Settling in Stories, Cities, and other Structures

researching exclusion within the field of urbanism

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into the text

Before walking into the text, I am standing in the city; between faces of strangers and fresh breads, movies in the morning and corner stores. The city shelters and feeds me with comfort on one day. The city leaves me naked and hungry the next. While naked and hungry I pass a place that seems to be a home to some, but cold concrete to others.

The built environment of the city is the main matter of this text; it is what I am writing about, looking at and standing in. It's the matter I will be flaying; searching for layers that cover the cold concrete. More specifically, I write about the transformations and developments of these built environments. I look at the ways in which the transformations and developments are influenced by ideologies prevailing in societies as well as at the effects they have on the inhabitants of the city. I especially focus on inhabitants who experience forms of exclusion from the built environment. With and throughout this text I am researching how this exclusion operates, and how the peripheral perspectives are positioned within the city.

The first chapter addresses the rise of settlements; what are the social and economic foundations cities are built upon and what social and economic mechanisms made settlements grow big. I then move on to chapter two, in which I write about the re-creation of cities (urban planning, expansion and renewal) by means of different historical case studies. Here, the focus is finding the connection between the re-creation of the city and its inhabitants; in other words, bringing the large dimension and big scale of urban processes to a human and bodily size. In the last chapter, I research the way the human figure is positioned and perceived within the city by those in charge of re-creating the city. I focus on the excluding consequences the placement and perception of this human figure has on the inhabitants of the city.

Most case studies analyzed in this text are European and thus only a particular part of all urban discourses and developments in the world is researched here. As well as my own upbringing and education, consciously and unconsciously, created an European perspective on urbanism. Eurocentric urban ideologies have also disseminated for years through colonial and imperial pursuits. It is therefore important to recognize that although this text discusses cities as 'cities', its definition continues to be informed by a history of European dominance.

into the city

The term 'city' can refer to an administrative status and to the formal characteristic of a certain place. The status 'city' is given by the government or other ruling body. The designation provides the city with rights and privileges. Formerly this often entailed independent jurisdiction and increased trading opportunities. Later on, it also provided the city with additional powers of taxation. Such status gives the city administratively defined boundaries.

In this text I do not use the term 'city' as an administrative status. I use the term in a non-bureaucratic context in which 'city' refers to the formal characteristic of a place. In my readings, the city was often characterized as 'a large, permanent, dense and human settlement'. This description is not universal nor crucial, but rather based on similarities in the appearance and structure of cities. In the following chapters and words in-between, I adapt this description to my personal perception of the city.

The city I am standing in, the city I perceive, is an organized organism. An organism that, in the words of philosopher Elizabeth Grosz, is: "semi-permanent but ever-changing"[1]. She, city, has bodily characteristics and an alive attitude. She is constantly growing and shrinking. She is permanent for a period and temporal for some time. She has porous skin. Skin like a membrane; pricked with lines and layers of non-stop transport, bringing the foods and fuels in. She gobbles down the day and devours the night. She wakes up in the morning not having slept. She is chopped up in names and numbers. She is order and structure as much as she is chaos. She has a high density of population, interaction and communication. This density creates a correlation between otherwise unrelated activities, processes, people and place. Here, she is holding her complexity, friction, knowledge, conflict and beauty.

some days

she

city

has a voice

she is talking in a tongue

that is unfamiliar to many

but loud enough

for all of us to hear

1. Creation of cities

The city "provides the order and organization that automatically links otherwise unrelated bodies"[1], writes Elizabeth Grosz. When following this thought and thus assuming that order and organization are an inherent part of cities, which social and economic mechanisms of order and organization are notable and where do they originate from? To research this origin, I will look at how small settlements sprang up and how they reached the relatively high density of population, interaction and communication. How did these settlements actually grow into cities?

The rise of permanent settlements is a complex sequence of events. These events cannot be reduced to a single cause, since there is not a single sort of settlement. To put it bluntly; there isn't a monogamous cause-and-effect relationship. I do believe that there are multitude of causes, mixed with swarms of circumstances, that result in some sort of influence on future happenings. Through reading, I gathered the theories of *security*, *surplus* and *sanctuary* as potential and partial settlement-starters, which are thus a fraction of the swarm but not the whole swarm.

1.1 security

The amount of buildings in the city surrounded by high fences and cameras is increasing. Gated communities pop up inside of the city, whereas before the city was often a gated community itself. Residents of these gated and fenced places separate themselves from the street and search for safety on their own private property. The switch from the city to the house as a refuge for danger shakes up the fundaments on which many cities are built.

