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No More Dreams?
The Passion for Reality in Recent Dutch Architecture . . . and Its Limitations

It was once not considered foolish to dream great dreams. Imagining a new, better world energized thinkers and spurred their resistance to the status quo. Now utopian dreams are rare. Instead of chasing after elusive ideals, we prefer to surf the turbulent waves of free market global capitalism. In our wildly prosperous First World—brimful of computerized production, technological and genetic applications, and commercial and cultural entertainment—reality can seem more exciting than dreams. Some even maintain that the ideals we strove for in the past have now become reality: according to Third Way politics, the neoliberal economic engine simply needs a bit of fine-tuning; late capitalism is the only game in town: although social rights and a measure of equality are needed, globalism can only be accommodated.[1]

According to this free market fundamentalism, utopian attempts to change society lead to dictatorships. Not only conservatives think this. Neo-Marxists Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that the organization of resistance in the margins is no longer necessary now that resistance is active in the very heart of society.[2] They believe that late capitalism is so complex and dynamic that it is capable of switching automatically from an alienating equilibrium of control into a potentiality for multiple freedoms. Everything is changing much faster than we ever imagined it could. Until the 1980s, mainstream cultural institutions condemned the transgressive operations of the avant-garde, whereas today they support and favor trangressive works, because they gain publicity from scandal. Time and time again, global capitalism has shown itself capable of transforming its initial limitations into challenges that culminate in new investments. One important consequence of this is that earlier forms of social criticism and social engagement are outmoded. Thus many reflective architects believe that it no longer makes any sense to spend time constructing new ideologies or criticizing "the system." Instead, they draw inspiration from the perpetual mutations of late capitalism.[3]

During a symposium on "The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century" held at Columbia University, Sylvia Lavin, chair of the UCLA graduate department of architecture, uttered the provocation that architecture ceases to be "cool" when it clings to the critical tradition.[4] Nor is hers a lone voice; a whole cohort of American commentators is anxious to move beyond critical architecture.[5] One form of critical architecture—exemplified by the work of Peter Eisenman, Daniel Libeskind, Diller + Scofidio, and Bernard Tschumi— offers comments within architectural/social discourse and avoids looking for better alternatives in reality. The Frank House by Eisenman, for example, forces the couple living in it to think about the psychology of their cohabitation by placing a slot in the floor between their beds. Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting have argued provocatively that we should stop burning our fingers on this kind of "hot" architecture that insists on confrontations. Whiting and Somol discourage an architecture born out of pain or the need to sabotage norms. Instead architects should initiate "projective" practices that are "cool."[6] (Why the word *projective*? "Because it includes the term *project*—that is, it is more about an approach, a strategy, than a product; it looks forward [projects], unlike criticality, which always looks backwards," according to Sarah Whiting in an email.)

While Whiting and Somol focus foremost upon American critical architecture that has been valorized by theories of deconstruction, Critical Regionalism in Europe, Asia, and Australia—exemplified by the works of Ando, Hertzberger, Siza, and Murcutt—tries, out of disgust with contemporary society, to overcome estrangement, commodification, and the destruction of nature.[7] Critical Regionalism does not strive to make difficult or playful comments on society but to invest in alternative spaces far from the wild city of late capitalism. It hopes to locate moments of authenticity—to calm the mind and the body—in order to survive in our runaway world. While critical architecture deconstructs the discourse of architecture, demystifies the status quo, and/or locates alternative worlds in the margin, it believes that constructing liberating realities in the center of society is impossible.

In contrast to both deconstruction and Critical Regionalism, Whiting and Somol's proposed "projective practices" aim to engage realities found in specific local contexts. Instead of hanging ideological prejudices (derived from utopian dreams or from criticism) on built form, the architectural project, in their view, must be rendered capable of functioning interactively. With a projective practice the distancing of critical theory is replaced by a curatorial attitude. This new paradigm in architecture, to paraphrase Dutch writer Harm Tilman, presupposes a continuous focus on the method (the "how") that leaves the "what" and the "why" undefined.[8] By systematically researching reality as found with the help of diagrams and other analytical measures, all kinds of latent beauties, forces, and possibilities can, projective architects maintain, be brought to the surface.[9]

These found realities are not only activated by the projective project, but also, where possible, idealized. If all goes well in the realization of a projective design, the intelligent extrapolation of data, the deployment of an aesthetic sensibility, the transformation of the program, and the correct technology may activate utopian moments. But the utopianism is opportunistic, not centrally motivating.

Whereas projective projects are chiefly discussed in the United States, architects in the Netherlands, in other European countries and in Asian have for some time been pursued in practice. Before we look at some examples, we must pause to consider the nature and failure of it predecessor, critical architecture. On the one hand, projective practice is inspired by personal and strategic motives. After all, if you want to succeed in a new generation, it's a good idea to contrast your own position with that of the preceding generation. On the other hand, the critical tradition has itself handed projective architecture the arguments against dreaming totalizing dreams, against designing speculative systems that offer a comprehensive picture of what reality should be.

