

The birth of Radio Orbino, a local, public radio station along the N242 highway in the Netherlands

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Introduction

How is the urban space related to ideologies?

The Byzantium churches in Athens are built on the remains of ancient Greek temples. Walking uphill along Dioskouron Street, the small church of St Anna is situated on the left. The church is built on the remains of the Pythion, an ancient temple dedicated to Artemis and Apollo-Pythios.¹ In Zadar, Croatia, the Byzantium church of St Donat (9 century) was built on top of the old Roman forum (1st century) and incorporates parts of the old structure. Many stones that were used to build the church of St Donat, were taken from the Roman forum. The stones were not neatly piled up, but spread randomly to form the foundation of the church.



Photos by M. Meredith². (2007)

In the mountains of Southern Europe, ideologies materialize directly on top of each other or in the shape of terraces with small differences in altitude. In the city landscape Berlin, in the relatively flat, ancient river valley, formed by water from melting ice sheets, ideologies lay extensively side-by-side. The 'East German communistic *Plattenbau*' looks like a slice of pastry in the Berlin cityscape. A closer look reveals that the *Plattenbau* segment follows more or less the former marl hills. The former Berlin wall was - in the contemporary center of town - built on a specific geo(morpho)logical sand layer. An incredible amount of experiences, events and processes preceded the construction of this political wall of global division.

The way 'globalization' materialize, seems more closely related to the geo(morpho)logy - mountains, rivers and subterranean substances - than to ideology. As such geomorphology is an agency in the ongoing reconfiguration of matter. It enacts or constrains global material (re) configurations of ideologies. In other words geomorphology is an active doing that matters in the field how matter comes to matter³.

However, as an active doing, geomorphology has to compete with other 'agencies or doings', like technology and money.

Nowadays technology and money opens up possibilities to built anywhere in ways that seems to ignore geological doings, such as seismic activities. Think of the skyscrapers in Tokyo. World - and Palm Islands are built off the coast of Dubai; bridges span many miles of water. In Spain en Portugal, north-south orientated highways cut through mountains and hence through million of years of orogenesis ('mountain building'). The sky seems to be the limit but even there, since the construction of the tower of the 7-star hotel Burj Dubai of 693m we have to (re) consider if the sky *is* a limit.

¹ www.athensinfoguide.com/nl/wtschurche.htm

² Margareth Meredith was so kind to provide me with this example

³ I want to make a reference to the article of Karen Barad: Posthumanist Performativity: toward an understanding How Matter comes to Matter, Signs, Journal of Woman in Culture and Society 2003 vol28. No3. This article spoke out to me and is for a great part responsible for what 'I' want to discuss in this paper.

On top of that, commercial advertising is shaping the outlooks of urban landscapes. MacDonald's, Cola, Sony, DB, Renault and others brand cities all over the world. When I ask for directions, my friend Oda - who is a tourist guide by profession - instructs me: " Keep driving on the highway until you see the Tulip Inn hotel sign ", she says, "turn left at McDonalds, then turn right at Renault, right again at Citroen, pass by the Bijenkorf (famous Dutch department store) and then straight ahead until you see the Heineken beer sign illuminate the sky...."

Martijn Hendriks⁴ drew my attention to maps of Las Vegas. The free maps (also available on the Internet) show a strip of casinos, hotels, shopping centers and other tourist attractions. What is in between the major casinos and shopping malls is left empty or erased from the maps. The maps pre-structure where to go. Going around the corner and walking of the map seem like an adventure in a no-go part of town.

See for instance <http://www.visitlasvegas.com/vegas/stay/planning-information/interactive-maps.jsp>

Does this mean that geo(morpho)logy and other site-specific agencies like history or locality will exist on the mind of the elderly or history books? Will the world have the same super - arte - ficial, global appearance in the next present? What does globalization means or imply? Is it the biggest ideological unit existing? Overruling all other doings? The mother of all mothers so to speak? And what does that mean for our urban landscape and the urban (public) space?

Globalizing is the talk of town. Politics, art, society and sciences are discussing globalization. In these discussions, the topic of space is, in general, high on the agenda. Globalization has changed 'our' world. We no longer speak about national states but about networks. We use the word 'scape' instead of landscape and avoid anything with the ending ism like urbanism. Endings on -ion are preferred. For the architect Rem Koolhaas globalization designates a general schema of the hybridization of thought and action.⁵ It creates a condition. Living - and shopping 'scapes' becomes generic. It generates contemporary urbanization, made ad hoc like metropolises in China. Shopping and brand promotion aside, golf courses seems to play a bigger role in material realizations of urbanization and in relation to that: urban spatiality, than other doings.

