opens onto the multiplicity and the transversality of the streets. It is also a common area, neither private nor public, but a space that is shared by all the residents. The ground floor is a space-time where our paths can cross, where we can meet or ignore each other, where we can stop long enough to have a conversation, or through which we can pass as quickly as possible. It is a place shared by the most unlikely objects: bicycles, strollers, pieces of furniture left behind after a move, piles of junk mail, letters waiting for their addressees on top of mailboxes… We use the phrase 'on the ground floor of the city' to express a methodological principle. A sociology of 'urban interstices' can indeed have no better epistemological point of view than that afforded by the multiplicity of the ground floor with its interfaces and intervals, its intersection of many working and living communities. This 'common space' is composed of a large variety of collective space-times, each rejecting a withdrawal into identity or a supposedly protective intimacy as much as a verbose and intrusive 'publicization', Where are these ground floors of the city located? Where are our common places? They are to be found in the multiplicity of uncertain spaces -in *terrains vagues* and abandoned sites, everywhere transitions and transversality remain possible, everywhere we can still imagine there is something common, something shared, something that connects us.

Translated by **Millay Hyatt**

(1) This article came out of research on temporary urban interstices, intercultural spaces under construction, and neighborhood localities that was conducted under the auspices of the interdisciplinary research program *Art – Architecture and Landscape* of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Urban Planning. The research was carried out in collaboration with Constantin Petcou, Doina Petrescu, François Deck, and Kobe Matthys. The findings are largely based on conversations we had with the inhabitants of La Chapelle and with the numerous artists, activists, architects, and nonprofit groups who were associated at one point or another with our work. More information on this project, initiated by Doina Petrescu and Constantin Petcou and undertaken between 2005 and 2007, can be found at www.iscra.fr

(2) *La sorcellerie capitaliste - Pratiques du désenvoûtement*, éd. La Découverte, 2005, p.149.

(3) Idem, p.149.

(4) Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne 2 - Fondements d'une sociologie de la quotidienneté*, L'Arche éditeur, 1961, p.25.

(5) Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*. Trans. Leslie A. Boldt. SUNY Press, 1988, p.3.

(6) Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne 3 - De la modernité au modernisme, Pour une métaphilosophie du quotidien*, L'Arche éditeur, 1981, pp.105-106.

(7) Idem, p.106.

(8) De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven F. Rendail. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, p.48.

(9) Cf. Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société* - Cours au Collège de France, 1976, Gallimard-Seuil, 1997, pp8-9.

(10) Michael Hardt and Toni Negri, *Empire*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000, p.46.

(11) Idem, p.54.

(12)Ibid., p.55.

(13) Cf. Constantin Petcou and Doina Petrescu, 'Au rez-de-chaussée de la ville', in Multitudes, n°20, 2005, p.75-87. The article can be found online on the magazine's website: http://multitudes.samizdat.net

Constantin Petcou / Doina Petrescu

Acting Space
Transversal notes, on-the-ground observations and concrete questions for us all

The crisis of the capitalist space

Capitalist means of production and of spatial-territorial management are more than ever undergoing a crisis. Global capitalist space is polarised between the North and the South, furrowed with unprecedented flows (of money, resources, people, etc.) for the most part in one direction. Certain cities are undergoing uncontrolled growth or decline, whether they are globalised under the control of mafias or obscure interest groups (religious, economic, political) in the South, or under pressure from economic mutations such as 'shrinking cities' in the North. From an ecological standpoint, the modes of territorial occupation and exploitation are evolving into a planetary stalemate: every day the surfaces of natural land diminish, making way for concrete and tarmac, implicitly contributing to the decrease of biodiversity. After years of study of the 'planetary garden', landscape architect Gilles Clement, overtly criticizes the modes of space anthropisation and underlines how unspoilt spaces play a role of protector. In this line of thought, he specifies how revealing it is that the IFLA (International Foundation of Landscape Architecture) assimilates industrial wastelands to 'endangered landscape'. (1)

In the same way, sociologists and political scientists are trying to understand the major changes linked to this global territorial management: changes in the modes and temporality of labour, dislocation of traditional sociability forms, trivialization of violence in an urban setting and, by counter-reaction, privatisation of public spaces and the drive towards a multiplication of gated communities. For Arjun Appadurai, it is due to a gap between contemporary cultural realities and the shapes that must insure an acceptable level of social cohesion: the failure of the nation-state to bear and define the lives of its citizens is perceptible through the increase in parallel economies, private and semi-private police armies, secessionist nationalisms and non-governmental organizations that offer alternatives to the national control of subsistence and justice'.(2)