Protection against danger has been the main motive for the formation of early cities, writes urbanist Nan Ellin. The borders of these settlements were mainly formed by waters or walls and created a split between the inside and the outside. "The walls, canals and palisades marked the border between 'us' and 'them' between order and wilderness, peace and war: the enemies were the ones outside of the walls and were not allowed to enter."[2]

Medieval Europe was a relatively highly populated and urban area. Battles over plots and lands occurred frequently or constantly. Fortification and other types of fence-forming around the city were very common. These walled cities were not only supposed to defend its citizens against human enemies, but also demons, death, and the devil, as Yi-Fu Tuan writes in *Space and Place*: "In medieval Europe priests consecrated city walls so that they could ward off the devil, sickness, and death - in other words, the threats of chaos."[3]

1.2 surplus

12.000 years ago, many nomadic foragers started to focus on a future full of farming. Due to the desire for a more stable and controlled food supply the foragers settled for a single spot. This agricultural revolution impacted big parts of the world. Previously, the concept of home could cover changing fields and seasonal waters, now, a fixed farmhouse and its surrounding grounds becomes the holder of home.

New settlements and other permanent structures arose. Planning the future became more important than it had been before, partly because an enhanced control over this future was possible as well as necessary to sustain a secure livelihood out of agriculture. Farmers started to produce more than they would consume; building up reserves to get through the flimsy years. Apart from reserves, the food surpluses became ware for trading. The trading of surpluses happened among the peasants, or with the new elites and rulers that sprang up.[4]

Yi-Fu Tuan touches upon economic surplus as a motive for the origin of cities: "The economic interpretation sees the city as a consequence of economic surplus: the products that local villages cannot consume are exchanged at a convenient place, which eventually develops into a market town and city."[5] But according to Tuan, by focusing solely on this interpretation the city's power to command awe and allegiance cannot be explained.

The existence of this awe and allegiance, is better understood through the emergence of class difference. The forfeited food surpluses of peasants fueled the new elite and their luxurious living conditions, leaving the peasants often only with a scanty subsistence.[4] This allowed the elites to gain economic control over the peasants, causing the emergence of hierarchies within the settlements and cities. Here it could be argued, that the new elites produced and curated awe through propagandizing their image and importance, so that their status would not be questioned. In the next paragraphs I elaborate on the production and curation of awe and allegiance in relation to the developments of cities, focusing on the importance of shared myths and stories.

1.3 sanctuary

While still researching the formation of the first cities, Tuan continues in his book by referring to geographer Paul Wheatley. He points towards a sacred spot, the city as a sanctuary site: "when urbanism is traced back to its primary centers and into the distant past, we find not the marketplace or fortress but the idea of the supernatural creation of a world. That agent is a god, a priest-king or hero; the locus of creation is the center of the world. That center is usually marked in some way. Beginning perhaps as a tribal shrine, it develops into massive and extensive ceremonial complexes that include

different combinations of such architectural elements as platforms, terraces, temples, palaces, courtyards, stairways, and pyramids."[5]

Some of the small settlements that sprang up over time transformed into crammed cities. Surplus and security might have formed these places, but it is the glue of myths and stories that has been holding them together, writes historian Yuval Noah Harari:

"When the Agricultural Revolutions opened opportunities for the creation of crowded cities and mighty empires, people invented stories about great gods, motherlands and joint stock companies to provide the needed social links. While human evolution was crawling at its usual snail's pace, the human imagination was building astounding networks of mass cooperation unlike any other ever seen on earth. […] All these cooperation networks – form the cities of ancient Mesopotamia to the Qin and Roman empires – were 'imagined orders'. The social norms that sustained them were based neither on ingrained instincts nor on personal acquaintances, but rather on belief in shared myths."[4]

Here, I would conclude that security, surplus and sanctuary all contributed to the formation of settlements and cities. However, the belief in shared myths and stories has been the main mechanism that made cities reach the relatively high density of population, interaction and communication. The belief in shared myths and stories created order and organization that made the construction of large networks, hence large cities, possible.

