Art. 3

Contesting Neoliberal Urbanization

Roemer Van Toorn

This essay is based on Roemer Van Toorns extensive UdK Monday lecture in connection to the Rotterdam Biennal 2007.
An abridged version of the article "Contesting Neoliberal Urbanization. The Right to the City" has been published in "The International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam", 010 Publishers, 2007.

After Mapping

Today many intelligent exhibitions map the city with the help of advanced mapping techniques mediating all kinds of surprising and problematic facts. The problem with many of these exhibitions on the city is that they celebrate nothing but the collection; the archive of fascinating urban data. They bring complex heterogeneous elements together in a collection, whereby all the parts exist next to each other without any ideological or hierarchical distinction. Those collections are an attempt at charting the details of our collective world and its history without judgment. The Venice Architecture Biennale "Cities. Architecture and Society" (2006) curated by Richard Burdett, mapping and showing the city[1], is such a recent example. The equality of all the parts - universal statements, economic facts, demographic data, photographs, advertising, film, architecture, journalism, interviews, etc. testifies to such a permissive heterogeneity. The new global order of late-capitalism was left unquestioned, as an almost divine institution whose authority derived from the mere fact of its existence. This and other kinds of collections are not capable of inciting a debate that unlocks secrets or offers resistance. Nor does it deal critically with the chance that new relations arise between the different parts. No position is assumed – the political correct questions at the end of the Venice exhibition on the City prove this – the arrangement of the material is not based on a particular thought or way of political acting. There is no direction conducted from a chosen point of view, nothing could be more boring, further from our human condition than an exhibition which represents just results, trying to describe what a city is with generic questions in green at the end of the exhibition.

The problem with the passion for the real in many exhibitions and research is not that it takes the extremes of our reality as a topic of research, but that it is a fake passion whose ruthless pursuit for the ultimate datascape avoids confronting the real issues. Instead of repeating the present infinitely, or as postmodernist used to say: "the present plus more options", we need to develop new agendas in the face of the urgencies the city has to confront. The mass produced individual took precedence over any idea of community in our market driven society. The power of the market led inexorably towards a passive and atomized society where the citoyen turned over into client.

Adriaan Geuze – who curated the second International Architecture Biennale of Rotterdam in 2005 – already proved that just collecting data makes no sense. As curator you should take a stance in relation to the urgent problems of today and tomorrow. Geuze and his Biennale team understood that architecture should stop its incestuous navel-gazing and should be operative again in the face of the many problems the urbanized landscape faces. In his article "The Betrayal of the Babyboomers"[2] Geuze explains how the ideal of freedom and solidarity of the generation born after the Second World War shifted under the influence of globalization from intellectual freedom into a freedom of choice as he shows that "the spirit of the babyboom generation got lost in a boring consumption addicted society full of decadent behavior."[3] With the babyboomers, procedures became more important than visions. Society has simply become too complex according to the babyboomers to define a coherent vision. The famous visionary planning and infrastructural projects of the past in the Netherlands, often converging with the fight against water as developed by professionals in the name of the public, are overruled today by endless meetings generating a landscape full of compromises where nobody takes the responsibility for the end results. What you see from your window when you drive through the Netherlands is the result of endless meetings. The consequences for the Netherlands are devastating says Geuze. "Blind for reality and deaf for critique, the babyboomers let suburbanization happen, without even first empowering the city.... The urban middleclass was sucked into the lowlands of the polders, while the elite stayed on the high grounds and in the canal houses, and the immigrants and subsidy dependent people where abandoned to the most problematic neighborhoods." This generation without pride or shame, Geuze remarked, will never answer why it failed to create a new promised land. She will keep repeating that we need better procedures, more transparency, more decentralization, more research and above all the forces of the free market. "The laissez faire policy of just one generation has caused a flood, bigger than all Tsunamis together," remarked Geuze.