At a micro scale, capitalist space is drowned under promotional pressure that is continually carried out by all communication means and media (mail, telephone, television, internet) transforming the home into an absolute centre of a consumerist culture of the ephemeral. All objects are disposable; they are no longer recycled or repaired by oneself. Marketing studies, perfectly include family temporalities in order to reach their different targets, at very specific hours, in their specific vulnerability (greedy children, solitary unemployed,

beloved animals, curious students, retired people in good health, couples in love, etc.). On a larger scale, capitalist space is ever more limited and controlled: by a permanent decrease in the field of possible actions within an urban space, by the superimposition of numerous regulations and norms. In his attempt to imagine the possibility of an ecological balance between environment, social issues and subjectivity, Felix Guattari denounces the impoverishment and homogenisation produced by the capitalistic control of the media and of public space: 'productions of "primary" subjectivity (…) are spreading on a truly industrial scale, especially by media and infrastructure'.(3) This impoverishment of urban space can be seen via the gradual disappearance of space devoted to public uses and that of space likely to be appropriated for informal uses based on responsibility and reciprocal trust.

Referring to Jane Jacobs' analysis, and singling out the inherent contradictions that capitalism creates on space, in his book devoted to the production of space, Henri Lefebvre underlines the abstract character of capitalistic space 'which acts as a tool or domination'.(4) The methods and scenarios which try to be 'creative' and 'attractive' (by offering Theme Parcs, Urban Renewal programmes, 'City Branding' operations etc.) are often a failure because space is above all considered in terms of financial yield and its subjects are manipulated to accomplish just that. Capitalist economy continues to create desubjectivated, consumerist and abstract urban spaces.

How is it possible to regain ownership, to resubjectivate the city? How does one act being a professional of space issues; by what approach and by what political measure? How is it possible to act being a regular inhabitant?

Desubjectivated space
For most of us, we react by simply following the same lifestyle since we lack instruments to act; and by waiting for decisions to be made by high decision-making bodies, decisions which are difficult to materialise because of the divergent interests put into play and the macro-economic, geo-political unbalances which overlap evermore at all levels.
What some of us, the most politically active, are able to do, is to react by criticizing, by organizing demonstrations, signing petitions and publishing alarming information on internet. But these reactions stay at an abstract and discursive level even if the discourse sometimes 'takes to the streets'. Acting 'in the streets', in public space and on a large scale is important and necessary, but sometimes leads to no outcome and to no constructive proposals. And when there is an outcome, it is recovered by the dominating power, often excluding those who, being concerned, articulated and asked for those changes.
On the actual daily level, this barrier is due, among other things, to individuals being reduced to roles which are void of any critical and active social position. Georgio Agamben points at the contemporary state which acts like some kind of 'desubjectivating machine, like a machine which blurs all classical identities and at the same time, and Foucault states it very well, like a machine which recodes, juridically speaking

especially, dissolved identities'(5). Agamben goes on to underline that the ground for this resubjectivation 'is the same which exposes us to the subservient process of biopower. Thus there is ambiguity and risk. Foucault demonstrates: the risk is that we re-identify ourselves, that we invest this situation with a new identity, that we produce a new subject, very well, but a subject subservient to the state, and from there we carry on, despite ourselves, with this infinite process of subjectivation and subservience which is precisely the definition of Biopower'.(6) The crisis related to space is doubled by the crisis of individual and collective subjectivity.

If in our action we limit ourselves to a criticism of the institutions, that of the state and of Capitalism, there is little hope for change. Acting to build « another world » will continue to have limited impact as long as we don't give ourselves the means, individually within our reach, to reinvest urban space collectively, ecologically and politically; as long as this space stays desubjectivated by our absence.