i have been looking for collaborating legs

i heard the phrase in someone's speaking

and since then couldn't stop searching

for more misunderstandings in my bag

words chop me up

and give gaps

while trying to touch

i don't mind the holes

i will fill it with buns or other breads

been looking for a new coat

a jacket made of sound

to wrap my shoulders in

to dip and then drown in

during collective mornings

when i wave with noise to you

when i wave with sleeves of forgotten garments

been looking for a heavy door

to enter with weight

while holding on to the handle

chatting with the floor

being the ceiling

facing the table

letting the street say sorry

before the building breaks into tears

i was searching for more water

when i found aged anger in the kitchen

on top of the fire

near the oven

between two jars

preserved by bodies that came before me

and will come after me

thin slices of pickled red onion

thin slices of shared sentences

thin slices of things i haven't heard

dipping all the narrators into the same sea

where fish walk in big gowns

peeling the walls

before settling in new houses

on new land

i think it is time to buy another dictionary

or more yoghurt

i am amplifying incomplete understandings

and the mistranslated utters of my own face

seeking an excess

of entries

and exits

where knees rattle away with the gutter

where bricks slam their opinion onto the pavement

where i meet the day without pre-placed meaning

where the way you walk feeds me more

than gripping speech is aiming for

2. Re-creation of cities

People are coming into the city, filling the streets and occupying new plots. Worldwide, the amount of those migrating from the countryside to the city has been increasing over the last hundred years and will continue to do so in the coming decades.[6] Constant transformation of the built environment is necessary due to the continuous influx of inhabitants, the changing needs of new generations and devastation caused by climate or natural forces. The appearance and construction of the built environment is commonly comprehended as stiff, sturdy, and long lasting, which is an understandable presumption when using the human lifespan as a frame of reference. However, observing this appearance and construction in relation to the lifespan of three human beings or three generations, they lose some of their stiff and sturdy characteristics. Hence, over time and over distance, the appearance and construction of the city can be looked at as an entity of change.

In this chapter, I write about some of these transformations and changes; the ones set in motion by the act of urban planning, expansion, renovation and renewal. I will look at what is affecting these processes and investigate the way urban planning influences the inhabitants of the city. The three case studies analyzed here are, consecutively, looked at within the context of Enlightenment, the Arts and Crafts movement, and Modernism.

2.1 new boulevards
During the second half of the 19th century, big urban renewals took place in Paris. Haussmann, a French government official, was selected by Napoleon III to transform the center of Paris. At this point in time, the city center was viewed by the government as overcrowded, unhygienic, dangerous and dark. And thus, Haussmann was commissioned to 'aérer, unifier, et embellir'[7]; meaning to provide the center with more open spaces, unify the different parts of the city and create beauty. Here should be emphasized that these tasks where assigned by the government and thus imply a certain idea of beauty, which in this case entailed characteristics of so-called historicist architecture.

Before the urban transformations took place, the city center of Paris was the cradle for uprisings and revolts. Between 1830 and 1848 the discontent and anger of the Parisian workers, caused by a conservative turn in the Republic's course, led to them blocking and barricading the narrow streets. This made it difficult for the military to control the uprisings. Turning the small winding streets and alleys into wide, straight avenues and boulevards was one of Haussmann's urban interventions. These new boulevards were laid out according to a geometric grid and connected the most important buildings and squares of the city.

The urban transformation of Paris is frequently written about in the Western discourse of urbanism. Mostly because of its large scope and thorough execution, which makes Paris a good case study for researching the effects of urban planning on the inhabitants of the city. Geographer David Harvey is one of the many who writes about the urban transformations in Paris. In his essay *The Political Economy of Public Space* Harvey starts by describing the existence of these effects at large before unfolding them with Paris as example:

"We do not, after all, experience the city blankly and much of what we do absorb from that daily experience (be it the long drag of the commute, the jostle of subway crowds, the blandness of the shopping mall, the elegance or grandeur of certain forms of urban architecture, the panhandlers on the sidewalk or the peace and beauty of an urban park) surely has some kind of influence upon how we are situated in the world and think and act politically accordingly."[8]

Harvey attempts to scrutinize the connection between urban public spaces and the politics of the public sphere by looking at the newly paved boulevards: "He [Haussmann] strictly mandated design criteria and aesthetic forms for both the public and the private construction on and around the boulevards […] Private activity was forced to support the political goal, which was to shape a certain kind of public space reflective of imperial splendor, military security and bourgeois affluence."[8] The urban renewals or so-called 'Haussmannization', explicitly the new boulevards, increased military control by creating more possibilities to by-pass the barricades that previously arose in the tortuous streets during revolts. Many of Haussmann's interventions sought to expel industrial activities and its associated working classes from the center of the city.

