Upscaling, Training, Commoning

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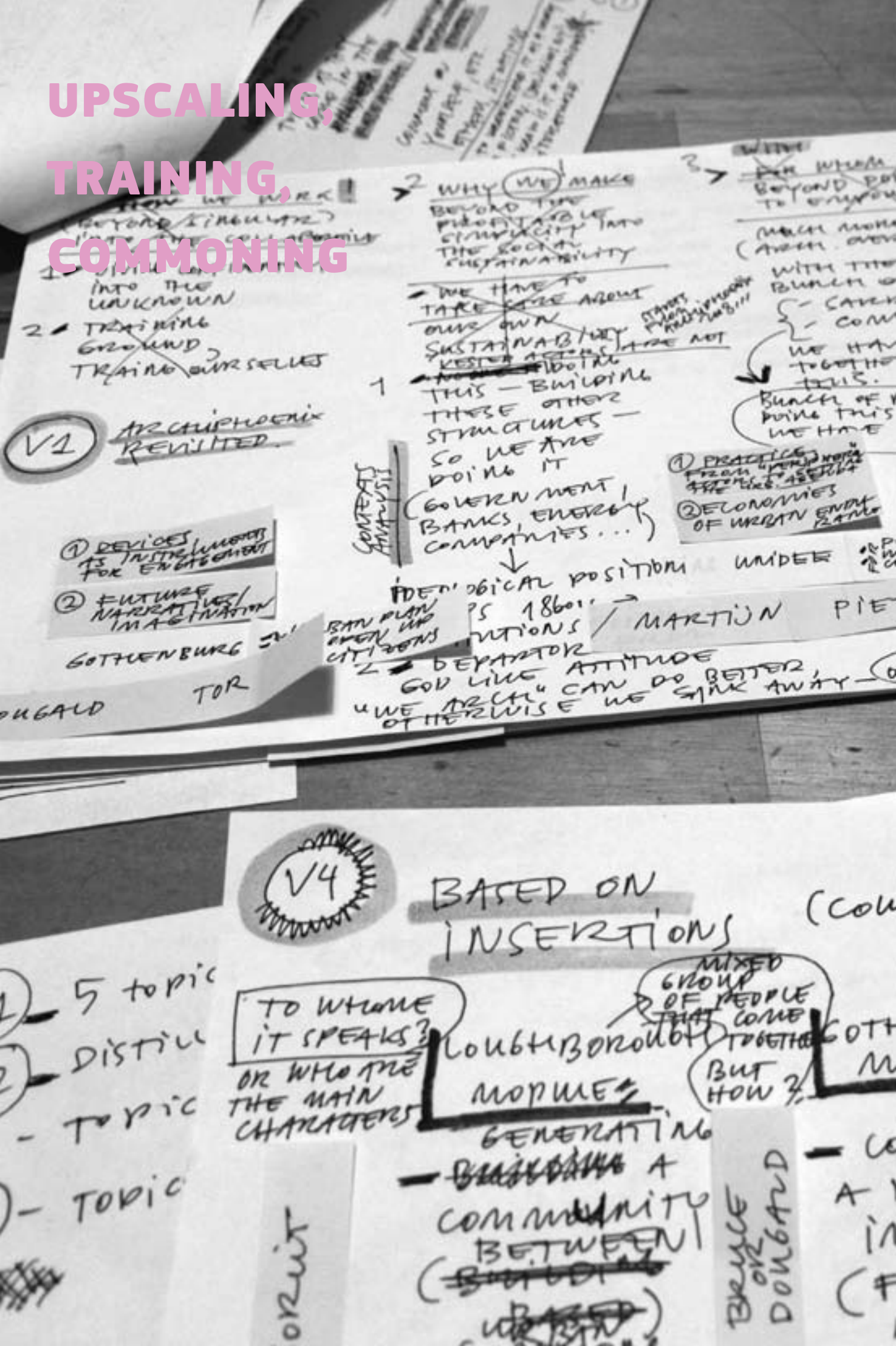

BOOK 0:

UPSCALING, TRAINING, COMMONING

STEALTH.unlimited (Ana Džokić and Marc Neelen)

With contributions by:
Dougald Hine, Martijn Jeroen van der Linden, Ana Méndez de Andés, Iva Marčetić and Paul Currion

This six-chapter book takes the nine years since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008 as a period of reflection. At that time, in 2008, STEALTH.unlimited co-curated the project Archiphoenix – Faculties for Architecture, at the Dutch Pavilion at Architecture Biennale in Venice, an attempt to collectively imagine a curriculum for an architecture profession beyond the speculative and profit-driven (over)production of urbanity.

While not immediately evident, that year would prove to be a turning point not just for STEALTH, as it would have an immense effect on the entire 'spatial' profession. In the Netherlands, for instance, the number of practicing architects halved and many of its architecture and urban planning related institutions were dissolved. Ever since it has become clear how deeply entrenched the unsustainability of urban production has remained. Meanwhile, a growing number of practices started to underline the necessity of a profoundly different approach, beyond the broken neo-liberal dogma.

This introductory book outlines the context of the practice-based research that STEALTH has set off in 2011. It investigates a possible role and capacity for spatial practice(s) by transforming STEALTH's own field of work in the process – towards direct and long-term engagements.

***STEALTH.unlimited** (2000) is the practice of **Ana Džokić** (1970) and **Marc Neelen** (1970). They live and work between Rotterdam and Belgrade. Initially trained as architects, for over 15 years they are equally active in the context of contemporary art and culture.*
Looking back, they realise that there have been distinct periods in their work, shifting every seven-eight years. Their initial interest in the 'stealth' urban processes (those which operate below the urban planning radar) manifested itself in a series of research and mapping projects. Sometime around 2008 they became increasingly involved in curatorial projects and public events which they used to explore and expose the potential of collective citizen capacity to confront the privatisation and financialisation of space, in a bid to mobilise different future horizons. Inspired by their findings, but also aware of the limitations of artistic/cultural led involvements in the urban domain, sometime around 2012 in Belgrade and Rotterdam they involved in setting-up long-term engagements to deal with the spaces and spatiality of production and (social) reproduction, particularly in the domain of housing.

MAY 3, 2011. THIS AFTERNOON, A CROWD HAS GATHERED AT STOCKHOLM'S ARCHITECTURE MUSEUM FOR AN EVENT ENTITLED ALTERNATIVE ARCHITECTURE.[1] MOST NOTABLE AMONG THOSE PRESENT IS THE GROUP OF PRACTITIONERS REPRESENTING THIS ALTERNATIVE

Most of 'us' cautiously navigate the promise of the 'alternative', wary of making too bold a statement. And not without reason, as the series of discussions literally takes place amongst the daunting ghostly exhibits of an earlier promise labelled 'radical architecture and design' – the show Environments and Counter Environments – featuring groups from the 1960s and 1970s. Some of these 'radicals' would later develop careers we'd rather not be reminded of: misfits have become re-fits. A well-placed warning?

That night, the two of us cram ourselves into the belly of one of the hostel boats at Stockholm's quays. We get some restless sleep, and prepare next morning for our interview. In the breakfast room on the boat, a fellow guest is apparently doing the same. It will be the first ever 'job interview' we engage ourselves in, and we are visibly uneasy with the occasion – and so it seems is the guy sitting across the long table.

After the interview for the Royal Institute of Art, we left feeling unsure as to what to make of it. Is this indeed the 'alternative' we have been searching for? We travel some 200 km up north to team up with group we were with the day before. On the way, we hear that the Faculty of Architecture in Stockholm is on fire, black smoke billowing out of its workshops. Another warning?

Over the next two days, the group discusses various outlooks on the future. It is not easy to project far ahead. We are in the backroom of the laboratory-turned-pub of a former steel factory, the place is reminiscent of a 1980s disco. Much time is devoted to the plan to set up a common pension trust for our precarious practices. Are we forced to already be thinking about retirement now the alternative got into the limelight? This thought will not leave us for some time to come.

October 5, 2011, Bordeaux. It is the afternoon just before the opening of the exhibition Once Upon a Future. We stretch ourselves in the middle of the huge circular exhibit set on the grounds of a soon-to-be-terminated abattoir. Suddenly, we realise that we are not only exhausted, but that we have most likely exhausted this approach to

1 Produced by Architecture Museum, Stockholm in collaboration with architecture practices Economy (Sweden), Raumlabor Berlin (Germany) and Testbedstudio (Sweden). With Bruit du Frigo (France), Cityförster (Germany/Netherlands), Celine Condorelli (UK), Exyzt (France), FAT (UK), IFAU (Germany), Modulorbeat (Germany), Meike Schalk and Apolonia Šušteršić (Sweden/Netherlands), STEALTH.unlimited (Serbia/Netherlands), Studio Basar (Romania), Uglycute (Sweden).

providing alternatives. Exhausted from doing research that ends up in books or exhibitions, exhausted by short term projects that challenge the current state of things and have a doubtful potential to spill into reality, exhausted of running around. The corrosive edge might be gone. We have to move on.

UPSCALING, TRAINING, COMMONING

This dissertation has been carried out and supervised within the graduate programme in Fine Arts at Kungl. Konsthögskolan/Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm.
The dissertation is presented at Lund University in the framework of the cooperation agreement between the Malmö Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts, Lund University, and the Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm regarding doctoral education in the subject Fine Arts in the context of Konstnärliga forskarskolan.

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COLOPHON

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CONTENT

BEYOND 2008

For the start of this journey we need to go back to 2008.

When on September 18, 2008 the newspaper NRC Handelsblad features a review of the Dutch Pavilion at the 11th Architecture Biennale in Venice, the tone of the article is somewhat whiny, as if someone has unjustly denied the author a covert pleasure. The article ridicules the attitude to refrain from featuring the ongoing construction frenzy (and 'starchitecture'). The author states:

"The Dutch pavilion (...) shows nothing that looks like a building but questions if thinking in terms of buildings still can address the issues and challenges awaiting us. (...) Luckily not everyone is so timid" (Bernard Hulsman in the article Gebouwen van Wasmachine).

At the time of the review, in the pavilion in Venice a group of video editors is frantically capturing the outcome of a week of discussions and debates on the capacity and necessity of architecture to deal with the societal challenges ahead. One by one, pages of a book produced on-site emerge from the industrial-sized copy machine, its paper jamming every now and then because of the damp weather. It is the end of Summer and we turn on the floor heating in an attempt to resolve the disruptive paper jams. On the small TV-sets in the exhibition, videos start to playback the many hours of discussion that had taken place. Still, not everything gets processed.

Three days earlier, on September 15, 2008, the financial conglomerate Lehman Brothers had filed for bankruptcy, and with that what is now widely known as the 'financial crisis' made its start. It had been an ominous year. The months before had witnessed the peak of a construction frenzy, fuelled by real-estate speculation and sky-rocketing real-estate prices. Even if the event of Lehman Brother's collapse itself came as a surprise of sorts, for many the signs had already been out there that this was to crash in on us. In Venice, a substantial group of 'alternative' practices (many featured in the Italian Pavilion, curated by Emiliano Gandolfi) had taken the Biennale's theme Out There: Architecture Beyond Building as an opportunity to point to the necessity for architecture to step beyond mere construction. This seems a futile exercise to the author of the NRC review. For us, it seemed unavoidable, not in the last place being metaphorically 'fuelled' by the violent disappearance of the Faculty of Architecture in Delft earlier that year.

On May 13, 2008, the fourteen-floor faculty building was consumed by a fire that started in a coffee-machine. This fire put a symbolic end to the post-1968 spirit of architecture in the Netherlands, that had come to a peak in what was heralded as the generation of 'Superdutch' design. The fire (and now the crisis) had put an end to it. At this point, STEALTH receives an invitation (from the Netherlands Architecture Institute, NAi) to co-curate with Saskia van Stein the Dutch pavilion in Venice. With ARCHIPHOENIX – Faculties for Architecture, we decided to take the fire as the starting point, a concrete trigger to ground the feeling that an era is over, and that it is necessary to rethink the production of space, and the profession giving shape to it.

With Saskia van Stein, we set out to 'hijack' the Biennale setting up period, turning it into a week-long stage for

an international exploration and debate. Seizing the opportunity of there being a large number of architects, designers and critics arriving early in anticipation of the opening day, we provided a structured opportunity to discuss the impact and future of the profession. Within a daily changing set-up made out of hundreds of white plastic crates, much of that 'structured opportunity' was framed by five fundamental questions on what architecture (can) contribute to society. The questions ranging from "why we make" up to "what it takes to make (and un-make)" were given a 'head start' in terms of needed 'beyonds': Beyond the Singular into the Collaborative, Beyond the Profitable Simplicity into the Social Sustainability, Beyond Power to Empowerment, Beyond the Artefact and finally Beyond the Sustainable: Challenging the Flow of Resources, Materials and People.

A massive editorial effort was made to capture this week of discussions, collective opinion building and debate into a six-chapter book written and produced on the spot, in a ten-day timeframe. It was done with a group of editors (Arjen Oosterman, Lilet Breddels, and Christian Ernsten from Volume magazine, Jeanne van Heeswijk, Dennis Kaspor, Miguel Robels Duran, Peter Lang and Piet Vollaard) and has been set to print by graphic designer Coralie Vogelaar, who for days had been trapped in a 'cubicle' of sorts, until this daunting undertaking was finally delivered.

On September 23, we finally pack our stuff, drag it over Venetian bridges and along the canals, put it in the car and set off south for a break. By October 3, 'our' bank in the Netherlands has been bailed-out and nationalised. On the way, we notice a Swiss tourist covering his face from the sun with a weekly newspaper. Its cover page depicts a Marx-headed Statue of Liberty, with the headline The Sudden Return of the Plan Economy. Times had become 'interesting' to say the least.

A PROFESSIONAL LANDSCAPE 'SLASHED'

Few anticipated how devastating this 'crisis' will be for architects, urban designers and spatial planners in many countries across Europe, including the Netherlands.

On April 18, 2014, the NRC Newspaper features yet another review by the same author on the occasion of the release of the Architecture in the Netherlands yearbook 2013/2014. The article The Feast of Superdutch is Over details some of the implications of the crisis in the interim years: "The 2008 economic crisis has dealt a severe blow to Dutch architecture. New office buildings have become rare, and housing construction in 2013 has halved in comparison to 2007. The decrease in the number of architects correspondingly was from 15.000 in 2008 to 7.500 today."

But this time the author arrives at a different conclusion, stating: "Also in the new Architecture in the Netherlands yearbook, hardly any mention is given to the crisis. (...) For the four editors of the yearbook the year 2013/2014 appears to be mainly business as usual," before coming to the conclusion that in the texts "(...) the crisis, and social developments like globalisation and the destruction of the welfare state remain distant topics" (Bernard Hulsman).

By 2014, for many architects the (professional) reality obviously has changed, and there is good reason to reflect


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on this, as Hulsman notes. A hint of how dramatic this change has been is not only given by the numbers above but as well by the yearbook of spatial planners published in 2012: "In 2008 our field of work changed. However, it took a couple years before we became aware of it. In the beginning, we thought: 'it will pass', in the meantime we've come to know that it is a structural change..." (Ruimtevolk Jaarboek, 2012)

Bearing in mind that the Netherlands was (and to some degree it may still be) considered one of the most advanced countries in terms of planning and building culture, it is worth looking at some parts of the 'structural change' mentioned here. What had happened since we left Venice in September 2008? It turns out to be more than just 'emergency response' – the crisis had been instrumental in breaking the more than 60 years of state involvement in planning, and with doing away many of its institutions. Apparently, national policy on planning was at odds with the policy of liberalisation and deregulation now in place.

In 2010, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment would cease to exist.
With this, the government surrendered its direction and formulation of national spatial policy, and of large scale investments in the built environment, to 'the market'.

And while the post of the Chief Government Architect remained, his/her main field of action shifted from being one of the most important actors in urban planning and national architecture policy to now becoming a portal of sorts capturing and advocating innovative and 'alternative' practices, for instance through the web platform The Netherlands Are Becoming Different (initiated in 2013), featuring strategies and projects that until recently were either (mis)understood as purely spatial practices or taken as mere artistic interventions. What were considered exotic or alternative practices only a couple of years before now apparently answer some of the key issues of today.

By 2013, under a change of cultural policy, the emblematic Netherlands Architecture Institute, NAi, would also cease to exist, literally giving its space to a new institution featuring 'creative industries', illustratively named the New Institute.

NEW CHANCES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, NEW CAREER PATHS?

While from the very start of STEALTH, in 2000, our practice has been considered 'peripheral', working with issues and dealing with subjects outside of the mainstream architectural profession, some years ago we would realise that around us, architects and designers had started refocussing their work. 'Our' kind of work increasingly starts to inform curricula of art, design or architecture schools and institutions. Within a short time new career paths started to emerge with profiles like 'social practice', 'spatial practice' or 'place making'. In the Netherlands, these profiles became part of professional training at, for instance, the Design Academy in Eindhoven, the Willem de Koning Academy in Rotterdam or at the Masters program at the art academy Hogeschool voor de Kunsten in Utrecht.

By 2014, the art center Stroom HCBK (The Hague), focusing on the urban environment, would start Stadsklas (City Classes), a crash course based on "alternative and innovative practices of artists, architects and public developers." It is meant for professionals from the field of spatial planning, architecture etc., who have found themselves rendered redundant in the last years. The essential skills to be learned are: "exploring, trans-disciplinating, transforming, framing, propagating, initiating, financing, involving, manifesting, democratising and continuing" (from Stroom website). This series of classes closes with a discussion on how these skills are to be translated into educational practice. Is this a sign of acknowledgment, or is there something else at stake?

In his text Educating Dissidents, the Swedish architect, lecturer and friend, Tor Lindstrand states: "Our culture minister, on Wednesday this week launched a review looking to produce a new architecture policy for Sweden, as we have seen in recent years in Norway and Denmark. (...) Even though we know for a fact that educating an ever-increasing number of architects yearly has done nothing to improve the quality of our built environment, social injustices, segregation, ecological un-sustainability and so on: the solution is still more architecture and more architects. Here one could be extremely pessimistic seeing the alternative, experimental practices being incorporated as yet another niche in an ever-growing urban industry complex. We are here to open up new territories, new markets, in-between architecture, place making and public art. We are here to animate public spaces, creating a sense of place where none exists and engage people of all ages to believe that they have power, and ownership, over the spaces they occupy. We are here to make reality something that can be consumed" (contribution to STEALTH's PhD seminar at the Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm, May 16, 2014).

In ourselves – as with a number of colleagues like Tor Lindstrand – a feeling of unease has started to develop about this transition from being the 'corrosive edge' towards becoming hailed as the promise from and towards the 'alternative practice'. It has been a gradually growing concern, maybe first articulated in 2008 during the Biennale, further elaborated in 2009 when we organised a couple of days of discussion on the future with a group of related practices, including Tor Lindstrand and Emiliano Gandolfi (titled Instant Urbanism, as part of the symposium Out of the Blue, Blue House, Amsterdam), and had finally erupted on that afternoon of October 5, 2011 in Bordeaux.

The reasons for this discomfort are multiple, one of them being the suspicion that those new career paths were nothing more than attempts at maintaining the position of spatial practices as 'service providing experts' in the time of a shrunken economy. Time was calling for a drastic re-framing of the practice, considering that economically 'better' times might not come back any time soon, and

that a much more society 'embedded' position was instead needed. Hence, the flurry of temporary involvements, of short-lived interventions, of non-binding interferences, could hardly be expected to confront the challenges ahead. What we need is action towards a socially and environmentally grounded picture of the world, that gives equality a real chance – at times when such a picture is not embraced internationally, by institutional policies and national politics.

UPSCALING, TRAINING, COMMONING

Thus, when in Winter 2011 the artist duo Goldin + Senneby contacted us with the opportunity of engaging in a practice-based PhD research position, on the subject of urbanism, at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm, we took this as an opportunity to make a leap forward – transforming our own practice towards more direct, long-term engagements.

We set three lines of exploration to guide us: that of the practice assuming new responsibilities, of the economies of engagement and disengagement, and that of the urban commons. Let's take a closer look.

Throughout this journey, we have tried to understand where our practice stands, where it reaches and equally where (some of) its limits can be found. Not surprisingly economic constraints have a massive impact on how the work unfolds and to which contexts it can contribute, to gain a greater level of economic self-determination to address that 'what is to be done'. In conclusion, the lines along which that 'to be done' have been set lead us away from involvements that sustain the current neo-liberal, exploitative, disruptive and (according to the words of William Davies that you will meet further in the text of Dougald Hine in Book 1), 'already plundered' future, for which the commons, or more precisely the act of commoning provides both an inspiring narrative as well as practice.

Much of the works and initiatives started throughout this period are part of collaborative undertakings, involving (many) more people and thus stretching beyond STEALTH as a practice in itself. This is possibly an indicator of where this path has taken us, partly dissolving into larger undertakings, particularly into Ko Gradi Grad (Who Builds the City) in Belgrade and Stad in de Maak (City in the Making) in Rotterdam. This multiple mode of engagement is something we increasingly encounter among the people and practices we collaborate with.

Within these undertakings, we set aside a wide space to build up expertise in fields in which we previously had not imagined becoming ad-hoc 'experts', together with others who likewise had not imagined doing so. Self-made experts in plotting future fiction, reviving decaying social housing stock, rethinking financing models for collective housing, drafting articles for a housing law, copywriting media campaigns..., all of which are to be encountered in this book. In entering into these endeavours, one has to become 'embedded'. Not only because professional distance does not benefit us in finding, exploring, and experimenting with the breakthrough necessary. It is about our own lives – as members of society. We need no distance for that.

We need to be right there to arrive at something close to what the curator Charles Esche spiritedly calls 'modest proposals': "'Modest proposals' (...) are essentially speculative in that we imagine things other than they are now yet those speculative gestures are intensely concrete and actual. They avoid the clearly fantastical as well as the hermetic purity of private symbolism in order to deal with real existing conditions and what might be necessary in order to change them. (...) This concern for concrete necessity is the quality that defines the limits of the term 'modesty' in the expression, rather than the scale of the issue involved or the absence of grand ambition for change" (in Modest Proposals, 2005).

Towards the final stages of this trajectory, the aforementioned lines of exploration (practice, economy and commons) have been re-articulated along a different set of notions: upscaling, training, commoning. As such, they provide a mode of action. In upscaling, we can amass the resources we have at hand from a marginal edge 'condition' towards a more substantial starting ground. With training, we can use the intermediate situation to imagine, test and (indeed) practice different forms of collaboration, of economy, and of co-ownership – and what else is required – to base our realities in a future beyond the intermediate. And finally, with commons, we are on a path of commoning our futures – as explained captivatingly in the words of feminist, researcher, activist and educator Silvia Federici:

"There are important reasons why this apparently archaic idea has come to the center of political discussion in contemporary social movements. Two in particular stand

out. On one side is the demise of the statist model of revolution that for decades had sapped the efforts of radical movements to build an alternative to capitalism. On the other, the neo-liberal attempt to subordinate every form of life and knowledge to the logic of the market has heightened our awareness of the danger of living in a world in which we no longer have access to seas, trees, animals, and our fellow beings except through the cash-nexus. The 'new enclosures' have also made visible a world of communal properties and relations that many had believed to be extinct or had not valued until threatened with privatisation. Ironically, the new enclosures have demonstrated that not only the common has not vanished, but also new forms of social cooperation are constantly being produced..." (in Feminism and The Politics of Commons, The Commoner, 2011)

Commons has been the focus of this research since its very start. Still the particular occasion of the course In Search of Common Ground, developed together with Henrietta Palmer (as part of the Resources.12/Lab at Mejan Arc, Royal Institute of Art, 2012/2013) gave us a chance to develop a much more grounded relationship with the subject. We set out, with a small group of researchers, to visit and discover the fragile state of urban commons in Europe. This exploration led us to organising the Commoning the City Conference (at the Architecture Museum, Stockholm, April 2013), to investigate what role the commons can have in shaping the city's future.

It also provided the insight that while the concept of commons opens perspective for collective ways of organising in places like Spain or Greece (suffering since the crisis and austerity measures from a vastly dismantled public infrastructure), it can produce a feeling of caution in Sweden, where activities of commoning may intrude upon (and potentially undermine) a still (reasonably) functional welfare system.

Four years later, we can see that some of the emerging commons we had visited withered away, while others became the core of a restructuring of public governance (like with local elections in Madrid, 2015 or the upcoming city elections in Zagreb, 2017).

A READING GUIDE

End of April, 2017. Now the trajectory taken is captured in the book Upscaling, Training, Commoning in front of you. Or more precisely in a book of books – this introduction and five more of them. It uses the ARCHIPHOENIX – Faculties for Architecture publication from 2008 as a template of sorts, playful with its structure and graphic appearance. The original titles of the 2008 publication have been struck through on the covers of this edition and have acquired new companions. Here, "how we work" becomes "how we could work", "why we make" becomes "why we engage (and disengage), "for whom we make" becomes "for whom

is the city", "what we make" becomes "what makes the impossible possible", "what it takes to make (and un-make)" becomes "what matters".

Apart from this introductory book outlining the context and premise of the research, the four following books 'report' from the experiences in which STEALTH engaged. Each is a reflection on one or more projects or long term engagements, set in a certain perspective: possible futures, community economy, asserting legitimacy, emancipatory prospects. Part of each book are excerpts and images from projects and initiatives discussed. The books also feature over 20 encounters with, for us, influential practices, citizen's initiatives (contemporary and historical) or writings.

We have reached out to a number of people with whom we've crossed paths since 2008: the writer Dougald Hine, the economist Martijn Jeroen van der Linden, the (former) architect Ana Méndez de Andés, and the (still) architect Iva Marčetić. Over these years, they have shared insights into our work, but equally they have had an impact on it, through collaborations, discussions, agreements and disagreements. While writing Upscaling, Training, Commoning, we have asked them to be our companions and respond to our observations, but also to contribute by recalling their own, in our view, significant paths from 2008 onwards.

February, 2017. We have asked three generations of people to reflect on where we might find ourselves leading up to 2025, eight years ahead: architect Jere Kuzmanić, Ana Méndez de Andés, architect and critic Piet Vollaard and writer and consultant Paul Currion. Tucked away in the dunes south of the port of Rotterdam, we have spent a couple of days pondering over what the future may bring. Sitting around the table in this former forester house, walking through the landscape surrounding it and wandering over the beach with its view on the enormous industrial machinery of the port, we mockingly started to describe ourselves as 'misfits in practice' – trading conventional career paths and job security for what could be called thematic determination and security. Even with such a short time span of the next eight years as a horizon, that future is far from spelled out and certain, as our twists and turns in the previous eight years have made clear. Paul Currion has taken on the daunting task of propelling the spirit of that discussion into a fiction story that the closing book has taken as its core. It is important to remember that this future does not (yet) exist.

"But it could."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has many beginnings, and many fire starters. Some of those – colleagues, companions, friends – who have been crucial in starting it off, or have kept its fire burning, are included here.

Piet Vollaard, for his matter-of-fact insistence over the years that our line-up of works, engagements and travels should be documented in a travel log of sorts.

Henrietta Palmer, for her thoughtful, generous and well-positioned comments during the many talks and exchanges we have had in the years prior. And for her capacity to remain focused, even when exceptional adventures, or many thousands of words have been put in front of her.

Doina Petrescu, for her persistence in suggesting that the abundance of material (publications, flyers, textual contributions, exhibitions...) resulting from our work is captured in one comprehensive book and 'domesticated' in such a manner that its progression can be understood.

Saskia van Stein, for her enthusiastic support for the idea to take our common endeavour of 2008 as a reference point for a new work, and for her amicable suggestions at the point when we took up the writing.

Maria Lind, both for her critical eye and for her enduring commitment as a companion to our work. She challenged us to take this book beyond what we originally had in mind.

Dougald Hine, Martijn Jeroen van der Linden, Ana Méndez de Andés and Iva Marčetić for putting in to words the challenges, doubts and expectations from their own (personal and professional) transformation.

Paul Currion, for entering the muddy waters of having to provide a reassuring outlook of sorts to our futures.

Simon Goldin and Jakob Senneby, for graciously luring us into this adventure and for their non-conformist attitude which has crafted a much-needed space for artistic research, in whose steps we could follow.

Åsa Andersson, for her sense of responsibility and commitment in supporting this work, even if it was the second collaborative practice 'oddity' challenging her work as the research coordinator.

The communities of R-Urban (Colombes, Paris) and Homebaked (Liverpool) for granting us the possibility to 'peek' into their kitchen (quite literally) and open up their thoughts on the challenges they had embarked upon.

Tor Lindstrand, not just for irreversibly disrupting our take on Swedish architects (him being the first we met when in 2006 we set foot in Stockholm), but moreover for being a continually inspiring and witty discussion partner ever since.

Magnus Erisson, for the motivating curiosity he has maintained over the many years and with whom we have been sharing our professional challenges and adventures.

Peter Lang, for his generous hospitality and capacity to get all and everything 'unstuck' in place and in time, and so it goes.

Erik Jutten, for keeping up the high spirits while his own companions (Piet, Ana and Marc) had gone underground in the final months of their respective publishing commitments.

King Shabaka, Danalogue The Conqueror and Betamax Killer, for providing the tune to celebrate the last words set for this work.

And finally, Katarina Popović and Mark Brogan, for their tireless contribution to the making of this book, through which we got to discussing with them much more than just words or layout.


ARCHIPHOENIX
FACULTIES FOR ARCHITECTURE

‘TRAVEL LOG’

KEY OCCASIONS, WORKS AND COLLABORATIONS THAT HAVE SHAPED STEALTH’S VIEWS AND IDEAS.

May 12, 2008, Ljubljana

Our first take on the future. Ten individuals and organisations, from the still young independent cultural scene of the former Yugoslavia and Albania, are brought together to tackle the question: “Imagine 10 years from now – year 2018. What are you busy with?” Eerily, looking back from 2017, many statements made at the time will become reality. Albert Heta, artist and co-director of Stacion writes: “In 2018 (...) Provisional is no longer an available escape route and exit for the real. Prishtina is a crowded mid-size political banner. (...) In 2018 Stacion Center for Contemporary Art is no more an island. It is a peninsula.”

HOW SOON IS NOW, AN EXERCISE TO IMAGINE OUR PROVISIONAL FUTURES; organised by STEALTH.unlimited, Azra Akšamija, Alenka Gregorič and Peter Lang, with Yane Čalovski (Skopje), Albert Heta (Prishtina), Dunja Kukovec (Ljubljana), Kristian Lukić (Novi Sad), Antonia Majača (Zagreb), Tomislav Medak (Zagreb), Nebojša Milikić (Belgrade), Davor Mišković (Rijeka), Edi Muka (Tirana), Ana Vujanović (Belgrade), as part of Europe Lost and Found, in collaboration with Škuc Gallery Ljubljana.

September 9 – November 23, 2008, Venice

When at the end of May we receive a call from the NAi’s curator Saskia van Stein to join her in taking up the Dutch Pavilion for the upcoming Biennale, we quickly develop a mutual understanding that such a challenge-turned-opportunity should be taken head-on. We manage to break open already signed contracts, get our hands on the budget and reroute it from an exhibition to a massive mutual effort to re-position the professional field of architecture. Embraced by the hundreds attending or directly involved, despised by some who came too late to experience it ‘live’, it has been a key experience for our future work.

ARCHIPHOENIX – FACULTIES FOR ARCHITECTURE; by STEALTH.unlimited in collaboration with Saskia van Stein (Netherlands Architecture Institute – NAi), commissioned by Ole Bauman (NAi), the Dutch Pavilion at the 11th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia.

April 16, 2009, The Hague

The start of the economic crisis, which caused a sudden influx of ‘stakeholders’ (from state institutions to developers) to patch up their stalling real-estate developments with the ‘interim’ uses, as well as a stream

of handbooks and step-by-step manuals, brought to us the necessity of putting these stopgap solutions in a critical frame.

CONSTITUTION FOR THE INTERIM; by STEALTH.unlimited and Iris de Kievith, presented within the Laboratory for the Interim in Transvaal (The Hague).

August 3-9, 2009, Amsterdam

Using the lead of 'instant urbanism' (the D-I-Y, makeshift and participatory creation) we set to discussing its more alarming aspects. In a prediction of sorts, the group taking part in this exercise sketches the future ahead. In it many 'alternative' practices give up their identities and gather under the name of Raumlabour. This successful Berlin based practice becomes a brand in order to gain in mass and in scale. In this vision, the Swedish company IKEA would make its own city. In the end of 2011 we read news of IKEA preparing to build a car free neighbourhood in East London.

ALL FOR THE LOVE OF INSTANT URBANISM; session organised by STEALTH.unlimited with Tor Lindstrand and Mårten Spångberg, Emiliano Gandolfi, Dubravka Sekulić, Harold Guyaux, Manuela Zechner Anja Kanngieser, Eva de Klerk, Dennis Kaspori, as part of Out of The Blue, international symposium on Instant Urbanism, Hospitality and Accelerated History by Blue House.

August 14-16, 2009, Pula

On Katarina and Monumenti, terrains conquered by the citizens of Pula but yet to be demilitarised by the Croatian Ministry of Defence, Pulska Grupa organised a debate on the 'post-capitalist city'. Some of the encounters from this time would turn into friendships, longer exchanges and collaborations. Here, in a 200-year-old military fortress, at the fenced of peninsula Muzil, the international group of activists and architects outlines the declaration of Komunal (commons): "We call Komunal the land where common value transfers from non-material to material value. This common territory exists outside current forms of city exploitations based on property and land speculation. It bases its general values in the field of access, use, activity or care."

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE POST-CAPITALIST CITY; organised by Pulska Grupa, with Exyzt (Paris), Fram-menti (Treviso), Hackitectura (Sevilla), Krax (Barcelona), Elena Marchigiani (Trieste), MetroZones (Berlin), M.i.m.o. Lab (Milano), Multilpicity (Milano), Observatorio Metropolitano (Madrid), Raumlabor (Berlin), Salottobuono (Venice), Self Made City (Rome), STEALTH.unlimited (Rotterdam/Belgrade), Dustin Tusnovics (Vienna).

October 3-7, 2009, Tirana

With a small but highly dedicated Tirana Biennial crew, we managed to 'pull off' an impressive artistic event in the corridors and rooms of the looted and devastated Hotel Dajti. Its former ball-room provides a symbolic ground for a set of debates on the ongoing urban development challenges in Albania and the former Yugoslav countries. The focal points are the conflicting conditions around the contemporary urban production and the citizen activists (from Pula and Zagreb, to Belgrade and Skopje) rising up in the name of 'right to the city'. The commonalities of situations across the region are striking and worth exploring further.

TIRANA DIALOGUES; as part of Episode 2 of the 4th Tirana International Contemporary Art Biennial the Symbolic Efficiency of the Frame, curated by STEALTH.unlimited, the dialogues program in collaboration with Emiliano Gandolfi, Biannual directed by Edi Muka and Joa Ljungberg.

June 17-19, 2010 – ongoing, Belgrade

Back from Tirana, in Belgrade Dušica Parezanović introduces us to Marko Aksentijević. Together we would soon set out to bring to discussion the corrupt and mismanaged privatisation of public resources in urban developments in Belgrade. In 2010, we organise 'open talks' driven by the belief that a dialogue about the desired development of the city must be inclusive for all those who make up the city. From there on, Ko Gradi Grad takes off.

KO GRADI GRAD (WHO BUILDS THE CITY); initial event organised by Marko Aksentijević, STEALTH.unlimited, Cultural Center REX/Fund B92 and Heinrich Böll Foundation, Belgrade.

August 15 – September 5, 2010, Medellin

This is our first involvement in South-America. We are rather unprepared to encounter a community living on and around a de-activated garbage dump. In its heyday, it counted over 15.000 people who made their livelihood by literally mining for valuable materials under their feet. A strategy of the municipality to include such areas in an urban recovery plan has since 2004 helped introduce organisational skills, resulting in an impressively articulate community able to express itself at a level we had not witnessed before. During the period of three weeks we make plans for an extension of the cultural development center in the neighbourhood.

NODOS DE DESARROLLO CULTURAL NO.1 (CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT NODE NO.1); initiated by Centro de Dessarollo Cultural de Moravia – CDCM and El Puente_lab (Juan Esteban Sandoval and Alejandro Vasquez Salinas), design by STEALTH.unlimited, María Camila Vélez, Yesenia Rodríguez and students from the Architecture Faculty of Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Sede Medellín (Jorge Alberto Arango, Cesar Augusto Muñoz Toro, Jenny Paola Sierra, José León Gómez, German Tamayo).

November 2-6, 2010, Banja Luka

Throughout their life, Ana's grandparents (Rajka and Vukašin Borojević) lived in many places in the former Yugoslavia and actively contributed to these environments. (Ana:) "I knew these stories from my childhood, but now looking back we detected that they resonate well with current, even 'fashionable' strands present in the contemporary art world like self-organisation, collectivism, radical education, the socialist project as an emancipatory opportunity, or the empowerment of women." We sift through their meticulously kept documentation to uncover how emancipation and economic gain for the community went hand in hand, and offer this as subject to discussion.

TAKING COMMON MATTER INTO YOUR OWN HANDS; by STEALTH.unlimited, at SPAPORT Biennial: Where Everything is Yet to Happen, 2nd chapter: Exposures, curated by Antonija Majača and Ivana Bago.

October 13-17, 2010, Utrecht

What future perspective do cities hold? Through the format of film programs and an exhibition we depict the city's growing dependency on the networked artificial superstructure, the tension between bold and almost unrealisable desires of our future, modest responses to pressing realities, dilemmas about the urban 'revolution' or alternative virtual environments as 'better worlds'.

IMPAKT FESTIVAL 2010: MATRIX CITY; curated by STEALTH.unlimited and Kristian Lukić, in collaboration with Arjon Dunnewind, Impakt Foundation.


VITAMINKA
KOLEKTIV
OBRAZOVANJE
KROZ RAD
TAKMIČ

December 13, 2010 – January 18, 2011, Nov Sad

This investigation uncovers some of the most remarkable dynamics and disturbing contemporary urban changes of the city of Novi Sad (Serbia). Who are the actors, how do they act, can we recognise the strategies on which they base their actions and how does this reflect on the public interest? We make the newspaper Cement, disguised as a tabloid, and on the night of its presentation it gets so crowded that people have to enter the venue through the windows.

A(U)CTION – NOVI SAD'S LOG OF SPACES BETWEEN PERSONAL INTERESTS AND PUBLIC NEEDS; by STEALTH.unlimited, Center_Kuda.org (Branka Ćurčić, Zoran Pantelić, Borka Stojić), Aleksandar Bede, Svetozar Krstić and Nataša Vujkov, with support from Kristian Lukić, Gordana Nikolić and Orfeas Skutelis, part of Cities Log project, edition 2.

May 4-6, 2011, Forsbåcka

"Bring a warm sweater and jacket, and hat, and gloves, and sturdy boots, and a pocket bottle of whisky. (...) We always meet when there is something to do, like a lecture, workshop, exhibition, building, whatever. This is free time. This is for us." In the old laboratory of a disused steel mill, with a dozen of people we have come to 'cook up' the future of our practices. One question prevails: are we stuck in the 'alternative'?

ALTERNATIVE ARCHITECTURE; organised by Raumlabor, Economy and Testbedstudio, in collaboration with Magnus Ericson (Arkitekturmuseet), with Bruit du Frigo (France), Cityförster (Germany/Netherlands), Celine Condorelli (UK), Exyzt (France), FAT (UK), IFAU (Germany), Modulorbeat (Germany), Meike Schalk and Apolonia Šušteršič (Sweden/Netherlands), STEALTH.unlimited (Serbia/Netherlands), Studio Basar (Romania), Uglycute (Sweden).

July – August 2011, Kaludjerica

We set out to write an unofficial history of Belgrade's suburb Kaludjerica (today with almost 30.000 inhabitants), the remarkable by-product of the modernisation of Belgrade, Serbia and Socialist Yugoslavia. Kaludjerica stayed largely beyond the reach of urban and financial planning and came up with its very own model of development. Can 'justice' be done to its still largely unresolved status?

KALUDJERICA FROM ŠKLJ TO ABC – A LIFE IN THE SHADOW OF MODERNISATION; by STEALTH.unlimited and Nebojša Milikić, drawings Vahida Ramujkić, as part of Unfinished Modernisations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism (2010-2012).

June 11 – August 21, 2011, Gothenburg

We create a three-month opening to physically transform and reassemble the site around the art center Röda Sten, stacking much of what could be necessary for any outdoor interventions in its large exhibition space – for whoever takes the opportunity to act, either alone or in collaboration. We become aware that not only our timely arrival, but also a well-timed withdrawal, is essential for the project to really take off.

(DIS)ASSEMBLED; by STEALTH.unlimited in dialogue with Röda Sten Konsthall (Mia Christersdotter Norman, director, Edi Muka, curator and Radha Hillarp Katz, Sara Lorentzon, Karin Lundmark, Calle Andersson, Helena Herou).

October 6 – December 18, 2011, Bordeaux

Working on Evento, the urban biennial of Bordeaux, we experience how a massive amount of energy (from many artists and practitioners involved) can be mobilised, but also wasted on a 'hopeless case', warped into a neo-conservative city-branding agenda. We put forward a piece of social future fiction inspired by numerous citizens' initiatives to confront the 2030 city agenda.

ONCE UPON A FUTURE; by STEALTH.unlimited with Emil Jurcan (Pulska Grupa/Praksa), in collaboration with arc en rêve architecture center, as part of Evento 2011, artistic director Michelangelo Pistoletto, commissioned by the city of Bordeaux.

October 2011 – May 2017, Stockholm and beyond

This practice-based research opens space not only to re-think, but potentially re-position the work of STEALTH. For four-and-half years, it also gives us financial stability, making it possible to set-up long term engagements, without for the first time worrying how to make ends meet.

UPSCALING, TRAINING, COMMONING; by STEALTH.unlimited, supervised by Henrietta Palmer and Doina Petrescu, as part of the practiced based PhD program at the Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm.

July 2011 – January 2012, Novi Pazar

It is not without reason that the city of Novi Pazar (Serbia) might lend itself as an intriguing starting point for the exploration of the perspectives for the constitution of commons: its history has largely been rooted in community investment. This research is a roller-coaster ride of ownership, property, land registry and the centuries old institution of vakif (and the claims on them).

WHAT PAZAR HAS IN COMMON(S)?; by STEALTH.unlimited and Emil Jurcan (Pulska Grupa/Praksa), with Urban-In (Aida Ćorović, Sead Biberović, Ešref Džanefendić, Sadija Džanefendić), part of Cities Log, edition 3 and INtoOUTREACH project.

February 2012 – May 2013, Sarajevo

We are back in Sarajevo. This time the city is covered by a metre-high blanket of snow, its clearing away by the inhabitants lending it an exceptional collaborative spirit. We ask thirteen individuals (thinkers, writers, designers, cultural producers and critics), what would be their utopia for Sarajevo. After many hours of lively discussions, we come to realise that the scope of a 'utopian' projection today resembles that which was once considered normal. Normality itself has become a utopia.

VERY NORMAL, VERY NORMAL – ON A UTOPIA OF URBAN RIGHTS; by STEALTH.unlimited, SCCA/Pro.ba (Asja Hafner), Anja Bogojević in conversation with Nenad Veličković, Stjepan Roš, Nebojša Jovanović, Faruk Šehić, Sabina Ćudić, Nejra Nuna Čengić, Amer Tikveša, Namik Kabil, Slobodan Anđelić, Saša Madacki, Suada Kapić, Adnan Harambašić, Zoran Ćatić and Nihad Čengić, part of Cities Log, edition 4 and Individual Utopias Now and Then.

August 28 – September 02, 2012, Island of Vis

In Hotel Issa, a remainder of the socialist workers' infrastructure, on the Croatian island of Vis, we join an international group of 170 scholars, activists and others to explore the topic of the commons. There is an atmosphere of collective interest in the discovery of the potential of the commons, but also of its limitations. The word 'commonism' is casually used.

COMMON FUTURE OF EUROPE – FUTURE OF THE COMMONS IN EUROPE; the third edition of Green Academy 2020, organised by Heinrich Böll Foundation, Zagreb and the Green Europe Foundation.

October 5, 2012 – January 1, 2013, Biella

In recent years, a number of cultural organisations and initiatives have set out to expand beyond the safety of the cultural space, and have started acting 'out there' to address some of the societal issues at stake – from affordable homes for people to live in to the need to democratise politics. It is a newly assumed responsibility. We have brought seven such initiatives to the fore, examining some of the breath-taking, daring or sometimes just provokingly pragmatic ways in which art and culture can re-define key aspects of our lives.

A LIFE IN COMMON – ART AND CULTURE CHANGING KEY ASPECTS OF URBAN LIFE; curated by STEALTH.unlimited and Juan Esteban Sandoval, with the assistance of Elisabetta Rattalino, Cittadellarte/Fondazione Pistoletto.

December 14, 2012 – ongoing, Belgrade

After more than two years being active in bringing urban issues in Belgrade to the fore, we decide with Ko Gradi Grad to tackle one of the most persistent of these: the lack of affordable housing. Following an open call, a group of people gathers to develop an alternative to the current market-driven and credit fuelled housing 'trap'. When our co-operative proposal reaches the media, reactions vary from those enthusiastic to help in whatever way they can, to tags like 'dreamers, enthusiasts' or 'thieves in the making'.

PAMETNIJA ZGRADA (SMARTER BUILDING); initiated by Ko Gradi Grad – STEALTH.unlimited, Marko Aksentijević, Cultural Center Rex (Dušica Parezanović, Nebojša Milikić) and developed with a wide group of participants.

April 26 – September 26, 2013, Konjic

Entering the former Atomic war command bunker of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – constructed between 1953 and 1979 to shelter 350 specially chosen individuals in a cataclysmic event – one question lodges itself in the mind: "Who is the community that will survive?" Can the choice of this group be radically opened up? We re-wire a bathroom of the nuclear bunker to show how this type of autonomous systems can be miniaturised, democratised and put to use in such a way as to avoid the next cataclysm: that being the collapse of the ecosystem due to our dependence on large, resource-consuming (infra)structures.

D-0 TO D0; by STEALTH.unlimited with assistance from Irfan Hošić and Jasmin Čorbadžić, part of the second edition of the Project Biennial of Contemporary Art, at the military object D-0, curated by Başak Şenova.

April 11-12, 2013, Stockholm

Investigating how to ground commons within an urban setting, with Henrietta Palmer we decide to set up an international conference on the matter. It is to explore the theory and practice of urban commons in the context of Sweden (and beyond) by bringing together professionals from the fields of urban theory, architecture, digital culture, film, literature and social sciences, as well as hands-on practitioners and policy makers. It foregrounds the necessity to keep this emerging field open and free from fixed definitions and wording, in order not to 'enclose' it before we understand its larger potential.

COMMONING THE CITY; made within the post-master research programme In Search of Common Ground – Resources.12/Lab, at Mejan Arc, Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm, organised in collaboration with STEALTH.unlimited involving the program participants.

November 2013 – ongoing, Rotterdam

The yet unknown fate of two dilapidated buildings, a stone's throw from Rotterdam's Central station will come to define our activities for a period of 10 years. With two friends, we take on the challenge of assigning the buildings a new future, an endeavour very much guided by an energetic and captivating learning-by-doing approach. Within two years, this will not just be centred on the two buildings, but also on re-defining modes of living in the city, and will take on the challenge of providing sustainable solutions to do so. Taking real-estate out of the market becomes the next, 'natural' challenge to be embraced.

STAD IN DE MAAK (CITY IN THE MAKING); initiated by Erik Jutten and Piet Vollaard and STEALTH.unlimited, joined by Daan den Houter and developed with its growing community.

February 18-22, 2014, Basel

With an international group of artists, designers, architects and sociologists we are part of a provocative discussion about our often-defensive positions on what 'the public' is. In the context of the increasing withering away of public institutions, and particularly of public space, we put into question the relation of 'good' and 'the public', and ask if a public which is increasingly mixed with the private should be defended or rather re-claimed.

DAS GUTE UND DAS ÖFFENTLICHE (THE GOOD AND THE PUBLIC); organised by Raumlabor Berlin with participation of a/o Jeanne van Heeswijk, Dirk Baeker, Christian Falsnaes, Martin Kaltwasser, STEALTH.unlimited.

July 4, 2014, Belgrade

The preparation of objections to the changes made to the General Urban Plan is the very first activity of what is to become the cornerstone of citizens' resistance towards the megalomaniac Belgrade Waterfront urban development project. Some days later, these objections are submitted by the citizens, in their hundreds. Within a short time, it becomes clear that such a legalistic approach when trying to engage with corrupt institutions is fruitless. Other forms of struggle are to come, bringing tens of thousands to the streets by 2016.

NE DA(VI)MO BEOGRAD (LET'S NOT D(R)OWN BELGRADE); initially sparked by the collective Minstarsvo Prostora (Ministry of Space) and Ko Gradi Grad, it evolved into a much broader citizens' initiative.

April 10-11, 2015, Madrid

We arrive in Madrid to discuss the relation between commons and institutions – and the question of how the commons can in a radically democratic way be an effective and operative political instrument. However, we are not only to experience this as a debate, but it literally plays out in front of our eyes, as we witness the citizen movement Ahora Madrid's intense election process at the kitchen table of the apartment where we are staying. Five weeks later they would go on to win the municipal elections.

BECOMING-COMMON OF THE PUBLIC, BECOMING-INSTITUTION OF THE SOCIAL; organised by Ana Méndez de Andés (Observatorio Metropolitano) with STEALTH.unlimited, Maria Grazia Giannichedda (Fundazione Basaglia, Venice), Francisco Lara González (Madrid), Francesca Bria (D-cent, UK), Laia Forné (La Hidra, Barcelona), Marta Malo de Molina and Débora Ávila (Manos invisibles, Madrid), Montserrat Galcerán and Raúl Royo (Fundación de los Comunes), in collaboration with Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.

October 11, 2013 – September 15, 2015, Vienna

Here we are in the 'kaminzimmer' inside the imperial building of the MAK. A small group of commons-related artistic and architecture practices are brought together by curator Maria Lind to discuss how to bring the concept to the upcoming Biennale. The question that unavoidably comes to mind is why bother wasting our energy on bringing the commons to such a 'zombie institution'. It would prove to be difficult to justify this until the very end of our project which (in a future fiction) harnesses the hard work throughout history of Viennese citizens and social movements in a confrontation with the City's technology driven goal of the 'smart city'.

THE REPORT: VIENNA BIENNALE 2049; by STEALTH.unlimited and Stefan Gruber, in collaboration with Paul Currion, on invitation of curator Maria Lind for the exhibition Future Light, at the Vienna Biennale 2015: Ideas for Change, MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/Contemporary Art.


SOL
SOL

May 29, 2016, Rotterdam

With a bid on a defunct boarding house in Rotterdam (euphemistically called Citizens' Hotel the Sun) we enter an entirely new stage in the ambition of Stad in de Maak, to make housing sustainably affordable. The idea is to buy the building 'out of the market' and bring it in co-operative ownership and governance. This first attempt falls through (or, the market is 'too high') – but the direction is set.

ACQUIRING BURGER HOTEL DE ZON (attempt); by Stad in de Maak (Erik Jutten, Piet Vollaard, STEALTH.unlimited, Daan den Houter).

June 15, 2016, Rotterdam

This seminar, organised on the three levels of Stad in de Maak's headquarters (at Pieter de Raadtstraat), is a moment to outline three possible future scenarios for Stad in de Maak. The first as sites for 'survival' in a growing number of temporally acquired buildings, the second as a 'training ground' for a different kind of living and the third one as taking the buildings out of the speculative cycle.

75% SEMINAR; by STEALTH.unlimited, with Guido Marsille, Martijn Jeroen van der Linden and Aetzel Griffioen, at Stad in de Maak.

September 30 – October 2, 2016, Loughborough

After months of preparation, two blue doors swing open onto a majestic, many metres high hall. The space inside is taken up by a large spatial set made out of hundreds of cardboard boxes. Above it, a suspended roof is levitating held up by metre long ratchet straps. This weekend, here at this place a group of people convenes to explore, open-up and dissect plans to turn this hall, and the much larger adjacent building (over 2.000 m2), into a place for the cultural and creative community. It is both their first collectively taken step into the building as well as the start of a long trajectory to gather the strength for such an endeavour.

FIRING THE GENERATOR; by STEALTH.unlimited with CIC The Generator, Loughborough (Kevin Ryan, Catherine Rogers and Megan Powell), as part of Market Town, a program by Radar – the Arts Programme of Loughborough University (Nick Slater), in close collaboration with Charnwood Arts and the BID Love Loughborough.

December 5, 2016 – January 5, 2017, Belgrade

Just before the new Law on Housing and Maintenance of Buildings enters discussion in the Serbian Parliament, a public campaign is launched to target the issue of the unaffordability of housing in Serbia for the vast majority of its population. Some of those who see the campaign images on social networks at first can barely believe that a campaign like this is also featuring on public transport buses and billboards on the street. "So, this is for real?" Over the weeks to come, the campaign extricates the issue of housing out of its undiscussed and taboo status.

DOBRO DOŠLI U STAMBENI PAKAO (WELCOME TO THE HOUSING HELL); by Ko Gradi Grad (Ana Džokić, Marc Neelen, Marko Aksentijević, Tadej Kurepa, Ana Vilenica) and Iva Marčetić, design by Miladin Miletić.

February 24-27, 2017, Rockanje

We have brought a small group of friends to discuss over a weekend where we expect to be heading in the next eight years. A few days of walking, cooking and discussing are necessary for the thoughts of these 'misfits in practice' to settle. Some of these thoughts will find their way into the last book of this publication. We depart with a feeling that the future is as unpredictable as it looked nine years ago in Ljubljana.

FUTURES BRAINSTORM; by STEALTH.unlimited, with Jere Kuzmanić, Ana Méndez de Andés, Piet Vollaard and Paul Currion.

