays which finds various media of visualization to create the hyper-realistic image of the rendering. While, historically the architect used to explore the tool of imagination through translation, visually, and linguistically. The pencil explored the paper, driven by the limitations of the medium, the imagination of the architect sought its way to make the drawn image speak of the desired composition, spatial translation, and material properties. Still, in the nature of writing we find a presence of time, history and place [10], which is so unique to the reading of the imaginative mind and its instinctive description in words. The architect is bound to explore the land of the poetry and literature more, to enrich the architectural representation through writing and drawing. Translating the poetry of art and space instead of the literal, the imaginative instead of the rational. The architectural description creates the possibilities to explore specific moments and occurrences in time, place and space, magnifying as well as abstracting, in aim to spark the imagination of you, me, and the other.

4. Ibid

5. M. Maaskant, & C. Grafe, OASE 70: Architecture and Literature (Unabridged ed.). nai010 publishers, 2009.

6. Fenna Regenboog, 2022

7. George Perec, & J. Sturrock, Species of Spaces and Other Pieces, Van Haren Publishing, 2008.

8. Juhani Pallasmaa, The Eveys of the Skin, 2012.

9. Scarry, 2013.

10. Perez - Gomez in Havik et al., Built upon Love: Architectural Longing After Ethics and Aesthetics, Amsterdam University Press, 2016.

12

# · SPATIAL · DISTRIBUTION

The earth’s surface is limited. There is only a certain amount of space, composed of an infinity of unique places. Land is a scarce good, and per extension it is prone for speculation. Space, is a major cause for inequality. It defines one’s chances and limits.

“People make the city and it is to them, not buildings, that we must fit our plans.”

*Jane Jacobs, journalist, theorist, activist*

# INVISIBLE CITIES: INEQUIS AND HABRAKIA

Rik Van de Wijgert

*After traveling the world, Marco polo has returned to the king to tell the places he has been. Inequis and Habrakia are two distinct cities, everything opposes, but still, two deeply related cities through their oppositions.*

*Inequis*

You probably live in this city or in a city alike. Indeed, Inequis is like any other city you know, it has its buildings, some are old some are new, some are big other are small, people live here and work there. In this city you will find landmarks, monuments, and facilities, and above all, in this city just as in yours, space is a commodity. Here, someone always owns a space, witch is distributed from each space it’s value, to each citizen it’s capital.

Every game has its rules and winners, the life game in Inequis has simple and clear rules: If you own you can rent and sell, you can turn a profit, to buy more, to rent and sell again to buy more. If you do not own, you work to rent. In Inequis, the game has been playing for a very long time. Only a minority owns, the others rent. It seems like the rulers of the city are also the owners of the spaces it seems like the owners have won the game.

In a city like Inequis it is of upper most importance to define every space and its boundaries. My space is not yours and these spaces are not ours. Some people possess space they lock behind gates, others live in spaces they don’t own. And sometimes, people live in between spaces; neglected by the community, they occupy the terrain vague between the boundaries of property. The city is for those who own, it rejects those who don’t. Surprisingly, this city is empty. Not every space is occupied, despite being owned by someone.

In fact, vacant space is very profitable. The value of spaces depends on places and values of other spaces, no matter if there are people in it. Vacant buildings have an increasing value over time. Why sell, rent, or share your space if you can speculate and turn a profit it?

Space will not be redistributed in Inequis anytime soon and for the time being, owners will keep on turning a profit on it’s citizens’ labour. The future of the city is certain: someone will win the game, monopolising ownership on every space of the city.

You may wonder why I tell you about Inequis. You may live in Inequis yourself, and you maybe already knew its rules, and citizens. The following city in contrast, you have yet never been, but you will hopefully one day see for yourself. I wish to everyone to live in Habrakia: the story of Habrakia goes as following...

*Habrakia*

When you first arrive in the city of Habrakia, you are immediately struck by its abundance of spaces and the absence of void. In this contradiction lies the essence of the city: space is no commodity. Here, no single space is owned by no single person, instead, it is distributed **from each space according to its ability, to each citizen according to his needs.**

It is difficult to explain all the implications of this city unlike any-other, but imagine this: Here no space exists without a purpose, and still no building was design for a specific function. There is no homelessness, no speculation, there is no segregation or congestion, no alienation or possession. Habrakia has torn down the pay-walls that separated the people into classes.

What does a room mean without any uses? What does a building mean without any occupants? A space receives it's meaning through inhabitation. Habrakia is just space, the people make the city. [1]
Of course not every space is equal. Some are smaller and some are bigger, some are darker and some are lighter, some are here and some are there, but all with their properties may answer a need. Here, people appropriate the spaces in the appropriated places. A space in Habrakia always offers freedom of usage, possibilities for evolution, interpretation and appropriation. In your space of course, nothing is forbidden. The space will accept.[2]

I could spend hours telling you how the city is organised within a rigid three dimensional grid and yet curiously, creating a flexible and stimulating city. How the city, before growing outwards always looks inwards, swapping places between functions, extending rooms while diving others spaces grow and degrow, merge and split. Habrakia evolves in an incremental way, never demolish, always transform.[3]

1. Smithson, Alison, and Peter Smithson. *Urban Structuring : Studies on Alison and Peter Smithson.* (Reinhold, 1967).

2. Anne Lacaton

3. Ibid.

13

# ·SPACE TIME COMPRESSION·

Space-time compression could be understood as a noticeable reduction in the duration between different places and systems.

