VR/URBAN
THE ACT ON HYBRID ESTATES

SORRY, WE´RE FROM ANOTHER FUTURE

1.   the current situation

1.1

We are bored by the increasing pervasion of pu-
blic space by advertising screens and less challenged
by being passive receivers in front of them. Nowadays
new digital media screens are set up in the cities that
push the people very effectively in passivity. They
let us remain spellbound by their visual dynamics like
a rabbit in front of a snake. Furthermore they do not
allow any form of activeness because they are so high-
ly evolved technologies and need explicite knowledge
to act on them. Both phenomena are power preservative
means for the screen owners, that are mostly national
companies with transnational cooperations as main cli-
ents.
They exclude us as people and draw a straight line
through the urban space: On one side moving digital
images, on the other side not moving people, constant-
ly receiving, immobilised. Only by these means, the
screens can exist in a capitalistic sense of a clear
counterpart. Every other reaction of the people, except
the transforming of the advertised values through con-
sumption, overcharges this imaginating and exploiting
system.
If we use the term of „spectacle" in the sense of devi-
ding image and reality, „spectacle" describes the posi-
tion of the urban person that is confronted with an al-
ways self-expressing principle, a forever ongoing, over
proportional and blunting monologue of power.

1.2
     This circumstance shows clearly the un-freedom
and bondage of the people. Their possibilities to act
are allways restrained. There is no way of articulati-
on and action in the established system. The free and
syntactic annotation of the technologically dynamised
image planes is not possible anymore as it was back
in the days. A pen, a spray can or a bucket of paint
aren´t sufficent tools for an adequate confrontation of
ones own idea with the fluid image stream at the urban
displays. Here, adequate tool means that the statement
not only affects the content and it´s signs, but also
the medium, the carrier of the signs. Adbusting and
codejamming are in the media agency mainstream arri-
ved methods of cumulating awareness and by this values.
The sympathic and supportable approach of attacking the
power of signs with its own ambivalent blur misses the
mark: it stays shallow.

The urban-digital „spectacle" is also just a superfi-
cial display of a much more complex working system and
by this can not be truely changed by it´s displaying
surface. Therefore it needs a new technical handle for
an equal right statement in public space and a simulta-
neous opening and accessibility of the existing, by pa-
tents and surveillance system secured public media inf-
rastructure. The people sould be given the opportunity
of acting! But here, we still stay on the level of a
constructive articulated form of intervention that not
affects the system at it´s core. Only the elimination,
destruction and the switching off of the screens are
in the end consequent liberations of and for the peop-
le. E.g. Mitch Altman, one of the wise masterminds of
virtual reality and growing responsibility in handling
technology, developed the TV-b-gone, a universal remote
control to switch off TVs in public space.

1.3
     If the opening of this infrastructure is reached,
the urban citizen gets the opportunity to comment and
design his or her micro and macro environment in basic-
democratical manner. The framework of possibilities

ranges from explicit statements and comments on near or far events to adamantly refuse the images by switching off the surrounding screens.

Well, this seems like an urban form of mushrooming social media websites like Facebook and Twitter. Those assumed participatory systems of designing ones „digital" environment is just a qualitative and quantitave development of mass media. Cheap and controlled content. It was just made easier to be passive. A real participation on decision processes is refused because of the users programmed role as a consumer. The only thing one can do is clicking the „I like this" button and imagine that something has changed. But not even an opportunistic parallel world, in which you can only say „yes" hasn´t changed, also the whole picture stays the same. One only remains in front of the screen of the smart phone or laptop, creating the predicted and intended. The relevant decisions will be made elsewhere excluding the crowd with it´s imagined power and affectations. The crowd, as mass or multitude, has just become much more accessible in it´s passivity.

2.   hybrid estates

2.1
     In the field of selling and buying houses and immovable properties, the term „real estates" is a common one. This term describes very well, in a structural manner, the point of planning urban spaces: making real usable space disposable and marketable. The focus is on the expression „real". The objects must match real affordances on buildings, such as they have to have walls, doors, windows and a roof.