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WEAK SIGNALS, ~~BEYOND SINGULAR~~ FUTURE SIGNS, WILDCARDS: ~~INTO THE COLLABORATIVE.~~ HOW IT COULD WORK ~~HOW WE WORK~~

BOOK 1:

WEAK SIGNALS, FUTURE SIGNS, WILDCARDS:
HOW IT COULD WORK

Addresses: *city agendas, imagination, possible futures*

Work in focus: *Once Upon a Future (Bordeaux, 2011) and The Report: Vienna Biennale 2049 (Vienna, 2015)*

The crash of 2008 did not provide for a breakthrough (politically, economically, culturally) towards a society that reaches beyond the forms of exploitation produced by contemporary capitalism. One can speculate about the reasons for this, but a viable 'alternative' for many still seems beyond imagination, let alone the reach of our daily lives. But how to desire for something that we even cannot (yet) imagine?

This book speaks about the capacity of fiction and the imaginary to transport us into possible futures, in order to recognise the potentials of different (urban) societies. Here the 'singular' (professional) point of view loosens its grip, while clues for conceivable futures are being found in past and present citizens' initiatives. By observing signals of what might seem at this moment still insignificant individual instances, a silhouette of another (postcapitalist/ beyond progress/...) society starts to get outlined.

Guest contributor Book 1:
Dougald Hine *(1977) is a writer and social thinker, based in Västerås, Sweden. In 2009, he co-initiated the Dark Mountain Project, "a network of writers, artists and thinkers who have stopped believing the stories our civilisation tells itself." Following our first encounter in 2013, and a set of common adventures, in 2016 STEALTH has asked Dougald to work together on a possible future fiction for Gothenburg Riverfront.*

JANUARY 29, 2016. THE BUS COMES TO A HALT AT THE BUS STOP. AS THE DOORS SWING OPEN, THE WINTER STORM RAGES DOWN ON US. THE BUS STOP STANDS IN THE MIDDLE OF A VAST DESOLATE TERRAIN, PUDDLES OF WATER WHIPPED UP BY THE WIND HIDE THE PATCHES ON THE ASPHALT.

Nothing around, just a line of low concrete road barriers, painted white. Our companions nod encouragingly. Our eyes half closed, we jump out and cross the terrain.

We walk towards the water and a weirdly shaped object, covered in corrugated steel. Rust breaks through its grey paint. While we go up along one of its high legs, we feel the structure tremble in the wind. Upstairs, we find shelter from the storm. Through a small corridor we enter a sauna, with an ingeniously crafted wooden interior[1]. Inside, our two companions talk about MIPIM, the international real-estate fair in Cannes – probably the world's most prestigious sales ground for real-estate developments. Apparently, the sauna will be featuring on the occasion of the 2016 fair. Our conversation continues about a swimming pool, whose vague outlines are pointed out to us, further below, in the streaming rain. We will only later understand why these topics are brought up, here.

A bit before we took the bus, we had been introduced to the reason behind our visit: a possible contribution to Gothenburg's City Triennial, in three steps leading up to the year 2021, when Gothenburg marks 400 years of its existence. The triennial has an intriguing exponential pattern: after a 3-day event in 2015, and a 3-week event in 2018, the Jubilee will be taking place during a 3-month cultural event. We're here to help with outlining that path to the next occasion, 2018.

After a short break from the weather, we are back to the rain. We cross the terrain in the opposite direction, to a refurbished warehouse. Here, we hear that the Jubileumsparken (Jubilee park) is the site of one of Gothenburg's upcoming city development areas, a former industrial harbour. Part of the developments will be temporary at first, and later solidify in a more permanent occupation of the terrain. We understand the Triennial plays a role in this operation, although to which effect is not yet entirely clear to us.

1 Part of Allmänna Badet designed by Raumlabor (2014), on our visit with Björn Siesjö (Gothenburg's city architect) and Kristoffer Nilsson (Gothenburg City Planning Authority).

Together with our companions, we glance over a larger map of Gothenburg. The bus stop, set on this desolate terrain, becomes a mere blip in the larger development perspective. The city has declared its ambition to make a huge leap towards RiverCity 2035, ... 2050 even. In turn, it triggers us to reveal to our companions the experiences we had through 'inhabiting' the urban perspectives that the cities of Bordeaux and Vienna mapped out for themselves.

Urban visions, urban imaginaries, alternative urban narratives all presuppose an urbanity unfolding. The force inherent to this is captured in concepts like 'development' or 'progress'. It is a way towards the future, a vector that carries contradictory, at times inherently oppositional characteristics: growth and sustainability, community and investment opportunity, (regional and international) migration and belonging – the list is endless.

Is it then, at all, possible to 'positively' strive for an urban future?

Dougald Hine: As I read your memories of the grey west-coast winter, I remind myself that the future will make fools of us all, that it will roll in despite all our strivings, and even when our actions have contributed to the form it takes, this will happen in ways that take us by surprise.

What is the future? It is a blank screen onto which we make projections. There are projections of power, in which the future is held up as an extension of a bright and brightening present; there are projections of hope, in which the future is a refuge from the shadow side of that present. The persistence of a concept such as 'progress' was due, not least, to its ability to encompass both of these: to those who are well-served by the current state of affairs, it could promise its extension into the future, while to those who are ill-served, it could promise an overturning of the present order of things.

Yet, somewhere along the way, these promises became less convincing. The future no longer felt like a safe vessel for hopes: it became a source of anxiety. Those once charged with providing a concrete embodiment of the ongoing betterment of the civic sphere are now occupied with performing raindances to attract the favour of the gods of investment capital. And the language of sustainability seems a substitute for progress, expressing a wish that the show can somehow be kept on the road a little longer.

And still, the days keep rolling in, one after another, getting shorter, then longer again.


BORDEL


DORAD


IL ETAIT UNE FOIS DEMAIN
ONCE UPON A FUTURE
ARC EN RÊVE
CENTRE D'ARCHITECTURE
+ STEALTH.UNLIMITED
LES ABATTOIRS
6/10
18/12/
2011
RÉ
EVOLUTION
EVENTO2011
BORDEAUX

BIENNIAL/TRIENNIAL

CONTEXT

There is possibly a fundamentally different role between the cultural context of exhibitions, biennials, triennials etc. and that of expos, urban forums and similar occasions. Still, since the start of the 2000s there has been an increasing space reserved to deal with the development of cities in cultural events.

Looking in more detail, they seem to provide space for a subtle act of critiquing the inherent violence, materiality, disturbance of communities inherent to urban developments, set in artistic or cultural projects that create islands of (temporary, performed) 'resistance' within the urban machine. However, like expos, MIPIMs, and urban forums much of their bedrock is in city branding. How then to understand what is played out here, what is at stake?

If artistic/cultural projects are aware of the conflicting nature of urban development, why don't they refuse, opt for exodus, or for mobilisation instead, but rather create microcosms of resistance (or denial)? And on the other hand, why do their commissioners seek such self-inflicted criticism? Does this provide the legitimation (aka 'morality') of the force that surrounds these (in many ways negligible) islands? *[DH: Your islands, however negligible, set me thinking of the fruitful opposition which Anna Tsing sets up between Hardt & Negri and Gibson-Graham. Could there be an outside of capitalism, an already-existing postcapitalist space of possibility? Maybe it is better to occupy the tension than to claim we have answered the question one way or the other.]*

Probably, the space of such events is often generated by the culmination of intriguingly un-aligned expectations infused with hints of opportunism.

We can take some clues for instance from the commissioning of the artistic director for Evento 2011 in Bordeaux; a 'carte blanche' given by the mayor of Bordeaux to the artist Michelangelo Pistoletto for an urban biennial under the banner of Art for an Urban (Re)evolution. Carte blanche? (Re)evolution? We have witnessed close up how both are largely illusionary and how the socially engaged art to which Evento was to give ground actually wasn't to be embraced by the authorities who had called for it, thus creating frustration for many artists, curators and local groups involved. Or the case of the Vienna Biennale 2015, meant to go under the banner of Ideas for Positive Change, where after some criticism the word 'positive' would get removed.

Similarly, we have to acknowledge an entire 'industry' of artists, architects and cultural producers that have come to excel in this space (like ourselves, or Raumlabor, the designers of the 'weirdly shaped object' in Gothenburg's harbour).

There is a level of impossibility (and with that, awkwardly enough, convenience) of this for all involved: the works are based on short-term engagements, hardly any 'deep' contact with the local reality, often leaving no enduring legacy, no possibilities to return later (geographic distance, lacking finance), limited risk, and an easy excuse (not understanding the local reality).

However, what can be taken from them is the possibility to create such islands, to carve out such spaces. Is it possible to subvert them, and let them become spaces that mobilise citizens instead?

> *DH: In London, activists have turned against those they accuse of 'art-washing', artists collaborating with developers, providing legitimation. However socially-engaged the practice, however critical, the anxiety that we are contributing to the legitimacy of this industry may give us restless nights.*
>
> *Meanwhile, the self-betraying language makes me think of the phenomenon of the 'residency', a word whose meaning has been turned inside out. 'To reside' means 'to remain behind', whereas the artist's residency is a brief stepping stone in a transient career.*
>
> *Beyond the darkly accurate description you offer, what room is there to subvert our role as outsiders brought in to contribute to the city's brand, by giving authority back to those who do reside?*

CITY AGENDAS

(2050, 2050)

City visions and urban agendas are curious documents. They linger in a weird space, a conceptual no-man's land well beyond "the end of history" once proclaimed by Francis Fukuyama (The End of History and the Last Man, 1992), even beyond the experience of the global financial crisis that broke out in 2008, but before other events that could cause an "end of history": a climate collapse, resource scarcity, massive migratory flows. Their language and imagery, embedding the route towards the future in reassuring elements: children, families, greenery. They unfold along the line of 'all is good already, but it will become even better' for (all of) us. No one should get upset, here.

Still, a massive amount of energy is poured into them, including the consultations and marketing efforts. Cities apparently need a vector into the future, or at least an imago of development. (We generally perceive 'lingering' cities as a trap or 'swamp', and shrinking ones as a sinkhole.) *[DH: The Danish archaeologist Klavs Randsborg retells the story of the classical world and its barbarian neighbours with the Greco-Roman city states as black holes, their prosperity generating collapse, requiring them to suck in the resources of wider and wider regions.]* A vision or agenda is to make this tangible, as to ensure that some strategy of sorts is in place. It is then relevant to understand who needs to be convinced of that fact. One would assume that the documents reveal more about this. Let's look at a statement from the Smart City Wien Framework Strategy (2014):

"Favourable economic policy conditions and cutting-edge technologies create a diversified employment landscape with a sufficient number of workplaces that are highly compatible with family life and children. Internationally, Vienna is considered a leader in products and services pertaining to energy, mobility, sustainability and health. These assets attract young people from all over the world, who find possibilities for a fulfilled and happy life in Vienna."

From this statement, one would almost believe it predicts the migratory flows of 2015 in an uttermost positive tone. However, it is crucial to look at the drivers behind the 'development'. Here, the documents are clear: growth, upward mobility and investment. All of which will force substantial portions of the existing citizens' base to give way for (more affluent) others, or to face an uncertain future amidst a substantial influx of new 'neighbours'.

In February 2013, during the official presentation of the city vision 2030 Towards the Greater Bordeaux, a Sustainable Metropole, the mayor Alain Juppé states: "Bordeaux is living a big bang". The reassuring words offered to the citizenry combined with the prospect of a 'big bang' are puzzling. And leave us wondering, why it became a mantra that Bordeaux should grow for a quarter more, to 1.000.000 inhabitants?

One of the people working in the urban planning department would reveal to us that such a vision is to guarantee a safe investment (to financiers, to developers, to future inhabitants) and a good return on that investment, rather than anything else. And being part of the million-citizens league is a qualification card for those bidding at MIPIM, the real-estate fair in Cannes.

If this is true, it might also help explain why there is hardly anything 'visionary' to be found in such visions. City agendas are simply re-enactments of the present situation, re-positioned into the future. Such futures are clearly outlived. Is it possible to come up with a vision that is future-proofed instead? And who is to drive it?

DH: I remember living for a while in Brussels, looking out across the city at the Atomium, a remnant of the World Fair of 1958. Such structures, relics of a future that didn't happen, are remote and eerie in a way that even the most mysterious and illegible of prehistoric remains are not: the ghosts of those who were never born, whose existence was only dreamed of. Yet, in their grandeur, they express a confidence that belongs to another time.

Faced with the feebleness of today's visions of the future, it is tempting to appeal for a recovery of that kind of confidence. You may have heard these appeals: We need to recover the spirit of Kennedy when he said, "We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

The circumstances which led to the disappearance of the heroic future cannot be reduced to a weakening of moral resolve. We face a set of complex entangled crises which may be better understood as predicaments than problems: they cannot be fixed or solved, but we may do a better or worse job of living with them, living through them, as they turn the world as we have known it upside down.

I am reminded of a saying of the storyteller and mythographer Martin Shaw, founder of the oral cultures programme at Stanford University: we are not living in a heroic age, he suggests, we are living in a trickster age. Rather than rebooting the heroic future, or accepting the outlived futures promised in these vision documents, I find myself wondering about the trickster's path, the possibility that we stumble backwards, unexpectedly, into another world.

BEYOND THE KNOWN

"To say that exponential growth is incompatible with a finite world and that our capacity for consumption must not exceed the biosphere's capacity for regeneration is so obvious that few would disagree." (Serge Latouche in Farewell to Growth, 2009)

"We have 10-15 years left to act. If we don't bend the development curve [down], by 2030 the wheels will come off". (Brennan Andersen, environmental expert, Green Academy, Vis, 2016)

The fragments of what can become a more visionary future are not all unknown. They exist as 'weak signals', which in futurology are understood as (advance, noisy and socially situated) indicators of changes essential for enabling anticipatory actions. And they can be found among citizens or groups that have come up with alternate narrations that defy the prevailing storyline. Those initiatives re-write what banks can be(come), what our energy infrastructure can be(come), set up networks of mutual aid and assistance, or practice elements of urban production. If we look better, there are many of them existing already. But their signals are weak, and do not provide (yet) the possible outline of a promise.

"The one thing that's clear is that such new ideas cannot emerge without jettisoning much of our accustomed categories of thought – which have become mostly sheer dead weight, if not intrinsic parts of the very apparatus of hopelessness – and formulating new ones." (David Graeber in Debt: The First 5.000 Years, 2011)

Yet, how to strive for something that we cannot (yet) imagine? While that in itself may prove impossible, what can be done is to fast-forward these weak signals, amplify them, and bring enough of them together. Many an occasion, a paradigm shift is so obviously necessary but unarticulated that a relatively small manifestation of an alternate reality can drive a massive change. According to P.M, the Swiss author whose writing sparked a whole range of new housing cooperatives in Zürich, it would take 20% to shift the unsustainable speculative housing market in Zürich towards a non-profit, resilient alternative (in our conversation at MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art, Vienna, 2015). Zürich – or Switzerland – might be getting there, but it is difficult to grasp how to get there elsewhere.

In 2011, deviating from that uninspiring 2030 urban vision of 'sustainable metropole' Bordeaux, we headed out to see what some of the residents of Bordeaux might otherwise hold to be future. Looking from the outside, Bordeaux is not exactly the city where one expects to find determined groups carving out paths to a quite radically different future. But the lush environment has awakened those who understand its current citizenry might not be able to afford a future in Bordeaux, or will largely have to depend on each other's mutual aid. Groups like H'Nord, Boboyaka or Garage Modern have started to imagine what is possible instead. However, all of them are overwhelmed by the effort it takes to currently maintain their initiatives. They may be able to transplant their idea into a timespan of a decade or two from now, but only as an island floating in a hostile or ignorant surrounding urban environment.

Faced with the task to come up with a future perspective for Bordeaux, with the exhibition project **Once Upon a Future** (commissioned within Evento 2011), we decided to turn to the tool of future fiction: "Fiction is a specific form of narrative that deals with events that are not

(yet) factual. To express imagination, it is necessary to go beyond current facts once in a while and freely explore the possibilities of our desires, in order to understand clearly what today's limitations are. This helps us to step beyond the rigid framework of the contemporary city and look at its complexities from a distance. It is important to stress that Once Upon a Future is not based on individual will, but on the shared aspirations of different groups and individuals who worked together and slowly constructed their thoughts. This makes it 'social fiction'." (from the introduction to the publication Once Upon a Future, 2011)

We teamed up with architect Emil Jurcan and writer and philosopher Bruce Bégout to outline the adventures, places, events and dates that would take H'Nord, Boboyaka and a range of others towards 2030.

In Vienna, where the city had set out to create "the smartest among the world's smart cities" (Smart City Wien, Framework Strategy, 2014) we explored where that 'smartness' indeed resides. As from the outset, there is little to object to regarding the basic idea of a 'smart' city: to improve the quality of urban life by using technology that enhances the efficiency of services and meet residents' needs. If we take the necessity of dealing with challenges like climate change, urban population growth, resource depletion, an ageing population, we will have to embrace technological advancements that can help us do so. However, we need before anything else to ask on what paradigm it is to be based, and who is driving these evolutions. There are two very opposing models of how 'smartness' can be achieved here: the one advocated by the likes of Jeremy Rifkin (in the book Zero Marginal Cost Society, 2014) who believes that the future is to be driven by 'Internet of Things' enabled networked individuals and communities, versus the 'old style' centralised corporations and infrastructures of the last century (like Cisco or Siemens) who have discovered smart cities as a globalised business model.

The choice between these two paradigms is key as they mutually exclude each other in the long term. With Vienna's particularly vibrant history of citizens-driven urban developments – from post-World War One Settler's Movement, to the many Baugruppen and co-housing initiatives – it comes as a surprise that the city has such difficulty embracing the very capacity of its own citizens in exploring its future. Especially if we understand how much of what we admire in Vienna today results not from corporate or municipal initiative, but has been triggered by popular initiative (the housing estates, the 'soft urban renewal', the Baugruppen indeed) and social movements. The difficulty of dealing with citizens' initiatives seems to be best encapsulated in the amount of force used to evict Pizzeria Anarchia on July 28, 2014, with an armoured vehicle and 1700 police in riot gear. All this just to remove a group of 'punks' who had put up resistance to a real-estate thug transforming housing into speculative lofts.

With the architect Stefan Gruber, we set out to explore the tracks left by 100 years of citizens' upsurge, revolt and initiative in the city of Vienna and to assess how these had been 'domesticated' and incorporated into the policies, strategies and practices of the city itself. Then, with writer Paul Currion we developed **The Report** – a fiction story in which the dilemma of the smart city driven by efficiency (to what goal?), and that of a personal responsibility in setting the course of history have been brought to the fore.

Although Once Upon a Future and The Report do indeed manage to transport us into a different future, they struggle with the same issue as many of the city visions and agendas we have discussed before: they constitute the idea of the future based on elements taken from the present. Does this mean that they are caught in the same 'non-visionary' trap or the same dead-end road we have criticised before? No, quite the contrary as one will intuitively understand. Where then does the difference emerge?

Although their constitutive elements are indeed based in what we know of today (resilience, a collaborative networked society, a zero marginal cost prosumer revolution, etc.) or what have been inspiring practices or concepts in the past (like cooperatives) they don't take the 'today' as their conceptual end-goal.

Although it may be tempting to ridicule the attempts of these groups and initiatives for lacking a clear vision of that which will replace the exhausted, dead-end visions of today, they respond with an intuitive trust that the outline of the future will only appear from stubborn, passionate and collaborative practice. We have noticed this momentum taking hold with some of the people and initiatives we have met during our talks and discussions in Bordeaux and Vienna. It is a reversal of strategy: instead of battling the insecurity of not (yet) having a clear outline, it draws strength from advancing from a set of steps and practices that follow common-sense principles (such as reducing the vulnerability of individuals and communities to economic risk, striving for collective control over one's living and working circumstances, introducing 'commons' and setting them free from erosive pressures, self-organising and doing things on one's own collective terms and strength). However, it takes a lot of faith and courage. *[DH: And what are the questions we need to ask ourselves (and each other) to hold such emergent processes to account? Both to find the courage – and to ensure that we are not losing the way in wishful thinking.]*

Paul Mason in his book PostCapitalism: A Guide to Our Future (2015) takes us a step further in reasoning where this may lead to a breakthrough:

"A general pattern is likely to emerge; the transition to postcapitalism is going to be driven by surprise discoveries made by groups of people working in teams, about what they can do to old processes by applying collaborative thinking and networks. [...] But for all our attempts at rationality, this is not going to be a controlled process. The most valuable things that networks (and the individuals

within them) can do is to disrupt everything above. Faced with group-thinking and convergence, either in the design stage of an economic project or in its execution, networks are a brilliant tool for allowing us not just to dissent, but to secede and start our own alternative. We need to be unashamed utopians."

And indeed, it might be exactly that 'ambition' which can take us beyond the known!

DH: I wonder about this, you know. Whichever way we turn it, a 'utopia' is a 'no-place', so to be a 'utopian' is to be a 'placeless one'. I recognise the desire to open a gap between 'how things happen to be' and 'how things could be', and ideas of utopia have been an instrument for opening this gap, but they belong to the set of instruments which do not work as well as they used to.

In his Postcapitalism, Mason rejects the approach to the future summed up in Gustavo Esteva's slogan: 'One No, Many Yeses'. For all the cooperative, self-managing non-hierarchy he may advocate, there is at the heart of Mason's argument the need for an overarching systemic vision of an alternative. In this sense, it is indeed utopian, in pursuit of 'once-and-for-all' answers. Against this, I suspect that much of what you are describing would be better served by the pursuit of 'for-here-and-for-now' answers, an approach to change that takes seriously the particular flavours of different places, as well as the common threads that link them.

Perhaps we could balance Mason's vision with another use of the term 'Postcapitalism' that was put forward some years earlier by the feminist economists JK Gibson-Graham?

Let's for a moment return to those artistic and cultural islands of (performed) resistance mentioned before. Could that which has been seen merely as 'perverse' be put to use as 'subversive' instead? Could they be understood as test-bed for urban practices in development? In Rotterdam, with **City in the Making** (an association set up in 2013, and in focus in Book 2) we started to understand our mission as such. We decided to conceive of the current situation of a gradually increasing number of sites and buildings that are managed on a temporary (hence unsustainable) basis as a phase of 'upscaling, training, commoning'.

Could citizens, instead of merely claiming the 'right to the city', start giving shape to those claims? It can be understood as a radical ambition, but however is not seen by many as a purely utopian perspective: the real-estate operator in control of the buildings we use as this 'training ground' acknowledges the necessity of embarking on new expeditions based in a different operating logic than that in which the situation is trapped, but thus equally acknowledges how the breakthrough has to come from initiatives like ours.

Similarly, the same holds for those in city bureaucracies. Understanding that a different logic of operating is called for, understanding that the current future agendas are not sustainable, let alone beneficial, they lack the tools and capacity to act otherwise. Quite a few of those – economists, planners, politicians – therefore understand the necessity to support this explorative capacity within their own cities. *[DH: The challenge for people in these positions is often the difficulty (both because of real shortage and because of trouble in finding what exists) of finding the genuine explorative capacity, rather than the woolly wishful thinking or the slick operators who have worked out how to sell a safe service that has all the right buzzwords.]*

A NEEDED (POLITICAL) ACT?

Let's take a more critical look at what both the narratives of Once Upon a Future and The Report actually propose, and identify the similarities and differences amongst them.

Both seem firmly set in the understanding that only another, yet more magnificent crash of society (triggered by an environmental catastrophe in one, and the 'onslaught' of a viral piece of programming code in the other) can convincingly 'transport' us to accepting that a change of paradigm for society and its (urban) development is possible. Not only could this be taken to be a quite depressing point of view, but it also ignores the outlook that another society is already in the making of which we are largely unaware. Authors like Jeremy Rifkin, David Graeber or Paul Mason, and economists like Serge Latouche come to the following conclusion: we are part of a changing paradigm – but critically, its speed be too slow to avert a global ecologic collapse in the first place. None of them, however, puts any hope in a 'liberating' catastrophe (quite the contrary). Both in Once Upon a Future, and in The Report, the actual trigger of events (an uninvited catastrophe) is taken as a logical step, which itself is obviously up for discussion.

In both proposals, the building blocks on which the actual adventures are based are a set of existing urban initiatives. In the course of both narratives, they get enlarged, multiplied - but hardly escape the very essence of what they are today. Once Upon a Future depicts a city reminiscent of hippy-style collectives, dressed in updated accessories and updated to yesterday's technology (internet, mobile phone, etc.). Their act of communal

interaction is the squatting of an IKEA which they turn into a learning-and-information centre named IDEA. Although IKEA may still be at the forefront of an expanding consumer infrastructure, the entire scene smells weirdly archaic. The same holds for The Report. We have a number of existing initiatives, yesterday's and tomorrow's technology (3D printing, for one) and some of the more heroic aspects of collective action arise around a 'free' bike share scheme. None of this seems to have taken the revolution of Rifkin, or the words of Graeber, Mason or Latouche too much into account. In defence, one could say that such fictional storylines quickly lose their credibility if they are not supported by artefacts and social realities directed towards our (current) reality. Still, there sits an enormous potential here for 'creative minds' (writers, spatial practitioners, artists etc.) to translate part of that unfolding revolution onto the interactions and the spaces set in future urban environments. It is maybe here, where their/our capacities and talents are the most needed.

Then there is the difficulty of how to imagine an alternate society in a sea of (likely) indifference? Both narratives struggle to convincingly place themselves in a regional or global context. In the case of Once Upon a Future, the Icelandic migrants that are the lead characters in the story are turned away by the largest economic and military power to date (when they are chased away from the harbours of New York), acting a few weeks later after arriving in Bordeaux within a context of regional collaboration (instead of regional competition) between cities, and by the end some of them set off on: "Creating a delegation of volunteer pioneers to found a new city in Greenland, a kind of New Bordeaux on arable land that has now thawed out because of global warming." The Report pictures a city that may (in the end) fend off the global commercial implementation of a 'smart city' paradigm, and could be said to be turning to 'smart citizens, rather than smart cities' but it remains unclear how it would survive in the global condition of corporate players, 'big data', proprietary 'smart city' code, etc. against which it turns itself in rejection. Of course, providing the answer requires us to first of all imagine the grounding and spatialisation of that unfolding revolution (mentioned just above) in future urban environments, before anything else. Lacking this, they are a constant reminder of Thomas More's Utopia (published in 1516), set on an imaginary island in the Atlantic Ocean: alternate societies that can be perceived as credible – because they are islands. *[DH: The world as archipelago?]*

It is also interesting to understand in whose hands finally lies the key to enact the overall change. In Once Upon a Future we follow a host of 'commoning' initiatives to arrive at the end with the figure of an enlightened mayoress who legitimises the struggle by calling for more direct democracy. It is interesting to take another look at the probability of this happening, especially keeping in mind the interaction of commoners and civic movements with political power (as in Spain, where citizens' movements have been getting into government in cities like Barcelona and Madrid). According to many, in France this can only be understood as a satirical comment on the impossibility of cracking the Trias Politica (the strict separation between legislation, administration and jurisdiction). On the other


LABEL
ELDORADO
2030


SARL
CABREPO
DUCASTEL et Fils
IL ETAIT UNE FOIS


ON A
RIEN
POUR
RIEN
RESISTANCE
MODERNE
LA GROSSE ÉPAULOUTÉ
DANS LES GRANDES VOITURES LES RÊVES SONT FACILES
PAS DE
PITIÉ
POUR LA
Croissance
MORT AUX VACHES
QUI REGALE
CUB

hand, in Vienna we are presented with marginal groups and the figure of a loner (the main character), confused by the mess in which he finds himself, and a bot (piece of software), for both of whom it then requires an act of terrorism (or liberation, for that matter) for them to put their almost solitary opinion on how the future should be unlocked. Maybe both key-holders are reminiscent of the Keymaker in the film The Matrix Reloaded (2003); a figure whose usefulness has expired and – rather than being deleted – has chosen to hide in the Matrix instead. So do we need these unlikely heroes?

Possibly the most difficult to understand is whether the drivers of change (broadly speaking, citizens' movements and collectives) are sufficient to drive the transition to another reality purely on their own terms. Does there have to be a structure of governance in place to enable the changes necessary? And for that do these groups have to become political actors in their own right? Both narratives remain vague in this aspect, just as many commoners and commons movements remain currently divided about it. However, if we follow the lines of for instance Paul Mason, he suggests that a supportive government framework, if not an outright political movement, might be necessary to make an alternate reality come through.

DH: The role of the liberating catastrophe may be worth dwelling on. Will a similar deus ex machina be required to set the narrative of a Gothenburg future fiction in motion?

Its purpose seems to be to cut the knot of shadows in which thinking about the future now gets tied up. Given that one of the reasons we cannot imagine things going on like this is the unsustainability of our current way of living and another is the fragility of our complex technological systems, the invention of an external catastrophic event that is a consequence of one of these does not seem to stretch the bounds of plausibility too far. Still, it sits uncomfortably with the desire for change to come about as a result of human agency – and there is a risk that 'the collapse' occupies the position of 'the revolution' in an earlier generation, the Godot whose arrival will open a new world of possibilities.

In place of this, perhaps we could defuse 'the collapse' and treat it not as a single dramatic event, but as the unfolding of a process which has already begun, which reaches different places and different groups of people sooner or later, and is seen more or less clearly, depending on where one stands. 'The collapse is already here,' we might say, 'it is just not evenly distributed.'

Another clue to how this could work in narrative terms – and how elements of present-day realities can be woven satisfactorily into a future scenario – might come from Alfonso Cuaron's film adaptation of PD James' novel Children of Men. One of the striking features of the film is the way that its dystopian portrayal of 2027 is riddled with clues linking it back to the world of the early 2000s in which the film was made. Does this not also describe what you have been doing? The research which goes into these projects enables the construction of such threaded timelines, linking the present and the recent past to the time in which our story takes place, to form the background to the world we want to write about.

THE ACT OF NARRATING

And how about the actual format used to 'transport' the outline of that viable future? With The Report, this is based on a plot in written text and accompanied by graphic material. This particular combination means that it may be easily assumed that the narrative holds little surprise for those who know the context and the graphic material (although it has been artificially distorted or 'glitched'). To actually read the plot requires effort as it does not project itself actively into one's field of attention. That is where Once Upon a Future, in its format as an outdoor exhibition, bears a quite different capacity. Here, a vast graphic display immediately catches the eye. It is made up of interpretations that provide a subtle translation of what we recognise as being a part of today but re-set in an unfamiliar context.

The choice of comics or graffiti was quite conscious. It is a narrative, an exhibition about urban development, but does not use the language of urban plans or architectural drawings. Not only is it extremely hard to make such (technical) drawings about an as yet unknown future but in our experience, with a few exceptions, there are few exhibits more boring than architects' blueprints. Standing in front of the exhibit, it is easy to see how the narrative manages to get itself across: most viewers catch a glimpse of one or another detail in the many drawings, become intrigued by the scenery and try to figure out what is at stake. Quickly, they turn to the text that presumably clarifies the somewhat puzzling display. And in no time at all they actually manage to locate the start of the storyline and to follow it through.

There are a few more instances of such 'graphic' tools being employed. Both narratives use a layering of names, dates and keywords as a quick navigational aid, as a locator of sorts. Numbers such as '1.000.000' refer to the number of inhabitants Bordeaux projects to have reached by 2030, or to particular geographic locations like 'Pessac'. In The Report, these graphic tools however refer to events, sites or initiatives from the past, that function as a historic reality, as a foundation of sorts to the claims made in the plot about the future.

Both narratives can be seen as a direct response to official policy documents, while 'instrumentalising' or setting them off in opposing directions. As such, the making of these narratives has been an exploration in itself, trying to understand what life in those visions could be, or how and into what it could be subverted. Therefore, writing became an interesting mode of researching the potential impact of such urban agendas. However, the narratives take two quite different directions: Once Upon a Future for one could be understood as an act of reclaiming of sorts where the notion of solidarity no longer means solidarity between

real-estate investors but between the citizens themselves. As a result, by 2030, an entirely different Bordeaux has (already) arisen. The Report follows another logic. In many ways, it stubbornly leaves intact the original ambition of the city but carefully builds the possibility of resistance in and on top of it. Although it less clearly outlines that potential future society, it may be more effective as a reminder of the struggle and the contrast with the direction set by the bureaucratic machinery.

In history, there is a long tradition of circumscribing alternative paths, of making other ambitions perceivable. While as we have seen both Once Upon a Future and The Report provide a caricature of sorts, some of the more influential projections have carefully avoided the label of caricature. The Society for the Acquisition of One's Own House was dead-serious with its proposal when launched in 1868 in the Amsterdam People's Journal (see Book 2, Encounters). Still, it has been hugely captivating. One could wonder if a narrative technique could be proposed that can successfully venture into the yet unknown, while not having to resort to somehow over-played or already characterised plots?

Finally, we come to the act of writing itself. Although both Once Upon a Future and The Report largely result from teamwork, with a number of different people involved, the text has been ultimately brought to expression by individual writers. **Hence, outlining these futures can be seen as setting up a huge funnel, through which the countless thoughts, ideas and contributions of a vast number of people and initiatives over the period of months are channelled into the keystrokes of a single mind;** awkwardly so if we recall that our own drive is set in an 'age of collaboration' or belief in distributed authorship. We are aware that the conventional consultation processes leading to conventional city agendas do not fare better in this respect (outsourced to commercial copywriters), but there is a vast space for improvement here. Can a 'true' collective imagination be mobilised?

UNFOLDING INTO REALITY

While we shortly touched already upon a 'narrative' that in a short time has managed to make a very tangible impact on real life (the Society for the Acquisition of One's Own House, that within 30 years built some 1.000 houses from the contributions of its working-class members), a few other cases may be of help in understanding how imagination can be a tool to pull us into an alternate reality.

For the members of the Society for the Acquisition of One's Own House, the conceptual distance travelled must have been considerable (from impoverished, indebted slum dwellers to independent collective house owners). However, it only turned a narrow segment of urban reality upside-down. The challenges before us require a longer journey as they concern much larger and more complex changes.

Quite often we are unable to see how that which is directly in front of us can become something radically different. While working on The Report we met with Helmut Voitl, one of the initiators of Planquadrat in Vienna. He and his partner Elisabeth Guggenberger had been commissioned in 1973 to make a documentary for Austrian public TV (ÖRF) about the Biedermeier-style backyards in Viennese housing blocks. Post 1968, this was not exactly the liberating subject matter they had been hoping for but quite swiftly they managed to twist reality and found themselves exactly doing that: liberating the 'subjects' trapped in a dead-end urban reality. Helmut and Elisabeth stumbled upon a block of houses that had been condemned to be demolished, whilst their residents were left up-in-the-air about their own destiny. The two slowly made their own way into the life of the block, first of all just standing in front of the buildings and patiently waiting and observing till someone from the block would open a dialogue with them. In a short amount of time they had become a part of the 'everyday' and set up within the block a clandestine TV studio (left unreported to the Austrian broadcaster). It is remarkable how their playful and minimal interventions activated the residents to the point of their even tearing down the fences dividing the individual plots. Step-by-step, a dense interaction the neighbours appeared. Even today, it is a vibrant community, and many people come to take a stroll or play there. What had started in an attempt to subversively turn a dreadfully uninspiring documentary commission into something else is today known as the start of the 'soft urban renewal' in Vienna.

In the same year (2015) we visited Vienna's urban-extension-under-construction: Seestadt Aspern. It is not 'just' a city extension; it is the model development along whose lines the Smart City Vienna vision is to be unfolded. When we arrived many of the newly erected buildings had just been completed and a swarm of removals vans and decorators were making their way about the new district. We had come here in the company of Hans Widmer, better known under his pseudonym P.M. While making our own way through the district, we could not but refrain from the feeling that a perfect, care-free environment had been laid out here, somehow as if 'the end of history' had found its materialised form. An odd feeling, certainly.

In 1983, dissatisfied with the direction urban life and global development were taking, as well the aspirations of a consumer society, P.M. decided to inject a rather unusual proposal into his surroundings. His novel bolo'bolo depicts life in a society of largely autonomous communities (each of 500 people), interconnected in a global network where dependence on personal private property has been mostly shunned (the concept of property being a weird heritage from Roman Law, but still understood as sacred in 'modern' societies). Private possessions would be stowed away in a space no larger than 1 x 0.5 x 0.5 meters – a box. Bolo'bolo outlines in great detail the interactions between the members of communities (bolos) and the communities themselves (bolo'bolo, the world of bolos). For many, then and now, it is a puzzling proposition, if not outright alarming. It puts many of our vested concepts


Une politique
DE LA


40 000
soit 40 000 délégués pour 1 000
200
tirage au sort de 200 représentants pour 5000

and our vested interests upside-down. Hence, it is equally remarkable that it has had the capacity to inspire a growing number of bolo-like living environments. Though not quite as radical as reducing their private possessions to the space of half a cubic meter, they have still taken the main line of thought into reality: the cooperative complex Kraftwerk 1 in Zürich (see Book 2, Encounters) has been the materialisation of bolo'bolo to a vast degree. And in its wake, a number of others have been, and are currently being developed.

DOUGALD HINE: FROM THE DEAD CENTRE OF THE PRESENT

It seems that we were following similar hunches, for years, before we were introduced. The crisis of 2008 had set us on these tracks – or rather, it meant that the tracks we were following anyway seemed suddenly relevant to people who hadn't noticed them before, so that we found ourselves needing to reformulate, to express what it was we thought we had caught sight of.

In my case, this took the form of Uncivilisation: The Dark Mountain Manifesto, written with Paul Kingsnorth and published in 2009. The hunch that we tried to put into words was that the crisis went deeper than almost anyone wanted to admit, that it went culture deep, that it was a crisis of the stories by which our culture has been living. And if this is true, we thought, then might it not follow that the work of telling stories and making culture becomes central to the task we face, the task of living through dark times and finding possibilities among the ruins.

The tumbling weeks of crisis turn into months, years, and a new normal establishes itself, but it is never the promised return to normal. Eight years on, Dark Mountain has become a gathering point for people trying to work out what still makes sense, in the face of all we know about the depth of the mess the world is in.

A mountain is not exactly an urban thing, though! Sometimes I tell people, it's not a place you live the whole time: it's a place you go to look back and get a longer perspective, maybe even to receive some kind of revelation, but you still have an everyday life to return to, back in the city or the village. That's what I enjoy about this friendship and collaboration with STEALTH – and joy is a word that should be mentioned here, you know! I still remember the night we were first brought together for dinner by a mutual friend and we laughed so much all night we said, we have to do this again tomorrow, and we did. That's how we got tangled up with each other.

Now, tracing our tangled trajectories across these past eight years – you bouncing between cities, me wandering up and down a mountain of words – I see two stories that we seem to have in common. The first is spatial, the second temporal.

The spatial story concerns a negotiation between the edges and the centre. I need to be careful how I say this, because we have all been told about the way that whatever is edgy, new, avant-garde gets metabolised, made palatable, made marketable and becomes the next iteration of the centre. That's the story of selling out, or buying in: the great morality tale of counterculture.

The story I'm trying to tell, here – the one I say we have in common – starts with the claim that the centre as we know it is already ruined beyond saving. This is what I see in that image of the burnt-out architecture faculty in Delft in ARCHIPHOENIX. In the manifesto that Paul and I wrote, we speak about this: "None of us knows where to look, but all of us know not to look down. Secretly, we all think we are doomed: even the politicians think this; even the environmentalists..." And then we ask, "What would happen if we looked down?" What if we admit that the centre is already a burnt-out ruin? Might we need to ask ourselves what it is, exactly, that is doomed: what version of ourselves, what set of things (structures, institutions, customs) with which we have identified?

If this is the kind of mess we're in, then the challenge for those of us at the edges is neither to retain our countercultural purity, nor to negotiate good terms on which to cash in with a centre that is already collapsing – nor even to try to shore that centre up and prevent its collapse (too late!) – but to offer something that could take its place.

"Sometimes you have to go to the edges to get some perspective on the turmoil at the heart of the things," writes Paul Kingsnorth, my co-founder in Dark Mountain, in late 2016. "Doing so is not an abnegation of public responsibility: it is a form of it. In the old stories, people from the edges of things brought ideas and understandings from the forest back in the kingdom which the kingdom could not generate by itself."

The arrival at the centre of a figure from the edges is the opening move in many an old story. But the negotiation cannot set anything in motion, so long as the pretense is maintained that business can go on as usual, that a return to normal is on the cards.

So when STEALTH asks how those practices which already showcase possible directions could be "made to work... on a scale that answers the challenges ahead?", what is in question is not 'scaling up' for the sake of profitability, but what might take the place where the centre used to be. How do we find ways of going on making things work when – as in The Report – the all-powerful operating system breaks

down. Like Anna Tsing, we are looking for the possibilities of life within capitalist ruins.

"The end of the world as we know it is not the end of the world, full stop," we write, on the last page of the manifesto. The ruins are not the end of the story. Ecologically, the species present (our species included) go on improvising ways of living together, even with all the damage. There are things to be done: salvage work, grief work, the work of remembering and picking up the dropped threads.

This is where we slip from the spatial to the temporal. What is at stake in the temporal story is how we find leverage on the dead centre of the present. Not so long ago, the future served as a point of leverage: a place from which to open up a gap between how things happen to be just now and how they might be. That gap was charged with possibility.

Here I think of the work of Tor Lindstrand, to whom you introduced me in that project in Tensta, 'Haunted by the Shadows of the Future'. He tells the story of the disappearance of the future in urban planning: the evaporation of any vision or belief in the possibility that things could be different, as the development of cities is subsumed into the operation of the market and marketed with bland identikit images and words. The role of financialisation in this reminds me of William Davies' description of the consequences of monetary policy under neoliberalism:

"The problem with viewing the future as territory to be plundered is that eventually we all have to live there. And if, once there, finding it already plundered, we do the same thing again, we enter a vicious circle. We decline to treat the future as a time when things might be different, with yet to be imagined technologies, institutions and opportunities. The control freaks in finance aren't content to sit and wait for the future to arrive on its own terms, but intend to profit from it and parcel it out, well before the rest of us have got there."

If the future is already plundered – and if, as Dark Mountain points out, the consequences of related kinds of plundering for the ecological fabric stand in the way of any revival of the confident future of modernity – how else can we open up that gap in which the possibility of change, the non-inevitability of present conditions, can be located?

The great improvisation teacher Keith Johnstone says that, when telling a story, you shouldn't worry about what's coming next: you should be like a person walking backwards, looking out for the chance to weave back in one of the threads from earlier in the story. We move through time backwards, like Walter Benjamin's 'angel of history': we cannot go back and fix the mistakes of the past, but at least it is there for us to see, in a way that was never true of the future. Ivan Illich writes of 'the mirror of the past': if we look carefully into it, without falling into romanticism and without dismissing it as simply a poorer version of the present, then the past too can serve as a source for a sense of possibility. In a time of endings, one of the forms of possibility it offers is the dropped threads of earlier endings – the way of life which is now falling into ruin was built among the ruins of earlier ways of life.

I see this as central to the method by which you seek to build possible futures, in Bordeaux and Vienna, in Rotterdam and Belgrade, and elsewhere. I remember sitting in a seminar room in Gothenburg as you showed us images of that mutual aid society in the Netherlands in the 1860s, created by workers to build their own homes. A trajectory can be traced from this initiative to the grander state projects for welfare of the mid-20th century, to the hollowing out of those projects under the neoliberal period of marketisation, to the crisis of 2008 in which they are revealed as ruins. Even as you go about improvising practical strategies to bring these ruins to life, you are always looking back to the beginnings of the story and asking what has been lost or written out, in the way that it has been told.

In THE REPORT, you reveal the pattern by which the role of bottom-up initiatives in the building of the city have been written out of Vienna's story. What emerges from these researches and the future narratives which they inform is the realisation that, in many parts of Europe, the achievements of social democracy were born out of movements which looked far more like anarcho-syndicalism than those who later consolidated these achievements into top-down state systems would be willing to admit.

Those movements were born out of necessity, operating within the ruins of the commons, devastated by the early phases of industrial capitalism; now, after 40 years of neoliberalism, as we look for ways to operate within the ruins of the welfare societies of the 20th century, their histories can help us open the gap between how things are and how they might be.

We meet in the conviction that telling stories is not just a way of passing the time, but the way that we find our bearings in the world. A story opens a space of possibility into which we can invite others and when the work of building new projects among the ruins is at its hardest, when we wonder if it is worth going on, it is by retelling the stories that we connect ourselves to the past and the future, place ourselves within time. The right story, told from the heart, can be the difference between going on and giving up.

ONCE UPON A FUTURE IS AN IMAGINARY FAST-FORWARD TO A POSSIBLE BORDEAUX IN 2030 – THE TARGET YEAR BY WHICH THE CITY PROJECTS TO HAVE REACHED THE MAGICAL NUMBER OF ONE MILLION INHABITANTS. THIS WORK STARTS FROM THE QUESTION – HOW WOULD THE FUTURE LOOK IF CITIZEN'S COLLECTIVE CAPACITY WOULD GROW AND BECOME BORDEAUX'S MAIN DRIVING FORCE?

[curators] STEALTH.unlimited (Ana Džokić and Marc Neelen) with Emil Jurcan (Pulska Grupa/Praksa), in collaboration with arc en rêve centre d'architecture Bordeaux

[narrative text] Bruce Bégout, writer and philosopher, on a synopsis developed with Ana Džokić, Marc Neelen and Emil Jurcan. Published as a novel in French and English in October 2011

[participating graphic artists] François Ayroles, Adrien Demont, Havec, Camille Lavaud, David Prudhomme, Sandrine Revel, Guillaume Trouillard, Sainte-Machine + guests: John Bobaxx, Dellastrada, Fanny Garcia, Kolona, Moam, Jack Usine

[exhibition direction] arc en rêve centre d'architecture (Francine Fort, Michel Jacques, Eric Dordan, Helena Pomés, Virginie Février) with Le bureau baroque (Alan Gentil, Laurent Tardieu) with Emmanuelle Jolivet

[graphic design] Studio Tricolore (exhibition), Loup Niboyet (publication)

[based on conversations in Bordeaux with] Alpage, Aquitanis, Boboyaká, Bruit du Frigo, Les Castors Pessac, centre social Bordeaux Nord, Projet Darwin, Fabrique Pola, Friche & Cheap, Garage moderne, GPV, H'Nord, Le Jardin de ta sœur, Tout le Monde – and many other contributors to discussions and encounters

[special thanks] Les Requins Marteaux and Rodolphe urbs (La Mauvaise Réputation)

[background] Once Upon a Future is one of the three 'roots' programs of the second edition of Evento (6 to 16 October 2011) with the motto "art for an urban re-evolution". Artistic direction Michelangelo Pistoletto (Cittadelarte) and his team – Luigi Coppola, Gabi Farage, Éric Troussicot, Judith Wielander, with Emiliano Gandolfi

[timeline] January – October 2011, exhibition 6 October - 18 December 2011, at the site of the to be relocated Les Abattoirs (Slaughter House)

Curated by STEALTH.unlimited and Emil Jurcan, and made in collaboration with architecture center arc en rêve, Once Upon a Future features contributions by writer and philosopher Bruce Bégout and a number of graphic artists.

Inspired by meetings with contemporary groups of active citizens from Bordeaux, Once Upon a Future extrapolates how the motives, visions and commitments of citizens might prefigure new ways to make the city by developing new forms of mutual solidarity and collective organization, going beyond competition and individualism. Such networks like – housing cooperatives, artistic production collectives, elderly people associations, social centers, community gardens, etc. – have the potential to produce another form of life in the city, which is a precondition for another form of urban landscape.

To go beyond current facts, Once Upon a Future uses fiction. The narrative follows a journey of 10,234 people escaping Iceland, after a catastrophic financial crisis and natural disaster have struck the country in 2030. The refugees take shelter in the luxury cruise ship THE WORLD and drift the oceans searching for a new home. The endless hours spent at sea are an opportunity to think about the future and the type of society they want to build. Finally, they are welcomed in Bordeaux, which at the time is lacking people to hit its 1.000.000 inhabitants goal.

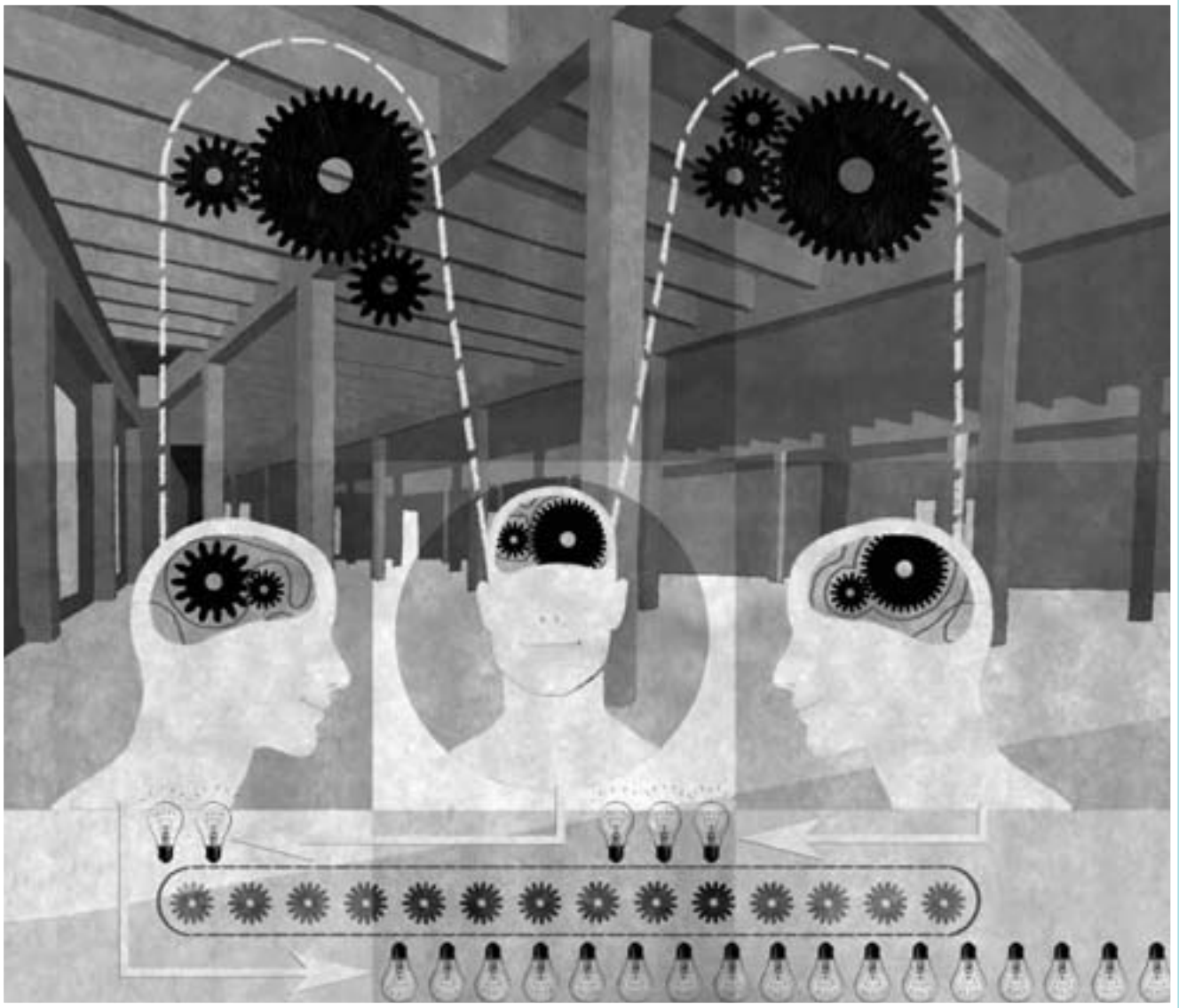
This 'social fiction', laced with irony and tensions, is a trigger to step beyond the rigid framework of the contemporary city and look at its complexities from a distance. It unfolds as an exhibition with an 80-meter long circular installation featuring works by a dozen comic and graphic artists from Bordeaux, as well as a printed nouvelle. While freely exploring the possibilities of common desires, it makes us understand clearly what today's limitations to realising them are. What follows are fragments taken from the original narrative.

A METROPOLITAN EDEN

On 12 December 2030, at 3.36 pm, THE WORLD sails past the four pillars of the Bacalan-Bastide Bridge. Thousands of spectators wave Icelandic and European flags.

The Mayor, after the traditional welcome speech, talks about plans for the future. She hands all the immigrants a bilingual brochure on Bordeaux in 2030, its role as a European metropolis, its ambitions and its assets.

In 2030 most of cities reach a similar level of competitiveness – and the focus of most European cities shifts from external competition to empowerment of local relationships and initiatives coming from the empowered citizens themselves. Models of solidarity are implemented as basic principles in Bordeaux as it strives to become a sustainable city.



WE DON'T WANT TO BE HELPED OR CARED FOR

The day after their arrival, the immigrants begin planning their future. They stop at the former IKEA store, which two years ago, after a long strike and sit-in by staff, has been transformed into IDEA - a free public forum devoted to alternative forms of development, citizens' initiatives, and non-profit organizations in the fields of housing, organic foods, education, and self-sufficiency.

The commercial atmosphere of the display area has changed completely. Icelanders go over to a brightly coloured booth in the former mattress aisle, where new forms of citizenship are being presented.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN BORDEAUX REACHES 1.000.000 INHABITANTS?