For instance, the daily lives of people in the city follows a different tempo to the architectural evolution of the city.

“Building materials have a high inertia and so do ideas and memories.”

*McFarlane, C. (2011). The City as Assemblage: Dwelling and Urban Space.*



*The Temporality of Architecture*

Old urban fabrics like the site in Maastricht are characterised by a layered structure. Over the ages, people, and processes have left their sediment on the ground, creating an urban fabric that tells the stories of past uses. This ability of architecture to speak across time is formally examined by Aldo Rossi in his book The Architecture of the City. According to Rossi, the layers of the city, and indeed all urban artefacts are carriers of the memory of a place. The urban artefacts of the city are not static or fixed. Rossi describes how they are continuously developed, altered, revised and reformulated by the people and processes that inhabit them. In this way, the architecture of the city becomes a continuously evolving collective archive. [1]

Stuart Brand offers a series of beautiful examples of the slow life of buildings in his book How buildings learn.[2] In the following chapter I will attempt a similar portrayal of the of the factory, interpreting it as an organism that lives in symbiosis with its inhabitants.

*The Evolution of the Site*

Maastricht was one of the earliest cities in the Netherlands to industrialize, largely under the influence of neighbouring Wallonia. The project site became a focal point for the Maastrichtian industry with the arrival of the Zuid-Willemsvaart in 1827, and the Maastricht-Luik canal in 1850. The canals simplified the import of raw materials, and their meeting point at the Bassin, became the location of two new factories, industrialist Pierre Regout’s Sphinx ceramics factory and the paper factory started by the Lhoëst family. [3]

The Paper factory was built on a plot which was wedged between the Bassin and the city fortifications. These fortifications were originally put in place to protect the city, but also functioned as device to divide it from the surrounding land by collecting toll. They consisted of a medieval masonry wall as well as 18th century earthen banks, moats and shooting ranges. On the site, there was located a storage facility for cannons known as the Affuitenloods and a ramp by which the cannons were pushed up on the earthen walls. The site still bore traces from its medieval past when a monastery had been located there. [4]

The oldest factory buildings that still exists to this day(2022) were built in the period 1859-1861. Firstly, storage and mill buildings were pushed against the existing boundaries of the site, naturally replicating the directionality of the fortifications. Secondly, the Bassin was connected to a storage building with a tunnel. Adjacent to the storage building, the main production facility was built, a four storey masonry structure. All of the buildings built in this period were built with the same material and detail catalogue: thick masonry walls, iron columns and vaults placed on I-beams. The factory, after the first large building phase,

1. Aldo Rossi, ‘The Architecture of the City’.

2. Brand, ‘How Buildings Learn”.

3. Jongenelen and Stichting Werkgroep Industriële Archeologie Maastricht, ‘Koninklijke Nederlandse Papierfabriek : een industrieel-archeologische verkenning’.

4. Koninklijke Nederlandsche Papierfabriek (KNP), ‘Honderd jaren papierfabriek, 1850-1950 : Koninklijke Nederlandse papierfabriek N.V. Maastricht’.

continued to be added to and the plot was soon filled up to a maximum capacity. All new buildings reacted pragmatically on the existing situation, continuing the ribbon pattern that was set in parallel to the fortifications. [5]

The industrial revolution eventually required a fundamental change to the condition of the site. The industrials in Maastricht were suffocating in the lack of space that the confinement of the old city offered, while the central government insisted that the city should keep its fortifications as they were considered of importance to the national safety. In 1867 the word of relief came from the Hague. The city of Maastricht appointed urban planner van Gendt was charged to design a plan for the dismantling. His design is reminiscent of grand European Boulevard cities like Paris or Vienna. A ring of park boulevards would surround the medieval city centre. The different segments were named after the rulers that Maastricht had had over the centuries. The boulevard that crosses the site was named Franssensingel. Van Gendt's most significant contribution to the urban fabric of the city was his reinterpretation of the ring around the city. In a time when fortifications no longer were meaningful, the permanence of the ring prevailed over its function, and continued its existence as a park. [6]

The factory continued to expand and its footprint came to grow across the Franssensingel when a sixth paper machine was installed. From the 1980s onwards the factory entered a gradual decline, which culminated this year when the current owner Sappi decided to sell the factory.