Disenchantment

Between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the 1970s, many architects came to the conclusion that Modern architecture, rather than fostering emancipation, encouraged repression and manipulation.[10] The depressing discovery that hopeful dreams can end in nightmares prompted prominent members of the architectural community—Kenneth Frampton, Manfredo Tafuri, Aldo Rossi, and Aldo van Eyck, among others—to mount a recalcitrant opposition to the commercial and populist city. They believed that instead of being a prisoner of modernity, architecture should mount continuous opposition to capitalist society. Quite apart from the fact that it operates in the margins of society and is often reserved for the elite, the creativity of critical architecture depends on dealing with very things it finds repugnant.

As Theodor Adorno remarked, "Beauty today can have no other measure except the depth to which a work resolves contradictions. A work must cut through the contradictions and overcome them, not by covering them up, but by pursuing them."[11] The void in the Jewish Museum by Daniel Libeskind in Berlin memorializing the Holocaust is an example of the beauty Theodor Adorno is after. The horror of Fascism as a dark shadow of disaster present in this void gives the museum its symbolic meaning. Jean Nouvel avoids critique through the creation of symbolic meaning conveyed obliquely through form. Nouvel wants to break the enchantment of our mediatic world with a strong and strange presence that leads to a kind of seductive contemplation. His objects are unidentifiable, inconsumable, strange. This uncanny architecture must be developed, according to social theorist Jean Baudrillard, to reach the inexplicable, a reality so ineffable that it can counteract the oversignification of everything in our culture of transient junk images.[12] The alien language of Nouvel's architecture has the aura of nothingness, or, in the words of Paul Virilio, of a mute and silent space in radical opposition to the surfeit of our design culture. Instead of the negation of our broad cultural situation found in the work of Daniel Libeskind or Jean Nouvel, Diller + Scofidio, as analyzed by Michael Hays, "produce a kind of inventory of suspicion. They capture the salient elements of

a given situation 'or problem,' register them, and slow down the processes that motivate them long enough to make the working perceptible, just before the whole thing again slips back into the cultural norm, beyond our critical grasp."[13]

Critical Regionalism, another form of critique, is a reaction against the rootlessness of modern urban life. It seeks durable values in opposition to our culture of mobility (it is no coincidence that Critical Regionalists see the car as a horror). Critical Regionalism locates its resistance in topography, anthropology, tectonics, and local light. It doesn't look for confrontation, as do Eisenman, Libeskind, Nouvel, or Diller + Scofidio, but is critical in its withdrawal from urban culture, and in its self-questioning and self-evaluating. According to Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, its place-defining elements have to create a distance, have to be difficult, and should even be disturbing to overcome the regional illusions of the familiar, the romantic, and the popular.[14] Critical architecture supposedly does not compromise itself since it tries to dismantle or distance itself from the logic that leads to exploitation. Yet, because of its constant need to unmask the forces to which it is opposed, it is condemned to engage at the scenes that threaten its effectiveness. As such, critical architecture is more reactive than proactive.

Critical architecture in general rests on a self-affirming system of theoretical and ideological convictions: "Look at me! I'm critical! Read me!" Somol and Whiting rightly remark that critical architecture proceeds from a preconceived legibility.[15] It is an architecture that brooks no alternative interpretations. Unless the critical theory and vision are legible in the object, the object fails. Critical architecture is opposed to the normative and anonymous conditions of the production process and dedicated to the production of difference. Criticism reveals the true face of repressive forces, and this view of power is supposed to promote political awareness. Criticism is critical architects' only hope. Much of this criticism is concentrated in formalist and deconstructive theory and has a textual and linguistic bias. Other critical positions, such as those of Aldo van Eyck and the early Herman Hertzberger, and of Critical Regionalism, try to create alternative worlds, "utopian islands" floating in seas of anonymity and destruction.

Although I have much sympathy for Critical Regionalism, it is too nostalgic for a lost, mainly rural landscape, too comfortable and marginal, too much in love with architecture (rather than the life that architecture can help script). Preferable, it seems to me, are works that operate with and within society at large and that set a collective and public agenda in direct communication with modernization. The victimology of critical theory leaves no room for plausible readings capable of completing a project in the mundane context of the everyday (including that of alienation and commodification). Estrangement must not be thought of as something to overcome, but as a position from within which new horizons can open. Although the urban, capitalist, and modern everyday is pushing towards increased homogeneity in daily life, the irreconcilable disjunctions born in a postindustrial city full of anachronistic interstices make it impossible to think of modernization as only negative. Michel de Certeau's work confirmed the impossibility of a full colonization of everyday life by late capitalism and stressed that potential alternatives are always available, since individuals and institutions arrange resources and choose methods through particular creative arrangements. Often critical experts and intellectuals prefer to think of themselves as outside everyday life. Convinced that it is corrupt, they attempt to evade it. They use rhetorical language, meta-language, or autonomous language—to paraphrase Henri Lefebvre—as permanent substitutes for experience, allowing them to ignore the mediocrity of their own condition. Critical practices reject and react unsubtly to the positive things that have been achieved in contemporary society, such as the vitality of much popular culture, including its hedonism, luxury, and laughter.