For the past few years and through a series of practical experiments begun with the *atelier d'architecture autogérée,* we've been trying to develop, without ado, with the means at our disposal and by associating anyone wishing to get involved, an approach, which starting at the micro level, is able to provide another vision of the city.(7)

Acting in the interstices
When new people come to these spaces we've initiated, very often they ask if they can do such and such activity. And, before answering, we ask ourselves if this activity could be done again by others later on, insofar as not to hinder the project. We've come to understand, together with the users of these spaces, that the freedom of each person to act in a mutual space is conditioned by the necessity to not hider someone else's freedom nor that of the whole project as a collective one. This way of acting allows for the spatial coexistence of a 'multitude in movement'(8). It's a way that gives the most autonomy and at the same time spatial coexistence of subjects, which can manifest their differences in a 'permanent heterogenesis'(9). By the human complexity put into play, 'spatial acting' teaches us to manage the contradictions that space contains. Inevitably these spaces will be contradictory by their content.

Acting spatial takes time. It is necessary to allow enough time for actively reinvesting space; to spend time on location, to meet other people, to reinvent uses of free time, to give oneself more and more time to share with others. Common desires can thus emerge from these 'shared moments', collective dynamics and projects to come. Patiently, we had to rebuild practices in spaces void of use, which are no longer suited to anyone. Lefebvre clearly distinguishes the difference in nature between space produced by a bottom-up process, set-up by concerned users and space decided by domineering mechanisms: 'the user's space is experienced, not represented (conceived). Referring to the abstract space of skills (architects, urban planners, designers), the space of tasks that users accomplish on a daily level is a tangible space. Which means subjective. 'It

is a space of "subjects" and not of calculations...'(10). Therefore, we are looking to set the conditions of a non-predetermined experience, of a subjective experience which produces a collective narration of urban space through daily activity.

In the space smoothed over by capitalism, we must imagine other spaces to invest: grooves, cracks, breaches, loop-holes. We must multiply the modalities to act on the edge, the margins, the borders. In permaculture, we refer to the 'border effect'; the 'margin effect' and Clement reminds us that there is more life where environments meet and overlap: 'limits –interfaces, canopies, borders, thresholds, outskirts- in themselves comprise biological layers. Their wealth is often superior to the environments that they divide'.(11) In the spaces of 'biological depth', energy is concentrated and intensified by difference, by the encounter with other species. Likewise, in his quest for a definition of democratic space where we are not just tolerant, indifferent of difference, but precisely where 'you do care about things or people who are different from you', Richard Sennett refers to the multi-functional margin of the agora (*Stoas, Heliaia*, etc.) (12) He also talks about the difference between limited space and fringed space, between 'boundary' and 'border', defining the border as something simultaneously resistant and porous. This double and contradictory characteristic 'resistant and porous' mirrors the intensity and contradiction that characterize the paradoxical condition of the edge.

Like a metonymy of what happens inside, the limits and the enclosures of shared spaces that we've built to this day always find another function, parallel and contradictory: to let the view go through, to let the plants grow over, to expose, to play, etc. In this way, a limit between two spaces is transformed into a space of exchange; the separation is transformed into an interface for dialogue. We've replaced existing opaque enclosures with neighbourhood enclosures, library enclosures, pierced enclosures, gardened, soft…

Alterotopical spaces

By looking for urban spaces available for 'acting', we've invested cracks and 'in-betweens' that are also spaces that concentrate energy, are contradictory and porous. Clement describes them as spaces that allow a stronger ecological wealth than well-defined landscapes. In an urban setting, the 'in-between' is most often a neglected area between two buildings, a hollow between two wholes. Clement tells us that these cracks form a 'tiers paysage' – 'third landscape' which comprises 'a territory for the multiple species which find nowhere else to be'.(13) It is the model of space to be shared with others: *alterotopy*. Foucault spoke of 'heterotopias' as spaces that have 'the power to juxtapose in one real place many spaces and locations which are by themselves incompatible', 'spaces of the other'.(14) But the spaces we're interested in, *alterotopias*, are other spaces as much as spaces of 'the other', and spaces built and shared 'with others' with those 'you do care about, who are different from you'.
Acting spaces become spaces to question daily life, its potential, its barriers, its imposed temporalities. By blaming the stereotypical mechanisms of conformed spaces, these

acting spaces can become spaces to dis-learn uses that are subservient to capitalism and to relearn singular uses, by producing a collective and spatial subjectivity proper to those involved. Through the daily weaving of desires, these micro-spatial practices in space introduce other temporalities, other dynamics (longer, random, collective and sometimes self-managed) thus comprising spaces, which undergo continual transformation, 'auto-poïetical'.(15)

