Educating the architect
Alejandro Zaera-Polo in conversation with Roemer van Toorn

The Berlage Institute from A to Z

RvT Universities and schools of architecture help people to become an architect, in the same way you learn to be a lawyer or a doctor. With Wiel Arets as dean the Berlage-Institute was after another kind of teaching. The students who apply at the Berlage-Institute are already practicing architects and come here – after years of frustration being in an office working for other architects – to develop their own agenda. While he stressed the making Wiel also brought in more theoretical reflections. The Institute was furthermore not only providing a service for each individual to develop his or her thesis. We confronted the students with assignments from within the Netherlands. What will be the next step for the Berlage-Institute, according to you Alejandro, as the new dean?

AZP I was invited to the Berlage-Institute by Wiel Arets in the very beginning of his term. During those first contacts I met some of the students who were at the Institute during the deanship of Herman Hertzberger, who were still into the system. My impression is that the Hertzberger period was a very exciting time, almost the hippie-period of the Berlage, orgy like … Probably it did not have yet a very clear structure, nor a clear didactic program, but great excitement and very motivated people. Typical heroic period… I think Wiel's term has been a period of consolidation, both of academic and financial consolidation He has provided a more structured organization and probably a more focused direction to the research in the Institute. I think that what we should aim now is to develop a more special profile that will make the Institute a unique International institution. As a Postgraduate Laboratory, the Berlage should find a specificity that distinguishes it from a school that makes it specific in respect to American schools but also in respect to other European postgraduate programs. Obviously the Berlage has already built up an important and worldwide known reputation and network. There are no such institutions in America or Asia. The fact that the Berlage-Institute is in Holland – and obviously Holland has been for the last 15 years one of the most interesting places generating new architecture – makes it a very strategic location in the international debate. Maybe this is a kind of optimistic perspective but I believe as the European consolidation advances, industries tend to concentrate in certain regions: automotive industry in Germany, luxury manufacturing in

Northern Italy, telecommunications in Scandinavia … Why not to imagine that Rotterdam may become the centre of architectural and urban planning services in Europe, taking advantage of a very well built local, cultural and productive infrastructure? If so, the Berlage may become a crucial part of this infrastructure. The target would be to make the Berlage a European research institution based in the Netherlands, rather than just a local architectural school.

RvT During Wiel's period the Berlage-Institute became famous for its urban research, for its architecture critique, bringing cultural studies into the field of architecture, and for its critical brief writing from the perspective of the program of architecture and urbanism. What kind of directions have you in mind with the Berlage-Institute Alejandro?

AZP I am also fundamentally interested in the Berlage as a laboratory rather than as a school. I am interested in doing more applied research, rather than defining general themes of research. Search for opportunities of research in specific cases of reality. I am interested in a kind of opportunistic research that is able to engage very directly in the processes of transformation of the built environment. I am interested in reality as a field of research that is able to offer a certain level of friction to the research and that can provide certain accountability to the work in the Institute. I am interested in developing an institution that will have a transformative impact both on the built environment and in the contemporary culture in a very concrete and direct manner. In order to produce the convergence of speculative practice with realistic performance, the identification of concrete domains of operation, either geographical zones, media, formats or subjects is crucial. Both the knowledge and the debate within the Institute should have an effective capacity of transformation, rather than remain as a purely speculative practice. I am not at all interested in visionary projects, or in individual authors. Contemporary postgraduate architectural education is basically formed in the '80s author-centred practices rather than focusing on subjects or problems. Students seem to go to postgraduate schools looking to become the next great prophet of architecture without realising that not only the statistic probabilities for that to happen are very small, but also that even the greatest figures need to develop a great capacity to understand the situation where they operate and its relationships with their field of interest. We are in an expanding disciplinary field and obviously, what can you better teach to people - aiming at a higher level of education - is how to be resourceful in getting information and how to put things together rather than telling them what Architecture is, as a recipe, that is obviously something of the past. All the good schools like

