

Public space in art practice: subjectivity as "witness" – Some reflections on art and Michel de Certeau's concept of memory

Mike Bode & Staffan Schmidt

Michel de Certeau is known for his discussions on strategy, which is always visible, and on tactics, which are associated with the hidden and the unseen, exemplified with *la perruque*, the employee making things for him/her self during working hours. His discussions on place and space and the "law of the proper" have also become widely spread. In an architectural context, de Certeau is well known for his discussion on the city, and the "walking rhetorics" of the pedestrian who applies a practice and makes stories out of pictures, and appropriates the map by moving around and engendering it with "desires and goals". All of these familiar examples of de Certeau ideas, to be found in *The Practice of Everyday Life*,¹ suggest that here is a humanist at work, finding the paths for an individual search for identity and resistance. This understanding of de Certeau's book is perhaps somewhat displaced in his discussion on memory. It is through memory that a de-centred or contingent subjectivity is accessed, deeply associated with psychoanalytical ideas underlining that the subject "in control" is an illusion. Much in line with this tradition, we interpret de Certeau's concept of memory as a turn around of a conventional understanding of the relation

between space and subject, in this way our efforts are aimed at examining the vast power embedded in everyday space. In doing this we will present some of our artistic projects and argue for a general relation between de Certeau's concept of memory, as we see it, and the artistic practice, directed towards built and socially constructed space, that we are involved in.

In trying to conceptualise our work as artists and PhD students, the rupture between the conventional understanding of the visual material, and a non-discursive side is at once acute and immanent. De Certeau's ideas is part of the conceptualisation process of our work, but it is important to stress that our work is neither an illustration nor does it claim to present a privileged understanding. The general character of the link between our line of argument and our presentations is related to an ontological stratum: an unavoidable and recurrent eroding of the subjectivity once you turn your interest towards built and social space. At this point, that of the status of the *subject as witness*,² an artistic and a scientific venture has much in common. A question that interests us in the everydayness of the public spaces is one of transgression and lack of control: is a memory

of a space a part of you, or is it a part of the built environment in you? It is an act of witnessing that becomes present in the gaps and discrepancies between the limits of conventional recognition and the photographic document: do you remember a space, or does it remember you? Is there another and *relational*/subjectivity disclosed in art, rather than the confirmation of borders between self and world that reassure us as free and *actings* subjects? It is also a question of text as activity and picture as passivity that de Certeau's discussion undoes... so it seems obvious that memory does not only call for personal reflections. We remember places and spaces, or rather, we personalise memories of the world, but it is not enough. Still, we are looking for the occasion where things could be altered, changed for the better...

The first part of this text concerns the character of the reflection that memory engenders in relation to particular sites and the repercussions that de Certeau's understanding of memory might have on the status of the memorising subject. In the concluding part of the text, we will look into the relationship between our collaborative art practice in a series of site-oriented projects, *Spatial Expectations*, and these speculative questions. Motivating and binding the two parts together is a question raised by de Certeau: How is it that memory arises "from the other (a circumstance)",³ and is performed as acts of witnessing in connection to public space, and in what ways could an artistic practice make any difference? Perhaps by conceiving an artwork as a set of visual, audio based and discursive *actants*⁴ that would conjure in a model like situation? This meta-analysis is then highly indebted to Michel de Certeau. In fact, our text should be looked upon as a commentary to and a digression on the particular *question* posed in part VI of de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, especially "The art of memory and circumstances".⁵ Memory, de Certeau writes, is part of storytelling. A story changes the real by making "a detour". But the question to de Certeau is what "constitutes the implantation of memory in a place that already forms an ensemble?",⁶ an implantation that calls for an "instant of art".⁷ Memories are inscribed by a circumstance (that also could be named as the other). They are the "holes and gaps" of the self, inscribed by the terms of the other.

A possible interpretation of passages such as "memory produces in a place that does not belong to it"⁸ is not an instantiation of subject remembering itself, but a circum-

stantial other "remembering" the subject, then returning to the subject as an alteration. To understand these factors the bind between time and space must be considered. In a series of five diagrams⁹ de Certeau establishes a relation between the unforeseeable, i.e. the other, and memory. Occasion and the non-integrated are seen as qualities introduced in a process with the capacity of overriding both subjectivity as linked to memory, and an "initial place" or "a visible establishment of forces". Neither time nor the other are possible to integrate into subjectivity, still the non-integrated necessarily upholds the subject through a continuous process, and it is also seen as a prerequisite for change in spatial terms.¹⁰ How is it otherwise possible to see a place for the first time and think "I know this, I recognise this"? To be more specific in relation to our own collaborative works: How is it that the index created by the use of the camera in our *Spatial Expectations* series conveys something different each time the material is re-used? To de Certeau, the possibility of change resides in memory returning from the other, producing modifications of the space.¹¹ In an earlier passage, de Certeau introduces and discusses *Metis* as a means to "obtain the maximum number of effects from the minimum of force"¹² in which a "use" of memory plays an important role. De Certeau writes, "*Metis* in fact counts on accumulated time, which is in its favour, to overcome a hostile composition of place".¹³ We will return to the concept of *metis* with a more thorough discussion. Memory understood as produced without the subject's full control could be seen leaving its mark on the tactics of an artistic practice.