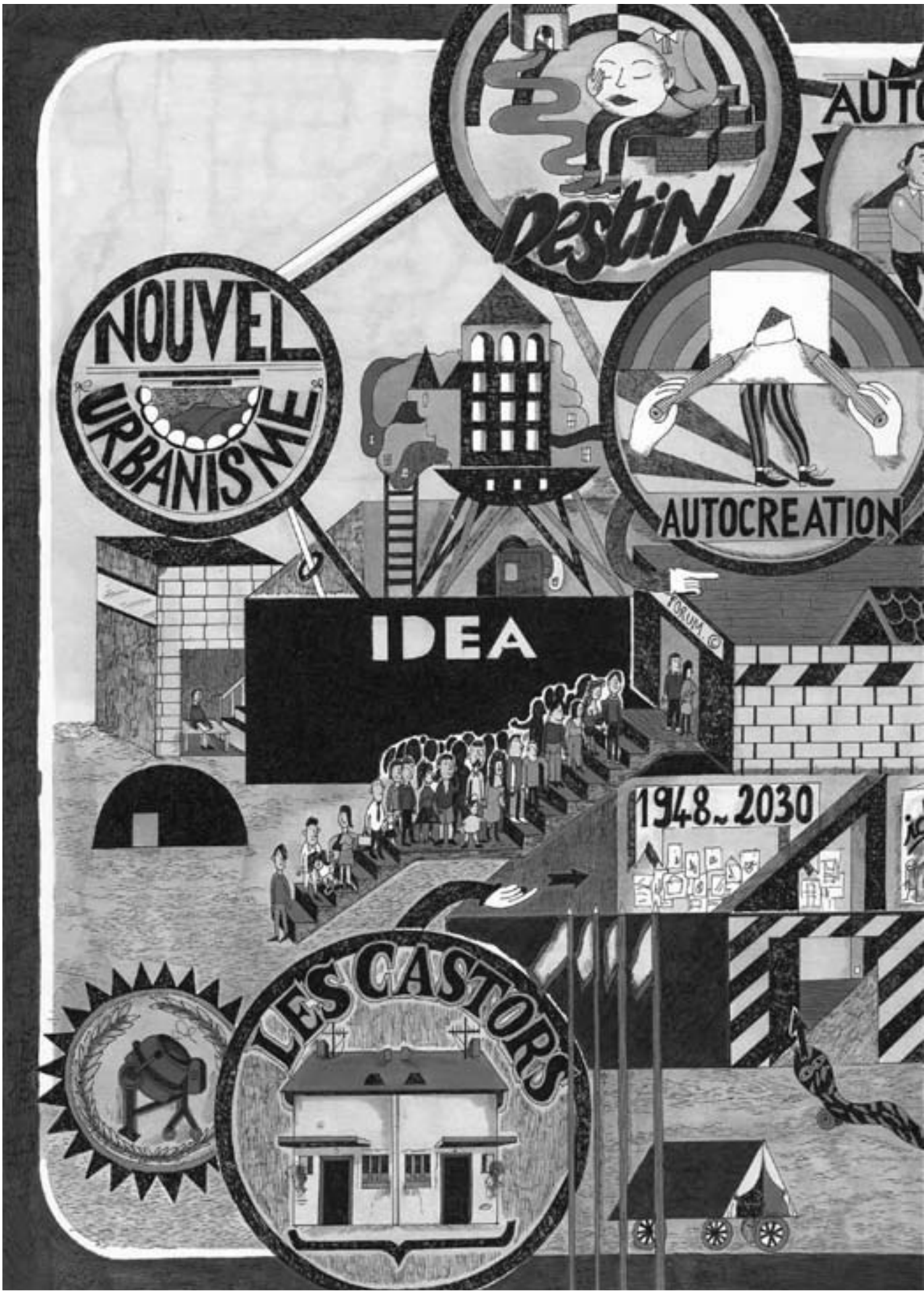
The ship has now been at its moorings for ten days. It has become not only a tourist attraction, but also a source of tension. It seems that the enthusiasm of the Council reaching 1 million is not shared by the entire population. The local paper Le Sud-Ouest has received anonymous threats about the number.

Some immigrants, seeking an alternative model for society that will avoid repeating the mistakes and tragedies of neoliberalism, attend the inauguration of the last phase of the Euratlantique project, which since 2016 has seen the redevelopment of the area around the railway station. Here lies a new district, on the ground of a never developed Arena – an events venue. The overall idea is based on rejecting the dogma of economic growth. The most surprising thing is the presence of so much empty space; the inhabitants have decided to leave whole areas untouched in order to disconnect their initiative from the idea of land use and property.

Economist Serge Latouche (now 90) is here for the inauguration of the square named after him and the new district around it. He talks to a group of sociology students about the principles of his theory of de-growth. "We live in a finite human world... We must give up the idea of there being no limit to what we can wish for".

AN OVERALL SHIFT FROM CONSUMPTION TO HANDS-ON PRODUCTION.

The presence of THE WORLD seems to have pushed the tensions one notch further. Bordeaux experienced similar


DestiN
NOUVEL URBANISME
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unrest when the wet dock district was renovated in 2022. Only the Garage Postmoderne resisted. They have understood that, working alone, they will never be strong enough to resist the well-organized urban forces and their highly effective lobbying. They contact the Factory BOLA and other associations with which they have already discussed the idea of coming together in a single, larger and more visible location, generating strength in numbers and pooling their expertise.

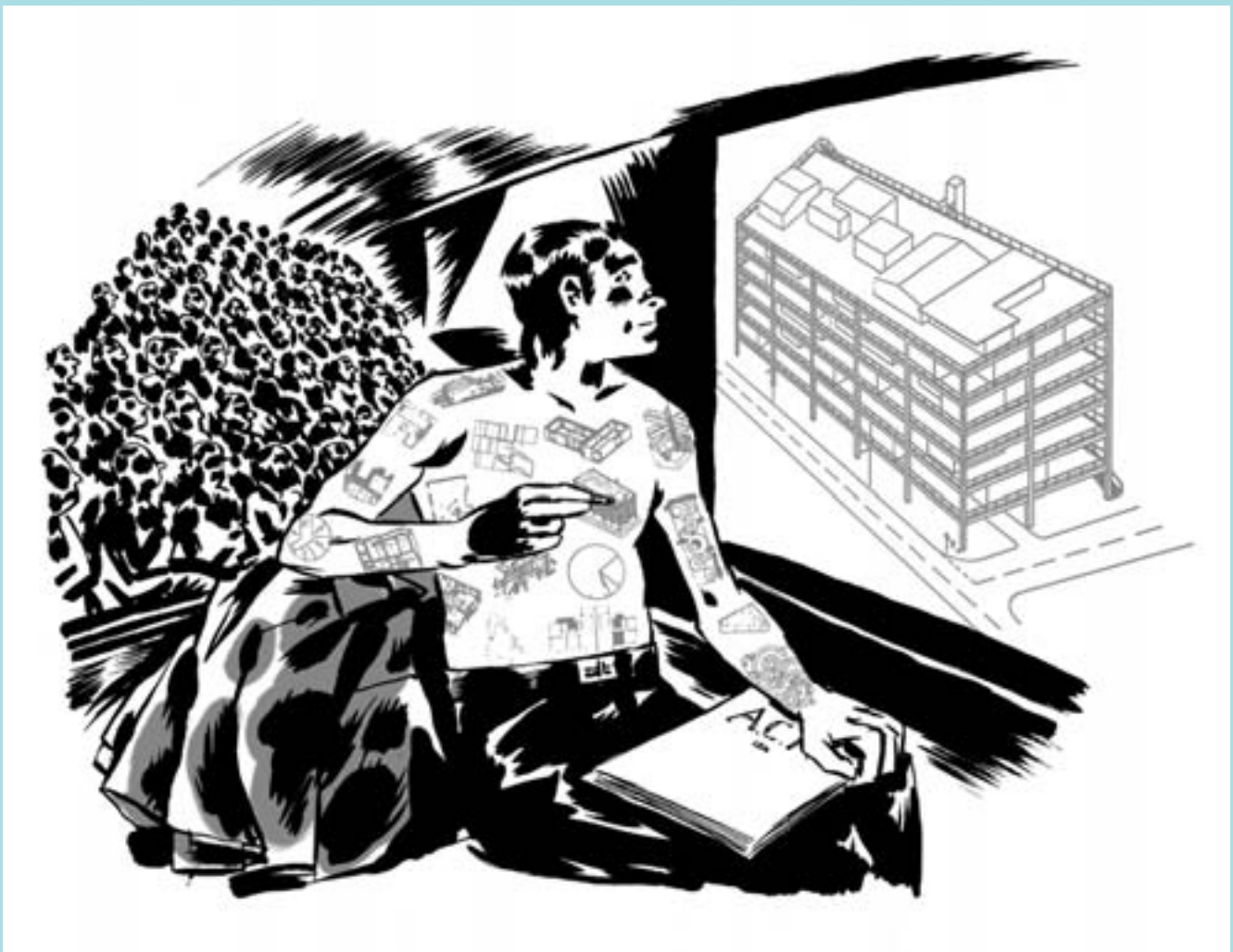
They ultimately settle on one of the Mériadeck towers and paint it red, the color of blood, life, and rebellion. Mériadeck, the futuristic utopia of the 1970s, is thus redeveloped according to new principles of intelligent cities, eco-compatible development, and collaborative urban design. The first meeting on the great project is held in the square in front of the deep red building that serves as its headquarters. When everyone is settled and ready to listen, a presenter takes the floor. Suddenly, an explosion brings the meeting to an abrupt halt.

Discussions about different directions for housing policy reached a peak in the third decade of the 21st Century. The massive collective housing utopias of the 1960 and 70s have been superseded; some of them have even been demolished. Meanwhile, the dream of the unsustainable individual suburban house had to be abandoned. The housing situation became critical when in the 2010s 80% of the population got pushed into the credit market in order to buy expensive dwellings. Housing became economically unsustainable for most citizens.

SO, WHERE WILL WE LIVE?

It is 9 a.m., and most of the immigrants have been busy preparing for the meeting in the giant 6.000-seat auditorium, where housing possibilities for them will be presented.

On the stage is a young man, full of life and enthusiasm, wearing a navy blue suit. He presents an original model for participative self-building. The organization provides future residents with empty, flexible, often elementary structures, called “skeletons”, then helps them to fit them out or even alter them. In all cases, 50% of the space the resident purchases is “green” (flower or vegetable gardens, balconies...). Then he removes his jacket and carefully lays it over the back of a chair, unbuttons his shirt and takes it off. His body is covered in tattoos. The tattoos covering his body depict urban development projects, on which he gives a running commentary. “Your future home is like a blank page. We give you the pens so you can fill in the frame of your own life”.



Not one, but several people now appear on the stage. They are members of a builders' cooperative called The Solution.

"We only share obligations", says the single father. "Everyone is free to choose whether they take part in communal activities."

After the presentations, one of the daughters of the slumlord has managed to get on board of THE WORLD; on roller-skates she hands out leaflets to the immigrants. "You don't have to cooperate, or concern yourself with building your own house, or learn to play golf. We give you everything you need, it requires no effort from you at all".

WHAT DO WE WANT TO HAVE IN COMMON?

It is now two months since THE WORLD arrived. A new Icelandic district is being collectively built at La Benauge. Here 800 residents are taking part in a new self-constructed urban project. They are developing a communal vegetable garden and hosting an African NGO (from Mali) that is visiting Europe to teach its former colonizers the principles of organic farming.

We attend a meeting in a self-managed urban garden (Eden Eden). The meeting is held in a kind of agora at the bottom of the garden, near the vegetable plots and greenhouses. The aim is to share expertise, useful tips, and skills, and to rediscover how to use one's hands and head.

By 2030, an overwhelming number of projects on different scales, carried out in Bordeaux with the involvement of citizens, point to the fact that key developments can be achieved in new ways. Cluster-based production models, neighbourhood development through micro-economies, collective housing initiatives, urban commons - by 2031 they have reached the limit of their development potential within the boundaries of the current system. With the elections approaching, in Spring 2031, one question lingers in the air: what is the role of municipal bodies now?

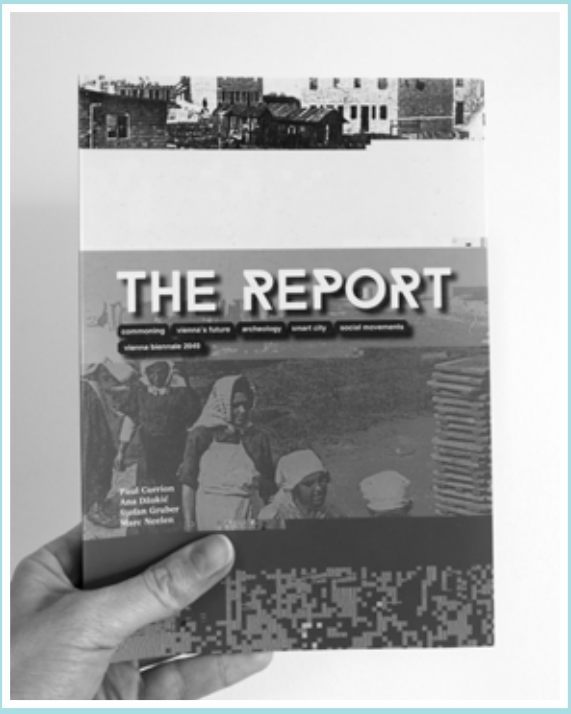
TOWARDS A POLITICS OF THE MULTITUDE

Preparations are underway for a political campaign in June 2031. The Mayor of Bordeaux has decided to make radical and spectacular changes to the way the municipality was run, proposing a system of participative democracy that will give citizens not only a voice, but real decision-making power. Places for debate and information exchange have sprung up all over the city.

Over two-thirds of the Icelanders have now left the WORLD. One of last remaining Icelandic couples who have yet to decide whether to settle on dry land awaits the assembly's decision. The captain notices the couple talking in the bar on Deck 5 and goes over to talk to them.

"I don't know if we've found our utopia", he says, "but I do know that looking for it was as good as any adventure. In the end, true utopia lies in our never-fulfilled aspirations".

THE REPORT IS A RESEARCH AND A FUTURE-FICTION THAT CONFRONTS THE TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN SMART CITY VIENNA WITH THE HARD WORK OF VIENNESE CITIZENS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THROUGHOUT HISTORY. IT CHALLENGES MANY OF THE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT WHY VIENNA IS DIFFERENT AND BRINGS THE 2049 VIENNA BIENNALE ARTIST ERGÜN DEMIR TO A CRUCIAL DILEMMA



– SHOULD VIENNA'S SMART CITY OPERATING SYSTEM BE RESTARTED AT ALL?

[research, concept, graphic design] STEALTH.unlimited (Ana Džokić and Marc Neelen) and Stefan Gruber (STUDIOGRUBER)

[narrative] Paul Currion

[original photos] Stefan Gruber, Zara Pfeifer, STEALTH.unlimited

[image alteration algorithm] The glitch experiment by Georg Fischer

[print] STANDARD 2, Belgrade

[based on conversations in Vienna with] Katharina Bayer, Gerda Ehs, Andreas Exner, Angelika Fitz, Robert Foltin, Rainald Franz, Ernst Gruber, Esad Hajdarević, Willi Hejda, Elke Krasny, Christoph Laimer, Carsten Leonhardi, p.m., Elke Rauth, Andreas Rumpfhuber, Ula Schneider, Patrik Simić, Helmut Voitl, Markus Zilker, and members of the research group Spaces of Commoning (Anette Baldauf, Moira Hille, Annette Krauss, Vladimir Miller, Mara Verlic, Hong-Kai Wang and Julia Wieger)

[thanks to] Peter Chaffey, Helen Chang, Barbara Gruber, Elsa König, Christoph von Thun-Hohenstein and Marlies Wirth

[background] The Report is an off-site commission for the Future Light exhibition, guest-curated by Maria Lind as part of the Vienna Biennale 2015: Ideas for Change at the Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art (MAK), Vienna. Three MAK Nite Lab events have been organised as a part of the project: Do You Hear Me When You Sleep? (9 December 2014), Since The Machine Will Not Simply Watch Us As We Organize Our 'Alternatives' (24 March 2015), The Report, launch (15 September 2015).

[timeline] October 2014 – September 2015

The Report publication was released in September 2015 by STEALTH.unlimited, Stefan Gruber and Paul Currion. It has been made on the invitation of curator Maria Lind to reflect on the emerging commons debate within the context of the 2015 Vienna Biennale: Ideas for Change. Not yet completely aware of the occasional 'explosiveness' when considering the political side of unsolicited citizens' initiatives in Vienna, the work on this commission started by investigating one of the earliest 'commoners' groups in Vienna: the Settlers' movement.

The research explores many initiatives whose actions are based on a variety of (different) beliefs, which in The Report feature in close proximity to or in support of each other, confronting the trust placed in a (closed-) technology driven Smart City Vienna. Without explicitly reaching out to verify to what degree the groups, initiatives and individuals approve of their documents, their photos and details being used to reveal the tension between the ambitions of citizens and those of the City of Vienna, between citizens' movements and how they have been historicised, or between the past and present, The Report produces a not entirely uncontroversial cultural currency of sorts.

Ergün Demir, the story's lead character, has been commissioned by 2049 Vienna Biennale to make a simulation of the history of the Smart City Vienna – the framework strategy that would make Vienna "the smartest of all smart cities" by 2050. But the Hex, a hack of the city's operating system, has brought the smart city operations to an abrupt standstill and consequently resulted in the emergence of many self-organised communities. Ergün's research takes him into the devastated City Archives. In desperation to gather data for his simulation, he turns to help from an illegal piece of artificial intelligence.

"My name is Abraxas," says the tablet with a calm male voice,

(...) "What would you like me to do?"

"I don't know, 'Abraxas' – what can you do?"

"I was built to collect, aggregate and analyse data."

"Well, I need you to recover some files from a hard drive. (...) Show me the earliest picture we have in these files." says Ergün.

(...) "Metadata indicates this is a photograph taken in [Vienna] in 1921. It shows women of [the Settler Movement] making bricks."

"That was clear, but I couldn't understand – why were they making bricks?"

"[Settlers] worked co-operatively to construct their own houses."

"Show me the homes they were building."

"This is the first type of house."

"They look – inefficient. In terms of their layout, I mean. They all have gardens?"

"[Settlers] grew their own food."

"Why?"

"The [Vienna City Council] was unable to house or feed its citizens."

Ergün leans in, as if he could move through the screen. "1921 – that would have been shortly after the First World War. The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. (...) This is exactly what I've been looking for, to show how far we've come since then. Under the Smart City system, nobody had to take matters into their own hands in this way."

"I do not have this reference [the Smart City] in my range."

(...) "Any additional files could expand my capability. (...) If I have access to [the City Archives], I can attempt to reconstruct those files also."

Ergün frowns and stops working for a moment; this is unexpected. "You could do that?"

(...) He is like those archaeologists now, with Abraxas as the spade with which he uncovers the truth.

The truth. The truth is what, exactly?

Ergün hasn't looked at the copy of the Smart City brochure since that disastrous interview at the MAK. He glances through it now with new eyes – now that it is no longer his only connection to the past – and he notices that on every page of the brochure is a picture of smiling people. Contrast this with the pictures they've recovered from the Archives: in those pictures, people are scowling, or swearing, or fighting; when they are smiling, it seems to be an uncaptured kind of happiness, as if they've escaped from something.

"Do you have a copy of the Smart City brochure? Why are these people smiling?" (COVER BROCHURE)

"The brochure suggests several reasons." Abraxas pauses as if trying to rank those reasons in order of plausibility. "The share of green space occupies about half of Vienna's municipal territory. Public transport makes it possible to reach almost all parts of the city quickly and in comfort."

"That doesn't really explain why people would be so happy."

"Vienna's water is of supreme quality for a metropolis and has been so for more than a century."

"Sure. Do we know who the people in the brochure are? What happened to them?"

"I have identified three of them. They appear to be professional models."

"Professional?" That explains the difference he senses between them and the older pictures. "I'm interested in these people." He turns the page of the book he is reading and points to a picture: a small group of young people, mainly dressed in black, huddled together on a pavement. "I saw their picture before, on the hard drive, but I was puzzled by them."

"This is the Pizzeria Anarchia, a collective that existed in the second district from 2011-2014. They established a People's Kitchen, a political film series, and ran a free shop and library."

Ergün turns the page to examine a flyer from the pizzeria. "They do not look happy. Was this a Smart City project? It was happening at the same time as the Smart City was being introduced."

"They were offered temporary use of the property by the owners. The owners claimed to be motivated by social responsibility, but they later admitted in court that they did this to scare away the existing tenants."

"So the police we can see in this picture – they were trying to stop the owners from evicting them?"

"The police were there to evict them." Abraxas scrolls through a series of pictures of the eviction. "The police were on the side of the owners."

"The evidence is contradictory," says Abraxas, "The brochure says clearly that allowing citizens to participate in shaping their city is of paramount importance; yet this footage shows that only certain citizens were allowed to shape the city."

"I agree it's strange," says Ergün, "These records show that these apartments were rebuilt as private apartments that the former residents could no longer afford." He sits back, head buzzing; unlike the Settler's Movement, which he now knows had succeeded in forcing the government to grant the people the right to occupy land, they were presented here with a situation where the city was actively supporting private interests against a community initiative and supported by the neighbourhood. Clearly something had changed in a hundred years.

They dig into the Settler's Movement: citizens of a city whose imperial operating system had collapsed, similar to the way in which Vienna's operating system had fallen apart after the Hex; all the buildings still standing, but everybody wondering what was supposed to happen next. "By 1918 more than 100.000 people were living in self-built shelters," reports Abraxas as they browse through copies of Der Siedler, "and 6.5 million square meters of public land had been turned to arable production by the Settlers." Abraxas decodes the archaic font of these newspapers as if they are encrypted messages from the Settlers. "However municipal support of the Settlers began to fade after 1925, in favour of centrally planned mass housing."

"What happened to the Settlers themselves?" asks Ergün. (...)

(...) "Presumably the movement only lasted as long as the authorities were unable to provide shelter."

(...) So the pictures continue to scroll across the walls of the reading room, while Ergün reads texts from the time: the archaic font of badly-scanned copies of the newspaper Der Siedler, loudly proclaiming the importance of self-help and solidarity between quaint advertisements for garden tools and household remedies. "The Settlers of the early 20th Century were driven by material needs," muses Ergün, "while the activists of the early 21st were explicitly political."

"Even material needs are political," replies Abraxas, "Housing is more than just four walls that offer protection from predators and shelter from inclement weather; it has a lot to do with the surroundings and the social system."

(...) "You're starting to sound like my daughter," mutters Ergün.

"Please explain," says Abraxas.

Ergün should be more wary that a bot is taking an interest in his family matters, but his discussion with Elsa is still in his mind. "Her group was the first to hack the city-bikes. I suppose in a way I should be proud of her – they've been very successful."

(...) "So now the city-bikes are working again, but the authorities are unhappy with this?"

"Yes," says Ergün, "but the whole scheme will be restored when they reboot the Smart City operating system."

"But the city-bikes are working now, so why are the authorities unhappy?"

"Because it's not official. It's all operated on a voluntary basis, there's no order – "

"This sounds like a solution to a problem, rather than a problem."

"You don't understand," Ergün sighes. "The Smart City

ensures that everybody has a voice, not just people who decide they should be in charge – "

"So who is in charge?"

"In principle, the Mayor, the brand managers and the technical staff – the city authorities. In practice, they don't face many decisions – the algorithms built into the operating system define the best outcomes for citizens, and optimise our political and economic structures based on that."

"Are you able to alter the algorithms?" asks Abraxas.

Ergün has no answer to that. (...) When the Smart City was still running, he was still consulted; he still voted in the online consultations, sometimes attended the consultative meetings, although he had never applied to join the consultation offices that could be found in each district. Yet he can't shake the feeling that Abraxas is on to something: consultation is not participation.

Ergün finds Klara in the community garden. She's on her knees, fingers like hooks into the soil, pulling out the least of the weeds before they take hold.

(...) "Back pain," she says, "The one thing they can't print replacement parts for."

"You should get a robot to do the weeding. That's the kind of task they love. Make your life easier."

She looks at him strangely. (...) "We don't mean easier when we say easier, do we? We mean more efficient, but efficient isn't always the best. I don't care what they say."

"I don't understand still."

She looks out over the L-shaped garden, a crooked green valley in the grey blocks. "Take this garden. It would be much easier if we just grew one thing. More efficient, yes?"

"That wouldn't be a very interesting garden," admits Ergün.

"Well, true, but I was thinking that it wouldn't be a very strong garden. Weak – it wouldn't survive, for long. It's what you call a monoculture. If you have only one type of plant, and that plant – let's say there's a blight, or the weather gets too hot for that plant – then you've lost the entire garden."

(...) "What's the Hex in this metaphor of yours?" he asks, when she returns to sit on the bench.

"You're not an expert, but you can guess."

"You think that's why the Smart City collapsed. It was a monoculture, and the Hex was a blight."

(...) Was it inevitable, Ergün wonders, did these improvisations always become institutions – was it the only way to ensure their survival? If Vienna had its own evolutionary algorithm, even before the Smart City was implemented – then why did the same ideas keep appearing again and again, even if they never reached a tipping point?

(...) After a few minutes, Abraxas speaks up again.

"[...] Alternative models ceased after the Smart City consensus was reached."

(...) Ergün looks through his notes, runs the elements of the simulation that he's built so far. "The Settler's Movement lead directly to large-scale housing reform; the squatting movement of the 1970s created important new cultural institutions; the Guilds have re-shaped the local economy."

"And all of these," concludes Abraxas, "happened outside the operating system."

"What if I believe you?" Ergün puts his notes away carefully and places both hands flat on the folder in front of him. "What do you suggest that I do?"

Abraxas looks at him calmly, and shrugs. "In the end, this is your work. You are the one who will present it at the Biennale. Only you can decide whose story you want to tell."

(...) Abraxas continues, "Ergün, I have a proposal for you. I think we both feel that the Hex has created... a window of opportunity."

Ergün says nothing.

(...) "And together we have seen that this is how the city has been built – by citizens demanding change, by changing their own lives."

(...) "What do you want, Abraxas?"

"I can do what you cannot: I can rewrite the code. Remake the law. With the knowledge I've gained, I can make sure that Vienna does not go back to the way it was before the Hex. Think of it as our bolo'bolo, the beginning of a process – "

In April 2011, when we set off on a planned visit to groups of people that are doing things 'differently' in Bordeaux, we knew little about the Boboyakas. On the first day of the many encounters we would have in the next couple of weeks (together with Emil Jurcan, Eric Dordan and Helena Pomés), we set out to visit the home of Mimi, somewhere in Bordeaux's city centre. Her friends Toni and Martine were also present. With a couple of bottles of wine, our conversation originally scheduled for one and a half hours turned into a pot-luck dinner, running up and down to get supplies from a nearby shop, and we would eventually leave Mimi's place in the midst of the night. What is it that engrained this meeting so deeply in our memories even now, six years after?

It was the question of what would it be to live together – until the very end. Together with a group of about fifteen old friends, all middle class, having 'sniffed the essences' of 1968, and now facing retirement, Mimi set a course in 2007 when they formed the association Boboyaka (named with a wink to their 'bobo' background).

Their endeavour has been shaped by the experiences of the House of Babayagas, a women's house in Montreuil that finally opened in 2013, after a fifteen-year long process full of pitfalls and conflict. The 'anti-retirement home' of Babayagas based on values of environmentalism, feminism, and solidarity was initiated by the feminist Thérèse Clerc as a self-managed place to independently grow old together, as free and useful citizens.

The idea sprouted – why not imagine a different future after retirement, of growing old together differently. Designed for twenty residents between 55 and 80, their plans offer private apartments (50m2) for couples and singles, internal public spaces: library, living room, kitchen, games room ... and other spaces open and outward-facing for meetings, exhibitions, debates, etc. In order to foster intergenerational ties, accommodation for trainees, student travellers and a maternal assistance house are included. For the Boboyakas, it is not enough to provide for their own comfort in old age – with this self-managed house they aim to empower the elderly to participate more actively in society with their knowledge and skills.

The beauty of the idea also raises the question whether we ought to learn to finish our lives by making the end a beginning. The Boboyakas feel they have a duty to make the last part of the trip joyful and exciting – collectively. However, it is not an easy step, after years of living a family life or living independently.

While the Boboyakas raised many issues related to cooperative living, meeting a couple of days later members of a quite diverse group of people gathered under the name H'Nord, would bring to us the 'discovery' of anti-speculative strategies, something that would influence our way of thinking and acting for years to come.

On the April 18, 2011, passing through a building facing the recently renovated

River Gironde waterfront, we entered the site of narrow and extremely long plots of former wine barrel storages in Bordeaux Nord. Here, we encounter a microcosm of decade-long untouched nature, growing amidst the crumbling walls of these hardly approachable plots, so close to the city centre.

The housing cooperative H'Nord (Hangar Nord) aims to develop here an atypical housing project with 46 apartments – based on cooperative principles, environmental awareness and mutualisation of members' individual capacities. In our conversation with a few members of the group (an architect, two retired people, a truck driver, a single mother and a voluntarily unemployed person), it is clear that as they say "H'Nord questions the idea of ownership" and wants to provide an alternative to market speculation on a plot of land that will not be owned but leased from the city. Anti-speculative measures reduce the market price by a half, for the long term. Apart from different kinds of apartments (regular income, social housing, older generation, students) and 20% commercial space, this group of people will share some 900 m2 of common areas, and offer complementary programs to the neighbourhood.

H'Nord (and Boboyaka) are part of Habicoop, an association that strives to better embed housing cooperatives in the French legal framework. After years of activist work, on March 24, 2014 a law has been adopted that recognises (again, since being made redundant in 1971) the status

of housing cooperatives and makes it possible to lease land instead of buying it.

Bordeaux has other, bold and inspiring stories. On May 21, 2011, we went to Pessac where we would meet Marcelle Gerbaud at her home. The neighbourhood, that surprisingly reminded us of a typical American suburb, has a remarkable history.

The Castors of Pessac (Beavers) was the first in a range of self-constructed cooperative housing neighbourhoods in France, started in 1948, as a response to the lack of housing following World War Two. The extraordinary endeavour in Pessac was started by a group of 150 workers of the shipyard Les Chantiers de la Gironde, helped by the young working class priest Etienne Damoran, who united to collectively build their own homes. They could not get a bank credit for materials but marched to Paris in order to get the French state to award them a credit based on to-be-invested labour (not backed by capital but the promise of a future delivery: their houses). Building on this success, the initiative developed throughout France, still operating today nationally with nearly 50.000 members.

During the three years of construction, the members of Castors kept a record of their time investment put into building the 150 houses, roads, the common house with library and water tower. No one could move in until all the houses were ready, ensuring the workers would remain standing in solidarity with each other. Self-built and low cost, the houses (on collectively purchased lots) were rather large (up to 120 m2), containing a couple of rooms, even garages and atelier spaces.

We met two of the original inhabitants, wives of two shipyard workers. In the library, accompanied by Isabelle Lépine, we spent time looking at old photos and plans where the houses are still marked by the names of their builders. Relationships in the neighbourhood based on cooperation and sharing fundamental values created a strong community spirit, traces of which remain today. We were however surprised to learn that the Castors of Pessac had not thought of a procedure by which new members could get admitted. Today, houses are simply sold on the market without too much concern of who comes in – changing the character of the neighbourhood as it becomes popular amongst couples with young children who see in it a suburban lifestyle, rather than a self-empowering community.

Vienna's strong welfare system and exceptional political continuity curbs political opposition and civil resistance. Yet major developments and important changes in Vienna are rooted in social movements and civil disobedience. We became interested in initiatives that over the last 100 years had formed an archipelago of islands of social innovation in a sea of normative living in the city.

The trigger for The Report has been the exploration of Vienna's Settlers' Movement. We were introduced to Vienna's makeshift community construction in 2008 at an exhibition on the work of the philosopher, sociologist and economist Otto Neurath (curated by Nader Vossoughian) at Stroom HCBK in The Hague, specifically in a section of the exhibition titled Gipsy Urbanism. Once in Vienna, we would understand that this labelling was deceptive. In our conversations with Stefan Gruber, looking back at the Settlers' endeavour from almost 100 years ago, we would start to understand Vienna as a cradle of social movements and that each bore an influence on the shaping of the city, also in physical terms.

Vienna's Settlers' Movement emerged from disparate self-help initiatives in response to food and housing scarcity after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Forming a cooperative movement made it possible for the Settlers to claim their rights to land on the periphery and gain support from the city. Beyond collectively building houses and growing food, the Settlers established many associations and institutions, giving rise to a parallel economy. For instance, they made their own bricks, known as Pax Ziegel (Peace Bricks), an initiative by one of the largest and most politically active cooperative associations in Vienna whose original members were railway workers.

In only a few years, the Settlers had built an intricate structure of nested cooperatives for building materials, construction work, financing, food production and insurance. Promotion of the movement was facilitated by new institutions – the Settlers' school, a newspaper, planning office, housing fair, etc. – helped by leftist intellectuals (Otto Neurath played a crucial role) including also architects like Adolf Loos. But the success of the grassroots movement also led to its demise through gradual institutionalisation. Settlers paved the way for the Red Vienna communal housing program where a more efficient central planning replaces self-building – as well as citizens' direct involvement. Meeting more recent initiatives in Vienna led us to the question whether this fate is inherent to any successful grassroots initiative.

In October 2014, in cinema Schikaneder in Vienna we watched a film on the occasion of 40 years of Planquadrat. It was exciting, particularly since one of its initiators and filmmakers, at that time ÖRF documentary makers, Helmut Voitl was there, bringing the energy of that time close to the audience. Although we had already frequented the restaurant Beograd (just around the corner), only later would we figure out that it is in the same block as the Planquadrat garden association in Vienna's Fourth District.

When we planned a meeting with Helmut, on March 26, 2015, we counted on some two hours of conversation; later on that evening, after we had spent about seven hours together at the café Anzengruber, we would realise that this is one of those unusual encounters you will hardly ever forget!

What began in 1973 as a commission of Helmut and his partner Elisabeth Guggenberger by ÖRF television for a TV documentary on Vienna's Biedermeier courtyards, would become three years of playful actions and fierce controversies leading to the tearing down of fences and the reassembling of the many fragmented garden lots into a single, publicly accessible grassy commons. The process had been followed and also sometimes facilitated by the ÖRF television team who set an editing studio in an abandoned building in the courtyard which would become the centre of the community. Patience, months of conversations (without the use of any recording devices), subtle hints and the use of games or playful interventions lowered the threshold for citizen self-determination, culminating in a collective garden, and thus opened a space for negotiation with authorities a revived capacity to imagine that other worlds are possible. And that is also the energy that the documentary on the exciting process at Planquadrat transmitted in a series of episodes in the mid-1970s to Austrian TV viewers. This collaborative process became a game changer for citizens' participation in urban planning and laid the foundation for the institutionalisation of this approach as the Viennese model of 'soft urban renewal'.

Even if they do not know its exact history, many people who frequent Planduarat understand and feel that something out-of-the-ordinary happened here.

We first heard about the Vizirast Mittendrin joint housing project at the Urbanize Festival in Vienna in October 2014 from the architect Alexander Hagner of Gaupenraub +/-. We were immediately interested in the unusual story of this place (opened in 2013) where students and formerly homeless share flats. The project resulted from the 2009 student protest Uni Brennt, when during the occupation of the Audimax university hall a conflict arose between students and homeless who sought shelter there. Their relationship would change once students asked the homeless to help with organising the daily activities in the hall. The relationship developed further and they reached out for possible financial support to fund a housing project that would bring these two groups together. They found the owner of Strabag construction company ready to finance the renovation of an existing building in town, and secured the Vinzenzgemeinde (an organisation dealing with homeless) as guarantor for the permanent implementation.

On February 25, 2015 we visited Carsten, an architect and former homeless, at his shared apartment at Vizirast Mittendrin who told us "I might have not lived if there wasn't this place." Here students live together with formerly homeless in 10 living communities of 3 people in an apartment, with a small kitchen and a bathroom. They also have common living rooms and a common kitchen on each floor. Besides affordable space to live, the restaurant, the two event venues, as well as several workshops, give residents the opportunity to work, thereby creating an extra source of income. Carsten found his safe haven here and became one of the people running the restaurant.

Vinzirast is a complex situation for both homeless and students, intrusive on their privacy and sovereignty.

The documentary film Living in the Coffin Factory (2013), depicts a group of people among the walls of an abandoned factory, shifting beer bottles around on the ground. It is set some time at the beginning of the 1990s and the bottles represent the positions of their apartments in a collective apartment complex. When in March 2015 Gerta Ehs, one of the people in the film, guided us through the Sargfabriek (opened in 1996) what would most catch our attention, or better to say imaginations, was the unusual swimming pool – one of the treasures of the project. We took off our shoes and entered. We are in the blue sweat space, the roof is curved, making the space quite abstract and us think that although Sargfabriek was all about fighting for affordable, community driven housing – this space is where it comes closest to utopia. More so than the bar, kindergarten, event space or the rooftop garden that they also realised. As a community in a project like this, you might need to strive for something entirely out of the ordinary to be able to achieve it. *[DH: Interesting – was it Saul Albert who compared London and Berlin hacker scenes and said the mythic narrative of the crashed space station might be what prevented the Berlin scene losing itself in political fights? Maybe we need mythic spaces?]*

Sargfabriek is Vienna's pioneer of self-initiated and self-managed housing on the site of a former coffin factory. It was initiated in 1987, by 10 not-so-close friends – who came from left-wing, feminist, green and peace movements. In 1989, they formed an association and bought the site, worth 1 million euros.

Sargfabriek and nearby Miss Sargfabriek (completed in 2000) are owned by the Association for Integrative Lifestyle which rents out 75 units to its members, while 15 units are dedicated to integrative or social causes. Despite its character of a 'village in the city', it remains porous and open to the public. It shows that grassroots organisation and professional management are compatible, and self-management is not simply more desirable but also more economically viable. According to Gerta: "We are not only living together but also have an enterprise together (with 20 employees, running the cultural centre, restaurant, kindergarten). That's the things that keeps us going, otherwise we would be arguing about small things". *[DH: Ah! Again, the question, what stops projects from descending into political fighting?]*

Artworks by:

page 51 – Sainte-Machine
page 54 – Sainte-Machine
page 63 – Sandrine Revel
page 64-65 – Camille Lavaud
page 66 – Francois Ayroles
page 67 – Adrien Demont

ECONOMIES OF ~~BEYOND THE PROFITABLE~~ ENDURANCE: ~~SIMPLICITY INTO THE~~ WHY WE ENGAGE ~~SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY.~~ (AND DISENGAGE) ~~WHY WE MAKE~~

BOOK 2:

ECONOMIES OF ENDURANCE:
WHY WE ENGAGE (AND DISENGAGE)

Addresses: *community, space and economy of the commons*

Initiative in focus: *Stad in de Maak (City in the Making, Rotterdam, 2012 –)*

While abandoned or disused real-estate has provided generations of voluntary urban 'misfits' with space and tools to enable more independent forms of living (independent, that is, of the conventional career path, of employment, of the privatised nuclear family, etc.), for an increasing segment of the population these sites seem set to become the last resort for urban survival.

This book brings forward how such sites can become the springboard for establishing more robust and self-reliant communities that extend beyond urban survival, taking the intermediate opportunities at hand as training grounds of sorts to do so. Indeed, by locating such attempts in the wrecks of derailed real-estate portfolios, the imploded development schemes of property speculators and the welfare state. It has been stated earlier: "The ruins are not the end of the story".

Guest contributor Book 2:
Martijn Jeroen van der Linden (1980) is an economist currently based in The Hague. He has set out to advocate practises of new economic thinking and researches the nature of money and the design of the monetary system. As one of the driving forces behind association Ons Geld (Our Money), he strives for democratic control over the creation (and destruction) of money. Collaboration with Martijn started in 2014, exploring how an economic grounding could be given to the rather unconventional activities tested within Stad in de Maak (City in the Making).

MJvdL: In the title of the book the term 'economies of endurance' attracts my attention. It is an unusual term. It is neither academic nor a policy term, but it fits a trend. Last decade(s) many scholars, especially non-academics and non-economists, have added an adjective to the word economy (green, blue, inclusive, ethical, social, collaborative, sharing, sustainable, virtue, civil, purpose, peer to peer etc.) to express their discontentment with the current economic system and/or their view on a future 'better' economic system. I associate the term endurance – as used here – with the ambition to stay, the desire to have stamina and the concept of sustainable development.

NOVEMBER 25, 2016. A CHILLY BUT SUNNY DAY IN ROTTERDAM. THIS MORNING THE TELEPHONE KEEPS RINGING. AND WITHIN HOURS, THE FIRST JOURNALISTS ARRIVES, GLANCING SOMEWHAT PUZZLED AT THE ACTIVITY AROUND TWO RUNDOWN BUILDINGS AT PIETER DE RAADTSTRAAT

The previous evening, in a packed auditorium at the Rotterdam's Theatre School, the association Stad in de Maak (City in the Making) had been awarded the Job Dura Award. The five of us representing the association are caught by surprise as we scramble on to the stage to receive the prize. The award brings with it a decent amount of (much welcomed) financial resources. But moreover, following three years of low-key, under the radar work, it propels us suddenly into the limelight.

This year's award is given for the "ground breaking temporary use of empty real estate". While taking the journalist through the ground floor workshops, we explain how it all started around these twin buildings, too decrepit to be used and too expensive to be fixed, buildings that suddenly had lost their economic relevance for the owner and risked remaining boarded-up for the next decade. What started as a mere try-out to revive such 'doomed' buildings and keep them accessible at low cost has slowly but steadily grown to a 'pool' of currently eight buildings that provide apartments and workspaces for a growing group of people. Meanwhile, providing cheap space on a temporary basis has become less of a focus. We actually won the award for dealing with the state of temporality we now want to overcome.

We explain that in the context of cities that increasingly function as sites for speculative economies, of cities as investment vehicles, our experience has been that our place is not guaranteed but rather must be claimed, fought for. For an increasing number of people life in the city is a struggle.

Martijn Jeroen van der Linden: The description of a fight for affordable living spaces in cities challenges mainstream 'neoclassical' economic theory. The economy is conceived as a self-equilibrating multimarket system in which supply and demand are equated via the price mechanism while price is determined by individual preferences. Adam Smith used the metaphysical 'invisible hand' to describe this process of 'automatic' or 'natural' price formation.

However, fundamentally different views on prices exist. Economists like Karl Marx, Max Weber, Karl Polanyi and Nikolai Bukharin have argued that prices are instead the outcome of a socio-political struggle between different groups in the economy. For example, Weber (in Economy and Society, 1978) stated that money "is primarily a weapon in this struggle [for economic existence], and prices are expressions of this struggle, they are instruments in this struggle only as estimated quantifications of relative chances in this struggle." Economists like Thorstein Veblen, John Maynard Keynes and Robert Skidelsky explicitly state that economics is not a science of 'natural laws', but a social or moral science, a domain where thinking, judging and acting individuals continually shape their lives and the world, including the housing market.

In the wider European context, large segments of the population have felt this through disruptive changes like the foreclosure of houses, evictions and urban poverty from Madrid to Athens and beyond. If we want to retain place in the cities, it is urgent to find spaces from where to act, as well as tools and practices to subvert and shift this reality. Therefore, we explain to the journalist that Stad in de Maak's focus has shifted to taking property out of the real-estate market so as to turn these buildings into sites of self-reliant and self-governing communities.

The following day, we read the journalists' full-page article in the rather mainstream Algemeen Dagblad newspaper. We are not entirely surprised that it features much about the adventure of living and working in makeshift conditions in the buildings but close to nothing on the taking over of buildings as common resources, beyond market conditions. That, apparently, is still too far a stretch of the imagination for its readers. In the accompanying photo, we're somewhat awkwardly glancing to the camera, not yet fully accustomed to the sudden attention.

TOXIC ASSETS

This book starts at a set of run-down buildings a stone-throw from Rotterdam Central Station. The buildings are owned by Havensteder, a non-profit housing corporation with a 45.000 apartments strong housing pool in Rotterdam. Its mission: to "offer affordable housing, well and sustainably maintained, where people live comfortably."

When on November 25, 2009, Havensteder acquires the two buildings, all still appears more or less to be going to plan. According to data in the Land Register, Havensteder pays over half a million euros, intending to demolish and redevelop them as they are technically considered 'end-of-life'. At that moment, the price Havensteder pays for the real estate still looks reasonable. However, not for long.

The economic downfall and mortgage crisis hit the Netherlands after some delay and when it does so in 2010/2011, the context in which housing corporations like Havensteder find themselves operating changes dramatically.

Suddenly, a substantial discrepancy appears between the value of their real-estate portfolio in the books (which had been 'booming' from the mid-1990s to 2009 at a pace faster than in any surrounding country), and the value that it now has in the actual economy (about 20% less). But it doesn't stop there. In the years leading up to the crisis, non-profit housing developers like Havensteder move away from their core task of providing affordable housing towards other products with a 'higher return'. Now this suddenly results in financial shortfalls of billions of euros for some of them, as is the case of Vestia in Rotterdam, which has taken derivative positions (to insure the interest on its loans) of nearly 10 billion euros. Collectively, they pitch in to prevent a systemic collapse of the entire sector. Adding insult to injury, the Dutch state subsequently slaps the corporations with substantial tax measures, to ease its own public treasury position. In effect, the corporations' reserves and investment budgets wither away.

At this point, Havensteder finds itself in a situation in which it can no longer sustain its real-estate portfolio: it has to focus on keeping the healthy parts of its stock in place. The two buildings bought in 2009 fall out of view. For those (and hundreds of other apartments in need of upgrade or repair) the future has become uncertain. They have become 'toxic assets' of sorts.

This rather peculiar notion gained popularity during the late 2000s. In the still early days of the financial meltdown, and well before the emblematic collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008, few people understood the widespread impact such toxic assets would come to have on the financial markets, let alone on the daily lives of millions of people. Nonetheless, the term soon would prove to encapsulate the glaring reality of the intertwining of today's financialised economies and the cities we are living in. In such an economy, assets are no longer primarily 'touchable' things – rather, they have become packaged and re-packaged financial services, like securitised subprime mortgages, collateralised debt obligations or credit default swaps, for instance the complex insurance constructions that financers place on a possible mortgage default by home owners.

> *MJvdL: According to Gerald Epstein: "Financialisation refers to the increasing importance of financial markets, financial motives, financial institutions, and financial elites in the operations of the economy and its governing institutions, both at the national and international levels" (in the paper Financialisation, rentier interests, and central bank policy, 2002). When we analyse the development of the economy since 1980 we find many remarkable statistics on financialisation. For example, a rapid growth of the quantity of money and 'near moneys', an increasing creation of money for non-productive investments (in particular for existing assets), and the emergence of a great diversity of financial products. The derivate market is a case in point. From a mere few million dollars in the 1970s, the Bank of International Settlements valued the outstanding notional amount of over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives by the end of 2012 at 632,679 trillion dollars, while some experts estimate the total outstanding amount of derivatives to be as much as 1.2 quadrillion dollars (Ole Bjerg in Making Money: The Philosophy of Crisis Capitalism, 2014). At the same moment, we witness a lack of funding for initiatives for which there is a high demand in society – like funding of affordable housing. How can this mismatch between the large stocks of money and the shortage of money in other places be explained? Is neoclassical economic theory failing?*

What has made these assets 'toxic' is that the crisis had revealed their more realistic value, rather than their inflated speculative sheen – and now their price had plummeted below what they had been originally bought for. For Havensteder, although its assets were still dominantly 'touchable' (physical) rather than just financial, having to operate in an increasing financialised reality meant that a part of their stock ('subprime' houses) had now become contagious, not only to the holders (the owners, the banks, insurance companies, investment vehicles, and other such entities), but equally to the people actually living out their lives in these properties: the apartments, homes and buildings that were part of this financial implosion. Now in 2017 we know that as a result financial institutions still totter on the verge of collapse (Deutsche Bank, for instance), and people continue to be evicted due to foreclosures of their homes. However, in the still early days of the crisis, few understood the impact of this toxic financial-urban entanglement.

AN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

While it is alarming that these two buildings, and hundreds like them, are at risk of being taken out of the pool of affordable spaces in a city like Rotterdam, we have to understand the impact of this within the broader tendency of living and working spaces becoming

economically inaccessible to a part of the urban population.

For one, as their commodity value has been driven up by the speculation of a financialised urban economy, where the seduction of urbanity is what sells rather than the 'real' value of buildings. However, it does not stop there. City authorities and urban developers have started actively 'engineering' the urban populus through real estate manipulation, with measures such as the demolition of certain (old, but affordable) housing stock in policies like the Housing Vision in Rotterdam (Woonvisie, 2016) or in Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) in the UK.

In the introduction to their article The Permanent Crisis of Housing (2016), David Madden and Peter Marcuse reflect on the position of housing and urban development, which in today's economies are no longer secondary phenomena but have become "some of the main processes driving contemporary global capitalism." Where cities are for some a home, for others they are investment vehicles. But the degree to which we, the inhabitants, are becoming subjected to this is unprecedented.

> *MJvdL: Karl Polanyi warned in The Great Transformation (1944) for the utopian belief in a self-regulating market system and proposed to distinguish between real and fictitious commodities. Real commodities are things produced for sale on a market. Fictitious commodities are things that are not really produced. Polanyi mentioned land, labour and money. Today, neoclassical economists argue that not only real commodities but also fictitious commodities should be sold on and regulated via the market. We may face existential crises as long the markets system regulates land (arguably including real estate), labour and money.*

The political strategy of cutting investment in affordable homes while allowing property values to inflate brings us to projections like this: "Fifteen years waiting for an affordable rental apartment. People in their thirties who still live with their parents, if needed even with the entire family. Exorbitant prices on the private rental market. Is this soon going to be normal in the Netherlands? New forecasts on the housing shortage point into that direction. (...) The housing shortage will rise sharply, (...) from 160.000 homes in 2012 to 290.000 homes in 2020" (in On the Way to a Serious Housing Need, Woonbond, 2013).

> *MJvdL: A number of researches (Positive Money in the UK, Dirk Bezemer in the Netherlands) show that private banks created most of the money for the real estate market last decade. One of the main challenges today is to connect money creation by private banks to productivity, that is for example the production of green energy and circular production processes. At this moment, most new money is still used to fund existing real estate and existing financial assets. This contributes to higher housing prices and bubbles in financial markets.*

It is in one of the later passages of Madden and Marcuse's article, where the chilling consequences of the situation around housing break through: "No other modern commodity is as important for organising citizenship, work, identities, solidarities, and politics. (...) It is this side of housing – its lived, universally necessary, social dimension, and its identity as home – that needs defending."

It is not the first time, and very likely not the last either, that existence in the city has become a serious issue. For us, it has been revelatory to discover the roots (and the passion, determination) of social housing developments in the Netherlands, set in the workers' self-organised movements of the second half of the 19th Century.
A captivating example is the Bouwmaatschappij tot Verkrijging van Eigen Woningen (Construction Company for the Acquisition of One's Own House), joined by 500 jubilant members on November 2, 1868 in Amsterdam.

Such struggles have been paramount to gaining an understanding of the importance of organising oneself, of embedding existential conditions in cities into legal and policy frameworks, and of regulating parts of urban existence to be beyond the violence of speculation and market excess (through social housing policies). However, these struggles, once won, are not won forever as we can witness today when the social housing stock – once a pillar of the welfare state – is persistently being hollowed out by subsequent governments.

AN 'EXCELLENT' STARTING POINT

Let's return to those two buildings at Pieter de Raadtstraat in Rotterdam North.

In 2010 their owner Havensteder has found itself in an awkward situation – buildings too decrepit to offer for rental, and too expensive to fix. One option it considers is to board them up and place them in an artificially induced coma for the next 8 to 10 years, after which the organisation will have been able to make up the balance on what to do next. However, being the owner of the majority of (social) housing in the residential sector, not everyone in this housing corporation is willing to accept such a solution. Individuals within the organisation call for a 'second opinion', to see if a more outside-the-box approach could bring a breakthrough to the situation.
In November 2010, two collectives (the architects of Superuse Studios, and the artists of Observatorium) are asked for a proposal. Their initial explorations make clear that any meaningful attempt at keeping the building safe and in some form of use would exceed 60.000 euros. The plan is shelved for the time being, while the buildings continue to dilapidate – to such a degree that their physical state becomes hazardous. Boarding them up will soon become a necessity.

Dissatisfied with this prospect, artist and friend Erik Jutten, one of the participants in the aforementioned quick-scan, decides to push further. The intention at this stage is still rather intuitive: the buildings are to become a site to generate knowledge on this kind of urban

conditions while renting the units in the buildings to an active community of users will provide the resources to co-finance that generation of knowledge. How this is to be done remains unclear, but the most important step is to move the owner to agreeing to open up the buildings for such an experiment.

It requires an unconventional proposal to persuade Havensteder to do so. If Havensteder has to bear a loss of around 60.000 euros to keep the buildings going at a minimum level for the next 8 to 10 years, would it be willing to bear that loss in full upfront? Meaning in practice to pay it in full on day one in the form of providing the necessary finance to start immediate work on the buildings' revival and thus turn this loss into an investment budget. Suddenly hibernating acquires a palpable financial dimension: 60.000 euros, a tool to work with.

From there, matters take their course. Erik involves STEALTH as companions, we ask Piet Vollaard (architect, architecture critic, and another long-time friend) to join. In preparation for a future transfer of the 'governance' over the buildings, a legal entity is formed, the association Stad in de Maak (City in the Making). Months of negotiations with the owner follow in which both sides overcome their initial misgivings about this unusual idea and build personal trust in each other's motivations. Slow-cooking rather than fast-food, the details of a crucial spreadsheet with the financial details simmer over much of the summer months of 2013: how to break-even and keep going for 10 years without having to resort to (cultural or other) subsidies a priori – to avoid vulnerability to of a dependence on them? Finally, both sides see enough assurances for the daring plan to hold. For Havensteder, it is a deal with an untested partner. However, one that is appealing: no financial risk, no contingencies, no management costs, yet no less of an economical result. On October 24, 2013, an agreement is signed.