According to Harvey, military domination, imperial splendor and embourgeoisement had a prominent position in the urban renewals of Paris. This resulted in an increasing control of the social activities at the new boulevards by the government and, at the same time, indirectly by the commercial activities around the boulevard. The streets, previously used by inhabitants to express their discontent and anger, were now filled with cafes and shops. This change meant that the inhabitants turned more and more into spectators and consumers of the city; which created a passive attitude of the inhabitants towards politics within the public space. For Napoleon III, this passivity ensured and enhanced his political and military power over the city. Hence, I would argue that he deliberately used embourgeoisement as justification to keep control in the hands of the state.

This example shows how urban planning was used by those in power in order to impose their ideologies onto the built environment of the city and its inhabitants. Here, the prevailing ideologies should be looked at in the context of Enlightenment. On paper, this period ended somewhere at the start of the transformations in Paris, but many ideals that arose during Enlightenment seeped through

into following years. Significant here is the focus on rational scientific progress. The discipline of urbanism, alongside other disciplines, gained a more scientific and intellectual status, inducing a hierarchy between the city planners and the executors. The rise of a new ruling middle class in Europe combined with the rise of the agency of the city planner resulted in urban development being mostly driven by the wishes and needs of the bourgeoisie. The city as a pleasant place for the 'happy few'.

2.2 new gardens

Having made the link between ideologies and urban developments within the context of Enlightenment, I continue looking at the Arts and Crafts movement, which emerged at the end of the 19th century in England. At the time, the built environment of the city was changing rapidly due to industrialization. The innovations and new infrastructures that emerged over time created factory focused labor and more convenient and faster travel and transport opportunities. In the field of urbanism these developments meant: an influx of people into the city because of more working opportunities in relation to the countryside, a central role for railways as travel and transport method, the need for new types of buildings (like factories and stations), as well as the possibility to construct new types of buildings because of the innovation of steel and glass as construction materials. Cities changed rapidly and immensely due to industrialization. Arts and Crafts was one of the movements that, in response to the new, predominantly urban living conditions, begun to laude nature, the countryside, and medieval cities.

In the late 19th century, English urban planner Ebenezer Howard crafted a model for a new type of settlement: 'the Garden City'. He imagined this Garden City to be a self-sustaining, autonomous, spacious settlement with cottage-like architecture situated in the countryside. Hence, trying to combine the perks of both the city and the countryside. Howard's model, similar to the Arts and Crafts movement, was born out of the desire to return to nature and free citizens from the industrialized and overcrowded cities that arose in England.

Not many cities have been built after Howard's model, however, in the beginning of the 20th century a number of Garden Suburbs sprung up in England and later on, in other parts of Europe. These suburbs incorporated some of the aesthetic and spatial ideals of the Garden City. However, these areas often ended up as residential suburbs far from Howard's initial model which mainly focused on creating economically independent settlements. The Garden Suburbs commonly did not entail industrial or commercial activities. They became residential areas for the richer elite who could afford commuting to the center or leaving the overcrowded inner cities completely.

2.3 new everything

Slightly after the Arts and Crafts movement, modernist ideologies became more prevalent in Europe. During Modernism, individualism and rationalism contributed to the publicly admired position of the artist-creator in society. This modernist creator was perceived as an autonomous genius who with new ideas and projects, could free himself and his fellow citizens from preceding tradition; thus aiming for a new and utopian society. This resulted in new movements in literature, music, visual arts and urbanism. As mentioned before, urbanism transformed at high speed around this period because of the rapid growth of cities fueled by industrialization and the destruction of the built environment due to World War I and II. One of the modernist creators that had been very influential for these urban transformations and developments, is French-Swiss architect and city planner Le Corbusier. *Plan Voisin* and *La Cité Radieuse* are two of Le Corbusier's projects analyzed here.

The first of them, *Plan Voisin*, is an extensive proposal for the reorganization of, again, the center of Paris made in 1925. *La Cité Radieuse*, equally named *Unité d'Habitation*, is an apartment complex in Marseille. This project was built between 1947 and 1952, after which it was replicated four more times in different cities in France and Germany. *Plan Voisin* has not been executed, however it remains relevant for the understanding of Le Corbusier's methods for city planning:

"From Plan Voisin onwards, which aimed for the cold-blooded demolition of the center of Paris wherein only the monuments are preserved, up to the different designs for 'Cité Radieuse', which were placed on an abstract, non-existent location, the same logic is used: not only a rejection of the city, but also the refusal to acknowledge any specific constraints imposed by the location. Everywhere except in Venice the 'standard' rules, and the terrain is no more than a representational surface for an object, an abstractly estimated machine-sculpture."[9]

Notable here, is the separation of land from its context; a tabula rasa, a blank slate. The land, torn and taken from the earth and her past; torn and taken to the drawing table to be transformed into an utopian settlement. This method indicates a self-claimed entitlement over existing land and thus over all its non-human organisms and existence.