Entering the new context, the occasion is a feeble moment when the unknown and the unknowable are possible to handle through the insertion of memory, or in our case, a visual material that "through mirror effects (inversions, incurvations, reductions or enlargements) or perspectives (the farther it is, the smaller it is, etc.), permit the juxtaposition of *different* spaces in a single picture".¹⁴ Memory in this sense does not only point to the individual story, but rather to a certain "feedback". The small step away from real time-space and realities that is introduced by memory and, if we may, visual and narrative distortions, is then reintroduced in the world through the possibilities linked to the occasion (and *metis*). This feedback that is made operational through change is perhaps de Certeau's way of overcoming a threate-

ning Cartesian split between *res extensa* (space) and *res cogitans* (idea). Memory must be active in producing alterations, "both of memory which works when something affects it, and of its object, which is remembered only when it has disappeared".¹⁵ In the end, what can be produced is perhaps only the *hope* for change.

Our main interest is the built environment and public space, not necessarily public space in relation to architectural concerns. We are rather interested in locating difference, or the gap between the inscribed memories of a place (as "witnesses")¹⁶ and its potential as expressed in "processual" models for change. An unresolved riddle lies hidden in the everyday encounter with public places (in de Certeau's sense¹⁷) and the built environment. The memory of a particular space (activated by that particular place) seems to precede the individual visit. This effect could be regarded as an example of immanence. If you are inserted into a context in such a way that you "recognise" the situation, no explanatory words are needed to confirm your impression. Still it seems contra-intuitive. It compels thinking to forfeit the "self-explanatory" recognisable link between subject and history. It potentially deflates the safe guarded subject and turns any privileged perspective around.

Place-subject-art

The death of the author arrived just in time to celebrate the end of aesthetic modernism. In a way, this epochal enunciation by Barthes in 1968¹⁸ was a turning back to the language itself, and to the social and relational production of culture. A structural understanding of society also meant the reduction of the individuals possibilities, linking them to institutional practices. The subject could be regarded as a relative and situated "effect" or "imprint" of a comprehensive, indeterminate and inexhaustible structure. Architecture-photography at this time had developed a neutral and repetitive character that attracted the attention of contemporary art. The photographic works of Bernd and Hilla Becher, appearing in the art context of the early 1960s, paved the way for a low profile subject in photography.¹⁹ In this respect, the visual idea of memory became related to materiality rather than subjectivity. The positioning of the subject moved away from authorising its involvement and certifying its right to speak. The subject withdrew (fully or partially) in terms of expressive visual properties. The status of photo-

graphy as an art form, strongly linked to the photographer's subject, thus shifted to a 'before art-photography' understanding of the media – the camera as a prosthesis.²⁰ At the same time as the aesthetics of the expressive subject succumbed to the growing awareness of the consequences of a fluent and partly – always situated and immanent, and unknowable reality – the call for art as *issues* grew in importance.²¹ An art which expression is composed of the discursive content and not through independent aesthetics, as with high modernism. From that point on in the understanding of the relation place-subject-art there is a turn around, which relates back to an actual place, but brings with it an implicit political call for change. Being a witness to a place, which in de Certeau's sense is "hostile", could call for a change that reaches far beyond a deconstructed subjectivity. Here we should rightly identify a point where discussions on art, architecture and urban planning intersect and where questions, approaches, topics and tropes could be sent back and forth between the systems. The comparison between architectural and artistic practices undoubtedly calls for a "critical" architecture which could establish some clues for change within the discussions on contemporary art which are interested in the discursive field of visual culture.²²

There is a tendency in Michel de Certeau's *Practice* to take sides, even though he stays with Foucault's analysis of power as fundamentally reciprocal, where the concept-pair of tactic and strategy tends to come across more as a dichotomy with commanders and "evaders". But the text is far richer than its potential function as a finely tuned map of the individual liberty of action within social stratification indicates. De Certeau, in his discussion of the placement of the subject in a discourse, a story, and a set of expectations, has some sobering things to say about memory and public space that, to our understanding, tell us something important about artistic practice. The concept of *metis* used by de Certeau to describe a practice without self-representation: *metis* appears in the "right" time, it is active without any fixed form, and only detectable through its effects. Certeau writes about the *metis* concept that it

counts on accumulated time, which is in its favour, to overcome a hostile composition of place. But its memory remains hidden (it has no determinable place) until the last instant in which it reveals itself /—/ The flashes of this memory illuminate the *occasion*.²³

Metis to be understood as a ruse, a trick through which a situation, played out in time and space, is *turned* (and perhaps even overturned in the sense of the Situationists) which appears as an interesting element for an aesthetic theory, a theory with a major advantage: it does not stipulate a specific interface. According to de Certeau *metis*, 1, takes appearance for granted but, 2, makes use of memory (as a description of the things at hand and parallel in time), 3, focuses on the capturing of the situation in the right (telling) moment and, 4, results in effects that all but affirm the first look.