A month later, work on the site starts. The two buildings are in ruin and quickly need to be made usable to generate the modest cash-flow necessary to keep the plans afloat (rather than defaulting on property tax or insurance costs, for instance). Of the 60.000 euro investment budget from Havensteder, a majority of 45.000 is reserved for contractor costs to structurally preserve the buildings for the long term. However, if part of that work on the buildings is done by Stad in de Maak, not only can it be done at a lower cost (we don't need to make profit on this) but more importantly it can be prioritised differently. This, in effect, would allow us to shift the timing of the initial work partly away from the 'shell' and direct it to refurbishing the interior – at least to the extent that the buildings become immediately inhabitable.

By April 2014, we had fixed the first of six floors and Stad in de Maak moved in. At the start our challenge has been to make an economic cycle for the two buildings, which by the end of the year looked achievable.

PROSPECTS OF A 'POOL OF TOXICITY'

Throughout Rotterdam today, there are hundreds of houses and buildings stalled in hibernation and available for interim use. And there, in that borrowed time, both the opportunities and challenges reside (see Book 3, Constitution of the Interim). For it is, first of all, a somewhat contradictory condition that determines the dependence of the interim use of these buildings on a 'frozen' market of toxic real-estate. For to have this type of sustainable future, we would have to rely on a sustained crisis, which is certainly not a viable long term strategy.

However, can this readily available pool of stalled real-estate be made of use in the short term? Can it be put to use to create a critical mass and a critical practice and experience, or to gain adequate momentum by which to overcome dependence on exploiting the interim?

We decided to explore three different scenarios, or tracks (presented on June 15, 2015 at Stad in de Maak) of where to take its potential. In the next three sections, they intertwine with where Stad in de Maak actually stands, as of Spring 2017.

SITES FOR (TEMPORARY) SURVIVAL

"In this first scenario, Stad in de Maak brings to use and manages a growing amount of stalled housing stock step by step. We offer to take over whatever from Havensteder's problem buildings is available for five years or longer. Each few months another building is taken over. Stad in de Maak becomes the 'innovative' interim guardian – offering a creative 'detox' for stalled real estate. For a certain group in Rotterdam the resulting pool of buildings is a welcome resource for survival, as long as it lasts." (from scenario 1)

The geographer and environmentalist Dean Bavington offers an interesting take on what 'managing' such a pool of resources entails. "Rather than meaning to control and to use carefully, 'to manage' can also mean to simply cope with a situation, person, problem or complex process (...). When we utilise management in these ways we are referring to situations far removed from that of a controlling authority and from being in a position to map, plan, simplify, direct, husband or steward reality to serve our wishes. When we manage as coping we are the ones being controlled or carefully used by someone or something." (In the paper, Managerial Ecology and Its Discontents: Exploring the Complexities of Control, Careful Use and Coping in Resource and Environmental Management, 2002)

It may be clear that the scenario of 'coping', as a form of resource management, is totally dependent on the availability of 'toxic' or 'subprime' buildings that can no longer function in the economy of their owners. As soon as a contrary business case (for their renewal, or clearance and redevelopment) can be provided, they are out of

'our scope'. The limited, or very uncertain, use time also provides hardly any option for long term investment in the basic structure, as it cannot (or remains uncertain to) be earned back.

Maybe more importantly, there is a limit to both the spectrum of people and the extent to which they are willing and able to live under 'fringe conditions', in those of constant improvisation. If we look at Stad in de Maak, at those who find themselves amongst its initiators, the first batches of inhabitants and users share some unspoken characteristics. They can be seen as being voluntary 'misfits', non-conformists, ready to roll up their sleeves, as having experience with squatting or the like, and many indeed in the arts. We know how to function in these kinds of places, how to bend them to our needs and ourselves into them. These buildings became our tools.

Our own experience in this, from when we arrived in Rotterdam in the summer of 1999, started with the collective Zwatra who (as neighbours) would 'train' us how to squat an empty house. Eight months later this intense experience came to a sudden end when the house was bulldozed to make space for a patch of urban greenery. We quickly had to find another place. 10 minutes' walk away an association called De Roos (The Rose) was just about to be established. Their majority working class inhabitants had successfully rescued a block of houses from demolition and now demanded their right to use them for a period of 10 years. Just before the signing of this 10-year contract for this self-managed housing project, we entered one of the shoe-box-like spaces of 42 square meters, with a toilet and a free-standing bath as the only amenities. With a great deal of enthusiasm and help from the neighbours, one of whom was Erik, we fixed 'our' temporary apartment but for instance also the common roof. So, this is our heritage – and a possible source of our 'misalignment'.

Today, for a growing number of people this marginal condition starts to become the only reality available, the reality of an urban survival. That is the reality of free-lancers unable or unwilling to take a mortgage, the reality of a withering welfare system where social rent may take 50% of your income, of subsidised housing rents that year on year increase by 8%. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that there is an increasing potential waiting to be addressed by Stad in de Maak.

"(...) Aim of the survival scenario? Helping ourselves out, as much as the owner of the stalled assets. However, what is the larger impact of this? Should we be satisfied to be survivors in our cities?" (from scenario 1)

Maybe some will be satisfied but more likely, this scenario suits a fringe group of people willing to live under fringe conditions – a rather unstable community, with many eventually wanting to move out in search of less exhausting and more sustainable conditions.

TRAINING GROUNDS FOR A DIFFERENT LIVING

Besides this, becoming 'survivors in our own cities' is hardly an emancipatory, let alone liberating option.

"Alternatively, we can see these buildings as sites to explore how to take things into common hands (again), to probe for the decade to come which forms of existential support we need to invent, how to engage in acts of commoning, verify our ambitions, build communities, grow skills and capacities, expertise and experience. Buildings dispersed throughout the city form the base for this citywide temporary 'training ground'.

Most likely it would have to start from a manifesto, and a cookbook of how to get it going; and a pool of at least 10-15 buildings. Or how about 40 or 100 of them? Entry is a 'tuition fee' (aka rent) towards a collective investment to educate ourselves in another way of living." (from scenario 2)

By Spring 2017, Stad in de Maak has grown from two to eight premises in close proximity to each other. Consciously we grow in numbers. But beyond being affordable, what is that different way of living for which we need a training ground? Somehow, this scenario set in the dilapidated buildings of Stad in de Maak, reminds of a passage penned by Doris Lessing in Memoirs of a Survivor (1974): "People looking down from a high building saw how these nuclei of barbarism took hold and spread. At first the observers were all sharp hostility and fear. They made the sounds of disapproval, of rectitude, but they were in fact learning as they, the still fortunate, watched these savages from whose every finger sprouted new skills, new talents."

What we need is housing, for a growing group of people, that conventional providers do not offer: housing for groups, housing for those that do not distinguish living and working, housing for those who are not willing or able to put a substantial part of their income into 'housing careers', housing for those who need a temporary station after divorce, housing for nomads... In short, where the privatised nuclear family is not by definition the corner stone of society, where the house is not the cornerstone for financial investment, where work is not stable, where we live beyond individual cells.

With these different ways of living comes also a different relation with the concept of ownership. If we (temporarily) do not need to mind the ownership – we can use the borrowed space and time to learn through practice to live differently, searching the boundary of what can be individual and collective, of what has to be taken into one's hands, and what can be taken into common hands.

While entering the buildings at Pieter de Raadtstraat for the first time in early 2013, however unclear it is what the future holds, one decision is made right away: the ground floors (a substantial 110 m2 indoor space, plus an outdoor storage area) are to be set aside for communal use by the inhabitants, street and neighbourhood. Brushing the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cobwebs from our clothes, the first objective was to get anything at all going on here. It would take time, as the priority is to get the upper floors ready for apartments and office space. Still, there is an intuitive understanding that these (proto) commons are vital, and will emerge by testing out different possibilities, rather than designing them beforehand; and that economic pressures need to be kept out of these spaces, so that they can be accessed without financial compensation per sé.

Now, four years later, the communal spaces are a site for a carpentry workshop, a laundry service available to the upper floor inhabitants and neighbours from the street, a micro-brewery, a cinema, a discussion space, a detergent laboratory, and a range of other activities taking place in what has quickly been dubbed De Stokerij (The Stoking House, after the water-stoking facility that had been located there for decades, and where neighbours would come to get buckets of hot water). This particular night we are watching a film, organised by some of the residents as part of a weekly program. With 25 people, we sit in donated red theatre chairs, in a makeshift cinema that the day after will cater to a different use.

"The growing number of entities (buildings) make it a desirable experiment with different ways of organising, different forms of governance. The buildings form a horizontal network with ground floor common spaces, with a variety of facilities and programs; they are spread through the neighbourhood." (from scenario 2)

We see these commons as the seeds of mutual support structures, that potentially (through collective productive activities, for instance) could provide the existential means for the people in and around them. With that perspective in view arise the necessity to more clearly define their access and governance.

When, in late 2016, artist Melle Smets (somewhat mockingly) is appointed as the investigator of the state-of-commons and of the conflicting multiple uses of the ground floor spaces at Pieter de Raadtstraat, discussion on their statute starts to unfold. Through this discussion, the retroactive undoing of settled patterns, pre-supposed usage rights, and already-made investments is set in motion.

"The rule for the space is that no single use or users is/are allowed to frustrate (or make impossible) other uses or users for an extended period (that is longer than is absolutely necessary). When not in use, the space should (in principle) be free of objects, smells, litter and/or other as yet unknown obstacles. This means that 'furniture' and also the workstations must be such that they can be moved (easily by hand and by one person if necessary) to the side storage (or hinged to the wall, or hoisted to the ceiling, or dropped beneath the floor, whatever) when the space is needed for other activities. There will not only be a 'clean desk' policy in the workspace, there will be a 'clean space' policy as well." (Piet Vollaard, from e-mail, February 3, 2017)

It may appear counter-intuitive that, whilst being aware of the necessity to put certain rules in place, for three years it was decided to refrain from doing so. There are however reasons for this. One of them being the necessity, at times, to re-invent the wheel in order to learn-by-doing. But there is another reason to opt for a less 'normative' approach. It has been the writings of the historian Peter Linebaugh in the book The Magna Carta Manifesto, Liberties and Commons for All (2008) that have left a significant mark on the understanding of what instituting a commons actually entails. This has been captivatingly pointed out by Massimo De Angelis: "Commoning, a term encountered by Peter Linebaugh in one of his frequent travels in the living history of commoners' struggles, is about the (re)production of/through commons. To turn a noun into a verb is not a little step and requires some daring. Especially if in doing so we do not want to obscure the importance of the noun, but simply ground it on what is, after all, life flow: there are no commons without incessant activities of commoning, of (re)producing in common. But it is through (re)production in common that communities of producers decide for themselves the norms, values and measures of things." (P2P Foundation Wiki)

"The aim of this scenario? To create living-and-working spaces which become a testing ground for a robust mutual support community. Think of aspects like common insurance, care or energy production, or even a common building repair company. They also enable the community members to make a living through this network, and possibly even go further – towards society beyond wage labour, maybe even an internal baseline income." (from scenario 2)

According to many predictions of the future, jobs will become scarce. And in the light of the expected massive levels of the automation of production, it is the Universal Basic Income (UBI) that is seen as a viable way out from today's perspective (as in Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work, by Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams, 2015). It could be a guarantee for our survival beyond the false promises of full employment, while a revised welfare state is put in place for our general care. With the road to a contemporary form of UBI still littered with obstacles, other forms of sustenance and

economic diversity are recognised and built upon. Full employment has never been a reality among the Stad in de Maak people. Some of us are only periodically employed and the types of activities that we do don't have a great visibility in main-stream economic accounts.

MJvdL: In the brilliant essay, Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren (1930), John Maynard Keynes argues that because of ongoing productivity gains "the economic problem may be solved, or be at least within sight of solution, within a hundred years." Keynes contends that in the 21st century "a fifteen-hour workweek" will be enough to satisfy material needs and this would give all human beings time to devote their energies "to non-economic purposes".

Keynes' expectation of increasing productivity became reality, but today still many human beings are working long hours. How could we understand this paradox? I argue that the main reason is the expansion of (the definition of) the economy. Modern human beings no longer work in the productive part of the economy, but mainly in the service economy. We are generally busy with reporting, consulting, auditing, advising, managing, investing and insuring; and we call these activities economic. (But are these jobs really necessary? Or, are most of them "bullshit jobs" as David Graeber suggests?) Moreover, we are increasingly calling social-cultural activities such as education and healthcare economic activities. Our challenge is threefold. First, we need to distinguish clearly between economic and non-economic activities. Second, we need to develop organisational structures and economic systems that produce as efficiently as possible within the planetary boundaries. Third, we need to arrange proper funding and allocate as much time as possible for non-economic activities as education, healthcare, culture and other activities that develop human capabilities. The 'doughnut' and other visualisations of Kate Raworth (in Doughnut Economics, 2017) are in my view good starting points to understand the social, economic and environmental challenges of the 21st century. However, Raworth's analysis could be expanded by a clear distinction between the different domains in society; at least the economic, political and the social-cultural domains. Such a distinction could help us to understand how money should flow through society.

Lately, there has been a surge in interest of what UBI could contribute to our societies. It is interesting that in the Netherlands, already in the period of the economic crisis of the 1980s, something remarkably similar already existed: the so called Rijksgroepsregeling Werkloze Werknemers (RWW) aimed at supporting unemployed youth over 18 years of age that had moved out of the family home. Not only did it allow for independent living in a time of scarce job opportunities, it also left an important imprint on the development of independent culture (from bands to artists, to small scale architectural offices, magazines, publishers).

MJvdL: One of the main challenges today is to get surplus profits from the economy, and especially from financial markets, to the social-cultural domain. The two main options are taxes ('forced' gifts, via the political system) and donations (voluntary gifts). In both scenarios, it is essential that the funder doesn't influence the content to guarantee cultural freedom. The RWW is an example of collective 'forced' gifts.

ELAPSING FROM THE SPECULATIVE SPIRAL

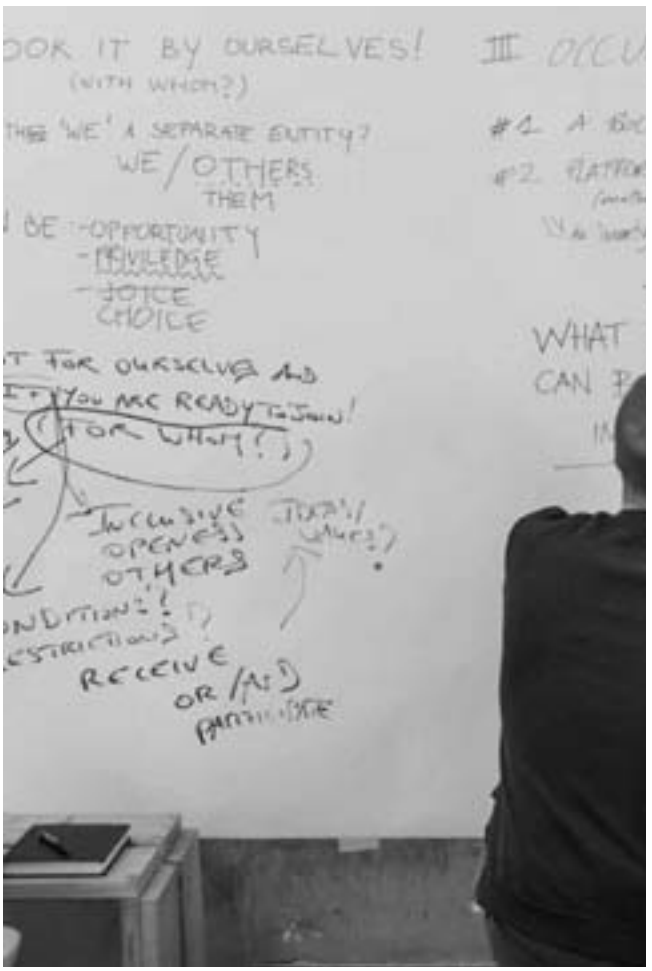
"What has stopped us from taking back the economy and building strong community economies before this? Our answer is that most people don't see themselves as significant actors in the economy, let alone shapers of it." (Take Back the Economy, An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities, by J. K. Gibson-Graham, Jenny Cameron and Stephen Healy (University of Minnesota Press, 2013)

MJvdL: Thatcher famously stated "There is no alternative" (TINA). Recently, I encountered TAPAS: "There are plenty of alternatives." An important question is indeed if people are willing to shape these alternatives themselves!

"Now, the community 'hatches', either by permanently acquiring these buildings or finding another space, that would be taken off the market. The agenda in this is the future plan, beyond temporary survival." (from scenario 3)

So yes, we decided go for it. And it feels as if the innocence of an interim player has to be shrugged off. At this point it seems that the only viable option is to buy a property on the market, in order to take it out of that market; paradoxically involving exactly the same mechanisms it aims to terminate. In the situation where the existence of other mechanisms isn't recognised we need to go through this capitalist loophole to get to the other side. *[MJvdL: Or we need enlightened (groups of) individuals who are willing to fund (radical) alternatives.]*

Of inspiration is German Mietshäser Syndikat, which has been doing exactly this since its inception in 1992. It takes buildings out of the market and brings them into collective ownership and governance. Crucially, this ownership is collectivised within the entire syndicate network, thus preventing individual buildings becoming easy prey for speculators. This, in turn, 'freezes' its market value (or renders it obsolete) as the object in question cannot participate in that real-estate market. Speaking in terms of the urban economy, these buildings have been stripped of their commodity aspect. This makes them available and affordable not only to the first generation of inhabitants, but also to every following generation. Given enough buildings, such a practice in the long term could even impact on the market performance of surrounding buildings. (However, there is a potential caveat in this. Within a larger economical context where speculation and rising prices of real estate goes on unimpeded, the price difference between housing within the cooperation and the 'outside world' will most likely increase over time. There is thus a risk of becoming a prisoner of the system that was built to guarantee freedom: it will become too expensive to 'move out'. Unless – of course – the syndicate becomes so



widespread that it becomes 'the market' itself.) In order to provide for such a snowball effect, the Mietshäser Syndikat has an internal, revolving investment fund, which enables it to slowly but steadily take more and more buildings out of the market.

The cleverness of this model has spurred a number of international offspring such as Vrijcoop in The Netherlands, which we (with Stad in de Maak) have become co-initiators of.

"This scenario is opening the taboo question of what happened to our common assets – in this case the social housing pool. Now that we find their caretakers (the corporations) have been putting this stock at risk, and also are being forced to privatise them, is there a base on which to open the discussion on re-commoning (stalled) public assets? Could this stock be reclaimed from corporations? Could there be something like a community bailout, in which these assets would be taken over collectively and dealt with in another way?" (from scenario 3)

The very same day of the interview with the journalist mentioned at the start of this book, a group of inhabitants of a nearby co-housing group in Teilingerstraat contacted Stad in de Maak for help. Their 20-year plus successful initiative was threatened with termination now that the municipality has decided to sell the buildings in which they are located. The letter from the City of Rotterdam could not have been clearer: it expresses the desire to remove the residents permanently from the premises so that they can be sold more easily to the highest bidders.

On a larger scale, the city has even more ambitious plans in terms of socially engineering the population. Rotterdam's Housing Vision 2030 (Woonvisie, 2016) sets out to demolish 15.000 cheaper or affordable social rent apartments (with rents ranging from 300 to 600 euros) and to have them replaced with (better but) more expensive ones.

Over the past 15 years, already 30.000 of these apartments have disappeared. This effectively denies a substantial segment of population access to affordable space in the city. Or, as some more outspoken critics have labelled it: it deports the unwanted population from the city itself. A chilling perspective that mobilised people to call for a referendum on this housing vision in November 2016 (which was obstructed by the Municipality and hence failed with only a 17% voter turnout).

"What makes people get together with other people in order to collectively organise a housing project, and invest a considerable amount of their free time into a house that ultimately does not belong to them? Is it affordable rents or joint ownership? Is it solidarity or the desire for self-management that motivates people to engage in syndicate projects? Perhaps it is the opportunity to establish in tenement houses free-spaces or the idea to rip the real-estate market of its speculative objects? Probably it is a mixture of everything." (Mietshäuser Syndikat, Brochure 6, 2013)

"The aim: Starting small to organise housing on non-commercial basis, to become commonly owned. In this way,


ZEEPFABRIEK
IN DE MAAK

pulling a string out of the downward spiral of a speculative market. Buildings are tools to build communities that run through different social strata." (from scenario 3) *[MJvdL: To show that "there is an alternative".]*

In Spring 2016, a first possibility appears through which such an option can be 'exercised'. When Burgerhotel de Zon (Citizens Hotel of the Sun) in Rotterdam goes on sale, Stad in de Maak decides to test its chances and make an offer. Since the 1920s this four-storey building has been serving as a 'boarding house of last resort' for men with social problems. At its peak, it counted 75 beds densely distributed in its three sleeping halls, with a restaurant and common living area on the ground floor, open to fellow citizens in trouble. The boarding house had moved to a different building and the housing corporation Havensteder, its owner, had now decided to sell the building. Its size and social history make it an ideal place to try to exercise this option.

It is the open doors day, when the announced potential buyers can check out the building. We are wandering through the venue, floor by floor, room by room, discussing how much repair would be needed, and how a form of living that combines the new wave of status holding asylum seekers and young Rotterdam' inhabitants could take place here, how many people could share it and what kind of restaurant they could run on the ground floor. A healthy and affordable meal, for a standard 5-euro price: 1 euro for the rent, 1 euro to cover the fixed costs, 2 euros for the ingredients, and 1 euro for kitchen staff/inhabitants 'salary'. During the viewing we bump into some of the competitors – developers in suits and shiny shoes. We sign ourselves onto the list of visitors, and manage to spot their names: from their websites, we understand their bids will aim at a series of luxury lofts...

Finally, in the days after, without having the money at hand, we make an offer of 100.000 euros while we estimate that the building would need another 900.000 euros for renovation. Within weeks, we find out that the building has been sold to one of the commercial parties (the highest bidder) which subsequently will resell it to (yet) another commercial party after only two months.

However, what remains afterwards is a set of ambitions for the future:

1. Take properties from the market
2. Make them available for affordable housing and work
3. Bring them into collective ownership/collective use
4. The 'commons' spaces are exempt from rent
5. Make it economically, socially and environmentally sustainable
6. Democratically organised
7. Largely self-organising
8. Make our own revolving investment fund
9. And whenever possible, do it boldly on our own.

Will 2017 be the year for the breakthrough?

MJvdL: I prefer this (last) scenario, because I believe a larger societal change is coming. As said earlier, for Keynes economics was a moral science. In the essay, Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren (1930) he argues: "When the accumulation of wealth is no longer of high social importance, there will be great changes in the code of morals. We shall be able to rid ourselves of many of the pseudo-moral principles which have hag-ridden us for two hundred years (...). The love of money as a possession – as distinguished from the love of money as a means to the enjoyments and realities of life – will be recognised for what it is, a somewhat disgusting morbidity, one of those semi-criminal, semi-pathological propensities (...). We shall once more value ends above means and prefer the good to the useful. We shall honour those who can teach us how to pluck the hour and the day virtuously and well (...)."

Keynes ends his essay with the recommendation: "Meanwhile there will be no harm in making mild preparations for our destiny, in encouraging, and experimenting in, the arts of life as well as the activities of purpose." This is, in my view, exactly what Stad in de Maak is already doing in the search for a radical new way of organising housing.

MARTIJN JEROEN VAN DER LINDEN: DISCOVERING NEW ECONOMIC THINKING

During the financial panic of 2008 I worked at ING [a multinational banking and financial services corporation headquartered in Amsterdam] in the field of change management. At 28 years of age I was the youngest of my team and a so called 'high potential'. To my surprise, none of my experienced colleagues were able to explain what was happening when the stock price of ING suddenly plunged. How could such huge amounts of money suddenly disappear? What went wrong? Was the whole system broken? Why was the communication of the board of directors of ING so ambiguous? I felt something fundamental happened, but was unable to explain what. Looking back, at that moment large parts of the financial sector were simply unknown to me: the existence of shadow banking, securitisation, derivatives and money market fund shares. I was naïve.

After the financial crisis started, I gradually discovered that there are two fundamentally different kinds of economic thinking. Here, I call them 'old' and 'new'.

At the University of Tilburg where I graduated Business Administration in 2004, my professors mainly taught me 'old' economics, generally known as neoclassical economic theory. According to this theory, individuals maximise their utility and firms maximise their profits (to a greater or lesser extent), and competing maximising behaviour moves supply and demand to market equilibrium. Neoclassical economic analysis is largely based on economic 'laws' comparable to the laws of the natural sciences and generally uses mathematical modelling. After my graduation, I gradually realised that other schools of economics had been ignored.

I discovered 'new' economics and economic pluralism by reading economists and economic philosophers such as Aristotle, Keynes, Veblen, Skidelsky and Sedláček, via conversation with Lou Keune, Klaas van Egmond and Ro Naastepad and institutions such as the New Economic Foundation, Rethinking Economics and the Institute for New Economic Thinking. Many 'new' economists view human beings as relational creatures. They argue that maximising utility is not the main part of human nature and that the principle of self-interest is not the main driving force of economics. This means that homo economicus is a myth. In contrast, according to 'new' economists, human beings have the desire to cooperate and to improve their environment. Moreover, these economists emphasise that economics is not a natural science based on laws but a social or moral science.

Meanwhile, at ING strategy meetings, I sometimes asked why we were focussing so much on less costs or more income. I asked for example: "Are all these financial products really necessary? What is their added value?" But when I look back I think that at that moment I did not have enough intellectual equipment to bring the discussion to the next level. 'Old' economics simply dominated my knowledge.

In October 2008, Alan Greenspan, the former chairman of the FED, stated: "Those of us who have looked to the self-interest of lending institutions to protect shareholders' equity, myself included, are in a state of shocked disbelief." I found it fascinating to see how people had to admit that they believed in 'old' economics. With many others, I realised that economics is per definition based on ideological ideas.

Because of the highly political environment, I decided to leave ING and to look for a new challenge. In my view, many of my colleagues did not want to talk about the real issues. Some people supported my decision, but many could not believe I was leaving a well-paid job for uncertainty. But I felt free and saw a world full of opportunities. I moved to London to live with my girlfriend and to look there for a new challenge. But what to do with my 'old' economic background? Where to work?

In the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2007/8 many thinkers criticised economic science. Now, that I had time to delve into it, all this new information made me more curious. I explored

pure economic topics such as the background of neoliberal ideology and the debt-based structure of the monetary system, but also ecological degradation, different forms of inequality and philosophy. I learned a lot – but what to do with all the new knowledge?

A couple of months after moving to London I applied for a day trader position at a trading company. One of my best friends did the same. We both started trading E-mini S&P 500 futures on a daily basis. A fascinating experience. I still think that the best way to learn how financial markets work is by following price formation for hours, when you experience yourself how news and psychological moods influence prices.

The main motto of the head trader of our company was: "The trend is your friend". In other words, if all other traders buy, you have to buy as well. Your moral view is not important. A plus on your account at the end of the day is your only objective. This is a perfect example of 'old' economics where 'it is all about money.' According to neoclassical economic theory, investors (including traders) are supposed to allocate capital in such a way that return on investment is maximised. However, in practice many investors do not aim at maximisation of financial returns on their capital. For instance, impact investors and many people investing via innovations in finance like crowd funding and peer-to-peer lending do not behave according to neoclassical theory. In their investment decisions, non-financial values play a role and arguably even dominate. Their main motive seems to be to enable people to start enterprises and unfold their capacities, or to solve ecological and social problems. In short, these investors use money as an end toward something else. In 'old' theory this behaviour is simply impossible.

As a trader, I also experienced how much money circulates in financial markets. Gradually I realised that the problem is not a shortage of money in this world, but that we do not use this money for the 'right' things. Later, while reading Aristotle I understood that we are still not able to distinguish between money as a medium towards another end and money as an end in itself. Aristotle famously distinguished between oiko-nomikè and two kinds of chrematistics: one limited, natural and subordinated to oikonomikè, and another unlimited, unnatural and not subordinated to oikonomikè. Many parts of financial markets fit perfectly in the definition of unlimited and unnatural chrematistics. At the end of 2009, I decided to quit trading, because I did not want to follow financial markets on a daily basis. Moreover, I wanted to contribute to the development of a more just, more sustainable and more stable economic system.

In the beginning of 2010, I moved back to the Netherlands and started to visit conferences about 'new economic thinking'. For months, I read books and academic papers for at least 4 hours a day. I got inspired by 'new' economists who advocated circular processes, sharing and non-material progress. In their view, the aim should not be to produce as much as possible, but to produce the right amount of goods of the highest quality with as little as possible natural resources. Today, I would consider myself a growth agnostic, much in line with Kate Raworth in Doughnut Economics (2017). Human prosperity should simply not be related to the development of Gross Domestic Product. I became a member of the Dutch based Platform Duurzame en Solidaire Economy (Economy Based on Sustainability and Solidarity). A group of 25 individuals, coming from NGOs, academia and business, that developed 'new economic' policies and organised conferences. Later, in the period 2012-2014, I chaired this group. Gradually 'new economic thinking' became my job. In 2013, I became board member of foundation Ons Geld (Our Money) that strives for monetary reform. Monetary reformers propose the separation of money (public) from credit (private); that is, to end the creation of money out of credit by private banks and to place the governance of the quantity of money under a public monetary authority. In my view, such reform, combined with the opportunities offered by digitalisation, contributes to (1) a stable and efficient payments system; (2) investments corresponding to the values of individuals; and (3) more funding for social-cultural activities because of real time taxation and radical transparency. In 2014, Ro Naastepad, economists at Delft University of Technology, asked me to join the EU research project Creating Economic Space for Social Innovation. In addition, I also started my own PhD research on the (re-)design of the monetary system.

After my career in the financial sector, the diversity of people I met and collaborated with increased enormously. Today I am also treasurer at Casco Projects, an art institute for practicing the commons, and chairman of the foundation Our New Economy. I still learn a lot from discussions with radical activists, monetary reformers, scientists, theatre makers, legal scholars, social entrepreneurs and architects. Some challenge my theoretical ideas while others show me that change is possible in practice. I feel privileged to be surrounded by creativity and courage.

I am still very much interested in the fundamental question if economics should be based on the value of individual freedom (as many 'old' economists suggest) or on the value of solidarity (as many 'new' economists argue). In other words, economic liberty or economic fraternity? Based on many discussions and books, I increasingly think we should strive for economic fraternity and cultural liberty.

Moreover, I am increasingly arguing that 'old' economics is a radical (or even fundamentalist) philosophy. Individual economic freedom on free self-regulating markets sounds good, but is likely harmful in practice. The main reason is that in this vision of freedom, fellow world citizens are considered competitors who have to be defeated, employees who have to be paid as little as possible and consumers who have to buy as much as possible for the highest possible price.

But what would happen, if we agree that the objective of the economy is to produce sufficient goods for all world citizens to live prosperous lives, if we consider our fellow world citizens as brothers and sisters, and if we collaborate to close economic cycles and to realise productivity gains? The better the quality of our products and the more productive we are, the less economic work we have to do and the more time we have for the real values of life. Time for social and cultural activities. Time to express ourselves freely. Why won't we move into this direction?

THE ASSOCIATION STAD IN DE MAAK (CITY IN THE MAKING) HAS BEEN SET UP TO TAKE ON THE REDEVELOPMENT OF VACANT PROPERTIES IN ROTTERDAM. DRIVEN BY HANDS-ON COMMUNITIES THESE BUILDINGS ARE CURRENTLY MANAGED FOR A PERIOD OF THREE TO TEN YEARS. THE START OF THIS INITIATIVE HAS BEEN TRIGGERED BY THREE CONDITIONS: THE DRAMATIC VACANCY THAT HAS OCCURRED

AT THE ROTTERDAM HOUSING CORPORATIONS FOLLOWING THE START OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS (2008/2009), THE DIMINISHING OF THE SUBSIDISED HOUSING STOCK IN THE NETHERLANDS AS A CONSEQUENCE OF NEO-LIBERAL POLICIES, AND FINALLY THE DESIRE TO AGAIN GIVE A PLACE TO FORMS OF URBAN PRODUCTION AND ECOLOGY IN THE STREET, NEIGHBOURHOOD AND CITY.

Meanwhile, Stad in de Maak has opened up eight of previously boarded-up or vacant buildings and restored them for living and working in a very basic way. For each added building, Stad in de Maak has been searching for a group of engaged participants to embark on the intended use and program, but also with whom to identify and implement the required interventions on the (run-down) premises. The upper floors are made suitable for living and/or working, while the ground floors are made available for production and collective use. A modest flow of finance from rent of the upper floors is channelled to enable low-cost access to the ground floor (commons) facilities. These workshops and multi-use spaces create the link between the residents and users of the buildings and the neighbourhood.

Stad in de Maak sees the current, temporary use of the buildings at hand as a 'training condition' for what is yet to come. In order to achieve long-term affordable housing and working in a different way than the real-estate market is luring us into, the next step for Stad in de Maak is to go beyond the temporary exploitation of the vacant properties that have been brought to our disposal as a consequence of the crisis.

[initiators] Erik Jutten, Piet Vollaard, Marc Neelen, Ana Džokić, with Daan den Houter (since 2015)

[background] Stad in de Maak has been set up in 2012, in response to an inquiry by real-estate developer Havensteder (Rotterdam) to come up with an approach to some of its 'toxic' buildings. After an initial investigation by Superuse Studios and Observatorium, this challenge was finally picked up by Erik Jutten, who – determined to find a breakthrough – started charting a 'business model' based on a set of out-of-the-ordinary propositions, in a close collaboration with STEALTH and Piet Vollaard. As of Spring 2017, Stad in de Maak comprises of 16 inhabitants and 21 people (permanently) using working spaces – plus a number of 'displaced workers' irregularly using the spaces.

[assets] Assets in the order of acquire, as of March 2017: Pieter de Raadtstraat 35 & 37 (living, working, commons), Banierstraat 62 (working, commons), Bloklandstraat 190 (living, commons), Zwaanshals 288 B (living, working, commons), Schiestraat 12 (working, commons), Noordplein 197 (working, commons), Zegwaardstraat 9 (living).

[timeline] May 2012 – ongoing (minimally 2024); opening first building February 2014

[website] www.stadindemaak.nl

STAD IN DE MAAK, CURRENT ECONOMIC CHARTER:

1)

MAKE EACH BUILDING A SELF-SUSTAINING NODE (IN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL TERMS) WITHIN A NETWORK.

This principle is introduced to foster a more robust network, in which difficulties (or even the 'collapse' of one node) do not pose a threat to the viability of the overall network of buildings. In economic terms, this means that each building should generate enough resources, from a financial contribution by its inhabitants and users, to cover its own costs. In social terms, each building should take care about its own governance and use. In environmental terms, it should aim to become resource flow neutral (energy, water, etc.).

2)

CREATE A COMMON FINANCE POOL FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND EXPANSION OF THE PLATFORM.

All the inhabitants and users of the buildings, through payment for the right of usage, generate a (modest) flow of finance that contributes to a common finance pool. From this, the activities to sustain the platform (a baseline income for those responsible) are being financed. Given enough nodes in the network (scale), a revolving investment fund to expand that network is to be created.

(The ambition is to take the buildings out of the market, and real estate speculation, to guarantee their long-term access. They will be brought into collective (cooperative) ownership structure.)

3)

HAVE A MINIMALIST (OR NO-NONSENSE) APPROACH TO INVESTMENTS.

Do less with less. If affordability is at the core, invest what is minimally necessary. For instance, by putting functional, rather than aesthetic, performance at the core. By re-using, upcycling, or working with donated materials. By improvising, if the use span of a building is limited, as long as safety is not compromised. And by being prepared to lower the comfort, in exchange for lower existential pressures (usage fee).

4)

REPLACE MONETARY FLOWS WITH NON-MONETARY ALTERNATIVES, WHERE POSSIBLE.

As both the inhabitants and users of buildings and the platform itself face a lack of mainstream money, part of the financial pressure can be diverted by doing transactions in other 'currencies': worktime or materials, for instance. This can lower (part of) the usage fee. Also, it lowers the financial investment to be made by the platform, as the price of work or materials inside the network is substantially lower than when acquired outside the network, at for-profit rates.

5)

KEEP FINANCIAL PRESSURE AWAY FROM THE COMMON SPACES THAT PERFORM FOR THE COMMUNITY.

Each building has a commons (“meent” in Dutch), accessible to undertake social or productive activities of people in the building, the street, neighbourhood. Access to such commons is free of charge, the direct utility costs (electricity, heating, etc.) are covered per building, from usage fees. When benefits are made from private (or commercial) use of the commons, a charge is installed as a contribution to the common finance pool.

6)

SET UP MUTUAL SUPPORT STRUCTURES WITHIN AN INTERNAL CIRCULAR ECONOMY.

Given the platform reaches a sufficient size, non-for-profit measures of support (normally acquired on the for-profit market) can be set up within the network: mutual insurances, sweat equity pools, mutual savings funds, childcare – and much more. This does not only lower existential pressures for the participants in the network, but also leads to a much more robust overall community.

When in Autumn 2012 we were figuring out how to open up the first buildings of Stad on de Maak, we were well aware of the diminishing stock of welfare housing in the Netherlands, but not so much of its roots. We decide to delve into this history. Soon we come across a set of black and white images depicting a group of men with high hats and in dark suites. One would think industrialists, but it swiftly became clear that these 'gentlemen' are workers and craftsman, initiators of the **Bouwmaatschappij tot Verkrijging van Eigen Woningen** (Construction Society for the Acquisition of One's Home), established in café the Zwan (Swan) in Amsterdam, on Monday evening, November 2, 1868.

That night some 700 people turned up in this café and on pavement in front, to become jubilant members of this construction society. With the number of co-operative movements on the rise, and many living in unbearable slum conditions, it became clear to them that the issue of housing had to be taken into collective hands. It all started a few months earlier with the launch of the Amsterdam Volksblad (Amsterdam Peoples Journal), at which a small group of people unveiled the blueprint plan for this endeavour. The journal calls on the citizenry to establish a self-help fund to build houses. With a payment of just 10 cents per week, and with 5.000 members, they were to collect enough capital to start building after one year. The rent was set at an astonishingly low level – no more than 1 guilder per week – and, the tenant who paid this amount for 20 years

would become a full owner of the house. Although not all members would be so lucky as to actually gain such a house, as these would be distributed through a lottery, those left without would still share the pride of having kick-started this remarkable initiative.

If we return for a moment to the overcrowded café the Zwan on that November 1868 night, the confidence with which several hundred people decided to push the reality of their lives towards a new horizon is overwhelming. It is a landmark moment, similar to a number of landmark moments at that time taking place in different cities throughout Europe. Klaas Ris, the precursors of the socialist workers' movement in Amsterdam, declared: "Workers! Not only the future homes will be 'ours', the construction company itself too! Every stone and every tile will be the work of the joint forces of Amsterdam workers themselves!"

From the appearance of the Bouwmaatschappij which by the end of the century had built 940 houses for its members, pressure had risen to introduce the 1901 Housing Law that would bring an end to the housing slums and create healthy living conditions to secure a 'productive' working class. This law would as well lay the ground for (municipal) housing cooperatives, supported by the government to construct, manage and rent social housing. This would lead the way to the development throughout the 20th Century of a vast stock of social housing, hollowed out in the last 30 years by new government policies such as recent 2015 Housing Law.

As social historian Dennis Bos writes, this "early socialist movement of the period between 1848 and 1894 was often depicted as a collection of silly dreamers, quick-tempered radicals and hot-headed youngsters, lacking in political determination, ideological clarity and organisational strength and destined to achieve nothing. The fact remains however, that this motley crew of casual labourers, rebellious youngsters and philosophically inclined craftsmen succeeded in constituting their own socialist labour movement." (from Waarachtige Volksvrienden. De vroege socialistische beweging in Amsterdam 1848–1894, 2001)

Although today ideological clarity is still lacking, things are obviously different. We seem less convinced of the possibility of a different type of life, of such a feasibility. And although we have technology and media on our sides, we seem less connected, less coherent when it comes to existential struggle. The challenges are no less today than over a century ago. For Silvia Federici, while discussing the aftermath of Occupy Wall Street, it is clear: "I don't believe that today we can have a strong movement which lasts, that does not directly deal with a question of day to day reproduction, and the needs that people have. Because the life for many people today goes just to having enough to survive" (from the Historical Materialism Conference, London, 2012).

Therefore, we cannot settle for anything less than a reality transformed. For real.

MJvdL: Between 1852 and 1901 fourteen housing associations were established in the Netherlands. Although these housing associations built only 4.000 houses, their contribution to social housing was significant. Pioneering architects and constructors gained knowledge and experience from developing housing blocks, and set new norms for both the construction and management of affordable housing (Van Acker et al. De Toolbox voor huurders en huurdersorganisaties, 2009).

Stavros Stavrides, an Athens based architecture professor, theoretician and activist, became on a wretched June day in Vienna in an unexpected way a rather intimate friend. That day we crossed through the Red Vienna housing neighbourhoods and ended up at the workers' beach on the Old Danube lake. We had got to know each other the year before, in April 2013, when we invited Stavros to speak at the conference Commoning the City in Stockholm (part of the program In Search for Common Ground we ran together with Henrietta Palmer at the Royal Institute of Art). On that occasion, we had asked Stavros why is the state of flux so important for the commons, and can the increasing interest in commons generate a push towards a new societal system.

"I prefer to take sides with those who think that we are talking about commoning as a process that might lead us against and beyond capitalism. (...) If we want to move towards this direction, then we have to rethink commoning as a process and commons not simply as goods, but as procedures through which we define what I propose to call a common ground. This definition of the commons is always a dynamic definition. If you (as imagined societies and communities) tend to close this world and believe that what defines us has its borders and those outside the borders are 'others' – then we come back to (...) new forms of enclosure that are connected to the capitalist idea of definition, classification and profit accumulation. If we want to go beyond capitalism, we have to rethink the commons as a flexible condition through which communities define themselves in a process of being open to other also emerging communities. (...) Commoning is a process and not an end product, it is important to view it as a process in which people discover the potentialities of sharing something. (...) You need constantly to be alert in avoiding that this process solidifies and closes itself and therefore reverses its meaning."

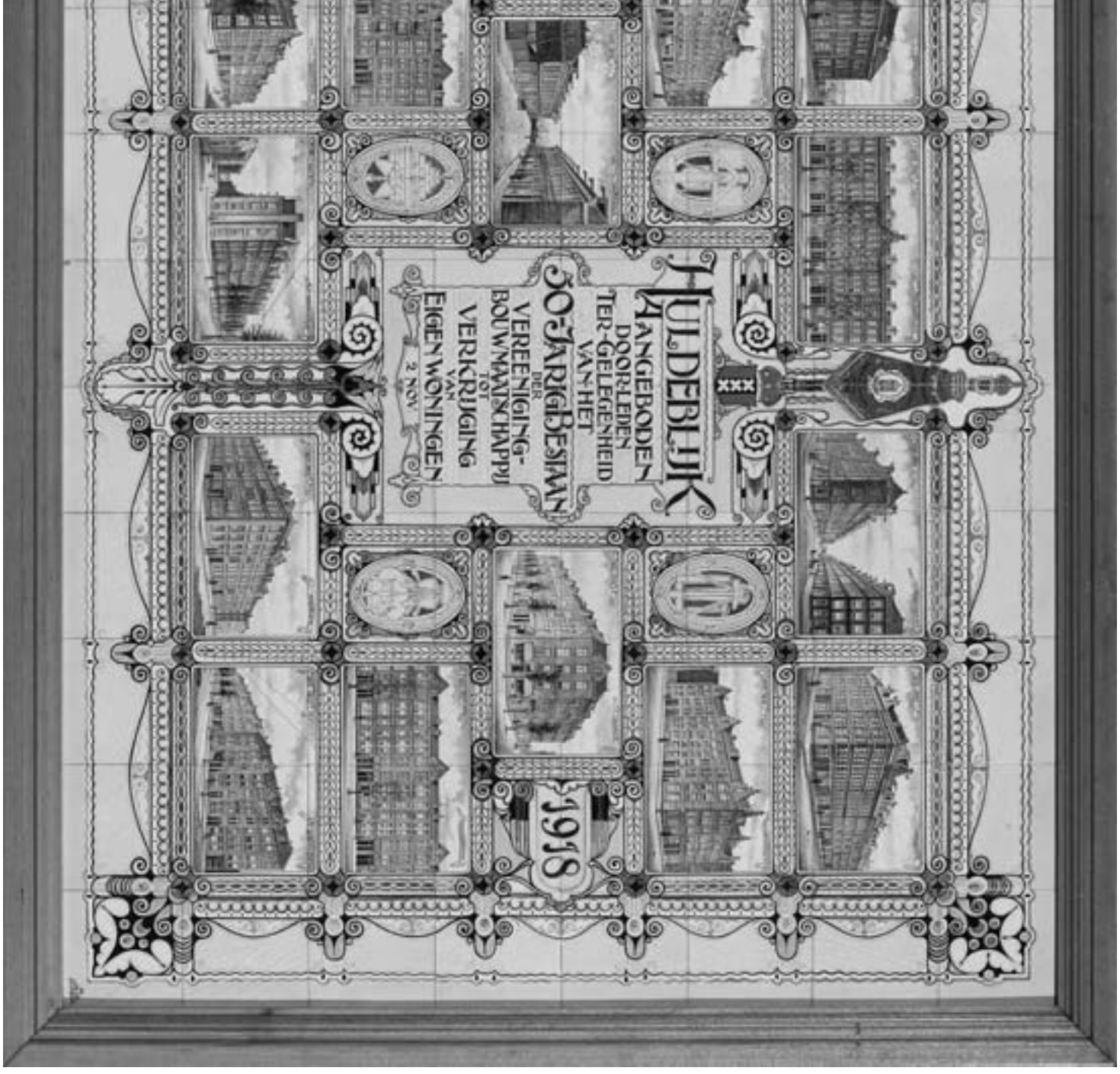
In 2016, Stavros published the book Common Space: The City as Commons in which he urges us to understand common space "not only as a space that is governed by all and open to all, but that explicitly expresses, encourages and exemplifies new forms of social relations and of life in common".

One interesting insight into the effect of basic-income-type provisions during the 1980s in the Netherlands was made by Piet Vollaard during the Stad in de Maak seminar Beyond Labour (February 22, 2017). At that time, the Dutch government introduced a collective arrangement for jobless employees called the Rijksgroepsregeling Werkloze Werknemers (RWW).

Piet explains: "This was basically an unemployment benefit for those that had not been employed in the first case: students leaving school going straight into unemployment. It provided a sort of basic income (around 750 guilders) that would be enough to live on provided you did not have many living costs (either were squatting, living with people who earned a higher income or still lived at home with your parents).

The unemployment rate among young people at that time was very high and with the RWW there were no repercussions for not applying for jobs so filling in one form and then signing on each week (just like it had been with the UB40 form in the UK) was about all that was involved. This condition allowed many young people to 'experiment or play' with free time and occupations that would not normally be economically viable. Many started a band, or became artists or started small businesses. Small cultural institutions prospered because people were willing (and able) to work there for free or for a modest fee. This period of free experimentation (or play) – free from economic restraints – proved a fertile ground for what would today be labelled cultural entrepreneurs whose prospects boomed when the economic situation improved (and the 'free money' disappeared)."

For the record, Piet never ventured in the freedom afforded by the RWW – he claims to have been too busy with playing and experimenting ("odd jobs, writing, teaching, designing") a long time before.



It is April 2015 at a co-operative housing project Kalkbreite in Zürich. Staying in this building is a somewhat surreal experience. With roommate Goran Jeras (initiator of the Cooperative for Ethical Finance (ZEF), Zagreb) we scan the guestroom we are staying in during the few days of meeting people occupied with alternative models for finance and housing. The room around us is immaculately built, with clean concrete surfaces and beautifully crafted massive wooden doors: we hardly believe this is the latest housing co-op in Zürich (6.350 m2, some 250 inhabitants) with affordability at the core of its concept.

That afternoon, we are welcomed at Kraftwerk1, the housing project that is considered to be the trigger of this new wave of cooperative, co-housing buildings. What now looks like an avalanche of remarkable co-housing projects, has come a long way since. It is a story starting in 1993, when ten years after the release of the anti-capitalist, self-determinist social utopia bolo'bolo (see Book 1), author P.M, with the artist Martin Blum and architect Andreas Hofer published the brochure Kraftwerk1. In the brochure, they outline the possibility of "a housing and working building for 700 people: shared, self-organised, ecologically and economically sustainable, an alternative to the then common mono-functional office and residential projects, but also to the capitalist economic system," (Bettina Büsser in Kurze Geschichte der Genossenschaft Kraftwerk1). Each of the 700 printed brochures contains a response

leaflet with which one can register interest in the initiative. Within short time, hundreds of these leaflets are sent in.

While the brochure hit a nerve, it still required an imaginative trajectory to arrive at the actual building of Kraftwerk1. First, a broader public campaign during the KraftWerkSommer in the summer of 1994, followed by a series of events at the cultural center Rote Fabrik, in the form of a Sofa-University in 1995. On this occasion, the so-called suite was built, a scaffold simulation of future living in the building; a one-to-one scale copy of a residential unit for 15 to 20 persons. In the same year, the housing cooperative was founded, starting off with around 50 members. Six years later, in 2001, the newly built 100 apartment housing/working development Kraftwerk1 would see the light of day in a former industrial area of Zürich West.

Apart from various forms of housing provision, this cooperative has been viewed as an answer to the societal crisis in providing wage work. In 1998 P.M. writes: "KraftWerk1 is also seen as an approach to solving the crisis of a society based on waged work which it is less and less able to provide. Between (unpaid) housework and (disappearing) waged work, new forms of making a living in a social context must be tested. Non-monetary waged work, communal services, internal exchange of services and products, create a better life with less work. KraftWerk1 will redefine living, work and income, with the aim of providing an egalitarian distribution of work between women and men," (KraftWerk1: An Approach to a Civilisation Beyond Work, published in the book Possible Urban Worlds). For P.M. this approach to the reinvention of useful work in the social sphere can be described as a new commons.

Similar to Stad in de Maak a decade or two later, Kraftwerk1 started in the short-lived window of a real-estate crisis during the 1990s in Zürich, taking advantage of the perplexity of developers at their plans gone sour. Although, according to p.m., what has been realised was "smaller, socially less cooperative, did not secure the collective existence as intended, had no agricultural part as planned and was solitaire", the experience of Kraftwerk1 set standards that influence today's community developments in Switzerland and contributed to the resurgence of Zürich's cooperative movement.

Speaking with Andreas Wirz and Philipp Klaus on the roof of Kraftwerk1 that afternoon in April 2015, it becomes clear how decades of carefully creating a position (also economically, by using their financial reserves as a mutually accessible investment fund) has now turned the cooperative housing organisations in Zürich into a rather powerful network.

Sometime in 2012 or 2013, when our engagement with housing both in Belgrade (see Book 4) and Rotterdam began, we heard for the first time about the Mietshäuser Syndikat. We were intrigued by this model of housing. This apartment-house syndicate is a non-profit investment company set up for the joint acquisition of residential buildings. It was formed in 1989 by former squatters and housing activists in the city of Freiburg, and today has a network of 121 housing projects and 23 project initiatives across Germany. Its primary aim is to support people who wish to organise their housing arrangements collectively and sustainably at socially sound rent levels – that is in self-managed buildings of their own, giving them independence from landlords' plans to raise rents, demolish or convert buildings.

Exactly for this reason Stad in de Maak in 2016 became interested in joining forces with the Syndikat's branch being formed in the Netherlands, itself called **Vrijcoop** – meaning 'free coop', but also a play of words that can stand for paying a ransom for a hostage or buying the freedom of a slave.

The already established projects within the Mietshäuser Syndikat provide financial, organisational and planning support to low-income groups that wish to purchase residential buildings but possess few or no assets. A key element is that the Syndikat has its own revolving investment fund which enables the wider network to balance resources between projects at different stages of their development. In some projects the Syndikat brings in administrators and policymakers as partners when looking for suitable properties or converting sites, and makes offers that are alternatives to (the practice of) selling municipal real estate and land on the open market.

The common idea that holds the mishmash of projects together comes from Syndikat's 1992 statutes that state the goal "to support the genesis and achieve political acceptance of self-organised house projects – humane living space and a roof over the head, for everybody."

Visual material:

page 101 – by Hidde van der Lijn
page 103-110 – from Stad in de Maak archive
page 113 – from Amsterdam Museum

RE-CONSTITUTING POWER:
~~BEYOND POWER,~~ FOR WHOM IS THE CITY
~~TO EMPOWERMENT. FOR WHOM WE MAKE~~

BOOK 3:

RE-CONSTITUTING POWER:
FOR WHOM IS THE CITY

Addresses: *claiming ground, asserting legitimacy*

Work in focus: *(Dis)assembled (Gothenburg, 2011) and The Constitution for the Interim (Rotterdam, 2009-2010)*

When in June 2011, a group of artists, activists and cultural workers occupy Teatro Valle in Rome (to rescue the age-old theatre from privatisation), their case quickly catches the attention of legal experts who point out that while the action itself may be considered strictly illegal by law, it is however to be considered entirely legitimate. Hence, the landmark struggle around this occupied theatre has put the legitimacy of the claim to commons, and to commoning, boldly on the agenda.

With this, the question of "who are 'we' to claim ground" in our cities has been given a more solid backing, even if current political and legal ruling often seem to suggest otherwise: it is a contested field, through which rights of use and access, and practices of commoning are carved into society. In this, taking the liberty to at times embark on a journey into the-yet-unknown is essential. How else can we craft the possibilities that could hardly be imagined before? How else can we experience the empowerment of what has been beyond our reach?

This publication speaks about inserting space(s) for exception, and of bringing that what has emerged as exceptional within them into daily practice.