After critique
Instead of assailing reality with a priori positions or resistance, as critical architecture does, projective practices analyze the facts and, in the process of creation, make micro-decisions

capable of transforming a project in concrete and surprising ways. The architect waits and sees in the process of creation where information leads him or her. As Michael Rock recently remarked, "Much of the strange shapes of recent Dutch architecture can be attributed to the devotion to the diagram, and the authorial absolution it grants. By taking traditional Dutch pragmatism to absurd, deadpan extremes, the designer generates new, wholly unexpected forms. Some of Droog Design embodies this absurdist-hyper-rationalism. The designer simply continues to apply the system until the form appears in all its strangeness. Dutch design seems intent on erasing the sense that any designer imposed any subjectivity."[16]

The touchstone here is not subjective vision but an addiction to extreme realism, a realism that is intended to show no theoretical or political mediation, a kind of degree zero of the political, without thought about the consequences of the social construction it would lead to in reality. The extreme realities the projective is obliged to confront are the cyborg; the information society; the global migration of money, people, and imagination; shopping; fashion; media; leisure; and the coincidence of the enormous effectiveness and absolute abstraction of digitization. In other words, this practice brings to its extreme the consequences of the processes of commodification, alienation, and estrangement that constitute the contemporary motor of modernity.

For projective practices, dreaming is no longer necessary, since even our wildest dreams are incapable of predicting how inspiring, chaotic, liberating, and dynamic reality can be. The intelligence a project is able to embody in negotiation with reality is what matters. According to the proponents of projective practices, involvement, even complicity with given conditions, rather than aloofness, is more productive than dreaming of a new world. Projective practices respect and reorganize the diverse economies, ecologies, information systems, and social groups present during the process of creation. Projective architecture also promotes a return to the discipline in a pragmatic and technical approach that takes account of the interdisciplinary influences that play a role in the realization of projects. Central to projective practice is the question of what architecture is able to express as material reality. The paternalistic "we know best" attitude that has long hindered critical architecture is a thing of the past. And architecture is allowed to be beautiful without any tortured worrying over accompanying dangers of superficiality or slickness.[17] We no longer have to say "sorry," according to Robert Somol.[18] Often projective architects, like Foreign Office Architects, have no idea what they seek except apolitical architectural knowledge driven only by technology and instrumentality. Others speak about beauty (the theme of the 2007 Documenta exhibition in Kassel), technical knowledge, and in some cases bottom-up self-organizing systems.[19]

The question now is what projective practices can affect in actuality. From my perspective, they come in three basic types in many recent realized projects in the Netherlands, types that display "projective autonomy," "projective mise-en-scène," and "projective naturalization." As we shall see, projective autonomy confines itself primary to models of geometry. Projective mise-en-scène and projective naturalization, by contrast, experiment with architecture as infrastructure. Projective autonomy tries to restore contact with the user and the contemplator through passive experience, while projective mise-en-scène and projective naturalization seek interaction. While projective autonomy is interested in form—what the aesthetic by its own means is able to communicate—the projective mise-en-scène seeks the creation of theatrical situations, and projective naturalization seeks strictly instrumental and operational systems.

In the practices in the Netherlands I am about to discuss, architects are not theorizing their work as "projective"; rather they are practicing and making in ways that fit this American concept.

Projective autonomy
The architecture of Claus & Kaan, Rapp + Rapp, and Neutelings Riedijk reveals what I am calling "projective autonomy." The meticulously crafted forms (a return to the discipline)

characteristic of their projective strategy offer comfort and reassurance. Projective autonomy revolves around the self-sufficiency of tasteful, subdued form, which, notwithstanding the vicissitudes of life or passing dreams, is in theory capable of enduring for centuries. In many cases it appears as a modest architecture that combines functional, economic, and representational requirements in an efficient, aesthetic, and sustainable manner. The preference for tranquility and harmony, for aloofness from change, means that in projective autonomy we are dealing with a conventional or limited projective practice. Projective autonomy is not concerned with movement, complexity, or any of the other dynamic processes that can be used to legitimize projects, but with relatively stable cultural and economic values.

Rapp + Rapp work with received architectural language, with the internal structure of architectural typologies as the residuum of the historical and the contemporary city, very much in the spirit of the early less figurative work of Aldo Rossi, Hans Kollhoff, and Colin Rowe. Thus the foyer in Amsterdam's Bos en Lommer district is a variation of the classic atrium typology. For Claus & Kaan, the organizing principal is not historical typology but the typographic autonomy of a building—I am referring not so much to the architects' fondness for letters and numbers as to the way they "interspace" the building—to the rhythm of thick and thin spaces by which the individual elements, from the smallest detail to the entire volume, are ordered. Just as the typographer selects his typeface and searches for the most appropriate spacing, so Claus & Kaan deal in a craftsmanly and repetitive manner with windows, columns, doors, facade panels, and volumes. They pursue a conventional architecture that inspires confidence and eschews controversy, that is about mass, boxy volumes, light, beauty, and style.[20] Radical chic and subversion are definitely not goals for them, but their buildings do possess some minimalist chic. The abstract language and meticulous detailing lend their buildings a self-satisfied, stylish gloss. The floating black bar with its sleek banded pattern in the main facade of the Municipal Offices in Breda reveals a certain kinship with the elegant profiling of Bang & Olufsen design. Minimal chic glosses over vulgarities with its abstract perfection.

