



‘Becoming-ruin’: travelling towards an ‘ethos of letting go’ with the post-industrial ruin

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Abstract

This thesis examines the ontological and ethical value of the post-industrial ruin. By engaging with an object that is generally deemed useless, I analyse our normative processes of value creation in the city. Demonstrating the often overlooked value of the post-industrial ruin serves to tell an Other story about the spaces we inhabit and the things we appropriate. I start out by examining a concrete account of Dutch urban planning strategies: the ‘Oude Kaart van Nederland’ report on vacancy and redesignation of Dutch towns and cities. An analysis of this document shows that Dutch urban planning strategies aim to construct the city as a coherent and logical ‘Whole’: a transcendental system, in which all the parts seamlessly fit together, and which is presented as a complete and natural unity. The post-industrial ruin does not fit within this neatly woven urban fabric and threatens to expose its constructed nature. Therefore, vacancy is prevented at all costs. I aim to oppose the normative and transcendental urban planning strategies outlined in the ‘Oude Kaart’ report by arguing that the ruin holds important ontological and ethical values, exactly because it does *not* have a fixed form and function. Taking Deleuze and Guattari’s machine-ontology as a system that adequately describes the complex and relational nature of entities, I argue that the urban ruin can teach us an important lesson about the ontological structure of ourselves and (the entities in) our built environment, while the planned environment tries to conceal it. This thesis discusses the planned city as a space where processes of ‘becoming’ are structurally stifled and reduced to sameness. The urban ruin, to the contrary, is a space where processes of becoming are allowed to go off in multiple directions and explore their polyvocal and nomadic nature. As such, I discuss the modern, Western city centre as a fixed, transcendental, a-historical and a-social space of ‘being’ and the post-industrial ruin as a fluid, anti-transcendental, historical and relational space of ‘becoming’. Moving from an ontology of the ruin towards an ethics of the ruin, this thesis ends by exploring how an encounter with the material of the ruin might help us make the important shift of perspective from a transcendental, anthropocentric ethics of Reason to an anti-transcendental, non-anthropocentric ‘ethos of letting go’. With this shift of perspective, we can learn to positively expand our interactions with things and work towards an ethical and inclusive becoming of ourselves and the entities we are networked together with.

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0. Introduction

“Doing things as they are typically done is simply not enough” (Harnois 2012, 17).

In the summer of 2011 I made my first big trip: six weeks of hitchhiking around Europe. My favourite destination was Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina. I specifically remember being struck by all the ruined buildings left around in that city after the Bosnian war, especially in the residential areas outside of the historical, touristic centre. I grew up in one of the most structured, fabricated countries in the world and such seemingly disordered public spaces were unknown to me. Compared to the well-maintained buildings and neatly trimmed greenery I knew from Dutch towns and cities, these urban ruins stood out to me. In 2012 I made a cycling trip from the Belgian-French border to Pamplona, Spain, passing many small French villages that were virtually abandoned and seemed to consist solely of crumbling farms. In 2013 I spent a semester studying in Berlin, where I spent most of my free time clubbing in former factory buildings, having coffee in shabby-chic ‘exposed-brick’ coffee bars and hanging out at a former airport, which now functions as a park. During my time in Berlin I was also introduced to the practice of ‘urban exploring’: the visiting and often photographing of abandoned man-made urban constructions (Wikipedia 2015a). I visited many abandoned structures, ranging from World War II and Berlin-before-the-wall remnants, to abandoned train stations and discarded factory halls.

For me, ruins and travelling have for a long time been exclusively connected. Naturally, I only really started engaging with ruins once I noticed them, which at first was only abroad. Outside of my familiar environment I paid more attention to what was going on around me. The Swedish language has a beautiful word for this common phenomenon: ‘hemmablind’, which roughly translates to ‘home-blind’. I think my home-blindness slowly began to decrease somewhat during or after a ten-month trip from the Netherlands to India, which I took in 2014-2015. A significant time away from home made me think of home a lot, and home often served as a frame of reference to make sense of the places we visited. We had travelled over land and had thus relatively gradually eased into the chaos that is travelling in India. Flying back home from New Delhi in one day, after spending six months in India and Nepal, was, in hindsight, quite a disruptive move. I did not very consciously experience a culture shock, but I did notice I was increasingly annoyed by the way things are structured in the Netherlands. The centre of the town my parents live in was renovated during the time I was away and, compared to the worlds I had just spent time in, it looked like a model town: sterile, overly regulated and devoid of life. The orderly structured spaces I had been

used to all my life started looking strange to me. Ruins, or rather the apparent absence of ruins, started gaining (mental) space in my daily life at home.

However, it was not until I was introduced to the work of human geographer Tim Edensor about half a year later, during a course on material culture and the politics of identity, that I really began to develop an interest in and appreciation of ruins in a more concrete way and started making sense of my feelings of annoyance with the overly regulated spaces of Dutch cities and towns. I was happily surprised to see that such a seemingly functionless and often over-looked thing as a post-industrial ruin could be an object of research. The way Edensor read the ruin as a valuable structure and as a protester against capitalism, commodification and over-regulation, made me want to join him in the conversation. This thesis flows directly from these experiences, frustrations and pleasures. This thesis is me scrutinising our highly structured Dutch, or even ‘Western’ culture, by way of analysing our built environments: both ruined and regulated. Like Edensor, I feel that “the disciplinary, performative, aestheticized urban praxis . . . [that is] refashioning cities into realms of surveillance, consumption, and dwelling — characterized by an increase in single-purpose spaces [and thus an absence of ruins] — is becoming too dominant” (Edensor 2005, 17). To challenge this ideology and practice of over-regulation, this thesis shows the generally overlooked *positive* and *productive* qualities of the ruin, “so that ruins are free from the gloomy constraints of a melancholic imagination, and can equally represent the fecund” (Edensor 2005, 15).

While my academic encounter with ruins lifted off because of Edensor, I soon went into another direction. Unlike Edensor, I do not go into detail about neoliberalism and the ruin as a structure challenging this ideology. My focus is on the ruin as a structure holding important ontological and ethical information about the world of humans and things. My notion of ontology and ethics is based on the work of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In this thesis, I discuss the post-industrial ruin as a Deleuzoguattarian ‘desiring-machine’. I discuss the modern, Western city centre as a fixed, transcendental, a-historical space of ‘being’ and the post-industrial ruin as a fluid, anti-transcendental and historical space of ‘becoming’. Through an analysis of three Dutch urban planning documents, I discuss Dutch urban planning practices as shaping our urban environment, and our urban environment as shaping our dominant urban planning practices: a cyclical process that leads to the production of homogenous cities in which the ruin is not welcome. By engaging with an object generally deemed useless, I scrutinise our normative processes of value creation in the city. I try to transform or ‘queer’ these processes by arguing how the ruin holds important ontological and ethical values, exactly because it does not have a fixed form and function. However, before I go about this, it is important to first flesh out what I mean exactly when referring to this thing called ‘the ruin’.

0.1 What is a ruin?

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the noun ‘ruin’ as: “[t]he state or condition of a fabric or structure, esp. a building, which has *given way* and collapsed” (OED 2015, my emphasis).¹ I find this definition particularly useful, because it describes ‘ruin’ as a quality, state or *condition* of being of a structure, and because it emphasises how this quality gives way by virtue of collapse. However, I will narrow this definition down a little, or steer it in a particular direction, to fit better with my own view on the matter.

In my reading of the ruin, the quality of ‘giving way’ is essential. To ‘give way’ not only means to “break down, collapse, cave in,” it also means to create an “[o]ppportunity for passage or advance; absence of obstruction to forward movement; hence fig. freedom of action, scope, opportunity” (Google Translate 2015; OED 2015). As such, (my interpretation of) this Oxford definition of the ruin foregrounds an idea that is central to this thesis: the idea of creative destruction — the thoroughly positive idea that, by disrupting something, one inevitably also creates something and that therefore destruction is not necessarily or solely a damaging act.² This idea of creative destruction is a celebration of change and transformation, of movement towards something new or other — of life as a process of ‘becoming’, rather than a fixed state of ‘being’. The ruin I talk about is a *material embodiment* of this idea.

Now that we have begun to grasp the idea of the ruin, it is important to note that the ruin is not merely an idea. The fact that the ruin is not just an idea, but also an actual, perceivable, material ‘thing-in-the-world’ matters. It gives us something to hold on to, something to really engage with, something to touch, feel, smell, see and hear (or even taste, if that’s what you’re into). As an actual, material place in the world, the ruin is a space we can encounter in a bodily sense, as a lived experience. Though there are many types of ruined materials, the particular ruin-material I talk of in this thesis is the post-industrial ruin. The post-industrial ruin is *one* specific locus that hosts the valuable symbiosis of material qualities and ideas that I introduced in the former and will elaborate on in the following, and there are many other such things to be found in the world. There are numerous other things or places that could provide a similar lens for ontological and ethical inquiry. In fact, any material has the potential to be(come) a ruin, if we let it. The fluid state of ‘ruinness’ is not inherent to a material, but comes about through a particular subject-object relation. However, I

¹ From now on, I will use the abbreviation OED when referencing the online Oxford English Dictionary.

² My understanding of ‘creative destruction’ thus differs from the notion as Joseph. A. Schumpeter coined it in 1942.

think this particular subject-object relation allowing ruinness to flourish is rare, especially in the Netherlands.

The Netherlands is a relatively highly structured country, compared to many other countries in Europe and worldwide. In the Dutch urban planning document ‘Visie Architectuurbeleid 2008+’ it is stated, quite triumphantly, that there is probably no country in the world that has as many organisations and institutions working in the field of architecture, urban planning, landscape design, infrastructure and cultural heritage as the Netherlands (College van Rijksadviseurs 2006, 13). In a country that proudly exclaims that: “Urban planning is our culture!” (College van Rijksadviseurs 2006, 13); that celebrates ‘maakbaarheid’ (‘malleability’); that has embraced the neoliberal ideology of utilitarianism; and that takes pride in sporting highly regulated, structured, clean, smooth, ‘perfect’ cities, the ruin is an unwanted remainder. Because it is particularly pertinent in this specific geographical location, I focus on the implications of (an absence of) urban ruins in the Netherlands and explore how this spatial organisation is tied up with ideologies and practices I consider characteristic of Dutch culture.

In this thesis I do not speak of the old ruins of ancient, pre-modern times that we have been preserving as heritage. I speak of the modern, post-industrial ruin that is not yet appropriated by the heritage industry. More specifically, I speak of a particular type of post-industrial ruin. I do not speak of the post-industrial abandoned factory buildings that are the object of the romantic gaze of the contemporary urban explorer, neither do I speak of the abandoned factory buildings that have been transformed into trendy lofts or ‘exposed-brick-coffee-shops’ in gentrifying urban areas. When I speak about ‘the ruin’, I am talking of the kind of post-industrial ruin that the human subject seems to have lost an interest in and therefore is granted the chance to exist in a constant process of transformation into decay.

Even though we seem to want to get rid of these ruins sooner rather than later, there are still some to be found in the Netherlands. I speak of the *post-industrial* ruin in order to place the contemporary urban ruin within its historical context. ‘Post-industrial’ refers to a particular moment in history, not an ontological quality. I am not saying that only abandoned *factory* buildings are useful decaying structures to work with. I use the term post-industrial, because it is the transformation from a labour-intensive economy to a knowledge-economy that the ‘Western’ world has gone through over the past three decades of the twentieth century, that has left us with a significant amount of urban ruins (Edensor 2002). The outsourcing of production to low-wage countries has left the “capacious stone and brick-built factories and warehouses which accommodated the assembly lines of mass production” obsolete and abandoned (Edensor 2002). Many of them have been turned into ‘functional’ buildings again, such as upscale housing, or have

been demolished to make room for something else. However, as Edensor states: “In the old industrial districts of cities and towns, derelict mills, foundries, engineering workshops and storage depots . . . linger, thwarting the attempts of city imagineers and marketeers to create new visions that might help to sell their city to potential investors” (Edensor 2002). These are the ruins I speak of: the ruins that have been left to us after this industrial restructuring — the buildings that once had a specific utilitarian function, and now linger ‘functionless’ on the side of the road.

As such, this definition of the ruin is culturally dependent: it is to be situated within the context of the ‘Western world’ and the industrial restructuring it has gone through over the last three decades of the twentieth century. As hinted at before, it is also embedded within the — what I see as typically Dutch— ideologies of ‘maakbaarheid’, utilitarianism, and urban planning. What we might consider a ruin in the Netherlands might be considered a home in India. One’s definition of the ruin will rely on, amongst others, one’s definition of order, structure, cleanliness, beauty and functionality — and these are all highly subjective and socioculturally constructed notions to begin with.

0.2 On the methodology and framing of this research

This thesis is not written from a direct claim of objectivity. By recognising my subjectivity rather than denying it, I strive for a more “strong objectivity”: a research approach coined by standpoint feminist Sandra Harding (1993) (Hesse-Biber 2011, 10). This approach states that, only when we recognise our own position as *a* position and subsequently try to see more sides to the story, when we try to look at a topic from dispersed and multiple angles, rather than in a top-down manner, can we really even begin to try to work towards some sort of objectivity. If we do not see the context we are embedded in, we really do not see that much: “It is in the practice of strong self-reflexivity that the researcher becomes more objective” (Hesse-Biber 2011, 10).

Though I talk from my own position, the personal experiences I analyse in this thesis serve a function beyond the individual. Through seemingly banal and personal things, like my experience of the university building, my encounter with the coffee vending machines on campus and my frustration with the ideology of ‘maakbaarheid’, I analyse systems bigger than me. The personal then reveals itself to be political, and functions as a gateway to society. Harding has coined this approach of “studying oneself” as an “outsider within” a practice of “studying up” (Harding 1991, 132). This feminist practice of studying up offers resources for “decreasing the partiality and distortion” of the traditionally Western, Eurocentric practice of “studying down” (Harding 1991, 132) and prevents us from playing the ‘god trick’, which feminist philosopher Donna Haraway

described as: “that mode of seeing that pretends to offer a vision that is from everywhere and nowhere, equally and fully” (Haraway 1988, 584).

With this situated approach of studying down, I conduct a textual analysis of actual texts — that is, urban planning documents — but I also ‘read’ the city and the ruin. I work with a ‘base layer’ consisting of the more traditional European, continental, white, male philosophers Henri Lefebvre, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Immanuel Kant, Ludwig Wittgenstein and J.L. Austin, and build on these with the works of contemporary scholars working at the intersections of philosophy, human geography, new materialism, Science and Technology Studies and phenomenology Tim Edensor, Dylan Trigg, Jane Bennett, Karen Barad, Bill Brown, Bruno Latour and Lucas D. Intra. Using the multiple perspectives all these people have to offer, I read both the city and the ruin from various angles, linking these insights together without rendering them axiomatic. I thus engage with these numerous, but predominantly *man*-made, knowledges with the critical feminist method of studying up, in order to forego logical fallacies and instead achieve a position of strong objectivity.

0.3 A feminist intervention

As I was scrolling through my bibliography, I noticed that indeed the vast majority of the scholars I work with are (white) men. I almost wanted to throw my entire thesis out the window when I realised I too had fallen into the normative trap of treating the white, educated, Western male as the main producer of knowledge. Out of the 32 scholars I use, 4 are women. At a mere 12.5% this is not a quota I find acceptable. The four women I engage with are Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, Claire Colebrook and Elizabeth Grosz. Colebrook and Grosz work with the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, whose work has greatly influenced feminist knowledge productions. Bennett and Barad can be situated within the realm of new materialism: a recently emerging academic tradition, which does seem to leave room for women. I received some of my most valuable information for this research from these four women. Their work has provided me with an important focus on, and expansion to, the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, and has given me useful tools to deal with the material of the ruin.

I furthermore noticed that *all* the scholars talking specifically about space — be it the planned space of the city or the unplanned space of the ruin — I work with are (white) men.³ It

³ Furthermore only seven out of the thirty-five people working at the ‘Dorp, Stad en Land’ Foundation, the organisation which conducted the research for the ‘Oude Kaart van Nederland’ document I am analysing in

seems as if space is a thing of men: a thing of men to study, think and write about. Virginia Woolf famously exclaimed that ‘a woman needs a room of her own’ (Woolf 1929). In addition, I think women also need to be granted the recognition as subjects perfectly capable of producing knowledges about that room. Space does not belong to men, neither does thinking about space. I therefore want to actively and explicitly position this research as one conducted by a woman working with a feminist methodology and informed by female and feminist thinkers — so as to account for a more inclusive perspective on ventures of space.

0.4 On the positioning and contributions of this research

A lot has been researched on the ruin already. We can even speak of a ‘ruin-craze’ in both popular culture and academia these days. Post-industrial ruins have been examined in many different capacities. Edensor and DeSilvey (2012) distinguish three main foci in the knowledge production on the post-industrial ruin: 1. Ruins as sites from which to examine and undermine capitalist and state manifestations of power (see: High and Lewis, 2007; Storm, 2008; Mah, 2010; Massey, 2011; Buck-Morss, 2002; Lahusen, 2006; Szmagalska-Follis, 2008; Yablon, 2010; Pálsson, 2012; Light and Young, 2010); 2. Ruins as means of challenging dominant ways of relating to the past (see: Van der Hoorn, 2003; Armstrong, 2010; Sensor, 2005; Garrett, 2011; Buchli and Lucas, 2001; Olsen, 2010; Penrose, 2008; Strange; Walley, 2007; Davis, 2008; DeLyser, 1999); and 3. Ruins as a means of reconsidering conventional strategies for practically and ontologically ordering space (see: Mabey, 1974; Farley and Roberts, 2011; Shoard, 2000; Shields, 1992; De Sola Morales, 1995; Picon, 2000; Jones, 2007; Rivlin, 2007). This research can be located at the intersection of these three categories and belongs not to one in particular, but rather to all of them. At the same time I also examine the ruin as: 1. A location of ontological value; and 2. A locus for ethical engagement.

My contribution to this field is mainly located in my specific approach and perspective. The specific focus of this thesis on the production and evaluation of Dutch space, through a textual analysis of three Dutch urban planning documents, using the combined yet dispersed and multiple perspectives of the scholars and philosophers mentioned in the former, is unique. In addition, I feel my feminist approach and positioning is something important I bring to the table, especially in the context of studies on space. Furthermore, I offer a systematic deconstruction of the binary

this thesis, are women. The Board of Advisors to the State, an ‘independent’ organisation advising the Dutch government on urban planning issues and also the initiators of this same project, consisted of only (white) men in that period (2004-2008).

opposition of planned space as ordered and ruined space as unordered, with the machine-ontology of Deleuze and Guattari, which — to my knowledge — has not been done as of yet.

0.5 On the research question and structure of this thesis

The question I examine in this thesis is: how might the post-industrial ruin be a space of ontological and ethical value for the human subject? What I mean exactly by ‘ontological value’ and ‘ethical value’ will become clear in chapters two and three of this thesis respectively. Contrary to the average Dutch urban planner, who generally does not seem to value the ruin, I think that the ruin has more to offer than it is usually given credit for, and I wonder what might happen if we listen to the ruin rather than get rid of it the first chance we get. In the three subsequent chapters I work towards a response to this question, and I will end with a conclusion tying the three chapters together and exploring further possibilities of research.

Chapter one starts out by examining the current ways in which influential ‘space-makers’ in the Netherlands deal with and think of the organisation of (ruined) urban spaces. I investigate dominant, state regulated, top-down practices of space-making in the Netherlands and their direct or underlying ideologies. I do so by analysing three Dutch urban planning documents published between the period of 2006 and 2011. These documents discuss the topics of vacancy and redesignation, spatial quality and desirable uses of space, and are all either conducted by or funded by the Dutch government. Combining Saussurian semiology, J.L. Austin’s notion of performative sentences and Lefebvre’s spatial triad, I discuss the impact these written documents have on the concrete and social construction of urban space in the Netherlands. I argue that these documents aim at the construction of what I, after Lefebvre, call a ‘Whole city’: a city in which form and function of built space match with each other perfectly and are clear, functional and one-dimensional. I discuss this type of spatial organisation as a transcendental and suppressive practice, which leaves room for only a specific type of building, and excludes the urban ruin and constructs it as useless. I do not only discuss the influence of these written documents on the practice of urban planning. I also discuss the influence of the practice of urban planning on the construction of written urban planning documents. As such, I discuss the urban planning ideology and ‘urban reality’ — or: writings on the city and the city itself — as two interwoven entities, which mirror and co-constitute each other via a logic of circular reasoning.

In chapter two, I make a first step into deconstructing the circular reasoning of Dutch urban planning practices, by assessing the ontological value of the post-industrial ruin. Thinking with and from the anti-transcendental philosophy of desiring-machines, as coined by Deleuze and Guattari,

we can argue that the post-industrial ruin holds significant ontological value. Where most things are arduously presented as fixed *products*, the ruin actively shows the *processes* of becoming which continually shape and reshape its structure. A post-industrial ruin is a building that visibly transforms every day. A ‘normal’ functioning building, to the contrary, is constantly being made to look and be the same thing as that which it was first built as. In this chapter, I discuss how planned space is forced to take on a singular, one-dimensional state of ‘being’ through strategies of maintenance and preservation, while the abandoned space of the ruin is free to transform in multiple directions and exist in a continuous and fluid state of becoming. Combining Deleuze and Guattari’s machine-ontology with the Actor-Network Theory of Bruno Latour and Bill Brown’s Thing Theory, I analyse the ontological implications of such spatial organisations. With these theories I elaborate on the thesis that the process of ‘becoming’ — and therefore the process of desiring-production, which Deleuze and Guattari describe as *the* ‘life-producing force’ behind all things in reality — is *concealed* in the planned urban environment and *revealed* in the post-industrial ruin.

Following up on chapter two, chapter three discusses how interacting with the ruin might not only teach us something about the ontological nature of humans and things, but also on how to deal with things more ethically. I thus take my second step into deconstructing the prevailing Dutch urban planning ideology, which tells us that ruins are worthless, by moving from an ontological value of the ruin towards an ethical value of the ruin. Through a critique of Ian Buchanan’s *Desire and Ethics* and an appropriation of Ronald Bogue’s *Deleuze’s Way*, I re-read Deleuze and Guattari’s machine-ontology as an ethics. I discuss Bogue’s notion of the ‘encounter’ as an ethically productive meeting between bodies, and the urban ruin as an especially suitable space to host such an encounter. Then, I combine these insights with the writings of Lucas D. Introna on what he calls an ‘ethos of letting be’ to work towards outlining my own approach, which I call an ‘ethos of letting go’. In this last chapter, I take up the typically Dutch notion of ‘maakbaarheid’ or ‘malleability’ and analyse our deeply rooted ideology of utilitarianism. I argue how the ruin is both a useful idea to think with, and a useful material to engage with, if we want to learn how to deal with things ethically and let go of our incessant need to control and fix ourselves and everything around us.

— Chapter 1 —

1. Dutch urban planning ideology and the notion of the city as a Whole

“The experience of being overwhelmed by an environment or situation that is clearly ‘out of control’ is becoming less and less prevalent in a society that prides itself on maintaining order” (Garrett 2014, 58).

This first chapter aims to map out currently dominant Dutch urban planning practices and ideologies. More specifically, it serves to outline dominant ideologies and practices regarding issues of vacancy and redesignation of buildings, sites and areas in cities in the Netherlands. To get a sense of how Dutch governments deal with abandoned buildings and sites, or places that have lost their ‘original’ function, on both a local and national policy level, I analyse three official government (funded) documents concerning vacancy and redesignation in the Netherlands. All three documents were published between 2006 and 2011. My focus is on the report of the project ‘De Oude Kaart van Nederland: Leegstand en Herbestemming’, commissioned by then Advisor to the State on Cultural Heritage Fons Asselbergs. In order to base my impression of the urban planning practices and ideologies of the Dutch government on more than one document alone, I also look at parts of two other documents written around the same time period. One is the ‘Visie Architectuurbeleid 2008+’: an advisory report on the architecture policy of the Netherlands post 2008, which was formulated by the Board of Advisors to the State (in Dutch: ‘College van Rijksadviseurs’) under Asselbergs. The other is the final publication of a 2,5 year government program on environmental planning, called ‘Mooi Nederland: 2,5 jaar innovatie en waardecreatie’. This report was published by the then newly formed Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment.

In the following, I start out by conducting a textual analysis of the ‘Oude Kaart van Nederland’ document. Since I am not so much interested in how the research of the Oude Kaart project was executed and more in what kind of ideology the project works from and with, I only briefly describe the research process as put to the fore in the report, and then proceed with an analysis of the ideology emerging from the text. I do not go into detail about concrete projects for redesignation of particular buildings or sites discussed in the document, but only distil general tendencies on dealing with vacancy from the text. I focus on those parts of the document that

describe the motive for starting the research into redesignation; the recommendations the authors formed for a good and efficient use of land; and those parts that are aimed at convincing the reader of the importance of the report and its particular view on spatial organisation.

I examine the ideology emerging from the text on the basis of the vocabulary and discourse used and the ideas, values and normative definitions stressed by the authors. In order to make sense of the choice of words and vocabulary this text makes use of, I employ Saussurian semiology and the notions of connotation and denotation as explained by Roland Barthes. Through this analysis, I discuss how the ‘Oude Kaart van Nederland’ report, as well as the ‘Visie Architectuurbeleid 2008+’ and the ‘Mooi Nederland’ report, construct the notion of the ‘Whole city’ or ‘the city as a Whole’, and present it as their preferred form of spatial organisation. I discuss how this transcendental approach to urban space shapes both our mental notion and bodily experience of the city. Combining J.L. Austin’s notion of performative sentences and Henri Lefebvre’s spatial triad, I discuss the impact these written documents have on the physical and social construction of urban space, and conduct an analysis of the Whole city as both a construction of written texts and extra-lingual contexts. The final part of this chapter is dedicated to an introduction of the post-industrial ruin as an agent capable of busting the myth of the Whole city, or unravelling its neatly woven fabric. As such, the ruin serves to ‘multiply the readings of the city’, to paraphrase a popular expression by Lefebvre (Lefebvre in Edensor 2005, 4).

1.1 ‘De Oude Kaart van Nederland’: an introduction

The Dutch urban planning report ‘De Oude Kaart van Nederland: Leegstand en Herbestemming’ was published in 2008.⁴ It was the written result to an inventory study commissioned by government advisor on cultural heritage Fons Asselbergs, and executed by two private businesses and a number of regional welfare organisations that specialise in heritage and spatial quality.⁵ The study aimed at gathering information on structural vacancy of buildings, complexes and sites in urban and rural areas in the Netherlands, in order to stimulate redesignation and to “contribute to improving the quality of our environment” (Harmsen 2008, 19). In this project, the notion of ‘structural vacancy’ refers to buildings that have been vacant for a minimum period of two years (Harmsen 2008, 23). The research was based on five sub questions: 1) What do we know about

⁴ From now on, I will refer to the document of ‘De Oude Kaart van Nederland: Leegstand en Herbestemming’ in short as the ‘Oude Kaart’.