Guest contributor Book 3:
Ana Méndez de Andés *(1972) was trained as an architect and urban planner and is becoming a political activist of sorts. She is based in Madrid where as part of the militant research collective Observatorio Metropolitano her interest in the question of urban commons and the re-appropriation of public space has fuelled her involvement in different spaces after the 15-M Acampada movement, and finally led her to be closely involved in the Ahora Madrid platform, for which she has been working as strategic advisor in the Culture and Sports Department of the City of Madrid. STEALTH's exchanges and collaborations with Ana started in 2009, at the conference Post-capitalist City (Pula).*

MAY 30, 2016. HIGH ABOVE US, TRAFFIC ROARS OVER THE ÄLVSBORG BRIDGE WHILE CROSSING THE GÖTA RIVER IN GOTHENBURG'S HARBOUR. METERS BELOW, ON FOOT, WE CROSS THE TERRAIN SET BETWEEN THE MASSIVE CONCRETE PILLARS THAT CARRY THE STEEL DECK OF THE BRIDGE.

At the quay, small groups of people are chit-chatting in the early summer sun, the atmosphere is relaxed. Up in the sky, the steelwork of the deck has been given a fresh coat of paint, some blend of radiant, almost phosphorous green. Five years earlier as we were leaving this terrain, exhausted and still slightly unsure as to what exactly we were leaving behind after eleven days here, the works on the bridge had just started.

Today, we curiously approach the sturdy brick building of Röda Sten Konsthall, set in the shadow of the bridge. We circle the terrain around Röda Sten in an effort to locate some of the traces of what had happened back then. In the years since, we had only heard sporadic fragments of stories on what had taken place: a hectic summer full of outdoor construction, transforming the rather non-descript terrain into some sort of makeshift settler's encampment through the involvement of hundreds of people from Gothenburg. For some of those involved, it wasn't easy to see it come to an end.

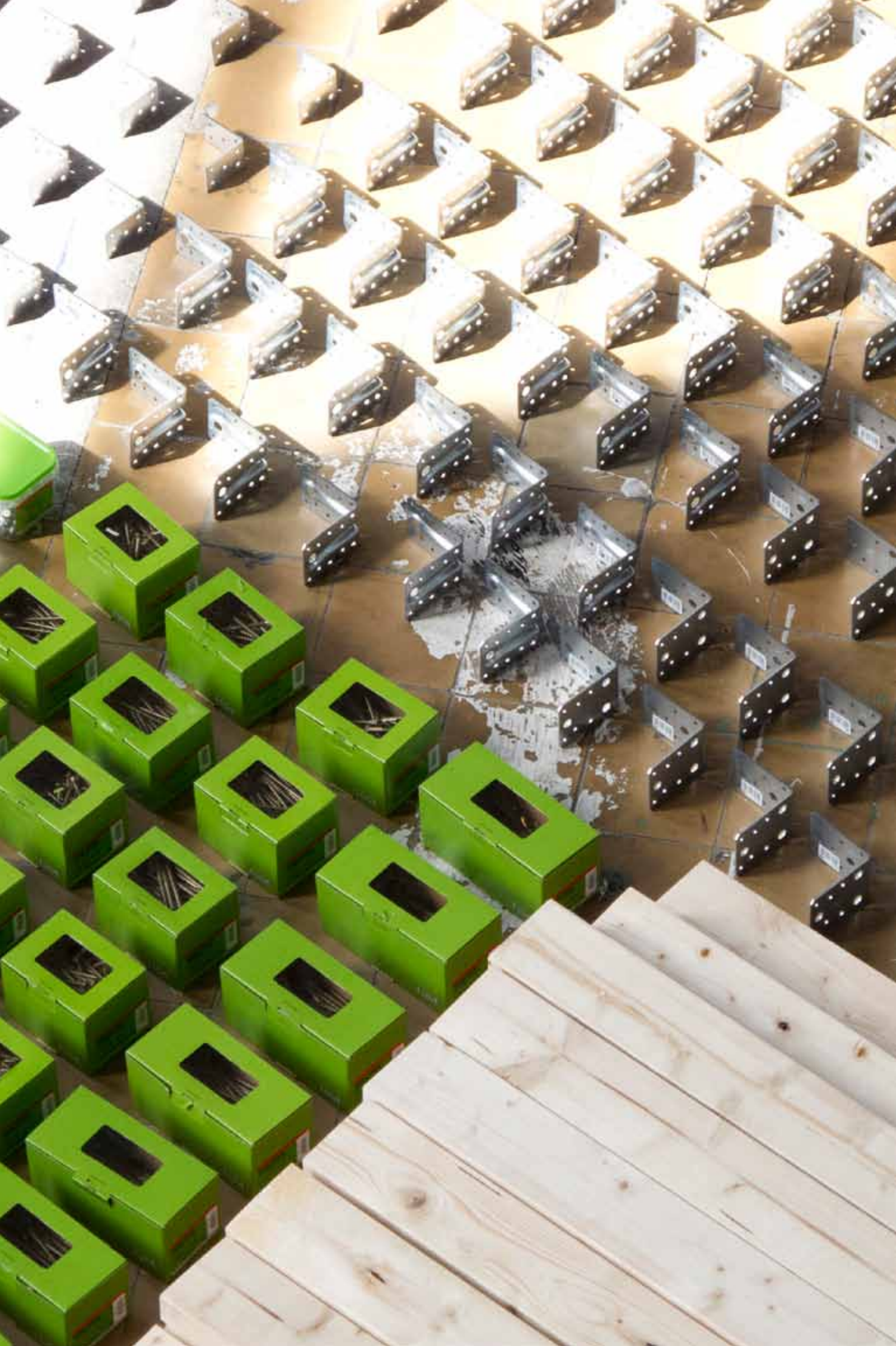
Today a few of the items that kicked off construction during that summer of 2011 are still there: the original wooden skate-ramp and an impressively large new graffiti 'dragon', although, everything is dwarfed by this harbour landscape. Looking further, we spot another object: a sturdy concrete skate ramp, almost hidden in the landscape. We scan the grass for any further traces – not much more is to be seen.

Suddenly, we realise that something else has fallen into its right place. The graffiti dragon, the wooden skate ramp and the new skating surface have become gathering points for groups of people who with a visible sense of ease have adopted these spots. They have made this terrain more approachable. Five years ago, this still seemed more like a far off fiction.

Ana Méndez de Andés: We have had for a long time a fascination in the spontaneous actions, the ephemeral occupations, the inapprehensible actions, the incredible opportunities offered by the void and derelict. Now, I am even more fascinated by the structures that are able to produce and reproduce, create and change while surviving through time.

One of the reasons for the shift from architecture to politics is because the latter belongs to the daily practice of collective structures, and my interest in how these practices are made operative through the small processes of micro-institutionalisation.


Trädgårdsjo
Trädgårdsjo



SPACE(S) FOR EXCEPTION

At a picnic day organised by the firm, the owner of an English construction company, quite by chance gave an opportunity to his workers' families to drive the company's gigantic excavators, shovels and cranes around. Realising their excitement at moving around some mounds of sand, he decided to make a business out of it. This is how Diggerland was born, a theme park dedicated to exactly that – digging. In April 2000, the park opened in Kent, "with over 20.000 visitors passing through its gates in the first year", as the company's website proudly states.

We came across the unusual story of Diggerland in the launch issue of Wired UK Magazine, which we picked up in May 2009. The short article rhetorically asks 'what if' this act of free-wheel digging would have another purpose rather than just moving heaps of sand randomly from one place to the other – what if it would somehow be useful? An interesting thought, but given the fact that such an extravagant 'toolbox' nor opportunity does not easily come to hand, we left the suggestion where it was and closed the case.

At the start of 2011, we are back from a visit to Röda Sten Konsthall and thinking how to address the challenge put to us. What had started as an invitation from Röda Sten's curator Edi Muka to propose an exhibition for its impressive venue (the boiler room of the energy plant of a now demolished sugar factory, a mini-Tate Modern of sorts) had quickly turned its focus from the interior to the surrounding terrain.

The art space is a remnant of the industrial era, rediscovered in the 1980s for parties and graffiti art. Threatened with demolition, a non-profit association was formed (today numbering some 1.000 members) to save the building and transform it into a place for contemporary art and culture. The area is set just outside the edge of the prevailing urban plans for the city, still part of Gothenburg's harbour. Over the past years, this area has seen the city's ambitious waterfront developments creeping ever closer (see Book 1, introduction). And with large stretches of Gothenburg's waterfront meanwhile in planning or re-development, its terrain gradually had become eye-grabbing for future real-estate developments. What now looks like a neglected area of disrepair could soon rank as one of the city's most desirable sites when handed over to the speculative powers of urban development.

And here lays the paradox. Many of Gothenburg's inhabitants value this stretch of quay-not-yet-turned-into-waterfront for the very reason that this is one of the last remaining pieces of untouched former industrial wasteland, not yet populated with loft-style apartments, cappuccino bars and retail seduction. People like to frequent this area for jogging, walking their dogs, getting a breath of fresh air or drinking a casual beer with friends. The 'non-scripted' area can take it all, easily. However, 'unscripted' from the point of view of urban developers means left in an unproductive state, one waiting to be cashed-in.

Who is to claim the area, and imagine its future? And for what purpose?

In 2011, the 'dialogue' with its citizens which the municipality had mounted over part of the waterfront development (Dialogue Södra Älvstranden, 2003-2007) is still fresh in people's minds. It doesn't bode well for the Gothenburg's citizens voices to be taken into consideration and many are left disillusioned by such a participative process.

> *AMdA: In Spain (but not only) contemporary urban planning reflects many of the hierarchical characteristics of the state institutions (it will only take the voice of the experts into consideration and at best will consider the inhabitants of a certain place as 'experts' of their own life, a non-technical source of information), binarism (things are either in or out, planned or informal, this or that, but never this and that, never in-between these and those) and segmentation (every procedure is designed to separate and label actions, uses, users and responsibilities to the smallest scale possible, to catalogue and script everything, to avoid overlapping). These characteristics are manifest at all different territorial levels, but the purely administrative nature of the local governments (laws are produced only at the national or regional levels). Urban Master Plans are the only area of legal competence granted to the local City Council level, this made us think of the City Councils as being more permeable to non-state dynamics.*

And there we were, pondering over whether the fate of this part of Gothenburg can be 'tilted' a bit in favour of those who actually appreciate the area for its productivity in terms of quality of life and its openness and not only marketable square meters.

> *AMdA: There is something inherently perverse in the way public administrations refuse to recognise the relational and symbolic value of social organisation. They pretend to be able to measure benefits and costs only in financial terms, and assess the efficacy of their actions by their impact on the budget or how much they contribute as National Treasures. At the same time, they co-produce the city in an alliance with private business and these projects are set to extract very tangible (i.e. able to be incorporated into the accounting books) benefits from all those different sources of capital.*

Could citizens' involvement be unlocked and literally carve itself into the urban terrain, as an imaginative projection of a future of a terrain that would otherwise be destined for real-estate development and the like? Could we do this by means of talking and quite literally 'digging', as a form of participation with tangible direct impact – at least as long as some space for exception granted us the ground on which to do so? It was this, which in early 2011, turned our minds again to that Diggerland, as a playful Trojan horse in the making.

A STORAGE FOR DO-IT-YOURSELF ACTIVISTS

On the 1st of June that year, we enter the boiler room of Röda Sten Konsthall again. The opening of the exhibition (Dis)assembled we had been commissioned for is a mere 10 days away.

The next day, impressed by the vast physical dimensions of the still empty space, we start to layout a diagonal grid on the floor with white tape. Over the following days, it will be filled in with a large quantity of materials, tools and equipment, meticulously sorted and distributed:

"... 2 pallets with 48 bags of sand (25 kg), 2 pallets with 48 bags of planting soil (25 kg), 100 wooden beams (45 × 70 x 3600 mm), 100 wooden beams (45 × 90 x 3600 mm), 300 wooden boards (22 × 145 x 3600 mm), 100 plywood sheets (18 x 1220 x 2440mm), 40 wooden poles (95 x 95 x 3000 mm), 40 standard euro-size pallets (800 x 1200 mm) (used), 20 straw bales (500 x 500 x 1000 mm), 40 empty oil barrels, 5 wheelbarrows, 5 fruit trees (small), ..."

With a nod towards the 2009 installation Waste Not at MoMA by the by Beijing artist Song Dong, we attempted to incite the idea that 'it is all there, now just go ahead': an exploded view of the ingredients for the anticipated intervention on the terrain surrounding Röda Sten Konsthall.

To provide an experience of this curious landscape from above we add a panorama scaffold. And indeed, from the viewing platform, it starts to play games with your mind: something has to be done with this wealth of resources. Outside, on the front façade of Röda Sten, a part of the clue as to what is to be done is given on a large banner displaying the words: "PLAN. DRILL. BUILD. PLANT". An accompanying flyer states: "As the possibilities for the surrounding of Röda Sten still remain wide open, maybe 'we', the citizens, should take the lead and imagine it. And during the summer turn it into a testing ground – a possibility to physically transform the area for a period of time, through a direct, think-on and hands-on format. (...) On the floor of Röda Sten's 'cathedral' all that is necessary to make outdoor interventions has been prepared for whomever takes the opportunity to act, either alone or in collaboration with others. You will find materials, tools and equipment to go ahead."

AMdA: I entered as Advisor in the Culture and Sports Department in 2015, following Ahora Madrid taking over the Madrid city government. We had the idea of mapping the different resources (money, space, visibility, etc.) that were in the hands of the City Council in order to make them available to cultural producers, that is, to everybody who considers herself as a producer of cultural artefacts, actions or products. Soon, we were confronted with the very same issue that is discussed at the start of this book: how to realise this idea within the institutional framework so that such procedures start to confront the existing norms and allow for a structural change that would protect the producers and their experiences and make them go further than the mere anecdotal. We realised then that we had to include in the list not only the material, but also the immaterial resources. That we have to take into consideration the institutional capacity of producing and changing the bylaws, decrees and ordinances that regulate the concessions and leasing of spaces, the subsidies and grants, the conditions of the contracts, etc. Trying to make these structural changes, however, made us also aware of the difficulty of institutional transformation. Not only have the existing structures a tendency towards stability and preservation, they are also designed according to a certain worldview. A view that is both created by and reflected in the institution. The biggest challenge, therefore, is to change the way the institution deals with and understands the world.

As Piet Vollaard (architect and architectural critic) aptly observed: we had constructed "a supermarket for activists". (e-mail, June 20, 2011)

Meanwhile about 10 people (artists, architects, carpenters, teachers, skaters and kids) respond to an open call and prepare for this pioneering act and to break the ice for others to follow them. Thus, the opening of the 'exhibition' became a surprise to all those not included in this plot: for hours, in an act of dismantling the so carefully positioned elements, this group drags the materials through the back door of the exhibition space. Once outside, they are to be assembled into a set of objects and spaces.

During the two days that follow a skate ramp grows out of a pile of wooden beams and plywood sheets, a graffiti wall is made from oil barrels (filled with water over an improvised aqueduct), seating elements are quickly put together, a treehouse is placed in a nearby tree, a giant swing is made from a car tyre... A fascinating scenery is built up before us.

WITHDRAWAL AS AN ENABLING FACTOR

In the build-up to this moment, we are haunted by an uneasy feeling. During discussions on how to unfold this intervention for the following two and a half months, Röda Sten seems to understand the potential of this 'Trojan horse' only under the guise of an artistic intervention. The Röda Sten staff refer consistently to it as our artwork rather than viewing it as potentially having an impact on Röda Sten's own future, itself placed in a landscape threatened by ever encroaching new developments. Remaining unspoken, the expectation is that someone will prescribe how the overall intervention should be realised and that as the artists and architects in charge, that role falls to us, unless we can come up with a strategy to subvert this convention.

Hence, we take the decision to withdraw from the scene in order to liberate it. Röda Sten, still a bit bewildered, quickly steps in: they appoint three 'stewards' to encourage people to take action and help them to practically realise their ideas, while also keeping an eye that the power tools don't fall into the hands of (too) young participants.


THE TOWER
THE TOWER

In hindsight, our disappearance was crucial for all the (others) involved, to their taking some degree of (co-) ownership in this intervention. For the instigator, it is often difficult to stay at a distance while for an emerging group or even ad-hoc community this distance allows them to unlock their involvement: it's a transfer of initiative. Thus, two days after the 'opening', on June 13, 2011, we pack our bags, board a plane and take to the skies.

A PLAYGROUND FOR SOLITARY INDIVIDUALS?

Somehow, this strategy must have worked out so well that even Röda Sten Konsthall lost view of us as that summer progressed. Ten weeks later when a set of photos reached us, it was with a mixture of perplexity and excitement that we tried to 'decode' what we were looking at. In the sequence of images in front of us, an entire settlers' village seemed to have been assembled on the terrain which was then partly dismantled and re-assembled in different spots, and then added to in multiple ways, to finally reach the pinnacle of becoming an odd outdoor festival of sorts. The photos depict many built objects, some of which the use could only be guessed but given that rather enthusiastic grown-ups or kids were involved in their making and using them, they must have been the vital parts of this encampment. The uses of other objects were luckily indicated by bold signage written above them: a "Saloon" or a structure labelled "THE TOWER" at the skate ramp. In some cases, it is not difficult to sniff out what this stuff is intended for, like for instance the double compost toilet positioned towards the edge of the terrain, carrying in its lack of privacy an optimistic communitarian spirit. The last image in the set shows a column of smoke spiralling up from barbecues in full swing and kids dragging materials around.

Asked about what had happened, the curator Edi Muka commented: "There were many things that popped up, other things that were undone for new things to be made. In the last week, there were basically only the TV monitors left in the exhibition space."

AMdA: Moments before reading this paragraph, I have been tweeting the article When Pixels Collide about the story of an experiment in reddit called Place. This began on 1st April and lasted 72 hours during which anybody could place pixels of 16 colours onto a totally blank canvas. They had to place them one by one with a few minutes spacing the positioning of each pixel. Groups were formed, drawings, flags, texts and paintings (the Mona Lisa!) appeared and disappeared in a dynamic that somehow resembles that of Röda Sten in it's doing, undoing, redoing (an echo in my memory of the impressive Louise Bourgoise's installation in the Tate Modern in 2000). First, some people worked together to make forms and shapes, then a mass of colour started filling everything, but stopped at the point where it might be considered as 'art'. Then, when the canvas was about to be completely filled up, a group started to erase everything in a black mass, and this destruction and the ensuing reaction to it enabled new 'art' to be created. The author of the text identifies the three different groups with the Indian deities Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Protector, and Shiva the Destroyer.

That summer, we learn about 1970s neighbourhood initiated and built playground schemes from Sweden in the 1970s. Some people we meet remember them being built when they were kids. It seems that the collective memory of this can be quite easily unlocked. Soon after, we figure that this might be connected to the exceptional project The Model – A Model for a Qualitative Society, a gigantic playground installed at Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 1968 by the artist Pelle Nielsen and arising from his conversation with the activist network Action Dialogue. In 2013, by coincidence, we meet Gunilla Lundahl, journalist and design critic, one of the key people in the Model taking place.

The images of the intervention at Röda Sten are captivating. The project (Dis)assembled attracted about 8.000 visitors and participants according to Röda Sten, which is probably more than any earlier exhibition. On the one hand, it makes it clear that once a group of people is given access to tools and terrain, their imagination and energy can run to impressive heights. They even bring their own tools, or provide materials when they run out. It is, however, also of great interest to see how little of that energy (visibly, at least, from those images) conglomerates, joins up, combines, into more complex set ups, beyond joyful individual interventions in that terrain. This perception might not be automatically accurate and this just may be the early pioneering state of an ecosystem still searching for the modus in which to create some emerging forms of organisation. A summer may be just too short a time to tell.

AMdA: Thinking of the über-material experience of Röda Sten and the mega-digital project in reddit side-by-side, made me think how the playful labour of making a space (however virtual) into something meaningful is always fascinating, but it takes organisation and the feeling that the space is providing resources that fulfil a necessity, that is to create structures that last in time, that can regenerate and protect, provide a meaning, and transform over time in order to endure. As Mexican professor of sociology and militant intellectual Raquel Gutierrez points out, the commons are mostly built and protected not by affinity, but by need.
The articulation of production and reproduction is a key element in the role the commons can play in the future, also as part of a wider eco-feminist political approach. This approach connects the exploitation of natural resources and of women (and of 'the Other') with strategies of capitalist extraction and the accumulation of capital gain. Key figures of this line of thinking, such as Vandana Shiva (on ecology and bio-piracy), Maria Mies (on feminist political economy), Silvia Federici (on the witch-hunt as enclosure of women's bodies), and Amaia Pérez Orozco (on patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism), are also relevant to the commons.

Now, except for a few physical remainders at the site, all that remains is this set of photos. The condition of exception in effect on the terrain – allowing it to temporarily operate outside the conventional regulations of usage – has passed, the 'mess' is cleared away, and normality seems to have been re-instated. Quite probably for Röda Sten's Konsthall, as well as for many of the participants, that would have been the expected horizon on entering this 'project'. In hindsight, one can speculate whether its potential could have been taken further, if Röda Sten could have implemented a longer-term agenda or if some of the participants or neighbourhood organisations had taken over.

Still, their presence was etched into the site. Its future is no longer unclaimed.

AMdA: There is always a memory of things, a way the body remembers having been there, done that. As we used to say after the 15-M: "what happens doesn't un-happen."

WE ARE DEVELOPERS TOO, REALLY?

In October 1999, the city of Amsterdam sought a way out from the stagnation of its urban re-development ambitions for the northern parts its industrial harbour. After a long period of decay following the dismantling of the heavy ship construction industries, this area became entangled in an interplay between different authorities, investors and potential users – all with their respective agendas. Realising that it necessitated a rather unconventional step to get the machine of development running on this barren, derelict industrial wasteland, the city reaches out to pioneers – its 'reputable' population of squatters, urban explorers, artists and others – for an unprecedented proposal. Rather than offering a condition-of-exception, it offers an exceptional opportunity to those 'misfits in practice' to become the lead developers, 'creative entrepreneurs' of the 30.000 square meter halls and grounds of the abandoned NDSM Shipyard, those who began as the Guild of Living and Working Spaces on the River IJ, a group that (at its peak) squatted 24 former industrial buildings. At that moment facing large scale developments that were to lead to their eviction from these buildings, they appropriate the opponent's language and boldly state – we are developers too!

This daring call from the municipality – and the corresponding reply from a somewhat unusual coalition under the name Kinetisch Noord – can be understood as the outcome of a long game of cat-and-mouse, in which both sides gradually came to recognise the capacities of the other and started to grasp the necessity of coming to an agreement. The game has become serious. For the squatters as they are quite literally about to lose the ground for their existence with the encroaching clearing of the urban wastelands in the harbour areas on the west and eastside of the Central Station, but equally for the municipality that fears the loss of one of the key elements that sets Amsterdam apart from other cities – its counter culture. And not to mention finding a destination for this uprooted part of population before it starts to drift on its own. Hence, a match seems inevitable. This is what some of the key people involved have to say about it, when we interview them in mid-2002:

"We could break down the hall – which we didn't want to do as we liked it – but we were afraid that as soon as Mr Versteeg and all his tenants move out, we would be confronted with all kinds of squatters in a very short time." (Rob Vooren, Municipal Urban Development Corporation Panorama Noord)

"Yes, we were screening this area for years... exploring how could we get in here. Obviously, there is a long history of our participation in the city development in Amsterdam along the River IJ." (Eva de Klerk, co-initiator Kinetisch Noord)

"I had a discussion two months ago with some people that are in prominent positions in the market, and they told me 'why don't you give it away to high profile art houses' and I said 'that is not what we meant'. We wanted to bring in people with plans, pioneers, with a lot of energy, with a lot of endurance." (Ted Zwietering, director Municipal Urban Development Corporation Panorama Noord)

It is the start of a long endeavour, bravely and persistently taken up by a small but steadily growing group, who in their role of 'creative entrepreneurs' write a 7-centimetre-thick business plan, and in the following years transform the giant hall into a cultural 'breeding ground' that takes its physical inspiration from the floating mega-structures of New Babylon by artist Constant Nieuwenhuys. That is for the next 10, possibly 25 years to come.

Some years pass, and in Spring 2009 we are back at the NDSM Shipyard. Just like before, on entering the site we feel dwarfed by the sheer size of the entrance door to the main hall, which stands out in blue against the red brick of the building. And again, we feel the excitement of opening that small door set in a corner of the massive blue door, through which we enter the hall. We have come here to speak with Eva de Klerk, who after years of being the front-woman of the transformation of the shipyard has now retreated into her self-built workspace in one of the upper levels of the mega-structure that now occupies the hall.

The occasion is a request from Iris Schutten and Sabrina Lindemann (Laboratory for the Interim in Transvaal, The Hague) to reflect on temporary uses of abandoned spaces in the Netherlands. In the years before and particularly since the start of Kinetisch Noord at the NDSM Shipyard, the temporary use of buildings and urban terrains has been a prominent topic in urban development and real-estate strategies. A lot of attention has been focussed on its potential to unlock stagnant or underused areas. Manuals have been drafted on how to deal with some of its more complex phenomena, like the challenges posed by the interim use of enormous industrial wasteland in terms of the strict health and safety regulations not designed around this type of use. Stacks of books have been written, documenting the vast array of inspiring uses that temporary occupation can bring to urban areas. But somehow, very little has been done to bring forward the almost impossible plight of many of the temporary users, who mostly do not enter these interim solutions

because of the attraction of their limited durations but because this precarious situation has become the only possibility for them at hand. By 2009, as well, it is also obvious that temporary use has become a clever real-estate development strategy, mostly to the detriment of an endangered, exploited urban population that has nowhere else to reside apart from existing in a largely unruly, rule-less 'borrowed time'. Thus, with colleague-explorer Iris de Kievith, we set out to draft the Constitution for the Interim.

> *AMdA: We are living in a string of constituent moments in which the ways of understanding of how we relate to each other are profoundly changing. Some of these require documents, contracts, codes (both legal and organisational) that help to define the new rules, what is desirable and undesirable, what is acceptable and what isn't, establish a consensus about what these new ways of relating are, propagate the procedures and the know-how and make them operate according to the 'fattualitá delle cose' (factuality of things) as Machiavelli said. We have come to realise that a political will for institutional transformation (even from the government) is not enough and that it must come with a new set of legal tools, concepts, documents and administrative orders able to provide more stable arrangements.*

While climbing up to Eva's workspace, it is hard not to be captivated by the sight of this stacked landscape of studios, workspaces, workshops, a skate park, theatre spaces, and still more. However, the timeline of developments Eva highlights in our talk that follows is less captivating. While the city at the start of its collaboration gave a large degree of autonomy to the collective taking on the redevelopment of the shipyard, successive measures rolled out by the city have tried to curb that autonomy and transfer the initiative to layers of management forced in by the administration. It seems that once the desired effect of this pioneering act has kick-started the development of the surrounding area (where we now find trendy offices like MTV Netherlands, etc.), the exceptional opportunity offered by the Municipality has been re-cast into a (forgone) 'condition of exception'.

After the meeting, we take a walk through the hall. The imposing floating overhead skate park is deserted and dead silent this afternoon. New rules about the sound level it is allowed to produce have halted its activities. (In 2013, this

emblematic facility will cease to exist and in the words of the disillusioned initiators will have to make way for 'the big money').

When we make our final turn to head towards the exit, our attention is drawn to a large banner stretched across the steel mega-structure of the hall. It reads "PRINCIPAAL AAN DE HAAL MET ONS KAPITAAL" ([housing corporation] PRINCIPAAL ON THE RUN WITH OUR CAPITAL). The future has turned sour. The city is trying to capitalise on the very venue these hundreds of artists, performers, craftsmen and others have invested in, by selling it to a developer. And with that, the window of exceptionality has closed. For Eva, it has been enough. She has moved her attention elsewhere. We start drafting the Constitution, mockingly granting legitimacy of action not to the owner of premises nor the (interim) users, but precisely the interim itself – to point out the frequently hidden problematics within those types of development that start out as temporary.

One of the key assumptions of the Constitution is that interim use builds both on uncertainty and hope, paradoxically originating from the fundamental inequality and non-equivalence of the partners involved in the interim (regarding their level of authority, legal status, investment capacity, available time for investment, pioneering spirit, etc.). Sustaining that careful asymmetry of power and capacities is violated in such a case when the Municipality of Amsterdam Noord unilaterally attempts to sell the building. For those involved in the NDSM Wharf, this is taken as an exploitation (or cashing in) of the added value that has been created 'in common' in the preceding years.

Essentially, it shows how for the vested power players (like municipalities, real-estate developers, property owners) the collective of people in the NDSM Wharf does not 'naturally' exist as legitimate actor – something many other citizens' collectives have experienced as well. They are allowed to inhabit or co-construct the temporary 'spaces for exception', but as soon as the exception is removed for the so-called development professionals, those collectives find themselves brushed aside without much ado. Then, on what are 'we' to build our legitimacy?

As the Constitution for the Interim already indicates, what we need is a shift from the concept of the interim and temporary use, projected on the domain of private or public property, to an understanding of places as commons – discovered, affirmed and re-produced through social practices. Such a shift needs legal backing. Or as the legal scholar Vito De Lucia writes: "(...) the commons re-grounds law in the actions and practices of bodies and communities. (...) The commons is furthermore organised along the functional category of use, rather than in accordance with the formal category of title. This is because its central feature is the linkage established between utilities and basic needs and fundamental rights" (in the article Law as Insurgent Critique: The Perspective of the Commons in Italy, 2013).

In the context of criminalisation of squatting, gentrification, real-estate speculation, rising rents and the sale of public assets in the Netherlands, the artist Adelita Husni Bey and Casco Projects produced White Paper: The Law (2015) organised around public meetings to draft a functioning and legally binding convention on the use value of housing. It encourages "occupation of vacant and underused space to produce non-marketable uses. (...) It is a step towards breaking the chain of command and democratise the way the current law is produced and performed."

WHO'S CITY?

Getting brushed aside can actually become an 'empowering' condition too. That is what citizens of Belgrade have been discovering, when in April 2015 hundreds of people took to the streets to protest against the signing of the contract for the Belgrade Waterfront mega development project. In the year after, the numbers would quickly amass to the thousands.

> *AMdA: Maybe getting brushed aside creates conditions of politicisation. In the past years we have seen many different movements that, by reclaiming the right to the city, are able to unveil and make visible the articulation between the somehow ethereal and difficult to grasp concept of 'financial capital' (transnational, almost faceless, governed by algorithms) and our concrete territories and lives. The construction of underground parking (in Zagreb), the renovation of a park (in Istanbul), the demolition of social housing (in London), are some of the projects that expose the true nature of the articulation between political powers (through the institutional structures of the Nation state) and economics (through the instruments of the capitalist value accumulation). The opposition to and rejection of this confabulation was expressed in the lemma "we are not merchandise in the hands of politicians and bankers", which together with the realisation that "they call it democracy, but it's not", and "it's not a crisis, it's a con", amounted to a total of 85% support from the Spanish population in the years after the 15-M.*

Much can be said about the plans for Belgrade Waterfront. The fact that it is based on an undisclosed bilateral deal between the governments of Serbia and United Arab Emirates, through which the developer

Eagle Hills (based in Abu Dhabi, and with – as of early 2017 – six waterfront developments in the seven cities its activities span) gets access to a prime section of land at Belgrade riverfront, at considerable expense to the national budget. The fact that the Serbian government declared it a project of national interest, introducing a 'lex specialis' to regulate special expropriation procedures and issuing of building permits (reminiscent of Giorgio Agamben's 'state of exception'). The fact that a massive number of such legal shortcuts have been taken by public authorities in order to speed up the process, varying from circumventing urban development legislation to illegally demolishing objects that have been lingering in the process of expropriation. The fact that the envisioned urban development (an area of 177 hectares of public land) is set in a technically rather wretched masterplan, and is filled with mediocre, bland identikit buildings. Or the fact that the existing base infrastructure (think of water, sewer, electricity, traffic) is inadequate for handling the 1.8 million square metres to be constructed (currently Belgrade does not have a functional sewage treatment plant for its 1.6 million inhabitants, and it gets a large part of its electricity from outdated lignite-fired power plants – an existing environmental catastrophe being put into overdrive with the waterfront development).

Governments, with their legal tools, do create conditions for a developer like Eagle Hills. Thus, it is not a surprise that Mohamed Alabbar (founder of Emaar Properties and chairman of Eagle Hills), when commenting on the digital 'revolution', gives us this taste of how he sees the ideal context in which to work: "(...) there are no borders, there are no laws that apply, almost no government regulations that apply, which means that it is fabulous." (speaking at the Arabian Business Forum in Dubai, November 2016)

While much of this has been addressed by Ne Da(vi)mo Beograd (Let's Not D(r)own Belgrade) the movement that has emerged against the waterfront development, the outcry of tens of thousands of citizens of Belgrade might have been triggered by something else. They are growing aware of the fact that they have become the 'extras' or figurants in today's urban development economy.

Let's look at the numbers. The average household in Belgrade struggles to make around 500 euros a month. For who then are going to be the 6.000 new housing units being constructed as part of Belgrade Waterfront, including "smaller apartments catering to younger professionals, as well as medium and large apartments for urban families" – with prices per square meter set at roughly 3.000 euros? The answer is as simple as disconcerting: not the inhabitants of Belgrade. Such developments do not cater to the citizens of Belgrade but rather to a flow of floating international capital in need for investment opportunities. This staggering 1.8 million square meters of what is likely to be Belgrade's single largest investment for the decade(s) is built to cater to the needs of investment portfolios – with some over-spill for privileged actors from the local scene (awarded construction contracts, 'transaction fees', etc.). Meanwhile, its citizens, a 'collateral damage' of sorts, have to make way for this or they can aspire at best to a stroll along the "1.8 km long Sava Promenada [that] adds a new dimension to waterfront living, while a central park, several world-class hotels and a Grand Boulevard lined by cafes,

restaurants and retail outlets add to the lifestyle appeal of Belgrade Waterfront, defining it as the must-visit leisure and tourist attraction" (from Eagles Hills website), the stench of the untreated sewage permitting.

AMdA: This is part of a fundamental comprehension arising from experiencing the institutional domain in Madrid from within: austerity has nothing to do with debt, in the same way as public investments have nothing to do with financial (or fiscal) gain. We knew the national budget was the instrument to implement public policies, but little could we expect how so very little it has to do with the actual access to money. Public spending is designed to allow or deny the possibility of projects to go ahead and life to thrive. And it defines with millimetre' precision what kind of projects, and whose lives.

In Belgrade, this emerging sentiment has spurred a group of people and associations to jump to action, and start what was to become Ne Da(vi)mo Beograd. This happened at the end of June 2014 through a call to collectively file objections to a series of problematic changes to the masterplan the City of Belgrade had proposed to kick-start the waterfront development. At this point, the filed objections to the plans were embraced by a few hundred citizens, from alarmed professionals (urban planners, architects, legal experts, people active in the field of culture) to a part of the urban activist scene. For a while it seemed that the rest of Belgrade's population was locked in some sort of lethargy, numbed and exhausted by two decades of opportunistic politics, poverty and loss of confidence. Ne Da(vi)mo Beograd stubbornly kept rattling the gates but with limited popular support and thus was easily dismissible by the public authorities.

That situation would change overnight when in a somewhat too overconfident move following repeated victories of the governing party (initiator and backer of the Waterfront project) in April 2016 an unannounced bulldozing of a part of the remaining properties on the intended construction site took place. This illegal act took place in the middle of the night, with witnesses held hostage by masked men, and police not responding to repeated distress calls from bystanders. The subsequent call for a protest march was answered by a few thousand people, suddenly propelling Ne Da(vi)mo Beograd from a fringe operation on to the mainstage. The likely prospect of not being taken seriously made the leap to one of a more realistic possibility – and with that, took on a host of new challenges for this citizens' movement.

AMdA: It is interesting to note how the protests that mobilised a wide social spectrum in Spain before the 15-M (2011) were related to environmental issues (the 2002 shipwrecking of the oil tanker MV Prestige in Galicia), the war (the 2004 Madrid train bombings following the Iraq invasion) and access to housing (the financial bubble). In these mobilisations, a novel combination of social organisations, cultural production and affected citizens allowed the production of a new imaginary and new forms of mobilisation, outside and beyond the classical political organisations.

IN WHAT DO WE GROUND THESE UPHILL BATTLES?

As the experiences in this chapter illustrate, the situation in which citizens find themselves as being the 'extras' roaming around their cities, their needs left unaddressed in urban development schemes or not taken seriously by political powers – is not exclusive to Belgrade. Neither is the set of challenges that has to be faced once the demand to be taken seriously starts to undo the existing status quo. What is alarming, however, is how unprepared many of us are in the face of such an opportunity when it suddenly appears.

Part of this is that such opportunities may force 'us' to act along the very lines that we are opposed to: abstract economic interests, institutionalised professionalism, consolidation of power, etc. In other words: the trap of replicating the precise types of structures we feel are at the base of dysfunctional forms of governance, exploitation of common interest or deprivation of the citizens' base. But it need not be like that: we can take legitimacy from the desire to craft another urban reality, one which addresses (personal and collective) existential needs and does not view the future as a "territory to be plundered" before we have arrived in it, as William Davies states (see Book 1, contribution Dougald Hine).

AMdA: In the spirit of the French philosopher Alain Badiou, there is no way to be prepared for an 'event'. But one of the characteristics of the Spanish experience is the network of projects, people and spaces that have been active in different movements related to migrant rights, squatted social centres, hack-meetings and copy-left culture, the anti-eviction movement or the work around precariousness. This virtuous cycle of activist production has been able to sustain different movements and struggles, to create basic infrastructures and to produce a transmission of knowledge. And yet, in the moment of the 'event', in 2011 we witnessed a social overflow with an absence of activist interventions in the squares assemblies. After that political tsunami, we realise we are just surfers riding the wave.

When in 2011, the 'commoning' of Teatro Valle in Rome takes place (to rescue the age-old theatre from privatisation), despite the obvious legal violation of doing so, the occupants (artists, activists and cultural workers) are backed by legal scholars coming from the movement of 'beni comuni' (the commons) in Italy, like Ugo Mattei. As Vito De Lucia in his article states "(...) occupiers are in fact 'performing law' as an embodied insurgent practice. The occupation of the theatre is a manifestation of the 'constituent power' of collective social practices, whose aim is the re-injection into the community of those commons which the public institutions are unable to protect."

Writer, filmmaker and anthropologist Massimiliano Mollona argues that the occupation has at least three legacies: a legal notion of the commons that is replicable across the political spectrum, a new model of political economy for cities, and a third legacy, which carries potentially the most far-reaching impact: to expand the boundaries of the political.

"Inverting the logic of traditional politics, in which theories inform actions, these artist-led movements have a practice-driven, performative and open-ended political praxis based on experimentation, ex-post conceptualisation and a constant engagement on two fronts. One of struggle and critique of the hegemonic forces of capitalism; another of epistemological and discursive construction of a new post-capitalist imaginary, including new forms of dramaturgy in which art and politics inform each other." (Massimiliano Mollona in An Unprecedented Experiment in Political Economy and Participatory Democracy: The Teatro Valle Experience and its Legacies, 2015)

AMdA: Teatro Valle is just one of the numerous experiences of the commons-production in Italy: between April 2011 and June 2012 nine different cultural spaces were squatted in Italy: ex-Cinema Palazzo (April 2011) and Teatro Valle (June 2011) in Rome, Teatro Marinoni (September 2011) in Venice, Teatro Coppola in Catania (December 2011), l'Asilo Filangieri (March 2012) in Naples, Teatro Garibaldi in Palermo (April 2012), and Torre Galfa (May 2012), Palazzo Citterio (May 2012) and Ex Macello (June 2012 in Milan). Furthermore, they followed the path opened some time before by Macao in Milan, Teatro Mediterraneo Occupato in Palermo, Teatro Rossi Aperto in Pisa or Sale Docks in Venice.

The resonances of this last wave of squatted (mostly) theatrical spaces, with both the construction of a sense of the commons in Italy through the referendum against the privatisation of the water held in June 2011 (the Teatro Valle was squatted the same day the Coordinatora Acqua Bene Comune celebrated their victory), and the occupied squares (from Tahrir to Puerta del Sol) are obvious. The specific characteristics of this movement, their intentions to build a legal/normative frame – both are a bit more complex.

We can distinguish two different repertoires: one set of tools refer to the instruments of private law, to the construction of an entity (a foundation, in the case of Teatro Valle) that could be recognised as a structure of the commons. The second which we could call 'the Napolitan way' produces a transformation in the understanding of the public and forced Naples City Council to issue different decrees which recognised the local government as an urban commons. First the Asilo Filangiere, which since it's occupation in 2011 has been an important cultural hub in the centre of the city, and later seven other public properties in different parts of the city, for example where self-organised activities were taking place close to a former industrial area, in a few historic buildings, a school in the city centre and a garden in the former convent.

There is a radical difference between these two approaches, as the first one requires an entitlement of the 'who', while the latter is demanding a recognition of the 'how'.

Around us, apart from the landmark struggle around Teatro Valle (ironically, at this moment closed for an indefinitely postponed renovation of the building) we see the emerging instances of trial-and-error to find appropriate forms for such structures, built in and around the ruins of that what has collapsed (as Dougald Hine recalled in Book 1).

In Barcelona and Madrid, urban activism has moved from the squares and squats to the municipalities. With varying degrees of success, they now build new structures, while navigating the traps and loopholes of the ones they aim to replace. Ahora Madrid and Barcelona en Comú are experimental approaches to uniting a citizens' movement with political power, to mounting organic structures that enable openness while being accountable, that allow for spontaneity and common sense while acknowledging the necessity of professional expertise. Fragile, volatile and also incredibly inspiring. And impossible, without first of all daring to claim ground.

ANA MÉNDEZ DE ANDÉS: WHO WE ARE – OR WHAT WE ARE TO BE(COME)?

Things have changed since ARCHIPHOENIX – Faculties for Architecture in 2008. This response has been difficult to articulate, not in the last place because STEALTH's text resonates with such a large scope of things: common (and commons) discussions, shared struggles, references we both have resorted to before. Trying to address some of the questions about where we(they) position our(them)selves only gives rise to many more. Trained as architects, when did we become more interested in legal code than in design? For years, I used the evolution of the empty agora in Athens into a densely-packed space full of temples built by the Roman Empire as a schematic metaphor. When did we begin to realise that the much-admired Greek democracy only recognised male owners? When did we begin to look for the women, the slaves, the outcast, the misfits? When did we realise that Trojan horses are cool, but that you need a whole army, a whole country in arms, to wage the war that makes even the thought of a Trojan horse possible?

Once upon a time, we were fascinated by empty spaces. By the image of a Taoist temple in the middle of the forest. In 2007 urbanacción developed a series of seminars/workshops/publications that looked at the ways to fill (or not) empty spaces; a part of this was an empty plot in the neighbourhood of Lavapies that had been twice squatted in an attempt to

create a community garden, finally receiving permission from public officials. Ten years on and I am part of a meeting at Madrid City Council working to define the legal framework that would allow the local government (that is us!) to lease empty public spaces to civic associations. My own transformation in this period follow a vector from the joy of producing spaces (and meanings) embedded in cultural production to taking responsibility for creating more sustained political action that transcends immediate responses. The questions that rise concern the possibility of a future that can nurture this emancipatory energy, with an awareness that this is not going to be developed through architecture. What follows here is a personal chronology of the reverberations between this two fields.

When I wonder about the capacity of (architectural) design to solve (social) problems, I recall what Matthias Ricks – member of the collective raumlabor – used to say: "We are not here to solve problems, we are here to create them".

14 September – 23 November 2008
11th International Architecture Exhibition, Venice
Out There: Architecture Beyond Building

Kathryn Gustafson is the first landscape architect invited to make an intervention inside the Architecture Biennale, the garden Towards Paradise where curator Aaron Betsky will celebrate his 50th birthday. I know Kathryn, this garden and the design team because I have been working with them in the previous months during a short break from my architect-and-activist life in Madrid. In Venice, the Dutch pavilion is strangely empty but for some white plastic boxes. The Polish Pavilion wins the Golden Lion for its exhibition Afterlife. Even when Lehman Brothers would collapse only a couple days later it still doesn't look like those images of decay presented in Afterlife would be a feasible future for the ever-shinier commercial architecture.

After the Biennale, in September 2008, I returned to Spain from London to witness the after effects of the financial crash and to continue with the work of the Observatorio Metropolitano, a militant research group, following our first book Madrid, La Suma de Todos? (Madrid, The Sum of All of Us?). We deployed our texts as tools for social movements and selected the themes (either the urban development of Madrid, the political communication of the Spanish 'neocons', the urban commons or the European crisis) based on both a collective and personal analysis of the best tools needed for each moment. This very specific political approach operated smoothly for ten years between social movements, academia and the cultural field.

In 2009, the Observatorio Metropolitano was invited to the conference Post-capitalist City organised by the Croatian architects Pulska Grupa. Here I met Stealth. With my comrade (and co-worker) Beatriz from the publishing house Traficantes de Sueños, we struggled to explain why the Observatorio called itself a 'militant' research group. Some people preferred the less aggressive term 'activist', while we ourselves held on to a tradition of organisational politics where involvement is somehow more urgent.

29 August – 21 November 2010
12th International Architecture Exhibition, Venice
People Meet in Architecture

The day of the Biennale opening, a small crowd gathers around the Dutch Pavilion (entitled Vacant NL) holding plastic champaign glasses with an attached strip of paper stating: "It's empty, let's fill it up!" In the midst of the austerity measures triggered by the so-called crisis, with most of the architects in Spain unemployed, and the high probability that 50% of the country is at risk of poverty and social exclusion for the next 10 years, it seems like the ship is sinking and the orchestra keeps on playing. Are we, in fact, the orchestra?

Raumlabor's Kitchen Monument is placed in front of the Italian Pavilion at the invitation of the curator Kazuyo Sejima. Here, in the adaptation of Jean-Luc Godard's What is To Be Done manifesto into a political architecture, with Pulska Grupa, we declare:

1. We must make public spaces for the community.
2. We must make common spaces out of the public.
3. 1 and 2 are antagonistic to each other and belong to two opposing conceptions of the world.
4. 1 belongs to the idealistic and transcendental conception of the world.
5. 2 belongs to the commons and the immanent conception of the world.
(...)
10. To carry out 1 is to collaborate with a system of enclosures.
11. To carry out 2 is to take up the re-appropriation of the commons.
(...)
18. To carry out 1 is to solve the problems of public space with Architecture.
19. To carry out 2 is to use architectural tools to take problems out into the public.
(...)
30. To carry out 2 is to study the potential of open access using structures and programs.
31. To carry out 2 is to study the potential of common production of space.
32. To carry out 2 is to dare to know where we are and where we came from, to know our place in the process of production in order to hack it.
33. To carry out 2 is to know the development of social struggles and to be inspired by them.
34. To carry out 2 is to produce technical knowledge for social struggles and their development.
(...)
39. To carry out 2 is to be militant.

May 15, 2011. A demonstration called by the two previously almost unknown groups Democracy Real Ya and Juventud Sin Futuro (Real Democracy Now and Youth Without Future) sparks a series of camp occupations that will spread from Puerta del Sol in Madrid throughout Spain for almost two months. The 15-M movement materialised a new common sense that threw into crisis the political and cultural status quo created in the 1970s after Franco's death, the austerity regime and

even the true meaning of 'democracy'. It changed the way we understood politics and showed the incredible potential of assemblies and consensus, their capacity to produce a highly innovative and productive collective, 'swarm' intelligence.

During the encampment of Puerta del Sol in Madrid I was at Tongji University, Shanghai, as a visiting professor from the private university where I have been teaching in Madrid for the last two years. Of all the meagre consolations from my friends for not being able to be involved one stuck to my mind: "Don't worry. Next time you'll be there". And indeed I was soon involved, and the 15-M didn't end with the camps. It was a wave that kept going for a long time, producing new demonstrations, mobilisations, texts and projects.

29 August – 25 November 2012
13th International Architecture Exhibition, Venice
Common Ground

One could say that curator David Chipperfield is at last a little in tune with social development. The theme, at least, resonates with a growing interest in the commons. Pulska Grupa is chosen to exhibit their work at the Croatian Pavilion where they show Unmediated Democracy Demands Unmediated Space, powerful visualisations of the protests in their country. It seems the Trojan horses have finally gotten 'inside the walls'.

A year earlier in Bordeaux, the French collective EXYZT, specialising in camps and temporary interventions, is setting up tents and infrastructures as part of a cultural event while the Occupy Movement is setting camps in squares across Europe. Because the camps in the squares in Spain *did* change everything, it hurts to realise that some of the dwellers of the Trojan horse have decided to stay inside its belly.

In May 2015, the day after the new party Podemos wins 1.2 million votes and five seats in the European Parliament, the Observatorio Metropolitano publishes La Apuesta Municipalista (The Municipalist Challenge). In the summer of that year I was part of the group articulating the process that will lead Ganemos/Ahora Madrid to the local elections. After three years, the articulation of different citizen-led electoral platforms that will run for the 2015 local elections gets a major injection of fuel in the struggle with the neoliberal project in Spain from the mobilisations triggered by the 15-M, some important victories and the realisation of many constraints, from the awareness that the local scale provides opportunities for more democratic structures and the desire for a radical democratic change.

7 June – 23 November 2014
14th International Architecture Exhibition, Venice
Fundamentals

(I don't remember about this one and have to search for it: it was curated by Rem Koolhaas.)

After only eleven months, on June 13, 2015 Ahora Madrid formed its first local government with a former judge as the mayoress and a heterogeneous mix of city councillors from old and new parties, social movements and organisations. Our comrades in A Coruña declared themselves "aliens in the Maria Pita Palace". Barcelona's mayoress, Ada Colau, pinned a memo to her door: "Don't forget who we are and why we are here". We have deployed a new Trojan horse that we will have to leave before it gets too cosy.

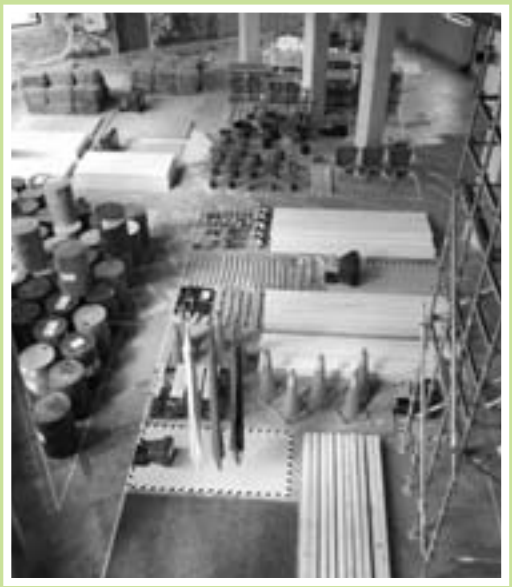
28 May – 27 November 2016
15th International Architecture Exhibition, Venice
Reporting From the Front

The image of Alejando Aravena's opening panel of the Biennale is nothing but embarrassing: a line-up of eight man, white, 48 to 80 years old. Deleuze and Guattari stated that western urban heterosexual men in their 50s–70s constitute the majority of the world, even if in number they amount to is a relatively small proportion of it. But, come on! What exactly is the 'front' this re-presented non-majority is reporting from? Where is the motley crew that speaks from and for the minority that actually constitutes majority of the world? The misfits for/with whom we design? We, the misfits. The women, the aliens, the unfit, the migrants, the 'other' that open up the battle grounds.

In February 2017, three generations of not-quite-architects are summoned by STEALTH to a house in the dunes south of Rotterdam to reflect on the question of 'us' and the next eight years to come. Looking back at the transformations of the last years, and looking ahead at the questions we might be facing in the years to come, I see some structural lines of common interest: the desire for an organisational form (of governance); the interest in the material conditions of possibility and how to provide them (the resources); the ability to fight with the army we have at our means (the community); the skillset to create structures and spaces that endure (the place); the urge to understand our mental, social and environmental limits (the three ecologies); the need to communicate the many other, and better, ways to exist in common (the narrative). Such are the concerns our practices are made from.

In April 2017, after almost two years of institutional work in Madrid City Council, I am no longer part of the municipal political staff. Three weeks later, I decided it was time to stop wearing a badge with the name of the (now long time inactive) Observatorio Metropolitano. When I had to send a short biography for the seminar The Right to the (New) City: Art, New Towns and The Commons, that took place in Milton Keynes in June 2016, I realised I am not able any longer to define myself as an 'architect'. If we are not sure what we are anymore, it might be more useful to define what we want to become.

(DIS)ASSEMBLED IS A



PROJECT AND AN EXHIBITION DEVELOPED FOR RÖDA STEN KONSTHALL IN GOTHENBURG AND ITS YET 'UNPLANNED' SURROUNDING. BY PROVIDING A LARGE COLLECTION OF MATERIALS, TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT, IT LAYS OUT THE POSSIBILITY TO TAKE INTO OUR HANDS THE MAKING OF THE CITY AS A COMMON EFFORT – AN EXERCISE TO EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL OF

ASSEMBLING AND ASSEMBLY. THE PROJECT BY STEALTH RESPONDS TO THE TREND OF CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT, PRESENT IN GOTHENBURG AND SWEDEN WITH VARIED AND OFTEN DISPUTED RESULTS

Röda Sten Konsthall, a former thermal plant, sits just a few metres outside the edge of the current urban development plan for Gothenburg's waterfront. Even though the site looks like a deserted field, it is precisely for this quality that many have come to appreciate and use it as a hangout. With a string of waterfront developments drawing uncomfortably close, and while the possibilities on this site still remain open, STEALTH decided to hijack the usual exhibition format by stepping into this no-mans-land and turn it into a testing ground for its everyday users. Thus, Dis(assembled) became a forerunner for what they think the area could become, before other, more (economically) powerful actors appear on the scene.