Further on in his text, de Certeau specifically points to memory as being that which not only "mediates spatial transformations", but also, by the same token, "produces a founding rupture or break".²⁴ Memory and reality are not to be seen as logical opponents; rather they have become opponents through convention given the atrophy inflicted by a less than democratic modern reality. A possibly rewarding understanding is that de Certeau's concept of memory marks the very fluctuating border between a conventional understanding of subject as "supported" or "reflected" by memory and the relationship to the subject as materialised other (or circumstance) in a given context. The subject is inscribed no matter what the circumstances *through its foreignness*. It is not the subject that remembers itself, it is space that remembers the subject as difference and brings it into its domain: "this implantation is neither located nor determined by memory-knowledge".²⁵ The idea of a foreign subject is linked to the psychoanalytical tradition. Freud addresses the question in his writings on the "uncanny".²⁶ Freud's point, which has become central in the writings of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva,²⁷ underlines the weakness of the subject, the confusing and ad hoc patterns which separate that which is recognised and memorised as "homely" and that which remains unintegrated and becomes "uncanny". Kristeva's position in particular makes it clear that a recognition of the world must mean an understanding of the vague and fluent borders of the subject, and its relational dependencies. To her the unclear limit between self and world has ethical bearings, in line with Derrida's later thinking on the ethics of welcoming the other as the concrete refugee into your home. The discussion on a productive utilisation of *metis*, that has a parallel in some artistic practices,²⁸ now moves in the direction of ontology.

Appearance could schematically be understood within a classical metaphysical tradition as semblance, with enlightenment as knowledge waiting to be unveiled, or from a critical tradition as a mediated guise for a destructive system. However, if we see appearance as *matter of fact*, as a primal acceptance, it would be more in line for example with the material thinking of Bruno Latour that focuses on horizontal and non-hierarchical human and non-human networks.²⁹ Appearance could thus also be understood as an open and potentially revolutionary invitation (to friendship/brotherhood/love), as an idea that could be traced to the ethical concept of *hospitality* with Derrida³⁰, a concept that could be the founding of a reconciliation process with the missing heteronymity within the enlightenment tradition. In relation to appearance subjectivity is then placed under a material perspective as an "witness", a figure once embraced by the medieval church as an idealised relation of the individual to the creation (symbolically represented by the individual confronting the gothic cathedral). As an example, there is a trope preserved during the renaissance, as seen in Rafael's *Sposalizio* or *The Marriage of the Virgin* from 1504. It must be noted that the marriage takes place in the foreground of a large square, an archetypal public space, and we, the visitors to the *Brera Galleries* in Milan, can also partake in the ceremony by standing in front of the scene and thus joining to the witnesses in the painting, on an invitation open for centuries. The painting delivers a religious explanation to a situation, and at the same time provides us with a perspective, a way of seeing. The lacanian-influenced art historian Norman Bryson has pointed to the fact that the vanishing point in Rafael's painting and the viewpoint are "inseparable": "annihilation of the subject as a center is a condition of the very moment of the look".³¹ From a standpoint of materiality this (fictitious) "occasion" does not create such a thing as a dichotomic space, only the remembrance of (an apparently given) facticity and the continual and orderly engendering of immanence.

A contemporary way of seeing this would perhaps be that the subject has entered a passive voice, that somehow the subject has lost track of its "right" to pro-claim passive spaces as the subject to its rule. This subject would be the equivalent of the settler that hears nothing else than the confirmation of the subject's intentions that could be read in the "response" from a passive context/material. Thus the



DSCN_6733
Wild flowers growing on the former site of the Addo's holiday camp, Vellinge, Sweden.
11 June 2002
The redistribution of surplus / Addo's holiday camp



DSCN_5584
View of inner courtyard, Pilängsrundeln housing estate, outskirts of Landskrona, Sweden.
13 June 2003
Landskrona / inside out



DSCN_1800
Cabinet displaying trophies won by factory workers. Bachelors housing communal room, Kanebo Factory, Hofu, Japan. 22 November 2002
Securities and Liabilities



DSCN_8674
View of block 9, Uklusaq school and block P, Narsarsuaq housing project, Nuuk, Greenland.
17 August 2002
Narsarsuaq / Nuuk



DSCN_8676
Detail of living room, block 10, Narsarsuaq housing project, Greenland.
18 August 2002
Narsarsuaq / Nuuk



DSCN_4748
Newly wed couple making the "traditional" visit to the Afghan War Memorial, Minsk, Belarus.
19 April 2002
Minsk Dérive

contemporary way of understanding the subject implies a structure of either/or, and the subject is left in a competition with everyone where the first prize is master and the second slave.³² In contemporary art, at least since the early 1970s, the engagement in the public sphere on the whole, and in particular in public space, has had a tremendous impact. This can be seen especially through the efforts of early feminist artists such as Ana Mendieta, Lygia Clark, Hannah Wilke, and many others. We will later return to discuss the relation between a discursive and a non-discursive concept of art from the perspective of our own practice. For now, let us only say that by pointing out that the resistance from the champions of an art as non-discursive form has indeed – and ironically – made the ideas of art as commitment widely accepted and understood.

Returning to the subject's position in Rafael's painted panel, the ideal of passivity still lingers in photography. The ideal "witness" is the passer-by, implying that what a journey leads up to, remains like memories attached to the pictures themselves. It is perfectly readable and perfectly tacit. To our minds this "passivity", which is a qualitative aspect in confronting reality, refuses to go away. At the same instant, "passivity" does not fix subjectivity to a secondary position or makes the indexical meeting truer or more reliable. It does not condemn art, or architecture for that matter as an idealised representative for the subject to a passive and powerless existence. The "witness" becomes a character in a comedy of mistaken identities. As seen through a modern mind, the subject must protest against appearance and prove himself/herself. Either he/she succeeds and rides the dragon, or succumbs and becomes a victim of context. Witnessing space is like reading the weather report, realities are changeable but out of reach. Seen from the horizon of a material world, the built environment (and with Lefebvre, who's constructivism makes straightforward claims for the actualisation of alternatives, the produced space) accepts interpretation and protests, but resists change. Even though a change in public space as a built environment may have small therapeutical value; it could well both create and solve problems.