⁵ In the Netherlands, welfare organisations (‘welstandsorganisaties’) aim at protecting the quality of the environment of Dutch cities, towns and villages (SAB 2012).

vacancy in the Netherlands and who possesses this information? 2) Who is involved in any way with vacancy in the Netherlands? 3) Where does vacancy originate? 4) What can we do about vacancy? 5) What (type of) vacancy is to be expected in the following years? (Harmsen 2008, 21). The information gathered via this research was processed into one national report, twelve provincial reports and one digital map outlining sites, complexes and buildings that were vacant at the time of research or that would lose their function within the next ten years (Harmsen 2008, 21; 24).⁶

The 'Oude Kaart' project started in 2005 with a pilot project in the province of Noord-Brabant, in the south of the Netherlands. Soon after, the project was expanded with pilot projects in the provinces of Zuid-Holland and Zeeland. These pilot projects were executed by 'De Onderste Steen' and the 'Dorp, Stad & Land' foundation (Harmsen 2008, 21). De Onderste Steen is the one-man business of architectural historian Michiel Kruidenier, located in the city of Nijmegen. Kruidenier advises the government, municipalities, foundations, associations and companies on issues concerning architecture, urban development and applied arts. By studying literature and doing field work, he maps the history of a building, neighbourhood or city. Based on this research, he advises his clients whether to preserve, restore, demolish or restructure the building (De Onderste Steen S.D.). The Dorp, Stad en Land (DSL) foundation advises Dutch municipalities and local governments on issues of landscape, urban design, architecture and heritage and consists of specialists such as architects, urban planners, architectural historians, monument experts, cultural historians and landscape architects (Stichting Dorp, Stad en Land 2015).

After the pilot projects in Noord-Brabant, Zuid-Holland and Zeeland were completed, an inventory research into the status of vacancy and redesignation in the remaining provinces of the Netherlands started late 2007. This larger part of the project was executed by the DSL foundation, under the supervision of project coordinator Gerhard-Mark van der Waal. Provincial studies were executed in cooperation with regional welfare and heritage organisations. The overall project and the publication of the reports was sponsored by three government organisations: Atelier Rijksbouwmeester, a support organisation to the 'Rijkbouwmeester', who serves as an advisor to the organisation of public space and (architectural) state property; the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment⁷; and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Harmsen 2008, 21-22; Rijksvastgoedbedrijf Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties. S.D.).

⁶ This map can be found at <http://www.oudekaartnederland.nl/okn.html>.

⁷ This ministry no longer exists: on 14 October 2010 it merged with the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management to become the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment (Wikipedia 2015b).

On the website of the 'Oude Kaart' project, project coordinator van der Waal expresses a number of motivations for starting the investigation into the status of vacancy in the Netherlands. He claims that vacant buildings and areas of neglect often lead to material and social damage and deterioration of the environment. Furthermore, he states that restoration costs can accumulate to high levels after a period of decay, which may lead to the decision to have a building demolished rather than repaired. Van der Waal claims that these are problems that need to be avoided by timely redesignation. Aside from improving our environment and preventing high restoration costs, he states that redesignation ensures an economical use of land (van der Waal 2007). By mapping out the expected developments regarding structural vacancy in Dutch rural and urban sites over the next decade, the 'Oude Kaart' project aims to grant governments and property owners the opportunity to anticipate changes in the function and use of their property, so that they may seek new uses for it in due time. Furthermore, the research serves to find out whether vacancy is a topic that is discussed and considered in Dutch urban planning practices and to what extent. Over a time period of several months, a number of regional welfare organisations conducted research on provincial levels. Via interviews, they aimed to map out the existing knowledge on vacancy and redesignation of local governments, markets and commercial and non-commercial real estate professionals, and to determine to what extent any policies are formed around this possible knowledge (van der Waal 2007).

1.1.1 Beautiful as clean, clean as beautiful: on the 'pleasure of malleability'

Now that we have an impression of what the 'Oude Kaart' project entails, I will continue by making a slight 'detour' to a text on the website of the DLS foundation, before returning to a close analysis of the report. However, I do not regard this a detour per se, but rather an additional angle into the ideology of the 'Oude Kaart' document. Since the DLS foundation is the main executor of the project, it makes sense to dig a little deeper into their understanding of desirable public space. On their website, the DSL foundation describes its mission as: "Bevordering, ondersteuning en instandhouding van landschappelijk en stedelijk schoon" (Stichting Dorp, Stad en Land 2015). This roughly translates to: "To promote, support and maintain the rural and urban beauty." This specific choice of words is significant. Saussurian semiology, a study of written and spoken language as systems of signification, is useful here to explore the effects and implications of this vocabulary.

Ferdinand de Saussure states that a sign, which can be any piece of information, consists of a signifier and a signified. A signifier is a sound-image: a written or spoken word. A signified is a mental concept to which the word or sound refers. Together, this textual unit and mental idea form a

sign that we can talk about and make sense of (Barker 2008, 76). For example: the signifier of the building in which I am sitting now, is the written or spoken word ‘Universiteitsbiblio-theek’ (‘university library’), or the abbreviation thereof: ‘UB’. The signified is the mental concept and social practice that we connect to the building and which shapes our interaction with it: the idea and practice of this building as a library. Together, the signifier (the word ‘Universiteitsbibliotheek’ or ‘UB’) and the signified (the mental concept and social practice of the building as a library) form the meaning of the university library building. The entity of the building, including its lived or performed reality, thus consists of the lingual (signifier) and extra-lingual (signified) representations of it. The noun ‘Universiteitsbibliotheek’ refers to a concrete, material building, perceptible in reality. This gives us something to hold on to when making sense of the signifier. The adjective ‘schoon’, used in the slogan of the DSL foundation, however, offers less grip as a signifier. ‘Schoon’ is not some actual thing that we can point to. It is already a concept, a normative idea, and a highly relative one at that: ‘clean’ in India means something completely different from ‘clean’ in the Netherlands. To make sense of this sign — or, rather, to problematise it even more and thus to understand a bit more of its complex nature — we can turn to Roland Barthes.

Expanding on Saussurian semiology, Barthes divides the meaning of the signified into a denotative meaning and a connotative meaning. The denotative meaning, or denotation, is the more universally or generally acknowledged meaning of a sign. For example: the UB-building as a library in which one studies. Connotative meanings, or connotations, are more personally or culturally specific: they vary more in different contexts or depending on who you ask (Barker, 2008: 79). For me, the library carries a connotation of a nice and stimulating space to study and write. For others, less keen on studying (in public), it might connote a prison-like space of depression and forced labour. By describing their mission as the protection of the ‘stedelijk schoon’, the DSL foundation takes up a strategic rhetoric, making use of the specific connotative and denotative meanings the word ‘schoon’ carries in the Dutch language. In their aim to promote, support and maintain rural and urban beauty, or ‘schoon’, they assume that the quality of ‘schoonheid’ is something that is worth preserving. This is already a subjective claim, made even more problematic by the fact that the word ‘schoon’ is highly subjective and ambiguous as well.

In Dutch the word ‘schoon’ does not only mean ‘beautiful’, which functions as the connotative meaning of the word in the phrasing of the DSL foundation. The word is also used to signify qualities such as clean, neat, fine or proper, which would be its denotative signification here. It is telling that the Dutch word for beauty, ‘schoonheid’, and beautiful, ‘schoon’, carry these parallel meanings of properness and cleanliness. We could read this as a sign of just how deeply rooted the equation of beauty and order is in Dutch culture, as it even manifests on a structural,

linguistic level.⁸ By positing the ‘stedelijk schoon’ as a quality that continually needs to be maintained and protected, the DSL foundation makes use of this double meaning of the word ‘schoon’ in order to reinforce their assumption of neatly ordered urban space as desirable urban space. In their specific use of the notion of ‘stedelijk schoon’ the denotative and connotative significations of the word ‘schoon’, seem to merge and become inseparable. With this choice of words, the DSL foundation thus equates a beautiful urban space with a clean and neatly ordered urban space. Although the notion of a desirable living environment is as ambiguous as the notion of a desirable study-spot, the equation of clean space and beautiful space is neutralised in this process of signification and thus rendered ‘true’.

The urban planning document ‘Visie Architectuurbeleid 2008+’ resonates with the mission statement of the DSL foundation and carries out a similar message. In this report, the Board of Advisors to the State (an organisation that formulates pieces of advice for the Dutch government on cultural heritage, urban planning and the environment), states that we have lost the ‘pleasure in malleability’ and claims that this is a ‘curious, almost un-Dutch condition’ (College van Rijksadviseurs 2006, 13). The report wonders how it is possible that, in a country in which every square kilometre consists of planned space, which often even contains multiple (historically) constructed layers, one does not believe in malleability (College van Rijksadviseurs 2006, 13-14). It suggests that we currently do not possess the ‘necessary societal attitude and mentality’ that is required to achieve an ‘accurately, meticulously and conscientiously designed Netherlands’ (College van Rijksadviseurs 2006, 14). The notion of ‘malleability’ or ‘maakbaarheid’ is often used to refer to social relations. The *Van Dale* dictionary defines the term as: the extent to which social change can be affected by government policies, or the extent to which society can be socially engineered (Van Dale 2015). In stating that we currently do not possess the right attitude to construct our country in a perfectly designed way, the ‘Visie Architectuurbeleid 2008+’ report directly links social issues of the malleability of peoples and society to material-spatial issues of the malleability of (urban) space. The report then nostalgically refers back to the seventeenth century, when land surveyors, like the ones responsible for reclaiming or impoldering the municipality of ‘de Beemster’ in the province of Noord-Holland, supposedly did not make a distinction between technique and beauty, between labour and aesthetics, or between what is necessary and what is beautiful (College van Rijksadviseurs 2006, 14). On this the document states:

⁸ Upon referring to an etymological dictionary, I discovered that the word ‘schoon’ also means ‘total, in its entirety’. This connotation will prove significant later on in this chapter, when the notion of the city as a Whole is discussed (Etymologisch woordenboek van het Nederlands 2015).

“Helaas is dit in de tegenwoordige tijd eerder utopie dan werkelijkheid. Geconfronteerd met deze werkelijkheid zullen vanuit het architectuurbeleid ‘kunstmatige hulpconstructies’ ingezet moeten worden om de verbinding tussen nut en schoonheid (...) af te dwingen en te bestendigen. We zullen vanuit beide kanten [i.e. het architectuurbeleid en het cultuurbeleid] moeten proberen zo dicht mogelijk bij het ideaal van de versmelting te komen” (College van Rijksadviseurs 2006, 14).⁹

Both the ‘ideal of the fusion of utility and beauty’, as propagated by the ‘Visie Architectuurbeleid 2008+’ document, and the tendency of the DSL foundation of equating beauty with order, resonate with the ideology expressed in the ‘Oude Kaart’ report. Where these three texts state that ordered beauty is something from which our living environment benefits, philosopher Dylan Trigg states that: “The equation [of cleanliness and civilisation], repressive and false, creates disunity between dwelling and place” (Trigg 2006, 207). He suggests that living in a fixed and rigidly ordered environment clashes with our experience of ourselves and the world we live in as complex, arbitrary and contradictory systems and creates an uncanny feeling of a “void between being and the environment in which being takes place” (Trigg 2006, 207). This observation by Trigg might serve as an explanation for the supposed rise of the so-called ‘curious and un-Dutch’ condition of a loss in the pleasure of malleability as addressed by the ‘Visie Architectuurbeleid 2008+’ report. It might also be an explanation for my feelings of annoyance with the overly regulated spaces of Dutch cities and towns I expressed in the introduction to this thesis. The idea of the equation of order and beauty as *false* will be assessed further in chapter two of this thesis. The *repressive* features of this type of space will be discussed in chapter three. By the end of this thesis we will then see that, where the ‘Visie Architectuurbeleid 2008+’ report suggests that we need to re-cultivate a pleasure in malleability, I argue that we have plenty of it in the Netherlands and that we precisely need to *un-learn* this disposition. However, first we will go back to the ‘Oude Kaart’ report in order to start our close analysis of the text and get a better impression of the ideologies presented in it.

⁹ “Unfortunately, nowadays this is more of a utopia than a reality. Confronted with this reality, architectural policies will have to deploy ‘artificial auxiliary constructions’ in order to enforce and perpetuate the connection between utility and beauty. We will have to try to approach this ‘ideal of the fusion’ as closely as possible from both sides [i.e. via architectural policies and cultural policies]” (College van Rijksadviseurs 2006, 14).

1.2 ‘De Oude Kaart van Nederland’: an analysis

After this general introduction on the ‘Oude Kaart’ project and some background information on one of its main executors, I now continue with a more detailed description and in-depth textual analysis of the national report of the ‘Oude Kaart’ project, in order to get a better informed view on the ideology foregrounded in it. In this section, I will start with an analysis of the first two paragraphs of the introduction to the report, which demonstrate the general tone of the document. In the next section, I proceed with an analysis of the eight recommendations on vacancy and redesignation included in the report. The national report of the ‘Oude Kaart’ project was written by Hilde Harmsen, then project assistant at DSL, and includes textual contributions by Michiel Kruidenier of De Onderste Steen. Project coordinator van der Waal was the editor to the report. The eight pieces of advice are formulated by Fons Asselbergs on behalf of the Board of Advisors to the State.¹⁰

The ‘Oude Kaart’ report starts with a preamble: an introductory paragraph or section of a formal document setting out its intention (OED 2015). In this introductory text, Asselbergs outlines the project’s purpose and underlying philosophy. He starts out by stating that exact facts and statements on structural vacancy in the Netherlands are available neither on national nor on provincial or local level (Asselbergs in Harmsen 2008, 7). Even though there is no exact information on the state of vacancy in the Netherlands, Asselbergs and the Board do regard the situation as problematic. This already indicates that the ‘problem of vacancy’ in the Netherlands is ideological rather than practical. The two very first paragraphs of the ‘Oude Kaart’ report state:

“Structurele leegstand kan een indicator zijn van een slecht functionerend gebied in stad, dorp of landschap. Het kan tevens wijzen op een gebrek aan beleid of actie en dat kan betekenen dat leegstand niet wordt erkend als een urgent probleem.

Rond leegstand heerst een sfeer van verwaarlozing, verval, verloedering, vandalisme en onveiligheid. Het is evident dat elke leegstaande ruimte binnen bestaand bebouwd gebied bouwcapaciteit vertegenwoordigt die eerder benut zou moeten worden dan nieuwe ruimte in

¹⁰ In the future I refer to the Board of Advisors to the State in short as ‘the Board’.

het buitengebied. Dit aspect is van belang voor het beleid van duurzaam ruimtegebruik” (Asselbergs in Harmsen 2008, 7).¹¹

It is significant to the subsequent sections of this document that right from the very beginning this firm opinion is put to the fore. I have taken the space to place this extensive quote here, because it is illustrative of the overall voice of this document and a good representative of the tone that is set throughout it. There are a number of things that I find particularly compelling and revealing in this fragment.

1.2.1 The ‘Oude Kaart’ project as a Whole

First of all, what is striking and problematic about this quote is that (personal) opinions are rendered facts. Right from the beginning, it is claimed that “vacancy emits an atmosphere of neglect, decay, degradation, vandalism and insecurity” and that vacancy indicates a poorly functioning area. These negative characteristics of neglect, decay, degradation, vandalism and insecurity are directly attached to the phenomenon of vacancy and the material of abandoned buildings, as if they were an ontological quality of such spaces. It is of course a rhetorical strategy to write in a clear, active, imperative fashion, instead of forming a nuanced but less pungent argument. However, from an intellectually well-informed or philosophical standpoint, one can (very easily) argue that this statement is false. It is simply not true that vacancy emits an atmosphere of neglect, decay, degradation, vandalism and insecurity. These are qualities that are *put upon* the material of abandoned, decaying spaces — a practice in which urban planning documents such as this one play a big role. These are not qualities that are inherently present in decaying buildings and sites.

I stated before that the quote I am discussing here is a *personal* opinion. In fact it is more complicated than that. The idea that vacancy means degradation, vandalism and insecurity, is an idea that has been repeated so many times, that it has become part of our dominant discourses on spatial organisation and our dominant regimes of truth. It is a socio-culturally constructed notion that has been normalised and neutralised and now appears to be generally accepted as being ‘true’.

¹¹ "Structural vacancy can be an indicator of a dysfunctional area in a city, village or landscape. It can also indicate a lack of policy or action, which may mean that vacancy is not recognised as an urgent problem.

Vacant spaces emit an atmosphere of neglect, decay, degradation, vandalism and insecurity. Evidently, each vacant space in a built-up area represents a building capacity that should be used rather than an open space in the outskirts. This aspect is of importance in ensuring a sustainable use of space” (Asselbergs in Harmsen 2008, 7).

The 'Oude Kaart' sustains this notion in mentioning that virtually all respondents to the interviews conducted by the DSL foundation agreed that vacancy in itself has a negative influence on the social, economic and spatial quality of an area (Harmsen 2008, 45). The authors of the document make an appeal to a broader group of people in order to support their own claims. However, this support lacks a proper base and therefore fails to yield any significant results.

The interviewees of the 'Oude Kaart' project are referred to in the document as 'relevant players' in the field of spatial organisation on both a provincial and a national level. More specifically, they are: government workers on the level of the state, the provinces and municipalities; property owners (referring to both private parties and the state as property owner); developers and brokers; interest groups; and the media (Harmsen 2008, 37-42). The 'Oude Kaart' project thus consisted of a select and homogenous group (the DSL foundation, supported by the government) interviewing a number of similarly select and homogenous groups (these aforementioned property owners, developers and brokers, interest groups and the media). From these interviews the DSL foundation concluded that their own claim that vacancy has a negative influence on the social, economic and spatial quality of an area is indeed true. It is problematic that the issue of public space in the Netherlands, which concerns multiple groups of peoples, is represented only by such similar, singular and homogenous groups. These claims are not to the least bit contested. There is no dialogue, no space for counter-arguments. For a document that concerns the everyday living environment of millions of people, this report is alarmingly homogenous.

This brings me to the second problematic aspect of the quote, which is directly related to the first one. That is: the outcome of this three-year research is based on an a priori idea. The 'Oude Kaart' project was executed by the DSL foundation and supported by the Dutch ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the ministry of Education, Culture and Science: a homogenous group of people that has the same goal as the 'Oude Kaart' researchers — namely to make Dutch public spaces beautiful in the 'proper' sense of the word and functional in the economic sense of the word. Since the interviewers and interviewees had similar notions of desirable urban space, the premise of this research was never tested or challenged, but merely reproduced. This research was based on an a priori idea, and merely perpetuated a notion of desirable space that already existed in the minds and behaviours of the researchers before they even started on it. As such, it is not the least bit surprising that this study 'found' that vacancy represents ugliness, danger and a poor use of space. Even though the findings of the 'Oude Kaart' project are posited as general truths, or ideas that are shared by a large group of people, if we look critically at the way in which the 'totality' of their claims is constructed, we can see that this strategy is based on insufficient research practices that merely reproduce pre-existing ideas. As such, I consider the

‘Oude Kaart’ project an artificially constructed or false totality. From now on, I will refer to such a false totality as a ‘Whole’.

1.2.2 Urban philosophy and urban reality as a Whole

In this thesis, I am working with text and language as my main source of information on urban planning practices and ideologies in the Netherlands. J.L. Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) can help to examine the impact the ‘Oude Kaart’ report has on the world beyond language: on the physical and social construction of urban space. In this work, American philosopher of language J.L. Austin distinguishes between two types of linguistic expressions: *constative* utterances or sentences and *performative* utterances or sentences — or, in short: constatives and performatives. Performatives are written or spoken words or sentences that incite action, constatives are written or spoken words or sentences that describe or report on a situation. A constative utterance is, for example, to make a statement on a historical event. A performative utterance is, for example, to make a bet (Austin 1962, 5-6).

As the title already implies, *How to Do Things with Words* discusses the power of language. In discussing particular utterances as performatives, Austin deconstructs the idea that language merely reports on a pre-existing world. He shows that language not only describes a reality, it also creates realities. The example he uses is the sentence “I do” in a marriage ceremony. Upon saying the words “I do,” one is not reporting on a marriage, but indulging in it, creating it: as soon as two people have said “I do,” the marriage becomes a reality. As such, this utterance is performative (Austin 1962, 6). Or, as Austin describes it: “[T]he issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action — it is not normally thought of as just saying something” (Austin 1962, 6-7). Austin’s theory of performatives states that speaking or writing is simultaneously a ‘doing’: an action of creating a world beyond those words. Like the words “I do” in a marriage ceremony, many of the sentences in the ‘Oude Kaart’ report are performatives, and as such they provoke actual, real life actions and consequences. Probably the clearest example is the ‘Wet Ruimtelijke Ordening’ (‘Spatial Planning Act’): a law which states it is compulsory for local governments to keep an up to date digital record of their zoning plans — a law which is meant to force local governments to anticipate on vacancy and redesignation (Harmsen 2008, 19).

A law is a relatively clear example of a performative sentence, as it is a written document that states how something should be performed in the lived reality beyond that text. In a similar way, the eight recommendations formulated by the Board of Advisors to the State included in the ‘Oude Kaart’ report, are performative sentences: these written words are explicit directions on how

to organise the world outside of this document. These recommendations are meant to be lived up to and will be considered by local governments in the structuring of actual cities and towns. However, unlike these direct recommendations, the majority of performative sentences in the ‘Oude Kaart’ document are somewhat more subtle. The sentence “Rond leegstand heerst een sfeer van verwaarlozing, verval, verloedering, vandalisme en onveiligheid”, is an example of such a subtle, indirect or hidden performative. This sentence illustrates how the distinction between constatives and performatives is not always clear-cut and obvious. It shows that there are in fact a lot more performatives than one might at first instance notice. This sentence might look like a constative, since it describes a situation. However, as Austin states, performatives often ‘ape’ constatives, or statements of facts (Austin 1962, 4).

In the previous segment I argued how in the document of the ‘Oude Kaart’ opinions are rendered facts. I explained that the negative characteristics of neglect, decay, degradation, vandalism and insecurity are framed as if they were ontological qualities of vacant spaces, while in fact they are qualities that are *put upon* the material of abandoned, decaying spaces by the document itself. Even though these characteristics are not inherently present in the material of decay, but rather grafted onto it, they do actually shape our evaluation of and interaction with the city and consequently the city itself. As such, this sentence is a performative: it incites (in)action, it discourages us from engaging with such supposedly dangerous and dirty abandoned spaces and thus actively shapes (our interaction with) the physical world. This sentence is not “just saying something” — it is involved in actually performing and creating a reality (Austin 1962, 6-7). As such, these words are tools of power. They are an attempt to influence the world outside of this document: the world of cities and towns in the Netherlands — and several strategies are mobilised to invigorate this attempt. One such strategy is the authors’ use of their own and their interviewees’ positions as ‘specialists’ or ‘relevant players’ in the field of urban planning. They employ the power they have as acknowledged subjects of knowledge in the field of urban planning to construct a specific normative notion of a ‘good’ city. They furthermore phrased their ‘findings’ in an affirmative and imperative way, as if they are objective truths. This is problematic. A specialist *quasi* objectively stating that vacancy emits an atmosphere of degradation is not an innocent act. It is not ‘objectively’ or ‘merely’ saying something: it is performing a reality, and employing one’s privileged position to only actualise *particular* worlds and leave other worlds virtual.

As such, not only language is a tool of power, but so is the body — and the position of the body in society as a collection of bodies. I therefore stress that spatial order is not *merely* a language construction. Feminist philosopher Karen Barad warns us that language has been granted too much power throughout history (Barad 2003, 801). In addressing our current urban situation, we need to

consider more than language. We need to examine urban reality as more than a textually constructed world. Or, as Lefebvre states: “Yes, the city can be read because it writes, because it was writing. However, it is not enough to examine this without recourse to context” (Lefebvre 1996, 108). J.L Austin also recognises the importance of non-lingual contexts in textual constructions: he states that, in order to have effect, performative texts need the right context. He argues that the uttering of words is usually the leading incident in the performance of an act, but that it is not the only one: the circumstances in which the words are uttered should be appropriate and other actions (physical and mental) should be performed as well (Austin 1962, 8). Merely stating a law or recommendation regarding spatial organisation is not enough: it needs to be stated by an authoritative figure or institution, it needs to be acted out by docile bodies, and the situation needs to allow and facilitate a realisation of the rule (Austin 1962, 8-9).

When it comes to spatial laws, regulations and recommendations, the notion of performative sentences ties in with Lefebvre’s notions of conceived and perceived space (Lefebvre 1974). Conceived spaces are spaces that are constructed by laws and rules that have been set out by authoritative figures or institutions, or, as Lefebvre calls them, by “centres of decision making” (Lefebvre 1996, 81). Conceived space invokes a specific use that complies with the rules set out by these powerful space-makers, which is carried out in perceived space. Perceived space thus is conceived space acted out. It is performed space: performed and reiterated according to the specific or implicit, written or unwritten set of rules set forth by conceived space (Soja 1996, 66-67; Watkins 2005, 209). Through performative sentences, the spatial laws, regulations, recommendations and ideologies outlined in the ‘Oude Kaart’ report create conceived spaces that influence how we perform our everyday environments as perceived spaces. To exist in reality, conceived space thus needs to be reiterated as perceived space — and contested as lived space.¹² As such, the city is a performance constructed both textually (by the (un)written rules and regulations of conceived space) and through extra-lingual contexts (the acts acting out those rules in perceived space and contesting them in lived space).

To be clear: I have first discussed the role of language in the construction of space, and the role of the body second. I have also introduced Lefebvre’s spatial triad in a linear way, positing perceived space as a direct result of conceived space. However, this will soon be rectified in a more nuanced discussion of the spatial triad. We will then see that, rather than following causally upon each other, these three types of space in fact co-exist. For now, it will suffice to say that I do not

¹² The notion of lived space will be explained later on in this chapter.

mean to imply a linear logic or hierarchical model here. It is not my aim to point out where the ‘origin’ of the city lies or where the process of influence between conceived, perceived and lived space and between language, the body and the city begins. It is not possible and not useful to point to a beginning, or to think in terms of linear actions and reactions. It is rather more fitting to think in terms of effects caused by multiple underlying processes and to treat the city as a co-constitutive, mutual and ongoing construction of languages, bodies, practices and ideologies.