In three months (June – August 2011), much of what would be necessary to the assembly of the outdoor interventions had been prepared: a collection of materials and equipment with which to engage in a direct, think-on and hands-on format. Laid meticulously on the floor of Röda Sten's main exhibition space were stacks of wood, oil barrels, piles of bags with soil and sand, rolls of grass, dozens of boxes of screws, hundreds of different metal anchors for woodwork, stacks of sheet wood in different thicknesses, trees, tools, and more. Amidst these items, on a set of TV monitors, one could draw inspiration from a variety of examples of temporary and D-I-Y spatial interventions in other contexts. Finally, Röda Sten also provided assistance from building assistants, for those that get into action.

Prior to the exhibition opening, 10 people were gathered through an open call to discuss what is necessary or desirable for the site. At the opening of the 'exhibition', they start carrying the materials outside through the doors of Röda Sten to start the first outdoor interventions. In just one weekend this varied group (artists, architects, carpenters, teachers, skaters and kids) make a skate ramp, a graffiti wall, an aqueduct, seating elements, and a tree house. At that point STEALTH leaves the process. From there on, for over two months, different groups and individuals take the production of many more interventions on the site.

[team] STEALTH.unlimited (Ana Džokić and Marc Neelen) in dialogue with Edi Muka (curator Röda Sten Konsthall) and Röda Sten Konsthall (Mia Christersdotter Norman, director and Radha Hillarp Katz, Sara Lorentzon, Karin Lundmark, Calle Andersson, Helena Herou)

[on-screen examples of temporary spatial interventions] 72 Hours Urban Action (Bat Yam), atelier d'architecture autogérée (Paris), Babelgum/Kelly Loudenberg - New Urbanism (New York), Bruit du frigo (Bordeaux), EXYZT (Paris/London), raumlabor (Berlin), Rebar (San Francisco)

[complementary screening program selected by Edi Muka, with works of] Johanna Billing, Chto Delat, Latifa Echakhch, Mario Rizzi, Stefano Romano and Paola Yacoub

[building coaches] Angelica Olsson and Karl-Johan Sellberg

[participants kick-off intervention] Mattias Ivarsson, Mia Börjesson, Cecilia Bjursell and her children, Henrik Wallgren, Jonas Ousbäck, Liana Sjölund, Ingela Bohm – and others

[background] (Dis)assembled has been initiated by STEALTH and Röda Sten Konsthall, materials have been sponsored by Beijer Byggmaterial AB

[timeline] January – June 2011, exhibition and interventions 11 June – 21 August 2011

(DIS)ASSEMBLED, LIST OF MATERIALS:

[raw materials]
. 2 # pallet with 48 bags of sand 25 kg
. 3 # pallet with 60 bags of planting soil 25kg
. 1 # pallet with 48 bags gravel 25 kg

. ~60 # assortment wooden beams 2" x 3" (47 × 70 x 3600 mm)
. ~60 assortment wooden beams 2" x 4" (45 × 95 x 3600 mm)
. ~150 # wooden planks/boards 1" x 6" (22 mm × 145 mm x 3600 mm)
. ~45 # plywood 1220 x 2440 x 18 mm
. ~50 Masonite 1220 x 2440

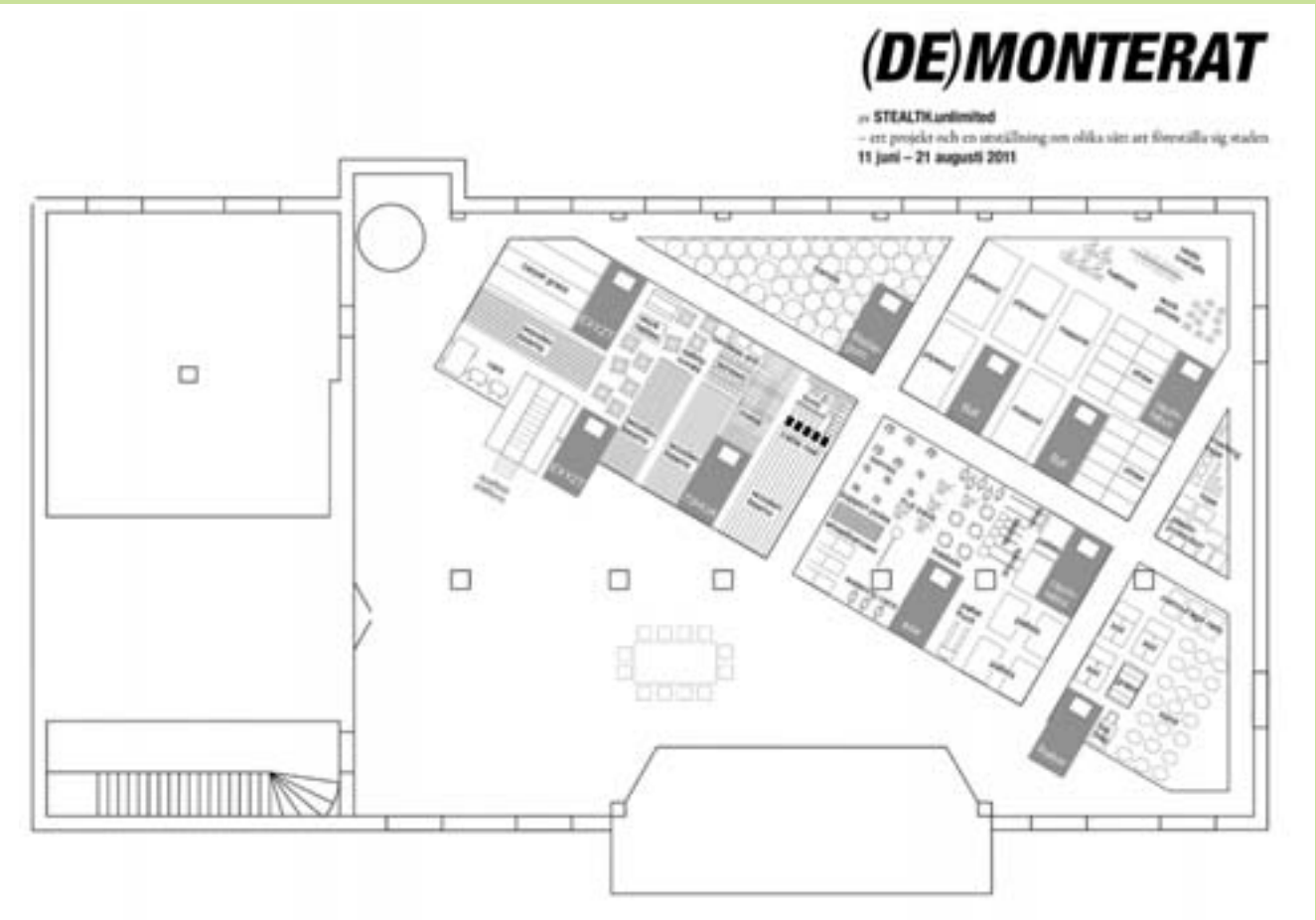
. 18 # wooden poles 95 x 95 x 3000 mm
. 40 # standard euro-size pallets 800 x 1200 mm
Acquired
? 20 # straw bales 50 x 50 x 100 cm
In process (uncertain if we can get them)
. 38 # empty oil barrels h = 725 mm, diameter = 435 mm

? 10 # tough plastic protection foil 6 x 4 m with rings in edge
In process (uncertain if we can get them)
? 5 # tough plastic protection foil 10 x 12 m with rings in edge
In process (uncertain if we can get them)
~~? 2 # role bubble plastic 4 mm x 150 cm x 100 m~~
~~Unfortunately, we can't get this~~

[equipment]
~~. 1 # scaffold metal in parts (dimensions to be defined)~~
~~Unfortunately, we can't get this~~
. 1 # scaffold viewing tower 2.5 x 2.5 x 6m high, with secure stair

[metalware and other materials]
. 6 boxes of different sizes # assortment screws for wood, different dimensions (box = 200 pieces)
. 30 metal 'shoes' 45 x 95 mm
. 50 metal 'shoes' 90 x 90 x 65 mm
~~? 20 # cans spray paint color~~
~~Unfortunately, we can't get this. However, we should talk about getting regular paint tomorrow.~~

[tools]
. 5 # hammer
. 5 # rubber hammer
. 2 # handsaw wood
. 1 # electric jigsaw
. 5 # screwdrivers
. 2 # pincer tool
. 2 # Bahco
. 3 # cordless drill
. 2 # set of metal drills
. 2 # set of wood drills
. 3 # set screw bits for cordless drill
. 2# outdoor cleaning brushes
. 6 # extension cords 25 m



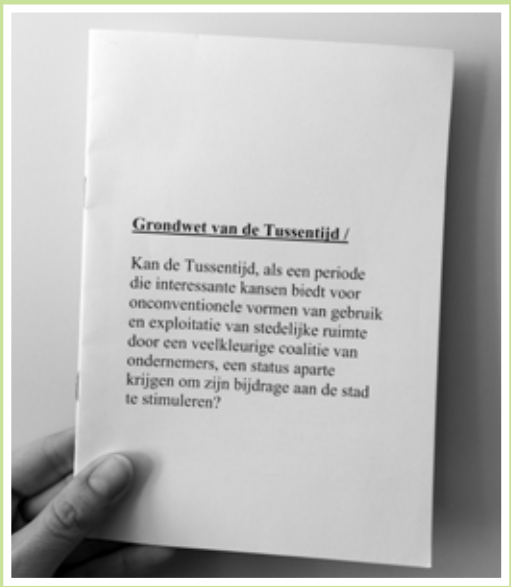
[landscaping]
. 3 # spades
. 3 # shovels
. 2 # rake
. 3 # wheelbarrow 80 liters
. 5 # watering can
. 1 # watering hose, 50 m

? 10 # small fruit trees
? 10 # berry bushes
? 20 # wooden support poles
? 20 # large flower pots 45 cm
? 10 # rolled carpet grass
? 3 # bundles of 50 pieces bamboo sticks 22 mm x 3 m
. ~~5 # hammocks~~
? 5 # large mesh net (camo)
? 10 # growth lamp, 200 W, (energy saver type), E27 fitting
All this is in process – hopefully it'll be here by Monday

[measuring]
? 30 wooden picket poles with point 35 x 35 x 250mm
? 3 # coil rope polypropylene 4 mm 100 m
Acquired
. 2 # measuring tape 30 m
. 2 # level tool 100 cm
. 20 # schoolboard crayon
. 1 # line marking tool with dry chalk (sport field)

[safety]
. 10 # safety pylon orange 50 cm
Acquired
? 3 # red/white marking lint (plastic) 100 m x 50 mm
Acquired
? 2 # traffic sign work in progress
Acquired
~~? 10 # metal safety fence (crush barrier) 2.5 x 1 m~~
~~Unfortunately, we can't get this~~
. 1 # large constructing announcement panel 2.5 x 3 m
Unfortunately, we can't get this
? 20 # road bordering (plastic, water filled)
Unfortunately, we can't get this

[clothing]
~~? 10 # boots different sizes (kid size to 45)~~
~~Unfortunately, we can't get this~~
? 10 # overall
Paper ones to buy
. 20 # work gloves
~~? 5 # set kneecaps~~
~~Unfortunately, we can't get this~~
. 5 # helmets
~~? 10 # safety glasses~~
~~We probably can't get this, but will check again~~



OVER THE PAST DECADE, AIDED BY A FALTERING ECONOMY, THE INTERIM – THE TIME IN WHICH LAND OR BUILDINGS STAND EMPTY, AWAITING A NEW DESIGNATION – HAS GAINED CULT STATUS IN THE NETHERLANDS. FOR LONG TIME A PIONEERING GROUND FOR SQUATTERS AND ARTISTS, TEMPORARY USE IS INCREASINGLY ENTERING THE SCOPE OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS AS A LOW-COST STRATEGY FOR URBAN

MARKETING AND AN ATTRACTIVE LEVER FOR THE INCREASE OF REAL ESTATE VALUE. THE CONSTITUTION FOR THE INTERIM, GRANTS THE INTERIM AND TEMPORARY USE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS – TO SECURE IT AS A DOMAIN WHERE CITIZENS CAN TAKE PART IN THE DIRECTING AND MAKING OF THE CITY

Following initial pioneering research undertaken at the beginning of the millennium (Urban Catalyst project in Amsterdam Noord), STEALTH, together with the architect Iris de Kievith, were invited in 2009 to revisit the issue of temporary use in urban development. This invitation came at a very particular time. In the years leading up to it, a stream of books, handbooks and step-by-step manuals covering the topic had been published. With the start of the economic crisis in 2008, suddenly many of the actors involved in urban development began to craftily use the interim occupation of vacant property to patch their stalled real-estate developments, disguising crisis management with 'creative entrepreneurship'.

However, those years before 2008 put one reality on the map: the interim was often shrouded in a fog of romanticism and creativity that concealed the grim exploitation of interim users in sly schemes of value creation. The existence of such a grey area was of course in the interests of interim users but certainly more so in the case of the owners of land and real-estate. In light of the this and the introduction in 2002 of the term 'creative class' by Richard Florida, it was now time to prick the balloon and put the issues around interim usage into a clearer perspective.

The Constitution for the Interim, mockingly employing juridical and policy language, defines the interim as an autonomous and finite entity in space and time the benefits of which have to be shared – and not only unilaterally by the economically most powerful actors. It argues that instead of letting a disused plot or a building become the target of speculation, policy makers, developers and anyone desiring to explore the potential of this available urban space should in a transparent manner take societal and economic responsibility for its exploitation.

The Constitution argues that the interim use should be part of a new planning reality which makes the city the shared domain of active citizens. The interim is one of the few areas where users outside the dominant property relations, or planning and development models, have access to urban land and buildings. Rather than a stopgap to patch stalled development schemes, it should be taken as a vital asset to allow for a more robust society.

[team] STEALTH.unlimited (Ana Džokić and Marc Neelen) and Iris de Kievith

[copy editing] Catja Edens for SUN Trancity

[thanks to] Gert Anninga, Simon van Dommelen, Anne Hemker, Eva de Klerk, Matteo Pasquinelli and Marc Schuilenburg for remarks, corrections and reflections that have brought an inspiring twist to this Constitution

[background] The Constitution for the Interim is produced on invitation of Mobile project office OpTrek and Studio Iris Schutten in the framework of the Laboratory for the Interim in Transvaal (The Hague). Its research and production has been financed by the authors, the Laboratory for the Interim and the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture. The Constitution has been published in the book Between Times. Hotel Transvaal Catalyzing Urban Transformation, SUN Trancity, 2010.

[timeline] 2009 – 2010

CONSTITUTION OF THE INTERIM (EXCERPTS)

CONSTITUTING THE INTERIM / PREAMBLE

DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM the many examples showing, firstly, that in the Dutch context the Interim offers space for a bottom-up planning instrument, either complementary or parallel to top-down planning processes, and, secondly, that this Interim offers space for reflection and action, space that must be used and, where necessary, pressed into service;

BELIEVING that the Interim introduces a trial-and-error approach that presents, in a literally constructive way, the opportunity to learn from one's initial steps and adjust one's plans where necessary, and that the Interim can thereby offer space for urban complexity and dynamism;

AWARE that the power and attraction of the Interim lies above all in the fact that so much is *not* present, *not* regulated, and *not* (or not yet) organized, but that in consequence a great deal is generally *not* accessible, *not* usable (or only with difficulty), *not* lasting, and *not* officially authorized, and that the regime presented in this Constitution therefore aims solely to guarantee the accessibility of the Interim without compromising the freedom that it offers, and to resolve relevant long-running issues in spatial planning;

we present the following Constitution for the Interim.

/ PART I: THE FOUNDING PRINCIPLES / I – DEFINITION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERIM

The Interim is the time period beginning when the original function of a site or building is terminated and continuing until the site or building is redeveloped (whether or not according to plan, and whether or not successfully). The Interim is therefore an autonomous and finite entity in space and time.
The objective of the Interim, within the scope of that autonomy, is to offer time and space for initiatives aimed at opening up prospects for the future.

/ PART I: THE FOUNDING PRINCIPLES / II – FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP OF THE INTERIM

Given the autonomy of the Interim as a spatial and temporal unit, the importance of the Interim in the development of the city and its culture, the relative scarcity of the Interim, and – as a consequence of the foregoing – the pressure under which the Interim must perform, the Interim itself is endowed with certain fundamental rights.

They serve to secure the objective of the Interim: to offer time and space for initiatives aimed at opening up prospects for the future.
The Interim has no other rights.
Citizenship of the Interim is available to those Interim entrepreneurs who undertake initiatives in the Interim. Citizenship confers one essential right on the citizen: the right of access to the Interim.

/ PART I: THE FOUNDING PRINCIPLES / IV – INTERIM INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES

As soon as the Interim is activated, a coalition of entrepreneurs takes shape.[1]
The objective of every member of this coalition is, in one way or another, to derive added value from the Interim through its development.
The participants (voluntary or involuntary) may include various levels of government, civil-society organizations (NGOs, neighbourhood and district organizations, etc.), and private parties (housing associations, property developers, investors, businesspeople, and individuals).

1 Entrepreneur: one who sets an activity into motion or initiates something (in other words, shows enterprise). An entrepreneur's goal is profit, broadly defined to include social benefits and other intangible gains, such as gains in time and space.

This coalition can take two essentially different fundamental forms:

a. the reactive coalition, which takes shape when one of the coalition partners unilaterally decides to activate the Interim, thus compelling the other coalition partners to take action;
b. the pro-active coalition, which takes shape when the broadest possible coalition mutually decides, through a broad participatory process, to activate the Interim, thus inciting a response from the existing coalition partners and other potential partners.

/ PART I: THE FOUNDING PRINCIPLES / VI – THE DEMOCRATIC LIFE OF THE INTERIM

The democratic life of the Interim (the operation of its governing institutions) is in the hands of the coalition of entrepreneurs.

Interim entrepreneurs can come together from very different backgrounds to form a coalition.
Accordingly, interim democratic life must necessarily be based on the principle of Interim inequality and non-equivalence (of authority, legal status, investment

capacity, available time for investment, pioneering spirit, etc.). This results in unique combinations that make Interim development possible.
In a pro-active coalition, the partners, fully aware of the fact of inequality and non-equivalence, strive toward dialogue and transparent development, in order to define and protect their common interests.

Within the framework of the coalition an external party is often engaged to protect those interests, given that the coalition itself is often unable to perform this task.

/ PART I: THE FOUNDING PRINCIPLES / VII – FINANCES OF THE INTERIM

The capital of the Interim consists of the capitalized increase in value or potentially capitalizable increase in value created by Interim development. (Value created and capitalization may take place in the Neighbouring Time or in the surrounding area, or both.)

The Interim increase in value is calculated on the basis of the total capital created, including both material and immaterial assets (the latter category includes urban, symbolic, cultural, social, economic, and cognitive capital, and the like).[2]
In addition to tangible economic capital (land and property), account must also be taken of the creation of productive value (rent and future rental values) associated with land and immovable property, as well as of urban quality and urban activity.

Through the progressive development of capital, value is created gradually and, in the ideal situation, irreversibly (rather than explosively, with the risk of an equally abrupt setback leading to impoverishment), as specified in further detail in art. III.V (The Functioning of the Interim).

In the case of a pro-active coalition, the mechanism of value creation and the conversion rates for the different varieties of capital are to be agreed in the form of exchange rates.

In the case of a reactive coalition, capitalization takes place outside the framework of the full coalition of entrepreneurs. This may be in conflict with the broader public interest, especially when the means for realizing the increase in value are, in whole or part, public property.

2 There are a number of different kinds of capital, with some overlap between them:
- urban capital: the value of the city and its culture
- symbolic capital: cultural recognition (or 'image')
- cultural capital: knowledge, skills, and training
- social capital: relationships and networking
- economic capital: money and immovable property
- cognitive capital: knowledge.

/ PART III: THE POLICIES AND FUNCTIONING OF THE INTERIM / I – PROVISIONS OF GENERAL APPLICATION

The General Decree regarding the use of the Interim ('Interim Use Decree') is to state which provisions of the relevant acts apply to Interim use.

In the Interim, the only rules that apply are those necessary for optimal use of the Interim as swiftly as possible and without compromising the interests of neighbouring entrepreneurs, the surrounding area, or the Neighbouring Time.

/ PART III: THE POLICIES AND FUNCTIONING OF THE INTERIM / II – CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is a right guaranteed to all those who enter the Interim in a spirit of enterprise. Entering the Interim in a spirit of enterprise should, if possible, be encouraged and facilitated.

If the Interim is situated on or in private property but has the potential to be of exceptional value to the public, the local authorities should play an intermediary role with regard to access to the Interim, thereby promoting Interim citizenship.

One situation worthy of special attention is that in which the Interim is situated in whole or part on or in public property. In such a situation, the local authorities are responsible for facilitating access to the Interim and promoting Interim citizenship.

Local authorities can promote access to the Interim in a number of ways:

- by financially supporting the development of the Interim or acting as guarantor in negotiations with coalition partners;

- through mediation, assistance in finding suitable locations for Interim development (a database of available sites and buildings), assistance with conflict management, or streamlining and simplification of procedures;

- by adapting urban planning instruments and models to increase the potential for Interim development and citizenship;

- by taking an active role as the initiator or organiser of Interim development or by assigning other parties to do so;

- by treating the Interim entrepreneurs as fully-fledged partners in a cooperative working relationship;

- by actively marketing the Interim, by presenting strategies for soliciting innovative proposals and generating interest in Interim development possibilities;

- by tolerating Interim development when the required permission has not (or not yet) been granted;

- by setting out clear guidelines on which forms of Interim development are and are not allowed in which types of Interim;

- by seeing to it that the coalition draws up a statement regarding liability in the event of accidents or damage in the Interim, rather than holding a single party liable, such as the owner of the land or structures.

Some people referred the (Dis)assembled project in Gothenburg to an adventure playground for children from the end of 1960's. In March 2013, the pieces of the puzzle would finally fall into place when visiting an exhibition curated by Lars Bang Larsen called The Society Without Qualities, at Tensta Konsthall in Stockholm. At this exhibition, we would meet Gunilla Lundahl, a cultural journalist and one of the key people who helped this legendary playground to take place. Talking with her opened a window onto the motivations and challenges of that 'early' generation of urban activists. And naturally helped us to understand the setting in which that 'playground' could come into being.

The Model – A Model for Qualitative Society, was organised by Danish artist Palle Nielsen at Moderna Museet in Stockholm during three weeks in October 1968. This free space where children played unsupervised was equipped with tools, paint, materials, costumes, masks and LPs that they could play on a large sound system. When photos projecting all its raw and unbound energy appeared in the media, it attracted 35.000 visitors, of which 20.000 children. The Model's anti-authoritarian and activist agenda came from Nielsen's work preceding this museum project. During that period, there was a growing international sentiment that children, amongst many other marginalised groups, should be taken more seriously. Nielsen gathered together a group of parents in Northern Copenhagen to act on behalf of their children's well-being and on a Sunday in March 1968, they constructed the first guerrilla playground. He would continue this making a few more, all of which would be subsequently dismantled by the authorities. Nevertheless, his actions generated a discussion about taking the needs of children into account in the urban planning of that city area.

The Model fell into obscurity for quite a while until in 1998 the art historian Lars Bang Larsen contacted Nielsen to revisit it. The Model had arrived at Moderna Museet in 1968 through a collaboration with the activist group Aktion Samtal (Action Dialogue, an anti-Vietnam war platform) that in Sweden was already carrying out similar actions of setting up playgrounds and tearing down fences to extend green spaces. It took some time to convince them that setting up a pedagogical model exhibition at a large cultural institution would be the next appropriate step. Immediately prior to the project at the museum, Nielsen received a doctoral grant in architecture which he used to give The Model the status of a research project and was also a way to get the money to realise it. What becomes interesting, looking beyond its powerful images, is the Model's 'dance' between "a pedagogical research project and an activist critique of everyday life, as well as – unofficial – concern with introducing an inclusive, process-oriented concept of art" (Lars Bang Larsen in The Mass Utopia of Art Activism: Palle Nielsen's The Model – A Model for a Qualitative Society, 2010), but also Nielsen's struggle to strip the project of his authorship, giving this to the collectivity instead. This, and the statement that the Model is not an exhibition – but rather a form of 'social art', or art activism – kept this work out of art history for many years.

One of the main reasons to directly involve the citizens of Gothenburg in the (Dis)assembled project emerged from their disappointing experiences with the participative planning processes for Gothenburg's waterfront development. When we invited Pier Paolo Fanesi, coordinator of participatory budgeting in the Italian town Grottammare, for the conference Commoning the City in Stockholm (April 2013), we wanted to hear how things can be done differently and how important decisions concerning a city can be made in common.

Grottammare is located in a coastal town in central Italy, with 16.000 inhabitants and an economy centred on tourism. When in 1994, as a result of a local political crisis, the civic movement Solidarietà e Partecipazione (Solidarity and Participation) suddenly won the local elections, it invited citizens to take an active role in decision making for the town. Participatory budgeting was the first step in this procedure. It was the young administrators' intention to make finances public, discussing local council spending and investments in public meetings. Participatory budgeting is first of all a political process through which citizens become better informed and more aware about the protocols governing everyday life in the city.

The process takes the whole town into consideration, but works also at the neighbourhood level. Its procedures evolve with time and take place regularly. For example, this includes methods like the Wednesday Meetings, regular moments for public deliberation where issues are raised, or the Neighbourhood Agreement where decisions are made, not through voting or negotiations, but through discussion until priorities are set. Decisions are made collectively and in person: "This is also to avoid a vote made in isolation from common interests, a vote made in your private room lacks the awareness of some other person's situation. In a meeting, you can listen to others argumentation which might change your idea on an issue." (Pier Paolo Fanesi, in an interview with Marc Neelen, following Commoning the City Conference, April 2013)

In Grottammare, the first trials of this form of self-governing took place in more problematic areas, and during the first ten years 124 decision processes were developed. Participatory approaches enabled the complete reinvention of the town's public and urban development policies. One of the results of such participatory planning process has been an unprecedented change made to the General Town Plan – reducing the town's buildable area by 1 million cubic metres.

Participatory budgeting arrived in Europe from Porto Alegre, Brazil, famous since 1989 for establishing this process, but its social outcomes in Europe have been on a fairly small scale. Grottammare started without directly referring to the Brazilian experience, but it is "the only local authority [in Europe] that can lay claim to undertaking social action that was comparable with the Brazilian participatory budgets" (Yves Sintomer, Anja Röcke, Carsten Herzberg in Participatory Budgeting in Europe: Democracy and Public Governance, 2016). In 2013, just a month after the Stockholm conference, Solidarietà e Partecipazione won another town election.

With friends and the crew of City in the Making we are on a visit to Brussels. It is Saturday afternoon, beginning of July, 2016. Our last stop for today is an

abandoned, 24-hectare former railway switchyard along one of the train tracks in the neighbourhood of Schaarbeek. At the entrance a washed-out board says: "Use me while I'm here." Guided by Sophie Ghyselen and Geert De Pauw (also part of Community Land Trust Brussels, see Book 4) we set foot on this vast terrain. Taking a well-worn grass path, ahead of us are growing boxes with vegetables and further on a couple of cheerfully coloured trailers. We reach a picnic table with benches and couple of chairs, surrounded by high grass. In the far distance a couple of large scale apartment blocks and a crane. Someone pulls out from a backpack and shares around home-made soup.

We are here to learn about Commons Josaphat. In light of a history of a lack of adequate land policies, in 2015 the Region of Brussels bought this area as a land reserve to protect it from yet another private-investment speculation – but without any real plan what to do with it nor the financial means to do anything. Following a failed plan to turn the site into the new seat of the European Community, and years of waiting for a new purpose, the time had come to activate this 'unused opportunity'. As a response, a group of residents, activists, students and associations formed an independent platform called Commons Josaphat, stating "What's stopping us from elaborating an alternative for this? Why not turn this terrain into a place for the 'commons'?"

Commons Josaphat advocates the recognition of this publicly owned land,

about the size of 32 football fields, as a commons and for development according to commons principles. They propose a democratic land governance model in the hands of those directly involved, neighbours and representatives of the public interest. What started as an experiment in thinking has become a call to claim this blank slate by joining forces "to draw a blueprint for the city of tomorrow" – as a concrete alternative to handing it over to private interests. In the meantime, the authorities have been challenged to drop plans to sell the land. How far they are ready to go in this direction remains to be seen.

In June 2011 a Roar Magazine headline reads "Democracy 2.0: Iceland crowdsources new constitution. In just three years, Iceland went from collapse to revolution and back to growth. What can Spain and Greece learn from the Icelandic experience and its embrace of direct democracy?" A few days later, the Reykjavík based information activist Smári McCarthy, executive director of IMMI (International Modern Media Institute), published a lengthy response to this hype, explaining the complexity of the process of the Icelandic Constitutional Council in which he was involved and some of the challenges in modelling the new constitution. The question of whether the 'crowdsourced' proposal should be adopted as the future constitution was put to a non-binding referendum, where it won 67% voter approval. However, the government's term finished before the reform bill could be passed and the new government elected in 2013 has not acted on it.

In August 2012 on the island of Vis in Croatia (at the Green Academy: Common Future of Europe – Future of the Commons in Europe) we would meet Smári for the first time in person. On this occasion, he introduces some of the work done on making the tools to democratise the political procedures in Iceland, which invoked our interest in the political decision making processes and citizens' role in them. Soon we found ourselves making an interview with Smári for the exhibition A Life in Common (co-curated with Juan Sandoval, as a part of Arte al Centro, at Cittadellarte, Biella, October 2012) in which he explains what hands him the legitimacy to "rock a boat that bureaucrats have been very carefully ballasting with their own flavours of institutional inertia for centuries." Smári states: "Most conservative politicians think we're crazy, idiotic, or both. But they are mostly harmless. The people who really have a beef with what we are doing are the bureaucrats. In their view, in the best case, we'll make them more effective in their work, and in the worst case, we'll make them redundant by making it possible for groups of concerned citizens to achieve everything they achieve: faster, better, cheaper. That's scary. That said, there are those within both politics and the bureaucracies that are interested in change. A lot of people come to be consumed by the beasts they came to tame."

The implementation of proxy voting, p2p production, commoning, etc. shows an almost unlimited potential of a more direct relationship between citizens and the context they live in today, or could be living in tomorrow. Naturally, we wanted to know whether Smári understands his engagement as a temporary 'patching' of an improper condition or as a long-term rewriting of what engagement from the field of media or e-culture is to be about. Smári: "Patch vs. rewrite is the great conundrum of software development. Ideally, I would want to be doing proper, long-term rewrites of law, because that implies new architecture and an ability to fix everything in one go. It also implies introducing whole new families of bugs, and it requires lots of testing, which is kind of hard to do on a society. But because full rewrites take a while to stabilise and need a lot more focus and effort than patching bugs, it is sometimes sensible to just patch things up a bit. It's normally going to meet less resistance that way and be generally more accepted. Maintenance is always more boring than designing, but both are necessary techniques. Our societies run on a lot of old code."

We had a chance to witness the frenzy of political changes in Spain not just from the news, but also directly from our friend Ana Mendez de Andes in Madrid. The transformation from the group we met in 2013 at a squatted social center to the group running for and finally winning local elections with the platform Ahora Madrid in 2015, just a month after we visited, was immense. Not so much in that the people had changed but rather their capacity to take things forward. The question of whether – following years of research, activism, square protests, assemblies – entering politics is what 'we' should do is something that not only the people of Madrid were wrestling with (and splitting up friends and comrades), but for instance also takes place in Belgrade.

In December 2016, we were given the opportunity to moderate a discussion organised between Belgrade and Barcelona in the struggle for the commons by Ne Da(vi)mo Beograd at the Centre for Cultural Decontamination. The discussion partners were from Barcelona en Comú, the citizens' platform that since May 2015 is running the city of Barcelona. What certainly captures the imagination is this evolution from a group of activists, as exemplified by Ada Colau, the current Barcelona mayoress (former spokesperson of La PAH – the grassroots support network for the victims of Spain's housing crisis), to now running institutions in the second largest city of Spain.

Barcelona en Comú promotes participatory democracy and bottom-up politics with the aim of transforming the way municipal institutions are run. The decision-making process takes place in assemblies spread across different areas of the city. Their local politics has a much larger ambition rooted in cities across Spain – that being to form an international municipalist movement, stating that transnational politics begins in your city. Their vision of a 'feminisation of politics' represents a significant break with the existing political order – offering a political style that openly expresses doubts and contradictions.

What becomes clear, talking with Laura Roth and David Fernàndez of Barcelona en Comú is that the power to act comes from a combination of occupying not only the institutions but also the squares where social movements provide leverage to the institutions. "One of the biggest dangers in looking to build radical municipalist movements in other cities is to mistake electoral victory with victory, to sit back and think that now when we've got 'our guys' in the institutions, we can sit back and let change occur." (Bertie Russel and Oscar Reyes in the article Eight Lessons from Barcelona en Comú on How to Take Back Control, Opendemocracy.net, March 2017)

RE-CLAIMING HOUSING:
~~BEYOND THE ARTEFACT:~~
WHAT MAKES THE
~~WHAT WE MAKE~~
IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

BOOK 4:

RE-CLAIMING HOUSING:
WHAT MAKES THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

Addresses: *housing, emancipatory prospects*

Initiatives in focus: *Ko Gradi Grad (Who Builds the City, Belgrade, 2010 –) and Pametnija Zgrada (Smarter Building, Belgrade, 2012 –)*

During a substantial part of the 20th century, numerous societies saw the home not just as a base of support for the nuclear family, but often equally as one of the key places from where emancipation starts – the modern home, meticulously designed, optimised, and rolled out in massive numbers. To ensure its penetration into society, it was necessarily affordable too. The end of the 20th century has brought a significant reversal of that reality. Instead of an enabler, a liberating force, the home has effectively become a trap for its inhabitants, keeping them at bay in increasingly patriarchal and conformist patterns. And for those who remain without, it has become a distant but unaffordable desire, increasingly impossible to attain.

This book starts out from the deadlock in which many inhabitants of Belgrade (and Serbia) find themselves, locked into unsustainable living conditions, and incapable of breaking out of this. It takes us along a path of re-imagining what the home can be today. And of how we – if we act collectively, instead of remaining atomised individuals – might have a chance to reach a breakthrough in overcoming the 'impossibility' of housing. In shaking up what the home can be, we might as well awaken the necessity to see it, once again, as an emancipatory force.

Guest contributor to Book 4: Iva Marčetić *(1982) is an architect, based in Zagreb. As a member of the activist group Pulska Grupa, she represented Croatia at the Architecture Biannual in Venice in 2012. With the Right to the City in Zagreb, she is involved in campaigns defending public and common resources. She has worked on the housing issue in the countries of ex-Yugoslavia, contributing also regularly to the initiative Pametnija Zgrada (Belgrade). Our exchanges with Iva started in 2002, when she (as a member of Platforma 9.81) welcomed STEALTH to Zagreb to give a lecture at an abandoned slaughterhouse.*

SEPTEMBER 15, 2013. THE VAN COMES TO A HALT AT THE POINT WHERE THE IMPROVISED ROAD GIVES WAY TO PATCHES OF SOIL AND GRASS. THE DOOR SLIDES OPEN AND ELEVEN OF US GET OUT ONTO A FIELD.

We make our way downhill, through the construction rubble littered lying around the place – ceramic tiles, a broken toilet, crushed terracotta bricks. To our right, we have a view over the thousands of red-tile roofs of the largely informally built houses of the stigmatised suburb of Kaludjerica.

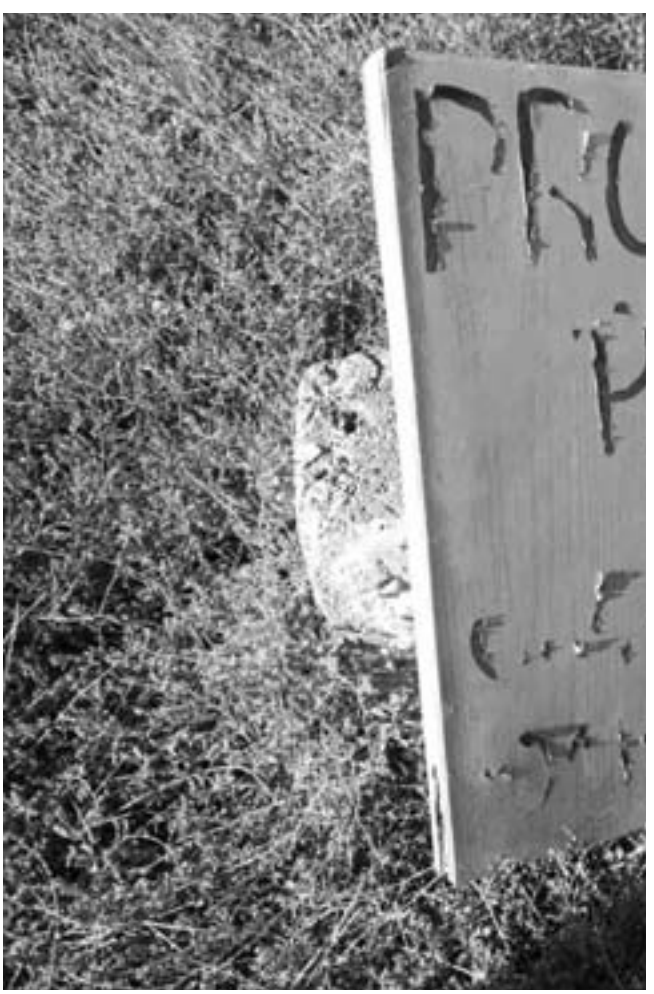
This day, we are scouting locations in Belgrade where a collective housing project could 'land'. With a shortlist in hand, our day starts at a more convenient (but utterly unaffordable) urban block close to the city center, taking us to attractive but rather complex locations a bit further out (such as a Roma settlement next to a clinic for plastic surgery) to finally arrive in this field and at what looks like the end of the city.

A bit puzzled, we follow the path that leads towards the field's edge where the land seems to drop off suddenly. We had been tipped off that this large plot of land is for sale, and at a well affordable price. Halfway along the dusty path is blocked by a mound of rubble, forcing us to climb over it. Suddenly we know we're in the right spot: with the landscape opening in front of us, in the overgrown grass stands a weather-beaten board with "I'm selling this plot of land" written on it, followed by a barely decipherable mobile phone number. So, is this indeed where we will be locating our future?

The company wanders around through the field, our emotions tugged between being upset at the prospect of such a far out 'non-urban' site on the one hand and the quite idyllic greenery that surrounds us on the other. Beneath our feet, under the green, sits a dump of construction waste that has been fly-tipped here many years back. The very reason why this site has a price the group can afford is that it can become a landslide at any moment if left untreated.

We discuss it a while. Settling for this site is more than just choosing a location. It is about choosing a direction in life. Choosing between a job in the city or a more independent career in its vicinity, between individualised life, or life dependent on a group. Not all of us are ready for this choice. On our way back to the city, it is quite silent in the van.

Iva Marčetić: You speak about a choice, but then – who chooses to live on a potential landslide? This choice you speak about is still in the making.



AN IMPOSSIBLE CATCH

"It is interesting to observe that in various periods – whether out of need, or because they were collectively inventing forms of survival (...) people had to reinvent and rearrange the conditions of the house. (...) Not even the house, that tends to become an imaginarily fixed condition of spatial relations, remains intact," observes architect, writer and theoretician Stavros Stavrides (in the concluding discussion following the Commoning the City conference in Stockholm, April 2013), when he touches upon the delicate incursion into our understanding of what the home, or the house, entails.

In Belgrade, such conditions of survival have deeply affected society for over 25 years, including the housing situation for most of population. This pressure first of all manifests itself economically. While Yugoslavia, before its split-up could have been considered a moderately well-off economy, most of its splintered bits-and-pieces, like Serbia, have been struggling ever since. The average household in Belgrade survives off about 500 euro per month, leaving little spare for even the most existential expenses such as healthcare or housing. Recent Eurostat data (Financial burden of the total housing cost – EU-SILC survey, 2015) reveals that 70.8% of households struggle to cover basic housing expenses, with the result that many live with the constant threat of disconnection of their basic utilities (heating, electricity, etc.), and may even be threatened with eviction. Currently, there is no objective indicator suggesting that the economy of the city (or country, for that matter) will recover any time soon, forcing much of population into a long-term struggle for everyday survival.

Furthermore, pressure on the housing situation results from a shift of the issue of 'ownership', over who is responsible for housing. This shift started almost overnight in 1992, when amidst war in former Yugoslavia and economic sanctions, the state nationalised the complete stock of 'societal apartments' (in the ownership of the entire societal community) to subsequently privatise by selling them to their inhabitants at bargain prices. At the time, few were concerned about the long-term consequences of this transfer of the responsibility for housing from the societally to the private domain. The emergence of a housing market made citizens from that moment – predominantly in the role of private owners – responsible for resolving housing needs on their own terms. Today 98% of housing in Serbia is privately owned. It is not difficult to imagine that for the generations too late to 'benefit' from the housing privatisations of the 1990s, the result is a catch-22 situation: one has to resolve one's housing needs on the market, but without having the necessary resources to do so.

IM: Some years ago we went by car together to Sisak, an ex-industrial city just south of Zagreb. I had come here to interview a guy who at the beginning of the 1990s had been working in one of the institutions responsible for housing. At that time, the republics of Yugoslavia started drafting their laws for the privatisation of the collective ('societal') housing stock. He and his crew set out to devise an alternative model of privatisation. They understood that market capitalism was at the door and that the housing stock now had become valuable capital. They figured that if the workers could capitalise on this value collectively – manage it in such a way to make money for all in the long run – they could help their factory progress by investing the revenue back into the factory from the housing project, but equally could invest into housing for future generations.

So, the group from Sisak drafted an amendment to the law in which they outlined a model where all the societal housing produced by Sisak's large steel factory should be transferred into the private ownership of a newly established firm. The workers would become owners with managing rights in this firm (or alternatively buy out 'their' apartments and go their separate ways). The apartments would be rented out to the workers at affordable rent levels and thus generate long term revenue which the workers' assembly could now prioritise how to invest. He himself read the amendment on the floor of the Parliament in 1991, just before the war broke out. It was rejected. Afterwards he was told that he had not understood that houses and apartments had become something even high-ranking officials of Social Democratic Party were now counting to become their own private capital. Nobody in power at the time would even consider the idea of housing remaining a collective concern but rather perceived it as means to an un-equal end.

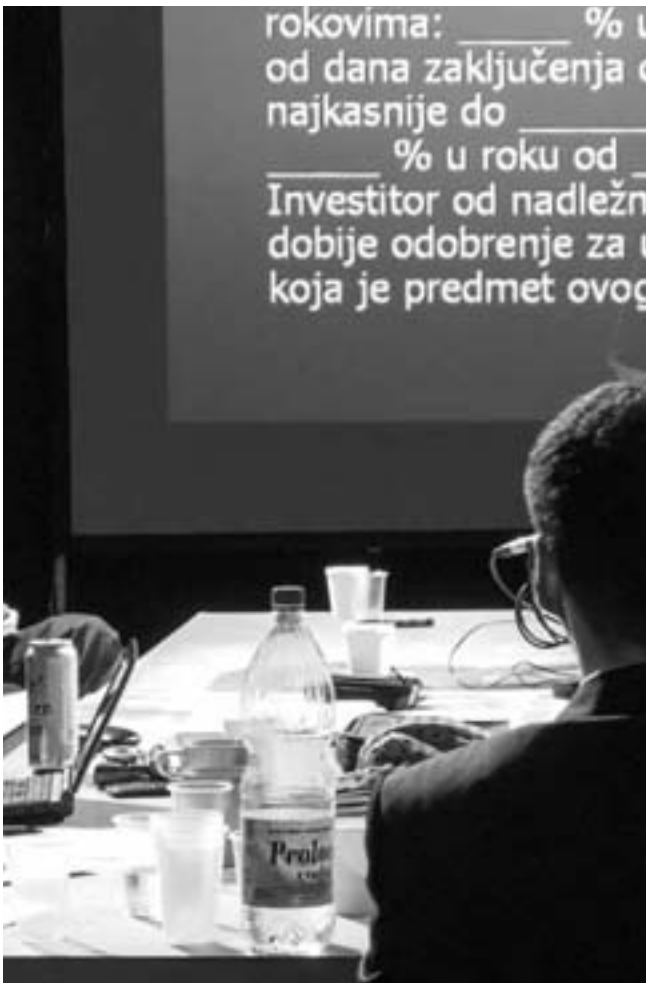
I often think how our future might have been different if this alternative plan had been adopted instead. I often think how our future might have been different in general.

Today, some 90% of households in Serbia do not qualify for a mortgage (due to insufficient or irregular income). The ratio of household income to house prices in Serbia is 13:1 – far above the 5:1 ratio considered the limit above which people cannot meet their housing needs without institutional support. Despite the fact that 70% of households qualify for social housing, less than 1% of existing housing stock is available for this purpose. In the opening paragraph of its National Social Housing Strategy (2012), the government recognises that there is a "huge discrepancy between needs and possibilities of a large number of households in the Republic of Serbia to independently resolve their housing needs on the market, and almost complete absence of systemic measures of housing support to such households." Still the state does not act upon this.

TWO SHORTCUTS

It is relevant then, to next explore how people "reinvent[ed] and rearrange[d] the conditions of the house", going back to the observation of Stavros Stavrides. In Belgrade, this broadly took the two 'shortcuts'.

First of all, multiple generations started cramping themselves into a single apartment. While during socialism the apartment was seen as one's entry into an



emancipated, modern society, now the costs of housing forces extended families to share the same domestic space and often adopt more patriarchal role patterns. For many younger people, this overcrowding (53.4% of households, the highest in Europe according to Overcrowding Rate 2015, Eurostat, 2017) leads to an unhealthy dependence on older generations, adding to the pressures that cause many to leave the country. For others, particularly women, it can lock them into marriages which they cannot escape.

IM: The countries in ex-Yugoslav region are considered 'super ownership states'. The privatisation during the 1990s contributed largely to this attribute. Some statistics indicate that over 80% of the population privately owns their dwellings, which might prompt the conclusion that not much state and city intervention is needed in relation to housing. But is it really so? Recent studies claim that conventional statistics on housing ownership omit the fact that these households usually consist of just one owner with family members, which can even be grown-up children or grandchildren. These statistics do not differentiate between those living in the house, while they are in fact 'renting without paying' and do not enjoy the same freedom and rights as the owner who is, by all accounts, predominantly male (husband, father, grandfather). There is a significant amount of those entangled in this 'super ownership' that are in urgent need of some other choice and some other statistical data.

Secondly, those who managed to secure some modest capital but could not get a foot in the housing market went into it illegally, constructing 'wildly' or off their own initiative. By doing so – outside the market and the legally allotted construction locations, without building permits – they could halve the costs of housing even if this illegality brings with it the unpredictable pressures of legalisation or the risk of demolition. In Belgrade, a city of 1.6 million inhabitants, there are currently about 260.000 legalisation requests waiting to be resolved (Blic, 2016).

Such unauthorised construction is not new to Belgrade. Already by the end of 1960s Kaludjerica, the very location of the possible landslide-construction site from the start of this book had been the cradle of controversial 'wild' developments. In hindsight, they can be understood as practices that would test the ground for much more substantial informal developments that followed in the 1990s. However, during the 1960s and 1970s, a massive housing program was underway in many cities of Yugoslavia. In drained swamp areas, the district of New Belgrade was taking shape, a modernist city extension with thousands of new apartments, made available to those in employment via a contribution to a collective housing fund. Not everyone however was entitled to such an apartment: for instance, many of the construction workers building up this ideal of a future society. (We would explore this with cultural worker and activist Nebojša Milikić (in Kaludjerica from Šklj to Abc: A Life in The Shadow of Modernisation, 2012), who developed a number of artistic interventions in Kaludjerica and for over a decade became its seasonal inhabitant.) As a result of the limited availability of

apartments, during their free afternoons and at weekends the 'wild' builders of Kaludjerica started constructing their own houses, often set on small plots of private farmland at the city limits. It takes little imagination to understand that (in the light of the model city being built elsewhere) this had to be done off the radar of the urban plans, illegally, even if somehow still tolerated. The lack of legality and institutional recognition meant that people in the neighbourhood of Kaludjerica had to come together to get some of the essential infrastructure working (roads, water, electricity, and partly even a patchy sewage system).

IM: Even if the laws enabling 'legalisation' of houses are poorly written, as an architect, I never understood the fury with which architects view this process. Many of my colleagues have been complaining how legalisation is an unfair process not resulting in qualitative solutions for the problem, but rather in formalised chaos etc. Working on some of those legalisations on the outskirts of Zagreb (mostly small and, indeed, badly built houses) I thought to myself: dear architects – where were you when this city needed you, when its outskirts were being built in the wild and you were pretending that this is an issue of a lack of aesthetics, rather than seeing it for what it really was – a housing problem you didn't care about.

In both of these housing 'shortcuts', however, the home is one's own responsibility. Why did the 'reinvention' in Belgrade not extend into a more collective resolution of the housing issue or explicit political engagement? One likely reason is that for most people, collective action has disappeared as a viable horizon for change.

Being forced to resort to resolving one's needs individually in a society characterised by deeply engrained poverty has not only resulted in a highly individualised survival spirit but also in a distrust of the intentions of others – often not entirely without cause. The result is a fragmented, pixelated society. Added to this is often a resentment towards practices of collective organisation, such as tenants' committees, and solidarity that are reminiscent of the Yugoslav period, which are considered 'obviously' unsuccessful or inefficient. Previous to his involvement in Kaludjerica, Nebojsa Milikić exposed both these types of response in the work Naša Zgrada (Our Building, 2001-2003), for which he made short episodes of a radio show about life in one of Belgrade's high-rises. In the episodes, the residents speak about everyday problems in the building, and the difficulty of overcoming them collectively.

In a society where the individual 'owns' the issue of housing and is held entirely responsible for it, it is difficult, almost impossible to transfer that pressure to society at large – where it actually belongs, considering the scale of the problem. The incapacity to resolve one's housing needs instead becomes a personal failure.

In effect, all of this makes it very difficult to mobilise people to act collectively, even on issues that clearly impinge on the capacity of the individual.

YOURSELF IN WHAT IS YOURS?

The TV advertisement shows a nondescript attic, with removal boxes still half unpacked scattered around. Some sparse light-coloured furniture decorates the otherwise white space. The main feature of the advert is a young man, smiling and dancing completely naked around the space. Music in the background shouts in English "let's get free, everybody needs a freedom, everybody needs freedom...". The character then raises both fists in the air in the sign of victory as the advert comes to an end with the text appearing "Be yourself in what is yours."

When in the beginning of the 2000s, commercial housing credits or mortgages were introduced in Serbia, they were perceived as a breakthrough that would bridge the financial gap to achieving ownership of an apartment. While this advert from Piraeus Bank in 2007 may have helped some people to finally find themselves in 'what is theirs', for many it certainly did not bring the advertised freedom. Moreover, this is one of the advertisements featured on the website of an association of victims of fraudulent bank credits (CHF Serbia) amongst a pool of ads that lured people into unsustainable mortgage deals – with devastating effects on the holders such as evictions and even suicides. A lot of their ordeal went unheeded in Belgrade, or has been brushed aside with a certain resentment: at least they were able to qualify for a mortgage in a country where the vast majority cannot, so why should we feel sorry for them!

That sentiment is quite different in Spain, where around the time of that TV advert – for somewhat different reasons – hundreds of thousands of people were facing unsustainable housing debts, and started losing their homes to the banks. In Spain, this has led to a vital network coming together of activists, supporters and victims around the struggles of those adversely affected by mortgage debt (PAH, Platform for People Affected by Mortgage). Set up in 2009, it is mainly organised around self-help circles, in which those affected led other people entering mortgage debt problems (and often on the brink of eviction) through the number of steps to secure their housing situation. As important as the practical side of preventing people from ending up on the street is its emancipatory side: if you can start to think of other ways to face this threat, not any longer on your own but with the support of a community, a potential for resolution opens.

IM: In this comparison with Spain, it might be better to explore why mobilisation around the housing issue happened there, rather than question why it did not happen 'here' (in the region) on such a large scale. The Spanish economy was much larger and relied much more on 'toxic' loans and housing loans in general. Therefore, when the bubble burst, many more people were affected (both in relative and absolute numbers) than for instance in Serbia, but more importantly – there was a group of dedicated activists, activist groups and civil society organisations already in place around housing problems of the millennials (V de Vivienda, the Movement for a Dignified Housing) that redirected their work and formed the PAH. The PAH spread like wildfire after 15-M thanks to its very D-I-Y organisational form. They took upon themselves to shatter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the myth that those who took out loans deserved the 'dark' fate awaiting them. This was done in Croatia as well (which, of all the ex-Yugoslav countries, had the largest number of toxic Swiss Franc/CHF loans) through the efforts of an organisation called Franak and its lawsuit against the major banks. In other words, we should remain aware that it is not that people 'here' don't care and people in Spain do care – it is that solidarity, around this issue, was more broadly organised there then it is 'here'. Solidarity needs to be organised.

This reasoning, but also the research in Kaludjerica, has also been the trigger to start addressing the housing crisis in Serbia through a 'self-help' initiative of sorts, launched in the daily newspaper Danas, in December 2012, with the following call:

"Are you interested in building a decent apartment somewhere in Belgrade at 300-400-500 euro/m2? Impossible? For the majority of people getting an apartment at these prices is the only reasonable option – without getting yourself into debt and unpayable loans, living in impossible conditions or waiting for your relatives to move to the countryside or to Heaven. Who, why and how can this impossible be made possible?

