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avec le produit, elle est totalement dépendante de ce produit chez BKK-3. Un bâtiment doit en effet authentifier en permanence les valeurs et qualités correspondant à sa marque. Une entreprise plutôt ambitieuse si l'on tient compte de la durée de vie nettement plus longue de l'architecture comparée celle des chaussures de sport. I.+A.R.

1 Naomi Klein: «No Logo! Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies», HarperCollins/Flamingo, London, 2000.

English

Urs Primas (pages 28–33)
Translation: Michael Robinson

Mono-multiculturalism?

MVRDV's constructed neighbourhoods

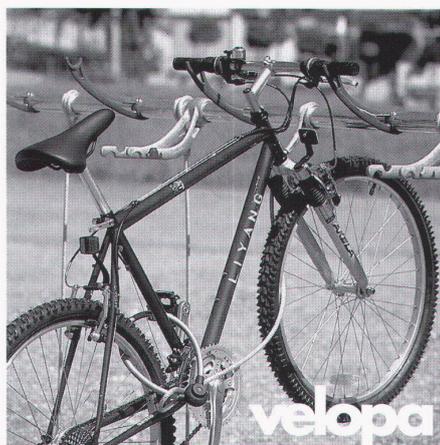
The "ecology of differences" is central to MVRDV's housing projects. This is a strategy that is trying hard to come to terms with the heterogeneous needs of today's housing consumers. It makes great play with this pluralism, but sometimes falls back on architectural images that merely mask the monotony and standardization that dominate housing construction.

"Rather than creating different advertising campaigns for different markets, campaigns could sell diversity itself, to all markets at once. The formula maintained the one-size-fits-all cost benefits of old-style cowboy cultural imperialism, but ran far fewer risks of offending local sensibilities. Instead of urging the world to taste America, it calls out, like the Skittles slogan, to "Taste the Rainbow". This candy-coated multiculturalism has stepped in as a kinder, gentler package of what Indian physicist Vandana Shiva calls "the monoculture" – it is, in effect, mono-multiculturalism." (Naomi Klein)¹

MVRDV's 1991 "Berlin Voids" European project is a manifesto for pluralism. This "tenement turned inside out" consists of a jigsaw puzzle made up of 284 extremely diverse dwellings: the home without a roof, the home with the super-window, the catholic home... Today people move of up to eight times in their lives on average – over three times as often as in 1950. This means, according to MVRDV, that the idea of the standard home ("one size fits all") is now obsolete.² Berlin Voids delegates part of centrally organized housing production's planning power to its future

residents. Instead of a monoculture of identical "ideal homes", a range of choices is offered. Thus – theoretically at least – individual preferences acquire a greater standing: at least the first buyers or tenants can choose a home that suits them better than a standard off-the-peg version. But Berlin Voids does not just create real freedom of choice, but – above all – an architectural image of it as well: the proud high-rise slab, Winy Maas writes in "Farmax", introduced itself to its East Berlin neighbourhood, which is dominated by "inhuman tenements", as a "vertical landscape packed full of ideals": a kind of "dwelling of the West" in other words, a built advertisement for the pluralistic promises of the market economy.

Two recent MVRDV housing projects suggest themselves as a basis for critical discussion of this double-edged strategy. Both projects – the residential block in Amsterdam's Silodam and the terraced houses in Ypenburg on the outskirts of The Hague – manage to find some "elements of architecture" among the banalities of current housing production in Holland, and they do this by enhancing the general standard beyond what is usually required for housing of this kind. That alone is an extraordinary achievement, requiring uncompromising negotiating skills from the architects, as well as talent and experience. Harm Tilman rightly points out that in Ypenburg for example a number of not particularly spectacular measures – concentrating all the parking places along the banks, treating affordable rented accommodation and expensive owner-occupied homes equally in visual terms – create qualities that go well beyond the usual architectural packaging, and that such measures are all too easily brushed aside when surface aspects are discussed in an unduly moral tone.³ The rest of this essay may seem to deal above all with "appearances": if so, this is because in both these projects the façade has become the crux of a marketing strategy that no longer sells a particular quality, but difference as such.