With this third International Architecture Biennale in Rotterdam, "Visionary Power", the need for a critical stance towards the status quo will be continued: exposing and proposing alternative visions by addressing the total urbanization of our global reality. Besides trying to give an insight how power generates its own urbanity of excess and why it does so, this Architecture Biennale – through a series of different experiments contesting neo-liberalism in world cities – showcases fourteen political perspectives trying to counter the vicious circle of the neoliberal system.

Venice Architecture Biennale 2006

green politically correct questions

mass produced individualism, Dubai

lack of coherent vision

[1] We have to acknowledge Burdetts brave endeavor to sidestep the celebration of the architecture object by bringing the city to the Venice Biennale.

[2] Adriaan Geuze in "Polders! Gedicht Nederland", editors Adriaan Geuze and Fred Feddes, NAi Publishers, 2005, article "Het verraad van de babyboomers". Page 24 – 28. 400 pages with articles in Dutch by different writers including many maps, and historical material of the polders including references how the polders influenced Dutch high and low culture.

[3] My translation from the Dutch (see note 1). This malaise in The Netherlands has been described by me in English with the title "Lost in Paradise" and can be found in the Architecture Yearbook, 2001 – 2002, NAi publishers, edited by Anne Hoogewoning. Piet Vollaard, Roemer van Toorn and Arthur Worthman, 2002.

The Right to the City

From all sides – even from developers and investors in the Netherlands – the call is heard today[4] that the terror that is neoliberal urbanization, resulting in a total splintering land and cityscape – should be put on hold. The paradox of this moment in history is that instead of trying to define what it could mean to be modern, almost everybody embraces nostalgic ideas that never existed out of fear for the unknown knocking at their door. They are realizing what the philosopher Frederic Jameson calls a 'nostalgia for the present'. A world is reconstructed which we never actually lost. It may look like the past, but in reality it is nothing other than nostalgia without memory. They idealize a world that never existed, which in reality only exists in the here and now. "Experimentation and irony have disappeared in favor of a traditional Style" says Winy Maas.[5] "The crucial buildingprojects in the Netherlands suddenly go to calming down retro architects such as Koll-hoff, Krier and their followers." After the fall of the Berlin wall the consequent onslaught of neoliberal-ism, and the abuse of 911 to close public space by bureacratic legasliation, surveillance and policing has brought the total suburbanization of our life: living in gated communities, camps, playing and shopping in surveillanced space. Instead of the often heard r'apple d'orde – "cleaning" up the mesh par example by fenced of nostalgia castle houses with golfcourse in between,[6] this Biennale researches what it could mean to be modern in our global urban age in the face of further modernization.

In his article "The Right to The City",[7] Henri Lefebvre explains that the City should be understood as an oeuvre – a work in which all its citizens can participate in the public sphere. The publicity in the city needs a thick heterogeneity: the constant attraction of new immigrants and spaces of density. The city is where difference lives and where the shape of the city, the terms of access to the public realm, and even rights of citizenship constantly have to be renegotiated. Out of this struggle – the city as a work, as a oeuvre, as a collective if not singular project – emerge new modes of living, and new modes of in- and cohabitation are produced. In the bourgeois city the oeuvre is alienated says Lefebvre. Capitalism's totalitarian demand to individualize everything results in the breakdown of social relations, not knowing how to keep individuals together as a collective. Now that the individual has taken precedence over the community and the fittest have prospered, there have been devastating consequesnces on the vast majority of people everywhere, as explained by the different curators in this Biennale.