In short: many believe that the current globalization implies generic systems, furtive sameness, ad hoc solutions, contemporary substances, mobility and migration and what's more: decoupling of history and culture. So things look ugly for our local and historical doings. But does this unlinking really happen?

In 2004 the architect Edith Winkler showed me a ' western' shopping mall in the South East of Berlin. It's size, I have to admit, took my breath away. It stood there as an alien among the surrounding cottages and meadows.

It felt as if I was watching an unexpected discontinuity. A discontinuity because "*most of the time we are inclined to assume that (in)organic processes that are going to take place in the next present will follow out of what went*

⁴ Martijn Hendriks, A Dutch artist and researcher <http://www.martijnhendriks.com/> In 2006 I found text about the map of the strip of Las Vegas on the internet. The writer was Martijn Hendriks and having met him in 2003 at the congress of the Dutch Association of Esthetics, it caught my intention. He wrote about highlighted areas on the map of Las Vegas in the exhibition Las Vegas Down nov 26, 2006, in Maastricht referring to the theorist Michael Sorkin. "The map show a condensed, abbreviated version of the city, reminding more of grand theft Auto' condensed version of the city than the real city," Martijn wrote "(..) Although the casinos and hotels have almost perfected their ways of 'stripping troubled urbanity of its string' they have done so merely by drawing attention away front. The free maps points to places that were erased from the maps and guides. (..) Sometimes, the places are just four feet off the Las Vegas strip" Unfortunately, after a long search I believe that the text I am referring too disappeared from the Internet. It seems to be erased from digital reality. It would go to far to quote the entire article written here. You can still find remarkable texts and artwork about Las Vegas on his site.

⁵ Jean Attalli, the Roman System or the Generic in All Times and Tenses, Mutations, pg21, ACTAR

*on before at the same locality or its surroundings (continuity).*⁶ As a result the local population of this part in Berlin was suddenly, in the time of the 'Wende', deprived of their means of existence. So the old, virtually blind cabdriver, who had found himself a new job, told me: I don't need anything what's for sale there." He pointed to the alien. " I want my daughter and son to be close to me, but due to the unemployment here they moved to the West." A brutal interference in the 'normal' course of things had occurred.

I was also invited to have a drink in the caravan opposite the mall. Here, Edith lived with her partner Herman, who put up some measure of economic resistance. He sold Dutch flowers and trees. The old woman who arrived on foot paid half the prize the man in the Mercedes had to pay. And he in his turn only paid half of what customers of the shopping mall paid. A shopping mall storage guard supplied Herman with water. He drank coffee at MacDonald's, to be able to take the complementary hot shower that comes with it. He ate ethnic fast food at the little stalls of the new inhabitants, in the parking space in front of the mall. And as in woven cloth, he and his allies contribute to a 'low-scale' economy in a shopping-scape with an 'up-scale' mall, without which they could not survive.

*More exactly: parallel to a 'global' materialized economic (re)configuration, like a brand new mall and its accompanying parking lot, small economic activities emerge. These small-scale and private activities are related to large 'global' materializations. As such, a mall is not a thing, but a doing. "This dynamism is agency. Agency is not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurations of the world," to quote Karen Barad.*⁷

In other words: the phenomenon globalization materializes locally.

The sliding zone

I started to look for areas with global phenomena. In doing so, I found some sort of area or rather zone of local becomings to accompany global phenomena. The environment talks back, so to speak. I will call such zones *sliding zones*.¹⁰ Let us take a closer look at these zones. The boundaries of the sliding zones are vague and change over time, but nevertheless there is inclusion and exclusion. I can also refer to these zones as 'Zwischenräume' or in-between spaces (spatial) and stages (temporal). It appears both as being and active becoming to me. There is ontology involved but also matter and it exists only in relation to other agencies of becoming.

Appearance and shape of the zone vary, as said, and are related to other agencies such as the 'upper' global reconfiguration and the 'lower' geo(morpho)logical characteristics.