While the buildings of Rapp + Rapp and of Claus & Kaan behave decorously and seriously, fun is given plenty of running room in the work of Neutelings Riedijk. No puritanical architecture for them, but instead good strong shapes that tell a story. Architecture, like television, comics, and other manifestations of popular visual culture, must communicate with the public. In the case of Neutelings Riedijk it is once again possible to speak of "buildings with character." Neutelings Riedijk strive for dramatic effects that offer the viewer an "everyday architectural surrealism."[21] Their buildings are *dramatis personae* that have stepped into our carpet metropolis, turning their heads to survey their surroundings. Buildings in the landscape become part of the theater of life, although the leading player here is not the user but the architecture. Neutelings Riedijk are interested not in life itself, but in the autonomy of the decor against which it is played out. Their buildings may be brooding, robust, humorous, even bizarre. A critical architecture would use these powerful characteristics to sabotage the language of architecture or the norms and values of society. The "pop art" of Neutelings Riedijk, unlike that of Andy Warhol for example, is free of ulterior motives. Their buildings are intended to be autonomous characters, to radiate a unique and subversively entertaining identity that we will not easily forget. Such narrative sculpture is ideally suited to the branding game so loved by clients and cities.

Projective mise-en-scène

In the projective mise-en-scène approach favored by MVRDV and NL Architects, the user becomes an actor invited to take an active part in the theater choreographed by the architects. In these projective practices, projects are not to be contemplated; rather they throw reality forward through the help of scenarios inspired by the theatrical programs the architects write based upon the data they find within contemporary "extreme reality." Because nobody really knows what the "appropriate" response is to the unprecedented degree of innovation and uncertainty in this reality, observing its many mutations "neutrally" is seen as essential.

In the projective mise-en-scène, the city is one huge datascape. The architects use a method based on systematic idealization, an overestimation of available clues in which it is possible to integrate even mediocre elements. The program of requirements, which sometimes seems impossible to comply with, is followed to the letter, as are the complex and stringent Dutch building regulations. But an experiment with the real world remains the basic aim: in the margins and gaps of late capitalism these architects hope to foreground unclassified realities easily seen as parts of the ordinary world, while turning them upside down by means of theatrical performances.

Usually theatrical performances allow us to dream of other worlds. Not so the theatre of MVRDV and NL Architects: after observing and charting our dynamic society, they go in search of new shapes which, with the help of an inventive program and a fresh aesthetic, cater to actual and everyday demands of use. They turn life into an optimistic and cheerful play that generates new solutions while making jokes about our constantly mutating reality. Giving the flat roof of the bar in Utrecht an added function is not just a clever use of space; by putting a basketball court on the roof of this student bar, NL Architects also achieve a delightfully absurd juxtaposition of two quite different milieus. MVRDV makes "endless" interiors in which diverse programs are compactly interwoven. The architects call them "hungry boxes," boxes hungry to combine different programs in a continuous landscape.[22] Whereas Neutelings Riedijk create representational forms that tell a story at one remove from the user/observer, MVRDV translate the program into a carefully choreographed spatial experience that incorporates the user into science fictions hidden in the everyday. When you stack all the village libraries from the province of Brabant in one huge skyscraper with the looks of an updated tower of Pisa and make individual study rooms into elevators zipping up and down the facade of books, the user suddenly takes part in a futuristic mise-en-scène.

With NL and MVRDV, we can justifiably speak of spectacular effects, of "scripted spaces" that steer experience (especially via the eye) in a particular direction. While NL makes jokes and develops a trendy lifestyle typology without bothering too much about providing the design with a data-based, pseudo-scientific alibi, MVRDV looks for new spatial concepts capable of giving our deregulated society the best imaginable spectacular shape.