In fact, as David Harvey has shown, the reor-ganization of international capitalism should be understood as a political project which wants to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites. The interest of this dominant neoliberal class and its sets of economic interest is not in favor of making the city a site for the cohabitation of differences.[8] As Margaret Thatcher declared famously, "[there is] no such thing as society, only individual men and women." She subsequently included "families" as part of this declaration. All forms of social solidar-ity were to be dissolved in favor of individualism, private property, personal responsibility, flexibility and family values. Economics are the method, but the object is to change the soul.[9] Neo-liberalism seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market. More and more spaces are made for us and not by us says Don Mitchell.[10] Its "creative destruction", remarks Harvey, destroys not only prior institutional frameworks and powers (even challenging traditional forms of state sovereignty), but also division of labor, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life and thought, reproductive activities, attachments to the land and habits of the heart. "A contradiction arises between the seductive and alienating possessive individualism on the one hand and the desire for a meaningful collective life on the other" remarks Davis Harvey. According to Lefebvre, people have the right to the oeuvre. Moreover, this right is related to objective needs – "the need for creative activity, for the oeuvre (not only of products and consumable material goods), the need for informa-tion, symbolism, the imaginary and play"[11] – needs that any city should be structured toward meet-ing. Lefebvre remarks that the right to the city is the right to urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and the complete usage of moments and places. The right to inhabit, use value free from exchange value. The right for appropriation way beyond ownership, the right to housing in opposition to right to ownership, etc.[12] Lefebvre wrote his article in 1968. Since than a lot has changed, but his claim remains: the right to the city is more urgent than ever in our urban age. The task for everybody who is involved in creating our urban environment today is how we can re-invent an idea of the city in opposition to the endless chaos neoliberal urbanization advocates.

Talking about the right to the city concerns a spatial politics that is about struggle, debate and dissonance in the public sphere. Architecture can-not, of course, conduct parliamentary politics. Spa-tial constellations can deliver no advice on how to vote or convey messages about social and political problems. Architecture is political precisely because of the distance it takes from these functions. But architecture can be political in the way in which it can organize collectivity or individuality, and the way it defines outside/inside relations within the city. Ar-chitecture is political in the manner it makes reality visible by means of its own organization and form, and gives social direction. After all, architecture influences our sense of being, our experience of a spatial constellation, how we move through space, and what we imagine a city to be.

Many neoliberal cities today – such as the Corporate City and The Spectacular City with its Hidden City full of informal creativity – do con-struct conditions full of contradictions that bring about heterogeneous combinations, but these but these de-mobilize any political agenda of emancipa-tion. Every collective situation in the Spectacular and Corporate City is objectified and therefore no longer makes a difference. No secrets are unlocked and no new possibilities are opened, nor does it lend itself to a polemic about our controversial real-ity. Neoliberalism is not interested in politics, but after policing. In other words, trying to normalize everything as quickly as possible, avoiding any kind of disagreement or discussion. What has been lost is the fact that a system replete with heterogeneity can also raise urgent matters without consensus, without already wanting or being able to provide the ultimate answer.

Citizens come to the city to be free, but both cities and freedom are messy, and often danger-ous. The alternative is bureaucratic order, which raises the question "whose order?" Many architects, bureaucratic institutions and politicians want the urban experience to be cozy, tidy, green, and de-signed without any form of dissonance or challenge. Although the sprawl of urbanization today is full of unintended heterogeneities it doesn't propagate anxiety. A true city is full of anxiety – contradic-tions which stimulate progression – like in Wil-liam Blake's "Proverbs of Hell" which states that "opposition is true friendship". In this Architecture Biennale, 14 architecture offices together with the five city curators will show that the cohabitation of juxtapositions existing in our extreme reality can be a starting point for the establishment of new social politic connections. Instead of the closed city dominated by private interests, fear, order and gated communties, the proposals in this International Architecture Biennale opt for porous collective systems in which the power of neoliberalism is ex-posed and contested, and relations between strang-ers become possible through different formations of dissent. The problem they face is not political architecture – the grand-narrative of neoliberal-ism – but how to make the architecture of the city political again.

The Architect as Public Intellectual

Although the number of free elections and elected governments in the world is increasing, it does not diminish the fact that the public electoral debate is engineered with precision by a strictly controlled and staged spectacle. The majority of the population plays a passive, quiet, apathetic role, and can only respond based on the signals dished out to them. Behind this spectacle of the electoral game, politics is shaped in private by the interaction between elected governments and elites that overwhelmingly represent the interests of the free market and big business. The real question is where the world of politics stands. Are we sliding down farther toward a post-democratic model as analyzed by Colin Crouch Is politics disappearing under post-dem-ocratic conditions in the air-conditioned business lobbies of the privileged elites. Or is there a role to be played by the architect as a public intellectual?