The modernist creators envisioned a new and utopian society based on efficiency and functionality, which led to the idea of a machine-like city in the field of urbanism. For this machine-like city to operate in an efficient and functional way the inhabitants were viewed as one big mass. This vision was based on the desire to improve the ergonomics, safety and a multitude of technical elements within urbanism. Seeing the inhabitants as one singular mass, made it possible to agree on standards, norms and rules that on paper would be suitable for and apply to the majority of humans. In city planning and architecture this caused the standardization and normalization of certain body

measurements, living forms, social roles, relationships and family constellations. In comparison to Enlightenment, the city opted for being a place for the masses rather than the 'happy few'. How this mass looked like, ended up in the hands of those in charge of standardization and normalization processes.

The case studies mentioned in this chapter show that the act of city planning created an increased control over inhabitants by the government, a more passive attitude of the inhabitants towards politics, a self-claimed entitlement over land and all its non-human organisms and existence, and an exclusion of the non-normative. With these historic European examples it becomes visible how ideologies prevailing in these societies are influencing and shaping the act of city planning and how city planning in turn influences and shapes the life of the inhabitants of cities. In the next chapter, I focus on exclusion within the field of urbanism caused by modernist and neo-liberal ideologies.

i found unheard music

on the way of waking up

i am ears

while moving into the hallway

primal echoes of granite

and other emptiness blast over me

let me touch some wood

before i lose it again

wanting to return

to when it felt like my neck held stuff steady

now it bends in all directions

and sweating

it is sweating

my neck is sweating

can i take that back?

i think i can only take it further

and listen longer

to the way she is not silent

to the way she speaks with singular shouts

to the way she wallows in her own sentences

talking to

or talking with

depending on the way

she flung up her leg against the wall

or how she is seated at the table

it is all bringing me back to that same sea

where stories are saturated by wetness

let me rephrase

she is not taking a bath

she is refreshing her skin

i am old skin

i wake at nights

i eat yogurt in the middle of loud evenings

3. Placement and presence in the city

I end chapter two by writing about the modernist mass; how the plethora of individuals was reduced to a singular group to serve the desired functionality and efficiency of a new society. As explained and elaborated on in the coming paragraphs, the personification of this mass required a singular body, which mostly ended up being a white male. This so-called 'universal figure' continued to operate as an undeclared corporal norm that individuals are measured against. In this chapter, I focus on the disembodied characteristics of the universal figure and the consequences this specific figure-focus has on the cities of today. Furthermore, I will be researching the placement and presence in the city of those who experience forms of exclusion due to these consequences.

3.1 universal figure
Cartesian theories, after 17th century French philosopher Descartes, imprinted themselves onto the universal figure. Descartes claims in these theories that the mind is wholly separated from the corporeal body. The thought that truth and knowledge derives from and is perceived through reasoning of the mind, positioned the body as inferior. The body was seen as a burden; soaked in neglect and lugged by the mind. As sociologist Nirmal Puwar writes in her book *Space Invaders*: "The separation of the mind and body, reason and nature, is absorbed in the public realm to the extent that there is repulsion and even fear of the body. Hence the body is treated with suspicion, as a site of unruly passions and appetite that might disrupt the pursuit of truth and knowledge."[10]

The rise of the mind-orientated figure declares the insignificance of 'the body'. Though, the body denied here is not just any body, it is a particular body; heterosexual, white and male. Here I will refer to Puwar again: "the universal figure is disembodied; the body is irrelevant to this positionality. Being pure mind, their bodies are of no consequence. […] Interestingly, though, in the folds of the spin we find that 'the body is only irrelevant when it's the (white) male body'. The vital ingredient, a transcendence of the body, is a capacity that women and non-whites are not associated with. Their physicality remains visible."[10] Hence, only those conforming to the characteristics of this universal figure are in the position of experiencing their bodies as insignificant for participation in a society that is dominated by this universal figure.

In the current Western world and those places influenced by Western cultures, it is a privilege to live a disembodied life; a life where bodily representation and appearance seem of no importance. Those not occupying these privileged places; people with disabilities, queer people, women and non-whites[11], "are instead highly visible as deviations from the norm and invisible as the norm."[10] The universal figure is thus often assumed to be speaking or acting from nowhere, however this figure is obviously

speaking from somewhere; he is embodied as well. He has a certain form, nationality and gender but nevertheless occupies the privileged place of disembodiment and invisibility since his body is perceived as the norm.