the AA and Columbia are based on this model. However, the model they have developed is largely based on the 80's model of architect, with strong character and "vision". The architect-artist or the architect-performer. That type of architect is unable to engage effectively in the swarm-like, complex reality where most architects have to operate today. Is not about constructing individualities but about understanding multiplicities. Is not about visions but about opportunities. I am convinced that the Liberal Arts Model in which all these Schools are based is exhausted and has reached its limits by deriving into the systematic production of eccentricity and authorship rather than developing models to handle the generic, the multiple, the impersonal… Understand the effect on the swarm that small changes of direction may have, rather than embracing vision and originality as our operative mode. In this sense the 80's postgraduate education "a la carte" is unable to generate solid knowledge able to be used outside the institutions, and worst, produces over-educated professionals that are usually unable to engage productively in anything for several years, doomed under the weight of their own personal visions. Also, I am interested in exploring a new breed of architectural knowledge, that in a way has been left aside by the educational institutions in the last ten years. Individuals are formed as a by product of knowledge, rather than the other way around. Contemporary research is typically directed towards fields of knowledge that are basically supra-disciplinary (economics, sociology, philosophy…) or sub-disciplinary (engineering, construction management…) In this landscape, the possibility of producing knowledge able to effectively analyse and articulate both levels of knowledge is a niche to exploit to which the structure of the Institute is particularly adequate. Furthermore I believe that postgraduate education, as we know it and how it is refined at most important institutions, is starting to become a little bit obsolete. In the last years there has been an ever-expanding domain in the architecture discipline that has lead the research or experimental practices to direct themselves very closely to discuss theoretically what architecture is, what the discipline is formally. What is lacking now in the current landscape is an institution that focuses more on structuring the thinking on how to make a project. Now it seems that when you talk about "research" in an architectural school it means reading, theorizing, doing cultural studies or gathering statistics. Issues of technology, geometry, structural design, and typological analysis … have been overlooked by current research. Research is very much equal to the production of text and graphics. Text is not necessarily the only form of research that you can do. Architectural research has to deal specifically with the tools and matters of architecture, and has to be fundamentally aimed at architecture as a product.

RvT Perhaps the trick of the strategies devices Wiel put forward each year – challenging everybody at the institute to define, to interpret, to give meaning to a word like "Conflict", "Forces", "Field" or "Double Dutch" is that this culture of different expertise interpretations promoted a stimulating culture of debate and research. The climate of confrontation and support by different voices – positions in and outside architecture - helps the student to orient him/herself beyond mainstream platitudes, to develop his/her own cultural agenda and menatlity. The technique of making you can learn relatively easy while it is much more difficult to develop an independent and critical position towards society. How would you see the focus of the institute? Would you allow a same kind of wide range of interpretations as Wiel put forward to orient and challenge the student? Or would you prefer more specificity because the educational method of the past didn't bring deep enough research results?

AZP If you are able to channel more the research then the output would be more sophisticated. I am not at all interested in students who think they know what they are about, but in those who are prepared to find out by engaging in research they did not even know before. I am 15 years older than them and I am happy not to know what I am about yet. And what I am involved in now I hope it will change in the future. If you are truly interested in learning things you have to keep your mind open and let things happen, learn to fly in a swarm… This idea of the school "a la carte" is a product of the consumer education and produces products like MacDonald's. When you go to MacDonald's, especially in the US, they make you believe you have enormous choice, when at the end everything tastes the same. I would rather go to a Kaiseki restaurant where there is only one menu and you can not choose, but everything is extremely sophisticated and new. I am more interested in that approach to the design of the future Berlage menu, and I am more interested in a clientele open to experience new flavors rather than rejoice in the ones they know.

RvT How do you see the relation between the development of the thesis of the student and the institutional research the berlage is interested in? Is here a conflict between what the institute wants and the student is looking for or earlier a synergy (and how do you see that synergy then)? How do you guarantee good education and high profile research at the same time?

AZP I think a thesis is a format that belongs to other disciplines, like philosophy, literature, physics... An architect's thesis is a kind of imposition on the dynamics of the architectural practice that I am not sure yet it works… I would rather structure architectural research around a concrete project, the development of a prototype, a new technique for