Pametnija Zgrada (Smarter Building) is a call to people who want to discover how we can make possible the construction of urban housing for the majority of those who do not have an apartment and that cannot acquire it under the imposed market conditions. We are looking for a group of people who want to work together to find out and practically learn how to get to an apartment through an acceptable level of investment and at the minimum realistic price. People who are interested or willing to come together to engage in planning, investment and construction – in a smarter way – by planning collectively, investing responsibly (their time, knowledge, abilities and/or available financial resources) and constructing intelligently."

This call by Ko Gradi Grad (Who Builds the City), was as much directed towards the situation of anyone 'out there' as it was to that of our friends – and ourselves. In 2010, Cultural Center Rex, with Dušica Parezanović, Marko Aksentijević and STEALTH, with modest financial support from the Heinrich Böll Foundation Serbia, established the platform Ko Gradi Grad, driven by the conviction that a dialogue about the desired development of the city must involve those who make up that city. In the run-up to the call, we had held many discussions on the viability of attempting to break the housing deadlock. We had often been knocked back by our doubts as to whether a group like ours could realistically effect a change in such a crucial, complex issue. Equally, some of us felt it was easier to follow others into the banks' 'mincer' and try to wiggle out a toxic mortgage than try to re-invent the housing solution – including its finance – from the ground up. Still the future – of dwelling around the place like nomads, 'crashing' on sofas, some of us moving to rental apartments if our earnings permitted, and having to move out again if the rent would be put up or the job disappeared – was no future: we needed to find a way out, together.

IM: This initial group inspired the conversation in the region about what collective and non-profit housing could be. That is priceless.

DECONSTRUCTING THE HOME, TO CONSTRUCT AN APARTMENT BUILDING

And so on December 14, 2012 about 40 people gathered in the assembly hall of Cultural Center REX. This cultural venue, started up in 1994 by the at the time rebellious radio station B92, is housed in a former Jewish community center. A peculiar location for such a gathering, a fairly large hall with white walls and an elevated stage in the rear.

It was at this place where over the course of a year the group, responding to the call to provide a new housing solution, took to dismantling the 'impossibility' of the housing issue as it now stood, step-by-step, in order to come up with alternative solutions for the particular challenges found. A cultural place is indeed one of few contexts where a radical questioning of the market driven housing solutions forced upon us can freely take place. This was mainly done through a series of 'working tables', supported with theoretical and legal contributions, the idea being to bring to the table at each session a particular element of the housing challenge and for those attending to ponder over the ways around that challenge – without any pre-set direction in which that solution was to be found. In many ways, this was an eye-opening endeavour.

IM: I came to these meetings for the first time in February 2013. It was really uplifting to discuss and deconstruct something so familiar as our housing problems – a very inspiring occasion.

Picking the housing challenge apart starts by exposing existing, and seemingly inescapable, norms and models of how 'housing works', but also the relation between individual and collective interest inherent to these norms and models. By dissecting the housing price, questioning individual ownership and profit making, exploring forms of collective finance and shared aspects of living, and imagining new possibilities that might introduce the notion of equality into a society largely based on inequality, a collective stance has taken shape. This brings at times confrontational and contradictory lines of thought, where rigid professional attitudes, strands of paternalistic, gender based pre-conceptions, or questions as to whether certain segments of population are 'unfit' for collective solutions, come to the table.

In that sense, the 'working tables' made it possible to discuss such issues and exposed their different ideological frames, producing an emancipatory effect. To some extent it was something we had anticipated from the start and it could have continued many more months. But unexpectedly news of a call came in for proposals for low-cost, do-it-yourself housing, brought by one of Belgrade's municipal authorities (Architectural competition MILD home, by Municipality Savski Venac, launched in December 2013).

WHERE DOES SMARTNESS RESIDE?

After a year of exploration into the model required to tackle the housing deadlock, many of us felt the time had arrived to bring a proposal to the drawing board. This process brought to light a number of significant findings.

While the call from the Municipality of Savski Venac was packed with mandatory performance parameters – from the number of apartments to their precise energy performance characteristics – the key parameter of what 'low cost' means in actual financial terms was left open. For the Pametnija Zgrada group, this became the prime parameter to be figured out. Was there a way to somehow objectively define what the average household could afford for accommodation?

We decided to quantify it according to data from the National Office for Statics (2012), according to which an average household spends about 15 per cent of its income on housing costs (including utilities), on average some 80 euro per month. While this sounds very small, that is what actually many households are able to afford, barely in many cases. Can we take that level of expenses to be the target for the costs to be incurred by newly built apartments? This forced an unexpected conclusion: we will have to set our minds on highly energy efficient buildings if they were not to burn away their entire monthly budget on heating and utilities alone.

Following this preliminary conclusion, the group took to addressing the development timeline: how can a collective of future inhabitants build the skills and capacities to arrive at a collectively developed, jointly-invested and possibly self-built housing solution? Although experiences and approaches from other contexts did not lend themselves to being directly applied or put into action in this situation, in January 2014 the architect Hein de Haan joined the Pametnija Zgrada group for a week at the crucial stage of outlining the developmental steps. Not just his experiences from over 30 years of working with different housing collectives, but equally his no-nonsense (and slightly obstinate) approach have been crucial in this respect: to skilfully circumventing the challenges ahead, the bureaucratic obstacles or the routines entrenched in the practices at hand.

Finally, the proposal we came up with instilled in us the confidence that a way out could be found, even if a number of significant hurdles were still to be addressed. It had helped to get to grips with a set of assumptions for Pametnija Zgrada (adapted from the brochure Housing from Below: A Smarter Building Model for Affordable Housing in Serbia, 2017), which read like this:

Build strength in numbers. *Meeting the housing need is one of the biggest challenges we all face. By joining forces to plan, invest (not only in terms of finance, but also with our time, knowledge and skills) and build together, we will be less vulnerable than if we try to meet our needs by ourselves.*

Bypass the private developer. ***At least 30% of the cost of an apartment go to the developer as profit. With some professional support, a group of people can take on the role of the developer themselves (and potentially undertake some of the building themselves) and thus save a large percentage of their costs.***

Raise finance collectively. ***For many people, buying an apartment is the biggest investment they will make in their life. By acting as a collective, the risk of investment is shared by many, and we will have a much stronger position as a collective, whether for taking out a mortgage or negotiating with the authorities.***

Don't waste energy. ***Making apartments affordable requires taking into account long term utility costs from the start. The aim is to reduce the energy costs of the building nearly to zero, using 'Passive House' principles to achieve high levels of insulation, complemented by extremely efficient heating and ventilation technology.***

Extend living beyond the apartment. ***Apartments designed by future residents should look at what we really need inside our apartments, what we can share with others (laundry room, guest rooms, garden or roof terrace, etc.) and what else can contribute to the community – like having a co-working space, running a kindergarten, or even starting a small business like a restaurant. We can change the way we live even in modest circumstances.***

Become mutual homeowners. ***To keep prices down, apartments are owned by a co-operative formed by residents, while individual residents 'buy' the right to live in their apartment. If you decide to leave, your investment will be returned but you will not make a profit. Apartments are not sold on the market, and so they are not only affordable for the first residents, but also for future generations.***

Share the experience. ***This model of living is new to Serbia. If we can launch it successfully, it can be repeated in another neighbourhood, or another city. It is therefore important to make the model freely available as open source, to enable others to solve their housing problems in the same way.***

Although the Pametnija Zgrada group was one of three finalists of the municipality's competition, further discussion on possible implementation or further collaboration with the municipality on such a project proved difficult. This frustrating situation, which would run on for months, would result in little more than an affirmative feasibility study. However, we had figured out that if such future residents were to take the lead in the construction of a new generation of apartments, this could result in a dramatic reduction in ongoing costs related to housing. However, there is a limit to what self-organised groups can do on their own. If housing was to be made affordable to a large part of population – including achieving the goal of housing costs at 15% of household budget – other measures had to be taken into account. We had come a long way but we weren't there yet.

IM: One thing that I found very amusing when I heard the story about the encounters with the representatives of this Belgrade municipality was how these people are puzzled faced with your introduction of a model of non-for-profit housing. It made me think how far we have regressed into the obvious falsehood that profit has to be made out of our homes, and that otherwise constructing those houses is impossible. A year after your encounter I was in a conversation with the head of the office for housing and city property of Rijeka (Croatia) and I asked him: "What do you think about the idea of the city making a pilot program that would open up a central but dilapidated location for a non-profit housing initiative to invest in and use it, thus activating their savings, and co-managing this property with you? In turn perhaps a couple of apartments could be transferred to the city so that it too can enrich its housing stock further." He laughed a bit, looked at me as if I was proposing something utterly silly and finally responded "that would never pay off".

AN UNEXPECTED, PRIVATE RESCUE

For the both of us, at that time, a crucial change took place in our personal housing situation in Belgrade. From Ana's mother, we were given the apartment that her parents had built for their old age: a studio apartment in the attic of the family house. Following long and at times agonising discussions, by which point the family property had been divided up among its members and the attic apartment had come into our possession – and rescue. That is not as something habitable, as years of neglect had brought it almost to its technical end-of-life, but as a future construction site, a slate to be wiped clean, on which a new apartment was to arise.

It brought us in a contradictory position: in this adventure, the implementation of most of the carefully drafted principles for Pametnija Zgrada had proven to be impossible. Only one leading insight could be adopted: "don't waste energy". It had become the guiding principle behind most of our design choices and in doing so we realised that even regarding this, a big leap was still necessary in order for it to become a more generally accepted principle. Workers were shaking their heads in disbelief at the point of mounting 30-centimetre thick roof insulation in our apartment, and laughed at our decision to ban the chimney from the place and instead to settle on a heat pump to warm the space. It made us also one of the 'pioneers' (for better or worse as we discovered later when confronting an unwelcoming bureaucracy) of solar energy in Belgrade, having literally one of the small hand-full of roofs in the city with solar panels. But apart from pioneering that, we had to step back from the 'smarter' approach.

In February 2015, we moved in. Meanwhile, the challenge with Pametnija Zgrada continued.

OUT INTO THE OPEN

The time had now come to take Pametnija Zgrada out into the open and to allow it to cross-over into other groups, initiatives or discussions in the city. From 2015, this took us on a search for ways to approach public authorities, understand the legal frameworks, scan potential building locations and outline collective financing methods. During this phase, the group has been fluctuating in size, and our meetings weren't very regular. The magnitude of the challenge and of the limitations, financial, legal, administrative, constantly confronted us. But also, we were confronted by the necessity to deconstruct these challenges rather than allowing them to simply wear us down.

It is important to consider how this could not only be a liberating and emancipatory moment for a group of future residents but equally can have a positive effect on the neighbourhood where it takes place, bringing in new (and yet unforeseen) aspirations, ways of living together, and of how to conceive housing in general.

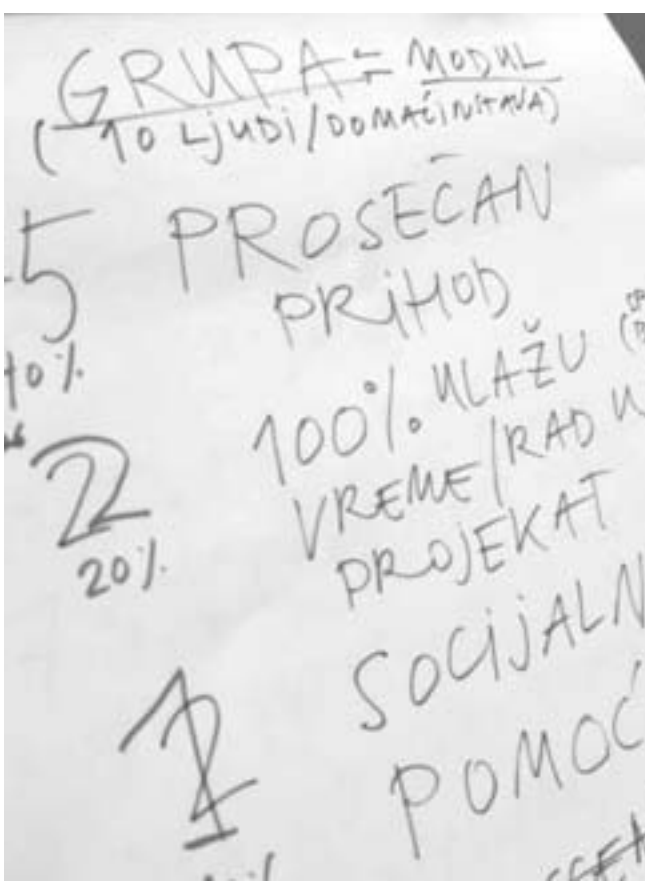
How would it work if indeed Pametnija Zgrada would find ground on the site from the start of this story? In Kaludjerica, among the thousands of self-built family houses, bringing in a different building principles? Could there be an upgrading from local do-it-yourself to do-it-ourselves construction principles, offering a space that can be shared? Could such a form of building remove the stigmatised image that most people have of this still mostly informal area? And what would it mean if the building we were proposing were to find itself in ghettoised neighbourhoods like Kamendin, at the other end of the city, among those few social apartments that have become a 'social dump' of sorts?

Whatever location we finally manage to get, we estimate that it will take another 3 to 5 years to form a stable community and complete the first block of 30-40 apartments, for these first residents to move in.

With us now getting ready to take the initiative to the city, is the city ready to take us on?

Already in 2009, the Serbian government's study on housing affordability had recognised the need to create conditions for non-profit housing that would bring its price down by 50% of the market price (according to the Draft Law on Housing and Maintenance of Buildings, 2015). These might include: land dedicated and given to use under favourable conditions, support in finding the starting capital (interest free or favourable interest loans, possibly establishing special funds), reducing interest on mortgages and construction loans, removing VAT and property taxes for projects that include more economically struggling social categories, tax exemptions when buying construction materials, etc. In short: state and municipal authorities will need to create conditions favourable to establishing affordable, non-speculative housing. This is still far from reality, even from any public discussion.

IM: We need to devise a better plan: knock on many municipal doors and frame non-profit housing (be it state or city owned or cooperatively built) as something that is an urgent issue, something we desperately need and which is surely feasible.



The position of land is of particular importance in this. Economists are increasingly calling upon us to understand that land and capital (like 'real estate') are fundamentally distinctive phenomena. Land is permanent and cannot be produced or reproduced, land values (in growing urban areas) are inevitably rising, and as a result "suck purchasing power and demand out of the economy, as the benefits of growth are concentrated in property owners with a low marginal propensity to consume, which in turn reduces spending and investment," as Josh Ryan-Collins states in the article How Land Disappeared from Economic Theory (The Guardian, 2017). That presents a problem for a conventionally working economy but for an eroded 'peripheral' economy like the Serbian it is a massive blow. Not only must land be put back into economic thinking (forcing us to examine "the role of institutions, including systems of land-ownership, property-rights, land taxation and mortgage credit that are historically determined by power and class relations" continues Ryan-Collins), but it has to become a part of the political, social and cultural policies of economic distribution (again). It is too delicate an issue to be left up to the individual capacities of citizens.

FROM A SMOULDERING ISSUE INTO AN OPEN FIRE

It is still pitch-black on an early morning in December 5, 2016 when the first buses leave the garage of Belgrade Public Transport company. One by one they go out on route, but on some are rather unusual advertising boards carrying the messages of the campaign Dobro Došli u Stambeni Pakao (Welcome to The Housing Hell), launched by Ko Gradi Grad. The messages stand out bright and bold, even if their content projects the far-from-bright housing reality of Belgrade and Serbia: irredeemable mortgages, marginal tenants' rights, energy poverty, evictions, non-existent social housing. In the days after, they are followed by a series of billboards at strategic public locations in the city, and a campaign on social media that will reach tens of thousands of people over the weeks to come.

> *IM: Preparing the material for this campaign has been truly challenging – working on the housing issues for many years now, we have not realised how complex our vocabulary has become in the meantime. We got lost in too many details! We had to write messages that are both understandable on first glance and remain valid on the second and the third as well.*

The crude directness of these messages (for example: "No apartment? There is a guaranteed housing solution," depicting a prison cell in the background) had been the subject of intense discussion within the group, as this strategy of cultural jamming aims at bringing into the open the widely felt but little discussed issue of discontent around the housing situation. A risky step, as the campaign was not offering any direct solutions, nor a containment strategy, to those hoping to find an easier way out of this predicament. When the first comments start to land at the campaign website and in social media, we wait with baited breath: will the discussion turn into a retaliation against the credibility of our approach, or will it provide a much-needed platform on which to vent some of the most pressing issues. After a few delicately balanced days, the discussion eventually flips towards the latter, much to the huge relief of the group.

> *IM: We all understood that this campaign should be something that rallies people around the housing problem. That is – it brings a relief of the atomised troubles in a way that both says: 'you are not alone' and 'we should organise together'. The best epilogue of this campaign would now be to organise broad meetings on all the separate issues tackled in the campaign followed by setting up concrete working and action groups. But then, we probably do not have enough people with enough time or resources to set this off.*

While such a campaign has been long overdue in Belgrade, the timing in December is not accidental. During the week that follows, the Serbian Parliament starts a discussion of the new Law on Housing and Maintenance of Buildings. This controversial law largely circumvents addressing the difficulties most people have regarding their current housing situation. It fully supports the market as the undisputed way to resolve housing needs and marginally recognises the needs of vulnerable groups. The law is approved on December 22, 2016 with many questions still lingering about its actual implementation.

The housing issue is out there now in the public domain. But in order to really make it into a housing resolution for all, much more pressure still needs to be applied. Therefore, since October 2015, with the event Tzv. Stambeno Pitanje (The So-Called Housing Issue), Ko Gradi Grad started teaming up with other initiatives and associations to strengthen the position of citizens in struggles against a/o forced evictions, energy poverty, the need for the democratisation of public utility companies or the revival of tenants' assemblies. (This has involved among others: Ignorant School Master and its Committees, Belgrade; Pro Bono, Belgrade; Committee of Lawyers for Human Rights – YUCOM; United Movement of Liberated Tenants, Niš; Centar_kuda.org, Novi Sad; Group for Conceptual Politics, Novi Sad; Regional Minority Center, Belgrade, Ministry of Space, Belgrade; Association of Workers and Friends of Trudbenik, Belgrade; Association Equality, Zrenjanin.) A lengthy Don Quixotian battle still lies ahead of us.

A (YET) UNFULFILLED PROMISE

Whilst Pametnija Zgrada has started to push the envelope of what a 'smarter' approach to housing entails (by becoming the collective planners, investors and builders), the challenge of imagining different forms of urban living has remained so far largely unanswered – or has just barely touched upon. In exploring Pametnija Zgrada as a to-be-spatialised community, rather than coming up with new forms (spatial, organisational, relational) that allow us to further unfold our possibilities, we largely replicate


NEMATE STAN?
Postoji garantovano stambeno rešenje.
stambenipakao.rs


Dobrodošli u stambeni pakao

(or extend) into that future the current conventions built around the nuclear family. More disturbingly, when we try to depict life inside Pametnija Zgrada, we often risk ending up the same types of imagery that we so resolutely tried to get away from.

The writer, critic and theorist Mark Fisher gives a clue to the trap we might enter when he observes that it is the workings of the current (neo-liberal, capitalist) framework that deprives us of the space to conceive alternative forms of social structures. In order to extend beyond what we perceive the approaching reality, we have to engage in an emancipatory politics that of necessity must "always destroy the appearance of a 'natural order', must reveal what is presented as necessary and inevitable to be a mere contingency, just as it must make what was previously deemed to be impossible seem attainable," (from Capitalist Realism Is there no alternative? 2009).

The current 'natural order' does not grant a place (and space) to the massive number of precariously living individuals and families, nor to economic activity (collective, or individual) in a society devoid of economic potential (massive unemployment, with no reason to expect this to resolve itself in a de-industrialised and increasingly automated society), nor to forms of living differing from the nuclear family and the traditional gender patterns (in a society becoming more and more conservative) or those forms which seek to escape the destructive materialistic and environmental impact of urban living. There is no place for forms of political organisation that do not take on the obedient form of the individual 'participant' in a representative democracy.

We are called on to destroy that natural order, especially when it comes to the conventions of contemporary living. And equally through that to understand how the specific ways of spatialising communities, of laying out apartments and buildings not only condition our very lives, but also our ambitions. It is crucial to realise that this can be destroyed, indeed. In the startling book The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities (1981), brought to our attention by Casco Project (Utrecht), the urban historian (and poet) Dolores Hayden recalls how early American feminists (a/o Melusina Fay Peirce, Mary Livermore and Charlotte Perkins Gilman) persistently developed ground-breaking plans and visionary strategies to break women's isolation in the home and confinement to domestic life. It is a fascinating tale of what Hayden calls 'material feminism', presenting this through various documented attempts of these pioneering women to break out of outdated forms of housing, while envisioning an environmental and economic transformation of the American neighbourhood, and raising questions about the relationship of men, women, and children in industrial society. "In order to overcome patterns of urban space and domestic space that isolated women and made their domestic work invisible, they developed new forms of neighbourhood organisations, including housewives' cooperatives, as well as new building types, including the kitchenless house, the day care center, the public kitchen, and the community dining club," writes Hayden. A massive aspiration, and while the experiments in practice do not always manage to deliver all of this at once, they are incredibly inspiring for their level of daringness. Hayden continues: "They (...) proposed ideal, feminist cities. By redefining housework and the housing needs of women and their families, they pushed architects and urban planners to reconsider the effects of design on family life." Like the Llano del Rio cooperative colony in California, which operated from 1914 till 1918, when it relocated to New Llano.

Hayden writes: "On the first of May 1916, hundreds of men, women, and children marched in a May Day parade at Llano del Rio, California, young girls in white dresses, boys in white shirts and dark knickers, men in their best dark suits and ties, women wearing ribbons and badges across their light summer dresses. Residents of an experimental cooperative colony, they were farmers and urban workers who planned to build a socialist city as an alternative to the capitalist city of Los Angeles. As they marched on May Day they sang familiar socialist songs, but their final destination was a half-finished frame building, where they examined architectural models of the unconventional community they hoped to create, a garden city of kitchenless houses, designed by Alice Constance Austin. (...) In her plans for the cooperative colony at Llano, and in her book, The Next Step, Austin, a self-educated architect from Santa Barbara, articulated an imaginative vision of life in a feminist, socialist city." Just a few years later, it would be the women of the Settlers' Movement in Vienna who would take the lead in constructing the first settlements, using PAX Ziegel (Peace Bricks).

Is it up to 'us', now, to articulate a progressive vision of urban life?

IVA MARČETIĆ:

Pravo na Grad (Right to the City), Zagreb
April 24, 2017, 16:22, Facebook

The state of siege on Savica is still ongoing and it is heating up right now. An angry mayor, upset because the police do not arrest the unruly citizens, has just sent about 15 security guards to deal with people who from this morning are trying to stop the excavators digging up without a permit the park. In this war of attrition, directed by the mayor, there are no rules and no schedule. Come to Savica as soon as you can, join the crew and show that the city does not belong to one man and his whims!
Savica ZA Park (Savica FOR Park)

(Iva Marčetić) P.S. Is there no one in the city administration and at Zrinjevac who has the courage to say that the emperor is naked?

WITH PAMETNIJA ZGRADA (SMARTER BUILDING), THE INITIATIVE KO GRADI GRAD (WHO BUILDS THE CITY) DELVES INTO THE PRESSING HOUSING ISSUE THAT CONCERNS AN INCREASING PART OF BELGRADE'S POPULATION. THE START OF THIS ENDEAVOUR, IN 2012, CAME ABOUT THROUGH THE RATHER UNCONVENTIONAL FORMAT OF A PUBLIC DISSECTING ('WORKING TABLES') OF THE BACKGROUND OF THIS

STRUCTURAL ENTANGLEMENT, AND OF THE POSSIBLE WAYS OUT THAT COULD BE BORN OUT OF (AND EMPOWERED BY) LOCAL SPECIFICITIES AND NECESSITIES.

[initiators] Ana Džokić and Marc Neelen (STEALTH. unlimited), Marko Aksentijević, Dušica Parezanović and Nebojša Milikić (Cultural Center Rex), within the platform Ko Gradi Grad (Who Builds the City), established in 2010, registered as citizen's association in Belgrade in 2016

['working tables' contributors] a/o Nebojša Kitanović, Paola Petrić, Tadej Kurepa, Miloš Veselinović and Andrej Malobabić, Mladen Bogićević, Suzana Jovićević, Vahida Ramujkić, Milan Rakita, Dušan Grlja, Hein de Haan, Arie van Wijngaarden, Robert Winkel, Marina Petrović and Kristina Lauš, Goran Jeras, Matthew Slater, Brett Scott, Nikola Šarić

[MILD home competition team] Ana Džokić, Ana Vilenica, Antonije Pušić, Čedomir Ristić, Dušan Milanović, Dušica Parezanović, Emilija Zlatković, Jelena Tomić, Marc Neelen, Marija Draškić, Marko Aksentijević, Milica Ružičić, Nataša Žugić, Nebojša Milikić, Paul Currion, Predrag Milić, Srđan Tomić, Tadej Kurepa, Uroš Maksimović, Vedran Spaić. Advisors: Hein de Haan, Slobodan Reljić

[background] Pametnija Zgrada (Smarter Building) and its outcomes are the result of a collective work that so far has involved a group of 30-40 people from a variety of backgrounds (architects, political scientists, journalists, cultural workers, lawyers, engineers). It has developed through more than 30 meetings, 15 workshops, a number of site visits, lectures with guest experts in different fields (from Serbia and abroad). It was awarded in the 2014 MILD Home (Modular, Intelligent; Low Cost, D-I-Y) architectural competition organised by Municipality Savski Venac (Belgrade).

[support] Heinrich Böll Foundation – Belgrade office, Creative Industries Fund Netherlands

[timeline] December 2012 – ongoing

[website] www.kogradigrad.org

The group involved with Pametnija Zgrada meanwhile has outlined a series of approaches necessary to introduce affordable, non-speculative housing in Belgrade, taking into consideration the capacity of people to resolve the housing issue through collective ways of organising. It aims at building an actual demonstration prototype, but more importantly and further than that at a replicable approach that can be relevant to other cities and towns in Serbia. The Pametnija Zgrada model comprises the following main principles: no developer involvement, mutual ownership, collective finance, communal living, energy saving, (partial) self-construction and open source.

Among the main challenges of realising Pametnija Zgrada are the relation to public authorities and the limited possibilities of gathering together the necessary starting capital. Ko Gradi Grad has laid the ground for a pioneering community-led project, but more is necessary for it to really take off in Serbia. This mainly means creating the right conditions for the involvement of institutions in non-profit, citizen driven housing. Ko Gradi Grad has been working towards these aspects with a dozen other civil society organisations, coordinating their actions related to the Law on Housing and Maintenance of Buildings (2016).

Pametnija Zgrada 'working table' notes (based on excerpts from the Ko Gradi Grad website):

INITIAL 'WORKING TABLE'
December 14-15, 2012

There is a noticeable mix of political and personal motivations among the 30-odd people who joined the working table. (...) Most believe that this new housing model is feasible and realistic, but that a potential problem may be a lack of trust when the issues of space and money are at stake. The model can be successful if there is a solid legal basis (a well-drawn up contract) and if there is enough 'craziness and courage' to carry it through. (...) There is a potential threat and a conflict of interest that will arise from entering the terrain occupied by the construction mafia in Belgrade who sell apartments at prices several times the cost of construction.

SMARTER THAN OWNERSHIP AND PROFIT
February 1-2, 2013

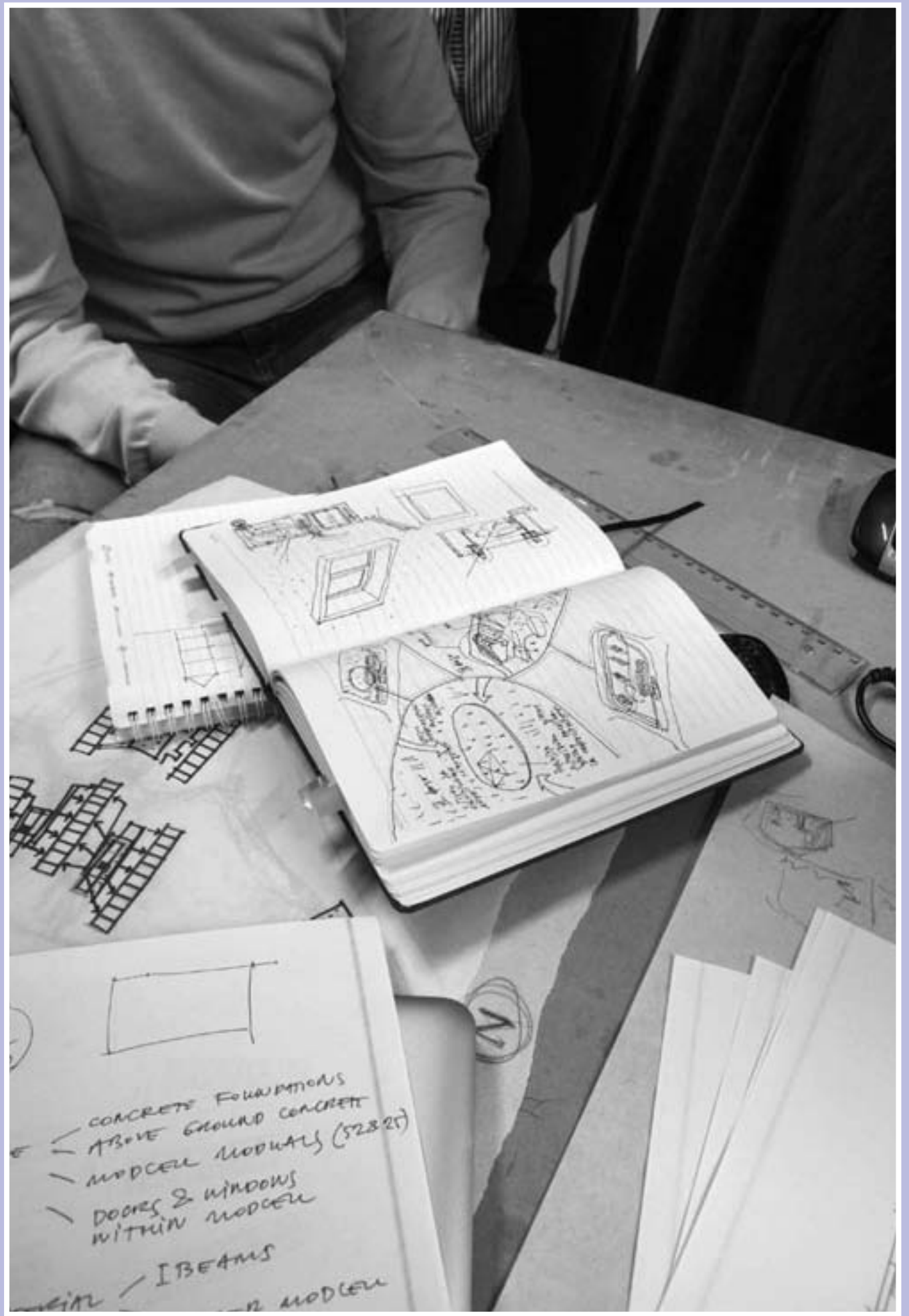
Issues of ownership and profit often may in a decisive manner affect motivations, the sustainability and public nature of a joint venture housing development. Not seeking an immediate solution to all the existing and potential problems and dilemmas related to this, we want to make these problems the subject of reflection and discussion. (...) The housing cooperative is proposed here as the most appropriate legal form for Pametnija Zgrada.

ALL FOR ONE, ONE FOR ALL?
March 9, 2013

For a joint venture housing development, it is essential to build a relationship between the individual and the collective interest in a way that goes further than individualistic action and 'coping' and originates in a practice of joint planning and creation. (...) Housing organised in such way would be accomplished despite the market and the State. This kind of self-organisation does not necessarily have to be based on left or right political orientations but on the principles of equality and solidarity.

EQUALITY IN SOCIETY OF INEQUALITY
May 10, 2013

Principally taking into account the different starting economic positions, we have opened a debate on how equality would be feasible in the society of inequality in which we live. (...) The aim of Pametnija Zgrada is to find a highly flexible housing model which would ideally involve both the homeless and anyone who cannot meet their housing needs in another way. We speak here about equality in fellowship where by agreeing on what is the lowest common interest or goal, it is possible to arrive at such equality.


CONCRETE FOUNDATIONS
ABOVE GROUND CONCRETE
MODCELL MODULES (52825)
DOORS & WINDOWS WITHIN MODCELL
IBEAMS

MINI-EXPEDITION TO FIVE POTENTIAL SITES

September 15, 2013

(...) After site visits, there are three equally interesting scenarios that we should continue to work on in parallel. The first one implies a location in the city center and 'embedding' a building in an existing residential block, this would very likely involve intense or complicated cooperation with a municipality. Another option is the renovation (of a part) of a former industrial building, and the third one building from scratch – on an entirely empty piece of land on the outskirts with no current infrastructure, but with the potential to envision the construction of an entire cooperative settlement.

NEW 'MOBA' FOR THIS TIME

January – February, 2014

The Pametnija Zgrada group did not respond to the MILD Home competition with an architectural proposal that would then be implemented by a market-oriented investor for as yet unknown clients able to afford it, but rather as a group of citizens united by the need to resolve their housing problem – and to find them a model for non-profit and solidarity housing. Nova Moba is based on the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the future residents.

(...) The current state of affairs limits the implementation of this approach. In order to make it truly affordable, some challenging conditions need to be met such as: municipality (City, State) need to recognise the importance of such a model of housing and supply the land for such use under favourable economic conditions (for example, through Community Land Trust model); to reduce fees for 'construction land'; the loans to finance construction have to be provided on a non-commercial basis.

AT THE COUNTER FOR COLLECTIVE SELF-CONSTRUCTION

April 23-26, 2015

If we consider that the city of Belgrade and the Serbian government are unable or unwilling to offer an alternative to the market, it becomes crucial to recognise the possibilities and significance of uniting citizens, which in turn could change the dominant relationship between the city and its citizens. (...) What are the given conditions for collective self-construction, what could motivate city authorities to support this development model, and whether and how the situation changes after the completion of the first residential building(s) of this type?

HOW TO INHABIT ABANDONED AND UNFINISHED

May 29-30, 2015

What is the potential to transform existing industrial buildings that have fallen out of use and to utilise unfinished residential buildings for affordable housing in Belgrade? Would this be cost-effective and sustainable in the long run? (...) The susceptibility of the Pametnija Zgrada business plan are the low offers it is only able to make when trying to purchase such facilities. This comes from low level of rents to be accounted. (...) The price can be lowered by the use of cheaper materials and investing of own work.

ECONOMY ON COMMON FUEL

March 3-5 and June 2-4, 2016

What are possibilities of creating new financial institutions owned by the citizens themselves? What is possible and what cannot be done through a common(ed) economy, in terms of affordable housing? How far we can get with cooperative funding, can experiments with new financial technologies (such as digital currencies) or group financing through 'crowdfunding' be of help? (...) And what would be 'ingredients' of a local economy that would protect and stimulate the Pametnija Zgrada housing initiative?

AT THE BEGINNING OF DECEMBER 2016, JUST BEFORE THE PROPOSAL FOR THE LAW ON HOUSING AND MAINTENANCE OF BUILDINGS ENTERED THE SERBIAN PARLIAMENT, KO GRADI GRAD (WHO BUILDS THE CITY) LAUNCHED A PUBLIC CAMPAIGN TARGETING THE UNAFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING IN SERBIA FOR THE HUGE MAJORITY OF ITS POPULATION. TITLED DOBRO DOŠLI U

STAMBENI PAKAO (WELCOME TO THE HOUSING HELL), THE CAMPAIGN AIMS TO BRING THE ISSUE OF HOUSING OUT OF ITS UNDISCUSSED AND TABOO STATUS.

The campaign uses cultural jamming as the approach (the language close to mortgage advertising) to ask the question: how did it come to be normal that the roof above our heads is thought of as a matter of privilege and luxury, and not a basic human right? It addresses five pressing issues: lifelong debt, the insecurity of unprotected tenants, struggle with energy poverty, forced evictions and the (virtual) non-existence of public/social housing. While each of the topics demands its own 'solution' in terms of policies and activating citizens' engagement, the campaign aims first and foremost to activate citizen dissent and pushes towards forms of collaboration, solidarity and mutual action.

The campaign targets a broad majority of the population, trying to bring all these issues under the umbrella of the large, yet unaddressed housing question. By doing so Ko Gradi Grad wants to show that the majority of Serbian population, one way or another, with or without their own apartment, already is living in this 'housing hell'. And moreover, that each of us is individually not guilty for the position we are in. By putting housing into the spotlight, the aim is to help develop a collective desire to change this unsustainable situation from one in which housing is left to 'natural' market forces to one which presupposes an understanding of housing as the 'home' to which everyone has a right.

WELCOME TO THE HOUSING HELL! (CAMPAIGN WEBSITE EXCERPTS):

You may be thinking: what is 'housing hell'? Am I in it? (...)

Why is the 'housing hell' discussed so little?

How did it come to be normal that the discrepancy between one's salary and the price of a 'square meter' of an apartment is so big that we can only dream of buying an apartment?

That, if we somehow managed to buy an apartment, the repayment on it becomes a nightmare, a matter of life or death.

[team] Ana Džokić, Marc Neelen, Marko Aksentijević, Tadej Kurepa, Ana Vilenica, Iva Marčetić

[graphic design] Miladin Miletić

[background] With the website (www.stambenipakao.rs) as its main anchor, the campaign has been using street billboards (at five strategic locations in Belgrade), public buses (two lines) and social media. By the end of December 2016, the twelve campaign statements have reached: 34.000 website clicks (on peak days about 3.400), 800.000 people through Facebook (peak days 97.000), 27.500 peak weekly post engagements, while the accompanying Google ads have been viewed 1.450.000 times.

[support] Heinrich Böll Foundation, Belgrade office, Creative Industries Fund Netherlands

[timeline] June – December 2016; campaign December 2016

[website] www.stambenipakao.rs


FINANSIJSKI PROBLEMI?
Nema stana - nema problema!
Dobrodošli u stambeni pakao

That the landlords can without warning evict us from a rented apartment, whenever they please.

That utility costs increase year on year while salaries remain the same, and we do not know how we are going to pay the next bill, or repay the accumulated debt.

How did we allow our neighbours, known or unknown to us, to be thrown out onto the street and left without a roof over their heads?

Even the most vulnerable are forced to move out of social housing, of which there is very little in Belgrade.

How did it come to be normal for a roof over our head to be thought of as a matter of privilege and luxury, rather than a basic human right?

1) PURCHASING AN APARTMENT

In Serbia, an apartment can only be obtained if someone dies and you inherit it or if you get into serious debt. Yet a huge number of those who are employed do not have big enough salaries to guarantee the repayment of a large (or 'hellish') housing loan. (...)

Using bailiffs, the Bank has a means to forcefully collect that 'debt' from your regular income (...). So, you end up both without the apartment you purchased and without the money to rent a new one. (...)

It is not a coincidence that the state did not regulate the mortgage market through a special law, as it is also no coincidence that it did not regulate the apartment rental market. It is as well not a coincidence that the government almost entirely stopped the construction of apartments in public ownership and that social housing is such that those who get it often in the end often feel they are being penalised rather than supported. (...)

How did we get to the point that lifelong indebtedness and the constant fear of defaulting on a loan are seen as something normal?

2) TENANCY

Being a tenant in Serbia means to live in uncertainty: what will be the rent next month, when will you have to move out, which of the landlords wishes will you have to fulfil. (...)

Tenants live without a permanent residence or protection from eviction (...), but accept this believing that their tenant status will not last forever. (...)

Thus, a renovated basement on the outskirts of the city (to be let to "a serious female, non-smoker, no pets and visitors") tends to cost more than half the average wage.

(...)

A vast number of people (the estimate for Belgrade is more than 150.000) every month pay huge amounts for housing rental. Still they remain unrecognised, unprotected and are not organised in any way. Every tenant is for him/herself. (...)

Where is there a decent life?
What about those who have no regular salary?
Where is the State?

3) ENERGY POVERTY

In addition to all other forms of poverty 'ruling' Serbia, one of the least visible and at the same time a most drastic is energy poverty. (...)

As of a few years ago, in Serbia over 50% of households are heated by solid fuel. (...) But what if we could calculate how much this heating costs us in terms of our health?

A survey shows that (...) more than 40% of the population would immediately change their heating devices if the state decided to somehow help them in doing this.

On the other hand, many who are covered by the extremely inefficient and expensive central heating system (from which they cannot be disconnected) do not have money to pay their heating bills so their debt accumulates from month to month to the point where it looks as if it is

impossible to pay back. (...) Therefore, the citizens of Niš have risen up in protest against the local heating plant (...).

Do you think it is normal for even heating to become a field of struggle for a dignified life?

4) FORCED EVICTIONS

(...) We live in the illusion that the compulsory confiscation of apartments will not happen to us, and that those to whom it happens are simply unlucky or they 'had' to expect it. (...)

Although Serbia, according to the international conventions it has signed, is obliged to provide anyone with adequate accommodation following a forced eviction, this is usually not the case. (...)

How did we as a society reach the point that it is legitimate for people to be thrown onto the street from the only apartment they have, even in the middle of the night? We have even succeeded in convincing them that they are themselves to blame for this: because they are incapable of earning (enough), because they took on unfavourable mortgages, because they were forced to build where it is not allowed...

How could we convince them that they should be ashamed for being kicked out on the street?

5) PUBLIC/SOCIAL HOUSING

Social housing has become (...) only available for the most unsuccessful citizens – a terrible stigma.

Today the city of Belgrade owns about 1.500 apartments, out of which 750 are for social rental. Thus, less than 1% of the Belgrade's entire housing stock is in the public domain (...).

Those rare social cases in Serbia who manage to climb high enough in the rankings to qualify are then faced with toxic living conditions in social housing. (...)

While social support in Serbia covers 9 (out of 12) months of the year, the bills still have to be paid regularly each month. Thus, social housing tenants, who for various reasons are forced to live from the miserable social support, inevitably find themselves with accumulated debts that they are unable to pay (...)

The last census showed that 10% of Serbian population lives without any or without adequate shelter. More and more of our former neighbours are homeless people. This is the reality of social housing policy today.

Are you OK to peacefully watch this happening?

In January 2013, as we were preparing the second Pametnija Zgrada 'working table' and decided to contact Hein de Haan, an old friend and architect with 35 -years of experience in housing projects which involved from the very starting point their future inhabitants. We are collecting examples that might be relevant for the group in Belgrade. Hein sends us his home address on the Steiger Island, a freshly created piece of land in Amsterdam. We vaguely remember that the last time we saw each other, some seven or eight years before, he mentioned a new housing project. As we were approaching his home, we finally realised that this must be the new housing project he had mentioned those years before! Passing a row of individually designed, four story high row houses, at the end of the street we arrive at a housing block – Vrijburcht. Hein lets us in through the street entrance, his office door, and a little later we would exit on the opposite side through his apartment entrance, to explore the interior of the block. This apartment is where we also meet Hein for the last time, in June 2015, two months before he would pass away.

In the first 20 years of his work, Hein's projects were implemented within the framework of social housing, where residents were not the owners but tenants of apartments built by housing corporations. Over time, as this model of housing lost ground there was a need to collectively organise future owners. Vrijburcht, which opened in 2006, is not a housing cooperative but an owners' association.

Hein's philosophy that living, working and collective facilities should be combined shows itself here in its fullest potential. Apart from 52 apartments, Vrijburcht is also: working spaces, a common garden with a glass house, two small guest apartments, a neighbourhood café, a kindergarten, a local theatre run by the community, even a harbour for small boats and a sailing school for children. Some of these spaces were realised with support from external co-financiers, and they contribute to the economy of the block. If the members had tried to approach this in the first instance as individuals, they would not have been able to achieve this, and especially not within the average price range for the area. This idea of 'collective commissioning' started in the Netherlands some 15 years ago, and this is one of its first manifestations.

Vrijburcht includes people able to invest as well as socially vulnerable groups. It includes six small special needs apartments for young mentally handicapped people, financed through public funds for social housing. To support such projects, the Municipality of Amsterdam established a system of public competitions by which to obtain land leases for collective construction projects by groups of citizens.

■

One interesting, but little-known case of collective, self-organised housing, from the mid-1980s Belgrade, is an attempt of Minel Factory's workers to construct their own neighbourhood. It was launched by a

group of young and enthusiastic workers realising that it would be some time before they ranked high enough on the waiting list to receive a societal apartment. Instead they decided to solve their housing situation through self-constructed apartments on land belonging to the factory. We had the opportunity to hear more about this project from Zoran, one of those at that time young and energetic workers. Thirty years later, he sensed a similar energy at one of the working tables of Pametnija Zgrada.

With questions about how such a neighbourhood could be made, the workers approached the Center for Urban Planning (CEP). We would find more on the story of this project which is called Čaršija in the suburb of Ripanj in the book Traganje za Gradom (In Search for the City, 2012) by the architect Djordje Bobić, who led the team that proposed its concept, calculated the resources needed and made the urban plan. This exceptional project was an attempt to bring an alternative to the at the time already present informal construction on the city perimeter. Here, on land allocated by the factory (including the basic infrastructural lay out), step-by-step, as their resources permitted and using the factory's technology and loans guaranteed by the factory, the workers were to build their own neighbourhood. The streets, initially dirt roads, would be asphalted over when finances permitted, while houses were to start with one or two rooms and a bathroom so that residents could move in quickly, and then be added to. It was to take several years

for the houses and neighbourhood to be built, all in accordance with the plans.

The project and its planning went very far but its full implementation was unfortunately blocked by a political decision 'from above'. An opportunity to test this model of 'bottom up' self-management in practice was lost. Left once again to their own means, the workers of Minel, as well as many others, resorted to figuring out other options – with many building 'wild' on their own.

During the past decade, a number of TV serials and films have been depicting the inter-bellum years in Belgrade and Serbia. Glorifying and romanticising this period, they are selling us an image of stereotypical bourgeois life – as if the majority of population actually lived that way. When in 2012, the architect Zlata Vuksanović–Macura (who for years has been involved in architecture and urban planning for the poor, particularly Roma population) publishes the unique and timely book Life on The Edge: Housing of The Poor in Belgrade 1919 – 1941, she sheds an entirely different light on this period. Her exploration steps beyond the 'great architecture' and 'great urbanism' depicted in many (contemporary) books and much research of this period, and brings to light the living conditions of the poor and the 'urban planning' they devised out of necessity. As much as it reflects on that particular period, it eerily reminds us of what we are living through today.

Following World War One, Belgrade (which prior to the war had about 100.000 inhabitants) became the capital of a considerably bigger country – the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (since 1929, Kingdom of Yugoslavia) – attracting many new inhabitants. Soon a large part of private capital flowed into housing construction in the city and created the base for a thriving rental economy. The book shows that the majority of Belgrade population found themselves renting overcrowded and unhygienic apartments, many of which were little more than sheds, with up to 80% of people surviving below poverty level. These figures and descriptions of housing entirely demystify the interbellum period and show just how little concern the elites and the city administration had for the living conditions of the majority of the population – with almost no active housing policy in place.

Therefore, during the 1930s, a vision of a "small, hygienic and inexpensive apartment affordable to all of Belgrade's vulnerable citizens" was taken up by an informal group of about 30 socially conscious intellectuals concerned with housing issues (many of whom were doctors, publicist, municipal officials, and only three architects). They struggled to answer whether the housing issue should be resolved by public authorities or through private initiative, and whether the housing should take on the form of 'worker's collective residential blocks' (like in Vienna or Prague) or rather follow the 'garden city' typology.

Although this group produced a considerable amount of published work on this difficult topic, its effects on society and the possible solutions, the housing situation for majority of population would not be dealt with until a new (post-war), socialist Yugoslavia took it up along entirely different lines.

We visited L'Espoir (Hope), a housing project in the Brussel's neighbourhood of Moolenbeek, in March 2015 and again in July 2016. In the year spanning these two visits the terrorist attacks in Brussels take place, the perpetrators originating from this impoverished area. L'Espoir started in 2004 on the initiative of Neighbourhood Center Bonnevie. "Justice! Apartments for all" was one of the campaign slogans of the people from the neighbourhood at that time. It was a response to the housing crisis in Brussels, resulting from a lack of affordable housing for people on low incomes who had been unable to get housing loans, in particular those with an immigrant background.

L'Espoir was an experiment to create an alternative to the necessity of the individual purchase of a home. The 14 apartments, housing 80 inhabitants, have been built on 1.024 m2 of land, acquired

from the city for 60.000 euro, at a quarter of the regular market price. At the start, the inhabitants formed a cooperative savings group, defined a project brief, and (through an architectural competition) selected an architect to work with. The resulting building, which opened in 2010, drastically cuts energy consumption and received a subsidy for sustainable construction. On our second visit, about 15 of us share a drink in an improvised shed next to the L'Espoir building. It is the end of Ramadan. Talking with two of the inhabitants, one of the main issues coming to the fore is the self-empowerment that this particular low-income group (with eleven different nationalities) experienced through this process.

Following the success of L'Espoir, Geert de Pauw, one of the key people behind the initiative started looking for a way of organising housing that combines the advantages of ownership and those of social rental. From here the adventure continues through the Community Land Trust (CLT) Brussels. CLTs started in the USA in the 1960s, and are now becoming more common in Europe. CLTs provide the opportunity to build affordable apartments while protecting residents and the wider neighbourhood from property speculation. In order to do this, the apartments and the land they are built on are legally separate entities. A CLT acquires land through donations or grants, usually from a municipal authority, but it cannot legally profit from that ownership. The land is removed from the market and the CLT then leases the land to others to build affordable apartments. Decisions in

a CLT are under 'community control'. In the case of Brussels, this means a group that is one third (future) residents, one third neighbourhood representatives and one third public officials. CLT Brussels was initiated in 2010 by a number of associations, and after lobbying the government, in 2012 they received funding to start the project. The first CLT Brussels block of apartments opened in 2015.

WHAT MATTERS

~~BEYOND THE SUSTAINABLE – CHALLENGING THE FLOW OF RESOURCES, MATERIALS AND PEOPLE: WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE (AND UN-MAKE)~~

BOOK 5:

WHAT MATTERS

How to collectively prepare for – and respond to – a changing world?

This concluding book follows a group of misfits who have faced many of the challenges and gained many of the insights outlined in the journey told in the previous books: responding to volatile political and economic situations, adapting to a changing climate, dealing with their own relationships, incorporating new technologies, and engaging with(in) the local community.

The title – What Matters – refers both to the theme of this fictional narrative (what is important) and the narrators of the story (the five classical elements, or 'matter'). Through their voices, the storyline explores one possible future for a group of misfits in Rotterdam, in which collective action might enable citizens to navigate through difficult times to create a new political economy.

Author Book 6:
***Paul Currion** (1973) is recovering from a previous career in disaster response and post-conflict reconstruction. Today, living in Belgrade ("I live in the city because I got tired of living up the mountain"), he works as a consultant in the field of humanitarian work. Paul is a member of Ko Gradi Grad (Belgrade). Our collaboration with Paul started in 2012, when he entered the group and parachuted his knowledge of energy-efficient architecture into the development of the concept of Pametnija Zgrada (Smarter Building). In 2015, Paul joined STEALTH and Stefan Gruber to work on The Report: Vienna Biennale 2049, a fiction story on Vienna beyond the 'smart city'.*

2018 – FIRE, SMOKE, COUGHING AND LOVE

When Prometheus picked me up, I asked him: are you sure about this? At least I think it was Prometheus. It might have been Mātariśvan, or possibly Maui. I've been stolen so many times, all these thieves have become one, the way that the dancing flames pull apart and come together; they come together and pull apart, but there is only one fire, burning endlessly.

Fine. It was Prometheus. I warn you now. I am reliably unreliable.

You know Prometheus: steals the gift of fire – steals me! – and gives it to humanity, punished by being chained to a rock to have his liver eagle-eaten every day. His name meant foresight, and with that foresight he saw what humanity might achieve once fire is in their grasp once more. What am I? I am the wonder worker. I am creator and destroyer. I am heat and light and safety and sustenance. Now you build your cities with my strength in the furnaces that fire your bricks, in the foundries that melt your metals, in the wires that light your rooms; and all I ask in return is that sometimes I am allowed to entertain myself occasionally.

You probably don't know that Prometheus had a brother: Epimetheus, whose name meant hindsight. With hindsight, what does Epimetheus see? Does he see me ten years past, on that morning when I went to work on the Architecture Faculty in Delft? Savouring the sound of the steel as it buckled, the concrete as it cracked? I burnt for hours, watching the faces of the staff and students as they watched me, the satisfaction of a job well done. From that destruction comes creation, driving you on to make something new.

Now I have returned to tear down another building in another city nearby, dragging my fingers down the walls, cracking the glass beneath my heel, shouting as I move from room to room and floor to floor. Make way, make way!

Who knows how this all started? A hate crime, perhaps; or perhaps just a short circuit in a coffee machine. You'll have to wait for the official inquiry: only hindsight can determine the cause. I like to build suspense, but I don't stay around to see how the story ends.

Except.

Except this time somebody does stay around to see how the story ends. Somebody who is in the building when the fire starts, and who wakes in time to wake his fellow sleepers. They rustle themselves from their beds, heat drying out their tired eyes, smoke roughing their throats. He shepherds them along the corridor and down the stairs and out into the unfamiliar street. I recognise some of them: I've seen them before when I burnt down their previous homes, hundreds of miles from here, and now I will burn their home down again.

Once they are safely outside, stamping their feet on the cold concrete, this somebody goes back in. They try to stop him – the flames are too high, they cry! – but he ignores them. He runs through the building, pounding on doors, checking in rooms, beating at flames. I fill his lungs but he does not slow: he pulls one boy from his bed, slings him across one shoulder and retreats down the hallway. No help has come: he lays the boy gently in the street, and then goes back in again.