*Starting Points for a Design*

From the historical overview of the site I draw two important conclusions. The first is to be found in the importance of the fortification ring to the development of the site. The permanence and weight of this urban form became clear to me when I asked residents of Maastricht to draw their image of the city for me, resulting in cognitive maps. The divisive effect of the wall on the collective image and memory of the city is profound. What was striking, especially in the drawings of older residents was the presence of the division line between the centre and the periphery of the city.

The second observation is that the growth of the factory was characterized by a series of bursts. driven by technological and societal developments. The canal allowed for the start of the factory. The removal of the fortifications led to the expansion of the factory. David Harvey would call these bursts moments of spacetime compression, moments when movement becomes significantly easier. [7] The factory has now fallen prey to yet another development of this kind. It can no longer withstand competition from abroad and is instead pushed into a fundamental change. In the city, signs of a new era are already present. The industries are declining while tourism and the knowledge economy are gaining importance. Maastricht now places itself in a larger international context and hopes to become a meeting place for people from across Europe and the world. The university city has become one of the most international universities in the Netherlands and Maastricht now is a popular city trip destination. [8]

In this latest phase of spacetime compression, a new privileged group has

5. Jongenelen and Stichting Werkgroep Industriële Archeologie Maastricht, 'Koninklijke Nederlandse Papierfabriek : een industrieel-archeologische verkenning'.

6. Finaly, 'Doorbroken barrières : architect F.W. van Gendt (1831-1900) en de negentiende-eeuwse stadsuitbreidingen'.

7. Harvey, 'The Condition of Postmodernity : An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change'.

8. Wijnands, 'Perspectief voor een gezonde stad - Stadsvisie Maastricht 2040'.

9. Koolhaas, 'The Generic City'



emerged for whom movement is now so readily available that it has become the default condition. Rem Koolhaas described this as the in-transit condition. [9] In a context when movement is becoming the default condition for the wealthiest part of the population, the appeal of places and cities become crucial for their survival. Christine Boyer expresses her concern for the way in which this condition changes the face of the city in her book The city of collective memory:

*"Since the early 20th century, architecture has been a commodity as well as a form of publicity, but now in the triumphant culture of consumption, the designer skylines and packaged environments have become vital instruments enhancing the prestige and desirability of place."* [10]

Boyer goes on to explain that the overly simplified images of architecture that are necessary in order to survive in the in-transit condition, are damaging the ability of architecture to be the container of memory. The city freezes and ceases to be the collective archive that was described by Rossi. Koolhaas similarly notices that our generation, doesn't seem to be able to see something made by us as a contribution to our identity, which is prefixed in the historical. Additionally he notes how the world is increasingly being divided into parts that have a status of protection and are legally not allowed to be altered, and parts that are rapidly changing in order to compensate for the stagnation of what is considered historical heritage.

In Maastricht, the division between the areas that are protected and the areas that change quickly has been made in a very clear way, at the location of the former fortifications of the city. The city currently has over 5000 listed buildings, of which a majority are located in the inner city. It has become the focus of the Maastrichtian identity project. Due to monument preservation laws, the inner city has become inflexible and it now requires a range of generic buildings outside of the former fortifications that cater for the needs that it can no longer support by itself. These buildings include housing, logistical centres, power plants, water purification facilities, a university campus, sports fields and many more. This part of the city is consistently not included in the identity formulations that are produced by the municipality. [11] In accordance with Koolhaas observations in The Generic City, the centre's "illusory presence denies the rest of the city its identity." Interestingly, the site sits immediately in-between these two worlds. Any development on the site therefore needs to position itself in relation to this persisting border condition.

10. Boyer, 'The City of Collective Memory : Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments'.

11. Wijnands, 'Perspectief voor een gezonde stad - Stadsvisie Maastricht 2040'.

14

# · HETEROGENEITY ·

The quality or state of being diverse in character or content.

When applied to architecture, this may refer to multiplicity of functions and uses. Mixed-use schemes are becoming increasingly common in modern times. What does this mean for the built environment, but also for society?

It [the city] has brought together people from the ends of the earth because they are different and thus useful to one another, rather than because they are homogenous and like-minded.

*Louis Wirth, American Sociologist*



The following text will explore how a heterogeneity of spaces within a city contributes to an urban environment and how espacially places of work can be meaningful spaces on the personal scale of the individual as well as on a societal scale. The basis for this is not an economic view of work and places of work, but one that puts human activity itself at the centre of consideration. In order to approach the intrinsic character of work and its role in human existence, several perspectives from the field of philosophy, in particular from philosophical anthropology, are used.