As we have seen in the former, the ideologically and normatively loaded document of the ‘Oude Kaart’ project shapes urban reality, and this constructed urban reality also shapes the urban ideology that is put forth in such policy documents — in an ongoing, non-linear process. It now becomes clear that not only the research of the ‘Oude Kaart’ project was executed from an a priori idea, but that the very way in which we engage with the city — both practically and intellectually — tends to follow an a priori structure, if we do not go about this carefully. In *Right to the City* (1968), Lefebvre warns us against the tendency towards transcendence that comes with this cyclical practice of knowledge production. He states that: “There is indeed a simultaneous becoming-philosophy of the world and a becoming-world of philosophy, and therefore a tendency towards wholeness” (Lefebvre 1996, 91). The circular propensity that seems inherent in our interaction with the world creates a false idea of rounded-off, finished things and ideas. It results in a world that creates ‘new’ worlds out of its own elements, without letting other elements in. Its borders are fixed and a world outside of it does not seem to exist, or is not recognised. The ‘Oude Kaart’ document puts forth a notion of the ‘ideal city’ that is based on prevailing urban planning ideologies, and prevailing urban planning ideologies are shaped by our understanding of what an ‘ideal city’ is. As such, the city itself and our understanding of the city, or urban reality and urban philosophy, are co-constituted notions that (re)create and perpetuate each other. Both are represented as Wholes, but in fact they are not inherently or ontologically whole, complete, logical or natural notions. Rather, they have come to seem like natural unities through a constant process in which they are repeatedly reproduced out of their own elements.

1.3 Eight recommendations on spatial organisation

Following directly upon the preamble that I analysed in the previous section, the ‘Oude Kaart’ report continues with eight recommendations regarding vacancy and redesignation policies

formulated by the Board of Advisors to the State.¹³ In order of their appearance in the report, I will now discuss these pieces of advice as performative utterances, and analyse how the ideologies conceived by them shape the performed reality of the city as perceived space. For every piece of advice discussed in the following, I first paraphrase the recommendation as formulated in the report and then continue with an analysis of the text.

Recommendation 1: 'Knowledge-management'

The Board states that a broader and more extensive body of knowledge on vacancy in the Netherlands is needed. A method designed to map and combine knowledge on spatial management in relation to vacancy does not yet exist and needs to be developed. The Board suggests to continue to work with the digital map DSL developed for the 'Oude Kaart' project and to expand it in order to increase the knowledge that is available on (structural) vacancy in the Netherlands (Harmsen 2008, 8).

An idea apparent in this first recommendation for creating a desirable, ordered public space is the age-old notion that 'knowledge is power'. The earliest documented occurrence of this phrase was found in the tenth-century book *Nahj Al-Balagha* and was pronounced by Imam Ali, the first Imam of Shia Islam. He said:

“Knowledge is power and it can command obedience. A man of knowledge during his lifetime can make people obey and follow him and he is praised and venerated after his death. Remember that knowledge is a ruler and wealth is its subject” (Imam Ali, *Nahj Al-Balagha*, Saying 146, in Wikipedia 2015c).

This ancient saying, I would argue, still applies quite well to the practice of urban planning today. Current and extensive knowledge on the topic of vacancy and redesignation is deemed important, because it allows urban planners and governments to control urban developments. The suggested way to go about collecting knowledge on the topic of vacancy in the Netherlands is to look at how different parties currently deal with vacancy and to collect this information in one place. In adopting this comparative approach, the researchers of the 'Oude Kaart' project only look at already

¹³ A copy of the preamble and the eight pieces of advice formulated by the Board of Advisors to the State to the state can be found in the appendix of this thesis.

existing urban planning practices. As such, they recreate or perpetuate a priori worlds instead of creating new or other ones.

The a priori tendency that is inherent in our dominant ways of knowledge production is already implicit in Imam Ali's statement. By stating that: "A man of knowledge (...) is praised and venerated after his death," he emphasises that generally accepted knowledge tends to live longer than individual subjects and therefore precedes the individual. In *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), Deleuze and Guattari make a similar claim. In their discussion of the role of names and their critique of representation, they point to the problems that arise when subjects identify with pre-existing 'labels'. To give a short and simple example: the term 'Dutch', with all its ideological, political, cultural and social meanings attached, existed before I was born, but still I identify as a 'Dutch' person. It is a term that precedes me and therefore it cannot completely define me, but it is an important identity-signifier for me. Deleuze and Guattari moreover state that subjects tend to make sense of themselves in retrospect, according to pre-existing notions and labels. In this process, already existing ideas get *reconfirmed* and an idea of complete and fixed subjects — an idea that is in fact constructed but appears to us as a truth — creeps in (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 70-71).

Recommendation 2: 'Manual for Reused Space'

The Board advises local governments to develop a plan or method of integrating vacancy and redesignation into their regular urban planning programmes and policies and suggests that 'success-factors' and 'failure-factors' of existing programs and policies should be examined using practical case studies. Arguing for the importance of such structural regulation of built environments, the document states:

"Met structurele leegstand van cultuurhistorisch interessante gebouwen en complexen loopt men het risico op cultureel kapitaalverlies. Wanneer waardeloze en banale gebouwen en complexen staan te verloederen mist men de kans met vervangende nieuwbouw een stukje Nederland te ontrommelen" (Harmsen 2008, 8).¹⁴

The Board states that a loss of function of buildings with an acknowledged cultural-historic significance causes a loss of cultural capital. The loss of function of 'normal' buildings is said to

¹⁴ "Structural vacancy of cultural historical buildings and complexes might cause the risk of losing cultural capital. When useless and banal buildings and complexes stand to deteriorate, one misses the opportunity to 'de-clutter' a piece of the Netherlands by constructing new buildings" (Harmsen 2008, 8).

indicate an inefficient use of space and is framed as a chance to ‘de-clutter’ a piece of the country. The Board thus appreciates cultural and historical buildings more and for different reasons than ‘banal’ buildings. Normal buildings need to have a utilitarian function. If they do not, they need to be demolished or refurbished in order to become orderly, functional and profitable again. Culturally or historically significant buildings enjoy a more non-utilitarian appreciation, but only if they are preserved well.

Recommendation 3: ‘Basic Registration Addresses and Buildings’

The ‘Basic Registration Addresses and Buildings’ (or, in Dutch: ‘Basisregistratie Adressen en Gebouwen’ (BAG)) is a database in which the Dutch government gathers and centralises information on citizens, businesses and institutions and their properties (Wikipedia 2015d). The Board advises local governments to mark buildings and properties on this list with a status of being in or out of use. This way, the BAG can provide governments with information on the geographical distribution, typology and duration of vacancy and vacant buildings (Harmsen 2008, 9).

Again, this recommendation attests to the idea that knowledge is power. Similar to the first two recommendations, it also foregrounds the idea that knowledge needs to be organised in an orderly, structured fashion. The mapping out of geographical distribution, typology and duration of vacancy functions to extrapolate patterns from currently available information. It thus serves not only control buildings and sites that are already vacant, but also those that will be vacant in the future.

Recommendation 4: ‘Trend forecasts’

The Board suggests to signal and monitor trend forecasts on structural vacancy on both a local and regional level, enabling governments to be pro-active in their policies regarding vacancy and to keep their knowledge on this topic up to date (Harmsen 2008, 8).

This recommendation, as well as the first three, suggests that gathering knowledge on the topic of vacancy in the Netherlands is important in order to control it and thus improve our living environment. The tendency of wanting to predict trends suggests that the total prevention of (both present and future) vacancy is favoured over the redesignation of already vacant constructions.

Recommendation 5: ‘Vacancy as a public matter’

The Board states that: “The owner of a structurally vacant premises, as a private party, is primarily responsible for the building, but, because vacancy causes problems in the public domain, it also

concerns the government.” The board then advises the government to facilitate independent feasibility studies into the reuse of vacant buildings, in order to help restart cases that have reached a deadlock (Harmsen 2008, 9).

This piece of advice states that the private owner is held responsible for the status of his property. However, part of his say over his own property is undermined in the name of public interest. In case the state of the building harms the public domain (according to the national or local government), local governments are advised to urge the private owner to do something about the ill state of his property. What becomes apparent here is that, in this document, top-down power is centralised (as the national government ultimately makes the rules), while responsibility is decentralised (as private owners and local governments are supposed to act out these rules). Private property is understood as private only when it is in concordance with ‘public interest.’ When it is not, local governments are granted the moral right to intervene, so as to protect the larger body of the population. Private property then becomes (a) public matter.

Recommendation 6: ‘Vacancy as a fiscal matter’

The Ministry of Economic Affairs executed a research into the potential and possibilities of taxation of (private) vacant properties. The Board claims that the fact that this research was being executed proves that vacancy is an issue of concern (Harmsen 2008, 9).

Similarly to point five, this is an issue of decentralised responsibility and centralised power on the level of the local government and the individual. Only, here it is exercised in a more pressing and concrete manner. The taxing of vacant property functions as a forceful discouragement for letting ones private property enter a state of decline. The Board posits the execution of a research into extra taxation of vacant property by the Ministry of Economic Affairs as an argument for the ‘fact’ that vacancy is an issue of concern. This is, quite obviously, a sophism or fallacy. As discussed before, the fact that one gets support from a similarly homogenous and like-minded group does not mean that one’s claim is true.

Recommendation 8: ‘Vacancy as a threat to the quality of life’

The Board states that vacancy is a threat to the liveability and quality of an area and therefore needs to be considered an urgent matter. The feeling of urgency can be strengthened by putting the issue of vacancy, along with concrete plans and methods to fight it, on the political agenda. In order to do

this, the Board suggests connecting the ‘Oude Kaart’ project to the ‘Nota Ruimte’ and the policy-theme ‘Mooi Nederland’ (Harmsen 2008, 9).¹⁵

Throughout the ‘Oude Kaart’ report, the authors keep stating that decay is a threat to the liveability and quality of an area, but they fail to convincingly argue why. Concrete information on the direct threat of decay to our quality of life is absent. I argue that this is the case, because the threat of decay is mainly an ideological one. This does however not mean that this normative ideology does not have real life effects: the financial decay that follows upon the material decay of an area is a point in case. Of course actual safety hazards can play a role in the decline of the financial value of materially decaying structures, but my point here is that, more often than not, the cause for a decrease in value of decaying structures is ideological in nature more than anything else.

Recommendation 8: ‘Whatever you need to do, do it exceptionally!’

In this final recommendation, the Board states that vacancy needs to be addressed not only as a problem, but also as an opportunity. In case of a dysfunctional form and function of built space, it is advised to follow these steps, in this particular order:

- a thorough exploration of all actors involved;
- redesignation by the government;
- redevelopment by the market or in public-private partnerships;
- redesign by designers;
- re-use by investors or users (Harmsen 2008, 9).

It is then argued that the state is the institution *par excellence* that can fulfil the role of ‘inspirer’ or ‘motivator’ of redesignation. Two government bills, the ‘Nota Ruimte’ and the ‘Nota Belvedere’, are designed to aid this ‘motivating’ function of the state. Aside from the state, regional and local governments are also encouraged to fulfil these roles (Harmsen 2008, 9).

In the list of steps mentioned above, Lefebvre’s realms of conceived space, perceived space and lived space are outlined in a particular order. As explained before, in perceived space the laws and rules set forth by conceived space (the space designed by planners and governments) are acted out,

¹⁵ The ‘Nota Ruimte’ and the policy-theme ‘Mooi Nederland’ will be explained and analysed in more detail later in this chapter.

performed and reiterated. This ties in with Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the role of names, as mentioned in my discussion of the first recommendation. Similarly to the way we construct our own identity according to pre-existing 'labels' and identity markers, the relationship between conceived and perceived space also tends to create fixed notions of space, which reproduce already existing spatial relations and practices. However, according to Lefebvre, lived space is the space where we can escape this circular reasoning. It is the space of inhabitants and users, and also of artists, writers and philosophers. As a space of transgression, lived space is a space where the flow of capital, and the norms and rules that are obeyed and reproduced in perceived space, can be undermined. It is a space that is highly personal, the space of our own lived experiences (Soja 1996, 67). In *Right to the City*, Lefebvre argues that lived space should take on a more communal social form. Rather than being a highly individual space, we should create collective lived spaces, which he calls *oeuvres*, to give lived spaces a larger place in society and create a city for and by the people, rather than a city for and by the capital-driven centres of decision-making (Lefebvre 1996, 66).

For Lefebvre, conceived space, perceived space and lived space are inseparable. He states that: "There are always Three. There is always the Other" (Lefebvre 2003, 50). Neither three of these terms can be thought of without recourse to the other two (Beyes & Steyaert 2011, 49). However, the last piece of advice of the 'Oude Kaart' report does seem to suggest to (forcefully and artificially) keep these three domains separated. In a hierarchical, chronological and linear way, it is suggested to first let the government (as the main centre of decision making) decide on what to do with the vacant lot; then it is suggested that a commercial party, either alone or in cooperation with the state, should change or update the structure of the abandoned building or site; then designers should redesign the interior of the building. The government, the market and the designer act as the creators of conceived space and investors or users are only brought into the process of redesignation *after* the vacant space has been altered by these specialists. As such, they are only allowed to use and inhabit this space as perceived space after it has been constructed by the government, the market, and the designer as conceived space.

This type of structured spatial organisation results in a homogeneously regulated and singularly ordered space, which makes it hard for lived space to be organised on a societal level. These singularly ordered spaces trigger singular uses. They carry out specific rules and norms with regard to the way people are supposed to interact with and in it. They reduce the multiplicity of possible ways of interaction with the environment to merely the supposedly proper interactions. Another threat to the diversity or the 'rich multiplicities' of the city, is the tendency of people to internalise and naturalise the rules created by conceived space in their performance of perceived

space.^{16,17} As such, it is not only top-down power structures that are shaping our experience of and interaction with the city. By internalising power structures, we also willingly or unwillingly perform and perpetuate them ourselves. These complex power relations that are at work in the city will be discussed in more detail in chapter two of this thesis.

1.4 Three assumptions about spatial organisation

In the first half of this chapter I described and analysed fragments of the ‘Oude Kaart’ report in order to get an impression of what defines a good urban space according to its authors. I introduced the general urban planning ideology of the ‘Oude Kaart’ report and analysed eight pieces of advice on spatial organisation formulated by the Board of Advisors to the State. I now continue my analysis of the ideology of the ‘Oude Kaart’ document, by discussing three general ideas, values or ideologies that emerge from the segments I have just discussed, and which recur in other parts of the report as well. By analysing three repeatedly recurring claims on how to best deal with vacancy, I will demonstrate how the ‘Oude Kaart’ report constructs their notion of the ‘ideal city’.

1.4.1 Assumption 1: Anticipating and avoiding vacancy is better than redesignation

On several occasions, the ‘Oude Kaart’ report stresses that local governments need to anticipate on vacancy. Page seven states:

“Structurele leegstand kan voorkomen worden als op gemeentelijk niveau — en voor het landschap op provinciaal niveau — ruimtelijke en sociaal-economische verkenningen plaatsvinden, op grond waarvan men op leegstand en herbestemming kan anticiperen” (Harmsen 2008, 7).¹⁸

The document also mentions the renewed Spatial Planning Act (‘Wet Ruimtelijke Ordening’), which would come into effect on 1 July 2008, and which obliges local governments to keep a digital record of their zoning plans. The aim of this digitalisation is to keep available information on

¹⁶ ‘Multiplicity’ is a term used by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* to designate the multiple and irreducible possibilities of transformation or becoming of the polyvocal, nomadic subject (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 40).

¹⁷ The tendency to internalise power struggles and thus control oneself, rather than being subject to top down forces of power, is discussed by Deleuze in his *Postscript on the Societies of Control* (1992).

¹⁸ “Structural vacancy can be prevented by conducting spatial and socio-economic surveys on a municipal level — and in the case of the countryside on a provincial level — on the basis of which one can anticipate vacancy” (Harmsen 2008, 7).

the topic of vacancy up to date, so that governments may anticipate on vacancy and redesignation, step in as soon as possible, and make sure a building or site does not lay functionless for any longer than it needs to. Rather than adapting the form and function of an abandoned building or site once it has lost its former function, the report suggests that it is better to prevent vacancy altogether (Harmsen 2008, 19). In light of this, it is also significant that the digital map of the ‘Oude Kaart’ project not only shows buildings and sites that are *currently* vacant, but also those that *will be* vacant within two years, and that the Board recommends to monitor trend forecasts on structural vacancy (Harmsen 2008, 24; 8). These too, are both means of anticipating on vacancy. The ‘Oude Kaart’ project thus envelops present and future manifestations of vacancy with the aim of governing both.

1.4.2 Assumption 2: Vacancy should be fought in the city centre as well as in the periphery

The way in which the ‘Oude Kaart’ document talks about central and peripheral areas in the city gives away significant information on how these spaces are valued. Moreover, it reveals the ideological nature of the issue of vacancy. In general, the notions of centre and periphery of the urban structure refer to more than just geographical position. A centre can be the geographically central point in a city, but more often than not the city centre is the space where certain financial, cultural, social or political power is concentrated. Thus, the city centre is the space of interest, the face of the city. It is the part of the city that is deemed most important and is therefore most subjected to preservation strategies.

On multiple occasions the document states that it is important to invest in city centres before expanding towards the margins of the city. In the introduction to the recommendations I analysed in the previous segment, Fons Asselbergs states: “Het is evident dat elke leegstaande ruimte binnen bestaand bebouwd gebied bouwcapaciteit vertegenwoordigt die eerder benut zou moeten worden dan nieuwe ruimte in het buitengebied” (Harmsen 2008, 7).¹⁹ Later in the document, the following question is raised:

“Waarom worden in een dichtbevolkt land waar vrije ruimte een schaars goed zou moeten zijn, steden en dorpen steeds weer uitgebreid ten kosten van open landschap, terwijl binnen de

¹⁹ “Evidently, each vacant space in an existing built-up area represents a building capacity that should be used rather than a new space in the outskirts” (Asselbergs in Harmsen 2008, 7).

gebouwde omgeving leegstaande gebouwen tevergeefs wachten op een nieuwe gebruiker?”
(Harmsen 2008, 19).²⁰

In these two passages a certain notion of what central and peripheral urban areas are and should be is constructed. These fragments show that the authors of the document evaluate the centre of the city in a different way than the outskirts of the city. We learn that they prefer to first keep the city centre clean and functioning properly, before turning to open land in the outskirts. It is furthermore suggested that city centres should be filled with neatly planned buildings, roads, parks and other spaces, while peripheral areas should be maximally open and spacious. Later on, the report states that vacancy is first of all an urban problem, and in the second place a provincial problem (Harmsen 2008, 87). This does not mean that there is more structural vacancy in city centres than in peripheral areas. Rather, it suggests that cluttered or functionless constructions are more *problematic* in central areas than in peripheral areas. This particular evaluation and construction of city centres, peripheral urban spaces and rural areas is ideological rather than practical: the fact that vacancy is fought more severely in city centres than in the outskirts and in rural areas has to do with more than just the scarcity of space in Dutch city centres versus the availability of space in peripheral areas.

The ‘Oude Kaart’ report refers to the densely built inner city as a ‘high pressure area’ and to the more open landscape of the periphery as an area of ‘underpressure’ (Harmsen 2008, 87). Harmsen states that both areas know their own type of structural vacancy. In high pressure areas, where space is scarce, one primarily finds vacant office buildings and business sites. In areas of underpressure one primarily finds vacant farms and residences (Harmsen 2008, 87). The ‘Oude Kaart’ report states that, because space is more scarce in the densely built-up city centres, governments need to prioritise redesignation of vacant buildings and sites in these high pressure areas (Harmsen 2008, 87). However, later in the document Harmsen states that it is important to tackle vacancy both in high pressure areas and in areas of underpressure (Harmsen 2008, 90). She warns us that tackling the problem of vacancy in peripheral areas is tricky though: since there is often no real shortage of space in provincial areas in the Netherlands, the necessary pressure to undertake action against vacancy is lacking here (Harmsen 2008, 87). This is why, in these areas of underpressure, vacant buildings are left to decay more often than in city centres, where space is

²⁰ “In a densely populated country where open space should be a scarce item, why are cities and villages being expanded at the cost of open land time and time again, while vacant buildings within the built-up area are waiting for a new user without avail?” (Harmsen 2008, 19).

more scarce. Ruins are thus more often allowed to stick around in those “off the radar” spaces outside of the scope of human interest. As human geographer Tim Edensor articulates it:

“Especially in those urban areas which lack inward investment to demolish, replace or convert such buildings, these ruins linger, thwarting the attempts of city imagineers and marketers to create new visions that might help to sell their city to potential investors” (Edensor 2002).

The fact that the ‘Oude Kaart’ document stresses the importance of redesignation of vacant buildings in low pressure areas, even though the direct pressure to do something about it is lacking, demonstrates that the problem of vacancy is not just a practical one, but moreover an ideological one — and, as the previous quote by Edensor suggest, a financial one. Vacancy is not just a matter of a poor use of scarce space: in areas that have plenty of space vacancy also needs to be eliminated according to Asselbergs and his colleagues. Buildings are thus not just a matter of use value, they are also signifiers of power and identity. In areas of underpressure vacancy is seen as problematic, because it defiles the landscape and harms its identity — and consequently it’s monetary worth (Harmsen 2008, 8, 91). However, these threats, I argue, do not directly pertain to the liveability, or quality of life, of a place. These are threats to the conceived space of urban planners, rather than to the lived space of urban dwellers.

The material condition of vacant buildings in central and peripheral areas in the city also reveal an interesting insight on our evaluation of high pressure spaces of interest versus spaces of underpressure. On a material level, there is a significant difference between vacancy in core areas and vacancy in peripheral areas. The office buildings and business sites in inner cities often look rather well maintained. The ruins one is more likely to find in peripheral urban areas are generally more deteriorated. A lack of human interest in the form of cleaning and maintenance has left the buildings to decay quicker than the abandoned buildings in the inner city. Also, a lack of control by security cameras and fellow citizens allows an increase of non-normative human and non-human interactions with buildings to take place and leave visible traces on their structure: graffiti is sprayed on the walls; empty bottles, cans and wrappers have been left behind; animals built nests; valuable materials such as glass and led might have been stripped off. Unlike these marginal or marginalised ruins, inner city abandoned buildings are often still considered valuable to an extent and therefore their structures are kept intact relatively well: sometimes so much so that a passer-by might not even realise when a building is vacant. Where the provincial ruin is left to decay and has had the chance to transform into something else — both with regard to its material form and its function — the abandoned lot in the city centre is more often maintained and kept from non-

normative interactions. Even though the ‘original’ function of the building is no longer needed, the form that fits exactly with this obsolete function is forcefully maintained.

1.4.3 Assumption 3: Vacancy affects the area

Another recurring argument for redesignation expressed in the ‘Oude Kaart’ report is the idea that vacancy is not only problematic on a small scale — on the level of the abandoned building itself — but is also harmful to the entire environment surrounding the vacant lot (Harmsen 2008, 7). Harmsen states: “Vaak duidt leegstand op een gebiedsprobleem. Eén leegstaand object in een straat kan een voorbode zijn van aanstaand verval in het gebied” (Harmsen 2008, 87).^{21,22} It is also stated that the exterior of an extraordinarily fine looking building contributes positively to the identity and the image of the surrounding area (Harmsen 2008, 94). In both cases, the researchers of the ‘Oude Kaart’ project stress the role of a single building in a bigger area and suggest that the former influences the latter. In light of this, they value redesignation of a single building as an opportunity to give an important impulse to the liveability of an entire area.

In addition to city centres, the ‘Oude Kaart’ report mentions city entrances as important spaces of interest in the city (Harmsen 2008, 94). The report states that these ‘backsides’ of the city need to be transformed into attractive ‘front sides’: places that make visitors and inhabitants feel welcome and generate a good first impression (Harmsen 2008, 94). The two types of city entrances the report mentions are the railway and the highway. Generally, railways and highways are spaces one moves through. They are paths that connect different cities, or different parts within a city, and one is only supposed to be there temporarily (Lynch 1960 in Gates & Stout 1996, 99). As mere spaces of passage, these spaces might be seen as less important ‘backsides’ and therefore the need to order or structure them is deemed less pungent. In light of this, it is not surprising that one often finds clutter and garbage next to railways and highways, while city centres are kept relatively clean. As city centres are spaces where one dwells and the city entrances spaces one passes through, the

²¹ “Vacancy often indicates a problem of the area. One single vacant object in a street can be the forerunner of future decay in the area” (Harmsen 2008, 87).

²² This idea resonates with the ‘rule of broken windows’ as discussed by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in their article ‘Broken Windows. The police and neighbourhood safety’. This rule states that, if a window in a building is broken *and is left unrepaired*, the remaining windows will soon be broken too, since one unrepaired broken window signals that no one cares and that breaking more windows will not have any repercussions (Wilson & Kelling 1982). However, to support my own argument that decay forms more of a threat to the ideologically and normatively constructed status of a building or area than an actual threat to the safety or liveability of an area: in this article Wilson and Kelling also state that keeping built space tightly organised “has little to do with the real sources of community fear -- that is, with violent crime” (Wilson & Kelling 1982).

former are generally found more significant to the overall image of a place and are therefore dealt with more carefully. The ‘Oude Kaart’ report nonetheless argues that city entrances too need to be taken care of. As we will see, city entrances occupy a prominent place on the mental map of the urban dweller and are thus important identity-signifiers for the city — and not only because they determine a visitor’s first impression of a city.

In the words of urban planner Kevin Lynch (1960), the train station and city entrance are ‘nodes’ within the urban fabric. Lynch (1960) defines ‘nodes’ as: “[T]he strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is travelling.” They are “places of a break in transportation . . . moments of shift from one structure to another” (Lynch 1960 in Gates & Stout 1996, 99). The train station and the city entrance are indeed places where a break in transportation or a shift from one structure to another occurs. At the train station, we change from transport by train to transport by, for example, foot, bus, car or bike. The train station thus serves as the place of transfer from the structure of the railway to, for example, the structure of the road, bicycle path or footpath. Leaving the highway and entering the city also means a shift of structure, as speed limits decrease and traffic becomes more diverse. So, paths convert into nodes when their structure is interrupted. As places of momentary breaks or interruptions into the flow of navigating through the city, we experience nodes with more intensity. Consequently, they acquire an important place on our mental map of the city.

Lynch states that some nodes are the focus or epitome of a district. Such important nodes then serve as a symbol for the wider district and can influence it to a large extent. These significant types of nodes he calls ‘cores’ (Lynch 1960 in Gates & Stout 1996, 99). Here, the ‘Oude Kaart’ document resonates with Lynch’s theory. They both state that individual buildings or areas, as nodes or cores, are important signifiers of their surrounding areas. Implied in the claim that one vacant building, one beautiful building or one city entrance affects the surrounding area, is the idea that these sub-parts of the city should fit with the overall structure of the city. If this is not the case, the identity of the city is in jeopardy. As such, the notion of the ideal city as a fixed, coherent Whole entity, in which all the individual parts should match the overall structure, is constructed. The ‘Mooi Nederland’ report, which I discuss next, will provide us with some significant insights on this particularly popular identity of cities in the Netherlands.

1.5 The city as a Whole and the ruin as its enemy

The ‘Oude Kaart’ project is only one out of many studies on urban planning conducted in the Netherlands in the last decade. The ‘Visie Architectuurbeleid 2008+’ report states that there is no

country on earth that annually publishes as many reports on architecture and urban planning as the Netherlands (College van Rijksadviseurs 2006, 13). Another one of these many publications is the report to the ‘Mooi Nederland’ project. This project was related to the ‘Oude Kaart’ project and aimed at stimulating an economical use of space, the prevention of ‘cluttering’ (in Dutch: ‘verrommeling’) of space and the promotion of spatial quality (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu 2011, 3).