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Methodological eclecticism

In both projects it is impossible to overlook the effort that has gone into the treatment of the surfaces: in the case of the residential block in Silodam, a patchwork of different materials is intended to illustrate the various "neighbourhoods" inside the large concrete structure, while in Ypenburg identical suburban terraced houses are covered all over with different materials and thus smoothed out into sculptural caricatures of themselves. In Silodam the material collage gives the block the charm of old industrial structures that have been cobbled together over the decades: a certain lack of perfection, making a comparable effect to the "mannerisms" that Le Corbusier used since the thirties to distance himself from classical Modernism. In Ypenburg, however, the effect is precisely the opposite: the lack of articulation in the canopies, guttering and other additional features gives these otherwise unpretentious little suburban houses a hint of artistic precision. MVRDV's eclecticism is not formal, but methodological: they define their approach, their ideologies and their fascinations all over again, from one job to the next.

The residential block in Silodam marries the socialist idea of the large block as a "social condenser" with the neighbourhood ideology of the fifties and Aldo van Eyck's metaphor of the building as a "small town": social pluralism is translated into a series of "neighbourhoods" – groups of specific housing types – each of which is allotted a characteristic access system, a colour and a façade material. Stacking all these lifestyles in one block produces a labyrinthine building whose corridors invite you to roam around at length: the dreariness of the "rues intérieures", which are painted in different colours floor by floor, and reminiscent of multi-storey car parks, alternates with middle-class front-garden romanticism in the multi-storey, extremely wide external corridors, with the iridescent light blue of a light-flooded passage on the ground floor or with the mysterious atmosphere of the bridges on the

lower storeys, which are sparsely lit by the daylight reflected on the surface of the water.

In the Silodam development the aim is to create manageable neighbourhoods within a large residential block, but in Ypenburg the "ecology of differences" becomes a pictorial strategy intended to create "identity" within the mishmash of housing in this urban expansion project providing 15,000 units. The majority of the homes had to be built as terraced houses, working to relatively inflexible guidelines on use statistics, budgets, layout planning and construction modes. Fritz Palmboom's master plan divided a former military airfield into a series of sub-areas with different landscape themes – moor, woodland, water etc. The first step in the sub-plan for the "water district", which was devised by MVRDV with the developer Amvest, reinforces the water theme: the buildings were given landing-stages instead of gardens, and the area of water is considerably increased from the original figure in the master plan. The second step further divides the sub-sections into building blocks which are in their turn allotted a thematic slogan, an architectural practice and a material for the façade: "Water Courts", "Patio Island", "Hedge Island" etc. On the "Hedge Island", which was further developed by MVRDV themselves, the idea of difference becomes an identity in its own right, in that not just one but five different façade claddings are used. Here the architects are pushing their own automatism of differentiation so far that it becomes almost ironic: a symbol of the panic fear of monotony, repetition and size that has shaped Dutch building culture ever since the so-called failure of the large Bijlmermeer estate.

In their "Adhocism" manifesto of 1972, Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver demanded a "democracy of the consumer", decentralized design based directly on meeting individual wishes: "You sit there and need – we do the rest..."⁴ Even thirty years later – at least in the field of housing construction – that sounds somewhat Utopian.

Just as the idea of grass roots democratic co-determination by residents in the seventies was quickly absorbed by the industrial housing construction machinery, the pluralism offered by MVRDV seems to have been somewhat eroded by contact with reality. While the Silodam can still be read as a remix of the Berlin Voids ideas spelt out to address Dutch realities, the differentiation of images in Ypenburg merely masks a far-reaching homogenization in terms of programming and typology. It thus distorts its own idealistic starting-points by turning them into hollow advertising clichés.