synthesizing hybrid programs or to design with viscoelastic joints… When you talk about a thesis you already precluding the output to a written one. You are giving priority to non architectural technology. Firstly I am much more interested in developing research that is specific to the discipline and its instruments. Secondly, I do not think that more than 5% of the students engaged in postgraduate education are capable in two years of producing a truly interesting piece of research by themselves. To think that as a single individual you can compete in terms of producing architectural research with offices, companies and institutions with large and experienced teams and abundant resources is kind of naïve. When you have been in the academic circuit for ten years, like myself, you get really bored to travel 7000 miles to be in a jury where you see the same kind of smart guys trying to impress you with original and unique research that you have seen already ten times in other schools. It is much more informative, for example, to talk to people from the research department of a construction company on how to reduce manufacturing costs by using a certain arrangement… A certain awareness that the relevant subjects in a certain age are just a few and the real sophistication and originality is to find a new personal perspective on them is a very necessary reflection to offer to the students. If a student comes to you with a research on, let's say the ionic order, you should try to dissuade him or her from proceeding. You may be foreclosing groundbreaking research and suppressing the desires of an individual, but the likelihood that will not lead into anything worthwhile is too large to risk valuable time and resources in it. To identify those frames of relevant research is the job of the Dean of the Institute. And of course, to be able to identify when someone is proposing something that is worth considering despite not being comprised in the main frame of research. But to take for granted that every individual in the school will make a significant individual research is not only unbelievably optimistic, but also irresponsible as a management strategy. I believe that the individualism to that degree is culturally a dead end already for a few decades. The real education consist today in constructing individuals that are able to understand their multiplicity and the mediation and construction of all desires through a very complex network of relations, and to be able to operate within these constraints.

RvT Herman Hertzberger philosophy was that students should do 15 designs in one year and should learn to do a lot of things at the same time. The Berlage Institute should prepare the student for the architecture practice were you have to act fast, be creative, present well, do research, work in teams. In simple words the education program was mimicking a high quality innovative architecture practice. The students were always

very busy even when they did not know precisely what they were doing themselves.

AZP Postgraduate education, as it is defined now in the most sophisticated institutions, is very much based on a star architecture model, in which students go to Columbia, the AA or the Berlage Institute to study with a certain guy or personality, because that's what you see in the magazines. Students want to become another star architect. Things don't work like that. There are a lot of very bright architects from my generation that didn't hit the big times while other less capable ones have managed to get their own practices. I am much more interested to develop a type of research and therefore education that is based in issues and subjects that are out there, and by doing that being engaged with the production of the institute in process. You don't come to work here to work with a certain person. You come to the Berlage because you are interested in certain issues you like to work on with highly qualified experts. Maybe that will be a certain drawback – without branding the institute through stars could be a problem to get students in - hopefully we will be able to come up with challenging research proposals engaged in reality that counteracts the 80s education; turning education around. Looking for research not so much with someone but aiming directly at affecting the world outside.Another important point for me in my program is that we will work with third parties outside the institute. Like municipalities, institutions, the government, developers, etc. who say; "we have a problem here, can you help us solving this problem?" Whereby the Institute will research a problem that is directly involved with reality. I am very interested in the model of direct action as opposed to the ivory tower that speculative research tends to become. That is the opposite of going to ask a well-known personality, because he or she is famous and cool, "what do you want to do?" I am much more interested in looking outside and getting clients involved who will tell us what is needed, where are the opportunities for action.

RvT The institute teaches students to be independent researchers in the field of architecture and urbanism, to present and foremost to intervene with projects in society in an innovative, independent, critical and relevant manner. How can we, as institute move beyond an agenda set by the much needed independent, innovative and critical individual practice?

AZP I must say that the paradigm of the "critical" is in my opinion part of the intellectual models that became operative in the early 20th century and presumed that in order to succeed we should take a kind of "negative" view towards reality, in order to be creative, in order to

produce new possibilities. In my opinion, today the critical individual practice that has characterized intellectual correctness for most of the 20th Century is no longer particularly adequate to deal with a culture determined by processes of transformation on a scale and complexity difficult to understand. Talking about the critical individual may be even demagogic, especially when selling it to the students. I would rather be more sincere, avoid to make false illusions, and rather talk about a new "productive" rather than "critical" paradigm in which the critical decisions can not be made on the whole system, - let's say capitalism versus Marxism or Democracy versus Fundamentalism - but on a much more concrete and haptic level. That means that you have to be fundamentally engaged in the processes and learn to manipulate them from the inside. You never get that far into the process as a critical individual. If we talk in terms of the construction of subjectivity, the critical belongs to Freud a Lacan, what I called "productive", to Deleuze.

What should the architect enact tomorrow?

RvT On the occasion of the farewell of Wiel Arets and your welcome as new dean of the Institute I asked many architects, theoreticians, curators and alumni of the Berlage to reflect upon the question "What will/should the architect enact tomorrow?" Elia Zenghelis talked about the need to "Start again" in architecture and urbanism. "The retro-active manifesto has come to an end", he said. The systematic idealization of data (often subversive in its contradiction) generated by the latest phase of capitalism – which made Dutch architecture (in developing new concepts) for our Second Modernity so famous - is no longer able to propose innovative and foremost progressive prototypes. The culture of sprawl where everything is submerging in consumerism and atomisation (even in its most subversive or ironic pragmatism), but also the inherent political climate of corporate globalism, are both developments which people more and more start to question as being an appropriate to project alternatives for live in space. Elia Zenghelis, like Peter Eisenman, believes that the structure, the language of architecture, the formal instead of the program is capable today to counter the culture of sprawl. What they propose is to investigate the syntax of matter instead of the sociology of space.