One sliding zone, for instance, forms a stretched egg-shaped area next to the 'global' new skyscrapers in the city of Rotterdam. The high rises are built on the sandy riverbanks. They remind me of buildings of other places in the world. The ' *The Two Gentlemen* ' look like a smaller version of the former twin towers, seen from a window in the Center for Contemporary Art *Witte de With*. The buildings left in my view seem transferred from *Marzahn*, an area of high-rises built during occupation in East Berlin.

⁶ H.J. Mac Gillavry- the geology and the cosmology of the obvious, de steensplinter 2006, pg31
For a detailed explanation of continuity, discontinuity and interference see chapter interference pg 31- pg33.

⁷ Signs, journal of woman and culture and society, 2003,vol28 Karen Barad, Posthuman Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How matter comes to matter, pg 818

¹⁰ In his wonderful book Niemandland (No-ones land), Lemniscaat, 2006, David Hamers describes the notion 'in between space' and introduces the terms frayed fringe or frayed edge and sliding space <... where no- mans land emerges at one place, it disappears at another.... pg17.

There is always something, so that time becomes in between time, and space in between space. The in between space may looks chaotic, but she is not. She is order in movement. Things have their position and if the position changes, the things move along. A 'stack' spot and a sliding space exist there. No-mans land helps us slide in the big picture. Without no-mans land no pushing around, without no-mans land the city stands as firm as a rock..pg21 >. The translation is mine. Matter and positions are being pushed around. He describes a space necessary for sliding. I diverted the term sliding zone from his sliding space.



Worldwide windows 'Witte de With.' On the background: the two gentlemen, 2007

The new economic globalization creates sameness and 'metropolization', or so it appears. It reminded me somehow of Einstein's statement that all physical laws are the same in not - accelerated systems (inert systems). To look at a movie is exactly the same in an airplane as it is at home. The only way to find out that we are flying is to look outside the plane. As soon as the plane slows down (or accelerates) we feel that we are moving.

The agency or doing of the sliding zone is to slow down the speed of globalization

In my window view from *Witte de With* a zone of slow motion unfolds before my eye. A friction zone, that slows down the speed of globalization.

Buildings, which are the materialization of 1970s social-housing projects, show their freshly painted colors yellow and blue in the sunlight. Exactly at two in the afternoon, as if in a planned performance, women clean the little balconies. Half an hour later husbands smoke their 'forbidden' Sunday cigarette.

Next to these buildings sits a stern, renovated building. A little 'grandmother' cottage, overgrown with roses, survived the WWII bombardments. At its doorstep, an old and tired fence leans over, protecting rusty, abandoned playground materials. Two towers of an old church stick into the air. Behind it, the golden moon of a mosque contrasts with the new Monte Video skyscraper. Triangle-shaped top floors of the orange-brown 'duplexes' pop up. History doesn't show itself here as a sequence of events, but as a medley of peacefully co-existing times. The ongoing process of materialization reconfigures time and space. These are the buildings and streets of which Paul Schnabel wrote in the daily national Dutch newspaper: the NRC , " *When entering the city (of Rotterdam, IJ) a disappointment awaits, because of the encounter with boring small-scale construction buildings and small-scale 'frumpishness' in between the high-rises. To her credit P. van Ulzen (she is the writer of the theses- *Dreaming of a metro pole, the creative classes of Rotterdam, 1970-2000* - that Schnabel reviews, IJ) doesn't waste a single word on this nightmare. A nightmare to everyone who dreams of metropolis Rotterdam. It is clear that she ignores the attempts of the seventies to create a Rotterdam of coziness, consisting of little squares, small buildings and pubs. Rotterdam is big, windy and a bit rough and the people want Rotterdam to be like this. That is to say: only the creative classes, because ordinary people like the 'Mevlana' mosque with its two minaret's better than the towers of Nationale Nederlanden (an insurance company, IJ), the West-in hotel or Montevideo.*"¹¹

I disagree completely. Schnabel contrasts coziness, social housing planning and pubs with the skyline of high-rises. Without the sliding zone however, the materialization of the economic globalization would take over the world with such a speed that all differences would be obliterated.¹² This sliding zone makes the (re)configuration of global materialization cognizable. It enlivens the skyline. Houses and streets are renovated. Shifting, piling and modifying take place within the new economic agency materializing as skyscrapers, which - in the background - pop up as mushrooms from the earth.