The history of philosophy has produced many positions on work itself, ranging from an activity that is merely a burden to a glorification and a path to transcendence. Only this seems certain: work is an essential part of being human. Work is the human's means of shaping the environment and cultivating a way of life. Acting as Homo Faber made the world inhabitable for a species which does not assert itself through extraordinary speed, size or strength. On the one hand, it is utilitarian with the danger of alienating through profanity, on the other hand, it has the potential to be meaningful, be more than a result of purely rational or economic interests. On a material level, work can be an expression of an individual and promote self-consciousness and self-worth. To experience this self-creation, it is important to work for oneself, on something that gives one the opportunity to express themselves. These products of the work become representatives of the individual and can be assessed from the outside, allowing others to react and interact. Through this coexisting of the individual in a world surrounded by others, a stronger meaning emerges through the encounter and exchange with other people, leading to higher types of creativity.[1]
"Work is neither a blind mechanical process nor a form of mere business as the means of distraction from existential bored and despair; it is a way of self-creation and a mode of forming and transforming the world and nature. The individual is being socialized and educated through the performance of work; he learns discipline and acquires the regard for the will the needs of others.

Work has not only a personal but also a communal and social dimension; it promotes not only the sense of personal worth of the individual but it also creates a sense of brotherhood through the exchange of service. The very nature of work is collaboration. To work means to work with (someone) and to work for ("something", a meaning, a goal, a task, a concrete ideal, a value). The workplace, therefore is a social place, it is not entirely a private, personal, individual sanctuary. The natural, social and personal dimensions of work together. The activity and the discipline of work are educational for the individual as well as for society."[2]

Hannah Arendt identifies and articulates a similar potential for transcendence in The Human Condition. She describes work as the fundamental activity of human existence and distinguishes between three different activities: Labour, Work and Action that range from individual to societal importance.

1. Kovacs, G. "Phenomenology of work and self-transcendence," *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 20(3), (1986): 195–207. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00148299.

2. Ibid.

*Labour, Work and Action*

Labour is the activity of the Animal Laborans, the individual human being who pursues its basic needs for the mere preservation of life. That is, according to Arendt, it is a mostly reactive activity, because men is subject to the urge to preserve and maintain one' s own life. To achieve this, one produces goods for immediate consumption by themselves. Here the immanent ephemeral quality also becomes clear, which is connected with labour through the process of returning and passing, reproducing, producing and consuming goods.

In contrast to this, Arendt describes under the term work an activity that is designed to produce a worldliness, that physically locates the human being and thereby enables it to orientate oneself. To achieve this, men construct the world around them, they act as Homo Faber. This entails the production of durable objects. For Arendt, durable means that they can be used for a longer period of time than it took to produce them, which reveals the difference to the previously outlined concept of labour.

Arendt sees her rendered image of human activities as hierarchical. While she recognises that labour and work are necessary elements of human life, she also explains that it is action, the activity of highest value in her opinion, that makes the characteristic difference the, very essence of a human being.

With action, the modus operandi of the Zoon Politicon, she describes a fundamentally different activity than labour and work. First of all, there is the immateriality of action, because in contrast to the physical products of the first two activities, action acts between people as a societal element and combines several aspects at once. Something that, in opposition to the naturally lasting products of work, must be continuously cultivated and maintained by the individuals of a society in order to achieve a lasting form.[3]

On the one hand, it is closely linked to her concept of freedom, as it breaks away from the constraints of the Animal Laborans and the telos of Homo Faber and is therefore free in Arendt's eyes. For Arendt, freedom means the human ability to bring something new into the world, while action is the execution of this very freedom. On the other hand, it is linked to plurality, because the plurality and possible synergies or frictions between individuals with different skills, perspectives and views allow unexpected novelties to emerge. For Arendt, plurality also includes the ability of human beings to enter into exchange with others and enables individuals to recognise themselves through confrontation with those.[4]

In order to make this confrontation and exchange possible, two elements are required. On the one hand, Arendt sees language as the purest vehicle with which an individual can express oneself and, in the following step, communicate and interact.

On the other hand, this aforementioned confrontation can only happen through the presence of other people and therefore only in a public space. Thus, I would also like to introduce Arendt's ideas of private and public space which are closely related to the three activities and in particular action and why it is relevant for architects and urban planners who aim to create urban qualities but also push

3. Hannah Arendt, "Vita activa oder vom tätigen Leben", *Ungekürzte Taschenbuchausg.*, 1. Aufl. Serie Piper: Vol. 3623. (Munich: Piper, 2002).

4. Passerin, M. "Hannah Arendt," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, January 11 2019, https://plato-stanford-edu.tudelft.idm.oclc.org/archives/fall2019/entries/arendt/.



the boundaries of the profession beyond the spatial dimensions.

*Private and Public*

While labour and work are located in a private space and serve their individual users, public space is necessary for Action. Arendt's concept of a public space is unlike the common definition, not described through its physical manifestation or its accessibility but stretches far beyond it. It is rather an intangible space where the political and social sphere of Action takes place. Public space thus takes on an even more important societal function, although it does not have to be accessible to everyone at all times like a public square, for instance. Even spaces with limited access such as cultural and educational institutions or even seemingly mundane places of work can be spaces of plurality and freedom and thus become public spaces and spaces for action.

Considering this now on an urban scale and treating a city or parts of it as public space, it has to be more than its mere physical appearance and attain a social level, as described in Vita Activa. This means that a maximum of freedom and plurality must find its way into the cityscape on an individual level of the inhabitant as well as on an urban scale.