- 1 Naomi Klein: "No Logo" HarperCollins/Flamingo, London, 2000.
- 2 Winy Maas, MVRDV et al.: "FARMAX, Excursions on Density", Rotterdam, 1994
- 3 Harm Tilman: "Architecture parlante in de buitenwijk", de Architect 2/2002
- 4 Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver: "Adhocism", New York and London, 1972

Ilka & Andreas Ruby (pages 38–43)
English translation: Rory O'Donovan

Bilateral Branding

The IP.ONE Impulse Centre by BKK-3

Heterogeneously programmed buildings are interesting investment properties that represent a current trend and receive State subsidies. Urban density and atmosphere – previously the postulates of a small radical scene are – today fulfilled in a smart mix of uses combining living, working and culture. BKK 3, whose origins as «Baukünstlerkollektiv» we can locate in left-wing alternative Vienna, employs a marketing strategy of global capitalism: branding a radical signature to make it into an urban cipher.



“Commercial development in the city” seems almost like a printer’s error, should it not read “on the edge of the city”? In terms of the market economy the urban periphery has all the best arguments: lower rents, a better infrastructure, closer proximity to motor ways and the airport as well as considerable freedom from planning constraints on green field sites instead of long-winded confrontations with established urban structures and building conservation lobbies.

Given these market conditions for commercial properties IP.ONE seems somewhat exotic: a business centre for companies from the areas of technology, services, trade and industry, almost 7000 square metres in extent, in an area of historic block perimeter development in Vienna’s 10th district. Here the project developer, Prisma Zentrum für Standort und Stadtentwicklung, applied a project typology in the city that it had previously used only in classical commercial areas on the urban perimeter. The Impulse Centre (IP) is not restricted to the usual supply of office and commercial premises but defines itself as “a business location offering a high level of service”. The centre has its own management team that assists resident companies in matters relating to the authorities and subsidies. It stimulates the exchange of information between companies housed in the building in order to encourage the formation of internal networks and to establish a basis for joint projects. At the same time it increases the external impact of the centre by organizing public events in the building and cultivating contacts with representatives from the worlds of business and politics. Additionally, in-house companies can use a whole series of communal spaces: a fully equipped seminar room and a foyer that can be used for public events. Thanks to a municipal initiative to promote the Viennese economy entitled Wiener Gewerbehöfe the foyer can be used free of charge by companies based in the building. A restaurant established in the building (“/slash worldfood”) guarantees the provision of meals during work hours and takes over

the catering for events held in the foyer in the evening. After office closing time the restaurant transforms into an address for Vienna’s nightlife. The other communal facilities then also become available for use by the general public. The seminar room and the events foyer can be rented for a modest fee for cultural activities in the evenings so that the location of the Impulse Centre in the city also increases the surplus value of the city itself.

Multiple programming as a marketing strategy?

Whereas the developer had tended previously to work with “anonymous” architecture, for the IP.ONE project he deliberately turned to BKK-3, an office that is numbered among the internationally known representatives of recent Austrian architecture. In addition to considerations relating to marketing strategies this choice was also motivated by the content of the work by BKK-3. This Viennese practice has impressively demonstrated its competence in the area of multiple programming of urban interfaces with projects for communal urban living.

In the “Sargfabrik” (1992–96) BKK-3 formulated a radical antithesis to mono-functional, pigeonhole type housing developments in the city by enhancing the 75 dwelling units with social and cultural facilities such as a kindergarten, café, seminar centre, concert space and an indoor swimming pool (wbw 1-2/1999 pp. 4–13). This functional upgrade from dormitory town to living city allows the residents to enjoy leisure time activities close to their home for which they would otherwise have to travel across the city. As such communal facilities can be economically run only if they are used by “drop ins” from other city districts as well as by the residents of the Sargfabrik they automatically attract the general public and preserve the Sargfabrik from the social isolation of a gated community. In the successor project, “Miss Sargfabrik” (2001), which was built as a response to popular demand from potential tenants, BKK-3 conjugated the same

programmatic concept of living but on a far tighter site (wbw 10/2001, pp. 27–33). In contrast to the open courtyard of the old Sargfabrik its offspring had to be restricted to the vacant corner of a block and BKK-3 were not permitted to build on the inner courtyard. For this reason they were able to produce their programmatic overlays only by means of complex interlocking spaces within the building. The most prominent result of this process is a functional hybrid made up of laundromat, communal kitchen, library, internet corner and tele-working room combined in a two-storey spatial formation that one can experience as a spatial continuum thanks to transparent dividing walls and a central access ramp.