2.2
     Because the buildings are not just boundaries of their innerspace but also boundaries of outer space, the outer surface gets a multiplied value role. It can be sold as a poster wall to a third party, independent from the activities happening inside. As in point°1

stated, the print media is getting less important in urban surroundings, so the facades become more of a medium for digital (e.g. moving) images. Some quick drawn dystopical idea could be that all buildings will be built just because of the value of its facades. Just like in Western movie settings or in Robert Venturies Las Vegas. But there are tendencies in this direction: Megaposters over scaffolding sites display what will be constructed underneath. Occasionally this is so photo-realistic, that the fake isn´t visible at first sight. This evolves with advancing and building specific projection technologies that can simulate different buildings on the surface that is physically different. Now it´s still very playful and mostly a proof of technology, but obviously made as an effective marketing tool. The digital ducks or binary sheds seem to be not that far away.

So what results is a real building with a clear value of use, for example an office building that is augmented with an extra digital layer of image value. The building is becoming a hybrid estate, a mixture of real and virtual object.

These digital image skins on the buildings will be augmented by partly participatorical, but always strongly controlled online services. Online votings, like „your favourite colour of this house, powered by xxx" will be shown or YouTube videos started remotely. By this, a mixture of „real estate" and „digital estate" results to a hybrid estate with hybrid aesthetics.

2.3
        The relation between the hybrid parts alternates, but is in the result worth equally. The prestige mediating, blinking outer surface augments the real usage value of the „estate" with a further digital quality that manifests itself in the value of the appereance of hybrid aesthetics.

2.4

It is not about structural and architectonical marked design problems, but about usage scenarios of between-architecture, the inter-facade of outer surface and the public space surrounded by it. It is imporant to point out that public space is between non-public buildings and the (digital augmented) outer surfaces of these buildings are posessed by the owners of the building, but received by the public. This means that the (digital augmented) image, the digital estate on the outer wall of a private building (real estate) is public domain (hybrid estate). It has to be open and accessible to all. The people have to be more aware of that. They are passive receivers of an increasing number of advertising screens that take over to shape the cities. It is not without alternatives, that the product offers smile at us from the screens.

3.   enlivenment

3.1

With our work SMSlingshot we follow a way of augmented dérive, that empowers people in a playful way to reclaim the screens. The urban citizen adopts the city by (pertly expressive) movements in it. Because space isn´t only real anymore, but increasingly digital, the dérive has to change as well.
A digital augmented dérive develops and by that hybrid urban situations.
SMSlingshot and it´s precedent spread.gun project is an attempt to take the passiveness out of the dérive, the drifting through the city. It makes it an active process of adopting urban areal units. The image space in the public space gets intervened on its own level, the image level. By the expressiveness of the gesture and the action, the city space changes, according to the dérive as well. By this we hope to generate active awareness that turns not only against the image, but also against the mechanisms that result it. Free the wall and you free the space and you free the wall.

3.2

What actually happens is an enlivenment of the
city. Enlivenment is active and positioned diametral
opposed to the passiveness resulting from standing in
front of an advertising screen. Enlivenment is also
physicalness, attitude and embodiment. The enlivenment
of space by active embodiment is very important, be-
cause it´s visible and identifiable for everyone. Ex-
pressivenss is catching, touching, senseable. SMSlings-
hot is in its interactivity highly expressive, because
of it´s archaic movements and shapes that are easy to
understand. Shooting a message is spatial and uncommon
in the formal result so it attracts people and passers-
by to join and try on their own. A few people gather, a
bit more, a little crowd sprouts and the space in front
of the projected wall starts to be filled with chat-
ting, laughing, arguing people. Life. The surface dis-
plays the moods and the topics of the people.

4.   Free access to public images

4.1

We propose access to the newly invented changeable
decors.
If we stick to this, masking the light pollution and
seduction out, this proclaimed access has to be exact-
ly defined how it should look, feel like and generally
result in.
The interaction with the surface is expressively spati-
al and triggers another expressive planar result on the
wall. By this, the „private" surfuce is drawn back in
to the public space. They correlate again!
What we propose is a tool for reclaiming fluid urban
media surfaces. We propose that this tool has to be on
the same technical and cultural level as the opponent
media screens. Because of our strong belief, that tech-
nology in general does not automatically lead to man-
kinds extinction (even though we know that this is one
of the possible options), we think it´s good to hand
out a device that is able to shape public conscience
and awareness on current situations. That we also pol-