This is only possible if a city offers and juxtaposes a broad spectrum of publicly visible functions that reflect the plurality of its inhabitants. Fortunately, this urge for heterogeneity is not a paradox, but a synergy between plurality and urban qualities, as Louis Wirth shows in his text Urbanism as a way of Life, in which we find similarities to Arendt's approach towards a societal meaning.

Wirth is looking from a sociological perspective for the criteria that define a city and create urban qualities, naming in particular three factors: size, density and the social structure of the inhabitants. While the first two criteria are purely quantitative parameters, the structure of the inhabitants is a qualitative one. He argues that a heterogeneous structure of the city's inhabitants contributes positively to urbanity. Urbanity is therefore relying on an amalgamation of people from different social, economic and geographical backgrounds, as the following quotation shows, despite its partly questionable choice of words from today's point of view:

*"The City has thus historically been the melting-pot of races, peoples, and cultures, and a most favourable breeding-ground of new biological and cultural hybrids. It has not only tolerated but rewarded individual differences. It has brought together people from the ends of the earth because they are different and thus useful to one another, rather than because they are homogenous and like-minded."*

He also argues that quantitative data is often inaccurate, because density or size usually only corresponds to reality at night, when people are at their homes, but urbanity always arises where human activity is present.[5]

Despite these findings, Wirth goes on to render a rather negative view of people living together in an urban environment, implying that individual subgroups become increasingly isolated and that this eventually weakens the social cohesion between the various groups. He does not reach the formative societal

5. Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *American Journal of Sociology*, 44, (1938): 1–24, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2768119.

capacity of public space that Arendt describes, and that appears in its strongest form in urban spaces that are consequently spaces for action. In combination of Wirth's statements with Arendt's concept of public space and the intrinsic capacity of human beings to express themselves, I conclude that a city needs to offer a dense and rich variety of spaces for different activities in order to facilitate a maximum of heterogeneity, incidents, chances, encounters and exchanges which thus become spaces for action.

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# · INDUSTRY ·

Etymologically, the term industry appears as a synonym of ‘diligence’ and ‘hard work’ which allusively refers to that of humans.

“workers and residents together are able to produce more than the sum of our two parts”

*Jane Jacobs, journalist, theorist, activist*



Dilara Turgut

*“Like small manufacturers, these small enterprises would not exist somewhere else, in the absence of cities. Without cities, they would not exist.”* [1]

The exhibition called ‘A Good City Has Industry’ welcomed its visitors with the booklet whose opening line read: “Cities are the incubators and the engines of the economy.”[2] The indispensable relationship between the city and economy often remains incomprehensible and rather conceptual, as they do not meet in a concrete realm. In the most general sense, the economy represents production and consumption activities in which urban residents participate, yet there is no tangible space in cities where this relationship is physically exhibited and witnessed. The reason being that the industry though a keystone of the economy, has not survived evolution of the urban tissue, resulting in the consequent lack of synergy between the humans and the act of production.

Etymologically, the term industry appears as a synonym of ‘diligence’ and ‘hard work’ which allusively refers to that of humans. Though throughout the years the word represented the means of production, this is now out of sight. Production, once indispensable to human existence and the urban tissue, is no longer a part of everyday life. The invention of the steam engine abstracted work from the physical toils of humans and animals, by introducing new actors who replaced the former manpower. The Industrial Revolution eradicated the diligence that vitalized the urban interaction between making and living, a consequence of which was the suppression of the local industries. The industry adopted these non-human actors for whom new spaces were designed. As the existence of production slowly became intangible, the role of humans in production was either erased or subordinated, and the machines were isolated within physical boundaries, all of which are now considered as the norm for the industry. These boundaries tried to maintain themselves within the city using the sources and the infrastructure that cities provide. Nevertheless, the excessive growth of the industry brought in new dynamics between the urban residents and the industry, which eventually could not embrace the co-existence of humans and machines. Functioning of the machines led to pollution and inadequate sources, while the industry needed bigger and cheaper lands which were hard to possess within the dense city center. This ever-changing dynamic resulted in the subsequent isolation of industry and production to the outskirts; resulting in segregated urban planning where it was not possible to witness the act of making. Now, consumption is the only means of interaction with the function of production.

In recent years, this seclusion of the industry found its voice in various urban and architectural discussions, highlighting its irrefutable social and economic impact on urban life and continuity.

*“Industry is no longer hidden away but celebrated as an indispensable part of the city.”* [3]

Atelier Brussels Productive Metropolis

1. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (New York: Random House, 1961), 147.

2. *A Good City Has Industry*, Visitor Guide, 2016, pg 5.