AZP I think that this is a polemical statement that is interesting in some ways, as a whole generation of architects, to whom I belong, has grown up thinking that to be idealistic, to be visionary, to try to impose formal visions onto the world is nonsense. If you were to ask 15 years ago to architects of the generation that today is around 55, what they thought

about developers, shopping malls, etc. they would have probably said it was bad. They looked at themselves and at architecture as an activity of "resistance". If you ask today to any of the around 40 generation, we would all tell you that we think those are very interesting worlds to engage with and that contemporary architecture is about surfing in those worlds. Rem was probably the first architect of that generation who changed the chip and started to propose that complicity was a far more productive attitude than resistance, and he used the "retroactive manifesto" to explain that precisely the most insane and mundane conditions have produced the most interesting architecture, by looking at New York, Singapore, Lagos. The engagement of my generation with complicity, quantitative analysis, factual data, consumerism and so on is a development of that shift initiated in the retroactive manifesto, and I still believe in it, I still believe that visionary architecture and political resistance are very unproductive attitudes to sustain for architects who lead a whole generation of architects to loose the chances to effectively engage in the transformation of the environment. So I believe that the path open by the retroactive manifesto is a good one, and complicity is a good antidote for idealism and barren visionary attitudes. I think that going back to language and formalism would be to forget the valuable lessons of the retroactive manifesto. What I would say after ten years of data and shopping malls is that the retroactive manifesto is not enough, and that we need to set up new references so that people do not think that the fact that they use data, build shopping malls and deal with developers conclude that they are making substantial contributions to the world of architecture. Those worlds do not need architects to exist. What is important to define is what an architect does within those worlds, and how can we assess its performance from the perspective of the discipline of architecture. The fundamental question here is how to operate beyond a fixed system of values and conventions, in order to survive the constant changes of conditions in which we have to operate. The practice of architecture as a reference to discourses, a system of values or conventions, as a language etc. has been greatly destabilized by the processes of change that characterize our productive context. In this context, operations on productive processes appear to be more appropriate as creative postures and generators of new possibilities than criticism. Architecture today is more than ever an experimental activity given the growing difficulty of operating with a priori discernment, either of a critical or a visionary nature. To practice like a judge, or as a theoretician that reflects on reality and questions what has up until now been considered as good practice. But to judge we need references, systems of value, comparisons ... and these are more than ever before difficult to find in solid form. The problem is that we can't absolutely give

up judgement a posteriora either. The question is how to overcome the operative paradigm that has come to dominates all disciplines and the intellectual or productive practices: the critical process. The solution perhaps lies within the interior of the construction process; to be able to construct sequences of micro-judgements that operate on very specific and concrete aspects of the project. To take down the great paradigms of references into chains of small local decisions in time and space, that we can realize without resorting to grand visions, or absolute references.

RvT Isn't there a risk that architecture, by concentrating on its technique, forgets the engagement with the social? Lars Lerup answers one of the questions I asked him to write about in Hunch 6 with a statement: "Our task is to build and rebuild the democratic city. Operate beyond the borders of your project. Make a Gift to the Street! Ethics!" Are you not afraid that with the much needed "start again manifest" the Berlage ends up celebrating the autonomy of architecture? That the designed (sublime) object can either solve it all can just be self-referential or provide a service? (I fear the Swiss and Singapore democracy).

AZP I do not know if there is a risk, but in any case it would be a risk worth taking if the outcome were good architecture. You do not need to keep reminding yourself that you are engaged with the social: the social is one of the materials of architecture, and you need to work with it. What I do not believe is that the purpose of architecture should be set in social or political objectives. All of the cultural analysis that architecture went through in the eighties does not seem particularly adequate to deal with the production of an architecture that has to operate in an increasingly mixed and unstable cultural background. Perhaps as a reaction to that sort of architectural discourse, focused almost exclusively on social, political, and cultural developments, we have tried to put the emphasis of our practice on the architectural construct, on the materiality of the project, and on its organizational qualities. Geometry, construction, organization, materiality, technique, and pragmatics have become an alternative for a temporary suspension of the exclusivity of cultural analysis. This is not to neglect the value of a theoretical perspective for the practice of architecture. Those architects who are not able to construct a theoretical perspective on their work die very young, and run out of possibilities to develop. To think theoretically generates a certain capacity to look at the work not purely from inside but to see it in an economic or social context. What is less evident is the kind of thought that can actually contribute to the practice of architecture. There are certain theoretical approaches that are completely inoperative as a focus for an architectural practice. At most, what these approaches can do is to turn an architectural practice, -