In the case of IP.ONE BKK-3 were confronted with an almost identical site. Here too the main issue was how to fill the vacant corner of a historic urban block. However in this case it was permitted to build over the courtyard to provide access to adjoining old buildings that were to be connected with the new structure. In terms of its primary function this link is purely a circulation space but, by virtue of its strategic positioning, it becomes the communicative heart of the building. Accordingly BKK-3 occupied this area with the most communicative function in the brief i.e. the lecture room. Thanks to its programmatic equivocality this space can easily adapt to fit the intensive public functions arranged around it. This applies particularly to the restaurant as well as the seminar room. The inward-facing side of the restaurant meets up against the foyer and so it can easily be extended into the latter as and when required. Vice versa, once public events are officially over they can equally easily move into the restaurant. Depending on the particular programming (lecture, exhibition opening, film presentation, disco etc.) the configuration of the floor plan constantly allows new possibilities of transitory use. More than just a foyer, atrium or lecture room this space is an example of that kind of event space which Bernard Tschumi identified in the 1970s as the embodiment of an



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architecture that defines itself less by means of form and more in terms of what it allows to happen.

As it favours the synergetic behaviour of programmes this spatial organisation reveals many similarities with Miss Sargfabrik, but, above and beyond the features they have in common, the two projects are at places astonishingly alike – despite the fact that their functions are very different. The handling of the building volume is in both cases identical; façade and roof are combined to form a single continuous surface. The sculptural working of the building with its cut and folded surfaces also seems familiar. But this similarity comes close to cloning due to the fact that both buildings are painted entirely in the same shade of orange. Combined with their identical urban positioning at the corner of a block the architectural effect is one of confusion, one building can be mistaken for the other. Given the clear difference in the function of these two projects this raises certain questions. In whose interest does it lie to blur the differences?

It is conceivable that, for the developer, the pragmatic marketing strategy that is also illustrated in the choice of the project name, IP. ONE, could have been decisive here. At the time this project was conceived the Austrian mobile telephone provider ONE was conducting an extensive advertising campaign to establish its brand name in the market. By means of the friendly takeover of the English numeral to describe their product the Prisma advertising strategists hoped to gain inconspicuous support in building up their own brand name – undeclared brand-sharing, one could say. Using the same logic one could argue that, through the friendly take over of Miss Sargfabrik (primarily, though not exclusively, in terms of its colour) IP. One could profit from the market identity that the latter had already built up. Seen from this viewpoint the increased recognisability of one's own product compensates for the risk of its being mistaken for something else – being seen is all-important.

However this theory receives only limited support from the project developer's entrepreneurial philosophy: He sees IP. ONE very much as "a self-assured building with an identity of its own". But perhaps his is a different understanding of identity such as we see expressed in the market-oriented consumer behaviour of the 1990s where the goal was not to be unmistakable but rather to belong to a certain form of collective? For this reason in this production of identity the brand plays the decisive role, the product that embodies it plays only a supporting role. In buying a pair of Nike trainers the actual value of the product is only secondary, most important is the fact that, through the purchase, the consumer becomes a member of the Nike community and thus gains access to an associated value system of Nike "attitudes" that can prove helpful in determining his/her own identity. Applied to IP. ONE this would mean that the orange façade colour adopted from Miss Sargfabrik functions primarily as a trademark. This interpretation

would go at least some way to explaining why the project developer insisted on using the Sargfabrik colour here.