According to Edward Said[13] the intellectual is an individual with a specific public role in society that cannot be reduced simply to being a faceless profes-sional, a competent member of a class just going about her/his business. The central fact, says Said, is that the intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty to representing, embodying, and articulat-ing a message, a view, an attitude, a philosophy or an opinion to, as well as for, a public. This role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without publicly raising embarrassing questions to confront ortho-doxy and dogma (rather than produce them). The intellectual must be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose raison d'etre is to represent all people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the carpet.

Traditional intellectuals of academia uphold eternal standards of truth and justice that are not of today's world. Therefore, architects in pursuit of practical solutions cannot be traditional intellectu-als, and instead must be organic intellectuals[14] who work inside a discipline, able to use their expertise to organize space through their material practice.

The curators and architects in this exhibition are public intellectuals trying to speak the truth to power because they cannot be mistaken for an anonymous functionary or careful bureaucrat. Their fresh perceptions involve the capacity to continually

city- growth by the hour, total urbanization

nostalgia castle houses with golf courses, NL

there's no such thing as society

the right to the city

corporate city

spectacle city

Edward Said

cozy, tidy, green

Essay

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capital city

informal city

hidden city

unmask and smash the stereotypes of the intellectual.

All architects involved in this International Architecture Biennale, "Visionary Power", try to operate as public intellectuals. They may disagree about how to reach their goal, apply different expertise and operate in different locales, but they do have the following in common:

- Once you know who's side your on, you also know who your enemy is. The architects in this exhibition not only know their enemy by heart, but also show its true faces that it prefers to hide. In neoliberalism the search for truth goes on as an endless conversation from which the force of power (the enemy) is absent and where reason and persuasion seem to prevail. Political and economical conflict are transformed into a matter of opinion: the story is told that the better you are informed and more "enlightened" the public is, the closer it will come to the truth. Knowing your enemy means that you decide whose side you're on, it is not just a matter of collection date and opinions. Being a public intellectual is based on awareness that proper political questions always involve decisions, which require making a choice between conflicting alternatives.[15]

- Facing marginality or accepting the conventions of commercial practice is not what a public intellectual is after. Contemporary cities and urban structures – from Dubai to Mexico City – demonstrate that the complex interactions of desire, density and commerce that characterize the urban field will consistently exceed the predictable expectations of critical discourse. Public intellectuals are curious about another degree of deviance from within the system: a "cheating in the mix" [16]. That is why all research includes mapping, a kind of projective mapping that is based on matters of concern, data that helps mobilize the progressive agenda. Complicity and negotiation with our extreme reality is seen as the only option for change. After all the space of the city is in continual flux: dynamic and self regulating. Not for nothing does Roberto Unger assign a specific role to the uncovering of the wild contingency of the city: "If the triumph of certain institutions and ideas was relatively accidental, their replacement can also be more easily imagined as realistic."[17]

- Instead of celebrating the paradigm of difference, the public intellectuals in this exhibition look for truth; a multiple truth that engages the urgent issues of contemporary society. The urgent question being asked is: how can you make a city democratic again in the face of total individualization?

- Instead of prioritizing the pure, solid, functional and objective qualities of the self-referential architectural object, the public intellectual explores what kinds of experiential qualities can be activated by architectural aesthetics and organization.

- The question this Architecture Biennale raises is not whether populism bad or good, but rather what kind of political logic[18] of the popular, of the public sphere, can be constructed in our contemporary cities? For many of us the popular has a negative connotation. Populism is depicted as anti-elite, cheap, irrational, folkloristic and dangerously superficial. But what we share as a group is of essential importance for every society. Whatever political system you choose, a democracy or dictatorship, they all have to deal with a certain idea of the collective and how it could be a leading principle for the city.