3. “A Good City Has Industry”, exhibition 2016, Brussels

Production is an everyday actor which plays a vital role in the urban flow. Gleaning the industry, collecting and giving it a new meaning, can reintroduce this everyday forgotten existence of production to its city. This way, production would not only represent the economy but also become an urban catalyst to evoke new possible interactions such as the sense of collectiveness. This collectiveness is provided by ever-changing urban dynamics, creating a new understanding of urban culture. Contemporary concepts like sustainability, circular economy, and re-localization, have questioned the scale and the methods of production, which eventually suggested a more interactive way of making. This approach offers shared urban spaces for different types of users, urban residents, makers, manufacturers, and workers. Sharing spaces leads to collaboration, as it blurs the defined borders of segregated functions and groups of people, working towards eliminating the stark scale difference caused by separated actors: the humans and the machines. The act of production scales down to a human scale, when various types of users are able to witness and participate in the act of making, "Workers and residents together are able to produce more than the sum of our two parts" [4] as Jane Jacobs mentioned in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

An essential factor of this reintegration of industry is visibility. The visual connection between the urban residents and production detaches making from being associated with only the idea of consumption as it re-concretizes the production process which was once abstracted with deindustrialization. When the urban industry is able to display its presence, it has the power to become a public hub, even a landmark where tangible and intangible relations occur. Not only does this approach question the dynamics of cities where the understanding of a city center is never linked with urban industry, but also it reinterprets the protagonists of a city and urbanity.

Rethinking the industry as an impetus to urbanity also entangles two concepts that might appear as antonyms: universality and contextuality. The overall position of stitching the industry back to the urban tissue addresses a universal approach where the coexistence of city and industry aims to contribute to the urban role of each side. Making requires infrastructure to sustain itself which is provided by the city and its users, and the production becomes the infrastructure to trigger social interactions by also being a visible proof of the city's economy. On the other hand, this economy depends on the local sources, culture, social, and economic dynamics, which makes production contextual. This contextuality creates a common ground for the urban users, bringing people together through the act of making.

After having been pushed away for years, the industry is now ready to be celebrated, offering unconventional perspectives for new urban and architectural explorations. By enabling many dualities such as humans and machines, contextuality and universality, etc. to exist together, it intends to form a more homogenous urban atmosphere.

4. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (New York: Random House, 1961), 153.

# · NATURE ·

The phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations.

Architecture on the other hand is the opposite: crafted, designed, man-made. What happens when these two worlds collide?

“And though it may sometimes seem that our impatient appetite for production has ground the earth to thin and shifting dust, we need only poke below the subsoil of its surface to discover an obstinately rich loam of memory.”

*Simon Schama, English historian*

# NATURAL AND CONSTRUCTED: ON THE ROLE OF THE URBAN ARCHITECT

Jolien Streng

As humans, we cannot see nature in an objective manner, always framing it in relation to ourselves. Changing culture and society have historically led to changes in the human view on nature. The human is the wanderer above the clouds, the man taming the wilderness, the scientist collecting natural artefacts. However, current discourse increasingly concerns itself with the materials and flows that guide everyday life in cities. Nature is also the grass growing between the cracks in the pavement or the housecat chasing the mouse. Within this coexistence, humans do not just use or discover nature, they are a part of it.

The human is the one who constructs the city: underneath, in between, overhead of the natural. As the land is shaped into urban form, nature in the city simultaneously shrinks to the human scale and expands, running up to the borders of the city and devouring the earth’s resources. As humans keep on building, they discover their interrelations with nature, and how environmental concerns require nature to be included in their plans. Consequently, the opposition between nature and city disappears and is replaced by a friction between natural and constructed.

Adapting to this view, architects are left with the task of reinventing what it means to coexist with the natural in the city. The question that lies before us is how we can rewrite the act of building, how we can move away from the broad and empty concept of sustainability towards a grounded view on the natural and constructed as productive parts of the city. Therefore, architects need to find the points of friction between the two elements and take a new look at their own practices, not only as professionals but also as living beings. This essay is an exploration of the role of the urban architect through the themes of habitat, ruin and soil.

## *Habitat*

Habitat is both a human and non-human concept that describes our common need for a place of residence that sustains our demand. Originating from the fields of biology and anthropology, the term has strong connotations with non-human organisms. Only during the mid-twentieth century the term habitat started to be used by architects. During this time, architects such as Alison and Peter Smithson applied theories from biology to illustrate the different ways of living on a landscape, grounding autonomous architectural objects in their context[1]. They opposed the countryside as a place where humans formed their habitat in landscape with the city where the human habitat is landscape. In cities, our feet move from slab to slab, our heads can find cover under a roof anywhere, our bodies are enclosed in the climatized spaces in between walls. Consequently, the ecology in the city is increasingly determined by human architecture.