The report to the ‘Mooi Nederland’ project gives a significant and revealing definition and description of a desirable urban identity — one which resonates with the values and opinions expressed in the ‘Oude Kaart’ report. Both documents foreground the notion of the ideal city as what I call a ‘Whole city’. With the notion of the Whole city, or the city as a Whole, I refer to an understanding of the ideal city as a space that is constructed to appear complete. Combining Deleuze and Guattari’s machine-ontology and Lefebvre’s *Right to the City*, I define the Whole city as a city in which all the fragments or sub-parts of the city have their own fixed place, meaning and function.²³ As such, it is a city that is static, where there is no space for alterity — unless this ‘alterity’ is ordered and remains within its assigned place — and where the individual subject or partial object has to match with or adapt to the overarching ‘full body’ of the city.²⁴

The point of departure of the ‘Mooi Nederland’ program is a revaluation and reverification of the notion of identity and its relation to our experience of our environment (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu 2011, 16). Within this program, the notion of identity is defined as a synergy of the image, use and meaning of a place (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu 2011, 16). The notion of ‘image’ (‘beeld’) is explained as the factor that decides whether the user experiences a place in a positive or in a negative way. A place with a desirable image, then, is a place that people enjoy staying at. The term ‘use’ (‘gebruik’) signifies a certain purpose or utilitarian function of the place for the people that visit it. A place’s use value is co-determined by the geographical location and spatial connections of the place with the surrounding areas. Lastly, the term ‘meaning’ (‘betekenis’) designates a historical, present and future value of a place and depends on factors such as the new relations an area can establish with nearby cities and landscapes (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu 2011, 17). According to the ‘Mooi Nederland’ report a city has a desirable identity when the image, use and meaning of a place fit with each other and form a

²³ Deleuze and Guattari’s machine ontology will be discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

²⁴ ‘Full body’ is a Deleuzoguattarian notion that will be taken up in chapter two of this thesis. For now it will suffice to say that in this case it refers to the whole of the form, function and ideology of the city as a complete, fixed entity as constructed by urban planners, governments and other authoritative space-makers.

synergetic, coherent whole (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu 2011, 17). The report claims that, if multiple people describe the identity of a place in a similar way, the merging of image, use and meaning has been successful — and that we could then perhaps speak of *the* identity of that place (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu 2011, 17).

If we go back to our reading of the ‘Oude Kaart’ report, we can see how it likewise works from the understanding of the ideal city as a space in which image, use and meaning correspond. The ‘Oude Kaart’ report continually emphasises how a desirable urban space is a space in which sub-parts of the city, such as individual buildings and city-entrances, fit with the general structure of the city. As such, there is no space for otherness in the form of seemingly functionless, abandoned or decaying buildings, in this notion of ideal space. These do not fit in the general structure of the city. The way in which the ‘Oude Kaart’ report addresses the problem of vacancy is reminiscent of the notion of identity as formulated by the ‘Mooi Nederland’ report. The ‘Oude Kaart’ report considers vacancy not just a small problem on the level of the vacant building, but rather a problem that affects the entire area. Because a ruin does not fit within the proper image of a city and does neither functionally nor aesthetically correspond to the other buildings in a planned environment, the ruin jeopardises the general structure of its planned environment. The ruin poses a threat to the carefully constructed synthesis between the image, use and meaning of the planned city. Urban ruins form an unexpected “speck” on an otherwise tightly organised urban structure. They stand out and cause a break in the pattern of the urban fabric, as suddenly a different form of organisation appears. I argue that, as they are unexpected and atypical remainders in an otherwise smoothly structured environment, ruins become *nodes* or *cores* within the city: because they are different, they draw attention to themselves and are experienced by the urban dweller with more intensity than the planned environment that s/he is used to.

The ruin breaks with the otherwise smooth structure of the organised city that we know and thus shows an alternative option of organisation. It gives a glimpse of other possibilities and therefore breaks with the transcendental, fixed notion of the city as a Whole and complete entity. Because it threatens the coherent, complete identity of the Whole city, the ruin is eliminated at all costs. The repeatedly mentioned argument that it is better to prevent vacancy altogether than it is to reinvest vacant buildings with a new image, use and meaning, shows that it is important to the authors of the ‘Oude Kaart’ document to not even show a *small glimpse* of this alternative way of organising space. Even a temporary difference, that is then normalised again, is considered unacceptable, since this is enough to show that the city is indeed not a fixed Whole. Ruins break open the dominant city-system and put its organisation up for discussion. They threaten the power of urban planners, the government and other authoritative space-makers in questioning their

seemingly natural practices and “talk[ing] back to the quest to create an impossibly seamless urban fabric” (Edensor 2002).

As will be discussed in chapter two of this thesis, the ideology of urban planning foregrounds a notion of the city that seems natural, but is in fact highly constructed. In order to keep the notion of the Whole city intact, constant processes of maintenance need to be executed: it takes tons of money and hours of work a day to keep up these appearances. The urban planning policies discussed in the ‘Oude Kaart’ document, are employed to such an extent that even future vacancy is anticipated. In doing so, they seem to introduce a new type of ruin, which I call the ‘future-ruin’.²⁵ Similarly to the building that is already abandoned, the future-ruin is also seen as problematic, since it is a *pending* threat to the notion of the city as a Whole.

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I demonstrated that the ‘ideal city’ as described by the ‘Oude Kaart van Nederland’ report, the ‘Mooi Nederland’ report and the ‘Visie Architectuurbeleid 2008+’ report is a city in which all the fragments or sub-parts have their own fixed place and are neatly woven together to form a consistent urban fabric. Their ideal city is a seemingly coherent, singular and rational entity in which image, use and meaning are made to harmoniously and logically fit together. In other words: this city is constructed to appear as a Whole, complete entity. Through the use of performative sentences the ‘Oude Kaart’ report, in which opinions are rendered facts and normative a priori ideas get reproduced, shapes our urban reality. However, in order for these performatives to be effective, they need the right extra-lingual context: a law or recommendation regarding spatial

²⁵ My notion of the future-ruin is related, but not identical, to Robert Smithson’s notion of ‘ruins-in-reverse’. Smithson’s notion of ruins-in-reverse refers to new constructions that have not (yet) been finished: buildings whose construction process has been shut down, leaving the buildings unfinished and unattended. He states that these are “the opposite of the “romantic ruin” because the buildings don’t *fall* into ruin *after* they are built but rather *rise* into ruin before they are built” (Smithson 1967, 54). The future-ruin, rather, is a currently functional building that is already treated as a ruin: a building whose vacancy is already anticipated and therefore already an active force in the world.

The virtue of the ruin-in-reverse is similar to the ontological value of the post-industrial ruin that I discuss in chapter two of this thesis. As constructions that are still in the process of being made, Smithson’s ruins-in-reverse actively show the historical unfolding of events: they show a continual process of becoming of space over time. The sterile suburb fails to convey this sense of time, and is therefore deemed a-historical — a claim similar to Dylan Trigg’s argument that capitalist space is ‘temporally clean’, which I will also elaborate on in the second chapter (Smithson 1967, 55; Trigg 2006, 125).

So, where the ruin-in-reverse for Smithson is a sign of active becoming of time and difference — like the post-industrial ruin in my discussion here — the future-ruin, as a Dutch policy instrument aimed at preventing vacancy, is a telling depiction of our excessive utilitarian mindset, and of our apparent fear of vacancy, nothingness or functionlessness as a threat to the arduously crafted structure of the Whole city.

organisation does not only need to be mentioned, it needs to be acted out as well. Or, to put this in Lefebvrian terms: conceived space needs to be acted out as perceived space. As such, the city is a performance constructed both through texts (the (un)written rules and regulations of conceived space) and contexts (the acts acting out those rules as perceived space and contesting them as lived space). In this mutually influential and co-constitutive process of signification, the city itself and our understanding of the city, or urban reality and urban philosophy, constantly (re)create and perpetuate each other. As such, dominant notions of what a city is or what a city should become part of our dominant regime of truth.

Through an analysis of the ‘Oude Kaart’ report, I have distilled three normative claims on vacancy and redesignation, that are repeatedly put to the fore in the document: first, vacancy needs to be tackled in high pressure city centres as well as in peripheral areas of underpressure; second, avoiding vacancy altogether is better than redesignation; and third, vacancy affects not just an individual building but an entire area. I have demonstrated that these motives for fighting vacancy in the Netherlands are ideologically underpinned rather than practically, noting the absence of any well grounded arguments as to why vacancy and decay form a threat to the liveability and quality of an area and pointing to the fact that vacancy is seen as a problem by the authors of the document, even though they do not have any exact information on the status of vacancy in the Netherlands.

Via these normative claims, the ‘Oude Kaart’ report constructs the notion of the Whole city as the ideal city. Urban ruins threaten this fragile and precious construction of the Whole city and thereby the power of urban planners, the government and other authoritative space-makers. Because they show alternative ways of organising urban space, they “talk back to the quest to create an impossibly seamless urban fabric” and therefore put the prevailing organisation of the city up for discussion (Edensor 2002). Ruins offer spaces in which the interpretations and practices of the city become liberated from the constraints of everyday determinations of what should be done where. As such, they offer opportunities for challenging and deconstructing the imprint of power on the city. I therefore argue that the ruin is a valuable entity, because it helps to multiply the readings of the city and challenge the transcendental notion of the Whole city.

2. Planned space as a place of ‘being’, ruined space as a place of ‘becoming’

“When rust sets in on a razor blade, when moss grows in a corner of a room . . . we should be glad because . . . life is moving into the house” (Hundertwasser 1997, 48).

In chapter one, I argued and illustrated how dominant Dutch urban planning practices strive for a construction and representation of a Whole city. This chapter serves as a first step in deconstructing this dominant urban planning ideology, by demonstrating the value of post-industrial ruins. Although the notion of the Whole city is attractive to urban planners and governments, I agree with Dylan Trigg that this spatial organisation is repressive and false, especially when becoming too dominant. This chapter serves to further develop this argument. The philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, as presented in *Anti-Oedipus*, will help me do so. It forms the theoretical backbone of this chapter, in which I use their philosophy as an ontology: a systematic account on what it is to be an entity (Kleinherenbrink 2015, 5).²⁶

Informed by Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘ontology of machines’, I discuss how dominant urban planning practices give us a ‘false’ understanding of our urban environment and how urban ruins might help us gain a better understanding of it. I argue that ruins reveal more about ‘reality’ than the planned environment does. I take my notion of ‘reality’, or ‘the world’, from Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of both as networks of ‘desiring-machines’ that consist of constant processes of ‘becoming’. In chapter one, I illustrated how urban planners attempt to construct and represent cities as complete and consistent unities. As such, they actively try to hide the *processes* that shape and shake our cities. If we re-phrase this in Deleuzoguattarian terms, we can state that they try to hide the continual processes of becoming of the city. Along these lines, this chapter argues how, in appearing to be a fixed ‘being’, planned spaces hide their underlying processes of *becoming*. Urban ruins, to the contrary, are *spaces of becoming* and openly display their continual processes of transformation (into decay).

In the following, I start out by explaining the difference between ‘planned space’ and ‘ordered space’. Then, I continue with an introduction to Deleuze and Guattari’s machine-ontology

²⁶ I am clarifying this because Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy can be and has been used as an ethics and/or a method as well. From now on, I will refer to this specific ontology of Deleuze and Guattari as their ‘ontology of machines’ or their ‘machine-ontology’.

and their notions of desire and becoming. I go on to use these notions in an analysis of the ontological value of the post-industrial ruin, in comparison to the planned urban built environment. I study both the post-industrial ruin and the planned urban environment, because one cannot exist without the other. Both ruined space and planned space depend on each other for their status, evaluation and role in society, as they are defined and given meaning in contrast to the other. A thing or object with an ‘ontological value’ is understood here as a thing or object that is particularly suitable as a medium through which to study and understand reality. Of course one can study reality through any object in the world, but I argue that the post-industrial ruin manages exceptionally well in this regard. As the subversive Other to the ‘normal’, planned urban environment, the post-industrial ruin shows the constructed, relational, systemic, or ‘machinic’ nature of our urban reality especially well. As such, it serves as a powerful lens through which to examine our everyday environment. Aside from Deleuze and Guattari’s machine ontology Bruno Latour’s Actor Network Theory and Bill Brown’s Thing theory will help me to demonstrate the ontological value of the post-industrial ruin. Using these theories, this chapter elaborates on the following hypothesis: the process of becoming — and therefore the process of desiring-production — is concealed in the planned urban environment and revealed in the post-industrial ruin.

2.1 Planned space and ordered space: a fundamental distinction

Contrary to what I might have implied in the introduction, I depart from a point of similarity between the ruined and the planned urban environment. The way I introduced the post-industrial ruin and the planned city in the introduction might imply that the two are binary oppositions of each other. This is not exactly the case. To the contrary, with Deleuze and Guattari’s machine-ontology, one can argue that both the post-industrial ruin and the planned urban environment are ontologically the same: both are not essential, a priori structures, but rather social constructions, being shaped by and shaping the things around them. I will therefore not refer to the planned city centre as ‘ordered’ space and the post-industrial ruin as ‘unordered’ space. Both are ordered, or constructed — only in *different* ways. At first sight the post-industrial ruin might seem unordered: it has fallen into neglect, is no longer manipulated by urban planning strategies and looks unruly compared to the city centres we are used to. However, from an ontological perspective, the post-industrial ruin is certainly ordered by entities in- and outside of its own confines. It might be largely abandoned by humans, but indeed various ‘other-than-human’ and ‘otherwise human’ (Braidotti 2014, 1) ordering forces are at work here. Think, for example, of entities such as: the weather, plants, animals, insects, homeless people, loiterers and graffiti artists.

Instead of the term ‘ordered’, I therefore use the term ‘planned’ to typify the urban environment that we consider ‘normal’. I use the term planned, because this urban environment is built with a certain *prefigured* image in mind. It is a space that is literally planned by architects and urban planners, who design and build our cities according to prevailing and pre-existing ideas on how they ‘should’ look. I thus make a distinction between the terms ‘constructed’ and ‘planned’. The term ‘constructed’ signals that an entity is not autonomous, but rather shapes and is shaped by various other entities — in a machinic, networked fashion. The term ‘planned’ signals a space that is made with an a priori idea of that space in mind. In my Deleuzoguattarian reading of the city and the ruin, both the ‘normal’ urban environment and the post-industrial ruin are constructed. However, only the ‘normal’ urban environment is planned.²⁷

2.2 Everything is a machine, everything is production: an introduction to Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology of machines

In the opening pages of *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), Deleuze and Guattari state that: “[E]verything is a machine” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 12). In this work, they develop their ontological argument, which states that every entity, every thing — both human and non-human, actual and virtual, material and conceptual — is a machine. This is not meant as a metaphor: the world itself and every entity in it literally function as machines, which produce *real effects* (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 12). Deleuze and Guattari state:

“Everywhere it is machines — real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 11).

This quote shows an important characteristic of the Deleuzoguattarian machine: namely, the fact that a machine is never autonomous, but always in connection with another machine or with multiple other machines. It is always *driving* other machines and always *being driven* by other machines. A machine thus cannot exist in itself. It is necessarily always part of a *network* of

²⁷ This is — obviously, but possibly still useful to express — stated from a human perspective. I do not know much about the behaviour of animals and insects and whether they plan their actions or their living environments. However, the point here is that the average person does not either and that, even if animals did plan their environments, this would be according to structures that are unknown to the majority of the people in (ruined) urban space. Therefore, I argue that the post-industrial ruin can generally be considered a non-planned space.

machines, in which it is always both subject and object. Within this network of machines, mutual interactions, influences or inscriptions between various subjects and objects continually take place.

2.2.1 Reflections on assemblages and machines

In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), which Deleuze and Guattari wrote and published after *Anti-Oedipus*, they speak of ‘assemblages’ rather than machines. Both the assemblage and the machine are defined as the outcome of a process or series of connections (Colebrook 1999, xx; xxii). However, in my reading of these terms, both emphasise different qualities of the workings and effects of these processes of connection — therefore, both terms carry their own specific connotations and denotations and thus provide different strategic opportunities in the formulation of an argument.

The term ‘assemblage’ arguably expresses the *mutual* influence that entities have on each other in a network better than the term ‘machine’ does. We commonly understand machines as apparatuses that transform a certain input into another output through a program of various steps. Therefore, use of the term machine might imply a certain subjectivity and linearity. It might imply that there is a single or clear source that started the action, that set the chain of connected machines in motion, causing the first part to activate the second one, and the second part to activate the third one, like some sort of Rube Goldberg chain reaction. The Deleuzoguattarian machine, however, does not work like a Goldberg-machine. Unlike the Goldberg-machine, the Deleuzoguattarian machine is a rhizomatic, non-linear network of interrelated machines and parts. It is not a matter of chain reactions, but of ongoing, mutual and concurrent influences and interactions between all the different machines and parts as both subjects and objects in the machine-network.

The term ‘assemblage’, with its connotations of a collection or a collage, might better express this non-linearity and non-subjectivity of the Deleuzoguattarian machine. Another important characteristic of the Deleuzoguattarian machine, which the term assemblage might better express, is the fact that this machine consists of ‘partial objects’, which do not necessarily belong together, but that have been grouped together as a machine in a *contingent* fashion. The notion of assemblage, as a collage, implies this ‘randomness’ of couplings and connections better than the term machine does — which, at first instance, might imply a more rational notion of logic and progression. However, the term machine does carry in it the connotation of *productivity*, which is important to my project. Using the term machine might foreground the idea that entities construct each other, and produce actual *effects* on each other. The notion of the Deleuzoguattarian ‘machine’ — as a thing that is produced and also produces things itself — allows me to examine the complex

processes through which our cities are constructed, and investigate the real life *effects* that our built environment, as a powerful machine, has on us urban dwellers.

I find Deleuze and Guattari's machine-ontology particularly useful, because, on the one hand, it is structural and dependable, since *everything* is a machine and *everything* works in a machinic way. On the other hand, it expresses the complexity of our contemporary global world, societies and cultures well. The machine-ontology of Deleuze and Guattari thus provides me with an all-encompassing idea to think about the world and everything in it, without reducing or simplifying it. I think it manages to have the seemingly impossible combination of being all-encompassing without being reductive, because it focuses on production rather than products, on processes and effects, rather than and isolated final results. Maybe it is even wrong to say that this ontology focuses on production, because this implies that there are other things to focus on. Deleuze and Guattari's machine-ontology goes further than that: it recognises *only production*. The idea that there are distinct, autonomous spheres of production, distribution and consumption is false, according to Deleuze and Guattari. It is an illusion created by capitalism, the capitalist division of labour (which, as illustrated by Karl Marx, obscures the production processes of human labour and presents products as autonomous beings) and the false dichotomies of man-nature, industry-nature and society-nature (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 14). Rather than seeing all these separate realms and dichotomies, Deleuze and Guattari see the world as a place in which there is only production. They state that: "Everything is production, since the recording processes are immediately consumed, immediately consummated, and these consumptions directly reproduced" (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 14).²⁸ Furthermore, this quote once more articulates the complex, mutual, concurrent and constant processes of influencing and being influenced, of producing and being produced, that are at work in the entanglements of machine-networks.

2.2.2 *Everything is production: a reflection on 'the Real'*

Let us take a moment to reflect on the idea that everything is production. This idea does away with a basic understanding in post-modernist thought — a philosophical movement to which Deleuze and Guattari are often assigned.²⁹ The fundamental assumption I am referring to here is Jean

²⁸ With 'recording processes' Deleuze and Guattari refer to the acquiring or forming of new capabilities or characteristics of machines, which happens through interactions with another machines (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 18).

²⁹ See, for example, Steven Best and Douglas Kellner's *Postmodern Theory* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991), which devotes a chapter to Deleuze and Guattari.

Baudrillard's claim that we live in a world of simulacra and hyperreality. In his seminal work *Simulacra and Simulations* (1994 [1981]) Baudrillard writes that:

“Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without any origin or reality: a hyperreal” (Baudrillard 1994, 1).

Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality suggests that, today, signs no longer simulate or reflect an external reality. There is no reality outside of signs anymore. They no longer represent or refer to an external, 'original' model. They have become a world in and of themselves — a world of 'floating signifiers'. In our highly mediated world, images only refer to themselves and to other images, which refer to other images, which refer to other images, in an endless process in which the original has been lost. As such, Baudrillard argues that we live in a world in which reality no longer exists, or is no longer accessible. The sign has taken over the Real and we do not know the Real anymore, we only know simulacra. Baudrillard therefore claimed that meaning has imploded and announced the “death of the real” (Massumi 1987, 1).

Where Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulations* could be read as quite a negative dissertation describing the world as a realm of empty signifiers that have lost touch with reality, a reading of this same 'symbolic' nature of the contemporary world could be seen in a much more positive light through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's machine-ontology. Baudrillard claims that reality has ceased to be, that the sign has taken over the real, and that we now live in a world of simulacra, or copies without originals. He makes a distinction between the copy and the original model, and states that Reality lies in the original model. Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, do not make a distinction between the sign and the real, or the model and the original. This is because they do not focus on complete products, but rather on processes of production. Deleuze and Guattari state that: “meaning is not attached to the signified to which each of the enunciated signifiers refers, but is constituted by process, suture, the concatenation of bound elements . . .” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 84). They do not see reality as an assemblage of symbols and signs, but as an assemblage of ongoing *processes* of signification. Every entity is the effect of a process of signification: a process that is non-linear, non-hierarchical, and always subject to transformation. Therefore, there is no a priori referent, no real, no original model.

If there is no a priori model or truth, then it cannot get lost, like Baudrillard claims. For Deleuze and Guattari, 'the real' is not fixed: there is no original model that needs to be uncovered.

The ‘real’ is the result of processes of production, the efforts of machines making and breaking connections with each other, thereby constituting a fluid, changeable, nomadic, polyvocal, continuously transforming reality. Both the original and the copy are machinic constructions, contingently put together, but nonetheless constituting a real life force. It is because Deleuze and Guattari make no distinction between the copy and the original, or the sign and the real, that they break with the notion of the simulacrum, a fundamental notion for post-modernist thought introduced by Baudrillard. Instead of categorising them as post-modern thinkers, I would therefore rather categorise Deleuze and Guattari as a-modern thinkers.

2.3 Every machine is a desiring-machine: an elaboration on Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology of machines

Deleuze and Guattari not only argue that every entity is a machine, they moreover argue that every machine is a ‘desiring-machine’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 12). Its ability to desire, or better yet, its *inability not* to desire, is a main characteristic of the Deleuzoguattarian machine. So, if we want to understand their machine-ontology, we need to understand their notion of desire. Contrary to psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, who considered desire a tendency of trying to make up for some sort of lack — typically the lack of the phallus — Deleuze and Guattari define desire as a tendency that is highly productive. For them, desire is the productive force behind all life forms. As Australian cultural theorist Claire Colebrook describes it:

“Desire is connection, not the overcoming of loss or separation; we desire, not because we lack or need, but because life is a process of striving and self-enhancement. Desire is a process of increasing expansion, connection and creation” (Colebrook 2002, xxii).

For Deleuze and Guattari, desire creates life, drives life. It causes life to go on, to evolve, to transform, to *become* rather than to be. A desiring-machine then, is a machine of ‘becoming’.

A desiring-machine has no fixed or a priori identity or form: it is fluid, always transforming, always moving on. A Deleuzoguattarian machine is constantly making and breaking connections with other machines. Deleuze and Guattari call these movements of breaking one connection and making another one processes of ‘deterritorialisation’ and ‘reterritorialisation’. A machine’s constant movements of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation drive its continual processes of becoming. Feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz describes the process of becoming as: “[T]he *operation of self-differentiation*, the elaboration of a difference within a thing, a quality or a system

that emerges or actualizes only in duration” (Grosz 2004, 4). She also states that: “Duration is difference, the inevitable force of differentiation and elaboration, which is also another name for becoming” (Grosz 2005, 4). As such, Grosz emphasises the inseparable bond between duration, differentiation and becoming. She underscores that becoming is a process that takes place over time, in duration. She also argues that becoming is a process of self-differentiation, of becoming something else, something other than before: a constant redefining of the self and every entity one interacts with. Becoming, then, is the continual process of transformation or self-differentiation that an entity goes through over time. It is a process that necessarily takes place, because, as time necessarily moves on, entities-in-time necessarily move along with it.³⁰

But why does the fact that an entity moves along with time mean it ‘self-differentiates’? Why does an entity that is ‘becoming’ necessarily transform into something else or other than it was before? This is because, in the machine-ontology of Deleuze and Guattari, entities have no fixed, a priori or natural place in the world. According to Deleuze and Guattari, those things that appear to us as fixed objects, are in fact fluid and contingent assemblages. They do not appear to us as ‘wholes’ because their parts naturally stay together, or essentially belong together, but because they are grouped together as ‘whole’ entities by force. Entities that are assembled as seemingly complete entities are in fact:

“[P]ieces to a puzzle belonging not to any one puzzle but to many, pieces assembled by forcing them into a certain place where they may or may not belong, their unmatched edges violently bent out of shape, forcibly made to fit together, to interlock, with a number of pieces always left over” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 57).

³⁰ In this reading, we could understand Grosz’s appropriation of Deleuze and Guattari’s machine-ontology as a project that takes up a similar aim as Tim Ingold’s argument for examining the ‘life of things’, rather than the ‘agency of things’. Ingold (2010) argues that the emphasis in much of the current literature on material culture is on material agency, rather than life. When we read things as agents, we examine a one-dimensional flow of inscription from thing to human. In this process, Ingold argues, we reduce things to objects, because we uncouple them from the ‘flows of life’ that they are constantly embedded in. Using the tree as an example, he argues that a tree is always a ‘tree-in-the-air’ and therefore “not an object at all, but a certain gathering together of the threads of life” (Ingold 2010, 4). In a similar vein, we can read Grosz project of linking the process of becoming to processes of duration, and discussing this as an ontological structure, as an argument for re-connecting entities to their flow of life by emphasising how entities are always intricately tied up in processes of time. Ingold focuses on the spatial dimensions of the life of things, and Grosz on the temporal dimensions. As such, it can be useful to read them together.

2.3.1 *Desire as self-differentiation: the contingent couplings of desiring-production*

According to Deleuze and Guattari, entities are never complete unities. Rather, they are like puzzles, built up out of pieces that are contingently and forcefully put together. For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is the force that puts these pieces together, and takes them apart again. Desire, then, is a process of constant breaks and connections, couplings and uncouplings, deterritorialisations and reterritorialisations. Importantly, the process of desire does not follow a premeditated course. Its breaks and connections are contingent. Deleuze and Guattari state that:

“Desire constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented. Desire causes the current to flow, itself flows in turn, and breaks the flows” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 16).