One World City.
Instead of simply a collection of data on cities –such as densities, sustainability, population figures, and other statistical material that directs this Architecture Biennale– five essential neoliberal phenomena which dominate and influence our urban environment have been selected to show the true face of urbanized world. Together, these five often invisible key phenomena make up the political map of our urban world environment.

Once you understand these five neoliberal city phenomena you discover how these dominant powers arrive at several cities worldwide and how these dominant powers can be redirected through different architecture practices which operate politically.

The global powers permanently active at the foreground of the city are those that are the most spectacular: the powers of the capital cities and of major corporations. Less known (off the radar and hidden from view) are the so called backstages of urbanization which are essential for the foreground city to succeed. In this Biennale these cities are called the Hidden and the Informal City of world urbanization. Together these five powerful phenomena make up the One World Neoliberal City map in which the 14 cities documented search for alternative routes as advocated by the young architecture offices selected. In short this International Biennale of Rotterdam exposes the unknown city of urbanization, or what Bruno Latour has called the "unconscious of the modernization", the space of mediation we experience with every move we make without any idea of the political today. Instead of explaining all 14 projects in detail and what the five curators have written on their Spectacular City, Hidden City, Corporate City, Capital City and Informal City (see elsewhere in this catalogue), I will

indicate what different positions have been taken in order to redirect neoliberalism through a specific political agenda.

Different Political strategies
When the architect operates as public intellectual by contesting neoliberal urbanization by advocating progressive alternatives for the city, it is not clear which political strategy a practitioner prefers or which method (and expertise) the architect finds most effective. This depends on certain beliefs and the specific urban territory that the architect operates upon. Let's look into some of the Biennale architecture projects, and their curators, to better understand which political strategies have been developed and how they believe neoliberal urbanization could be contested by reconfiguring the notion of the citizen against the individual consumer and their gated communities.

For the sake of clarity imagine a continuum which shifts from institutional authority to guerrilla tactics. Within this spectrum you can locate all the different ideological positions of the 14 projects. Some approaches hold on to the power of form: the authority of architectural monumentality; an absolute idea of architecture[19]. Others are not interested in the image nor form of architecture. They concentrate on participation from the ground up and invent complex and empowering systems of self-organization, sometimes against, sometimes cheating the mix. Let's look to a few of them[20] to better understand where they stand and what they produce:

1.
Counter-Institutional
Architecture.
Negative Critique
With their plea for para-architecture the curators of the Hidden City, Lieven De Cauter & Michiel Dehaene, research how architecture and urbanism can respond to the rise of the hidden cities such as detention centers, refugee camps, and transit camps. With their para-architecture they look for imagined heterotopias from where the existing status quo of neo-liberalism can be put under fire.

De Cauter & Dehaene look for a kind of paper-architecture that exposes and makes legible the extremes of our neo-liberal society. This approach is most evident in the Border Polis designed by Kersten at the city of Cueta. With the Centro Direzionale in Turin by G. Polesello, A Rossi and L. Meda (1962) in mind, Kersten designed a camp/prison/sanctuary of horrific beauty. Fortress Europe shows its true face: defending its Western privileges against all "strangers". It is an architecture that tells

the truth to power knowing that it cannot solve the tragedy of exclusion.

Instead of celebrating the foreground of the Spectacular City or Corporate Zone - with its middleclass "paradises" fetishizing individual desires - De Cauter & DeHaene dismantle the good looks and lifestyles of suburbanization. They show the consequences of the dominant neo-liberal powers by exposing what normally stays hidden from view in the Western urban landscape and the media.