A complication lays in the risk of confusing an ontological stratum with an actual situation. From a de Certeau perspective, raising the question of ontology might here be understood as story telling; to create a perspective that

mutually enacts and makes trustworthy. However, the response needed for the strategic investments in public space is only possible to achieve through recognising that there is a time delay, a *dialectical* difference, in a materialist discourse, between buildings and humans. Non-dichotomic public space could then prove to be nothing more than powerlessness, an idea that has lost trace of the enlightenment and Marxist *turn around*. Is there, after the post-modern critique, no way of turning knowledge into a lived experience? Is there an absolute line between describing the world and changing the world, which after the death of a general narration no longer can be surpassed without opting for terror? Or is there sufficient conceptual space to unify the figure of a "witness" to the unchangeable, and to a "witness" provoking change? Non-dichotomic public space could be the erasure of conflicts embedded in the ways of language and subjectivity and could thereby lead to an almost unbearable loss. Rationality has no other option than moving by removing, opening ways of thought by closing down others, integrating new ideas by drawing lines of demarcation and construing borders and "beyonds", creating new heaps of the un-proper, "rubbish". Could de Certeau's concept of memory make a difference here? Could art?

Memory is in de Certeau's scheme dependant upon basic Kantian categories such as space and time, but it has an evasive, uncontrollable and unknowable aspect, which certainly makes it interesting to our purposes: "it is clever enough to transform into an opportunity".³³ Still it "produces in a place not belonging to it"³⁴ – notably de Certeau does not use the word "creates" which could have been understood as an indication that creativity is a prerogative outside of the material world. The *metis* capacity, always prepared to intervene, given the right time, place, sets of other memories, and effects, stems from what de Certeau identifies as the fundamental mobility of memories and its capacity of being altered. Memory is "formed (and forms its "capital") by *arising from the other* (a circumstance) and by *loosing it* (is no more than a memory)".³⁵ Here it is again important to see that de Certeau, as a founding member of *École Freudienne de Paris*, was using Lacanian thinking. However there is an interesting shift in the position of "the other (a circumstance)" from the psychoanalytic displacement of the subject as in a stereoscopic "view-master" position through the implacable other. De Certeau turns to the

situations and walks of the everyday and places the other, paradoxically from a traditional psychoanalytical point of view, out there: in lived space, in the midst of public space. The unconscious is thereby led from the isolation of a bourgeois subject to materiality, appearance and the plane of immanence. So the subject takes a vital part, by the fact of being the "witness", in transforming places into space. It disorders the locked down "one thing after another" that in de Certeau's mind is typical of the place.³⁶ But then again, inviting to disordering is just a prerequisite for change.

Expectations of change or the interruption of sameness (as a down scaled and in the everyday tenable utopia) are by de Certeau placed, or deplaced, in and through memory. This is characterised by its open vigilance: memory "sustains itself by believing in the existence of possibilities".³⁷ What de Certeau is saying could be understood as evoking the body as an objective, producing agent in the practice of space and as an instant and unavoidable rearrangement through a metonymical memory. The artistic practice of finding and approaching places and retaining them through visual and textual research includes the actual encounter with that "which is expected without being foreseen".³⁸ Another way of describing this insertion by (and insurgence through) memory, which has a striking similarity to de Certeau's conception of memory, is by the attractive possibility that where opened by Henri Lefebvre. That is to say that to experience the difference between representations of space – displayed as inserted memories in appropriations of space through advertisement in the service of particular vested interests – and representational space. Representations of space "play a part in social and political practice: established relations between objects and people in represented space are subordinate to a logic which will sooner or later break them up because of their lack of consistency"³⁹ Lefebvre writes, and continues "Representational spaces, on the other hand, need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness".⁴⁰ Yet another way to understand this is to link these two Lefebvrian concepts to the concepts of imaginary and immediacy. Whereas the imaginary refers to what is always already placed or implanted as memory in social space in the name of interests and choices, immediacy refers to the (possibly) unknown or unconscious on the horizon of the social field.

Spatial Expectations

In our series of projects *Spatial Expectations*, we initiate our work process by inserting ourselves into a specific context, or deliberately throw our selves into new situations and collaborations. In so doing, the positioning of the subject – which through working together already is an issue in itself – is of vital importance.

Inscribed in the first moments of our projects is an openness which is present before we start the work process of opening up and closing off by way of intentions, interests, concepts and external contexts; by way of luggage. As we see it, there are always uncertainties and risks of conceding to the role of art as being powerless: one is that of "tactical" consent to the situation, the other is being exposed to a standardised and unfocused "critical" attitude. We are looking for intersections, the immediate closeness in the everyday between events in public and private space. The local realities that, without notice, appear as the *global* that rules in the extended now of situations. Time plays a role in the objection to the non-discursive concept of art. According to this notion, as developed by Adorno in *Aesthetic Theory* and in the essay *Commitment*, there is a sharp line between actually being engaged in an issue, linked, as it were, to a specific cause in time and space, and to a content. In the eyes of Adorno the line cannot be surpassed without paying the price of devaluation from "art" to "politics": "such considerations, and the concept of art that underlies them, are themselves the spiritual catastrophe of which the committed keep warning"⁴¹. The first problem with Adorno's discourse is that he finds that there is a distinction to be made, the second is that the distinction is dichotomic and exclusive.