The idea that desire couples things together that do not naturally belong together is crucial to understanding the way desiring-production works, and the effects it produces. If desire constructs reality, and if desire works through random, non-premeditated processes of flows and interruptions, then reality is a contingent construction. As such, we can also understand why living, as a process of ‘becoming’ driven by the contingent couplings and connections of desire, necessarily means transforming into something else or other than one was before. In order to emphasise that entities are contingent constructions, that can never be complete or finished, and are always subject to change, Deleuze and Guattari make an important distinction between ‘wholes’ and ‘totals’. They emphasise that the things we perceive *can* function as wholes, but can *never* function as totals. This means that, in order to be ‘faithful to reality’, a whole should never be reduced to its parts and a part should never be reduced to the bigger whole in which it functions. Or: the machine should not be reduced to its parts, neither should the parts be reduced to the machine. As such, Deleuze and Guattari argue:

“We believe only in totalities that are peripheral. And if we discover such a totality alongside various separate parts, it is a whole *of* these particular parts but does not totalize them; it is a unity *of* all these particular parts but does not unify them; rather, it is added to them as a new part fabricated separately” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 57).

We should always remember that (seemingly) complete objects are in fact built up out of various parts. These parts are contingently assembled together and thus do not form a complete and finite

unity. A ‘whole’ is never finite or complete. It does never exhaust the multiple ways in which parts could have been assembled together. As such, a whole does not ‘totalise’ or unify its parts. In arguing this, Deleuze and Guattari’s machine-ontology is a highly anti-transcendental one. It denies sovereign, a-priori ideas or structures, and believes only in ‘totalities that are peripheral’. It argues that we should treat every entity as a *new* part, fabricated *separately* and suggests that a-priori models or methods fail to envelop specific entities. Deleuze and Guattari articulate this need for complexity and specific, situated approaches as follows:

“All molar functionalism is false, since the organic or social machines are not formed in the same way they function, and the technical machines are not assembled in the same way they are used” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 328).

Molar functionalism, or the use of general methods, is false, because it fails to produce appropriate knowledges about specific entities. General methods do not tell us something about specific entities, because specific entities do not follow general models. General methods are averages, and thus fail to represent or completely grasp ‘individual’ entities. Therefore, Deleuze and Guattari’s machine ontology analyses the world and every entity in it in terms of specific, concrete systems (or: machines) and their direct interactions and contexts (Kleinherenbrink 2015, 5). If we fail to situate an entity properly, and do not sufficiently address its specific interactions and contexts, we reduce the entity to an a-priori, general notion through our very interaction with it — a process in which we reduce the ‘part’ to the pre-existing, overarching ‘whole’, from the very start.

2.3.2 *Every (desiring) machine is a (sub)machine: on ‘wholes’ and ‘parts’*

If everything is a machine, then both the post-industrial ruin and the planned urban environment are machines. The idea that they are both machines suggests that they are both constantly being inscribed by various entities, and are also constantly inscribing other entities themselves. As machines, these entities are assemblages of various parts, and these parts also function as machines themselves (because *everything* is a machine). The process of inscription between entities thus happens both *between* ‘whole’ entities and *within* ‘whole’ entities. A city exists as a part of, for example, a municipality, but also consists of parts itself, such as neighbourhoods and districts. Neighbourhoods and districts form parts of the city, but are also ‘separate’ machines themselves. As such, every entity is always both at the same time a machine, and a ‘sub-machine’. In discussing appropriate ways of how to ‘read’ the city, Lefebvre accordingly states: “I can separate [the city]

neither from what it contains nor from what contains it, by isolating it as a complete system” (Lefebvre 1996, 102). The city-machine is not an autonomous being and should not be treated as such. It is an assemblage of parts, which is situated within a bigger network of parts. As such, Lefebvre argues that: “[A]t best, the city constitutes a sub-system, a sub-whole” (Lefebvre 1996, 102). Similarly to Deleuze and Guattari, Lefebvre argues for a situated, anti-transcendental approach, that does not cut an entity off from the network of which it is part, or reduce it to it. In arguing that the city is a ‘sub-system’ at best, he suggests that the city is a system itself, but is also always part of a system. He argues that the current organization of the city cannot be isolated as a complete system, or framed as if it tells the entire story. In chapter one, I argued that this is exactly what happens in dominant urban planning strategies that construct the city as a Whole. Now we are still left wondering: what is problematic about isolating the city, or parts of the city, as a complete system? I argue that the construction of the city as a Whole is problematic, because it is the result of a too one-dimensional approach to (public, lived) space, and it gives us a false understanding of this complex system. In the next segment, I argue that the Whole city is the product of a method that reproduces knowledge through extrapolation, and does not invite enough diversity and complexity into its process. I then go on to discuss how this forceful or artificial construction of the city as a Whole rests upon the structural denial of social and temporal dimensions of the space itself and of the entities in that space.

2.4 The city as a Whole as a fallacy of Reason: on the paralogism of extrapolation

Deleuze and Guattari’s machine ontology states that new entities arise when machines enter into connection with other machines, and thus have their own and the other’s assemblage changed. However, the process of entering into a connection with another machine is never flawless. Influenced by German philosopher Immanuel Kant, Deleuze and Guattari argue that, upon approaching another entity, ‘transmission errors’, ‘translation errors’ or ‘logical fallacies’ are bound to occur (Holland 1999, 25). These fallacies are also called ‘paralogisms’, or more specifically ‘paralogisms of Reason’. In his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* Kant states that: “[A] fallacy of this kind will have its ground in the nature of human reason, and will bring with it an unavoidable, although not insoluble, illusion” (Kant 1998, 411). Paralogisms of Reason are fallacies that inevitably occur in our way of thinking. They are unavoidable, because they are ingrained in our human reason. Kant also states here that these paralogisms cause (transcendental) illusions to arise. Although these illusions are unavoidable, they can be solved somehow. Where Kant discusses the paralogisms of Reason and examines the human way of creating knowledge — of approaching the world

intellectually — Deleuze and Guattari take this approach to a more practical or material level. They discuss the fallacies that occur in processes of desiring-production. They outline five ‘paralogisms of desire’, which pertain to both our intellectual and our practical, material and embodied encounters with things. I only discuss one of these paralogisms here: the paralogism of extrapolation.

2.4.1 Faulty machines, faulty reasoning

The paralogism of extrapolation occurs as the result of a faulty interaction between two or more machines (Holland 1999, 45). An interaction that is respectful to the complex and fluid nature of an entity is open, so that one does not guide the entity in a predetermined direction. The paralogism of extrapolation occurs when one fails to do so. In this process, entities that are in fact polyvocal and nomadic, are forced to take on a fixed and already-existing form and function. As such, an entity gets reduced to an a priori structure, and other options are excluded from the start. The paralogism of extrapolation forces nomadic, polyvocal entities to stay in one place, like “pieces to a puzzle belonging not to any one puzzle but to many, . . . forcibly made to fit together” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 57). Desire constructs entities as such through its very functioning. The adverb ‘forcibly’ is significant here. The idea that a coherent Whole can only be constituted and kept together *by force* (of desire) is a central thought in Deleuze and Guattari’s machine ontology. It illustrates their claim that nothing is naturally or inherently orderly. It suggests that, in order to create and maintain order, one needs to put in effort.

Deleuze and Guattari describe the paralogism of extrapolation as “a properly analytical fallacy . . . that consists in passing from the detachable partial object to the position of a complete object as the thing detached” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 77). The paralogism of extrapolation thus occurs when we take partial objects and treat them as totalities, or complete objects. It is a process in which we forget the rich multiplicities of entities and treat the way entities currently appear to us as the way they *are* and *should be*. It is the action of reducing an entity to its already existing form and function, or treating it according to what it presently is or seems to be, and thereby cutting it loose from its other possible manifestations (Holland 1999, 45). It is the action of reducing the parts of the machine to the machine as a Whole, or vice versa.

In *Right to the City* (1968), Lefebvre discusses a similar process of faulty reasoning, in which partial objects get transcended to full bodies. Like Deleuze and Guattari, he speaks of extrapolation as a way of reasoning. He describes it as a logic that makes a “passage (leap), from the partial to the whole, from the elementary to the total” (Lefebvre 1966, 98). According to

Lefebvre, this is the logic that urban planning ideologies and practices work with. In *Right to the City*, he describes urban planning as a doctrine that functions through “interpreting partial knowledge, justifying its application and raising these (by extrapolation) to a poorly based or legitimated totality” (Lefebvre 1996, 97). To extrapolate means to draw a conclusion about some future or hypothetical situation, based on already existing data that one perceived (OED 2015). Another word for extrapolation is ‘deduction’, which is defined as: “drawing a conclusion from a principle already known or assumed; spec. in Logic, inference by reasoning from generals to particulars” (OED 20150). As such, the method of extrapolation or deduction in logic works in a similar fashion as the paralogism of extrapolation outlined by Deleuze and Guattari. However, there is one significant distinction. The process of ‘deduction’ or ‘extrapolation’ in logic is defined a one-way inference from generals to particulars. Deleuze and Guattari’s paralogism of extrapolation works in two directions: it refers to both the reduction from ‘parts’ to ‘wholes’ and from ‘wholes’ to ‘parts’.

As a process of reason and logic, the method of deduction or extrapolation is often considered a method that produces ‘truths’. Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921) is a case in point. In this essay, Wittgenstein defines logic as a method in which process and result are equivalent. He states that: “We prove a logical proposition by creating it out of other logical propositions” (Wittgenstein 2010, 81). Therefore, he argues, there can never be surprising results when employing the method of logic (Wittgenstein 2010, 81). Wittgenstein describes this as “the only strictly correct method,” which produces unconditional truths (Wittgenstein 2010, 90). However, he also states that the propositions of logic are ‘tautologies’ and that, therefore, they are insignificant (Wittgenstein 2010, 76-77).

2.4.2 *The propositions of Reason as tautologies*

The term ‘tautology’ is used in rhetoric to refer to statements that are in themselves redundant, such as “unsolved mystery” or “added bonus” (Philosophy Index, 2015). A mystery is inherently unsolved and a bonus is per definition something that is added to an already existing amount. It is rhetorically unnecessary to mention these adjectives, because their content is already present in the noun they belong to. In popular use, tautologies are often used to emphasise certain qualities. However, in rhetoric, for example in debates, tautologies are generally regarded fallacies: in this context, they are considered insufficient arguments that inadequately verify a statement by merely repeating its own premises.

In logic, the term tautology has a different meaning, connotation and evaluation. Here, a tautology is a formula that is always true on any valuation or interpretation of its terms (Philosophy Index, 2015). Wittgenstein was a philosopher of both logic and language. His adaptation of the term ‘tautology’, and his understanding of the role tautologies play in the formation of logical knowledge, was clearly influenced by both realms. He uses both the connotations of the term ‘tautology’ as used in logic and as used in rhetoric. Wittgenstein states that: “A tautology follows from all propositions: it says nothing” (Wittgenstein 2010, 58). And he argues that: “The propositions of logic are tautologies. The propositions of logic therefore say nothing. (They are the analytical propositions)” (Wittgenstein 2010, 76-77). Wittgenstein thus uses the definition of ‘tautology’ as used in the tradition of logic, in stating that the method of logic, as a method producing tautologies, produces results that are unconditionally true. He uses the definition as used in rhetoric, in stating that the propositions of logic, as tautologies, are insignificant.

These assertions on the workings of the method of logic are relevant to my argument that urban planning practices, and the construction of Whole cities, result from a flawed process of reasoning, and generate transcendental illusions. Wittgenstein’s arguments resonate with Lefebvre’s depiction of urban planning as an ideology that raises partial knowledge to a poorly based or legitimated totality through extrapolation (Lefebvre 1996, 97). As tautologies, the propositions of logic derive pre-existing knowledge from already existing systems and describe their outcomes. As merely analytical propositions, they only report on already existing worlds. As such, the method of logic, as a method that creates tautologies through extrapolation, is a method that does not produce new knowledges, but merely reproduces and perpetuates already existing systems as norms.

Wittgenstein’s perspective on the method of logic, as outlined in his *Tractatus*, has a lot in common with Lefebvre’s critique of Rationalism as an ideology that shapes our appropriation of the city. Lefebvre describes rationalism, or the method of logic, as an ideology that claims to extract from its own analyses the aim pursued by these analyses (Lefebvre 1996, 82). As such, both Wittgenstein and Lefebvre argue that the method of logic is a method in which process and result are equivalent. However, where Wittgenstein sees this as a positive thing, in that it creates observations that are supposedly always ‘true’, Lefebvre shows us the problematic effect of this method, in foregrounding that it creates a poorly legitimated and false idea of totalities.

2.4.3 The ‘Oude Kaart’ report as a tautology

The previous examination of the method of logic as a method that creates tautologies through extrapolation sheds an interesting light on the method of research of the ‘Oude Kaart van

Nederland' project that I discussed in chapter one. From the former, we can argue that the paralogism of extrapolation has occurred in the research of the 'Oude Kaart' project. As I argued in chapter one, the research of the 'Oude Kaart' project was based on a priori ideas. The method of research caused an already existing ideology of the city to be re-constructed. The research largely consisted of one homogenous group, the DSL foundation, conducting interviews with local governments and welfare and heritage organisations, which are similarly homogenous groups of people sharing similar ideas on spatial organisation. The unanimous outcome of this research — the idea that vacancy in Dutch cities needs to be avoided and prevented because it causes a degradation of our living environment — came from the operation or the method of research itself and was thus guided in a pre-meditated direction from the start. Deleuze and Guattari argue that: "Only what is not produced in the same way it functions has a meaning, and also a purpose, an intention" (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 328). Evidently, the 'Oude Kaart' project was produced in the same way it functions. As such, it did not invite enough complexity and heterogeneity into its process and merely reproduced a notion of the city that was already present in the minds and behaviours of the researchers before they started on it. The research did not create any new knowledges on spatial organisations, but simply reproduced already existing ideologies. We can therefore conclude that the 'Oude Kaart' project did indeed raise partial knowledges to poorly based or legitimated totalities through extrapolation. The research then turns out to be a tautology and its results essentially insignificant.

2.5 Keeping up appearances: planned space as socially and temporally clean

As we have seen in our discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of machines, an object is never used in its totality: its multiple possible functions are never exhausted by its current organisation. As such, an object is always a *partial* object. We have also seen that desiring-production, which is subject to the paralogism of extrapolation, forcibly keeps polyvocal and nomadic entities in a fixed place and presents them as complete, whole, rational entities. Deleuze and Guattari argue that our rational interaction with things says more about ourselves than about the things we interact with. Our uses of general models, or 'molar functionalism', they argue "imply precisely the specific conditions that separate their own production from their distinct product" (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 328). Nothing has a fixed place in nature, but often things are kept in place by the rational and normative way we interact with them. We artificially create distinct entities, by cutting them off from the multiple relations they are involved in and superimposing a general model onto them. Molar functionalisms, such as the ideology and practice of the Whole

city, thus do not function by realising a pre-existing reality, or a true original model. The ideology of the Whole city is itself a fabrication, and it forms precisely the condition that ‘justifies’ its own production or renders it logical. It is a self-perpetuating mechanism, which ‘proves’ or produces a ‘logical’ proposition by creating it out of other ‘logical’ propositions. In this process, multiple options are excluded from the very start, only through the method that is used. In framing the Whole city as the only possible or only natural city, any other type of organisation is rendered impossible or unnatural. As such, Lefebvre argues that: “[T]he city as a whole [is] the most expanded isotopy, embracing others, or rather, superimposing itself over others” (Lefebvre ..).

Deleuze and Guattari teach us that, if we want to avoid such structural reduction of entities, we should not examine them as products, but as processes. We should not look at they way they presently are, but at they ways in which they became what they are, and the ways in which they are currently still involved in processes of becoming. In order to do this, we should not examine the entity as an isolated object. We should look at its context, at the entities it is networked together with. Along these lines, Deleuze and Guattari argue that: “Desiring-machines . . . represent nothing, signify nothing, mean nothing, and are exactly what one makes of them, what is made with them, what they make themselves” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 328). In and of itself an entity does not mean anything, it is the entities it makes and breaks connections with that inscribe an entity with meaning. Therefore, an entity should never be examined as an autonomous, complete unit, but rather as a set of multiple relations.

2.5.1. ‘Things’ as social relations

Bill Brown’s Thing Theory is helpful in examining the ontological structure of entities, in particular inanimate things, as aggregates of social relations. In his Thing Theory, Brown makes a distinction between ‘objects’ and ‘things’. An object is a normatively functioning entity, and a thing is an object that no longer functions ‘properly’ or according to the normative uses attributed to it. Every entity can both be an object and a thing, depending in how it is used. As such, ‘thingness’ is not an essential characteristic of an entity, but rather an effect of a social interaction. It is a fluid, changeable quality, which can come and go as the object falls in and out of normative use. Brown explains this as follows:

“We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us . . . The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human

subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation” (Brown 2001, 4).

Like Deleuze and Guattari, Brown argues that both things and objects are not essential, but rather socially constructed entities, shaped by particular subject-object relations. Like Deleuzoguattarian desiring-machines, Brownian things consist of their relations to other objects: they are relational from the outset and throughout. Brown distinguishes between objects and things based on the way the entity is generally made sense of by humans using, as either a logical tools or an illogical thing. He talks of entities that are *specified* and entities that are *unspecified*, and he examines what consequences this (lack of) inscription has for the entity in question.

A Brownian ‘thing’ is an *unspecified thing*. Brown’s understanding of unspecified things is similar to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of ‘deterritorialised partial-objects’: they used to be part of another assemblage, one which functioned as a seemingly complete whole and according to social expectations, but somehow they got disconnected from this normative assemblage and have formed a new, unknown, unspecified (or: not yet known, not yet specified) assemblage. Brown argues that this loss or lack of specific utilitarian function has significant consequences for the entity on an ontological level, because: “Released from the bond of being equipment, sustained outside the irreversibility of technological history, the object becomes something else” (Brown 2001, 15). When an object is no longer used as a specific tool — when we do not know what to do with it anymore, or do not know what to do with it yet — an object becomes a ‘thing’. As such, ‘the story of objects asserting themselves as things is the story of a changed relation to the human subject’ (Brown 2001, 4). As the object itself becomes something else as soon as the (human) relation to it changes, we can conclude that the object itself essentially relational.

Brown refers to ‘objects’ as *specified things*. Some examples he mentions are: doorknobs, figs, crates, blackberries, stoves and water (Brown 2001, 3). These are all things that have been given a specific use in our human appropriation of them. The thing itself is perpetuated by that normative use: a doorknob will remain a doorknob as long as we use it as such. Through a specific and singular use a round metal thing, which in itself offers multiple possibilities of use, can thus be turned into an object, its multiple possible functions reduced to that of a doorknob. Brown’s understanding of objects is similar to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of seemingly whole objects, or seemingly complete machines: they are things that have been assigned a specific use and therefore they appear to us and are treated by us as complete, finished objects.

If we expand Brown’s definition of a specified object with Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology of machines, we can argue that, as (partial) objects are essentially multiple and can never be used in

their totality, ‘specified objects’ are *temporal* crystallisations of ongoing processes of becoming. They are things that have temporarily taken on a roll that makes sense to us. They are multiple, polyvocal assemblages that have been specified to take on a singular form and function, so that we can use them as equipment. However, as the singular manifestation in which a specified object appears to us is never its only possible form and function, an object can and will constantly transform. Brown states that: “[H]owever materially stable objects may seem, they are, let us say, different things in different scenes” (Brown 2001, 9). As an object makes and breaks connections with other entities and falls in and out of (normative) use, it can and will eventually change into something else — and when this happens, its ‘thingness’ might (re-)appear.

2.5.2 Invisible black boxes: things taken for granted

Brown states that the thingness of objects appears only through chance interruptions, when our habitual interaction with objects gets interrupted or suspended through an external intervention. According to Brown, things make their presence and power known to us in sudden, unexpected moments, when:

“[Y]ou cut your finger on a sheet of paper, you trip over some toy, you get bopped on the head by a falling nut. These are occasions outside the scene of phenomenological attention that nonetheless teach you that you’re ‘caught up in things’ and that the ‘body is a thing among things.’ They are occasions of contingency — the chance interruption — that disclose a physicality of things” (Brown 2001, 4).

Things become quite immediately clear to us when they hit us in the face or bop us on the head. To the contrary, the everyday items we interact with, like the buildings we live in, the furniture we sit on and the computers we work on, generally function like we expect them to function. In their smooth functioning and discrete flawlessness, it is easy to forget their actual presence. As such, these smoothly functioning utilitarian machines operate as ‘black boxes’.

Although the term ‘blackboxing’ is commonly used in science studies, it is also applicable and illustrative to how we interact with our everyday, material environment. French sociologist and philosopher Bruno Latour describes the social process of blackboxing as “the way scientific and technical work is made invisible by its own success” (Latour 1999, 304). He explains this as follows:

“When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become” (Latour 1999, 304).

The same goes for our built environment. Our cities are cleaned and maintained every day, and thus made to function ‘properly’. As long as they function like we expect them to function, and look like we expect them to look, one is not directly urged to think about why and how they function this way. When the ‘city-machine’ runs smoothly, and does not interrupt our habitual way of using it and navigating through it, we just go about our business as usual. The city then appears to us as a black box, whose inner workings remain hidden and are taken for granted. We might then not sufficiently recognise that the current organisation of the Whole city is a construction.

2.5.3 Black boxes and transcendental illusions

At first instance it seems quite obvious that the modern, Western city centre as we know it, is constructed. We know that the buildings that furnish our urban environment are designed, built and maintained by people. However, once a building has been built, processes of human intervention and ordering are often obscured, masked, tucked away or hidden. Maintenance and preservation of buildings often does not take place for everyone to see. In most buildings, it generally seems to be done before and after opening hours. I argue that this might cause us to forget that a building’s process of becoming continues after the last brick has been placed. In hiding the work that goes into its maintenance, the fixed appearance of a building is presented as a natural phenomenon. A short reflection on my experience of our university building will illustrate this last point.

When I arrive at university in the morning, everything is clean and neatly organised. I know that the previous day the building was filled with people working, reading, writing, eating and socialising. I also know that these social acts have inevitably changed the appearance and organisation of the building and the things in it: floors got dirty from people dragging in dirt from outside to inside, food spillages stained the tables at the Refter, cigarette buds filled up ashtrays, books got left outside of their assigned cabinets, people lost stuff and left it behind. Yet, no traces of these interactions remain until the next day. When I arrive on campus in the morning, everything looks spotless, as if all yesterday’s events had never happened, as if no one had been there before me. Although it makes sense for its functionality and durability that the university building gets cleaned and restored every day, I argue that the fact *that* this happens and *the way in which* it happens causes ‘transcendental illusions’ to arise.

Apart from the people cleaning the toilets, I never see anyone tending the university grounds. It could be for practical reasons that maintenance is done before and after opening hours of the university: as no students and staff members are walking around then, the maintenance workers can do their jobs more easily and effectively. However, as they generally do not take place for us to see, continual processes of restoration are largely rendered invisible and taken for granted. This has significant implications for our perception of the university building. Constant maintenance and preservation strategies create a fixed, uniform notion, identity or appearance of our university building. Daily acts of restoration perpetually bring the university building back to the state in which it was before. In this process, our university building gets a singular representative, or homogenous signifier, which is (re)constructed every day. The fact that the processes that construct this fixed notion remain largely hidden creates the impression that this is the *natural* state of the building. If we cannot see them, it is easy to forget that they are even there. One then forgets that the university is ‘artificially’ constructed as a seemingly fixed entity through processes of maintenance and preservation, and that the way the building appears to us everyday, is not just what the university *is* in and of itself. As such, our understanding of the Erasmus-building as a fixed, constant entity, is a transcendental illusion — and the continual maintenance efforts that keep on bringing the university back to its ‘original’ form are ways of keeping up or ensuring this illusion.

We now know that every entity is in fact a changeable assemblage of multiple social relations, which is constantly (re)constructed as a logical and functional ‘black box’ through our appropriation of it. Now that we know that this black box exists, we can begin to pry it open. We can now begin to see that, by constructing things as logical and functional units, we cut them off from their social and temporal relations.

2.5.4 Planned space as temporally clean

The Erasmus building, as an entity-in-time, ‘naturally’ transforms, because people, animals, plants and the weather make and break connections with it every day and leave their traces on its surface and structure. However, if we look at the two pictures below, we can see that the Erasmus building today still basically looks the same as it did forty years ago. We seem to have a fixed notion of the university building that we feel needs to be maintained over time — a notion that probably originates from when the building was first designed and built in 1974. Contrary to what the two pictures of the Erasmus building would suggest, philosopher Dylan Trigg states that: “Place moves on, necessarily” (Trigg 2006, 122). With Trigg and Deleuze and Guattari, I argue that the inevitable tendency of a place to ‘move on’ is obstructed in planned space. The Erasmus building has not

looked the same for forty years because it is a fixed entity, but because it is forcefully kept in place through maintenance and preservation strategies. This forcefully keeping in place of the building means a denial of time. In order to better understand why maintenance and preservation strategies entail a denial of time, we can turn back to Deleuze and Guattari's notions of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.

As explained earlier in this chapter, the process of becoming of all entities in reality is driven by a constant movement of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. This process of becoming takes place in planned space as much as it does in the post-industrial ruin. However, where the post-industrial ruin is relatively free to transform in multiple, unguided directions — because it is not under the ruling hand of urban planning strategies anymore — the processes of becoming of planned spaces are constantly erased and directed back to where they came from. An important characteristic of the process of becoming is that, when deterritorialisation takes place, reterritorialisation *necessarily* follows. When an entity disconnects from one spot in the network, it necessarily settles in another place in the network again, because “one machine is always coupled with another” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 16).

The fact that reterritorialisation takes place, is also the reason that we can even witness the process of deterritorialisation. Deleuze and Guattari state that: “The movements of deterritorialisation can never be grasped in itself, one can only grasp its *indices* in relation to the territorial representations” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 360). An index is a sign that stands in direct, physical relation to the thing in reality it refers to (Peirce 1991, 183). An indexical sign refers to or demonstrates a thing in reality: like smoke indicating fire, or your footprints in the snow indicating your travelled route. In the Deleuzoguattarian machine-network, the process of reterritorialisation is the indexical sign, which proves that the process of deterritorialisation has taken place. We can only perceive the new situation when something has reterritorialised after deterritorialising. We can then see, hear, smell or feel the difference of the new situation compared to the old one, and conclude that a shift has occurred. This is thus always a reflective, afterward realisation.