In projective mise-en-scène, it is not the autonomous force of the type, of chic minimalism, or of expressive decor that is given free rein—as in projective autonomy—but the daydreams alive in society. Objects are not important as things in a projective mise-en-scène; they are there to be used as a screen onto which fragments of our extreme reality can be projected. (On the Dutch pavilion at the Hannover world expo, MVRDV projected all kinds of Dutch data clichés—the artificial landscape, the dunes, tulip fields, a forest, and windmills.) As in the social sciences, objects are seen as the carriers of everyday culture and lifestyle. The architecture is a co-producer in the embodiment of cultural and social meaning. In projective mises-en-scène, everyday life is magnified by the spectacular decor that the architect assembles from data that reproduce the hidden logic of contemporary society. Instead of continuing to hide the more than sixteen million pigs in thousands of pitch-roofed bioindustry barns spread over the picturesque countryside of the Netherlands, MVRDV proposes that it is more efficient and animal-friendly to house pigs in high-rise flats in the harbor of Rotterdam. Suddenly—without any value judgment—the facts that there are more pigs than people in the Netherlands and that pigs can be happy in high-rises with a view—looks plausible. The shock effect of such a surreal and pragmatic mise-en-scène—like the Benetton billboards by Olivier Toscani with an AIDS patient dying in a living room—will immediately grab our attention. But if this bewildering realistic mode of representation is interested in either a better world or in exposing our Brave New World remains uncertain. The fables that lie hidden in the everyday are made visible by MVRDV's opportunistic imagination and make users into leading actors, as in the "Medical Center Pajama Garden" in Veldhoven. Instead of hanging around the sterile corridors and other introverted spaces typical of a hospital, patients can relax in their pajamas daydreaming of the Mediterranean among olive trees and other surreal "Mediterranean" set

pieces.

Dreaming about utopias has lost its appeal. The everyday is so rich in fantasies that dreaming of a different world outside the existing one is no longer necessary. Like Steven Spielberg, architects must provide new representations that everyone can enjoy.[23] Entertainment first confronts you with dystopias (e.g., sixteen million stacked pigs), then guarantees a happy ending by glossing them over with "pragmatic solutions" ensuring conformity. The attitude is the putatively cool "Whatever."

Projective naturalization

The limitation of projective mise-en-scène is that, while it is busily projecting meaning onto things, it forgets that things can themselves convey meaning, can be sensitive and active, and can activate processes in both the eye and the body. That performative capacity is at the heart of practices that follow the route of what could be called "projective naturalization." In the Netherlands, projective naturalizations have been developed by, among others, Oosterhuis.nl, UN Studio, Maurice Nio, and NOX Architekten. They featured largely in the recent "Non-Standard Architectures" exhibition in Paris.[24] Projective naturalization is not about signs, messages, codes, programs, or collages of ideas projected onto an object, but about technologies that allow matter to be performative.

Architect Lars Spuybroek of NOX is not interested in technology as a way of regulating functions and comfort. He sees it as a destabilizing force whose function is to fulfill our craving for the accidental by providing a variety of potentialities and events. "With the fluid merging of skin and environment, body and space, object and speed, we will also merge plan and volume, floor and screen, surface and interface, and leave the mechanistic view of the body for a more plastic, liquid, and haptic version where action and vision are synthesized," he writes.[25] What geology, biology, and even history have taught the architects of projective naturalization is that mutable processes generate far more intelligent, refined, and complex systems than ready-made ideas ever can.[26] This non-conventional architecture comprehends many shapes and schools.[27] What these manifestations have in common with nature is that the shapes they produce exhibit similarities with the structures, processes, and shapes of biology. The properties of these buildings change in response to changing conditions, just as nature does. A facade is not simply a shell, but a skin with depth that changes in response to activity, light, temperature, and sometimes even emotions.

A blobbish interactive "D-tower" designed by NOX is connected to a website at which the city's inhabitants can record responses to a questionnaire, designed and written by artist Q.S. Serafijn, about their everyday emotions: hate, love, happiness, and fear. The answers are graphed in different "landscapes" on the website that show the valleys and peaks of emotions for each of the city's postal codes. The four emotions are represented by green, red, blue, and yellow, and determine the colors of the lamps illuminating the tower. Each night, driving through the city of Doetinchem, one can see which emotion is most deeply felt that day. A host of measurable data and technologies gives rise to a sophisticated metabolism that, as in Foreign Office Architects' *Yokohama Terminal*, channels the flows of people, cars, ships, and information like blood cells through and near the organism of the building. The project tries to function without obstacles or other complications and avoids communicating cultural meaning through shock, as does the work of MVRDV.

Projective naturalization projects are not rough or unfinished like many projective mise-en-scènes, but smooth and fluid. It is not ideology but the (wished for) instinct of artificial organisms that ensures that complex processes are operating appropriately. Buildings are intended to function like bodies without heads following complex biomechanical logic. When Foreign Office Architects exhibited their Yokohama terminal at the Venice Biennale, they showed sections of a body scan parallel to the one of the terminals, suggesting that the logic of a building should resemble the body's. The foreign presence of forms generated by the "genetic manipulation" of data and technology in projective naturalizations helps prevent instant categorization of these projects as good or bad, beautiful or ugly. Judgment is deferred.

The building rebuffs immediate consumption as symbol or myth; instead it invites people to use it, to interpret, to enter into relations, to step into a stream of stimuli organized by matter. More than ever a building is able—by means of the new digital design methods and computer-controlled production of complex 3D elements ("advanced prototyping")—to behave like an organism.