fundamentally a form of production-, into a practice of cultural critique. This can also be interesting, but as a practitioner I am more interested in a perspective that allows us to problematise architectural techniques specifically, to develop an architectural discourse out of the productive rather than out of the critical. As an architect, involvement in those external processes finally becomes significant if they are used as an excuse to open new architectural potentials. It is irrelevant whether we are doing malls and transportation buildings or churches and schools. Malls or theme parks do not need an architect to come into being: they happen spontaneously. We need to make these developments internal to the logic of the discipline; and you don't do that by writing more and more about minorities, migrations, gender, globalisation, or new cultural patterns but by finding a correlation between the emergent political, economical and social processes and certain architectural techniques, geometries and organizations.We have been through a decade of political correctness in architecture that has not produced a single good architect. If I look at the architects that interest me, Le Corbusier dealt with Vichy, Mies sold himself to American corporations, Rem is an accomplish of commercial interests and Jacques Herzog is making beautiful enclosures for the international high culture… And so what? They are all inevitably engaged with the social, is part of the materials they handle, but the driving force of their practice is not to produce social effects, but architectural ones. Lars' statement seem to me totally irrelevant in terms of defining what architecture should be, and Swiss democracy has produced a generation of the best architects in the world.

RvT How do you relate the fact that we need to know more about the life and times surrounding buildings and the much needed revitalization of the profession with its own specific language?

AZP I am not sure if I understand the question properly. If you refer to the relevance that program has acquired as an architectural material in the past 15 years, it is obvious that we can not longer ignore that programmatic factors are of great relevance in the assemblage of materials of different sorts that construct architectural organizations. I think they have always been, the difference between now and let's say, the Enlightenment, when the array of building typologies started to have entity as an urban science, society's rhythm of change has accelerated enormously and the life cycle of buildings decreased substantially. This means that we have to rethink the nature of the assemblage between material program and other materials to increase the capacity of buildings to deal with the different consistencies that those components acquire in the contemporary conditions. However, the idea that an architecture is

interesting simply because it has an innovative program is somehow overvalued. Legions of architects are now trying to justify their projects by the programmatic composition. Certain forms of architectural programs are very interesting as cultural or social phenomena, but that does not guarantee their architectural value. For example, in Tokyo there are thousands of buildings with really weird programmes and very little architectural value. Even worse is that the way in which architects usually talk about programmatic composition. Even in the highest academic circles, it is embarrassingly imprecise. There are several disciplines that can talk about this matter with far more precision. To be serious about our capacity to operate with program, we should be able to look at the techniques that other disciplines use to deal with activities, to learn how to quantify, to use statistics, and to model the effects of a programmatic distribution. And not only to develop forms of engineering program, but to discern the capacity to produce architectural effects. That is what the prophets of program have not answered yet.The hybrid as program has become one of the key themes of contemporary architecture culture. Nevertheless it is treated with a laughable degree of imprecision. It seems that the mere joining together of an office with a tennis court or a discotheque with a church is sufficient to have made architecture with "hybrids". One of the aspects of real interest, that we have concentrated our academic investigation on since 1993 is the possibility of understanding that activities have physical, material and geometric properties: weight, friction, hardness, cohesion, durability, and texture... For this reason they can be used to construct in a similar way as to how we use traditional physical materials. The objective would be to transcend the social and linguistic consistency of the program, to learn its material properties and the form of building with them. At the current time, there is an absurd proliferation of coloured plans with scattered activity keys or pictograms which attempt to become the new instruments for the making of an architecture of "the program". This is a mistaken instrument that probably will never produce any architecture of value. From designing restaurants, we have learnt a lot about the physical properties of this type of program. Now we know that the proportion and scale of the dining hall is crucial in producing determined ambient affects; the distances between fellow diners or the geometry of the tables and the service circulation. We know the material and we can manipulate it to produce certain effects, although these effects are effectively determined by the culture where the program is situated. So you want to join a gymnasium with an office? Very good, but as of yet, we are not talking about architecture. If you ask me why, I'll tell you if you are making architecture or a social commentary or writing a movie script.