Looking back at the *metis* scheme of de Certeau, time plays, as we already have pointed out, a significant role in the change or *turn* of, for instance, a "hostile" public space. The restrictions set by the non-discursive understanding of art has to exclude time, or at least put brackets around it, to make trustworthy that content in our time at all times is of no use and equals the mark of oppression and "catastrophe". Seen from our line of argumentation the non-discursive concept of art refers to art and the artist as a passive "witness", mixing up the ontological drone-chord of existence as one with the unavoidable dynamic changes in time and the social struggles for change. The non-discursive concept of art will only identify its borders through a halt in time

(looking back or looking far into the future) and is not ready to decentralise its critical powers, as if there is no outside to the discourse. On the other hand and on a micro scale de Certeau's *metis* is like a recipe that has the practical advantage to produce under any conditions. The tactical and evasive action of the *metis*-scheme opens an invitation to activities on a horizontal plane of immanence.

The representation of particular places in form of complex and essayist installations brings with it layers of non-subjective subjective memories in de Certeau's sense. The tools in our work – photography (situations, spaces and moments), the DV camera (the "context"), a voice recording device (opinions and experience) and texts (narrative and theoretical approaches) – are brought together overlapping each other. Telling details appear under voice. The camera operates with its focus on neutral or "non-telling" everyday objects, in our eyes this is mostly what particularity is about: the misfit ubiquitous, the *objectal memory* inserted in the "wrong" context. The DV camera has gradually moved away from being the narrative instrument, to a rather impassionate, bland and cold, registration. Before arriving at the focal point of *metis*, the method recalls another passage in de Certeau:

There is a double alteration, both of memory, which works when something affects it, and of its object, which is remembered only when it has disappeared /—/ Far from being the reliquary or trash can of the past, it sustains itself by believing in the existence of possibilities and by vigilantly awaiting them, constantly on the watch for their appearance.⁴²

Memories come from the subject confronted by the other. When talking about *observations* of reality this is a valid approach, which could give an explanation to why re-used materials can be seen "in a new light": we make secondary observations of observations as materiality. But in trying to stay with the observed objects even after being exposed to memories, transforming materiality to memory, it seems as if de Certeau's differential memories keeps him satisfied regardless of the materiality at hand. Memories are also disseminated in texts, and the awareness of the "planetary scale" (Lefebvre) of events, even in the most distant and smallest places are in the first instant always "*arising from the other*". The use of interviews adds layers to the scene, as do excerpts of texts, quotations relevant to the situation,

and by balancing prejudicial information with theoretical reflections. In the end, the issue is that we have to talk *from* and *within* public space, not *about* it.

Spatial Expectations is, in its broadest sense, an ongoing discursive and visual artistic study on and in the built environment and its social consequences. The projects carry the trajectories of several real conflicts as they evolve in public and private space. The focus of our attention is always on the everyday: what are the consequences of the *grand reçeu* of globalisation in the living room, around the kitchen table? Simultaneously, on the meta-level, the conflict between the discursive and the non-discursive understanding of art has an important role. This difference is continually accelerated by the training that we have received – as an artist and art historian respectively – and through the expectations directed towards the artwork itself, inherent in making art and claiming the discussion on art in the same gesture. In the *Spatial Expectations* projects such as *Narsarsuaq/ Nuuk* (2002), *Minsk Dérive* (2003), *The redistribution of surplus/ Addo's holiday camp* (2003), *Landskrona/ inside out* (2003-04), *Spaces of conflict* (2004), and *Securities and Liabilities* (2004), we could interpret our relation to the situations that we have been engaged in as acting as a "witness". In respect to the actual surprise of contact with a situation and to the other, the memories, stories and expectations, the actual works must balance between being a "witness" and evoking change. I.e.: at the same instant and in the same presentation, to respect an ontological openness and approach the situation by way of the immanent politics of hospitality. The perspective in *Spatial Expectations* is a set of conceptual informants as registered in the built environment, with a special interest in social and political changes as they act in public space and on the level of the kitchen table.

From a "kitchen table" perspective, the visual materials focus on the everyday and the practices of the everyday, practices that dismantle the power invested in the built environment and the officially sanctioned stories that solicits them. Practice is what makes it possible to facilitate the appropriation of a space to live in. According to de Certeau's understanding of memory, as we see it, lack of control cannot be separated from its intimate relationship to the surrounding world. This relationship is something that is given, something that can be "witnessed". The insignia of power manifest through mastering the production of space can

only be exercised, as seen through the everyday perspective, at the cost of becoming a frozen picture, a mirror in Lacan's sense. The visualisation of the everyday then, works in a *metis* operation, disclosing the unstable preconditions of the built order that gives voice to mistrust and ridicule. Practised space undermines each story claiming supremacy through multiplicity, but always points back to a common experience, an experience "arising from the other (a circumstance)". Inevitably, several stories can be told, stories other than the officially endorsed, but it is important to separate the practised stories *from* and *within* public space, from the ones that speak *about* it.⁴³

In 2003, we presented *Redistribution of surplus/Addo's holiday camp* at Göteborgs konsthall, Sweden.⁴⁴ Addo's tells the story of a working class holiday refuge by the sea, situated in Sweden's richest municipality, parallel in time with the rise and the dissolution of the Swedish "peoples home". A model founded and developed on the basis of a mechanistic and Fordist production pattern. The Addo family owned corporation made mechanical counting machines, and the company folded in the first wave of globalisation and digitalisation with the arrival of Japanese semiconductor calculators. The *Addo's* story made itself first and foremost tangible in spatial terms. The plot of land, with its buildings collectively used as a summer utopia by the workers and their families, and cherished long after the end of the company was eventually sold. On this site, six luxury villas are soon to be built, with the consequence that Addo's collective deviation of the use of space is brought back to the privatised family unit normal to the surroundings. The space was bought with the intention of being turned into public space, with its foldable dance floor next to the watchman's hut with its loudspeaker platform mounted on the sounding the ultimate call for unity roof in the heart of the camp. *Addo's* amounted to a utopian counter memory on the ground.