Instead of hiding or resolving conflicts, De Cauter and DeHaene believe that architecture under the control of neo-liberalism should tell the truth to power by a kind of non-participation, suspension, reversal, or even standstill. The advice of the philosopher Theodor Adorno is that if the everyday world is corrupt, then there is only one thing that the aesthetic experience can do: distance itself from reality so as to guarantee a pure aesthetic promise exposing the real contradictions. Such a negation of reality by means of a strong and almost absolute aesthetic gesture in architecture is meant to arouse resistance and rebellion in the political field.
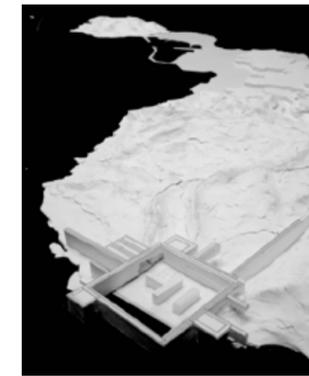
2.
Institutional Architecture.
The City as Political Form.
While De Cauter & Deheane tell the truth to power by sheltering the oppressed and exposing the horrific face of the neo-liberal city in the hope that one day it will be overthrown, Pier Vittorio Aureli, with his Capital Cities research, investigates how architecture as urban artifact can counter the neo-liberal culture of individualism. What ever happened to our metropolitan consciousness, the city as theatre of political debate and class conflict? Why should we celebrate a generic habitat of absolute individualism and a culture of sprawl based on the supremacy of mobility? It is these questions that the Capital Cities research tries to answer by investigated how true form – the one of monumentality representing power and the idea of the horizontal plane for collective action – can generate a civic space of appearance and confrontation. The research on Moscow investigates how through prefabricated housing projects for the masses, a collective idea of the city can be generated. While in Moscow the aesthetic order of monumentality is tested in mass housing, the project in Beirut researches with different means (rotating festivals, cedar evolution, a thick infrastructure of tents, rotating festival, etc) how the enactment of conflict by activities on different platforms in the open city could turn the city in a political form.
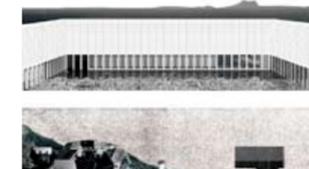
Both counter-institutional and institutional

Fortress Europe shows its real face

draft of "Border Polis", Cueta

counter- institutional architecture

institutional architecture

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architecture challenge the market and declare that it should be over. They both favor monumental, often monochromatic severe, empty and void spaces where only life itself is allowed to be colorful, human and joyful. The institutional architectural poetry promoted by De Cauter & Dehaene's embody the trauma of our existence: the impossibility of the real. The invisible walls and fences between the haves and have nots gets physical in all their horrendous truth. Aureli is not after exposing power in all its negativity for his politics is of another kind. He looks for redemption instead of exposing trauma. It is of no coincidence that he looks for spaces of co-existence and cohabitation in which the different powers come together and fight their battle of life. Instead of choosing a side, the city can be nothing else than a battle field of different voices. That is the only democratic and public truth architecture can represent and make visible. Aureli's city architecture is not after overthrowing power, or having a new world in mind such as De Cauter & Dehaene do, but gives the different powers present in the city the right to the city. They can write their oeuvre in all their purity, anger, honesty and vulnerability. All this on the basis of an almost eternal architectural truth: an architecture of formal rhetoric, monumentality, type and abstraction. This is an urban design that can be the prime contributor to the formations of the city by acknowledging the limits of architecture in failing to bring about revolution on its own.

In most cases true transnational economical and political power[21] is hidden from view. There are no representations of truth, platforms of public presence for debate or demonstration. Our collective desires are redirected into endless individual lifestyles and persuaded by beautifully designed architectural experiences. Both De Cauter, Deheane and Aureli show us the true face of neo-liberal power. De Cauter & Dehaene are after breaking consent by opposing the neoliberal city, while Aureli institutionalizes disagreement by overcoming the dictatorship of individualization in the city. Instead of setting up an "us against them" discourse, De Cauter, Dehaene and Aureli and are after a vibrant democratic culture where the political ideologies of the Left and Right are exposed and contested.