When comparing the two pictures of the Erasmus-building, we can see that the building looked exactly the same in 1975 as it does today. We then realise that the processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation that have taken place so many times over all those years, have continually been effaced. Traces (non)human interactions have left on the building's surface over time, like rust on metal, cracks in the concrete, stains on carpets, trash on floors, moss on the outer walls, dirt on the windows and paint coming off, have continually been erased or tidied up. The building has been kept in a similar state for decades and therefore it looks as if it has not moved along with time. This analysis of the particular regulation of processes of deterritorialisation and

reterritorialisation at work in the Erasmus building, shows how Deleuze and Guattari's machine ontology serves to support Dylan Trigg's argument that: "Capitalist space is temporally clean. The lack of alterity entails an absence of history" (Trigg 2006, 125). Constantly cleaning and fixing a building means constantly erasing the 'traces of difference' that have been left on its surface and structure over time. The building then looks as though it is untouched by time and gains a sense of 'temporal solidity' (Trigg 2006, 207). Trigg and Deleuze and Guattari remind us of the fact that, just because we generally cannot see traces of difference within the structure of the Erasmus building, it does not mean that they are not there. If we uncover and examine the processes of maintenance and reservation through which the building is (re)constructed, we discover that its 'temporal solidity' is not a natural given, but a highly regulated phenomenon.

2.4.5 Planned space as socially clean

The fact that the Erasmus-building has a fixed signifier means that the way of being — or rather the way of becoming — of the buildings itself gets suppressed. In the former, I have discussed this as a structural reduction of the building as an entity-in-time. I argued that maintenance and preservation practices constantly direct the buildings' processes of becoming back to a form and function that was designed and built in 1975. The building is thus locked in time and not allowed to move along with it. However, as becoming is not only a process that takes place in time, but also a process that takes place in relation to other entities, a structural reduction of the processes becoming of a building also means a structural denial of the relational nature of the building. I therefore argue that planned space (or, as Trigg calls it, 'capitalist space') is not only 'temporally clean', it is also 'socially clean'. As we will see, these two phenomena go hand in hand in the construction of spatial solidity.

In his book *The Aesthetics of Decay: Nothingness, Nostalgia and the Absence of Reason* (2006), Trigg argues that the lack of alterity entails an absence of history (Trigg 2006, 125). However, we can also re-arrange this argument and state that an absence of history entails a lack of alterity. This slight re-arrangement of the argument reveals the significant 'other side' to Trigg's original argument. Trigg states that space is being constructed to look 'temporally clean' by erasing differences. His concern lies with the fact that planned environments give us a false understanding of space and its relation to time. He, for example, examines nostalgia as a phenomenon that results from a false understanding of space as being fixed in time. If one leaves one's mother country with a certain image of that place in mind, and upon return finds that place in a different state, one is stuck with a feeling of nostalgia: a longing for a past that is unreachable. This feeling, Trigg argues,

occurs when we do not recognise the fact that ‘place moves on, necessarily’ and thus do not have a sufficient ontological understanding of space as an entity that transforms over time (Trigg 2006, 122). Differently, my concern lies with the fact that planned environments give us a false understanding of the relational nature of things-in-space. Rather than emphasising the ‘absence of history’, I want to emphasise the ‘absence of alterity’. I want to emphasise that a building can only be made to look the same over time, as though it is unaffected by time, if differences are structurally being removed. Rather than understanding the structural removal of differences as a method to create temporal solidity, I understand the creation and positive evaluation of temporal solidity in our organisation of urban space as a strategic method that justifies the structural removal of differences. The construction of a fixed space necessarily rests upon the structural *exclusion* of non-normative relations that might change the normative structure of the building, or on the structural *denial* of these non-normative relations by erasing the traces they leave behind.

Trigg argues that: “Preserving temporal dimensions creates a mutation whereby dwelling is stifled” (Trigg 2006, 207). If we look at the two images of the Erasmus building depicted below, we can clearly see that the dwelling of the building itself is stifled, or fixed to take on a solid form and function, when subjected to maintenance strategies. Our normative notion of the building is maintained by erasing traces that change its current structure. However, it is also maintained by preventing such traces from ever materialising in the first place, by regulating the interactions that take place with and within the building. As such, treating the Erasmus building according to a fixed notion means excluding multiple ways of being in that space that are not considered ‘normal’ or ‘decent’. It reduces the ways of being of entities in that space to merely the ways that are considered appropriate.

Our normative notion of the Erasmus building, for example, dictates that we walk the stairs to move down a floor rather than abseil from the outer walls; that we do not (spray)paint walls, floors or other surfaces; and that we use the doors, and not the windows, to leave the building. All these ‘don’ts’ of interacting with the Erasmus building are practically possible, realisable actions. We do not do these things, because ‘common sense’ or ‘common decency’ prevent us from it. Moreover, we do not do these things, because we have a fixed notion of what the Erasmus building is, and we know these non-normative interactions would change the current structure of the building. We could thus say that the process of becoming of the Erasmus building, its nomadic and polyvocal ‘force of life’, is suppressed and reduced to sameness through our very interaction with it. At the same time, the solid form and function of the Erasmus building, constructed in this process, only perpetuates our normative interaction with it. We can thus conclude that, in planned space, the

multiple process of becoming of both the building itself and the entities interacting with it get reduced and ‘stifled’.



The Erasmus-building in 1975



The Erasmus-building in 2011

2.5.6 Planned space as ‘unreal’ space

As we have seen, spatial solidity goes hand in hand temporal solidity and social solidity. The denial of temporal and social relations that occurs in planned space has significant consequences for our understanding of the ‘nature’ of place and of ourselves as entities within that place. For some reason, we often believe that things need to be true to their nature. The urban planning documents I have discussed in chapter one all argue for a neatly planned and well-maintained city. It is suggested that a city needs to have a matching image, use and meaning, so as to form coherent, natural whole (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu 2011, 17). In order to create and maintain this desirable identity of the city, different-looking buildings, such as urban ruins, are removed: either through demolition or redesignation. Demolition and redesignation of abandoned and decaying structures, then, are strategies employed to keep the city as it is ‘supposed’ to be, or strategies to secure its supposed ‘natural’ structure and identity. It is presumed that this supposed

‘natural’ state of the city ensures the best possible quality of the environment, and by extension the best possible quality of life for the inhabitants of that environment (Harmsen 2008, 19).

With Trigg, and Deleuze and Guattari, we can argue that the supposed ‘nature’ of urban space as represented in these documents, is not ‘natural’ at all, but rather a naturalised, normative construction. Trigg claims that place is not at all a coherent, fixed whole. In line with Deleuze and Guattari, he argues that place necessarily moves on and transforms (Trigg 2006, 122). When we deny or cover up the natural movement of place, we “become entangled with an unreal place” (Trigg 2006, 122). The Whole city created by maintenance and preservation strategies is such an ‘unreal place’, because it structurally denies temporal and social relations that are essentially part of that place. Now that we have established that the city that is constructed through urban planning strategies is not ‘natural’ at all, these strategies can no longer be framed as projects that protect or secure the ‘natural’ structure and identity of the city. The argument that the supposed ‘natural’ state of the city ensures the best possible quality of the environment, and by extension the best possible quality of life for the inhabitants of that environment (Harmsen 2008, 19), can then also no longer be defended.

Rather than stating that the Whole city provides the most desirable space for the human body to reside in, I agree with Trigg that it creates a “disunity between dwelling and place” and a “void between being and the environment in which being takes place” (Trigg 2006, 7). Since planned space is a space in which temporal and social relations are structurally prevented or erased, they are spaces that deny the machinic processes that shape that space and every entity in it. Trigg states that our standard way of living — a way of living in which being and the environment in which being takes place clash — is “ascertained by it[s] autonomy from the organic” (Trigg 2006, 207). I do not want to speak of the ‘organic’ and the ‘inorganic’ too much.³¹ These notions are too complex and too broad to discuss here. I will only say that I do not understand them as binary oppositions, but rather as interconnected Deleuzoguattarian machines: as co-constitutions, or ‘intra-acting’ phenomena.³² From this perspective, I then would not know what ‘the organic’ is, so I do not want to repeat Trigg in agreeing that “[t]he standardized form of living is now ascertained by it[s] autonomy from the organic” (Trigg 2006, 207). I would rather state that our standard way of

³¹ I do however work from the understanding that everything is a machine and will therefore speak of the ‘machinic *nature*’ of reality.

³² ‘Intra-action’ is a term coined by Karen Barad in her account of posthumanism, which she calls ‘agential realism’. In contrast to the usual ‘interaction’, which presumes the prior existence of independent entities, the notion of ‘intra-action’ emphasises the perpetual connectedness of things as networks of interior and exterior relations. It states that things do not preexist relations, that they are relational from the start (Barad 2003, 815).

living is ascertained by its autonomy. We are trained to see ourselves as autonomous individuals, living in a ‘civilised’ world that is furnished with rationally organised cities, buildings, products, populations, etcetera. Our strong belief in the power of ‘maakbaarheid’ or ‘malleability’ has us convinced that we can and should control ourselves and the entities around us. It has us convinced that we are sovereign beings, that the human subject is at the centre of the universe and that Other, (non)human things are ‘things-for-us’ to use, shape and destroy. This sovereign, autonomous attitude — often contributed to rationalism, humanism and neoliberalism — denies the machinic forces at work in the world. It hides the fact that “everything is a machine”, that life is “[t]he continual whirr of machines” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 12). In their constant denial of our relationship to them, rigidly planned places are places in which we constantly have to disavow the machinic, connected nature of both ourselves and the world around us. Planned places pretend to be autonomous and force us to pretend to be autonomous too. They are places in which we constantly have to keep up the appearance of ourselves, and our carefully created world, as sovereign beings.

The planned city we live in, shaped by neoliberal ideologies of utilitarianism and clean, orderly and rational aesthetics, thus forces us humans — desiring-machines and creatures of becoming throughout — to constantly be in a place of fixed being. Such overly regulated places might therefore be hard to identify with and might feel insignificant, devoid of meaning, or life. Human geographer and urban explorer Bradley Garrett writes on the oppressive, or limiting implications of tightly maintained and preserved ruins and argues that: “[T]he regulation of ruins often precludes the possibility of writing our own stories into them” (Garrett 2014, 58-59). Ruins that are supposed to retain a fixed form and function — such as the ruins that we can go see in museums or the ruins that are preserved as heritage — only allow for specific uses: namely, uses that do not disturb or alter their current form and function. Usually they are under surveillance and accompanied by ‘do not touch’ signs. We are only allowed to observe them from a safe distance, so that they may stay exactly the same for the next visitor. Garrett argues that: “[S]omething is missing . . . where material and memorial trajectory is regulated. We cannot see ourselves written into the futures of these places because we are not allowed to inscribe ourselves there” (Garrett 2014, 53). As Trigg demonstrates, this does not only go for ruins we maintain and preserve as heritage: it also goes for the planned cities, or ‘capitalist spaces’ we live in. Planned buildings are places that deny their social and temporal connection to their environment. They deny their connection to us as urban dwellers, as the traces we leave behind on their surface are structurally being removed. The majority of the traces we leave behind on the urban fabric are ‘cleaned up’ every day. Our traces — the indices or signs that prove that an interaction has taken place between us and our built environment — are generally considered indications of the cluttering or degradation of our built

environment, and are thus removed or cleared away. As such, the planned city keeps us at a distance. In a city that is structurally (re)constructed according to a fixed notion, it is hard to imagine ourselves as part of its life and future. Consequently, the place might feel alien and unrelated to us.

2.6 Lifting the veil of rational order: the post-industrial ruin as an index of becoming

Contrary to planned space, which presents itself as temporally (and socially) solid, Trigg argues that: “The peculiarity of decayed place is that it does not partake of this solidity. As with the temporal conditions of dwelling, the image of solidity alters in time” (Trigg 207). Unlike planned space, the urban ruin actively displays its machinic nature and the social and temporal relations that structure it. With the machine-ontology of Deleuze and Guattari, we can argue that, in the ruin, processes of becoming are actively displayed, rather than covered up or constantly brought back to their previous state. Because the post-industrial ruin is deemed worthless and not much effort is put in to fix its form, function and meaning anymore, the building is relatively free to transform and move on. When the parts of a post-industrial ruin deterritorialise and reterritorialise into a new formation, this process is not revised or tidied up by normative maintenance and preservation strategies. Therefore, the post-industrial ruin is the perfect example of an ‘index of deterritorialisation’: here, one can literally notice transformations every day. In the ruin, traces of interactions are left on its structure for us to see, hear, smell or feel. We can perceive the new situation that this partial-object deterritorialised to, because it is distinctly different from its old situation. It is exactly in its capacity of index of deterritorialisation that the ruin shows its ontological value. As an index of the process of becoming, the post-industrial ruin serves as a lens through which to reflect on the life-producing force that is desiring-production.

As I discussed before, Brown argues that it is through chance interruptions that we can discover the ‘thingness’ of the objects around us. Bruno Latour’s Actor Network Theory, which has also been described as an empirical version of Deleuze and Guattari’s nomadic philosophy, takes a more active and affirmative approach and provides the subject with a little bit more agency (Law 2009, 145). Latour argues that excavating the fluid processes of becoming that underlie seemingly fixed objects is something that we can choose or learn to do. He calls it ‘opening up the black box’ and it is not necessarily something that has to be left to chance completely. A more positive and motivating approach, Actor Network Theory urges us to actively look for or *create* cracks in normative systems, instead of lingering on them once chance has brought them to our attention. It urges us to actively (and forcefully) break open black boxes ourselves.

In order to open up prevailing systems, or black boxes, Latour states that: “[I]t is important to become sensitive again to very odd types of assemblages” (Latour 2005, 248). However, this is not easy. It takes active effort to find or create cracks in prevailing assemblages and to treat seemingly fixed objects as fluid and changeable things. It takes a certain attentive attitude, a mindset in which we do not take our normal way of going about things for granted, but rather scrutinise them. It is a process of un-learning, which requires us to take a risk, to leave open the possibility of failure, and to actively try to find new combinations and surprising events (Latour 2005, 251-252). It also takes a certain openness and attentiveness towards difference, in which we actively try to get to know those odd types of assemblages, rather than immediately cast them off as weird or unnatural.

As Jane Bennett states, in order to experience the appearance of ‘thing-power’, an “anticipatory readiness” is needed (Bennett 2010, 5). We have to be open to what a thing *can* mean, and not let our interaction with a thing be limited to the normative boundaries that we have set out for it. In other words: it takes an alternative mode of looking at and interacting with objects to see them as things. One has to realise and recognise that objects can always escape from their current assemblage and be reassembled into something else. We have to give objects the chance to appear to us as things. This can only happen if we do not reduce them to pre-existing norms. Other, different, or unknown types of assemblages are extremely significant, because they show that dominant models are not all-encompassing, absolute truths. They teach us that norms are not sufficient methods with which to approach complex entities. They teach us that, as Deleuze and Guattari state, ‘all molar functionalisms are false’ (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 328) and that, instead of describing an entity, such general methods rather reduce an entity to a pre-existing norm and thus forcefully and ‘artificially’ construct it as such. As discussed before, the ideology of the Whole city, is such a ‘molar functionalism’. It is a method in which the city is made to seem as a complete and coherent entity, by cutting it off from the multiple relations it is involved in and superimposing a general model onto them. As it is false and suppressive, the notion of the city as a Whole needs to be de-constructed. The post-industrial ruin, as an ‘odd assemblage’ within the urban fabric, can help us do so.

I argue that the post-industrial ruin can serve as a space that is especially suitable for experiencing the appearance of ‘thing-power’ and the productive force of different types of spatial organisation. The post-industrial ruin is a space that exists outside of the prevailing logic of the planned city centre, where a capitalist logic of utility and rapid progress shapes the physical reality. The ruin is a space where things are actually allowed to deterritorialise and reterritorialise in multiple directions. As such, the material of the ruin is an indexical sign that shows us the actual,

real life effects that non-human and non-normative human interactions, and the course of time, have on that unplanned space. Furthermore, by showing us what is usually hidden or removed, the ruin also makes us aware of our lack of inscription on the planned spaces we usually dwell in. Ruins actively show us the (usually hidden) fluid nature of ‘becoming’ of our environment, and, by extension, of ourselves. The ruin does not deny its relationship to time and the entities it makes and breaks connections with every day. As such, Trigg quite fittingly states that: “The residue of violence in the ruin, made possible because of the dynamic silence that encircles the cessation of activity, throws a distorted light on what ordered space conceals” (Trigg 2006, 136). The ruin actively shows the constructed nature of reality and shows us that entities are not autonomous, but relational — something that planned space is continually trying to conceal. In this effort, “[t]he ruin destroys artifice” (Trigg 2006, 220) and teaches us an important lesson on the ontological structure of both ourselves and our environment.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have assessed the ontological value of the post-industrial ruin with the machine-ontology of Deleuze and Guattari, the Actor-Network Theory of Bruno Latour and Bill Brown’s Thing Theory. I argued that the process of becoming — and therefore the process of desiring-production — is concealed in the planned urban environment and revealed in the post-industrial ruin. Within the machine-ontology of Deleuze and Guattari, the post-industrial ruin and the planned urban environment are ontologically the same: they are both constructed and constructing entities, they are both what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘machines’. Every entity is a machine and every machine is created by and creating processes of desire. Deleuze and Guattari see desire as the creative force of life: the driving force propelling processes of becoming. An important characteristic of desiring-production is that it arbitrarily groups parts together into a whole, and, by extrapolation, makes these contingent assemblages seem like logical, natural, coherent totalities or Wholes.

The process of becoming takes place in planned space as much as it does in the post-industrial ruin, since becoming comes natural to a place. Or, as Dylan Trigg articulates it: “Place moves on, necessarily” (Trigg 2006, 122). However, as I have argued throughout this chapter, planned and unplanned places host a significantly different kind of becoming. In planned or capitalist space, processes of becoming are strictly regulated and structured according to a fixed, a priori idea. Planned space is therefore constantly being brought back to a supposedly ‘original’ state through strategies of maintenance and preservation: a process I demonstrated with the example of

the Erasmus-building, which looks the same today as it did forty years ago. Our normative notion of the Erasmus building keeps us from interacting with it in non-normative ways, and thus only perpetuates its current structure. As I have demonstrated, this normative notion rests upon the structural denial of both temporal and social relations. It regulates and reduces the multiple and polyvocal processes of becoming of both the building and the entities interacting with it. As such, temporal solidity, social solidity and spatial solidity go hand in hand.

In this chapter, I argued that the planned, fixed, Whole city, is a fallacy of Reason and a tautology. I discussed how ideologies and practices of urban planning raise partial knowledge to a poorly based or legitimated totality through extrapolation, and thus forcefully and artificially create a fixed notion of the city as a Whole — a notion which is perpetuated by its own operation (Lefebvre 1996, 97; 82). To the contrary, the post-industrial ruin is relatively free to become in multiple, unguided directions, because it is not under the ruling hand of urban planning strategies anymore. As such, the polyvocal process of desiring-production is concealed in the planned urban environment and revealed in the post-industrial ruin. As an index of deterritorialisation, the ruin brings the active processes of transformation that take place in the production of space to the surface and leaves them for us to feel, smell, see and touch. The thus ruin perceivably manifests the processes of desiring-production, which shape reality and which are structurally covered up in our day-to-day environments. As such, the ruin “destroys artifice” and shows its ontological value (Trigg 2006, 220).

I furthermore introduced the idea that the post-industrial ruin, as an unspecific thing, demonstrates that entities are not autonomous, but rather relational. As such, the ruin serves an important ethical function in challenging our supposed human dominion over non-human Others. This idea, where the ruin is not only found different from planned space on an ontological level, but also on an ethical level, is explored further in the next chapter. This chapter discussed how the ruin obtains its ability to transform relatively freely from its lack of human intervention. This observation is the premise on which my argument for an anti-anthropocentric and anti-utilitarian ethics in chapter three is built. In chapter three, I examine the reductive, oppressive and excluding effects of planned space created by urban planning practices and ponder on what would happen if we would ‘let go’ a little and stop trying to forcefully plan the things around us as much as we do now. Taking the ruin as an Other to planned space, a place in which human organisation does *not* rule, I elaborate on the ethical function of the ruin as a space in which things are allowed to deterritorialise and reterritorialize in multiple directions.

3. An encounter with the ruin: the ruin as a fruitful ground for ethical dwelling

“Let go — It’s all right, ‘cause there’s beauty in the breakdown” (Frou Frou, Let Go, 2002).

In chapter one I discussed the practice of urban planning in the Netherlands as an ideology. I argued that the maintenance and preservation practices outlined in the ‘Oude Kaart van Nederland’ report strive for a construction of the city as a Whole, in which everything has a fixed place. As ruins do not fit within this desired urban form, they are rendered worthless and vacancy is prevented at all costs. In chapter two, I argued that continual strategies of maintenance and preservation of our urban environment hide the processes of becoming that shape our environment, in an attempt to represent the city as a fixed and complete entity and render this identity permanent and ‘natural’. In the ruin, where maintenance and preservation strategies are no longer deployed, the fluid, transformative nature of entities can be perceived more clearly and directly. I therefore argued that recognising and interacting with the ruin, rather than eliminating it over and over again, can serve a profound philosophical function: it can teach us about the processes of becoming that shape our reality. Building upon this ontological examination of planned and unplanned space, this chapter argues that interacting with the ruin might not only teach us something about the world on an ontological level, but also on an ethical level. In this chapter I will thus move from an ontology of the ruin towards an ethics of the ruin.

Lucas D. Introna, professor of Organisation, Technology and Ethics, states that: “[W]e are the beings that we are through our entanglements with things” (Introna 2009, 25). In the entanglements between humans and non-humans, things shape us as much as we shape them. Therefore, nonhuman, inanimate things need ethical consideration as much as human subjects do. With Introna, this chapter argues that we cannot just think of inanimate objects as things *for us*, as things that we can fully control. We have to start recognising our inanimate co-inhabitants as things *with us*. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Deleuze and Guattari’s machine-ontology serves well in revealing and unpacking our continual connectedness with the things around us. It proved to be a helpful tool in examining the multiple ways in which subjects and objects, connected within ‘machine-networks’, leave their imprints on each other. Now that we have uncovered this fundamental ontological structure of entities, this chapter discusses some ethical imperatives that emanate from the machinic functioning of the world. Using Ronald Bogue’s *Deleuze’s Way: Essays*

in *Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics* and Henri Lefebvre's *Right to the City*, I formulate a critique of Ian Buchanan's claim that Deleuze and Guattari's theory of desire cannot be read as an ethics. Contrary to Buchanan, I argue that Deleuze and Guattari's machine-ontology simultaneously functions as a practical ethics: one that urges us to locate, analyse and deconstruct prevailing systems of organisation, in order to uncover alternative possibilities that are generally left unrealised.

After re-reading Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of machines as an ethics, I discuss Bogue's notion of the 'encounter'. An encounter is understood as an ethically productive meeting between bodies, and I discuss the urban ruin as an especially suitable space to host such an encounter. Then, I go on to discuss Lucas D. Introna's writings on an 'ethos of letting be': an ideology that aims to move beyond the dichotomy between 'is' and 'ought', that reveals non-human matter as utterly meaningful, and that forces us humans to face our responsibility towards things. Combining Introna's 'ethos of letting be' with a re-reading of Deleuze and Guattari's machine ontology as an ethics, I move towards outlining what I call an 'ethos of letting go'. I explore how an encounter with the ruin might help us make the important shift of perspective from a transcendental, anthropocentric ethics of Reason to an anti-transcendental, non-anthropocentric 'ethos of letting go'. This change of perspective uncovers the ethical value of the urban ruin, as it turns out to be an agent that is capable of providing a much needed Other voice on spatial organisation.³³

3.1 Rereading Deleuze and Guattari's machine ontology as an ethics

As we will see, there has been some discussion on the possibility of reading Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of desiring-machines as an ethics. However, I claim that Deleuze and Guattari's machine-ontology can, and should, simultaneously be read as an ethics — and in this I am not alone. In the preface to the English edition of *Anti-Oedipus* French philosopher Michel Foucault describes this work as a book of ethics. He refers to the book as an 'Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life', and

³³ As a genuine encounter with the ruin is needed to uncover the ethical value of the ruin, we can see how this project is burdened with a certain difficulty. In her 'Cosmopolitical Proposal' feminist philosopher Isabelle Stengers deals with a similar problem. She outlines an anti-transcendental, situated, ecological philosophy, but admits that her project will only resonate with people that have already embraced such an approach. She states that: "[T]his proposal . . . can be useful to those who have already effected the "political shift" associated with political ecology, and thus learned to laugh not at theories but at the authority associated with them" (Stengers 2005, 998). Later on, she repeats: "[N]othing I put forward has the slightest meaning if those I am addressing have not already learned to shrug their shoulders at the power of theories that define them as subordinates" (Stengers 2005, 998). My project deals with a similar challenge: it will probably mainly resonate with people that have already started to see the value in anti-transcendental kinds or organisation, but it is nonetheless a project that is worth pursuing.

argues that it deals with the important question of how to “ferret out the fascism that is ingrained in our behaviour” (Foucault in Deleuze & Guattari 2013, xiii). “Being anti-oedipal,” Foucault states, “has become a life style, a way of thinking and living” (Foucault in Deleuze & Guattari 2013, xiii). This interpretation of *Anti-Oedipus* as not just an ontology, but also an ethics, is critiqued by Australian cultural theorist Ian Buchanan. In his article *Desire and Ethics*, he denies that Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology of desiring-machines can provide the basis for an ethics in their image. He argues that: “[T]here is nothing at all within Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of desire that can tell us either how we should live or how we should treat others” (Buchanan 2011, 18). Buchanan criticises several analyses that do attempt to take moral and ethical lessons from the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari and outlines two problems with regard to such a reading. First, he claims that their ontological exploration of desiring-production cannot be read as an ethics, because it would be faulty reasoning to move from how things are to how things should be. He argues that such readings make the “classic error (...) of trying to argue ‘ought’ from ‘is’” and refers to Foucault’s preface to *Anti-Oedipus* as the most “egregious” instance of such an error (Buchanan 2011, 9). He argues that:

“The fact that desire functions in the way it does is not reason enough to stipulate that that is how desire should be, or rather should be allowed to function. It would amount to saying that the only ethical position with respect to desire is one in which desire is given everything that it wants” (Buchanan 2011, 9-10).

Second, he states that it is impossible to conceive a model of ethics based on Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of desire, because “insofar as desire is thought of as an urge or impulse (whether conscious or unconscious) it exists outside of, or at least at the extreme border of the realm of rational judgement and thought” (Buchanan 2011, 10).

3.1.1 Relations, transformations, imaginations: ontological work as ethical work

The first argument Buchanan provides against reading Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology of desiring-machines as an ethics is his claim that equating the way desire functions with the way desire should function is wrong, and would mean saying that the only ethical position with respect to desiring-production is to let it roam freely and give it everything it wants (Buchanan 2011, 9-10). Contrary to what Buchanan suggests here, I argue that desiring-production comes with a considerable responsibility, of both the individual and the collective, exactly because of the way it functions

ontologically. I therefore argue that ontology and ethics should always be thought together within this framework.