If *Addo's* could be seen as the tattoo for a communitarian tendency in the Fordist epoch, then *Landskrona/inside out* presented at Dunker's kulturhus, Helsingborg, Sweden, in 2003–04, showed the "misinterpretation" of the bourgeois city centre of a south Swedish town given by the dominating societal force to a dependant people. Landskrona is now inhabited by immigrants, refugees, the unemployed, which has led to the city's dwindling reputation in mass media – the public space of our minds – and the actual

exploitation of the situation by landlords and rent racketeers. Our method was to listen to the stories told by the immigrants themselves, how they came to settle in Landskrona, with the background of the city's efforts to refuse newcomers without jobs and living on welfare. One observation was that not only was the city centre inhabited by people that do not "belong" (on a regular basis gentrified by 19th century architecture), but that the Swedish born population left the city centre to live in the 1960s and 70s concrete block suburbia, and that the immigrants actively adopted to this pattern.⁴⁵ The validity of the relation between suburban block housing, deprivation, powerlessness and non-belonging is thus denied. A relation which is constantly reinforced in media and politics. The streams of people moving from countryside to the cities, from poor countries to richer, from south to north, are in Scandinavia relocated into suburbia. Areas that are doomed, as it seems, to reproduce disadvantaged spaces with subdued inhabitants.

Changes are indeed possible even in a fossilised structure heavily invested in prohibiting forms of spatial usage. Notably a first step could be taken through the renaming of public space in accordance to practices and memory. In the *Minsk Dérive* project that was developed with students at the now closed down European Humanities University in Minsk in 2003, the young students worked with an imaginary plan for the Belarusian capital, enlightening practices in public space and living quarters that in fact made the place inhabitable, or subverted the imaginary order of a transparent space diffused by the totalitarian government. Not least through the remembrance and *turning* of space, whereas touching the foreskin of a gilded statue of an angel at an official war memorial by newly wedded couples, changed the setting of lament into an informal celebration of life and sexuality. In another case, a popular living area built during the Brezjnev years was reinterpreted with the discovery that it was standing on a Jewish cemetery erased by the Nazis and by the following communist regimes.

In *Narsarsuaq/Nuuk* first presented at Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2002, the discussions on divergent spatial stories and a paternalistic housing system and formation of a suburbia style public space, converge in a discussion on the conditions for subjects with different languages, cultures and life styles that do not "fit" into the form of a "generous gift". The mixing of cultures, languages,

economies and traditions which are reluctantly portrayed in media as too problematic, are then reflected in the destructive roles typecast to the tenants and to the suburban blocks. The decolonization process in Greenland during the 1950s and 60s resulted in a programme for infrastructure, health care and housing and the subsequent concentration of the population to places where these services were provided for by the Danish state. The loss of tradition no doubt had negative effects on the social situation, but these events some forty years ago, resulted in neither an Inuit nor a Danish culture flourishing on the island. People freely mix attitudes and languages and the housing blocks that are of the same type as in northern European suburbs are, thanks to the housing shortage, seen as attractive. Instead of showing the hopeless and unachievable "integration" between different life expectations and livelihoods, the events in Nuuk could be a forerunner to a revision of what differences could produce given a minimum of hospitality and openness towards the other. Once again, the negatively asserted link between rationalist large-scale housing projects and people with a different culture has proved false.⁴⁶ It took its time, but the situation in Nuuk contains a realistic hope for the future.

Securities and Liabilities were completed on an invitation to participate in the *Territories* exhibition in Malmö konsthall, Sweden in 2004.⁴⁷ The study concentrates on a shift taking place in two western societies, Japan and Greenland. A shift from social security to security interpreted as a question of threat at different levels: from strategic or terrorist, to local and environmental issues. Security is managed either by the paternalistic companies as in Japan or by the paternalistic state as in the Danish Home Rule in Greenland. We focused on the everyday and how both systems need to produce a certain space to secure its own affirmation based on the provision of housing to the employees/subjects which make some feelings and decisions easier, and others harder. The similarities between the planned space inside the gates of the Kanebo company factory in Hofu and the planned space of Nuuk overrides the dis-

inction that could be made between physical public accessibility. Besides their obvious historical differences, these spaces have so much in common that the concept of colonisation must be extended from the level of the state to that of global enterprises.