3.
Guerilla Architecture.
The Power of the Immediate
The curators Alfredo Brillembourg & Hubert Klumpner, working in the poor living areas of Caracas, don't fight the neoliberal system with conventional architecture. Instead of an institutional

approach – a belief in the "truth" of the formal language of architecture, or the power of institutions – Brillembourg & Klumpner use guerilla tactics. Guerilla tactics are a method of unconventional combat which operates from within informal culture, empowering local populations without the need for any uniform style. It is based on the reflexive capacity of the immediate, the inventive power of people to manipulate and negotiate existing conditions. As Raymond Williams has noted, however dominant a social system may be, the very means of its domination involves a limitation or selection of the activities it covers, so that by definition it cannot exhaust all social experience. What seems guarded in this guerilla tactic is immediacy, the unknown, that untreated bolus of direct experience, those line of flights that cannot be reflected by any dialectical opposition as we have seen in the projects of De Cauter & Dehaene and Aureli. So freedom is not something you have to establish outside reality by being critical towards society, but can also be developed through practical experiments in a world divided between privilege and poverty. In their work the borders between urbanism, architecture, design, art, film and social work blurs. They care less how they are called, as long as their projects improve the reality of the poor. Even when their work consists of physical objects it is at most tactical manipulations of political landscapes. Their built work aims to change the political status quo in such a way that more things become possible in our. They employ micro-tactics with macro-ambition. They identify small projects, working with communities and their intelligence by reusing, adapting, and modifying existing infrastructures to make them more viable and affordable.

In fact two kinds of humanity are activated in the informal city projects by Teddy Cruz in the San Diego/Tijuana zone. On the one hand there is the focus on the city as a place for equal opportunity, urban culture, and policies to serve the wellbeing of the citizens. On the other hand the informal city research by Cruz shows that the informal city provides answers to how we in the field of housing can overcome the problem of worldwide cocooning. In others words, how we can de-individualize our many gated communities. What Cruz discovered on the micro scale of the neighborhood are micro heterotopias that are emerging within small communities in the U.S. in the form of non-conforming spatial and entrepreneurial practices. These heterotopias define a different idea of density and land use, setting forth a counter form of urban and economic development that thrives on social encounter, collaboration and exchange. The trans-border

urban dynamics at play across the most trafficked checkpoint in the world has provoked the small border neighborhoods that surround it to construct alternative urbanisms of transgression. Within the research of Teddy Cruz we come very close to identifying what we can call Piratical Architecture.

4.
Piratical Architecture.
Cheating in the Mix
"A piratical architecture", according to curator Keller Easterling, "does not evaluate the integrity of expression or the regrettable urge to reform. It intervenes in the patterns of believers and cheaters, evaluating the ability of masquerades to leverage change."[22] According to Easterling architects are well trained to pirate in their own career: they have multiple voices, tactics, and a political craft to deploy self-promotion. However, the rest of the discipline reinforces the boundaries of its own world, its autonomy as an art form within which to write monologues that preserve its integrity. Aureli, De Cauter, and Dehaene prove that institutional architecture, the convention of form, can expose and even confront power on the urban scale of the city. Speaking the truth to power is not what guerilla architecture is after. With guerilla architecture the intelligent nature of the informal – the anarchistic survival system of everybody beyond the normative of the institutional – is mobilized to survive the terror of the status quo. No symbolic fight, but direct humanitarian action repairing what is destroyed even if the means are minimal.