In fact the architects did not want to use this colour, they had suggested dark green. Since in the case of the two Sargfabrik projects the use of orange was closely connected to their contextual history it was anything but self-evident that the same colour should be used again here. In the case of the earlier projects the orange was a reference to the light coloured brickwork of the historic coffin factory building in which the visionary housing project had its origins. In the case of IP. ONE however we search in vain for anything relating to the building's content that might justify a reference to the context of the Sargfabrik.

Logotype and signature

When architects are forced to do something they do not want to do they often think up a post-rationalised explanation in order to legitimise what they unwillingly did. We do not know precisely what justification the architects decided upon in this case but at least two possibilities are conceivable. The first is derived from the world of Judo: as it is anyhow impossible to fight the psychological effect that links IP. ONE with Miss Sargfabrik, the response is to accede fully – very much in the style of the brand sharing by IP. ONE we noted above, which was linked with the ONE advertising campaign. The capital that the project developer invested in the development of the brand IP. ONE is used as an indirect strengthening of the "brand" Miss Sargfabrik. In this way the latter's presence is heightened. Passers-by associate IP. ONE potentially with the Sargfabrik complex and are impressed by the apparent forcefulness of the association that erected the latter project, the "Gesellschaft für integrative Lebensgestaltung" (which in fact is itself about to start work as a project developer). IP. ONE, which actually is launching its own series of three impulse centres, thus becomes a virtual "Sargfabrik THREE".

The second plausible variation would be a tactical re-evaluation of the situation. Something that could possibly be bad for the project developer (the fact that IP. ONE and Miss Sargfabrik can be mistaken for each other) must not necessarily upset the architects. On the contrary it could be to their advantage as the reference from IP. ONE to the Sargfabrik in the end links back to them as architects and documents their authorship.

So, is BKK-3 ultimately interested in making their architecture into a brand? Here the question of the logo acquires a decisive role. The architectural treatment of the logo was central to the "signature architecture" of the nineties, that is around the same time as the discovery of branding as a discursive paradigm in the field of Cultural Studies, and produced a series of notable "logotectures". For instance in the architecture of Coop Himmelb(l)au we can observe at the beginning of the 1990s an X introduced as a figurative spatial element subsequently developed as a

double cone that, from this point onwards, is impressed like a serial trademark on almost every one of their projects. O. M. Ungers in contrast extracted from the underlying grid of his architecture the ideal figure of the square and then multiplied it to create an iconic structure that covers the entire building with a logo carpet. Lastly, in his design for the Guggenheim in Bilbao Frank O. Gehry developed a specific 3D form typology, which since then he has solidified by a kind of variable repetition to create a logo type that guarantees permanent recognition.

In the case of BKK-3 it does not appear to be form for its own sake that is repeated but rather form as the result of a design method that, for its own part, is programmatically determined. For the architectural articulation of this programming – the relational handling of individual programmes to form a new collective contingency – BKK-3 always proceeds according to the same design logic:

1. Occupation of the maximum permissible volume
2. Subtraction from this volume according to the minimum required distances to neighbouring buildings and the spatial depth necessary to allow the entry of light.
3. Sculptural formation of space according to the principle of synergetic programming.
4. Tracing of the internal spatial structure on the external walls to create the façades. If we view it this way then BKK-3 do not «brand» themselves but the implied content of their programme. This turn around is not without a certain irony. An architectural practice, whose roots as "Baukünstlerkollektiv" are to be found in left-wing alternative communal building of the 80s, employs of all things branding, a marketing strategy of global capitalism, in order to implement its ideas on collective working and living. This manoeuvre does not leave the logic of branding untouched. While, according to Naomi Klein, ("No Logo")¹ at least as regards the major brand name companies branding philosophy frequently has no longer anything to do with the product, in the case of BKK-3 it is utterly and entirely dependant on the product, for the building must permanently verify the values and qualities ascribed to its brand. Given that architecture has a considerably longer life expectancy than a pair of trainers this is a somewhat ambitious undertaking. I.+A. R.

1 Naomi Klein: No Logo! «Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies» HarperCollins Flamingo, London 2000