lute the urban surrounding with artificial and blin-
king light is not a problem any more, because now the
people will decide whether they accept it or not. It
will evolve in a natural manner. One danger we face: It
might be possible that the reclaiming tools will main-
ly be used by those who allready know how to articula-
te themselves in code or multimedia: These new digital
natives and migrants and virtual drop outs, media desi-
gners and art&business school hipsters. This will defi-
nitely happen, but they are on the same social level as
all the people and enrich the dialogue in the streeets
on the facades with an approach in hybrid aesthetics.
By cheaper and easier-to-learn technologies, like pro-
jectors, laptops, cloudspaces and microcontrollers,
the quality and quantity of the images will positively
change over time. This will lead to a truely democratic
mapping of the society and equals the balance of ac-
tion and re-action because the production is not on the
„other side" but in the hands of recipients.
Possibly it will be less glossy in the beginning, but
this glossiness is not real anyway! It will not be the
advertising anymore to shape our taste and aesthetics.
Also the way of articulating on the facades is impor-
tant.
The polis will be enriched by a new sort of urban mem-
ber: the produsers, who are strictly different from
the prosumer by their participation on the society, by
creating „more-than-participative" tools for all and
following ideals rather than company interest. When
Toffler is talking about production processes of usage
values, the produser is confronted with a system of new
sign production. The produser, or better: our visiona-
ry kind of produser, creates signs that are receivable
and by this transformable into reflective actions. It
is mobilisitation instead of immobilisation, as done by
the media screens.

4.2 More power leads to more responsability.

      The consequence is that the tools we proclaim for
reclaiming the urban space are more than just „click
the button" and „me likes" features. It only works with
radical solutions, all the time intervening attacks on
the distraction system of urban media. When it will be
as democratic as evoked, the creators of the tools will
be the same as the recipients of their work on the sur-
facades. The responsiblitiy is very high because the
produser does not want for the other people anything
less than he proclaims for him. The Sur-facades will be
changed to inter-facades. Everyone is the same.
And the politics need to change. More freedom requests
more responsibility, espacially for the freedom. Cen-
sorship and controls limit the freedom, and by this the
responsibility of the people. It must be self regula-
ting. Trust the people, they are like you! What will
be left for the politics in sense of there role of or-
ganising market factors? They have to step back, watch
their power and influence tools go and remove the secu-
rity systems attached to the screens. Even a step more
is needed: the access to the technology must be radi-
cally open. We propose an integration of open inter-
faces on these media units to upload, modify or create
any content one likes.

5.   Theses:

People should be given the full right to create con-
tent, otherwise the big urban mediascreens have to va-
nish!

Tools for creating content have to be expressive. No
disguised whisking on smartphones or uploading from
home! The space in front of the screen is the key to
the screen. Enlivenment!

The interfaces have to be open! usb ports for uploading
on the screen have to be standart at least!

If there is an economic need, the screens are allowed to work economically. The profit should be calculated in a wise manner out of awareness and social issues of the screen it self. If profits arise, they must be given to the public. ATM machines underneath the screens would be perfect. Watching an advertising allows you to draw an amount of money. Or, by leaving the local area, purse tracking would be good: if your purse is near a screen, it get´s filled up.

People are encouraged to be critical. No censorship!

We declare augmented situations. For this, it is important to have technological devices that are part of both worlds:_ the digital and the real world. Smartphones and of the shelf hacker technology are accessible to all!

Let the screens be used in a fluent an iterative manner. everyone should be enabled to use the screen!

Let us be patient! Things take a while! We are sure that the aesthetic factors will lack in the beginning. Too much trash will be produced. But that´s how it is. In the end true visual and interacive quality will accomplish, independent from consumer studies and marketing strategies.

We declare the hybrid derivé. Drifting through urban surroundings is nower days also a drift through the internet, linked to social media plattforms such as qype, twitter, google maps and facebook. These worlds are locally devided: the virtual in the device and the real out of the device! We say: mix it! Make it hybrid and let the two sides interfuse to create a new world consisting of both best factors.

We kick the post out of modern! It is very necessa-
ry to demonstrate attitude. The idea of everything
goes on with out any idealistic approach has proved as
fail. Nothing will be changes without a clear position
and vision. There is a place that can´t be: Utopia is
not in the internet and not on the streets. Its right
between!

www.vrurban.org