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Werbung

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by Berlage and how it became committed to an opportunistic and lucrative town planning approach. With this project, the city of Amsterdam not only abandoned its role as owner to the private sector, but also initiated and encouraged a vast process of gentrification. As a result, town planning has become less and less an expression of policy and increasingly an economic activity. What we are seeing is a massive privatisation of the power to transform the urban environment effectively.

The welfare state has been completely replaced by an improbable combination of market forces and local democracy. The reality of power is now vested in new finery that both the philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the historian Frank Ankersmit have reviewed. For Frank Ankersmit, the three successive social organisation models described by Gilles Deleuze: sovereign societies, disciplinary societies and control societies, correspond to three power paradigms. Both believe that we are now witnessing the final breakdown of disciplinary societies and entering a control period ruled by the third paradigm of power. This latter reveals itself above all by a deficiency and evidence of it can be found wherever there is an absence of formal power. It eats away at the institutions that we have inherited from disciplinary societies and, wherever the powerlessness of modern states is

criticised, this is no more than an implicit recognition of the reality of this new type of power. This third paradigm of power covers the influence of market forces, the ascendancy of bureaucracy, the defence of particular interests (NIMBY) and the power of corporatism. Although it remains difficult to grasp, and even if it does not have a clearly identifiable form or origins, it seems to be as real and influential as the financial markets. Finally, what's left is a little space where architects can design their buildings and town planners their town. Nothing but a form without an author, a three-dimensional representation of the third paradigm of power discussed by Frank Ankersmit.

The apology of the real

In that context of the middle of the 1990s, a new generation of Dutch town planners and architects attempted to recover possession of their disciplines, among them: MVRDV, West 8, NL Architects, ONEarchitecture and MAX 1. These firms adopted an intellectual position that allowed them to survive and even thrive in what certain people were already calling a second modernity. In the Netherlands and elsewhere, a large number of critics did their utmost to define these professionals as being part of the same movement and, among others, this resulted in the term fresh conservatism proposed by Roemer van

Toorn in 1996. This designation is particularly interesting as it goes beyond the aesthetic appreciations referred to by neo- or super-modernism.

Fresh refers to a number of characteristics: unqualified optimism, readiness to enter into dialogue and be tolerant, communicative energy, marked degree of strong hedonism, and so on. It is a way of exorcising the disarray that defined the previous generation. Conservatism refers to existing values, to the rejection of radical reforms (rejection of utopia) and the constant search for consensus. Fresh conservatism matches the current mood by assuring a synergy between preserving what exists and aspiring towards what is new. Its political horizon is the alliance between social democracy and the market economy. This oxymoron arises from the tension between an aspiration to individual differentiation, and modernity's increasing tendency to homogenise all that it encounters.

This new position breaks away from something that modernism and post-modernism shared: the quest for a new realm. Modernism sought a better future while post-modernism wanted to return to a nostalgic past (historicism, neo-regionalism). Rather than trying to escape from the present, the new position found that the existing environment was the one that suited it best. The everyday sameness of the contemporary city is an inexhaustible source of inspiration

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