In contrast to projective mises-en-scène, projective naturalizations are not interested in projecting scenarios onto objects related to society, religion, power, politics, globalization, or individuals. Projective naturalizations possess a super-functionality that revolves around movement, self-organization, and interactivity.[28] The intelligence of the project does not reside in a capacity for reflection, in offering a representation for or against something, but in activating open processes that can supposedly function automatically in accord with the flows of the status quo. Projective naturalizations are about modulating precise and local decisions from a mechanistic perspective interested in open, self-organizing systems that allow flows of consensus to follow their different trajectories with the aid of an advanced construction processes. Grand dreams and other paradigms—except those of advanced technology and design expertise—are of little relevance. While concentrating on organic abstractions, projective naturalizations totally neglect the fact that every appropriation of a project depends on narratives of use—is about the interaction between social behavior and a given objective condition. What projective naturalizations tend to forget is that our social actions and behavior, not our biological bodies, constitute our identities.[29]

Larger ambitions
Breaking with criticism, a passion for reality and a return to what architecture as a discipline is capable of projecting are essential to make the most of the many possibilities inherent in the "second modernity."[30] Instead of predicting the future, we have to be attentive to the unknown knocking at the door. Projective practices also demonstrate that the question is not whether architecture should participate in late capitalism. That is a given. But what form this relationship with the market should take is an ethical and political question that cannot be curated only in pragmatic, technical, or aesthetic terms.

The projective practices described here create spaces cut from the same cloth as the garments of the ruling systems. As such they confine themselves to forms of comfort enjoyed in particular by the global middle class. Apart from fear of confrontation with the unknown, the chief concerns of this middle class are the smooth processes that guarantee its rights to power, individualism, career, identity, luxury, amusement, consuming, and the infrastructure that makes all this possible.

This totalitarianism of difference, of individual rights—celebrated as the "multitude" of neoliberalism—overlooks the fact that it is essential to pay attention to the collective interests of the world population (including that of the transnational middle class). Instead of the paradigm of difference, we should vivify a paradigm of sameness and supra-individual responsibility. Culture is now all about diversity, flexibility, and the search for permanent novelty and effect that a project initiates, about how an object can relate to the market as an open supposedly neutral platform. This is a strategy without political ideals, without political or socio-historical awareness, that is in danger of becoming the victim of a dictatorship of aesthetics, technology, and the pragmatism of the blindly onrushing global economy. Instead of taking responsibility for the design, instead of having the courage to steer flows in a certain direction, the ethical and political consequences arising from the design decisions are left to the market,[31] and the architect retreats into the givens of his discipline. In that way, all three projective practices described here are formalistic.

The positive thing about projective practices is that in the making of a project, under the influence of the material, the economy, the construction, the form, the program, the specific context, and with the help of architectural knowledge and instruments, projections can be tested and developed. In the very act of walking, projective practices create their paths.

In the making of work, reality projects itself.

What these projective practices fail to see, however, is that utopian dreams are necessary in order to develop in a project a perspective that reaches beyond the status quo. I am not suggesting that utopian dreams can be realized, but that such dreams provide frames of reference for political action. Utopian dreams also enable us to make a detached diagnoses of the present. This moment of exile from the addiction to reality could make us aware of our own inevitable and implicit value judgments, of the fact that excluding political and social direction itself sets a political and social direction. It is the interaction between the dream of utopia with reality that could help a projective practice develop a new social perspective. What should fascinate projective practice is how it might inflect capitalism towards democracy.

The only problem is that so far almost nobody has been prepared to rethink the now-eroded concept of democracy or to carry out research into what democracy could mean today in spatial terms.[32] Talking about democracy is simultaneously a taboo and a fetish. We treat the word *democracy* as a palliative that relieves us from having to think hard about its realization.

If we were to dream about new forms of democracy, we would develop visions that shake off the current political ennui, the blind pursuit of the market, and our incessant navel-gazing. But instead it looks as if we have nodded off. Do we really derive so much enjoyment from the addictive consumption of comfort, design trends, technology, and countless mutually indifferent differences? Isn't it time to wake from our deep sleep and again dream of utopias?

Roemer van Toorn

Notes

1. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1999), *The Global Third Way Debate,* Anthony Giddens, ed. (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2001).

2. In Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), *Debating Empire,* Gopal Balakarishnan, ed., (London and New York: Verso, 2003).

3. See also *Latent Utopias: Experiments within Contemporary Architecture*, Zaha Hadid and Patrik Schumacher, eds. (Vienna and New York: Springer Verlag, 2002).

4. Symposium held to mark Bernard Tschumi's retirement as dean of Columbia University, New York City, March 28–29, 2003, now published in a book, *The State of Architecture at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, Bernard Tschumi and Irene Cheng, eds. (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2003).