¹¹ <http://archieff.nrc.nl> date 07-04-2007

Thesis, Patricia van Ulzen, *Dromen van een metropool*, publishers O10, Rotterdam

Review by Paul Schnabel pg NRC 46, translation is mine

Promotion Erasmus University of Rotterdam, promotor: professor dr M. Halbertsma

¹² the force of converging markets produces an instantaneous capital that shoots across horizons at the speed of light, making for certain furtive sameness, a planning away of particulars that effects everything from architecture to leisure time to the way people eat and sleep and dream. Don de Lillo *Underworld* p 786



Worldwide windows 'Witte de With, detail, 2007

The 'Witte de Withstraat' has also changed over the last few decades. It used to be a hang out for junks and other street inhabitants of questionable behavior. Houses were abandoned and squatted by artists and other hip and creative people. It was as if the pages in *Richard Florida's: The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* had come to life. Today windows of expansive design shops; exclusive restaurants and exotic hotels color the street.

The sliding zone is an agency in the intra-action globalization-localization.

The *egg zone* is not a 'free-floating area or form' located inside a metropolis environment. It is not an object or area of investigation with inherent properties. The area itself *'designates an element of agential reality; a phenomenon that is constituted and reconstituted out of historically and culturally situated iterative intra-actions of material/discursive apparatuses of production'*.¹³ *'Those material/discursive apparatuses are not mere physical instruments, streets or buildings (I), they must be understood as phenomena made up of specific intra-actions of humans and not humans.'*¹⁴ The stretched-egg sliding zone actively contributes to a practice of which "we" are also part. The skyscrapers are doings, (re)configuring and (re)enforcing the local character of, in this example, metropolization. The phenomena globalization and localization intra-act¹⁵ and are ontologically primitive relations-relations without preexisting relata¹⁵. The ongoing reconfiguration of the specific physical arrangement "localization" makes the ongoing reconfiguration of the specific physical arrangement "globalization" cognizable. This sliding zone is an 'intra-action zone' or as I like to call it an '*intra-esse*'.¹⁶ I draw 'streichmap Rotterdam' of the area. A reproduction of the map will be included in the catalogue.

Strangely enough, this zone became visible to me only from behind Polaroid plastic. The windows of the art centre are covered with transparent plastic to protect the works of art from the sun. Through the windows in the staircase the sunbeams did not break due to lack of plastic Polaroid's and as a result the area wasn't cognizable.

Geomorphology and history as intra-active agencies in the entanglement of globalization/localization

When we dig even deeper, the geomorphology unfolds its subterranean character in intra- action with the sliding zone and the globalizing surface.

In case of the former Berlin wall, for example, the sliding zone appears as a 'frayed fringe'.¹⁷

¹³ I replace in the description of Karen Barad's fetus by egg zone. Karen Barad, *Getting Real: Technoscientific Practices and the Materialization of Reality*. *Differences: A journal of feminist Cultural Studies* 10.2 (1998) pg 115

¹⁴ Karen Barad, *Getting Real: Technoscientific Practices and the Materialization of Reality*. *Differences: A journal of feminist Cultural Studies* 10.2 (1998), pg 116 and pg 125 nt 32

¹⁵ I use the notion of intra action as described by Karan Barad. (*Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter, Signs: Journal of Woman in Culture and Society* 2003, vol28, spring 2003, pg 815that is phenomena are ontologically primitive relations-relations without preexisting relata. The notion of intra action(in contrast to the usual "interaction", which presumes the prior existence of independant entities/relata) represents a profound conceptual shift....)

¹⁶ As a reference to H. Arendt's notion of interesse

In geological and historical maps (records) I found out that the western outline of the former wall followed a specific geological layer in "Mitte" (the city center). First off all, the characteristic sedimentation of the layer (stratum) had to become cognizable in relation to other layers. Historical maps show differences in cultivation next to a small nucleus of buildings along the stream valley of the Elbe. Properties of the subterranean become cognizable in relation to the cultivation of the fields. Subsequently houses and streets were built alongside and next to the differentiated fields. Walls were built. Mind you, I am not referring to the first medieval fortification (in the form of a Dutch-style water-fortress) wall. Outside those walls fields produced different crops than the ones within the walls. Gates were made where roads entered the city. Here taxes were levied on goods passing through, chiefly meat and flour. Even now we find relicts in street names of the walls that were built. In 1723 there existed a wall on the so - called Mauerstraße, which turned eastward just south of the Zimmerstraße. It continued to the Kopernickerstraße. To the south of that wall grew fruit trees. West of the 'Mauerstraße' a country estate materialized on the sloping sands of the upper-diluvium. The western part of the estate bordered on 'small forest.' Said forest nowadays hosts the zoo. In this small stretch of countryside between 'Unter den Linden', Königgratzerstraße and Zimmerstraße a palace materialized. The tax/protection wall migrated towards the west. Just to the edge of the estate and on the alluvial deposits. The road - built for the king - entered and left the city at a gate: Potsdamerplatz, which started out as a five-cornered traffic hub on old trading routes across Europe. Inside the gate a large octagonal area materialized at the time of Friedrichstadt's expansion (in 1732-4). It was bisected by Leipzigerstraße and became one of several parade grounds for the thousands of soldiers garrisoned in Berlin at the heyday of the Prussian Kingdom. "The Octagon," is now called the Leipzigerplatz. Just north of the Leipzigerplatz, in the former estate area, Hitler was to build his bunker in a next present.