Specific public spaces are the spaces for art. In the project *Spaces of conflict* produced by *Nifca* in Helsinki, Finland, in 2004, we interviewed art museum professionals and students at art academies in six cities (Oslo, Malmö, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Vilnius, and Berlin). We posed three questions: A, In what way(s) does an art space contribute to a/the community/city/society? B, Are there any expectations that an art institution has to negotiate and/or have to live up to? C, Are there any actual spatial alterations that could improve the way that institutions work and communicate? We reduced seven hours of collected interview material down to 37 minutes for the final version. Sometimes parts of the interviews were transcribed into texts to highlight passages of importance. From the beginning it was obvious that there is a line of division between the institutions which are engaged in an aesthetic concept of art and those who act upon a social or discursive concept of art. Not entirely unforeseen, the consequence of this difference demonstrated that the socially engaged institutions welcomed the white cube tradition, while in situations where art seemed furthest away from discussions of the everyday (situations with a complicated relationship to their portrayed, actual and potential audiences as was the case in Oslo and Copenhagen) the questions of place and architectural involvement was at its highest, effectively overshadowing traditional exhibition programmes. Added to the interviews and together with a set of sequences of inconspicuous photographs addressing aspects of the everyday of each institution, we incorporated a commentary track where we tried to elucidate our own stakes, our involvement, expectations and desires linked to these spaces. The two audio sources, the interviews and the commentaries, are encountered simultaneously and therefore hard to follow, adding to the intended difficulties.

Mike Bode
mike.bode@telia.com
Staffan Schmidt
Schmidtsabo@telia.com

Notes

1. Certeau, 1984. Strategy and tactics are presented in chapter III. The *perruque* is discussed on pp. 24–28. For the concept of “proper”, see p 94, as well as the thorough introduction of place and space on pp. 117–118. The famous discussion on planned and practised space, starts on the 110th floor of World Trade Center, in the beginning of chapter III, p. 91. Walking rhetorics is discussed on pp. 100–102. Michel de Certeau, 1925–86, was a highly productive writer, a psychoanalyst and a Jesuit. There is no surprise in finding that the salvation of the individual’s soul *and* the recognition of the unique and all-encompassing creation always seem as a plausible interpretative context to his writings. The complexity of his ideas is also a gift to the interpreter, but it causes serious difficulties when it comes to taxonomy. On the back of the cover of our edition of the book, you will find the following description “Sociology/Anthropology/History/Literature”, but not philosophy, psychoanalysis, architectural theory or theology, which would also be well motivated. A concise, well-written biographical note, in French, by Luce Giard is to be found (2005-01-02) at <http://www.philo.8m.com/mcluce.html>.
2. In understanding how we use the concept of “witness”, it is important that the subject and the built environment are not related to a dichotomic resignation. Seen through the interpretation we make of de Certeau’s concept of memory there could be no clear distinction between active and passive, since both are engendered, and changed, to produce memory. This means that subject as witness and place as witness are two aspects equally dependent upon each other. Art has been understood as a “witness” to social life, history, etc., very much in line with descriptions of photography as an “index” of reality. The artist “registers” and then “expresses”, through the privileged input of subjectivity turning passivity to activity. Working with a concept of art in which aesthetics and discourse intersect the idea of the witness changes from a passive and distant receptor to a more active, or rather, involved position.
3. Certeau, 1984, p. 86.
4. A term widely used in semiotics. By an actant is here understood subjects and objects interacting on equal terms; a door, an idea, an individual that makes up a relation in a given situation. From the perspective of interacting actants, a human agent is not privileged. “No actant is so weak that it cannot enlist another. Then the two join together and become one for a third actant, which they can therefore move more easily. An eddy is formed, and it grows by becoming many others.”, Latour, 1988, p. 159.
5. Certeau, 1984, pp. 82–89.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 83–85.
10. We are dealing with a process that starts and restarts from a given subject and a given place. Changes could only take place by way of the subject being “remembered” by space, returning to itself at a later point in time, re-established through a loss and the presence (markings) of the other. The subject is now able to introduce its difference to the given space, and the process starts all over again, as “an unending summation of particular fragments”, Certeau, 1984, p. 82.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, p. 84. A single picture is not our option, rather a complex constellation. The single picture establishes a singular focus that easily becomes monumental and thereby disrupts discursive attempts.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
16. See footnote 2.
17. “A place (lieu) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (place)”, and “Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function /—/ *space is a practiced place*”, Certeau, p. 117.
18. Barthes, 1996. The complete essay is (2005-01-02) to be found at <http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/threeEssays.html>
19. Harald Szeemanns exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form: Live In Your Head*, 1969, presented the Becher’s in a post-minimalist context. The photography became a material (chemical-optical) trace of material facts rather than expressive accusations related to late modernist aesthetic and political thinking. The photographs could be related to series of early 19th century anonymous and deadpan daguerreotypes portraying cityscapes, rather than the “aura” of the unique picture or that of the artists. The Becher’s is also to be recognised as an early example of artists working together.
20. The Swedish photography theorist Jan-Erik Lundström is currently working on a book in which he presents the history of photograph as a societal vehicle for desire and change. Some of content of the book was presented in a lecture at the school of photography and film at Göteborg University, 2004 11 08. The object of a photo is to be seen as being scrutinised by a context of societal desires, where memory and change is to be considered, even if not presented in the picture proper. Pointing the camera to the (post)industrial everyday – as did the Becher’s – could, through de Certeau, be understood as an act of *reciprocal* memory. But this activity is, as we have seen, linked to change. Thus, social desire for change and certain objects becoming the motif in photography are related as we see it.
21. Without the support of a stable definition, an art related to issues is exemplified by the last two *Documenta* exhibitions.