With piratical architecture – a cheating in the mix – we adopt an attitude of finding luck on the sea. Liberation, convention and commodification can travel together in piratical architecture. Institutional architecture looks for truth, either the one of justice against neo-liberalism or the political form of the city. Guerilla architecture is a kind of "Médicins Sans Frontiéres." Whatever the system, it fights with the people for survival and justice through immediate action. Pirates do not only manage to survive any system but are also able to play within the system and even enjoy its extravagance. They fight the system with its own means, its own schizophrenia, without regretting its often corrupt attitude. What they share with the guerilla is its anti-authoritarian nature. Their weapon is the multitude, the one of immanence, while institutional architecture opposes the multitude through the institutional authority of architectural form and the alternatives it could shelter under its institutional roof (which could include pirate and guerilla action!). When Rafi Segal and Els Verbakel showed their research on

New Jersey for a Future Urbanism they screened the raw opening stills from the American television series The Sopranos. We see New Jersey from the car window of Tony Soprano who tries to be a good family man on two fronts: to his wife, kids and widowed mother and as a cape in the New Jersey mob. New Jersey is a sprawl city par excellence, the backyard, garden city making the Corporate Zone a success. Instead of ignoring the suburban setting of New Jersey all together, Segal and Verbakel read, interpret, and intervene like pirates dissecting, re-combining, and synthesizing what progressive spaces could emerge from within suburban New Jersey.

Institutional and guerilla architecture would shy away from the power of spectacle within place. Any spectacle is politically incorrect, too corrupt or just not to the point. But as John Urry correctly remarks, "spectacle-isation is necessary in order for places to enter the global order, to somehow to be 'recognized'".[23] Places depend upon performances, such as flâneurie, photographing, running, shopping, swimming, sunbathing, talking, reminiscing, reading, playing or listening to music, surfing, eating, partying, drinking, collecting, climbing and so on. Piratical Architecture doesn't ask the academic question of whether spectacle-isation is good or bad. The question is not defining the truth. As public intellectual you cannot afford yourself that kind of luxury when you have to change reality. The question is what kind of spectacle-isation you can construct given a certain situation. How you can reimagine the idea of heritage beyond densification for instance. How tourism can be the unexpected motor of cityness in Rome as ....., or how you can make a better World Heritage City by escaping the regulative power of the UNESCO in Innsbruck, overcoming the risk of freezing a city in a history that never happened in the first place.

From Political Cities
To Making Cities Politically
The political practices shown at this International Biennale Rotterdam Visionary Power are not interested in a practice of dissent, an element that has the function to express an a-priori discontent. Instead, confrontation and dissonance within the neoliberal system are used as a method to affect our imagination and social conditions in order to change the real conditions of life. As Michael Hirsch has remarked, "We have to liberate ourselves not only from the 'positive' idea of the conquest of power, but also from the negative idea of the contestation or provocation of authority."[24]

To make political cities is not that difficult. Even when you are blindfolded (or are in love with fash-

moscow- aesthetic order of monumentalism

Beirut- impossibility of the real

Guerilla Architecture

micro- heterotopia

micro-tactics with a macro ambition

[22] Enduring Inocence. Global Architecture and its political masquerades. Keller Easterling.

[23] See John Urry in this catalogue Cities of Spectacle.

[24] Michael Hirsch, Did Someone Say participate?, edited by Shuman Basar and Markus Miessen, article title: The space of community: between culture and politics.
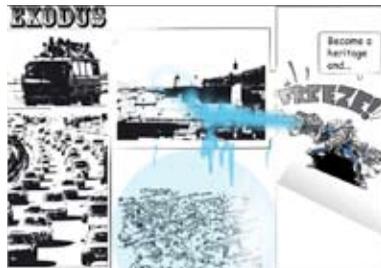

Las Vegas- believers and cheaters

Innsbruck on a post- card and in real life...

...note the mountain silhouette!

the risk of becoming a world heritage

the city as a place for the world citizen

ion or autonomous architecture) you are still a child of your time and its political and ideological implications. But to make cities politically means that you have to develop a vision which reaches further than the power of now, beyond the power of the market. All architects in this Biennale of Rotterdam see the architect as a public intellectual and are concerned with how our cities in the 21st century can be a place for the worldly citizen to live within. It is not a vision which rejects reality, but one concerned with the different realms of emancipatory politics that tries to develop alternatives based on what we urgently need in our contemporary society. Neoliberal individualism has to be contested.