On the north side, at the foot of the marl hills, the early wall was at the Linienstraße. It marked the flat fluvial-glacial sand and clay deposits and (the upper diluvium) marl hills.

The latest political (East-West) Wall followed what remained of the route of the "ancient" wall from the Leipzigerplatz, the Königgratzerstraße northward. There it went around a former drill terrain, located on diluvial sediments, as the city grew larger. The wall followed the layer consisting of alluvial sand and clay deposits and some dune sand (between the upper diluvium and the alluvium) to finally cross the marl hills at the Bernauerstraße. I had to look at many maps to find a relation for a small, southeastern part of the 'wall layer'. On the geological map²⁰ the 'wall layer' splits in the east. No developing cityscape or cultivation indicated why the wall would follow the south route instead of the northern one on the Kopernickestraße.



geological map Berlin²⁰, detail



historical map Berlin,¹⁹ detail

¹⁷ The edge or fringe enacts the middle. The middle gets space and pushes what threatens away. Worn out sidewalks, the IKEA, the Mac drive and pimped cars. If they inhibited the middle, we would not like going there. The middle would morph into the edge, it would unravel. It would become a 'frayed fringe' or a 'unraveled edge'. Free after David Hamers, Niemandsländ pg12.

²⁰ Geologische Karte der Stadt Berlin in Maasstabe 1 :15000. Herausgegeben von der köngl. Preussische Geologische Landesanstalt, 1885

Finally I found a footpath on a historical map. It was very small, but unmistakably there. The dynamics of walking stimulate the subterranean to develop a property of - and a difference in use - of the 'stratum'. It became an agency in the cityscape and hence influenced where the wall was eventually built.



Photo's taken in 2004

The latest Berlin Wall has been demolished, but it continues to leave a mark on its surroundings. In Berlin brand-new buildings and trademarks promotion sprawl. The site where the former wall stood at once modifies and changes. There is a graveyard with pieces of the former wall, which partly cover the tombstones, waiting to be disposed of, an alternative camping site with yellow striped tents, and a wooden wall along a beach.



Clearing out the grave of the wall

The composer Michael Turnbull walked the outline of the former wall in 1998-1999 and made a cappella songs from sounds in the public space on specific spots: the so called no-man's land. If you listen to the sounds of the pieces, one hears birds and leaves and in the distance a car or a plane. As if you were walking in the countryside. Although much has changed since 1999, the area still has an unraveling look. The 'frayed fringe of the former wall' and the brand new buildings are specific components of the ongoing reconfiguration in their intra-active be comings.

This unraveled 'edge' cuts right through the center of the city. The new buildings and the unraveling fringe reveal the intra-action between components of the phenomenon geo(morpho)logy and the phenomenon globalization.

To return to the subject of the look and skyline of the cityscape: even global brands adapt their appearance locally. The MacDonald in Maastricht sits in the ancient centre of town. The buildings there were built ages ago. They probably survived because they sit on firm ground. The MacDonald's materialized locally, for it exchanged its usual red and yellow trademark M into an antique-looking brass font.²¹

**So did economical agencies take the world by surprise, creating one global landscape?
Did the world give in without word or deed? I do not think so.**

To put it more forcefully: globalization exists *only* through being local. A contradiction in terms. To underline this statement, a group of artists focused on a world wide known phenomenon: **Asphalt.**

¹⁹ Plan von Berlin nebst denen umliegenden Gegenden, 1798, herausgegeben von J.F. Schneider Konigl. Preusl. Artil. Lieutenant scale 1:2500 Schritte

²¹ Dr J. Mesman, University of Maastricht, pillow talk

Radio Orbino, an art installation of Anton Dekker en Irene Janze

Asphalt is the sedimentary rock from (post) - modernity²²

Asphalt seems a neutral carrier on which the world moves along. A long, linear, docile body, the asphalt bears its deterministic fate. Slavishly it lets itself be run over: without complaint and only the occasional crack or groan. But looks are deceptive... Probing reveals that asphalt meanders, bows, cuts, divides and rules. Asphalt produces boundaries, islands and residual areas. She upsets just restored balances. If we are not careful asphalt might become our grave.