5. More information about "post-critical" can be found in: Sanford Kwinter, "Who is Afraid of Formalism?" *ANY* 7/8, 1994; "Equipping the Architect for Today's Society: the Berlage Institute in the Educational Landscape" (dialogue between Wiel Arets, Alejandro Zaero-Polo, and Roemer van Toorn), Stan Allen, "Revising Our Expertise," Sylvia Lavin, "In a Contemporary Mood," and Michael Speaks, "Design Intelligence" in *Hunch*, 6/7, 2003; Jeffrey Kipnis, "On the Wild Side" (1999) in *Foreign Office Architect: Phylogenesis, FOA's Ark*, Farshid Moussavi, Alejandro Zaera-Polo, eds. (Barcelona: Actar Editorial, 2004), 566–580. A robust debate about criticism among Hal Foster, Michael Speaks, Michael Hays, Sanford Kwinter, and Felicity Scott can be found in *Praxis: Journal of Writing and Building 5: Architecture after Capitalism*, 2003, 6–23.

6. Sarah Whiting, Robert Somol, "Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernisms," *Perspecta: The Yale Architectural Journal 33, "Mining Autonomy,"* 2002, 72–77.

7. See Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture,* Hal Foster, ed. (New York: New Press, 1999) and Liane Lefaivre, Alexander Tzonis, *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World*, Prestel USA, 2003.

8. Harm Tilman, "Architectuur onder globalisering" editorial, *De Architect*, January 2004.

9. All data regarding location, program, use, and infrastructure as well as the economy, politics, art, fashion, the media, the everyday, technology, typology, and materials that might conceivably help to advance a specific "found" reality are documented in diagrammatic form, especially charts and graphs. Of course, ideology is implicit in the science of measurement and the way the hidden

qualities of reality are communicated. Most projective practices are, however, not aware of this ideological dimension. In addition they are ideologically "smooth" because the veil of fashion and style hides the many contradictions through the deployment of the design. For more information on the ideological dimension of contemporary Dutch architecture see my article "Fresh Conservatism: Landscapes of Normality," in *Artificial Landscape: Contemporary Architecture, Urbanism*, Hans Ibelings, ed. (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2000).

10. Manfredo Tafuri managed to convince the architectural world that the modern avant-garde, in overthrowing the past with its radical modernizing technology, had not only contributed to a progressive avant-garde program but had also and more particularly helped to accelerate capitalist modernization. The avant-garde's principle of montage anticipated—according to Tafuri—the assimilation process of the dynamic and mechanical capitalist revolution that every individual must undergo: permanent anxiety prompted by urban living and the loss of values.

11. Theodor Adorno, quoted in Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), p. 4.

12. For an excellent explication of the work of Jean Nouvel, see K. Micheal Hays's introduction and the interview between Jean Baudrillard and Jean Nouvel in *The Singular Objects of Architecture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

13. K. Michael Hays, "Scanners" in *Scanning: The Aberrant Architectures of Diller + Scofidio*, Aaron Betsky, K. Micheal Hays, Laurie Anderson (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 2003), 129–136.

14. Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre, see note 7.

15. Various observations on criticism versus the projective are set out clearly by Somol and Whiting in "Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernisms."

16. Premsela Lecture by graphic designer Michael Rock at Premsela Dutch Design Foundation Amsterdam, February 11, 2004, received in typescript by email and available from the Premsela Foundation.

17. As long ago as 1995, Hans van Dijk noted a tendency in Dutch architecture towards a kind of "aestheticized pragmatism" that combines realism (with respect to the terms of reference, regulations, budget, etc.) with a desire to produce a good looking building (but without reference to any particular aesthetic theory). See "On Stagnation and Innovation. Commentary on a Selection," in Ruud Brouwers et al., *Architecture in the Netherlands. Yearbook 1994–1995* (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 1995), 138–152.

18. See also Robert Somol, "12 Reasons to Get Back into Shape," in *Content*, Rem Koolhaas, OMA-AMO, eds. (Cologne: Taschen, 2004), 86–87.

19. Research done by the offices like Stefano Boeri and Multiplicity, and Raoul Bunschoten and CHORA investigate the territorial transformations taking place in contemporary society. With the help of new observing, representing, and curating tools, they map and work with the processes of self-organization of inhabited space rather than in typological prototypes. The inherent rule in their design projects aims at constructing itself in relation to the dynamics already operating in the territory, which are not all necessarily controllable by centralized planning practices. See also Stefano Boeri, "Eclectic Atlases," in Multiplicity, *USE: Uncertain States of Europe* (Milan, Skira Editore, 2003), and Raoul Bunschoten and Chora, *Urban Flotsam* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2001).

20. "We do not believe in designing aesthetic objects with complicated forms that can only be built through craftsmanship. Instead, we use standard industrial materials, spans, and constructions: ordinary products and ordinary techniques." Claus & Kaan, *Hunch* 6/7, 2003, 140.

21. In: *At Work. Neutelings Riedijk Architects* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010, 2003), 7.

22. See "The Hungry Box," a travelling exhibition about the work of MVRDV, at the Netherlands Architecture Institute from November 2, 2002 to January 5, 2003.