By investing the 'on our doorsteps', we create interstices, differences, in a homogenised and abstract city. By overcoming the anonymous condition that we usually find as soon as we leave the house, we can contribute to resubjectivate space. From these spaces, proximity can acquire a familiar character; we meet familiar faces, we say hello to some passers-by, we exchange words and phrases with neighbours. Acting 'at one's doorstep' allows one to find a local anchorage. At a certain moment, there is the risk to settle for this rediscovered social dimension and to limit oneself to a local and closed-in social circle. Indeed, the acting spaces that we develop stay open to transit, to intersecting with other subjectivities and dynamics from elsewhere; stemming from the local, we work to set up spatial trans-local networks and make them operational.(16)

This functional and pragmatic mixture of spaces that would 'normally' not intersect, this neighbourhood community that is active and permanent with 'the other', this weaving of scales and trans-local positions enable a spatial *alterotopic* production. It is a *realistic utopia*, such as Jacques Rancière describes it in his analysis of the political project: 'not the dazzling utopia of the distant island, of the nowhere land, but the imperceptible utopia which consists in having two separate spaces coincide'.(17) Through this practice of trans-local *alterotopias*, we can reintroduce 'the political dimension' in everyday space.

'agencement jardinier'/ gardening assemblage

For years, the children of families of African origin who regularly frequent ECObox named the garden 'gardening'. At first we thought it was some kind of infantile slang or a linguistic error. Listening to them speak about the project as a place where they can play, ride their bikes, garden, draw, play music…where they can do anything, we came to understand their term. They had grasped the active character of space, the permanent transformation of the project according to those who invest in it. It was their way of defining acting in an auto-poietical space. The 'acting' is always an assemblage. What is important is the quality of this organisation, its 'how'. Gardening offers a model for a certain type of organisation, which takes into account the singularities, implies patience, availability and the unexpected.

Auto-poïetical 'acting' enables the setting up of a daily ecology via 'agencement jardinier' (gardening assemblage): organisational dynamics by neighbourhood communities, conducting to exchanges, mobile, tolerant and cyclic. These are schemes that come close to ecological dynamics whilst being adapted to an urban environment, to small scales, to daily uses and practices. This mode of action by "agencement jardinier" can,

in time, produce a *constituent space* for modes of collective processes and for a local political acting.

'Gardened space' contrasts to 'modern space' produced by and experienced through a pragmatic cut-out, which separates all heterogeneous elements: functions, users, scales, etc. Because of these cut-outs, which bring about homogeneous, monovalent spaces, without contradiction, when superimpositions of heterogeneous environments and functions do occur, they are accidental and lead to conflict.

The *gardening assemblage* teaches us, via the different environments, to go from one space to another, to change locations and to come back. Little by little, we were able to link the heterogeneous spaces that we were building, together with their users, by bringing about unusual encounters, bits of dialogue, doing and making together, letting contradictions arise gently, learning about politics via heterogeneous temporalities, dynamics and content. More than verbal and deliberative forms, gardening assemblage encourages physical, visual, non-verbal practices; an incorporated democracy, living together as a common body.(18)

Nevertheless, investing in spatial acting must enable one to stay free in his/her action, free to change, to stop, to pass on. To be free of his/her acting can also mean to hand over (a project, an action, a movement…) but also the possibility to interrupt, to suspend, to introduce a (self)critical interval in his/her subjective journey.

Some of our projects introduce continuous temporary assemblages, based on the mobility of the architectural devices (palette garden, mobile modules, constructions which can be disassembled), that can move and be reinstalled many times, depending on the spatial opportunities. They demonstrate that we can forge durability with the temporary, from repetition and ritornellos that allow for a certain continuity (therefore a reinforcement) and at the same time for a reinstitution. Each time, it is just as much the space that reinstitutes itself as it is the subjects that resubjectivise in gardens, debates, exchanges, parties, political projects formulated collectively.

Synaptic subjectivity
Rancière noted that the group enables the appearance of a subject that thinks itself in relationship to others, 'the formation of a one that is not a oneself but a relationship of a oneself with someone else'.(19) The relationship with the other, the multiple possible relationships within the group, enable the appearance of a multiple and differential subjectivity.