Artists studied 2,5 kilometer new *Dutch* highway, the N242 east of the city of Alkmaar. In December 2007 Radio Orbino (a small, local, live broadcasting radio station, next to the highway), broadcasted their findings.

Along the 2.5 kilometers stretch of investigation, the road cuts through industrial areas, encloses greenhouses and cleaves the remains of an old village road. A mountain of old iron hovers above it. At the same time, the road falls into her form according to local peculiarities, the shape and reactions of its surroundings.



Bridges are being built and tunnels dug. The new route of the highway N242 hides the frayed fringes of older roads behind her sound barriers. The uniform barriers and the uni-form-ication of the highway look like a global phenomenon, yet at her base we find local history: bent spoons, forks and knives of the waste-processing industry near by.



Asphalt is an agency entangled in other agencies. I want to make it clear that I do not consider asphalt as an *autonomous* moral esthetical agent. Its specific performance exists only in relation to other human and non-human agencies. The relata are not preceding the relation, waiting to be discovered.

The geo(morpho)logy supports, guides and obstructs her way. For those 2,5 km the road slides over a geological borderline. It runs roughly in between ancient sand banks (behind the old dunes) and the sedimentation of

²² *ibid*, walking quotation

Duinkerken III²³. This subterranean intra-acts and becomes cognizable in drainage systems and economic cultivation. Alkmaar (Alkmare) grew on an ancient sand bank surrounded by 'inland' clay. It is next to the former lake: Schermeer (Scirmere). In the museum of Alkmaar I saw on a map (written in French) Chermer = Dear Sea, but I presume that was a Freudian mistake (by the cartographer or my memory). The lake was connected to the Zuiderzee, which is now called the IJsselmeer. Today Alkmaar appears to be in the middle of land, but this situation is relatively recent. In the last 800 years, the region around Alkmaar was claimed from lakes and the sea - several times, as the land was flooded again and again. Alkmaar borders (to be precise: its neighboring village Oudorp) on the polder 'Schermermeer". Hence the highway does too.²⁴ The polder is amongst the oldest ones in the Netherlands.



It is immediately clear, looking east from highway, that the landscape is old. That is to say: if you slow down or stop the car and perhaps had paid a visit to our radio station Orbino. The station looked over the polder meadows. Here the highway is built upon old sand banks and follows a centuries-old track.

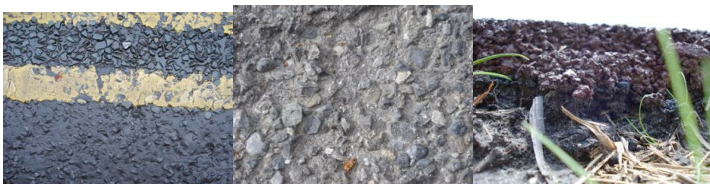
This geomorphology unfolds its subterranean character solely in relation to the sliding zone and the globalizing surface. At the sliding zone, globalization is made local and the asphalt road N242 becomes locally materialized globalization. This intra-active sliding zone makes the geo(morho)logical and globalizing phenomena cognizable, while simultaneously the sliding zone is becoming (shifting and modifying) due to these phenomena. As such the intra-active sliding zone can be regarded as a physical arrangement of both embodied and non-embodied matter and meanings.

Artists investigated the local character of the asphalt of the highway N242 and made comparisons with asphalt highways in other places. Thin cuts were made from samples asphalt to research small components and the composition of the blacktop.