23. Winy Maas mentioned Spielberg in a call to architects during the presentation of a research studio at the Berlage Institute, March 2, 2004.

24. See *Non-Standard Architectures*, catalogue and exhibition curated by Zeynep Mennan and Frédéric Migayrou in the Centre Pompidou, Paris (December 10, 2003–March 1, 2004), which featured work by Asymptote, dECOi Architects, DR_D, Greg Lynn FORM, KOL/MAC Studio, Kovac Architecture, NOX Architekten, Objectile, oosterhuis.nl, R&Sie, Servo, and UN Studio.

25. Lars Spuybroek in a 1998 essay outlining the philosophy of NOX Architekten at <www.archilab.org>.

26. See also Manuel de Landa, *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (New York: Zone Books, 2000), and *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002).

27. The pavilions by Oosterhuis.nl and Asymptote in the Floriade Park (in *Architecture in the Netherlands. Yearbook 2002–2003*, Anne Hoogewoning, Roemer Van Toorn, Piet Vollaard, Arthur Wortmann, eds. [Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2003], 38–40) and the saltwater pavilion by Kas Oosterhuis and the freshwater pavilion by Lars Spuybroek at Neeltje Jans (in *Architecture in the Netherlands: Yearbook 1997–1998*, Hans Van Dijk, Hans Ibelings, Bart Lootsma, Ron Verstegen, Hans Van Dijk, eds. [Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 1998], 42–47).

28. Projective naturalizations also aspire to be operational. See also what Koolhaas has to say about this in a reaction to the manifesto of Van Berkel, Kwinter, Zaera-Polo, and Lynn (during the 1997 Anyhow conference in Rotterdam): "They had fresh and new ambitions and postures—antisemantic, purely operational—represented in virtuoso computer (in)animation. I remember being critical of their claim, then, that they had gone beyond form to sheer performance, and their claim that they had gone beyond the semantic into the purely instrumental and strictly operational. What I find (still) baffling is their hostility to the semantic. Semiotics is more triumphant than ever—as evidenced, for example, in the corporate world or in branding—and the semantic critique may be more useful than ever." Rem Koolhaas, in "Spot Check: A Conversation between Rem Koolhaas and Sarah Whiting," *Assemblage* 40, December 1999, 46. See also Felicity D. Scott, "Involuntary Prisoners of Architecture," *October 106*, Fall 2003, 75–101.

29. I am always surprised when Van Berkel & Bos (Un-studio) show their "Manimal" metaphor for a new architectural practice—an image hybridizing a lion, a snake, and a human, and only talk about the process of generating the Manimal but never about its cultural, ideological, and symbolic implications are. For them it's all about form and not how social practices of use unlock such a metaphor. It would not surprise me if Hollywood cast this Manimal in a horror film.

30. The idea of a "second" or "reflexive" modernity was first developed in Ulrich Beck's *Risikogesellschaft: auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986) (*Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London; Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1992).

31. For the role of the market in architecture see also "Lost in Paradise" in *Architecture in the Netherlands: Yearbook 2001–2002*, by Anne Hoogewoning, Piet Vollaard, Roemer Van Toorn, eds. (Nai Publishers: Rotterdam 2002) and "Propaganda" in *Architecture in the Netherlands: Yearbook 2002–2003*.

32. At times, the practice of Rem Koolhaas (although he refuses to talk about it) seems to experiment with new notions of democracy in space. Alongside the three projective practices mentioned in this article are also "projective juxtapositions," in which the permanent crisis of late capitalism is a source of inspiration. Projective juxtapositions are characterized by an indefinable critical detachment that continually places the program and with it the organization of society in a state of crisis. In projective juxtapositions—such as those of OMA—a project never reaches a conclusion but instead provokes a never-ending subjective interpretation and inhabitation. The early projective juxtapositions of OMA were a vessel to experiment with new freedoms, as for example in the Kunsthal resisting the current idea that a museum needs to be a temple with quasi-neutral white exhibition spaces. There a projective juxtaposition is combined with what Immanuel Wallerstein calls Utopistics (Immanuel Wallerstein, *Utopistics, Or, Historical Choices of the Twenties-first Century* [New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998]). With Utopistics Wallerstein is not referring to a progressivism that already knows what is to come, but is pleading for a science that seriously assesses liberating historical alternatives—what best possible path for a far (and uncertain) future can be followed. Reassessing Utopistic examples—which proved successful in creating freedom in the past—can help in the creation of new situations of freedom. Such an approach can be found in the OMA's Seattle library, which to a large extent reworks the public library of Hans Sharoun in Berlin (among other examples from the catalogue of utopistic examples). When utopistics are combined with a projective juxtaposition, we come close to what I am after. But the OMA experiments with Prada and the Guggenheim in Las Vegas went no further than a projective mise-en-scene which Salvador Dalí would have loved: "It is not necessary for the public to know whether I am joking or whether I am serious, just as it is not necessary for me to know it myself" (Salvador Dalí, in *Diary of a Genius*, London: Creation Books, 1964).