3.2 city of the modulor man
The built environment of the city has been designed for and is still structured after this disembodied universal figure. To create an understanding of how this influenced the city, I will once again write about the man, the modernist, the much-mentioned Le Corbusier. In 1948, Le Corbusier wrote *Le Modulor*, a publication on the mathematical proportions and measurements of the human body. Based on his research he designed a male figure that, as he envisioned, would be universally applicable to architecture. The *Modulor* man shows similarities to the universal figure: masculine, muscular, 1,83 meters tall, fist in the air.

However, as Joanna Parker writes in her essay *Architecture is Yet to Come to Terms with Trans Bodies:* "It's easy to see that Le Corbusier's modulor largely ignored those who didn't fit his vision of a 'good looking, six foot tall policeman', nor did it meaningfully account for the intricacies of human habitation, which are about far more than simple ergonomics. […] Architectural theory has a long history of imposing normative ideas onto the human body, as if architects want to design the perfect form to inhabit their buildings."[12]

The tendency and necessity to render bodies as a collection of measurements is common in many design practices. Bodies are reduced to sets of data and put into diagrams, thus only representing selections and averages of the multitude of body types. These data are commonly used for the drawing, designing and planning process of architecture and urbanism. The focus on the normalized and average measurements results in the exclusion of many extant and diverse body types.

3.3 city of the eyes
As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, the Cartesian split caused, in Western cultures, the body to have an inferior position to the mind. This inferiority did not just spring up in the 17th century when Descartes paved his path, the inferiority has been fed by other, older Western philosophies, emerging from Ancient Greece and the Renaissance. The prevalent philosophies of those times were filled with ocularcentrism: the dominance of sight over the other senses. This position was granted to the eyes because of the idea that sight was most truthful in the pursuit of reality and knowledge. This created a vision-centered and vision-generated interpretation of the world. An interpretation that is still visible today.

In the book The Eyes of The Skin, Juhani Pallasmaa writes about the dominance of the visual realm in relation to the built environment of the city. According to Pallasmaa, ocularcentrism pervaded architecture and the built environment, which meant it significantly influenced the execution of city planning and the perception of these places. "In particular, the contemporary city is increasingly the city of the eye, detached from the body by rapid motorized movement or through the overall aerial grasp from an airplane. The processes of planning have favoured the idealizing and disembodied Cartesian eye of control and detachment; city plans are highly idealized and schematized visions seen through 'le regard surplombant' (the look from above)."[13]

Not only cities are detached from the human body, a lot of contemporary architecture likewise has lost the connection with the language and wisdom of the body, writes Pallasmaa. Here, he points towards the loss of a phenomenological understanding of our bodies and their environments, resulting in an unrooted relation of humans with the world: "The inhumanity of contemporary architecture and cities can be understood as the consequence of the negligence of the body and the senses, and an imbalance in our sensory system. [...] The dominance of the eye and the suppression of the other senses tends to push us into detachment, isolation and exteriority. The art of the eye has certainly produced imposing and thought-provoking structures, but it has not facilitated human rootedness in the world."[13] Pallasmaa concludes that modernist design at large has housed the eye and the intellect, but because of this one-sided emphasis "left the body and the other senses, as well as our memories, imagination and dreams, homeless."[13]

While this text favors and derives from the perspective that all humans are fully embodied beings, the vision-centered and vision-generated world has contributed to the idea of humans as disembodied beings. Especially in Western cultures embodiment has intentionally been pushed into denial and oblivion. This tendency can be traced back to Ancient Greece and the Renaissance, and was further emulated by Modernism. As pointed out in the previous paragraphs, this has created forms of exclusion from the built environment of the city. In Parker's words, it is the exclusion of bodies that do not conform to the average and normative body types. According to Pallasmaa, it is not solely certain body types that experience exclusion, certain senses and elements of the corporal body experience exclusion as well. Especially the parts connected to the non-sight related senses: touch, taste, smell and hearing.

3.4 city of capital
The last urban-critical writer I will refer to is René de Boer, who through his research on contemporary urbanism, notes an increasing phenomenon called 'Smooth City'. Where Parker and Pallasmaa mainly focus on somatic or bodily norms, De Boer focuses on the discipline of urbanism in a neo-liberalist context and how this feeds normalization in the built environment of the city.