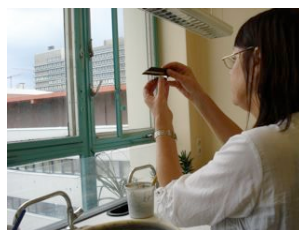
Lancaster, UK

Graubunde, Swiss

N242, Alkmaar



grind room, VU Amsterdam



Wijnanda Koot, head



thin cuts of asphalt blacktops

²³ Duinkerken O/III is the name for sediment, deposited during the transgression of the sea in medieval times (it is the period of the birth of the 'big' lakes in the province: Noord Holland)

²⁴ It would go too far to describe the reconfigurations and the agencies peat moor, the drainages basins and water sheds, the sea floods, peat moor winning, dykes and mills, governments and ownerships, economical depressions and the canalization on the phenomenon: leveled landscape

Archives and museums are visited. Geological and historical maps consulted.



maps

Experts were interviewed about the process of refinement, about the residual molecule bitumen, about the future of asphalt, about CO2.



prof. Jan Smit, Prof. Olaf Schuiling, Drs Peter van der Gaag, interview drs G. Heidweiler, drs J Baker, Dr. Jean van Berkel

Sounds of asphalt highways in the world are collected. The local flora and fauna of the roadside were studied. Reports, (live) interviews and collected sounds: all data were broadcasted. Radio Orbino was on air in December 2007 for 24 hours a day (10 - 12 hours live). The station was reached by telephone and many people found their way to the studio and paid us a visit. Life performance of artists took place and trans-passers used the open microphone. Local shop owners, garden owners, inhabitants of the small village 'de Omval, ants, cars and roadblocks, road menders, tree planters, a grower of flowers, a local physical geographer, the environmental engineer, poets, dancers, musicians, writers, artists, school classes, the local tango society: all got their say and performance. Workshops were given. On Internet at www.orbino.nl / projects/ Radio Orbino is an archive of impressions (in sound, pics and movies) of the programs and performances.



Interviewing a construction worker in the pit

Why radio?

The stream of cars appears as an un-interruptible global phenomenon as well.

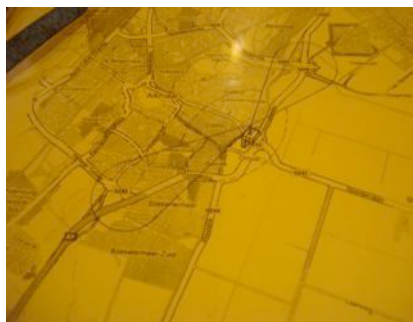


Still it consists of different cars and road-users. Asphalt gathers the vehicles and enacts mobility by means of braking distances to relative positions and speed. How can we communicate with such an inert system? How can we draw attention to the local components of the highway as cars pass by with such a speed that all differences are eliminated? We will try to infiltrate private cars with radio waves.

By invitation of Unit1, an artists' initiative, we transformed the art laboratory Orbino of the Belgian architect Luc Deleu into the radio station Orbino with a broadcast radius of 2,5 km. Relicts of a lost landscape, the '*Areal Antennae*' were taken down from the roofs of Alkmaar and were put on Orbino around the 7 meter high transmitter. A pulsating light 'on air' transformed Radio Orbino into a beacon, a postmodern lighthouse. So the architectural sculpture of Luc Deu got a vertical extension and by means of radio waves a horizontal extension.



At first we wanted to drown out the regular stations as soon as the cars entered the ring around Alkmaar. But if you think highways in the Netherlands are crowded, that is still nothing compared to the 'frequency-scapes' above them. The transmitter was designed in such a way that no other (emergency) frequencies can be disturbed.