RvT After the 11th of September architecture will be confronted more and more with social and political issues. Does architecture have to choose a certain side? Or is surfing the contemporianety of late capitalism enough, the only possibility?

AZP This is a very complicated question and difficult to answer in a short time. I am not so sure if the world after 11 September is going to change so drastically. However, I think that we will go through some time in which we will be increasingly held accountable for the forms we produce beyond the architectural domain. I don't think that it will help very much when an architect justifies his or her practice on the fact that it has a particular political orientation, or that it aims to yield a particular "political effect". Good architecture produces fundamentally interesting or new architectural effects, and those have an effect in politics and the economy, but as a secondary stage. That doesn't mean that politics are not a huge force from all these various forces that we have to deal with when we are doing a commission or a project. So you need to be conscious that what you are doing has a political color and has a political effect and are to some degree also the results of a political context, but it is difficult to justify your architectural performance in your political alignment.

RvT Perhaps the problem is not so much to make political architecture, as to make architecture politically? Or in the words of Benjamin: "Instead of asking, 'what is the attitude of a work to the relations of production of its time? Does it accept them, is it reactionary? Or does it aim at overthrowing them, is it revolutionary?' – Instead of this question, or at any rate before it, I would like to propose another. Rather than asking, 'What is the attitude of a work to the relations of production of its time?' I would like to ask, 'What is its true position in them?' This question directly concerns the function the work has within the literary relations of production of its time. It is concerned, in other words, directly with the literary technique of works. In bringing up technique, I have named the concept that makes the literary product accessible to an immediately social, and therefore materialist, analysis. At the same time, the concept of technique provides the dialectical starting point from which the unfruitful antithesis of form and content can be surpassed."

AZP I always rejected to give to my students any kind of political direction. I was educated in a very politically charged environment. I consider myself someone with a very strong political awareness simply for a biographical reason: I grew up in Franco's Spain, I was seven years old when Franco died and I remember very clearly that we had to learn

"how to vote" at school. Learning democracy was a very important part of my upbringing, and that is an experience that most of the people I meet from my generation in this profession have not gone through. I have a very clear consciousness that political freedom and democracy are not a given, you have to construct them. At the architecture school, your work had to be loaded with political content, but this did not necessarily leads into a very interesting production. My friends who became more actively involved in political action are no longer architects today. They became politicians or developers. I think that no matter how politically motivated we are as architects, the pleasure we get and give out of building is not political. Our work is finally relevant because we managed to do something that relates to a certain architectural tradition and architectural discipline. I think that today, after a decade of cultural theory and political correctness, there is a very important task in finding also intrinsic values of architectural organization.

RvT Zaha Hadid, Patrik Schumacher but also Hans Ulrich Obrist are organizing exhibitions around the issue of Utopia. They believe, and I agree with them, that every time needs its utopia(s). Zaha and Patrik write in their introduction of the exhibition "Latent utopias" that "There is no sense any more in projecting and articulating the Zeitgeist. Every architectural concept or trope is relative with respect to divergent perspectives and interests. Every architectural form multiplies in the kaleidoscope of multiple, temporary audiences. The total social process has become far too complex to be anticipated within a single vision and utopian image. Other strategies are called for." Although the utopian speculation is rather dubious today how do you see the much needed principle of hope (as Ernst Bloch put it)?

AZP I would rather operate with the principle of "no hope, no fear" as Michael Speaks puts it. I agree with the idea that utopias can only be multiple and ephemeral today. They relate to specific environments or situations, and can be used only temporarily as a guideline. However I still believe that there is a certain Zeitgeist, a certain consistency across all those multiple environments that we need to be able to effectively understand. Call it capitalism, democracy or world-wide-web, those locales that are not connected through them are outside the domains that everybody who will read this interview operates within. Yes there are aboriginal tribes out there which may be very interesting from an anthropological perspective but beyond our field of operation; there are also fundamentalisms that decide not to enter into these global processes and remain local in time and space. But they are not interesting to me, they are not multicultural by ignorance or will. The idea that everything is

local and that there is no Zeitgeist, no consistence across locals is finally very dangerous to sustain because ultimately will lead us to a position of no discussion and no debate. There is a Zeitgeist that can not be any longer represented in a singular utopian vision, but in a multiplicity of, let's say, local utopian tendencies. In the show, in which we are represented too there will be a great deal of consistency. Leon Krier, and the Prince of Wales, nor the Taliban, are in the list of exhibits.

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