De Boer describes the Smooth City as an urban condition in which "all spaces seem to be scripted according to the dominant norms and needs of capital".[14] He writes that alternative narratives, ideas or (sub)cultures need to be neatly encapsulated and made servient to these dominant norms and the need of capital, when they want to make a claim on, intervene in, or transform urban space. According to De Boer, this condition has become increasingly common, in different intensities, over the last decade in cities around the world.

The reason for the rise of the Smooth City can be found in the growing hegemony of neo-liberal urbanism. A central characteristic of such urbanism is "the dominance of profit-driven and private sector-led urban development, often combined with the (local) government's prioritization of economic development, foreign investments and city branding."[14] Other significant aspects are; "privatization of (social) housing, local services and public space, the commercialization and festivalization of urban space and culture, and forms of militarization through increasing surveillance and police repression."[14]

These tendencies often create an influx of wealthier groups in the city due to the capital-driven urban developments. Hence, it creates involuntary migration and displacement of the relatively poor due to their non-prioritized position in neo-liberal policies. "While neoliberal urbanism is in essence a political project, it has paradoxically given rise to the post-political city, in which 'the urban' has increasingly become a commodity and urban politics are deliberately undermined in favor of technocratic-economic measures."[14] The influx of wealthier groups caused by effects of this so-called Smooth City, is now stimulating the smoothening of the city even more. Smooth and safe, polished and perfect, friction-free and well-designed, but only for those conforming to the norms and rules of neo-liberalism.

We can freely conclude here that neo-liberalism benefits from a built environment that is based on normalization. And thus in neo-liberal urbanism, the presence, placement and perspective of non-normative bodies, non-sight senses and relatively poor are marginalized and excluded from fully being part of the built environment of the city.

Myth of today

The belief in shared myths and stories made the construction of large networks, hence large cities, possible. Cities sprang up and grew big. Constant transformation of the built environment is necessary due to the continuous influx of inhabitants, changing needs of new generations, and devastation caused by climate or natural forces. In chapter two, I described how in Europe city planning caused an increased control over inhabitants by the government, a more passive attitude of the inhabitants towards politics, a self-claimed entitlement over land and all its non-human organisms and existence, and an exclusion of the non-normative. Chapter three focused on the hegemony of the universal figure in city planning, in order to link it with the exclusion of the non-normative. I ended the chapter with the theory that neo-liberal policies are maintaining these excluding structures within the city.

Has the continuous desire for capital gain become a myth of today? Here, on this paper in this paper, I will say so. It is this myth that has been creating and re-creating the cities as we know them today. It is this myth that the majority of people in Western cultures believe in and is thus dominating these societies. It is this myth that only allows non-normative bodies, the non-sight senses and the relatively poor to participate and intervene in or transform the built environment of the city when servient to the script of capital gain.

Normalization of the universal figure has caused alternative narratives, ideas, (sub)cultures and bodies that do not conform to this figure to be "highly visible as deviations from the norm and invisible as the norm".[10] Recent diversifying developments of institutes, governments and other organizations often entail bringing more minorities, women and non-whites into their existing structures. These processes assume that once these groups are represented in the top layer of such organizations, diversity is achieved. It is as if the act of diversifying has been encapsulated in neo-liberal policies and thus turned diversifying into a profit-driven business form. Here, the focus on making visible what has been invisible, makes it easy to forget that the prevailing structures are often still constructed by and for the universal figure. The built environment of the city being one of these universal figure-focused, and thus normalized, structures.

<u>Myth of tomorrow</u>

i am standing in the city

an organized organism

she mostly and mainly has been thought of as a machine

but to me she is flesh

a body with a tongue

when I think of talking

i hear her having a dialog with everyone

but, only some she is talking *with*

others she is talking *to*

i am standing in the kitchen

chopping onion and boiling water

it is a casual kitchen visit

not stuffed with the complexity of a layered dinner

or too many dirty dishes

on the counter is enough space for a pan

and a view onto the street

i see my friend in the world outside of my kitchen

she stands on the sidewalk

i open the window

and invite her in

she enters the house through the window

the window starts above my knee and stops somewhere above my head

the window can be opened in two ways with a single hand and a single knob

the window seduces me to go through or seduces me to tell others to go through

my friend leaves the kitchen in the same way she entered it a few hours before

tossing her knees over the sill

shortening her upper body

lowering her head

using the window as a door

entering through unintended entries

leaving through non-existing exits

stepping out of a kitchen

while holding on to edible words

there where I understand food

and where the language of food understands my body

stepping into something like a city

into many more myths

that start in the street

between two corner stores

or on top of the bin

stepping and then settling

in stories that are not delivered by single sided screams

and only shelter some

take it as salt

and keep on talking

Notes

1. Elizabeth Grosz, Bodies-Cities, 1992. Part of the book Sexuality & Space, collection of essays by different authors. page 244, 243