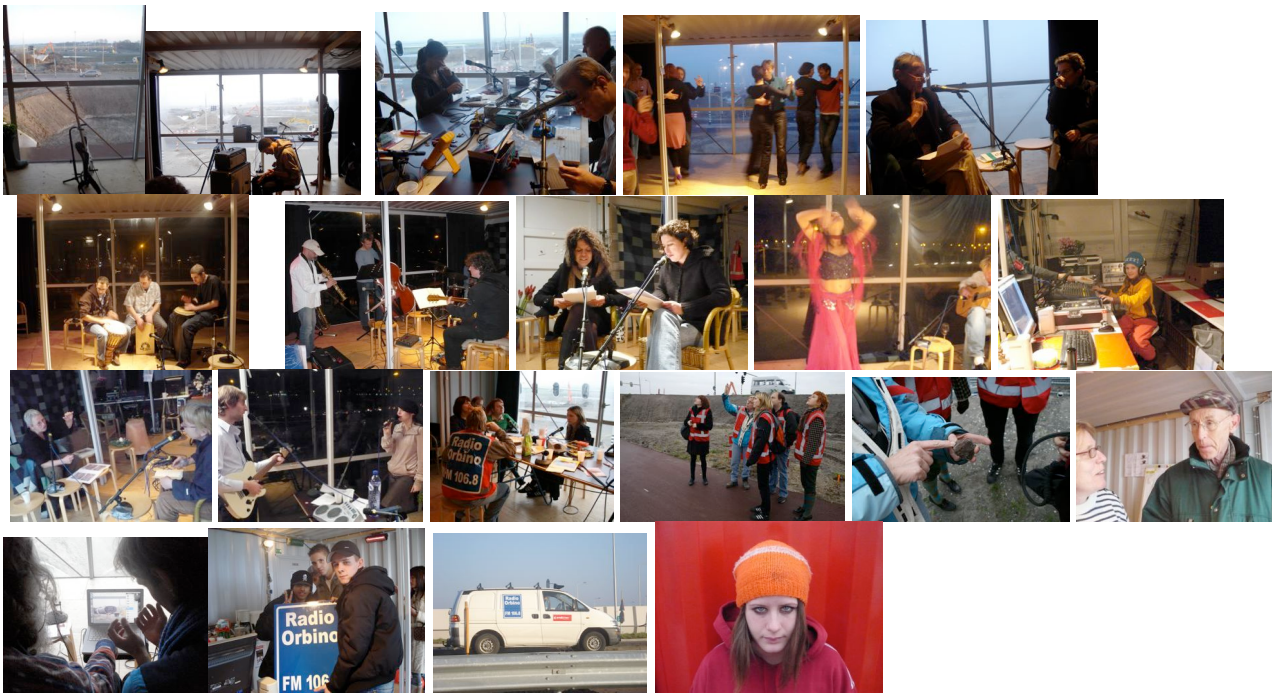
The radio could only be received on those 2,5 km investigated highway and his surroundings. (2.5 km length and 2 times 3.6 km in broadness) . You had to switch to our frequency right away, as you were out of reach in a split second. Luckily the car park of the garden centre Ranzijn was our neighbor. So everybody could park his or her car to listen to Radio Orbino . In fact, Radio Orbino and the artists were intra-actively related agencies intending to slow you down. Two swimming pool speakers could be switched on and created a sound bell over the cycle path.



On our so called Orbino Hill (the slope of the N242) people could sit and rest and enjoy the sound-scapes, interviews and performances on Radio Orbino.



The studio was a stacked-container sliding zone with a hart-shaped transmission extension. Or, as an interviewer from a neighboring local radio station called it: a local 'google-machine', absorbing all the surrounding information and spitting it out in the air again.



On this moment I am writing about the experience and spatial grammar of the phenomenon 'Radio Orbino'. It will become chapter 2. (cd with soundtracks will be included) Chapter 3 will be about the road. Her skin (black top), her family, her doings and memory.

The installation in Lancaster

As said the project: 'On the road: Radio Orbino' was presented at PalCom, University of Lancaster, UK, nov 7,8 2007



I took pieces of asphalt from all over the Europe (and one Asian piece) to Lancaster.
 I brought thin cuts made of the asphalt chunks.
 I brought asphalt sounds from Europe.
 I brought the bend knives and spoons found in the foundation of the highway.
 I brought drawings and a model of the radio station.
 I brought show slides (and Q-movies) of highways and asphalt.



Over the last few months I came to value asphalt. It grounds me and forces me on my knees every now and then. I have come to know its markings and cracks. It shines in her youth and fades away in old age. It changes color depending on traffic passing by. It whispers in wet climates and hardens in St Petersburg, forcing cars to assume different tire tensions.

In Philadelphia it slowly sinks into the underground because it surrenders to another agency: on old tram rails left over from a recent past. Than human hands lift it; take care of it; caress it. Its composition varies tremendously; still it appears as the same everywhere. It is successful without diva attitude or vanity. Its greatness at birth became flourishing commonness. It never bores me. It always has stories to be told. It became my lover.

I was very curious what the highways around Lancaster looked like. Perhaps they were constructed on top of ancient Roman roads. Perhaps the geology dictates their routes. How did the highway smell and sound? And out of what was the asphalt made?

It was nice to go on excursion to highways near Lancaster and collect data about their local characters, sliding zones and local sounds. The collected sounds, interviews and the music piece Hi way code from Now were broadcasted on Radio Orbino.



Irene Janze, januari 2008