The investment in a group project always goes through a strong initial motivation; group spaces and projects that we've experienced 'from within and by way of the inside'.(20) allow transversal and hybrid activities (a fluidity of spaces and a mobility in the organisation, that by parallel uses makes it possible to cook and to participate just after a

debate or to do handy work and listen, in the same space, to a concert, etc.). To frequent a diversity of activities and skills allows, at a certain moment, for a shift towards other implications, something unexpected, brought about by collective dynamics; people who at first come to garden can, little by little, get involved in political dynamics.

These heterogeneous and porous subjectivities, specific to interstitial environments allow each person to have multiple transits and successive and temporary adherences within different cultural, professional and social contexts.(21) Thus, as Rancière states, 'the possibility, which is always open, of a new emergence from this ecliptic subject', which by 'the renewal of actors and of forms of their actions' constitutes the guarantee of democratic permanence.(22) The social assimilation of this intermittent condition must generate subjectivity that is continually organising itself through multiple transversalities; constituting a 'synaptic subject', one that can function like a synapse: a body that receives and transmits flow.(23)

Synaptic subjectivities adapt to and manage interstices that comprise situations conducive to practicing the permanent negotiation of the 'democratic undetermined'. (24) The undetermined character of these interstices is structural, by including each person's specific differences and availabilities and by allowing anyone to actually get involved in democratic territoriality projects. These places can become the catalysers of 'local democracy' rebuilt and updated; then they can initiate connexions with other local projects, introducing networks that carry a 'trans-local democracy' and the birth of a large scale collective subjectivity, while staying locally anchored; 'a rhizomatic collective subjectivity'. The construction of this rhizomatic subjectivity demands spatial micro-devices that can be inserted in sterilized metropolitan contexts thus initiating the resubjectivation processes. At the same time, these devices can contribute to rewriting a different urban and political discourse.

Guattari pertinently noted the role of architecture among other instruments of Integrated World Capitalism.(25) Our tangible experiments showed us that any initiative to adopt these devices by their users is essential for any political or societal project. 'Architecture is not only the walls, but especially the people that act within and between these walls', said a local participant in the ECObox project as he commented on City Hall's initiative to renovate the Halle Pajol in order to put forward a 'beacon' project at the same time as the administrative services wished to evict, without discussion, the collective practices that had developed there.(26)

Biopolitical creativity
If the metropolis has lately become, simply because it is 'inhabited', the privileged place for biopolitical production (27) it is 'on one's doorstep' that should be the new 'factory's cafeteria', the interstice within the space of production from whence a political reconstruction can begin. But once started, this reconstruction is not void of conditions. Just like any ecological space, these places are reversible; by loss of interest,

insufficient investment, they can quickly disappear, be adopted in unfair or discretionary ways, become counter examples, and carry false discourses. In order to preserve them, we must invent an ecological, molecular, collective and daily political policy.

The metropolis is also, according to Negri, 'biopolitical creativity' 's ground, acting at all levels: social, cultural, and political. It is not necessarily visible because, being modest in means and appearance, biopolitical creation swarms at the border of the capitalist city in industrial wastelands, squats, 'Centri Sociali', encounters on the street corner and street parties, temporary occupations, 'TAZ', 'participative platforms' and syndications. New practices are being invented in the cracks of existing practices and skills, organisational forms, lifestyles and ways of doing…(28) Biopolitical creativity is at everyone's reach. As Appadurai said: 'Even the poorest of the poor should have the privilege and the ability to take part in the works of the imagination'. The question, he underlines, is if 'we are able to create political policy that acknowledges that'(29).

Today, occupying an empty and unused space to live in under certain conditions, is acknowledged as a legal priority over other criteria of spatial lawfulness; it is the winter truce. We also feel that it is a priority for the metropolitan inhabitant to have access to abandoned spaces for the length of their availability and open them for collective uses that reinvest territory, which is ever more desubjectivated. With this conviction, over the years, we've opened a series of spaces that have been used by a large number of people: inhabitants, artists, unemployed, students, architects, retired men and women, researchers, activists, friends and neighbours. After two years of operation, 80 families from the La Chapelle quarter had the keys to ECObox; a few hundred people could therefore have access to a 2000m2 plot at any time of the day and of the week, arranged in part as a garden and in part as a workshop. These projects show the necessity of a legal acknowledgment, to open private and public spaces for collective uses, and of a political recognition for the social priorities in the management of metropolitan space, which is ever more subject to market laws.