- In particular *Documenta X*, curated by Catherine David, has been recognised as a watershed in contemporary art. The exhibition made it clear that there exists a wider tradition in which art has a function and a political tendency, and still holds on to the presentational freedom linked to utopias and a non-centralised enlightenment. The presence of spatially oriented projects and interventions, notably from the realities in a “periphery” distorted and obscured by the media shadow, has in both *Documentas* been very prominent.
22. Being critical in the modern sense is linked to the economy and expectations in a given institutional context. Contemporary art could express its critical potential by referring to utopia. Architects referring to utopia would be at risk of evoking the megalomaniac magnitude of Le Corbusier’s *Plan Voisin* or suburbia such as Marzahn in eastern Berlin. For photography to be critical, it mainly requires to be “realistic”.
 23. Certeau, 1984, p. 82.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 85. Observe that de Certeau sees both *metis* in the preceding paragraph, and memory as “break”.
 25. *Ibid.*, p. 86. See also footnote 10.
 26. Sigmund Freud, 1990. Especially part I.
 27. Julia Kristeva, 1997, pp. 191–203. Kristeva has called de Certeau “one of the boldest, the most secret, and the most sensitive minds of our time”, quoted on the back cover of Ahearne, 1996. To Kristeva the maltreatment of immigrants is linked to the conventional misunderstandings of identity, and memory. If the *other* within our self is possible to conceptualise structured as language, then the self is – and that would coincide with de Certeau’s idea of “walking rhetorics” – a story that is constantly being rewritten. This would in turn mean that the subject might well integrate into another story, one told about authentic origin, people and place, without necessarily being hurt or misled. With Lacan/Lacan, we could refer to memory in de Certeau’s sense as a “mirror” through which the subject tries to constitute itself, but the subject is deceived; the picture in the mirror is no more than an idealisation. See Lacan, 1989, pp. 27–36.
 28. The work of Michael Asher can be seen to incorporate the qualities of *metis* due to the fact that his art often engages in concrete situations which are related to art institutions and which through the use of minimal force opens them up to hidden and repressed references. In “Deaquisitons”, that was part of the MoMA exhibition *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, 1999, he scrutinised the museums records of acquisition and uncovered that the museum, the praised safe haven for contemporary art, had accepted bequests which had been sold at a later date. The small publication prepared by Asher was stifled by the management and itself became another example that deflated the credibility of the museum itself. For a discussion on Asher’s project from the perspective of “place”, see “Institutional non-place: the Museum of Modern Art”, in Sandin, 2003, pp. 197–201.
 29. Latour, 1999, p. 20.
 30. The fundamental aporia is caused by two non-negotiable ethical demands, which have to be reconciled, one for the unique and singular and the other for equality. An introduction to some late topics in Jacques Derrida’s thinking can be found (2005-01-02) at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/frenchthought/derrida.htm>.
 31. Bryson, 1988, p. 90.
 32. As in commanders and “evaders”.
 33. Certeau, 1984, p. 86.
 34. *Ibid.*
 35. *Ibid.*
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 117. See also footnote 18.
 37. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
 39. Lefebvre, 1991, p. 41.
 40. *Ibid.*
 41. Adorno, 1988, p. 177.
 42. Certeau, 1984, p. 87.
 43. This effort would then, to some extent, co-inside with the attempts within the “field” of visual culture: “Nor does this field function as a form of art (or any other visual artefact) criticism. It does not serve the purpose of evaluating a project, of complementing or condemning it, of assuming some notion of universal quality that can be applied to all and sundry. Furthermore, it does not aim at cataloguing the offences and redressing the balances, nor of enumerating who is in and who is out, of what was chosen and what was discarded. /—/ All of this, however, would constitute a speaking about’: an objectification of the moment in culture such as an exhibition or a film or a literary text”, Irit Rogoff, in Mirzoeff, 1998, p. 27.
 44. See Bode & Schmidt (eds.), 2003. The main theoretical stance in the *Addo’s* project was Lefebvre’s discussion on the production of space, and the project came to focus on the dividing line between two different sets of understanding the proper use of land as actual memories and facts on the ground.
 45. The concept of “proper” is activated in *Landskrona/inside out*. De Certeau brings it up in discussing the construction of the city, how it creates (as we see it in accordance to Lefebvre’s “dominating forces”) “its own space (*un espace propre*): rational organization must thus repress all the physical, mental and political pollutions that would compromise it”, Certeau, 1984, p. 94. Bringing up “rational organization” is clearly a marker for a fault in the construction of identity, a city that does not allow the memories of a part of the population to be recognised, thus turning their presence in the “proper” space into a deviation. The low-income homes, immigrants and welfare takers are plotted out on a map, prepared by the city council, so that the city could get to grips with the situation. A “proper” place is constructed through exclusion: “The law of the ‘proper’ rules in the place: the elements taken into consideration are *beside* one another, each situated in its own

- proper' and distinct location, a location it defines", *ibid.*, p. 117. This discussion is also present in *Narsarsuaq/Nuuk, Minsk Dérive*, as well as in *Securities and Liabilities*.
46. "The work of Seamon, Pred, Thrift, de Certeau and others show us how place is constituted through reiterative social practice – place is made and remade on a daily basis. Place provides a template for practice – an unstable stage for performance. Thinking of place as performed and practiced can help us think of place in radically open and non-essentialized ways where place is constantly struggled over and reimagined in practical ways. Place is the raw material for the creative production of identity rather than an *a priori* label of identity. Place provides the conditions of possibility for creative social practice. Place in this sense becomes an event rather than a secure ontological thing rooted in notions of the authentic. Place as an event is marked by openness and change rather than boundedness and permanence", Cresswell, 2004, p. 39.
47. For the *Territories* exhibition as grounded in the Israel-Palestine conflict, see Weizman & Franke (eds.), 2004.

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