If we accept Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of desiring-machines as a conceptual framework that accurately describes our world, then an ethical imperative can and should be directly derived from the workings of desire. If we know that the world is a network of desiring-machines that constitute each other, we know that much is at stake in the interactions between us and the entities that we are networked together with. Reading the world as a network of desiring-machines, then, means recognising that our position within this network matters. It means acknowledging that we need to figure out how to position ourselves within this network, and that we need to account for the ways in which our positioning influences both ourselves and (the entities in) our environments. Approached as such, a Deleuzoguattarian machine-ethics is a profoundly practical ethics. It is an ethics that should exist in direct relation to our everyday material world. It forces us to think about ourselves in relation to our environment, as assemblages that consist of, and exist as parts of, various networks. An important ethical imperative is thus not to forget the entanglements of the 'individual' in various collectives, assemblages, or networks of desiring-machines.³⁴ As this ontology teaches us that entities exist in a constant connection to others, it teaches us the ethical lesson that everything we do does not only affect us, but also all the things we are networked together with.

By emphasising our relational nature, the Deleuzoguattarian machine-ontology is simultaneously an ethics: not only because it forces us to recognise our responsibility towards others, but also because it forces us to recognise that others are essentially part of ourselves. Deleuze and Guattari's machine-ontology teaches us that all entities are essentially assemblages of various parts, which exist within in overarching networks of desiring-machines. Therefore, they are never completely autonomous. In this machinic framework, we have to think in terms of *collective* bodies, of which 'individual' bodies are (only) a part. Deleuze and Guattari's machine-ontology teaches us another moral lesson in emphasizing that 'individual' bodies never call the shots all by themselves. As such, it can indeed help to "ferret out the fascism that is ingrained in our behavior" (Foucault in Deleuze & Guattari 2013, xiii). It can help to deconstruct the rational, anthropocentric, human(ist) subject and the pedestal it has acquired. Importantly, these moral lessons are informed

³⁴ In a Deleuzoguattarian machine ethics, we do not exist alone, but always in relation to the things around us. The individual, as an autonomous entity, does not exist in this epistemology. As such, Foucault states: "What is needed is to "de-individualize" by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualization" (Foucault in Deleuze & Guattari 2013, xiv).

by the way the machinic functioning of the world works on an ontological level. Their transformative possibilities are shaped directly by the way the machinic functioning of the world enables or allows us to act. I therefore claim that, in the case of Deleuze and Guattari's machine ontology, ethics does indeed follow from ontology. Furthermore, I claim that doing ontological work is fundamentally intertwined with doing ethical work when employing Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of machines.

Deleuze and Guattari's machine-ontology teaches us that no entity has a fixed or predetermined form and function. Figuring out our position within the network, then, is not merely examining the ontological structure of ourselves and our environments. As we do not have a predestined position, doing ontological work does not mean uncovering a pre-existing world. Rather, it means being involved in imagining and creating *new* worlds. Deleuze and Guattari's machine-ontology shows us that the ways in which worlds unfold depend on the breaks and connections that take place in processes of desiring-production. Along these lines, Foucault argues that ethical questions following from a Deleuzogattarian machine ontology are "less concerned with *why* this or that than with *how* to proceed" (Foucault in Deleuze & Guattari 2013, xii). Important questions to mull over in a Deleuzogattarian ethics of desiring-machines then are: "How does one introduce desire into thought, into discourse, into action? How can and must desire deploy its forces within the political domain and grow more intense in the process of overturning the established order?" (Foucault in Deleuze & Guattari 2013, xii).

As Foucault already implies here, reading Deleuze and Guattari's machine ontology as an ethics does not mean claiming that the ethical thing to do is to give desire everything it wants. Rather, it means recognising that we have to figure out how to deploy desire. In this ethical project, desiring-production is a strategy to be employed — not a predestined faith that we have to passively let run its course. As such, I argue that an ontological understanding of the workings of desiring-production is helpful in contributing to an affirmative, inclusive and ethical unfolding of the world. In other words: if we want to envision and affect (positive) change, we have to know what kinds of breaks and connections create what kind of effects. We have to know which parts we need, and how these parts need to interact, in order to generate the effect that we are looking for. In a similar vein, Ronald Bogue states that: "The ethical question for Deleuze is not "what must we do?" but "what *can* we do?" What assemblages allow the formation of collective bodies that expand their capacities, that open new modes of affecting and *being affected*?" (Bogue 2007, 12, emphases added).

Contrary to Buchanan, I thus argue that the way desiring-production is, can indeed teach us something about the way desiring-production should be: arguing 'is' from 'ought' is not necessarily

a “classic error” (Buchanan 2011, 9). However, such arguing only works if we have the right conception of desiring-production to begin with. As this ethics focuses on questions of what we *can* do, rather than what we *should* do, it urges us to develop a profound knowledge of desiring-production as an actual system that shapes our everyday reality. We do not only need to recognise our responsibility towards the things around us, we also need to develop insights into *how* we are networked together with these things. In order to figure out how to proceed in the machine-network, and to find out how to deploy forces of desire in an ethical manner, we need to know the nature of desiring-production and the entities it creates. If we do so, we can indeed make the move from ‘is’ to ‘ought’. However, if we do not have this essential insight into the workings of desiring-production, a wrong inference can creep in, causing exclusionary transcendental illusions to arise.

3.1.2 From ‘is’ to ‘ought’

Buchanan argues that trying to argue ‘ought’ from ‘is’ is a ‘classic error’ (Buchanan 2011, 9). I argue that the logic of moving from ‘is’ to ‘ought’ can be used both in a rightful and respectful manner, as well as in a false and perverted manner. I argue that a misguided application of this logic is caused by a wrong or too narrow idea of what the entity in question is. Take for example the current and ongoing debate on gay marriage. An often-heard argument against gay marriage is the belief that a wedding is something between a man and a woman. Chancellor Angela Merkel, for example, stated that: “[M]arriage is a man and a woman living together” (Trayner, 2015). People like Merkel have a certain definition of the notion ‘wedding’, which constitutes their ethical judgement of it: their logic states that a wedding *is* between a man and a woman, and therefore it *should* be between a man and a woman. In this case, a wrong ethical conclusion is drawn, because it is based upon a wrong ontological understanding. This evaluation of the notion of wedding stems from a heteronormative, oppressive and exclusionary notion of love, which does not recognise its fluid, multiple and polyvocal nature. I argue that, in the notion of the city as a Whole, a similar connection between ontology and ethics is made. The *idea* of the city as a Whole is simultaneously an *ideal*. Dominant urban planning discourses have a certain definition of the modern, Western city, which constitutes how we think our cities should be organised. The way urban planners and other fans of planned space think a city *is*, is then also the way they think a city is *supposed* to be. In this process of signification, a circular reasoning is established and used to perpetuate and neutralise normative urban planning strategies. As our understanding of what a thing ‘is’ influences our evaluation of what the thing ‘ought’ to be, it is clear that having a false definition of something can cause poor ethical judgements.

With Deleuze and Guattari I claim that false definitions, and consequently false ethical judgements, often come from adhering to fixed, transcendental notions, or ‘molar functionalisms’. Believing in the rightfulness of the current, dominant way of organisation can be perfectly fine, but believing that it is the *only* possible way, and therefore the only possible *right* way of organisation, is problematic. There should always be at least the *possibility* of change, and the physical and mental space to facilitate this change — and this space can only be there if one does not think in terms of a priori, fixed entities and identities. I therefore claim that, in stating that no entity is fixed and outlining a radically anti-transcendental ontology, Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy is already an ethics, because it urges us not to exclude Otherness in advance. It urges us to think in terms of multiplicities, rather than fixed entities. As such, this strand of thinking is geared towards the important project of opening up new possibilities for the future. It encourages us to imagine other futures, rather than to deduce a future world, through extrapolation, from already existing worlds. It urges us to locate, analyse and deconstruct prevailing systems of organisation in order to uncover alternative possibilities that are generally left unrealised, and thus work to generate a more inclusive unfolding of the world.

Reading *Anti-Oedipus* as a book of ethics means not thinking and acting in terms of fixed entities and identities. It means giving things the opportunity to develop in new and unexpected directions, by not superimposing transcendental models onto them, and thus excluding ‘otherness’ from the start. This ethics does not claim that one has to let desiring-production run wild. It does not state that anything goes. It does not propagate complete anarchy. Rather, it is an ethics that acknowledges the powerful influence of systems and relations on the formation of entities and identities. It demands a profound knowledge of the workings of desiring-production, and urges us to account for what is at stake in making and breaking of connections within networks of desiring-machines.

3.1.3 Rationalising desire, or desiring reason? On deconstructing desiring-production

Buchanan secondly claims that it is impossible to conceive a model of ethics based on desiring-production, because “insofar as desire is thought of as an urge or impulse (whether conscious or unconscious) it exists outside of, or at least at the extreme border of the realm of rational judgement and thought” (Buchanan 2011, 10). As an ontology, *Anti-Oedipus* is entirely dedicated to analysing the workings of desire as the productive force of reality. To then state that desire is an urge or impulse that exists outside of the realm of rational judgement or thought is quite curious and moreover false, as *Anti-Oedipus* itself is an example of a rational, systematic reflection on the

workings of desire. I argue that Buchanan's claim that it is impossible to formulate an ethics after Deleuze and Guattari's notion of desire is based on a wrong conception of the workings of desire as explained by Deleuze and Guattari. Buchanan states that:

“[F]or Deleuze and Guattari desire refers to the operation of the unconscious with what Freud called the perception system, which includes both external and internal modes of perception. As such, it refers to what are essentially involuntary processes of the mind and the nervous system and therefore cannot form the basis of either ethical or moral discourse” (Buchanan 2011, 15).

Buchanan is right in stating that processes of desire include both internal and external modes of perception. Desiring-production indeed works both from and towards the subject. In other words: desiring-machines are both always at the same time subjects and objects of desire. As discussed in the former, this means that they never call the shots all by themselves and are not autonomous entities, but rather assemblages that exist in constant relation to others. However, this does not mean that we have no agency or control at all in processes of desiring-production. In regarding the processes of desire as involuntary processes Buchanan adopts quite a defeatist attitude, acting as if we cannot get a hold of the processes of desiring-production whatsoever. If we look at Immanuel Kant's notion of the 'paralogisms of Reason', on which Deleuze and Guattari's 'paralogisms of desire' were based, we moreover learn that this assumption is false. As explained in chapter two, desiring-production consists of a constant process of interaction between different entities. This interaction is never flawless: it is always manipulated by certain 'logical fallacies' (Holland 1999, 25). Although such fallacies are unavoidable, because they are ingrained in our human reason, they are not insoluble (Kant 1998, 411). The question that remains then is: how might these errors in thinking, acting and desiring be resolved or clarified?

In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari propose 'schizoanalysis' as a method to affirmatively deal with processes desiring-production. Lefebvre's method of choice, in *Right to the City*, is 'dialectical reason'. Both approaches share a similar mission, which Lefebvre articulated as: “[T]o break up systems, not to substitute another system, but to open up through thought and action towards possibilities by showing the horizon and the road” (Lefebvre 1966, 63). Again we see that such an approach is a highly practical one. It operates through thought and action, and aims to show 'the horizon' and the road', or: the limits and possibilities of movement within the system. This project of disentangling the system is pursued by getting to know the system in an active, direct and concrete manner — by “discovering in a subject the nature, the formation, or the functioning of *his*

desiring-machines, independently of any interpretations,” or by recognising the conditions of one’s own existence by reflective thought and practice (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 367; Lefebvre 1996, 82).³⁵ Lefebvre and Deleuze and Guattari both emphasize the importance of being aware of and accounting for one’s own position within a networked world. This is not a merely personal and subjective approach. An examination of one’s own position can be a first step in examining the overarching network in which one is situated. By looking at specific entities and their direct connections and interactions, these theories urge us to deconstruct (normative) systems or ‘molar functionalisms’.

This is an affirmative and inclusive process. It is a process that opens up possibilities, and thus invites more diversity and complexity in to our appropriation and interpretation of the world. It warns us against uncritically reproducing already existing structures, and encourages us not to reduce our evaluation of what a system can or should do to our normative understanding of what the system currently is. Only this type of ‘dialectical reason’ can examine multiple and polyvocal processes, such as processes of identity formation and desiring-production, without reducing them (Lefebvre 1996, 82). Transcendental ways of thinking and acting, such as the ideology of Reason, structurally force contradictory and paradoxical processes into some kind of unity, totality or finality. The rationalist establishes coherence in a chaotic reality by forcefully creating fixed, complete objects, and perceives this coherence as real or natural, rather than as created through strategies (Lefebvre 1966, 82-83). As such, Lefebvre claims that, in a rationalist logic: “The notion of *system* overlays that of *strategy*” (Lefebvre 1966, 82). This is problematic, because it neutralises power-relations. It can create a position of sovereign power for a dominant subject, and make this subject seem untouchable or unchangeable.

Critical analysis, as a method that can break prevailing systems open and reveal them for the strategies they really are, proves essential in both examining the ontological nature of things as polyvocal networks, and ensuring that these networks remain open and changeable. It can serve as a means of undermining the power of prevailing and seemingly natural systems. As systems turn out to be strategies — constructed rather than natural — we learn that they can be deconstructed and changed. As desiring-production turns out to be a system that we can get to know it can, and should, serve as a basis for ethical and moral discourse. I therefore argue that Foucault’s reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* as a book of ethics is not a category mistake, but a way of using this philosophy as something that is useful, productive and mobilising in actual life. His reading

³⁵ This is what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the “first positive task of schizoanalysis” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 367-387).

motivates us to adopt Deleuze and Guattari's machine-philosophy as a way of life in which we actively try to deconstruct prevailing systems rather than take them for granted, and as such aim to ensure an ethical, non-fascist, inclusive unfolding of the world.

3.2 What can we do? An encounter with the ruin

Although we have established that, in order to be involved an ethical mode desiring-production, one needs to learn how to employ desire and not just give it everything it wants, it does require some sort of 'freedom' or openness. It requires that we do not have a fixed and predetermined notion of oneself and the other, or approach things with a-priori models or 'molar functionalisms'. Such an open (mental) space is needed if we want to have a genuine 'encounter' between self and other. Contrary to Buchanan, I argue that Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of desiring-machines holds an important lesson for us on how to interact with the entities around us. I illustrate this argument by discussing Ronald Bogue's notion of the 'encounter', which can be defined as an ethically productive "dislocating meeting of affects" between different bodies (Bogue 2007, 13). I argue that the urban ruin shows its ethical value in that it serves as an especially suitable space to host such an encounter. My discussion of the ruin as a suitable space to host an encounter adds to Bogue's conceptualisation of the encounter, as it examines its spatial dimensions. I claim that an encounter, as a (creatively) disruptive meeting of affective bodies, needs a space: the meeting of these bodies needs to take place somewhere. Though this could be a virtual, mental or conceptual space, I argue that it helps to have an actual, material meeting place, so that the encounter may become a more concrete, lived experience.

3.2.1 Affective bodies

In order to understand the impact of the encounter, it is important to first clarify the role of the interaction of bodies in a Deleuzoguattarian ethics of desiring-machines. In this ethical ideology and practice, interaction between bodies is not meant to secure one's dominion over the other, but rather to go into dialogue with the other, to affect the other, and to *be affected*. In other words: entering into a connection with another entity within a Deleuzoguattarian network of desiring-machines means to have both the self and the other be transformed. Or, as Bogue describes it:

"[T]he ethical imperative in bodily experimentation is not that of an increase in power *over* a world, but an increase in powers of affecting *and being affected*, a responsiveness to a selected world and an openness to *interaction*" (Bogue 2007, 12).

Within this logic, the body — and every other entity in reality — is understood as a “configuration of speeds and affective intensities” (Bogue 2007, 12).

In assemblages of desiring-machines, different machines and parts influence each other in varying intensities. An important notion in this thinking of entities as assemblages of varying intensities is the idea that the peculiar, unexpected, Other machine holds significantly more affective capabilities, and is experienced in a more intense manner than the ‘normal’ machine. We can notice this effect in our experience of the city, in which the urban ruin stands out as a glaring exception to the rule. The ‘normal’ urban environment forms the backdrop to our day-to-day lives. As a fixed entity that looks and feels practically the same day in and day out, it moves to the back of our minds. We can navigate through it smoothly and, like a flawlessly operating black box, its inner workings remain hidden by their own success. This smoothly structured environment does not hinder us — but it also does not catch our attention. Daniel Miller argues that, when things are organised in a normative manner, they, in a way, become spectral. He argues that normative objects are not necessarily “tangible stuff that we can stub our toe against” (Miller 2010, 50). Rather, he argues: “They work by being invisible and unremarked upon, a state they usually achieve by being familiar and taken for granted” (Miller 2010, 50). By being so predictable, the planned city does not trigger us. It facilitates a normative style of living and arguably flattens out our experience of our everyday environment. Our movement through a tightly planned city or building then becomes a fixed ‘script’ or ‘program’ (Introna 2013, 5). When ‘normal’ spatial organisation gets interrupted, and our usual program of bodily conduct does not work anymore, the system gets revealed for the strategy it really is. We then also get the opportunity to re-think this strategy. In the case of spatial organisation the urban ruin can serve as such a trigger for thought.

As a tear in the otherwise perfectly woven urban fabric, the ruin stands out from the rest of the neatly planned space in which it — and we — are situated. Clearly, the urban ruin follows a different system than the smoothly structured city centre we move through on a day-to-day basis. Where urban planners therefore argue that the ruin is ugly and useless and needs to be transformed to fit with the overall identity of the area again, I would rather argue that the ruin is utterly valuable exactly because of its exceptional character. As an exception to the rule, or a break with the overarching network, the ruin serves as an agent that is capable of yanking us out of our comfort zone, our bubble of habits, our perpetual script of mental and bodily conduct. As an unexpected ‘node’ (Lynch 1960) within the urban fabric, the ruin is experienced in a more intense and affective manner than well-maintained buildings that fit seamlessly within planned space. This disturbing and affective quality of the ruin plays a large role in its ethical value.

3.2.2 The encounter: a disturbing meeting of affective bodies

Ronald Bogue argues that the ethical question of what we can do in order to enable positive interactions between bodies is not a matter of imposing limits from without, but rather of exploring the potential for growth from within (Bogue 2007, 12). The Deleuzoguattarian machine ontology states that a potential for growth, or ‘becoming, lies in the interaction of one entity with another entity. Bogue uses the term ‘encounter’ to discuss the potential for growth that lies in the interaction between entities. He describes the encounter as “a dislocating meeting of affects” and states:

“[I]f it is to be a productive encounter, it will be one of mutual disturbance, in which possible worlds yet unspecified in the terror and in the shocked reaction to that terror interconnect and interact to generate an actual world” (Bogue 2007, 13).

The encounter is a meeting of two or more entities that has a disturbing and dislocating effect on all the entities involved in the interaction. It is not a matter of imposing limits from without, or a top-down process inscription, but rather an interaction in which a mutual inscription and transformation takes place. It is a productive process. A ‘dislocating meeting of effects’ is a process in which new entities are generated. When an entity uncouples from a particular network spot in the network, it necessarily reterritorialises somewhere else and thus enters into a connection with another entity. In a similar vein, Deleuze and Guattari argue that: “[T]he breaks in the process [of desiring-production] are productive, and are reassemblies in and of themselves” (Deleuze and Guattari 2013, 56).

As the making of new entities is at stake in such processes of becoming, it is important that this happens in an open manner, so that entities are not guided in a pre-meditated direction from the start. Although we have established that an ethical desiring-production involves learning how to employ desire, and not just give it everything it wants, it does require some sort of ‘freedom’ or openness. It requires that we do not have a fixed and predetermined notion of oneself and the other. Such an open (mental) space is needed if we want to have a genuine encounter between self and other that can be truly transformative: an encounter of mutual disturbance, in which we are both affecting and being affected.

3.2.3 Encounters in planned and unplanned space

Bogue states that, upon encountering the other, one must “construct a plane of immanence in which I and other are no longer fixed entities, but instead residual points of emergence within an unfolding ensemble of speed and affects” (Bogue 2007, 13). As such, he emphasises the importance of adhering to an anti-transcendental, nomadic and polyvocal definition of entities when entering into a connection with them. My argument is that such a productive encounter is less inclined to happen in the planned city centre than in the unplanned urban ruin. The imprint of human power on the city is much too ubiquitous to allow for the level playing field that is required for a genuine encounter to take place. A residual point of emergence of the human and the non-human subject is unlikely here, because man has already claimed dominion over the city. We treat the city as an object that exists *for us*, rather than *with us*. We have fixed ideas on what a city is, what it should be and how we should behave there. A genuine encounter between us and our inanimate co-inhabitants is unlikely to take place here, because we know in advance how we are going to enter into interaction with the city and its various sub-parts such as buildings, neighbourhoods, parks and traffic.

The ruin, to the contrary, might serve as a helping hand, a positive external force, or fruitful context enabling us to achieve a productive ‘dislocating meeting of effects’ between ourselves and our inanimate co-inhabitants of the earth. I argue that the ruin might be especially suitable in doing so, for (at least) two reasons. First of all, the ruin is a fruitful place for a genuine encounter between the human and the nonhuman subject, because it is a space in which our habitual model of bodily conduct gets suspended. As I argued in the former, the ruin is an agent capable of yanking us out of our comfort zone, our bubble of habits, our perpetual script of mental and bodily conduct. Therefore, it evokes the disturbing but productive effect of ‘creative destruction’ that constitutes a genuine encounter. Second, the ruin might serve as a suitable host for an encounter, because it is a space that has not yet been made sense of. In the ruin, we have to start “fresh,” as equals, because we have not (yet) established what is what and who belongs where. We therefore might call the ruin a “posthumanist space,” which Andrew Pickering defined as: “[A] space in which the human actors are still there but now inextricably entangled with the nonhuman, no longer at the center of action calling the shots” (Pickering 1995, 808). The absence of hierarchy and of clear-cut boundaries between human and nonhuman things is a necessary condition for an encounter between the two to take place. For, as Bogue explains, in a genuine encounter there can be no preliminary distinction between ‘I’ and the ‘other’. They have to start at the same, not-yet-defined level: in a ‘plane of immanence’, or a ‘residual point of emergence’ (Bogue 2007, 13).

A genuine encounter is therefore not an interaction between two pre-existing, specified entities. As such, Karen Barad's notion of 'intra-action' might be more useful in our analysis than the term 'interaction' that Bogue uses. The term 'intra-action' manages to convey better the deeply 'assemblaged' nature of entities. The notion of 'interaction' presumes the prior existence of independent entities. 'Intra-action', rather, emphasises the perpetual connectedness of things as networks of interior and exterior relations. It indicates that things do not pre-exist their relations, but that they are relational from the very beginning. From this understanding, Barad defines entities as "ontologically primitive relations —relations without preexisting relata" (Barad 2003, 815). For a genuine encounter to take place, such an anti-transcendental, relational notion of ourselves and others is required. It is crucial in order to avoid that multiple, polyvocal entities, and the effects they could have on each other, get reduced to pre-existing forms from the start. A genuine encounter can only take place if one allows oneself and the other to change and to be changed (Bogue 2007, 12). It rejects thinking in a-priori structures and demands an open attitude of the human subject towards the nonhuman object — something which Jane Bennett calls a certain "anticipatory readiness," or a "perceptual style open to the appearance of thing-power" (Bennett 2010, 5).

3.3 'Becoming-ruin' by encountering the ruin: a lesson in 'letting go'

The ruin, as a place in which our habits are disrupted, is an especially affective space, experienced with a relatively high level of intensity. As such, I argue that the ruin has the ability to reach us better than the planned city that we know from everyday life does. In the ruin, inanimate things do not go unnoticed. As they crumble under our feet and hover menacingly over our heads, they make their presence known. They reveal themselves to us as agents with affective qualities. Upon a genuine encounter, the ruin then might have the ability to really influence us, and teach us something we did not know before. Or, to put it in Deleuzian terms: as a configuration of highly affective intensities, the ruin will leave an imprint on us when we enter into a machinic interaction with it.

Inspired by Deleuze's philosophy of difference, human geographer John-David Dewsbury analyses the way space is constructed when various (human and nonhuman) actors come together in new and unexpected ways. He argues that the human subject and its environment mutually shape and 'shake' each other (Dewsbury 2000, 487). In his analysis, the emphasis lies on the way our environment shapes us. Dewsbury states that: "[O]ften it is our surroundings that appropriate what it is we do . . . such that we are continually forced into 'never-before-occurring' situations that 'become us'" (Dewsbury 2000, 488). In this argument, Dewsbury makes use of the Deleuzian

notion of 'becoming'. In chapter two I defined 'becoming', after Elisabeth Grosz, as the continual process of transformation or self-differentiation that an entity goes through over time. Aside from taking place in time, becoming also necessarily takes place in space, in relation to other entities. When stating that surroundings can force us into unexpected or unknown situations that then 'become us', Dewsbury argues that an encounter with an unknown environment will leave an imprint on the subject in that space and therefore transform that very subject.

In a similar vein, I argue that an encounter between the human body and ruined space will leave its traces on us: the ruin will leave inscriptions on us that then become part of ourselves. In his article *Walking through Ruins* Edensor discusses the influence that dwelling in ruins has on the human subject. He explains: "Improvising in accordance with the encumbrances that confront it, the body after a while develops a feel for ruined space, a sense of where and where not to tread" (Edensor 2008, 129). As such, a genuine encounter with the ruin means a 'becoming-ruin' of the subject. If we interact with the ruin with an attitude of 'anticipatory readiness' and a 'perceptual openness to the appearance of thing-power', the ruin will leave its imprints on us and thus expand our set of capabilities.

If it is true that we learn from things by interacting with them, and if it is true that this interaction has the ability to transform, change or expand the parties involved, what can we learn from interacting with the ruin? If we do not immediately discard abandoned and vacant buildings as useless crap, or opportunities to 'declutter' the environment, what new possibilities might emerge? What kind of imprints would the ruin would leave on us, human subjects, when entering this space of seeming disorder? How might dwelling in decayed space add to our set of capabilities?

3.3.1 From 'things for us' to 'things with us': beyond utilitarianism

In chapter two I argued that urban planning is an ideology that raises partial knowledge to a poorly based or legitimated totality through extrapolation and as such creates the transcendental illusion of the city as a Whole (Lefebvre 1996, 97). As we will see now, this extrapolation is not only caused by our intellectual interaction with the world around us, but also by our practical interaction with things. With Lucas D. Intra, I argue that our fixed notion of things is largely caused by our utilitarian approach of using things as things for us, rather than things with us. Intra states that:

"Every human appropriation of the world is conditioned in advance, both pragmatically and ontologically — pragmatically because we engage with the world for practical purposes and

ontologically because such engagement is already constituted by a horizon of taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of the entities so engaged” (Introna 2013, 262).