The use of the term habitat helps to see the human as one among many organisms. From this perspective, the opposition that the Smithsons saw

1. Van den Heuvel, D, Habitat and Architecture : Discruption and Expansion. In Van den Heuvel, D. Martens, J., Muñoz Sanz, V. (Eds.) (2020). Habitat : ecology thinking in architecture (2020): 8-23, Nai010, pp 9.

between the human habitat and the landscape disappears. The habitat is not only the house, but includes all aspects of life. Rediscovering where our constructed world meets the natural, requires looking at our habitat from a new perspective. Within this expanding frame all of the city's inhabitants are included. Acknowledging the cohabitation of the human and non-human reveals unresolved imbalances. In a natural situation habitats are fully entangled. Imbalances exist but are compensated by moving and adapting. In cities, and on the smaller scale in architecture, the human habitat becomes dominant. An architecture that is receptive to the entanglement of habitats, might also be an architecture in which the human requires less so to give space to others. Not all spaces need to be climatized. Not all need to have a roof, a wall, a window. Not all need to constantly be inhabited by humans. Furthermore, to bring balance back into the city, architecture needs to accommodate adaptation. The human and non-human can grow and shrink, changing with the seasons and with the building's individual users.

Whilst the demands of human habitats have remained similar, the landscape of which it is a part and the technology available for its construction have altered over the past decades. The fundamental principles underlying architecture have long been explored. During the 18th century, Laugier reframed architecture by reducing it to the image of the 'primitive hut.' Architecture is depicted as a basic shelter, created as an imitation of and a collaboration with nature[2]. Reducing architecture to its basic elements, as done by Laugier, contrasts with the contemporary self-functioning machine that architecture has become. However, the basic elements of architecture are no longer enough if we look at the extents of the urban habitat. The experience of the city is an unidyllic one, filled with polluted views, noises and smells. Therefore, a contemporary building, more strongly than ever, filters and recreates the outside world in its interior. A sensitive approach to architecture takes account of the way daylight enters in different seasons, how a building heats itself up and cools down, how the air enters and leaves the building. Instead of using material to create issues and subsequently using machines to solve them, the architecture itself is the most important tool in creating suitable conditions for living.

*Ruin*

Even though humans might try to set buildings in stone, this stone weathers over time, by algae, wind, human touch. Ruination symbolizes the overtaking of the natural over the constructed. In the ruin, decay of what is constructed by men offers a place of growth for nature. However, as described by Georg Simmel, out of the friction between the natural and constructed arises a new whole[3]. In this whole, the human accepts the impact of nature on their construction, making the material take a turn back towards its roots. The image of the ruin shows that architecture is not about creating objects. Instead, it is about making a node of flows that evolves over time[4]. Over time, the unpredictability of architecture becomes visible. The built grows further away from what the architect drew on paper.

The architect can take the ruin as a guiding theme to view the building as part of natural processes. As urbanist Frits Palmboom explains, both landscape

2. Laugier, M. *An Essay on Architecture (Ser. Documents and Sources in Architecture)*. (Hennessey and Ingalls, 1977, Original work published 1755), 11-12.

3. Simmel, G. "The Ruin (transl.)" In *Wolf*, K.H. (Ed.). Georg Simmel, 1858-1918, pp. 259-266. (Ohio State University Press, 1959) (Original work published 1907), 159-160.

4. Latour, B., & Yaneva, A. "Give Me A Gun And I Will Make All Buildings Move": An Ant's View Of Architecture, *Architectural Theories of the Environment: Posthuman Territory*, London: Routledge, 2012, 107-14. 109.



and architecture are solidified versions of time[5]. Even though architecture is constructed within months, the building takes position in a longer stretch of time, interrelated with the slow development of the landscape and of urbanism. Growth and decay, slowing down and speeding up, designed and undesigned, manifest in architecture. Cyclical movements of different tempos show themselves in façade and interior, in load-bearing construction, in technical installations, in finishes[6].

In the context of the ruin, the architect alters their human-centered perception of time in order to visualize the multilayered changes caused by nature. Whilst a person cannot truly understand climate change, they can imagine the weathering of a material or the moving of soil. By making the impact of nature small, it can be increased once again. In architectural design this can be done in a direct way, by offering places for nature to overtake, but also in an indirect way. An example is the work of Peter and Anneliese Latz, in which sites are approached as ruins. By gleaning elements of the site and using them anew, their work is a practical and metaphorical display of survival[7]. In similar fashion, architects can use collage of existing elements and the image of the ruin as a tool to evoke a series of human and non-human memories and possibilities.

*Soil*

To the human eye a building is made up of layers or floors existing on a surface. Poking below this surface demonstrates that it is more than merely a plane that we can use for transportation, production or being. Historically, the invisible mass of the earth has been visualized as a multilayered carpet. Visualizing the soil, even if only artistically, displays something otherwise uncharted[8]. In case of the earth, visual representations display pedogenesis or soil formation. This process of layering is usually determined by substrate and parent material, climate, topography, vegetation and fauna, and time[9]. Formation of the urban soil is determined by another factor: human intervention.