Acting space requires opening, working out, using spaces with 'the other' as refuges for social and political (bio)diversity, as well as the ecological care to keep fallow spaces and practices, to spot and preserve territories for the dreams of tomorrow, for *us-others*.

Translated from French by **Nicole Klein**

(1) Gilles Clément, (1985), 'La friche apprivoisée', in *Où en est l'herbe ? – Réflexions sur le Jardin Planétaire*, (Paris : Actes Sud, 2006) p. 24.
(2) Arjun Appadurai, (1996), *Après le colonialisme – Les conséquences culturelles de la globalisation,* (Paris : Payot, 2001) p. 261.
(3) ' F.Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*,(trans.) Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, (London : The Athlone Press, 2000) p.53

(4) Henri Lefebvre, (1974), *La production de l'espace*, 4th edition, (Paris: Anthropos, 2000) p. 427
(5) Giorgio Agamben, *Une biopolitique mineure*, interview by Stany Grelet and Mathieu Potte-Bonneville, Vacarme n° 10 (Paris: 2000)
(6) G.Agamben, *ibid.* Foucault denounces the State power which 'aims for governing over a multiplicity of people' through bio-power techniques: 'a sum of processes including demographic grow, reproduction rates, population fecundity, etc.'. in Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société – Cours au Collège de France. 1976*, (Paris: Gallimard/Seuil,1997) p. 216.
(7) With l'*atelier d'architecture autogérée (aaa) we develop* an alternative practice of mico-urbanism which initates self-managed spaces run by their users. *aaa* is a collective platform which conducts actions and research concerning urban mutations and cultural, social and political emerging practices in the contemporary city. The interdisclinary netwok was funded in Paris by architects, artists, students, researchers, unemployed persons, activists and residents. See also our article on the project ECObox, run as both architects and inhabitants of La Chapelle area, in the North of Paris, 'Au réz-de-chaussée de la ville', in Multitude n° 20, (Paris: 2005).
(8) Speaking about the project of the multitude, Hardt and Negri notice that such a project is only possible by the creation of 'relations and social forms based on co-operative work.' Michael Hardt et Antonio Negri, *Multitude – Guerre et démocratie à l'âge de l'Empire*, La Découverte, Paris, 2004, p. 121.
(9) In his analysis of 'existential territories', Guattari states that the praxis of the context can be constructed only through a discourse which include 'heterogeneous elements that take on a mutual consistancy and persistence as they cross the thresholds that constitute one world at the expense of another'. in F.Guattari, *o.c.* p. 54.
(10) Henri Lefebvre, (1974), *o.c.* p. 418.
(11) Gilles Clément, *Manifeste du Tiers paysage*, (Paris: Sujet/Objet, 2004) p. 48.
(12) Richard Sennett, *Democratic Spaces*, in *Hunch* N° 9 (Amsterdam : Berlage Institute, 2005) p. 40.
(13) G. Clément, *o.c.,* p.19.
(14) Cf. M. Foucault (1967), 'Les espaces autres', in M. Foucault, *Dits et Ecrits*, Vol. 2, (Paris: Gallimard, 2001) pp.1577-1578.
(15) The notion of autopoïesis has been developed by H. Maturana et F. Varela in the 197Os. It names the qualities of a system which generates and continually specifies the production of its components. See also Francisco Varela (1979), *Autonomie et connaissance*, (Paris: Seuil, 1989).
(16) 'Translocal' is a central notion for Appadurai: 'in the contemporary world, the production of neighbourhood tends to be realised within the conditions of the system of State-nations which is exerting normative control on local and translocal activities' cf. A.Appadurai, o.c. p.259.
(17) Jacques Rancière, *Aux bords du politique*, éd. La Fabrique, Paris, 1998, p.30.
(18) R. Sennett, parallels the idea of 'deliberative democracy' and that of 'associative democracy', by comparing the functioning of two kind of public space in the ancient Greece : the Pnyx and the Agora. *o.c.* pp 40-45.
(19) Jacques Rancière, *o.c.* p.87.
(20) About the idea of interstitial reconstruction of the city 'from within and by way of the inside' see Pascal Nicolas-Le Strat's contribution to the research project initiated together with aaa on Temporary Urban Interstices. See his article published in this book and also: www.inter-stices.org and www.iscra.fr
(21) The interstitial practices need, by their nature, to continually negociate with possibly contradictory physical and subjective data. These constitute, according to Rancière, the fundamentals of any political exercise, as « the true nature of the political is supported by disensual modes of subjectivation'. J. Rancière, o.c. p.184.