2. Zygmunt Bauman, Vloeibare Tijden: Leven in een Eeuw van Onzekerheid, 2018 (2007), own translation. page 99

   Original text: "De muren, grachten en palissades markeerden de grens tussen 'ons' en 'hen' tussen orde en wildernis, vrede en oorlog: vijanden waren degenen die buiten de muren waren en niet binnen mochten komen."

3. Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience, 2001. page 173

4. Yuval Noah Harari, Homo Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind, 2011. page 114, 115, 117

5. Yi-Fu Tuan, Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values, 1976. page 151

6. United Nations, World Urbanization Prospects, 2014

7. Patrice de Moncan, Le Paris d'Haussmann, 2002. page 33

8. David Harvey, The Political Economy of Public Space, 2006. Part of the book The Politics of Public Space edited by Setha M. Low and Neil Smith.

9. Jean Castex, Jean-Charles Depaule, Philippe Panerai, De rationele stad, Van Bouwblok tot Wooneenheid, 1984 (1977), own translation. page 175, 176

   Original text: "Vanaf het Plan Voison (1925), dat de koelbloedige afbraak van het centrum van Parijs beoogt waarbij alleen de monumenten gehandhaafd blijven, tot aan de verschillende ontwerpen voor de 'Cité Radieuse', geplaatst op een abstracte, niet bestaande locatie, wordt dezelfde logica gevolgd: niet alleen een verwerping van de stad, maar tevens de weigering rekening te houden met enige specifieke beperking die de locatie oplegt. Overal behalve in Venetië regeert de 'standaard', en het terrein is niet meer dan een representatievlak voor een object, een abstract bepaalde machine-sculptuur."

10. Nirmal Puwar, Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place, 2004. page 16, 57, 59

11. The expression 'people of color' directs the attention to white people as people with no particular color. Here, the refusal to be labeled as a color contributes to the idea that to speak of the color of skin is to speak of a particular body, and thus the idea that only 'people of color' are embodied people, as written by Victor Burgin in *In/Different Spaces*. This refusal ties in with the idea that to have no color is the have no body, and thus 'white' people as disembodied and universal human figures. Therefore, I decided to use the term 'non-whites' instead of 'people of color' in this text.

12. Joanna Parker, Architecture is Yet to Come to Terms with Trans Bodies, published on Failed Architecture, 2020.

13. Juhani Pallasmaa, The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses, 2005. page 29, 17

14. René de Boer, Smooth City is the New Urban, published in Volume #52, 2018.

Sources

In the end 2019 a friend recommended to me the text *The Eyes of the Skin* by architect Juhani Pallasmaa (b. 1936). I remember reading it in the morning, sitting on a blue chair. Later that day I went to a concert in a crowded, dark bar; I felt sheltered by sounds and limbs. The words I consumed that morning made sense and meant much in the evening.

Pallasmaa led me to phenomenology and somehow back to geographer David Harvey (b. 1935) and sociologist Richard Sennett (b. 1943), whose writings I do not refer to in this text but who nevertheless has been influential on my understanding of urbanism. I found myself in a spot where Juhani Pallasmaa, David Harvey, Richard Sennett, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (b.1925) and geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (b.1930) all seemed to be quoting each other.

A couple of months passed, I read *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, an essay by Ursula K. Le Guin. She showed me a juicy side of stories and sciences. I continued reading texts about architecture and urbanism, this time by writers who identity as woman or queer: philosopher Elizabeth Grosz (b. 1952), historian Yuval Noah Harari (b.1970), sociologist Nirmal Puwar, writer Joanna Parker and researcher René de Boer (b.1986).

we serve ourselves on flat plates

with comprehensible proportions and lots of olive oil

choosing chopping over chewing

cause ruminating takes time

fingers are folded around spoons

moving up and down the dish

tilting towards the front

groceries have been shoved down

slightly jostled to the back

stacked in the storage

some will stand up and bring the leftovers to the kitchen

whereas others use the empty chairs to climb on

and give a speech as dessert

is it ever too late for coffee

we wonder

we know the answer

but we only came for the question