In the past, human activity in cities has been defined by soil-destructive acts such as pollution. The current aim for coexistence with nature emphasizes the soil-regenerative qualities of the layers that architecture adds to the soil. In the city, the multilayered carpet of the soil becomes an unordered patchwork that is constantly in motion. An urban soil is one in which natural and constructed coexist within the layers. For example, the uppermost parts of the urban soil are often made up of exogenous materials such as demolition waste or compost [10]. The rapid formation of the urban soil reflects the dynamic system of cultural, climatological, productive and ecological functionalities[11]. Nowadays, designs on an urban scale take into account how this life above is intertwined with the life of the soil below.

The soil below our buildings is a milieu of its own, tightly bound together with habitats such as the human one. Architecture weaves together the plan and section of the soil, leaving its traces on both. Within this act, the architect acknowledges the conflicts that remain within the coherency of their design[12]. Buildings replicate the surface of the ground, meanwhile sealing the soil and preventing further soil formation. Still, architecture can affect the soil and its

5. Frits Palmboom, *Drawing the Ground - Landscape Urbanism Today : The Work of Palmbout Urban Landscapes*, (De Gruyter. 2010), 34-37.

6. Ibid, 37.

7, Iliescu, S, "The Garden as Collage: Rupture and Continuity in the Landscape Projects of Peter and Anneliese Latz," in *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, 27(2), (2007): 149–182. 158-165.

8. Leatherbarrow, D. (1999). "Leveling the Land". In J. Corner (Ed.), *Recovering Landscape : Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture*, 171-184, (Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 175.

9 .Viganò, P., & Guenat, C, "Our Common Soil," *A Project of the Soil*, OASE, 110, (2022): 53-66, 53.

10. Ibid, 54-55.

11. Ibid, 57.

12. Schwarz, 1949, as cited in Moravánszky, A., *Metamorphism: Material Change in Architecture*. (Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2017), 80-82.

milieu without destroying it. The architect leaves open ways for the soil to be in contact with climate, vegetation, fauna and time above. Instances where the soil and surface meet are highlighted, with elements such as a drainage pipe, a small gradient difference, a slope making explicit how the building functions in relation to the soil[13].

*Conclusion*

Shaping the mutual relationship between nature and city is architecture, the urban architect, who consciously works against their own human-centered perception of the city. The themes of habitat, ruin and soil highlight how architecture causes friction between the natural and constructed. The architect uses this friction, not only as a static given, but as a process directed by time. The building is designed as a node for the ecological flows of the city, providing habitats for various organisms. Lowering walls of the city, of the building, letting the non-human through, increases the friction between the natural and constructed but also provides grounds for cohabitation.

13. Bianchetti, C. (2022). "Rethinking Soil Design, Starting from the Body," *OASE* 110, (2022): 89-94. 89.

# · ASSEMBLAGE ·

The term is often used to emphasise emergence, multiplicity and indeterminacy, and connects to a wider redefinition of the socio-spatial in terms of the composition of diverse elements into some form of provisional socio-spatial formation (e.g. within a city or building).

To be more precise, assemblages are composed of heterogeneous elements that may be human and non-human, organic and inorganic, technical and natural.

“Urbanism is produced through relations of history and potential - of capital, social relations, cultures, materials, and ecologies - these are not separated in assemblage theory, rather observed how multiple bit-and-pieces align to enable a certain form of urbanism over other ways, and which can be subjects to disassembly and reassembly through unequal relations of power and resource.”

*McFarlane, C. (2011). The City as Assemblage: Dwelling and Urban Space.*

# NORTH OF TOWN

Alex Kirschstein

Sand, pulp, grains and clay
and water that unites them
boats, sweat, coal and bricks
as elements that shape them

paper, glass, bathtubs and coke
rifles, nails and gas
sent to Liege or up the Maas
a fortune came in back

production left and fortune, too
likewise, those with work
emptiness and hopelessness
portrayed the north of town

lawmakers and contractors
with modern urban dreams
used concrete beams and passenger cars
to fill the barren scene

while cars transport they don’t build life
and so the void endured
what stayed were concrete skeletons
and beams of rusty steel

shards of glass and dust and dirt
beneath the dormant cranes
kept many out but some came in
to seize the vacant space
in came a volatile mix
of wood stoves and courage
of wicked raves, personal crises
and political ideals

artists, oil paintings and litigations
fuelled by fantasies of autonomy
minimum wage jobs and smoke machines
clashing with uneven relations of power

translocal activist networks
drug consumption
manual ingenuity and deep community bonds
this story is a wild one

two decades passed
of struggles and victories
what remains is an island of freedom for some
but others won’t see it

eyesore!
nuisance!
cried the law makers
eighteen million euros is the price

life had returned to the north of town
and so, the money makers came

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*Aaliyah Lawal*

*Alex Kirschstein*

*David Fang*

*Diederik de Vries*

*Fenna Regenboog*

*Frederic Hormesch*

*Karthika Ranjit*

*Lulu Song*

*Mawee Pornpunyalert*

*Nina Kempa*

*Oliwia Tatara*

*Rik van de Wijgert*

*Vittorio Romieri*