(22) J. Rancière, *o.c.* p.82.

(23) The synapsis (in Greek syn = *together*; haptein = *touching*; so 'connexion') is the pairing of two homologous chromosomes that occurs during the cellular division. It converses a potential action into a signal. (wikipedia.org)

(24) Cf. J.Rancière, *o.c.* p.80.

(25) 'I would propose grouping together four main semiotic regimes, the mechanisms on which IWC is founded : (1) Economic semiotics (monetary, financial, accounting and decision-making mechanisms); (2) Juridical semiotics, (title deeds, legislation and regulations of all kinds) ; (3) techno-scientific semiotics (plans, diagrams, programmes, studies, research, etc.) ; (4) Semiotcs of subjectification, of which some coincide with those already mentioned, but to which we should add many others, such as those relating to architecture, town planning, public facilities, etc.).' F.Guattari, *o.c.*,p.48

(26) The projects of ECObox (Paris 18e) and 56, St. Blaise Street (Paris 20e) propose an architecture which, constructs relationships rather than walls. The pallets and the mobile modules of ECObox move and produce space according to people's uses. At St. Blaise the construction phase has been transformed into a social and cultural experience. The construction time has been stretched to include time of socialisation, during which groups and uses are formed. The spatial construction accompanies the construction of the collective subject. In this type of projects, the spatial, social and political creativities are supporting each other.

(27) Notes on the seminary *Métropole et Multitude* directed by Antonio Negri, Collège International de Philosophie, Paris, 2005/2007.

(28) During the last decade, a big numer of alternative urban practices were initiated by activists, artists, architects, interventionists, urban hackers, tactical media, intermitent workers, immigrants, resident groups who claim space in the city.

(29) Arjun Appadurai, *The Right to Participate in the Work of the Imagination*, in Arjen Mulder (ed), *TransUrbanism*, (Rotterdam: V2 / NAI Publishers, 2002) p.46.

Jesko Fezer / Mathias Heyden

The Ambivalence of Participation and *Situational Urbanism*

In the 'Dwelling' issue of *archplus* (no. 176), Günther Uhlig discussed 'Baugruppen' (self-build groups)(1), a universally emerging new form of procurement of private housing. According to him, this form of 'urban social development could be the watershed at the peak of the housing crisis'. The multitude of initiatives such as the 'Baugruppenagentur'(2), in Hamburg, the 'Wohnprojektatlas Bayern'(3), the 'Tübinger Südstadt'(4), in Tübingen, the recently launched internet platform 'wohnprojekte-berlin.info' (5), the Leipzig programme for self-managed building (6), which aims to promote property ownership in inner cities, and the national association 'Forum gemeinschaftliches Wohnen' e.V.(7) supports the thesis of a growing urban development based on individual initiative. Following the decline of the welfare state housing provision, there seemed to be no alternative to individual responsibility and capital -even and in particular from the perspective of the state.

Baugruppen and the "Creative Class"
In a polemic article from the 8th of October 2006 the conservative German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* gleefully charactierised the residential quarter Vauban in the southern German city of Freiburg as an elitist but alternative petty-bourgeoise idyll: a *Gated Community by Culture and Income* with the nationwide highest concentration of salt crystal lamps, bicycle child trailers and breathing therapy groups - however there are neither foreigners nor unemployed(8). The highly praised settlement, which for the most part was realised by private developers and Baugruppen and so demonstrates a very precise form of self-organisation of a specific clientele, could also be interpreted as an exemplary case of self-managed urban development.

The 'Creative City'(9), a project primarily triggered by Richard Florida and Charles Laundry, is rooted even more firmly in current urban reality and still fashionable within contemporary urban management. In summary a (neo)liberal urbanism is introduced to raise the attractiveness for the stakeholders of the creative industries, which are considered economically up-and-coming, by addressing their needs. Here the urban politics seems to relate positively to specific 'bottom-up' dynamics in order to integrate them into its administrative systems.

While the urban image politics of the 1990s were based on a strategy of increasing festivalisation through large-scale events with a broad touristic appeal(10), the creators of (sub-)culture and their surrounding background are now in the spotlight as subjects of a new norm. Following the example of Berlin in 2005(11), more and more cities