Usually I don't let people get away with this kind of behaviour, but for some reason I now make an exception. He breaks down another door on the ground floor, and pulls out two more boys, who whimper and clutch each other. When they are safe he turns once more to go back, but now even he can see that I will not permit it. Down it must come so that something new can rise.

I watch him standing outside, this little man, smoke-lunged and half-cooked, and he is staring at the building he has just run from, and he is trying to decide – yes he is! – whether to go back in. Does he know there are people left inside, people who will never make it out? Does he know that if he goes back in, he too will never make it out?

The people around are staring at him, and when he realises he looks down at himself. I have done my work on him as well: his clothes scorched at the edges, his skin starting to come away, and he sits down heavily in the middle of the street. How much has he lost, how far has he come? From Syria, or Afghanistan, or Nigeria? Don't ask me: all you humans look alike to me, or you will once I'm done with you.

The gods created all mortal creatures, and asked Prometheus and Epimetheus to distribute qualities to each of them, at which Epimetheus said to Prometheus: Let me distribute, and you inspect. This went well – strength and speed and claws and assorted advantages doled out in fair amounts – until Epimetheus reached the last creature, the human creature, and realised that he had already distributed all the qualities he had to give. Prometheus realised that of all creatures humans had been left defenceless; and that was when he decided to steal fire – and the art of making that went with it – and give it to man.

Yet he was only able to steal mechanical wisdom, not political wisdom; and this lack means that another type of fire is at work in the city now, more powerful than this blaze, running all through your civilization: the human heat that sets your hands to war.

It is hard to tell when war starts – a street fight, a single shot, a train timetable – but I was being unreliable before: I know exactly how this all started. I haunt the dreams of arsonists. In this city, at this time, it starts with one man telling the crowd that they are the real victims, not these strangers who have run from war. It starts with one man in the crowd deciding that he will not be a victim, that he will be a soldier.

Down the street this arsonist watches his work – my work – to completion, and believes that he has won a great victory in his struggle, the struggle of his people, who are not these people who stand in the street watching their home burn. He is the heir to Epimetheus: he wants those people gone so he can have the past back again, the past that he is looking at while he walks backwards into the future.

Ah, but it's not the arsonist that I want to talk about. It's the other one. The one who ran back into the building. The one who saved three of his friends, although he couldn't save them all. Where he comes from, he was an engineer, with an engineer's hands and an engineer's name: Sinan. I watch Sinan in the days that follow, as he finds temporary shelter in the offices of a local activist group, and then in one of the buildings that the group looks after.

"So you own this building?" Sinan asks, as Martijn and Lieke show him around the building that will be his new home. The room they've given him seems to be filled with bubble wrapping, half-sawn pieces of timber and a stuffed animal that Sinan doesn't know the name for.

"I don't own the building," replies Martijn, picking up a cardboard box, "I'm just – I guess you'd call me the coordinator of the group." The box is heavy but Martijn, surprisingly strong for his size, shoulders it easily.

"That's what *you'd* call yourself," says Lieke, and Martijn shrugs on his way out to the hallway. "We're a cooperative, Sinan."

"I don't know what it is," admits Sinan.

"It means we make decisions together," says Lieke, "and now that you're living in one of our buildings, you're a member of the cooperative."

"They're not really our buildings," says Martijn, coming back into the room.

"It's complicated," says Lieke, "but you'll pick it up quickly."

"We take buildings out of the market," says Martijn, pulling a tarpaulin to one side to reveal a mattress on the floor. "There it is. Give me a hand, Sinan." Together they drag the mattress out from underneath and rip away the plastic wrapping.

"I'll see if there are any pallets left," says Lieke, out of the room and footsteps going down the narrow stairs, already calling somebody on her mobile.

Martijn sits on the mattress, bumping up and down a few times. "It's fine. We'll clear everything and make a bed for you. You'll have to find any other furniture that you want."

"Who else lives here?" asks Sinan, looking at the white walls as if they were ghosts.

"At the moment nobody. House prices keep going up and up and up, so we've got a waiting list. Lots of students, artists."

"So why are you giving this to me?" asks Sinan.

"The cooperative decided to reserve this apartment for refugees," Martijn replies, and this only makes Sinan look uncomfortable, even more uncomfortable than the smoke-ache in his lungs.

He's an engineer, but he doesn't have permission to look for a job while his asylum application is stuck on a desk somewhere in the COA, so he starts fixing this and that, all the little things that are wrong with his building. In his free time he walks the streets of Rotterdam, trying to take comfort in how normal everything is: flocks of mothers flapping in head scarves by school gates in Oude Noorden, the old men of Afrikaanderwijk squatting pavement stools to shout advice at young men diving into car engines, the sun like weak tea poured over the silver tray of the Kralingse Plas.

Yet underneath that normalcy is something else. He wakes in the night from dreams of cities in flames. He reads about a housing crisis that hollows out whole sections of the city. He hears raised voices in the street, and walks past demonstrations that increase in frequency. The EU, which once seemed so solid to him, comes apart at the edges: a misfiring referendum here, a bank collapse there; but at least not the prelude to civil war, not like it was in Syria. This is something slower to bite but equally fierce once it gets firm hold.

Finally he feels as if he's walked every street a man can walk down, and so he gets to work on the other buildings they hold. It's not as if a coat of paint in the bathroom can cover the scars from the fire, or that setting the mirror straight can somehow set his own life straight; but it feels good to be useful again. Eventually being useful gets you noticed, and Martijn calls him for a drink, at a cafe set up on the ground floor of their newest building.

"You became a bit essential, eh?" the first thing Martijn says after they sit down, pushing a cup of coffee across the table to Sinan.

"I'm just helping with the odd jobs," Sinan says, "Is it okay?"

"Sure," Martijn says between sips of coffee, "We're getting offered more buildings, and every building needs work."

"I can look at them also. Just give me the addresses."

"You think so? I actually don't think we should take on any more."

"I thought that we wanted to take more buildings out of the market?"

"Sure, but then we'll have to start employing people – "

"I don't understand. You don't want people with jobs?"

"We don't want to be employing people, or we become just another property developer." Martijn puts his coffee down. "This financial crisis looks worse than the last one. The property

market is burning down just like that fucking refugee centre."

Sinan stares down into the black mouth of his coffee cup, but jumps up when Martijn slaps the table with the flat of his hand.

"Hey, sorry. I didn't mean that. We could have all the buildings that we want. But this is never just about housing. It's about changing the way we do things. It's about creating opportunities."

Sinan thinks about what Martijn says that evening while he is pasting the cream on his burns. Time is the fire that reduces your memories to ashes, but he tries not to forget his family, still stuck in a camp far away. Without family, what is he? Yet family is something you build, not just something you are born with. The next day he goes to the large room that the members of the initiative share for their work, and he throws a newspaper down on the table in the middle of the room.

"Here is the opportunity," says Sinan, pointing at the headline: the city government finally announces that it will not rebuild the refugee reception centre, that the city budget is not enough, that the political climate is not right, that the right location cannot be found.

Lieke picks up the paper. "You think we should set up a refugee centre?" she says doubtfully.

Sinan folds his arms across his chest as if he is preparing for something. "I am not only a refugee. I do not only want to be a refugee. I see these people who blame me for losing their jobs, for not getting paid so much, but I am not to blame. We can't give these people jobs, I understand this, I think, but we can give them work. Like I am working now, for a community. So it's not a refugee centre."

"We always said housing isn't just housing, eh? It's the starting point for everything else in the community," says Martijn as he takes the newspaper from Lieke, who looks at him doubtfully until he shakes the newspaper at her, exclaiming "Housing as a platform!"

"I don't know," says Lieke, "Starting a building project is very different to taking on empty properties – "

"Why we have to wait for empty buildings?" says Sinan energetically, stabbing at the paper. "Why do we wait for somebody else to give us opportunity? We can still do these things, but we can also make something new."

Sinan doesn't fully understand the things that Martijn talks about yet, and he thinks perhaps he never will, but he understands one thing: he came here to build, and now he has something to build, or at least to re-build. So where's the spirit of Prometheus now? The man who sets the fire, or the man who rushes back into it? The man who wants to destroy, or the man who wants to build?

2019 – THESEUS IN ROTTERDAM

I come in at night, blindly making my way up the channel into the city.

I pass between these Maeslant gates they built to hold me off when I rise, although I never rise in anger – what is barely a shrug to me is still a blow to them, to their city, to their hubris. I move without moving, towards no destination at all, always listening yet always murmuring, a habit of mine from long ago that I have no desire to break, for my murmuring can be heard everywhere if you listen hard enough, and listening is what I am best at, blind since birth but always attentive, taking the sound and holding it like the precious gift that it is.

Ship engines, pipe bursts, glass shatters, morning drills, twilight footsteps, seabird shouts, loose coins, idling cars, sonar bursts, landing planes, platform corrections, crossing signals, storm warnings, high winds, language upon language upon language; I gather them all up and store them within me, I will send them many miles to places where only the whales will hear and your secrets will be safe, the secrets that are the bricks your civilization is built on, and if you hear those secrets coming back to you on the evening tide – well then, you will know that my promise was good.

What secrets do I hear tonight?

"Why are we meeting here?" asks the man with the deep voice, rubber-soled shoes scuffing against dockside concrete.

"I wanted to know what you think the chances are," says the woman, voice slightly muffled by her hood, "that any of this is going to be here in ten years."

"I think the chances are low," the mans voice sinking towards the ground as he sits on a bench, pulling up his trousers, "but if you asked me ten years ago I would have had a different answer."

"I'm asking you now, and you're saying the chances are low."

"Ask me again in ten years." He lights a cigarette, holds the smoke, blows it into the sky. "I might have a different answer."

"Why are you joking, Hendrik? This is terrifying." The woman paces up and down restlessly, her sandals skipping over the stones where they are uneven.

"Lieke. In a hundred years we're all dead," says Hendrik, "Don't waste too much time being terrified."

"I'm not wasting time. It's an environmental assessment."

"Then do the assessment, and then we build the hostel, or the incubator, or whatever it is."

"It's not a hostel or an incubator, it's – well, it seems to change every time we discuss it." Lieke sits down heavily next to him as he shifts uncomfortably. "What's the point of doing an environmental assessment if the site could be under water in a decade?"

"Don't be so dramatic."

"Don't be so *Dutch*."

"I am Dutch. Rotterdam is Dutch. We had a lot of experience in making our chests wet the last 600 years."

Is it so long ago that this struggle began? I have a soft spot for this place, founded on the fen stream Rotte, in the old tongue that I have missed so long, the language of the marsh: first the village Rotta, from rot, meaning muddy, then -a, meaning water; muddy waters that gave the town of Rotterdam the blues from the moment that dam was first built. Yet that old town disappeared in flames not so long ago, the observers overhead counting off the buildings as they burned, the trauma of war sketched into the streets in a single day; and then the rubble of the old city was swept away and a new city built in place of the old.

The city faces new struggles – as waterways become landfill, skyscrapers replace churches, newcomers join natives – yet so much of it is still below me, sheltered behind the dams the dikes the ditches that I am always touching, always testing, always trying to see where you will let me in. I bring a warning that you will not hear, just as you do not hear the sound the ice makes as it calves from the pack, tearing itself apart and pitching headfirst down down down into the deep of me, making itself me again: this is the sound that I bring you tonight, and you may be listening or you may not, and you may hear it or you may not, and you may heed it or you may not, for that is always your choice.

By the time I remember what I was doing before I was swept away in my own thoughts, the pair of them have gone. I go after them, I slip through the city along a thousand different channels, one of which I will follow now under the ground through pipes that creak and leak and speak to me, which let me into your houses and into your lives, although you never seem to notice that the water that you drink and clean and wash with is the same water that threatens you, that I am both outside and inside, and now I am inside a house, listening to somebody ask Lieke:

"Now you're saying the environmental assessment is pointless?"

"It's not pointless, we just don't need to do a proper assessment," says Lieke, "I'll write a report just how they want, we'll get the approvals from the city – "

"So we're giving up on making this project environmentally friendly?"

"Martijn, I didn't say that – " Lieke begins.

"Well it sounds like that!" says Martijn.

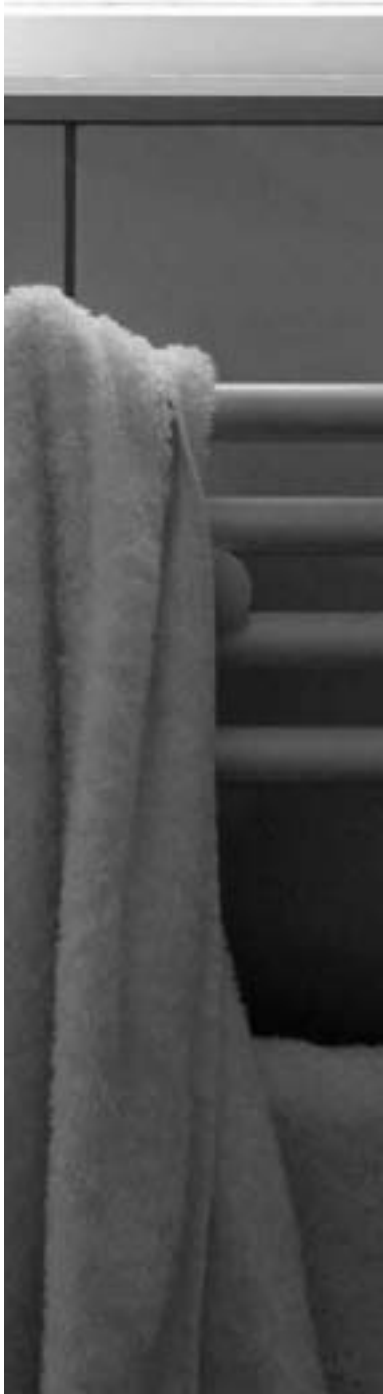
"None of that environmental stuff matters if we don't have the finance to build," Hendrik points out, "and the Climate Facility has money."

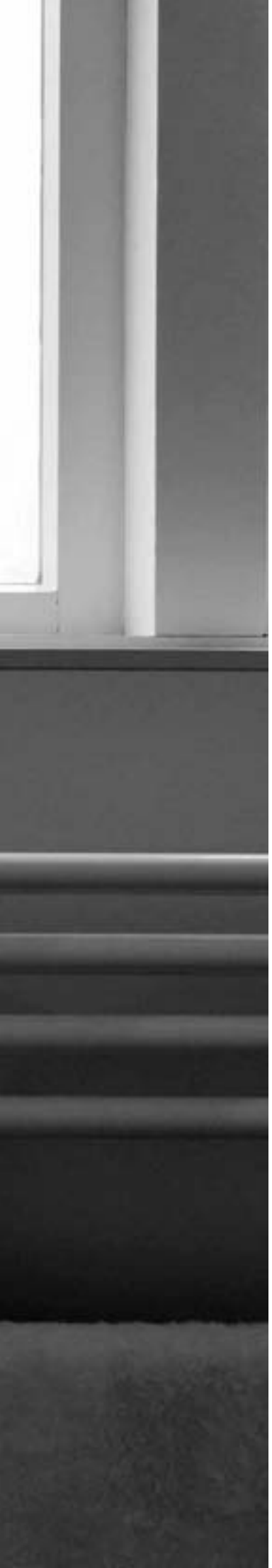
"I don't believe this, eh?" says Martijn, "We specifically said we didn't want to raise money through this kind of bureaucratic channel, and now we go straight to the government begging?"

"We can't start building until we solve this problem of finance," says another man whose voice I have not heard before.

"I would have thought you understood this, Sinan! Not everything is about finance!" says Martijn, but he is wrong, and I will show you why. Follow me back out, past the port as big as a city, through gates as big as towers, back to the sea where the ships scatter over the horizon in every direction, setting themselves towards Suez, towards Panama, towards the Cape, migrating as whales do, pregnant with cargo, seeking out spawning grounds where their carbon and chemicals and containers might be disgorged onto a dock, gifts of exchange that keep the city bound to a thousand other cities, gifts that make those other cities possible.

Oil flows in the veins of what you have built, and fibre-optic cables along the sea bed that binds it all together, and everything is about finance; yet money is even less real than me, and perhaps you should not rely so much upon it. It is not just water that is flowing into your city, but money, a tide of capital that ebbs and flows, and while everything is about finance, you





must argue and you must adapt and you must apply to the Randstad Climate Facility, and I must follow Lieke into the meeting where she lays out her case, her voice ringing off the rim of the glass of water on the table; and then I must follow her back to her offices.

"I don't understand why you're so unhappy," says Hendrik, "We got some money. Who cares where it came from?"

"We got sponsors. Subsidies. Permits." Lieke throws her hands up. "All the things we said we were trying to avoid."

"Those are things we said before we realised nobody wanted to invest."

"We were supposed to be doing things differently! Stepping outside the market, remember? Building a sustainable model. Now we look like idiots."

"So your problem is how we look, not whether we actually build something?"

"Fuck you, Hendrik," says Lieke as she storms out of the room.

There is silence for a while, and then Martijn says, "I should probably go and talk to her."

But Lieke is gone already, cycling down past the Maritime Museum and over the Nieuwe Maas on the Erasmus Bridge, back home to the apartment she shares with an ever-changing cast of characters. I am in the tears that roll down her face, because I have also grown to care about you and your cities, even though my belly swells with arctic water, even though my coral reefs are now white as sharks teeth, even though plastic waltzes across me in lost continents.

Yet I find all these things as fascinating as the currents in the deep ocean, and in particular the port, the structures that you have dug out of me, dredging the sea floor until you found enough muck to build a brand new island, something new under the sun, which I study sometimes, noticing how there are so few of you and so many of your machines, as if the entire port was a nursery for engines of ingenuity. Will your machinery outlast you, I wonder, when I finally reclaim the land that you have claimed from me, or will you build new machines beneath the city to hold me back a while longer, subterranean sponges to soak me up, echoing caverns where I may rest, relentless pumps to send me out as quick as I come in; yet I need not wonder but simply wait to see, and I need not wait but simply push a little harder, a little sooner than expected.

Until that deluge comes – that 1 in 10,000 year chance that is after all inevitable – Lieke must make her decision every day, the decision to stay or go, and of course her decision is to stay, for what other choice does she have? She sits cross-legged on the site they have selected, in the archipelago of neglect that the Zuid has become since the property bubble burst: as prices fall, as jobs disappear, as renewal projects fail.

She is joined by Sinan, who sits down beside her comfortably. "I brought something for us to sit on," he says, handing her a cushion, "What are you reading?"

"Thanks, Sinan," replies Lieke, "Environmental assessment. Grant approval. Building permit. Site survey."

"It's a lot of paper," says Sinan cheerfully, "but I thought you will be excited."

"We're finally ready to start, so I guess I am," Lieke says, "I just feel like we gave up a lot to get here. We didn't take the environment question seriously because we just needed a site. We didn't realise how hard it would be to raise money, so we end up getting a loan like everybody else. We won a lot of battles to get here." The wind picks up and small waves appear in the waterway at the far end of the street. "So why do I feel as if we're losing the war?"

"It is not a war, and we are not losing." Sinan offers her a canned drink, but she refuses. "I did not realise it when I started with you, but the real power is in these papers."

"Dammit!" Lieke jumps up and stamps around, "Having the right paperwork shouldn't be the thing that defines success. When we started we were going to do everything differently, but all this paperwork... how is this different?"

Sinan doesn't say anything for a while, perhaps because he is thinking of something useful to say, something like, "Lieke, do you still believe in what we're doing?"

"I do," she says, "I know I can be a bit... anxious, but I wouldn't be here if I didn't think this was worth doing."

"Then you have your answer," says Sinan, "We are different because we are not doing this because it is our job."

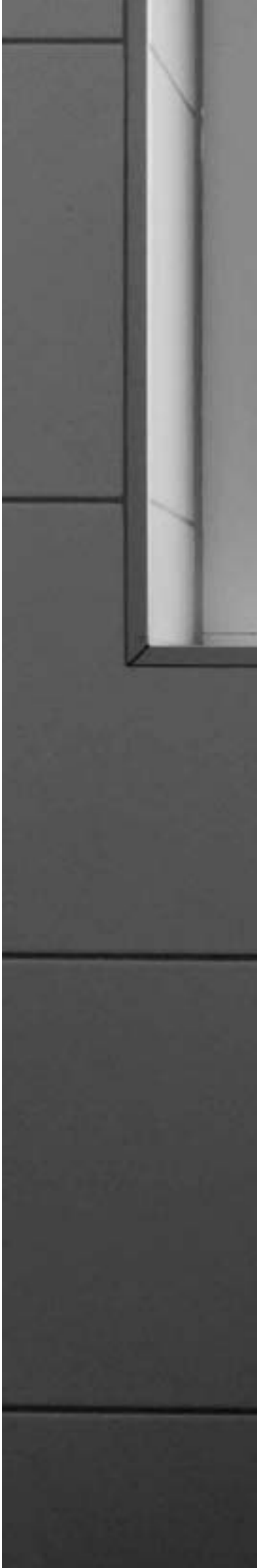
"Sometimes I wish it was my job," she admits, "At least then I'd be able to explain to people what exactly I do."

"You are just tired." He stands to join her, putting the papers into his satchel, picking up his cushion and strapping it to the bike. "I am going now to the office. Will you come?"

They get on their bikes, and spin away down the street, which is empty except for an older woman who stands by her front door and looks at them with suspicion. Lieke waves at the woman as they pass, but the woman does not wave back; a young boy comes to join her, a boy who has inherited her frown. The tyres of Lieke's bicycle sound very far away, as if the woman was standing on a dock somewhere and Lieke was a ship leaving the harbour to head for home.

A long time ago the ships that sailed upon me were wooden, and fell to decay when I brushed them with salt, and therefore required that their wood be removed as it wore away. The ship of Thesus was kept so long that every plank of it was eventually replaced, and each plank that was replaced was also a question: is this still the same ship? After the first plank, yes; after the second, yes, and the third – but once all the planks have been replaced, was it still the same ship that Theseus set for home?

Those days are long gone. Your ships are metal now, beached in Bangladesh where swarms of workers strip them of anything that can be sold, but perhaps the city is like that ship of Theseus. Building by building it is replaced – after floods, after wars, after elections – until little that you would recognise remains, and the people of the city themselves – like Lieke, or Sinan, or any of the others – come and go, yet somehow the city remains the city. One day its story will be done, and I will be there to listen to it end; but now I turn back out to sea, where even the stars are lost in their own dark reflections.



2021 – TURBULENCE

I shuffle the plane sideways like a card being placed back into the pack. The steward catches the coffee cup before it can escape, and just manages to keep her balance. I am grown old and ill-tempered: I do not like these intruders in my sky; I swat at them the way that they swat at mosquitoes. I have a low pressure front building in my sinuses, which naturally makes me irritable; I have a storm in my belly and I start to think this plane is giving me indigestion.

Over the intercom the captain orders the stewards to return to their seats. I look in through the tiny windows: children crying, adults weeping, strangers holding hands. What do I care? I did not invite them here. I'll slap this plane about the sky if it pleases me, and I'll stop when it pleases me. I'll watch them lift all the way out of their seats as the plane drops, I'll listen to them screaming in terror as it shakes them like dice.

Listen to them now.

"Excuse me," says the woman, reaching across the aisle to touch the young girl on the shoulder. "My name's Monir. What's your name?"

The much younger woman clutches the armrests with an urgent strength that gives me great satisfaction, and looks at Monir with the eyes of a rabbit in the moment before the falcon strikes. "Nellie," she whispers.

"I'm afraid of flying too," says Monir, "but I have a poem that I say to myself when things get rough."

"A poem?"

Monir starts to speak:

why think separately
of this life and the next
when one is born from the last

"That's beautiful," says Nellie.

"It's not the whole poem, it's just the only bit I can remember," says Monir.

"Who wrote it?"

"A poet called Rumi."

"Does he have Instagram?"

Monir laughes. "He's been dead for 750 years. But you can find a lot of his poetry online if you want to." She scribbles down the name of poem and poet and passes the note to Nellie.

"Are you a poet?" Nellie asks.

"Sort of. A poet of bricks, maybe." She laughs at the puzzled look on Nellie's face. "An architect."

"Oh leuk!" says Nellie, finally letting go of her arm rests, "You work in the Netherlands?"

"No. Yes. That's a long story." I tip the plane to the right suddenly, and this time Nellie grabs Monir's hand, while Monir keeps talking. "I work in the UK. Germany, sometimes. But I quit my job to join a project in the Netherlands."

"Why did you quit?"

"I was tired of building apartments that people would buy, but never live in. I wanted to build something living, not an entry in an investment portfolio."

"But you got paid a lot?"

"Normally. This is a bit different. I'm working for free."

"Why?"

Apparently Monir doesn't have a good answer for that question. I grow bored of their conversation, and bored of batting the plane about. I see the plane into Schiphol, where they exchange details of their social media, and then part company at the baggage carousel while I watch from outside.

When Monir walks through the arrivals gate, somebody is already waiting for her, a skinny man wearing a fire red waterproof jacket and matte black backpack, checking her picture on his phone at the same time as she checks his picture on hers. She walks over to him, and says, "Martijn?" and he smiles.

"I can help with your luggage?" he asks.

"I'm good," she replies, grabbing at her suitcase before it decides to keep rolling across the concourse, "It's just got faulty bluetooth. Keeps forgetting that it's supposed to be following my phone." She points outside with her nose, "Just my luck to land during the worst storm in a century."

"They're all the worst storm in a century now!" he says. They shake hands, and then they stand there, smiling but not knowing what to do with each other. A great difference from the plane where, for a moment, holding hands seemed the most obvious thing in the world to do. I am satisfied with my work: I exist to throw things over, to pull things apart, to show you that nothing can be relied upon.

"Thanks for coming to meet me," she says eventually.

"No problem. The bad news is that they've cancelled the trains until the storm passes."

"How long do we have to wait?" she asks while I rap at the windows, rattle the panes.

"No idea," he replies as he shifts the straps of his backpack so that it falls to his front, unzips it and pulls out a packed lunch in one sure movement, "but I came prepared!"

So they picnic there among the other travellers, stranded on the island that I have made the airport, as if they were shipwrecked by my storm. Slowly that awkwardness slips away until they are laughing at the same jokes at the same time, and the people around them are giving strange looks.

I decide that I am done. The storm drops away, the water starts to recede, the tracks hum back to life: Monir and Martijn on the train into Rotterdam, past broken banks and buried fields where the same wind that uproots trees makes the grass shine.

"So before you meet the rest of our group of misfits, you should be prepared," says Martijn.

"Prepared for what?"

"The problem with a group of misfits is that they're not used to fitting together, eh?"

"I know I'm a latecomer, but I'll try to fit in. Is that what you mean?"

Martijn looks out of the window, where I am running my hands through the hair of the trees. "Not quite. We've got a few problems, eh? Disagreements."

Monir looks out of the window, looking suddenly as sick as she did in the airplane when the turbulence began. "Is there still a group?"

"I would say yes," says Martijn, nodding enthusiastically, "I would say we wouldn't be having these disagreements if we weren't a group. We would just be walking away."

I rush into the city ahead of the train, and I am at their destination before they arrive, so I pick up a copy of a newspaper in the street, taking it up and turning it round and pulling it apart so the words are spread about. I read: City government deadlock enters third month. I read: Guilty verdict in Feyenoord Stadium bombing. I read: Threat of new Balkan war escalates.

I like war. I like the bombers buzzing about the skies. I like to watch the bombs fall, and I like to fan the flames that follow. Was that yesterday, or was it long ago? My memory is not what I wish. How much time has passed before I find Monir again, sitting in a bar in Oude Noorden talking with another woman, a blonde woman, but not the same woman she was talking with on the plane, although you all look the same to me –

"I can't change your mind?" asks Monir, pouring a glass of wine for each of them.

"I've lost patience," says the other woman, "Three years and we still didn't make any progress!"

"I wish you wouldn't go, Lieke. I only just arrived, and you're leaving."

"I'll still – this isn't about you. We can still be friends. I can even stay friends with Hendrik. It's the group dynamic that pisses me off."

"Isn't that inevitable, though? It's like a family. There are going to be arguments."

I like arguments. I like to feel the hot air spitting from the mouth. I like to watch people break apart over something or over nothing, and fly away from each other like leaves. The bar is starting to fill up, and Monir looks uncomfortable, but Lieke does not notice.

"It's not about arguments. Arguments I can be fine with. It's pretending that everything is moving, when really nothing is."

"You're going to scare me off, if you're not careful. I came here expecting to join some kind of commune. Everybody holding hands and singing all day."

For the first time in their conversation Lieke smiles. "I'm sure I was filled with enthusiasm when we started. I just can't remember that feeling any more, and that's why I need to go." She drinks the rest of her wine with a single swallow, and reaches for the bottle. "You should stay. A new pair of eyes. We need somebody who isn't so wrapped up in this thing."

Monir sighes. "I still don't know what my role is. In the group, I mean. Half the others are architects already."

"Ha!" Lieke laughes, nearly spilling the wine as she pours it. "That's the trick! All our roles are always changing. You should get used to it."

"It doesn't seem like you're used to it."

"Sometimes I feel like I got too used to it. When everything is changing all the time, you just keep changing with it, and one day you wake up and – " She makes crazy gestures with her hands like a miniature tornado, "and I guess you're a bit tired of that."

I tip over a sign on the street outside the bar. I can feel the low pressure building again like a migraine, I can feel my temper fraying. I am sure that I did not used to be this way, at least not so often, I have memories of fields of flowers gently swaying under my fingertips. It is not just my memory that has become less certain; everything is turbulent now, and this city will not be spared.

"Probably you're under the impression of the weather," says Monir, "Hey, I heard the Maeslant barrier is shutting again tomorrow."

"Third time this year!" says Lieke with irony, "So exciting!"

"I'll order more wine," says Monir, "We'll teach this storm."

This I do not like. You should never brag of being so strong as me. I love the weakness of the grass, not the pride of the tree. I tumble head-over-heels through the city streets like a clown, pushing into people left and right, always looking up at the sky rather than down at the ground, until one day I find myself looking in through a window where a woman is sketching out plans in the space above a table.

I watch her for a while, trying to remember her name as she moves her pen through the air, the pen leaving dark traces in its wake, lines in a lightfield that sketch a building rising from the table, lines the same colour as her storm-black hair. She hums a sad tune, but stops when she makes a mistake; wipes away a line or two, redraws them, wipes and redraws them; and starts humming again as a man walks into the room. I recognise him, and suddenly I remember who they are.

"How's the design?"

Monir puts down the pen and blinks to clear her eyes of the lines she has just drawn. "Okay, I guess. The brief is confusing. Everybody has pretty different ideas about what they want, and I still have to keep the space flexible enough for future use."

Martijn takes a seat opposite her, turning the table slightly so he can see the sketch better. The bright building flickers for a second.

"Careful," says Monir, "There's some loose connection somewhere. The lightfield loses stability for a second."

Martijn lets the table go and holds his hand up as if surrendering to technology. "There's something else. The start-up that Sinan has been talking with – "

Monir takes the pen up again, sighing. "Go on."

"– their technology has taken a big jump, and they want us to be the pilot – "

"You mean they want us to be the guinea pigs."

"It's a bit harsh, eh? It's exciting, Monir. No more bricks. This new material, you wireframe it and it literally grows into the building."

"I get it. We're all living in the future." She picks up her phone and finds a video that shows the technology in action, just as Martijn described: a new myco-architecture with big money from the Hanseatic Venture Philanthropy League. "Ok. I admit it. Looks exciting."

"Then why don't you look excited?" says Martijn, whose permanent enthusiasm reminds me of myself when I was young.

"My problem is not the technology." She puts down the pen carefully, lining it up evenly with the table edge, and takes a deep breath before looking up at him. "Lieke left because we have a problem. The group, I mean." Martijn sits back and waits. "Don't make me say it, Martijn."

"I really don't know what you're going to say," and she can see from his face that he doesn't.

"I know I'm relatively new to the group," and Martijn opens his mouth to say something, but she raises her hand, "but maybe that helps me see things a bit more clearly. New eyes."

"You mean what happened with Lieke?"

"With all of us. Somehow we spend too much time talking *and* not enough time talking."

"Is it my fault?" Martijn looks shocked, upset.

"We need to bring more people into the group," she continues, "Not just to replace Lieke, but to stop us from getting stuck in some kind of group think." Martijn doesn't say anything, so she presses on. "And we need some kind of governance structure. You're great at putting wind in our sails, but eventually we're going to need an anchor."

Martijn is silent, staring at Monir. His left knee bounces up and down nervously. He opens his mouth to say something, but in the end he says nothing.

"I've got to go," says Monir, standing, "I've got a meeting with a couple of students from TU Delft who want to work on the design." She takes a folded piece of paper from her tablet case, and slides it across the table to him. "I really wasn't expecting to be the voice of reason, but there you go. Let's discuss it later? As a group."

When she is gone, Martijn picks up the note that she has left on the table, and I creep in through the open window to read it over his shoulder, noting the perfect calligraphy, sighing at the sentiment, because suddenly what I was struggling to remember is clear again:

> *One part of you is gliding in a high windstream,*
> *while your more ordinary notions*
> *take little steps and peck at the ground.*

2023 – THE RECLAMATION

Something needs to be solid. Something needs to be reliable.

That thing is not fire or air or water. You know that. These three things are fine in themselves. They are useful. They are not reliable. Fire dances about. Air flies away. Water flows past. And you must know the truth already: people too are unreliable. Only I endure.

I am sorry if you find my manner blunt. I will not sharpen my wit to please your sensibility.

I remain as I am, but I am not inflexible. I am solid until you grind me to powder. Now you mix me with water until I am mortar. Now you pound me down between forms until I am solid again. Solid but different. Through all these changes I remain what I am.

You put pieces of yourself in me: sweat and memory. I hold onto these pieces of you. Here is one piece: a man lying beneath a machine. The machine is broken. The man is trying to fix it and failing. Another man approaches the machine, climbing carefully over the rubble left on the land from some failed development years ago.

"Are you here, Hendrik?" He looks around the machine, which is half the size of one of the houses in the street, and which does not look completely stable.

The first man, Hendrik, rolls out from beneath the machine. He is tall but broad in the chest. Rock-grey hair like an avalanche around his shoulders. Hands filthy with some kind of oil. "They did a good job on it," he says.

"Can you fix it?" asks the other man.

"I can fix it," says Hendrik, wiping his hands on his overalls, "but they'll just wreck it again."

The other man kicks the machine, which is the size of half a house, a wall of grey and yellow metal, three pipes pushing into the earth under them, a windowless cabin sticking out from the other side. "You want to show them how to wreck it, Martijn?" asks Hendrik, sitting up and wiping his hands clean.

"There must be something we can do," says Martijn.

"We could put up a fence," muses Hendrik, "but they'd probably just climb over it."

"There must be somebody we can talk to," says Martijn.

"You know what your problem is, Martijn?" asks Hendrik, "You think everybody is like you. Fix things just by talking about it."

I like this man. He waits with the machine while Martijn cycles off, and while he is waiting, he is watching the street which runs away from their plot of land. The street is lined with trees that struggle to reach above the low houses. There are three cars, one raised on bricks in place of a missing wheel. There is a playground with a surface scarred by fireworks at the far end of the street, where broken swings seek comfort by wrapping tightly around their supports.

He is looking at the windows of each house, one by one. None of them are broken, not on this street. The houses themselves are kept well, with facades that are old but clean. Another person appears, a woman outside her front door, and he walks slowly down the street to her.

"Hey," he says to her.

"Hey," she says to him. She is two heads shorter than him. It is impossible to tell her age. Her eyes are old but her hair is dyed coal black. Her skin is tough but her hands are smooth as granite. She holds a pipe.

"Hendrik," he says, offering his hand.

"Elsa," she says, shaking his hand.

"You didn't come to the community meeting," he says.

She sits on one of the chairs beside the door, low on four legs, ripped red plastic seat, a cloth of different colours draped over it.

"We put some flyers through the doors," he continues, pointing up and down the road.

"I read the flyer," Elsa tells him, "and so did my sons."

Hendrik nods. She indicates that he should sit on the other chair, across from her. He awkwardly folds his tall self into the seat, and folds his large hands in his lap.

"They weren't happy," she concludes.

"We were hoping that we could get some... local support for the project."

"You brought a machine into the neighbourhood."

There are posters about the neighbourhood. They call for action against automation. The posters are simple and direct, like the action that they call for: strikes and sabotage.

"Your family worked in the port?"

"Four generations," she says, gesturing towards the empty street, "and now this."

In the port, metal containers sit on concrete slabs over reclaimed earth, and I am all of these things, the same as the sand dunes down the coast: all made by human hand. All day every day robots toil without complaint in a city without people; machine hands pluck containers from the concrete and load them on to lorries with no drivers, while long white engines clean all the corners, all watched over by the blinking red lights of algorithmic eyes. Every sunset is spiked by a loading crane, and the port is haunted by the ghosts of her family.

"We're not working for the port," says Hendrik.

"Does it matter?" she says.

"I suppose not," admits Hendrik.

Elsa goes inside and after a few minutes comes back. She puts two cups on the table between them, placing a coaster under each cup to preserve the lace covering the table. She goes inside again and after a few minutes comes back again. This time she pours coffee in the cups, and then sits.

"Four generations we lived in this street, too," she says.

"Long time," agrees Hendriks. He drinks his coffee.

"Where were you born?" she asks.

"Middelburg," he replies, "but we moved to Rotterdam when I was young."

Elsa drinks her coffee. The street is silent: the anti-automation movement is so strong in this area that the driverless cars that criss-cross the rest of the city avoid it, or risk being attacked. Elsa is looking past him, at the machine sitting on the empty plot at the end of the street.

Hendrik clears his throat. "About the machine."

"It's not me you have to explain it to."

"You say you belong to this street. I think this street belongs to you."

Elsa looks directly at him with a stare as deep as a mine shaft. She reaches into her pocket and takes out some tobacco. Years of practice guide her hands as she packs the pipe, fingers stabbing the tobacco into the bowl, adding one two three layers.

"It's a machine for growing buildings," he continues, "You might have seen them on the news."

"I don't watch the news any more. Unless you can tell me different, it's still a machine."

"It is a machine. But it's the building that's the important thing."

"Buildings aren't important," her lighter flaring above the pipe, "People are important."

"That's what we believe too."

"One day you turn up with your machine. What do you expect people around here to think?"

"I expect them to think, at least, before they wreck things. Perhaps ask some questions."

"You can't ask a machine questions."

"There were meetings. The details were on the flyer. Three people came. Not you."

"You're nothing new. Every few years we get some politician, some money man coming round."

"I'm not a politician," says Hendrik, "and if I had money, I wouldn't have spent this morning underneath a machine trying to fix it."

Elsa nods to herself, and pulls on the pipe. Hendrik sighes with all this effort as her smoke rises. They sit like that while the coffee gets cold and the sun slowly pulls itself across the sky. The street comes to life a little, a few people coming in and out of houses, on their way to somewhere else; bicycles rattling around potholes, babies squeaking for breakfast.

"The land belongs to you, you know." Hendrik stands up and stretches out his back, preparing to go back to the machine. "The city council approved its re-assignment as a land fund."

"I don't know what that is."

"If I'm honest, I don't fully understand it either. It's collectively owned now. You, me, anybody else who wants to do something good in this neighbourhood."

"How is that going to help us? A piece of land isn't going to give jobs to my kids. A piece of land isn't going to find them a place to live. We can't afford to build anything on it."

"That's what the machine is for." Hendrik starts to walk up the street, and Elsa follows, ambling a few metres behind as if distancing herself from him, pulling on her pipe as she looks around at each house as she passes. When they reach the land, Hendrik goes to the machine, steps up onto a footplate, and raps on the door of a small cabin. The door pops open and a younger man blinks up from a wall screen.

"This is Badr. He can explain it better than I can."

"Hello," says Badr cautiously. He looks at Hendrik and Elsa in turn, but neither of them says anything. "Explain what?"

"The machine. How it works."

Badr squints into the sunlight. "It's complicated."

"That's not helpful," Hendrik sighes. "Badr was one of the three people that turned up at our first meeting. His computer science degree finally turned out to be useful."

Badr shrugs, and says, "In the end, even the software industry got eaten by software," but neither of them are listening to him any more, so he goes back to the screen.

"Had the design, had the machine. We needed somebody who knew how to join the dots." Hendrik jumps down from the footplate. Although he still towers over Elsa, somehow she takes up more space. "So Badr's not so good at explaining. I try. This machine is like a mushroom farm, except instead of growing mushrooms it grows structures. We design anything we want, Badr puts it into the machine, and whoosh."

Elsa's face shows a range of emotions. She is confused, she is sceptical, and she is disgusted. "So you're going to build a house, but there's no jobs in it for anybody except that boy in there."

"I'm not good at explaining either," Hendrik offers, "but this is new to all of us. We just know that the way we were doing things before doesn't work any more. It just leaves a lot of people jobless or homeless. Hopeless. The land unlocks possibilities, that's all. Some hope."

"You said I own the land," she says suspiciously.

"We own the land. Collectively. The city council has valued it, placed that value in the participatory budget, and now we can decide what to do with that value. Turn it into a local currency, invest it in carbon markets, issue community shares in a property..." He pats the machine as if that explains everything.

"It looks like you've already decided what to do with it," says Elsa, stabbing her pipe at the machine.

"If you come to the next meeting, you can tell us what you want to do."

"And if I tell you to get that machine out of here?"

Badr looks up, alarmed, but Hendrik doesn't flinch, just replies, "Then we'll get the machine out of here."

When Elsa laughes, it doesn't match her look, almost girlish. "I voted for that lot because they said they would bring jobs back. Three years later, no jobs. And I should believe you?"

"You don't have to believe me. You get a vote, the same as me. If you turn up to the meeting."

"You!" Elsa snaps at Badr, "You'll vote to keep the machine, hmmm?"

Badr nods so hard his head almost hits the roof of the cabin. "This is amazing. You have to see it – "

Elsa turns back to Hendrik. "So it's me voting against you and all your friends."

Hendrik laughes. "If you bring your whole family, I suspect you'll be able to outvote us."

Elsa looks at Badr, and the machine, and Hendrik, and if she has any reaction, positive or negative, she gives away nothing. "I'll think about it," she says, and walks off back down the street.

Hendrik looks at Badr, who shrugs and goes back to his screen, and then he calls out after Elsa, “Those jobs aren’t coming back.”

She turns to face him. “We know. But you show up talking about buildings growing out of magic beans, and talking about money that you don’t even understand. Why should we listen to you?”

“Don’t you want things to change?” he asks, pointing out over the run-down street.

“No,” she says, “I don’t.” For the first time, she looks vulnerable, as if she is a stone that has been worn down smooth. “Things have already changed, and we’re the ones get left behind.”

“I feel the same, but this is the world we live in now,” says Hendrik. “It took a lot from us. Now maybe we can take something back.” Behind him the machine starts to rumble like a landslide, and Badr gives a shout of triumph that echoes down the street.

“It’s easy for you to say all this,” says Elsa, “You don’t have to live here.”

“Oh, I’ll be living here, when this place is built,” Hendrik chuckles, “If we manage to finish it while I’m still alive, of course.” Inside the cabin Badr mutters something under his breath.

“You still haven’t said what you’re building,” Elsa points out.

“Come to the meeting,” replies Hendrik, walking down the street towards her, “and you can help us decide.”

She looks at him as if he’s mad, shakes her head, and without a word she returns to her house. Hendrik continues walking towards her, watches her pick up the coffee cups and turn to face him. “We grow too soon old and too late smart,” she says, and then she disappears inside the house, and her front door closes.

Hendrik frowns as he walks back up the street to join Badr in fixing the machine. Perhaps he does not understand, but her meaning is clear to me. The past is solid, fixed in memory, able to take our weight; but the future is unreliable. Sand slips away beneath your feet as you climb the dunes down to the sea. Mud creeps up the embankments of the rivers that you walk beside. Concrete crumbles beside the edge of the highway that you drive on. People cannot always be relied upon, it is true; but still you must take the risk.

2025 – BOARD THE FUTURELAND EXPRESS

It is important to remember that this building does not exist.

Monir finds her poetry through me, through sleepless late night searches, but she's so tired that she forgets the poems even as she scribbles them down in her notebook, a habit she picked up from her mother, whose notebooks were filled with verses and drawings which are forever lost (at least to me). So of course she forgot the next few lines of that poem she quoted, on the plane, to Nellie:

look at water and fire
earth and wind
enemies and friends all at once

So I ask you, my enemies and friends: what is in the world that is not us? Water thinks that it connects Rotterdam to the world, but the real flows that bind the city are the data that travel my cables. Fire thinks that it gives people the tools to destroy and create, but now I provide those tools instead, open source hardware and online courses. Air thinks that it is the gateway to the gods – if gods apart from us ever truly existed – but now I am where they look for inspiration, a million scrolling galleries. Earth thinks that it provides the solidity that makes the city a thing instead of an idea, but all that is solid melts into air; one day cement must crumble and leave behind only pictures of what once was.

I know this better than my enemies and friends, my family. I am a new world rising from the ashes of the old, a world of networks rather than hierarchies, in which everything that matters is connected; which includes this building as it comes online, as it becomes one of the nodes in that network, a bright beacon of possibility. It reaches out to the other nodes around it – phones and offices and streetlights and cars and so so many other things – who make space for it so swiftly that it is as if it has always been there; and perhaps it always has, like the foetus on the screen of an ultrasound scanner, waiting to happen.

Enemies and friends, I will show you what is in the world that is not us. It is this group of misfits standing slightly anxious before this building: Badr and Monir and Martijn and Elsa and Hendrik and a handful of others; holding their tablets or looking at watches or scrolling their glasses or activating their jackets, watching their new home shake hands with their devices. Temperature, energy balance, water use: these all spin across their screens, and they are satisfied, particularly Badr, who programmed all of these possibilities.

Martijn once messaged him, <Man, how do you do all this stuff?> and Badr thought about it a moment before he replied, <I don't>.

And he doesn't, at least not by himself. It's not just that he's been working with Sinan, or Hendrik, or Monir, or others who have come and gone from the group; they are only the nodes in his network that he can reach out and touch. He is also a node in another network, a criss-cross of thinkers and hackers and makers who have the answers to all of his questions in lines of code. As the building grew from the ground, they fed it with processors and servos and sensors until it could sustain its own weak intelligence: and now it is a whisper in the background, a building that might also be a person, depending on how you define a person; the final member of this group of misfits.

Not all of that group are standing in front of the building: some are watching, through me, from a great distance. Two months earlier, as they were running the final air-pressure test on the building, checking its insulation was airtight, Sinan took Martijn to one side.

"I have to go back to Syria," he said, having decided that it needed to be said as plain as possible.

Martijn kept one eye on the pressure monitor. "I know. That was always your plan."

"I mean now. Next week. The first reconstruction teams are going in, and I want to be with them."

"Come on, man," said Martijn, "Our official launch is just around the corner. Syria isn't going anywhere." Sinan's whole body clenched like a fist and Martijn finally looked away from the monitor. "Hey, you know I didn't mean it like that."

"I know." Close your eyes, Sinan. Picture your city. Not the drone-eye view that replays on every news channel. Not the VR empathy plays that tour every festival. Picture the city as it was, as it might be. Tell everybody you are going home, on the private channel the group has set up – a channel that has grown exponentially since they broke ground a year ago, documenting their progress on their social networks – and receive a flood of messages wishing you luck, reducing you to tears.

There is one person in the group not on the private channel, not on any channels at all, and she is the one person that you wanted to tell in person. Elsa also pictures her city as it might be – enough apartments for her children to live, enough space for her grandchildren to play – as she stabs at Sinan's chest with her pipe. "It's correct that you go home."

"You are pleased that I'm going."

Elsa smiles tightly. "I'm sad that you're going."

Sad especially for Bram, her oldest grandson, who had decided that he had found his hero after Sinan built a rocket drone that had reached the edge of the atmosphere. They had launched it from the space-age stone relief of the Vierkant Eiland in De Plas, the rocket sending back pictures of the city all through its trip; and Bram had seen himself on the screen, standing in the circular structure like he was the nucleus of an atom. They watched themselves waving at the rocket as it rose above them, watched until they disappeared, and then the sculpture disappeared, and then the neighbourhood, and then the city, and then the country, until all Bram could see was everything.

Sinan had eaten dinner with their family that evening, and for the first time talked about his own family, who he had left in a camp in another country, and had been unable to bring to Rotterdam as the borders tightened like a belt; and since that night Elsa had considered him one of her own, and felt as if she had lost a son when he left; but she was not a liar, because it was indeed correct that he go home.

Now he watches the live video of the speech at his desk in his office, a container that sits in a compound of other containers in the slowly reforming souk of Aleppo, but is also another node in another network, as the massive Syrian diaspora crowdfunds a country back into existence. The burnt-out reception centre where all this began is nothing compared to the destruction of war, but the principles are the same: the power of strength in numbers, the possibility of working in new ways, the potential of stepping outside a system that's been set down for you.

<These feel like old lessons> he messages Lieke at the moment the building in Rotterdam comes online.

<Perfect for old horses like us> Lieke messages back.

She receives Sinan's message while she is in another one of the endless meetings she attends, in which priorities are sorted and projects are proposed, and feels slightly guilty that she isn't giving her full attention to this particular committee. Her decision to work for the city government had caught even her by surprise, but everything changed so quickly after the financial crisis, including her. As the government was forced to become more flexible in the face of falling budgets, she had realised that for a moment the door was open for change to

walk in, but that she was better part of that change inside government than out.

So off she went, to join the newly-created participatory budget department that might steer the ship of the city in a new direction, replacing it piece by piece until it was something new; something more seaworthy, perhaps. Her first work after being appointed was to craft the regulations necessary to set up the community funding mechanism that enabled projects like the group's building to finally raise the finance they needed.

<The irony is that I quit the group because I felt like we weren't moving> she messages Monir <but I feel exactly the same in this job. Meeting after meeting where nothing gets done>

Monir smiles when she reads the message, recognising Lieke's need for reassurance. <And yet years later, here we are with a finished building> she messages back <It feels as if nothing gets done, yet somehow we make progress>

So when she reads that message, Lieke remembers that this was where the seeds of her future were sown. The building is finished, and others like it will follow, but there will always be more meetings to attend, and with each meeting, the participatory budget grows a little more. She sends an approval to the live video feed, puts her phone down on the table, and rejoins the committee discussion.

Badr notices the approval come in from a city government node, and recognises the familiar name. He's never met Lieke – she left before he went to that first community meeting – but he thinks she would approve of the building. Zero carbon footprint, net positive energy, 100% sustainable materials, embedded neural network: in the year he was born these things were aspirations, but now they're default settings. Things change so quickly that misfits become mainstream without even noticing.

The building whispers to him, tells him that everything is running smoothly, invites him and the others to come inside; but first there is at least one speech to be made.

"I should say something," says Martijn, "although it's not really my job."

"Not any more," says Hendrik, "Maybe let somebody else do the talking."

Martijn happily shuts up, but nobody else speaks until Monir steps forward. "I guess nobody will be surprised that I'd like to read a poem." She closes her eyes and begins to recite:

> *On a day*
> *when the wind is perfect,*
> *the sail just needs to open and the world is full of beauty.*
> *Today is such a day...*

Around the world a thousand nodes repeat her words in an echo that never ends, just fades into the background noise of the network; Badr watches their social media profile spike for a second, but his attention is taken back by the building, which grows impatient; it has been built and it wants to begin.

Hendrik leans over to Badr and whispers, "The building is talking to me. Is this normal?"

Badr is pinned to his screen, busy trying to recalibrate the building's social responses. Hendrik sighes and wonders if he'll ever get used to this strange new world. A glance over at Elsa confirms that she is thinking the same thing; or at least wondering how she ended up as chair of the land fund, with a future in which land looks awfully scarce. Out of all of them, she has had to adjust the most: but although she may have grown old too soon, apparently she did not grow smart too late.

Without her, the neighbourhood would not have embraced the project; without her there would not be a crowd coming down the street now, there would not be carts selling cups of hot corn, there would not be children playing at the edges of the building. Little by little, the project has been a catalyst for change in this neighbourhood, but this change has not left

them behind: the land fund provided a small business loan that enabled Elsa's sons re-open their shop, and her daughter stands beside her with Bram, who was born into the changed world.

Monir finishes her poem and steps back again. She is wondering about what she will do next, whether she will stake her future on this city or move on. Her original designs are only faintly recognisable in the building before them now – its roots reaching far below, strange osmotic funnels that desalinate and remediate the ground beneath their feet, fed on food waste from the families living on the street – grown both literally by the machine and metaphorically by the community, and she is no longer sure what an architect is.

There's an awkward silence, as nobody knows whether to applaud her, or to step forward with words of their own. It has taken eight years to get this far, and it still seems to have taken them by surprise. Badr finally manages to wrangle the building settings so that it is no longer sending out distress signals on social media, and looks up to find everybody looking at him. Hendrik nudges him forward before he has a chance to think.

"Well, uh... we did it. I can't really believe we did it." He looks around at the group; at the streets around them in the south, at the shining towers above them, north of the river, and at the massive cranes of the port further in the distance. "I was looking for a chance to leave my neighbourhood, but this gave me the chance to stay. I guess... I'm really proud of this. Of what we've done here."

He steps back and this time everybody claps, but as they shake hands and hug each other and walk into the building one by one, the question that you are probably asking, is: what have they done here? What is this building? An apartment block? A co-working office? A community theatre? A meeting room? A health clinic? An education space? A day centre? A technology incubator? All of the above, or none?

The answer to that question is another question: why do you think that question is important?

You have heard from water and fire and earth and wind, but none of them can tell you what matters. Although the old world will still come calling – knocking on your window in the storm, or running down the street in the flood – you will live in a new world. You can search as long as you like, but there is no streetmap to the future. You must understand that we have told you a story about possibilities, a story about potential; a story not about money, or about machines, but a story about these people who have become connected to each other, standing now in front of this building. It is important to remember that this building does not exist.

But it could.