From Introna, we learn that the transcendental urban planning ideologies, as discussed in chapter one and two of this thesis, stem for a large part from the utilitarian approach with which we appropriate the world. Our anthropocentric, utilitarian interaction with the world assumes the agential superiority of man in claiming that *we* shape the material world and that nonhuman things serve as things or tools *for us*: as things that are here to make our lives better, easier, more efficient or more beautiful. Introna argues that we engage with the world for practical purposes and that this approach is conditioned in advance: it is pre-constituted by socio-culturally constructed and naturalised assumptions about the nature of the entities we interact with as tools (Introna 2013, 262). As such, a utilitarian conception of things encourages us to think of and treat things as fixed, singular and a priori entities. It cuts things off from their multiple possibilities of becoming and forcefully shapes them into (seemingly) complete, finished objects. Furthermore, as these seemingly complete objects have such clear-cut forms and functions, they are often exclusionary, directive and unsurprising. The planned urban environment is such an object that we use as a tool for us, of which we only allow a specific, pre-figured use, which then engenders repetitive, one-dimensional, ‘flattened out’ experiences that we often take for granted. I therefore argue that an important step in moving towards an ethical, open, inclusive interaction with the city consists of moving beyond a utilitarian interaction with our built environment. We need to realise that the nonhuman things around us do not just exist as tools for us. Expanding our definition of the city, and the entities within it, beyond a utilitarian one will be an ethical, inclusive and emancipatory move, as it will contribute to the ‘multiplication of the readings of the city’ (Lefebvre 1996, 159 in Edensor 2005, 4).

Introna argues that, in our interaction with things as tools “we tend to find a world in which most beings already are what they are, and have their place in a “naturally” occurring order, as this or that sort of being” (Introna 2013, 262). As such, we cease to value nonhuman things beyond their instrumental value, and only interact with them as partial objects, as ‘this or that sort of thing’. Introna argues that things need ethical consideration exactly because we treat them this way: because, as they are tools that we create, inscribe and use in certain ways, “they always already embody in some way particular values and interests” (Introna 2013, 265). The everyday things that we treat as specific use objects are not neutral or passive. They are “political ‘locations’ where values and interests are negotiated and ultimately ‘inscribed’ into the very materiality of the things themselves — thereby rendering these values and interests more or less permanent” (Introna 2013,

265). As ‘political locations’, we can understand our use objects as material solidifications of our values: our ideologies can be read in the things we design.

In our analysis of the construction of the city as a Whole, we saw that, by constantly performing the city in the same way, we invest it with a fixed identity. As we internalise norms of spatial organisation, they trickle down to the level of lived space: norms of spatial organisation then only get (re)constructed and perpetuated through our habitual behaviour in the city. As such, the things that we design and use as tools also influence us. Introna states that: “[T]hose who encounter and use these inscribed things may become, wittingly or unwittingly, enrolled into particular programs, or scripts of action” (Introna 2013, 265). He argues that: “[W]e humans have always been becoming through the appropriation of the non-human other” (Introna 2013, 264). As such, “we are the beings that we are through our appropriation of things” (Introna 2013, 265). Nonhuman things influence us in fundamental ways and therefore they need ethical consideration. As we can ‘become’ our environment and the entities around us, it is important that we make the right connections with things, so that we may change for the better and not for the worse. An anthropocentric and utilitarian understanding of the world — a logic in which the human subject is the most important or central being, and nonhuman things merely serve as tools for the human subject — thus proves to be both (ontologically) false and (ethically) exclusive. Introna argues that this is a logic in which ethics has taken on a perverted form. Here, ethics is exactly the opposite of what it is supposed to be, namely “an ethics of violence and oppression of the many [nonhuman objects] by the few [human subjects]” (Introna 2013, 262). In an attempt to forego this violent ethics in which nonhuman things are marginalised, never valued beyond their instrumental value and not recognised to have influence on human subjects, Introna outlines an ‘ethos of letting be’.

3.3.2 *Letting be by letting go*

Introna argues that it is ethically necessary for us to let things be in their becoming (Introna 2014, 5). ‘Letting be’, he argues, means to let the other be radically other without “succumbing to the desire to turn it into something knowable, that is, into something in our image” (Introna 2014, 16). He continues that: “[S]uch dwelling is enacted in a radical exposure to the provocations of the other through touch and being touched — that is, it is a matter of the flesh” (Introna 2014, 5). In a similar vein, I argue that the ruin, as an actual, *material* place, serves as a good meeting place to host an affective encounter between bodies, because it allows for an embodied, lived experience to take place. By stating that letting be is a matter of the flesh, something that happens through a direct, affective, bodily experience, rather than through a reflective, rational appropriation, Introna

emphasises the inadequacy of an approach of pure Reason. Turning an object into something knowable, means turning it into something in our own image. Appropriating a thing as an object for us to use, means reducing the multiple and polyvocal qualities of that thing — which is something that we cannot do in an ethos of letting be.

Introna bases his ‘ethos of letting be’ on Heidegger’s notion of ‘Gelassenheit’, which he describes as “a way of being that lets being be” (Introna 2009, 25). Introna argues that:

“Gelassenheit is the abandonment of that representational and calculative thinking (or comportment) by which human beings dispose of things *as this or that being*. This giving up of the assumed lordship over beings – so central to the rational scientific human way of being – opens the possibility for the entry into the ethos of letting be” (Introna 2009, 25; 37).

After Heidegger, Introna furthermore describes his ethos of letting be as a ‘poetic dwelling with things’: a mode of being with things, in which we let them be(come) as they are *on their own terms* (Introna 2009, 37). Heidegger takes up the figure of the poet as an embodiment of the ethos of letting be. I argue that anybody is capable of developing such ‘poetic’ qualities. Appropriating Heidegger, Introna argues that, in order to develop an ethical and poetic dwelling with things, we need to move beyond the dichotomy of ‘is’ and ‘ought’ (Introna 2014, 15). Introna uses the following quote by Heidegger to arrive at his point:

“[I]t is important finally to realise that precisely through the characterisation of something as ‘a value’ what is so valued is robbed of its worth. That is to say, by the assessment of something as a value what is valued is admitted only as an object for man’s estimation. But what a thing is in its Being is not exhausted by its being an object, particularly when objectivity takes the form of value. Every valuing, even where it values positively, is a subjectivising. It does not let beings: be. Rather, valuing lets beings: be valid — solely as the objects of its doing” (Heidegger 1977, 228).

In concluding from this that we need to not distinguish between ‘is’ and ‘ought’, I assume that Introna interpreted the word ‘value’ here as signifying ethical or moral value. I however interpret the word ‘value’ in this context as indicating ‘use value’, in the Marxist sense of the term. What the quote by Heidegger explains then, is how a utilitarian appropriation of things forcefully reduces nomadic, polyvocal things to fixed and singular one-dimensional tools. Rather than stating that we need to not distinguish between ‘is’ and ‘ought’ in order for a non-anthropocentric ethics to be

possible, I argue that it is necessary that we un-learn our deeply ingrained utilitarian mindset. We need to look beyond the preconfigured practical and ontological conditions of things that utilitarianism has set out for us — or: that we have set out for things under the guise of utilitarianism. Exactly because “what a thing is in its Being is not exhausted by its being an object,” assigning use value to a thing actually means reducing the use value of that thing (Heidegger 1977, 228). By treating a thing as ‘this or that object’, we construct the thing as something that should be used mainly or solely in this or that particular way, dismissing all of its other possibilities of use. Such a utilitarian disposition causes poor ethical consequences, as it causes an exclusive and excluding interaction with things and, as Heidegger states, turns things (including ourselves) into objects. It can, for example, lead to overconsumption and the excessive production of waste, as it can have us ‘trapped’ in a network or chain-reaction of purchases. A personal anecdote might bring about some clarification here.

One day I decided I did not want to continue using disposable paper cups when getting coffee at the machines on campus. I had gotten into a habit of using these coffee vending machines every day. Through this repetitive and normative use, I had developed a particular understanding of the coffee vending machines and the kinds of ‘to go’ cups one uses with it: a tall, round cup without any handle and with a removable lid with a hole in it to drink your coffee through. Stores sell reusable, plastic or ceramic versions of these paper disposable ‘to-go’ cups, and I was thinking of buying one of these to avoid having to use the disposable ones.³⁶ When I talked to a friend about this, he answered: “You know any cup holds coffee, right?” Quite embarrassed, I realised that my one-dimensional utilitarian use of these machines and these cups, had ‘tricked’ me into uncritically adopting a preconfigured and completely singular notion of ‘public coffee cups’. It had me believing that a disposable coffee cup — or a ceramic or plastic re-usable rendition of this cup — was not only what you were *supposed* use to drink coffee ‘on the go’, I figured that it *is* what you use to drink coffee to go. ‘Ought’ and ‘is’ got completely intertwined. I had been distracted by habit, causing me to take the *most common* practice for drinking coffee in public to be the *only* practice. I felt embarrassed because I felt I had seized to think for myself, and this had almost

³⁶ Writing on our appropriation of things as tools for us, Introna states that: “As things-for-us they are at our disposal – if they fail to be useful, or when our projects drift or shift, we ‘dump’ them We can dispose of them because we author-ized them in the first place. Increasingly we design them in such a way that we can dispose of them as effortlessly as possible. Ideally, their demise must be as invisible as possible. Their entire moral claim on our conscience is naught, it seems” (Introna 2009, 31). Adding to this, I would state that, in the case of a disposable cup, we feel ok with disposing of these cups because we designed them that way, for that particular, singular use: they *are* disposable cups, so they are *supposed* to be disposed of. We then do not need to feel guilty about doing so.

caused me to buy a completely unnecessary item. By the incredible amount of completely superfluous items being sold in stores, it is clear that this tendency has become more of a rule in our contemporary Western culture than an exception — and, clearly, businesses are eager to capitalise on this.

Moving beyond an anthropocentric ethics, I argue, does not mean abandoning all moral judgement to move beyond the dichotomy of *ought* and *is*, as Introna suggests. Rather, I argue that it takes allowing the things we use to be *more* or *other* than what the norm dictates they are. It means letting go of preconceived notions of objects as things that exist purely *for us*, and letting things go off on different paths than we have set out for them. A coffee vending machine could then indeed also be used in combination with a ‘normal’ coffee mug, preventing you from having to buy a special cup that looks similar to a disposable paper one. I call this approach an ethos of ‘letting go’, as it means letting things go off or develop in multiple, unexpected directions, and letting go of one’s own preconceived notions of objects. It also means surrendering: leaving your implicit faith in the idea of ‘maakbaarheid’ behind and choosing to stop regulating processes of becoming of the self and the (inanimate) other according to normative structures — and thus letting go of the ‘fascist that is ingrained in our behaviour’ (Foucault in Deleuze and Guattari 2013, xiii). It means recognising that we, human subjects, are not autonomous beings at the centre of the universe, that we do not call the shots all by ourselves, and that the things around us shape us as much as we shape them. An ethos of letting go demands an active de-learning when it comes to our habitual, utilitarian interaction with things and an active trying to get to know of the systems that ‘force’ us to use things the way we do. Rather than stating that the “forgetting of the self is what moves ethics,” as Introda does, after Emmanuel Levinas (Levinas 1999 in Introna 2013, 271), I would rather state that actively trying to get to know yourself, the systems around you and your own position and possibilities of movement within these systems is what moves ethics.

Like Introna, I therefore call this effort an ethos, rather than an ethics. I do this to emphasise the longevity of this approach, its need for continual update, and to point to its inherently interconnected or systemic nature. The term ‘ethos’ refers to the “character of an individual as represented by his or her values and beliefs; the moral or practical code by which a person lives” or “the prevailing character of an institution or system” (OED, 2015). The term ‘ethics’ refers to the “moral principles or values held or shown by an individual person” (OED, 2015). As such, the term ‘ethos’ manages better to convey the gravity or commitment that is needed in an attitude of ‘letting go’. It is an ongoing project, a life style, a way of thinking and living, just like Foucault’s description of being ‘anti-oedipal’ (Foucault in Deleuze & Guattari 2013, xiii). If we adopt such a ‘dwelling with things’, we can positively expand our interactions with things. We can then figure

out how to constitute new or other assemblages, which allow for the formation of ‘collective bodies that expand their capacities and open new modes of affecting and *being affected*’. If we continually work through this process of ‘letting go’ we can un-learn deeply rooted ideologies and practices of utilitarianism, and work towards an ethical and inclusive becoming of ourselves and the entities we are networked together with.

3.4 Conclusion

Encountering the ruin in an open, genuine way means ‘becoming’ the ruin. It means letting the ruin affect you and leave an imprint on you. As an especially intensive and affective space, I argue that the ruin has the ability to teach us something more so, or in significantly and much needed other ways, than our everyday environment. As I have argued in this chapter, the most important lesson the ruin can teach us is the cultivation of an ethos of ‘letting go’.

When we (try to) encounter the ruin in an open, genuine way, the ruin will provide us with a much needed other perspective on our habitual interaction with things. First, because of its (to us) foreign type of organisation, our habitual mode of bodily conduct gets suspended in the ruin, revealing it as a system constructed in relation to the material world around us and thus forcing us to reflect on it. Second, the ruin is a space that has not (yet) been made sense of. It bolsters a palpable absence of hierarchy and clear-cut boundaries between human and nonhuman things, which enables us to reflect on our current ways of organising the order of humans and things. As a configuration of distinctly present and seemingly unordered things, the ruin forces us to come eye to eye with our lack of power. It is a place in which man is not fully in control or at the centre, calling the shots. It is a place that reminds us and actively shows us that the things around us shape us as much as we shape them. By interfering in our habitual way of interacting with our built environment, and forcing itself on us, the ruin actively demonstrates the agency of inanimate things. It shows us that “the material world is not merely a passive canvas for the expression of human culture,” but that “material non-human actors also simultaneously assemble us as the humans that we are becoming” (Introna 2014, 2).

As they assemble and influence us, inanimate things need ethical consideration. Contrary to Introna, I do not claim that an ethical dwelling with things requires us to let go of the distinction between ‘is’ and ‘ought’. Quite the opposite: an ethical or moral judgement is of vital importance in this approach. I claim that, if we want to develop an ‘ethical dwelling with things, we need to abandon our deeply rooted utilitarian mindset. When employing an ethos of ‘letting go’, we try to see things as more or other than the preconceived, functional notions we have of them as use items,

tools, or things *for us*. As a space that we generally deem ‘useless’, I claim that the urban ruin is a space that does not trigger or invite utilitarian thinking. Utilitarian thinking does not make much sense there. As its order is foreign to us and we have not (yet) made sense of it, the ruin might enable a different kind of approach than a utilitarian one, and create space for the cultivation of an ethos of ‘letting go’. This way, the ruin can truly be a place of dwelling: as dwelling not only means to reside, remain or live (in a place, house, country, etc), but also “to let (things) remain as they are, let alone, let be” (OED, 2015).

4. Concluding words on ‘letting go’ and the ‘becoming-ruin’ of the subject

In this thesis, I formulated a response to the question of how the post-industrial ruin might be a space of ontological and ethical value for the human subject. I started out by examining dominant ways in which we currently deal with both planned and unplanned urban spaces in the Netherlands by analysing the ‘Oude Kaart van Nederland’ report. Scrutinising the normative claims and recommendations put forward in this report, I demonstrated how the notion of the ideal city as a fixed, coherent, Whole entity, in which different parts match together perfectly to create a seamless urban fabric, is carefully constructed and maintained. I did not only discuss the influence of these written documents and the practice of urban planning on the city as it is (made), I also discussed the influence of the city as it is (made) on the construction of urban planning documents and practices. I discussed urban planning practices and ‘urban reality’, in relation to writings on the city and the city itself, as two interwoven entities mirroring and co-constituting each other via a logic of circular reasoning, thus perpetuating the notion of the city as a Whole. As such, the city and urban planning practices are not pre-existent, but rather intra-acting entities that are intricately connected and constantly shaping and re-shaping each other. In this complex process of meaning-making Other(ed) agents possess the capability to disrupt the circular reasoning shaping this process. In the logic of the urban planning documents I analysed in this thesis the post-industrial ruin is deemed undesirable, precisely because it forms a threat to the structure of the Whole, coherent city they so meticulously constructed.

When the logic of a seemingly Whole city gets too dominant and becomes ‘normal’, it is important to tell different stories. As Latour states, in order to open up prevailing systems and black boxes, “it is important to become sensitive again to very odd types of assemblages” (Latour 2005, 248). It is important to let odd or Other actors speak in order to create new perspectives and unveil the diverse multiplicities and immense complexities of the world, rather than keep things artificially coherent or seemingly complete. It is important to let Other actors speak in order not to fall into the normative and habitual trap of circular reasoning — of re-producing already existing knowledges as the norm, rather than producing new knowledges. From this understanding this thesis analysed the urban ruin as an ‘odd assemblage’ within our everyday built environment. I did not explore possible ontological and ethical qualities of the ruin for the purpose of showing how ‘cool’, ‘eccentric’, or ‘exotic’ post-industrial ruins are. Instead, my purpose was to deconstruct deeply rooted ideologies at work in and from our conception and construction of urban space. Demonstrating the often overlooked value of the post-industrial ruin served as a platform to tell an

Other story. It served to create a productive and inclusive detour, to form an alternative to the paved roads we usually walk when engaging with the spaces we inhabit and the things we appropriate. In addition, it served to re-think ourselves, our own subjectivities, as inhabitants of these spaces and users of these things. As discussed throughout this thesis, the (human) subject and the spaces s/he inhabits are inseparable. Therefore, analysing how we organise the spaces and (in)animate things around us might simultaneously serve to gain a better understanding of how we organise ourselves and our fellow human subjects. After all, as Introna states: “[W]e are the beings that we are through our entanglements with things” (Introna 2009, 25).

4.1 The promise of ruins

The particular phrasing of my research question shows that this thesis started with a specific project in mind: to map out the *positive* qualities of the ruin, the ontological and ethical *value* of the ruin.³⁷ Deconstructing the negative connotations of the post-industrial ruin and re-formulating the ruin as an intensely positive and productive thing to think with regarding issues of both ontology and ethics served as an exploration of the notion of creative destruction, or the creative potentiality of ruination or disintegration. It too might be regarded a contribution to articulating what feminist philosopher Donna Haraway calls the ‘promise of monsters’ (Haraway 1992). By deconstructing the ‘monstrosity’ of this ‘inappropriate/d Other’, I aimed to show how the ruin is positive, productive and valuable exactly because it is different from the normative planned urban environment we are used to. From this understanding I discussed the ruin as a creatively destructive agent, capable of opening up dominant readings of various important matters which concern the city, but also the citizen.

In chapter one I discussed the ruin as a creatively destructive agent capable of opening up the readings of the city by revealing the constructedness of our everyday urban environment and posing a threat to this carefully fabricated structure. Chapters two and three sought to apply this creatively destructive quality of the ruin to the realms of ontology and ethics. Here, my focus was specifically on the human subject: my research question asks specifically how the post-industrial ruin might be a space of ontological and ethical value for the *human* subject. Chapters two and three discussed how the ruin might teach us something about that which we might call the ‘nature’ of

³⁷ Some of the theories I use in this thesis, especially Dylan Trigg’s, find creative potential in negativity. They discuss empty or abandoned (non-)spaces as realms of opportunity, and refer to them as negative spaces. I make a similar claim, but, because my own strand of thinking is informed by Deleuze and Guattari’s machine-ontology and by difference feminism, I use the terms ‘productive’, ‘positive’ and ‘affirmative’ to describe these spaces and their qualities.

human beings, about how we relate to the inanimate things we interact with, and about how to interact with these inanimate things (and by extension with ourselves and our fellow human beings) in an ethical way.

I demonstrated the ontological value of ruins with the machine-ontology of Deleuze and Guattari by arguing how the ruin actively exposes its traces of transformation into decay. In the ruin we get to spot the indices of becoming more clearly than in the neatly planned-out city centre, in which maintenance and preservation strategies constantly make a building look exactly the same as it did the previous day. By allowing traces of interaction with varying agents such as the weather, humans, animals and plants to linger on its surface in the form of, for example, mould, rust, empty bottles and graffiti, the ruin actively shows the processes of becoming in which *everything* is entangled. As such, the ruin teaches us something about our own nature as humans, who are constantly, but less apparently or obviously so, involved in processes of becoming. Furthermore, the structure of the ruin does not fit seamlessly in the perfectly woven urban fabric and does not appear as a perfectly coherent entity in itself. The ruin therefore actively shows how different agents work with and against each other through its very structure, as well as through its problematic position within the city. As such, the ruin proves a particularly useful configuration to think through the contingently assembled nature of things, and the ontological irreducibility of things, including humans.

I demonstrated the ethical value of ruins by arguing how the ruin, as a fluid subject of becoming, rather than a fixed subject of being, puts the human subject's idea of sovereignty or autonomy in much needed perspective. In showing the assembled nature of both human and nonhuman things, the ruin reminds us that inanimate things do not just exist *for* us. Rather, they exist *with* us. We do not only shape them, they shape us as well. Along these lines, I argued how the ruin is a useful figuration to think with when thinking through issues of ethics. Thinking with the ruin as an assemblage or a machine, we are urged to think through social relations in terms of complex systems in which various agents are at work, influencing each other in varying intensities and with different effects. In discussing the ontological and ethical value of the ruin, I discussed the ruin as a site that negotiates the powers of difference. The ruin is a structure that affects Others and allows itself to be affected by Others: because of this, the ruin is transformed by the things it enters into connection with every day. As such, a shift of attention from the subject itself to the entities around the subject, or the network in which the subject is entangled, shows us that the subject never existed in and of itself.

4.2 Becoming-ruin: on de-essentialising the subject

Thinking through issues of ontology and ethics with the post-industrial ruin as a Deleuzoguattarian desiring-machine, then, is first and foremost indispensable for the sake of *de-essentialising* the subject: a project I called an ‘ethos of letting go’. I argued that the (neoliberal and rational) ideas of ‘maakbaarheid’ and the sovereign subject have become too deeply rooted within Dutch discourses and I explored the ways in which these ideas are mirrored and perpetuated in our urban planning practices. As such, I aimed to think through the relation between the construction of our cities and the construction of our ideas and ideologies. I demonstrated this parallel in comparing urban planning practices and ideologies to the logic of Reason. With Kant and Deleuze and Guattari, I discussed how the paralogism of extrapolation causes false transcendental ideas to occur in human reasoning. With Wittgenstein, I discussed the propositions of logic as essentially insignificant ‘tautologies’ in which process and result are equivalent. With Lefebvre, I applied these critiques of Reason or logic to our predominant construction of urban space, in order to describe urban planning practices as systems that follow a logic of circular reasoning and create homogenous, seemingly Whole cities in which Otherness has no place.

Throughout this thesis, the notion of circular reasoning has been discussed in multiple contexts. I discussed the logic of circular reasoning as shaping our urban planning practices; the construction of the city as a Whole; the propositions of logic; and our interaction with inanimate things as things-for-us. I thus discussed the logic of circular reasoning at work in both our intellectual and practical approach to the world of things. I illustrated my discussion of the logic of circular reasoning in our habitual interaction with inanimate things as tools-for-us with the examples of my interaction with the Erasmus building, the University Library and the coffee machines on campus. In the logic of circular reasoning — a logic of habit — a structural reduction of the things we use and of ourselves as users of those things occurs. Rather than recognising the things we use, and ourselves as users of those things, as the multiple, nomadic, polyvocal subjects they/we are, we forcefully assemble them as coherent, fixed entities, like “pieces to a puzzle (...) assembled by forcing them into a certain place where they may or may not belong” (Deleuze & Guattari 2013, 57).

Of course, a certain reduction is necessary in order to interact with things. With Deleuze and Guattari’s machine ontology, I discussed that we can only perceive the processes of becoming that all things essentially go through by spotting and comparing the *indices* of becoming: the traces it leaves on the subject. As such, we cannot perceive of or interact with the process of becoming itself, but only with its effects — which are always already parts or reductions of this process. It is

not necessarily problematic that we can only perceive indices of becoming, rather than entire processes of becoming. It becomes problematic when these indices are *separated* from the processes that produced them: when the *processes* of becoming are not adequately acknowledged and when their effects are taken as autonomous entities, as finished *products*. In our contemporary ‘Western’ cities, strategies of maintenance and preservation are constantly being deployed to structurally remove the traces of the processes of becoming, that buildings go through every day in interaction with agents, such as people, the weather, animals and plants. When indices of becoming are structurally removed, we cannot perceive a building's processes of becoming and it might then seem like the building naturally *is* a fixed entity.

As such, we see that the ‘problem of the subject’ is at stake here. The task of examining complex processes of subject formation, and of challenging dominant notions thereof, has been taken up by many scholars, theorists and philosophers, especially in the era of postmodernity. The projects of posthumanism, poststructuralism, feminism, (new) materialism, phenomenology and psychoanalysis all aim to actively deconstruct the Cartesian split subject and explore other kinds of subjects and subjectivities. In short, the idea of the fixed, transcendental subject, in any kind of formation, is problematic, because it excludes a multiplicity of other subjects and subjectivities. As discussed in chapter two of this thesis, Deleuze and Guattari therefore use the notion of the ‘machine’, or the ‘assemblage’, to deconstruct the notion of a fixed, a-priori and autonomous entity. Although the project of demonstrating the ontological irreducibility of the subject — of demonstrating how every subject is always already an assemblage of different parts from the very beginning — is immensely important, I argue that approaching the subject with the ruin rather than the machine might add an important perspective on how to conceive of subject(ivities) in our contemporary time. Like the Deleuzoguattarian desiring-machine the ruin reveals the assembled and becoming-nature of the subject. However, in addition to this, the ruin also shows the creative force of destruction or disintegration. It reveals how different types of organisation of space afford different kinds of subject(ivities) to take place. It therefore expands potential readings of the city and the experience of the city as a lived space. In the ruin Other kinds of practices, people and ways of being are allowed to take place. The ruin hosts subjects and subjectivities that are foreclosed in the rigidly planned structure of the city centre: plants, animals, insects, homeless people, loiterers and graffiti artists are allowed to linger around in the ruin and leave their traces on its structure. With the ruin, we then see that a different type of spatial organisation affords a different kind of subject/ivity to take place or to materialise.

This thesis argues that this positive force of difference, which the ruin demonstrates, needs to seep through to the very ways in which we understand ourselves as subjects. It poses the idea that

the autonomous, fixed subject needs to be *ruined*, so as to make way for more and other kinds of subjectivities than the currently dominant and normative ones. The ruin, as a structure teaching us to let go of our incessant need to control ourselves and the things around us, teaches us this ethical lesson of the importance of de-essentialising the subject. By demonstrating the value of the post-industrial ruin, by showing what we as humans can learn from the ruin, I aimed to argue that we need to ‘become-ruin’: we need to let the productive force of ruination work its way into our conception of ourselves and the things around us, in order to open up these normative and singularly structured systems of identification. The process of ‘becoming-ruin’, then, is the project of tearing down the powerful, sovereign human subject. This is not a process of destruction, but rather of *creative* destruction, of making way for new subjects and subjectivities, also within the self. It is a process of what Elisabeth Grosz calls the productive and inclusive ‘operation of self-differentiation’ (Grosz 2004, 4), that is, a process of allowing ourselves to explore our polyvocal, nomadic multiplicities, rather than forcing ourselves and the things around us to take on a fixed form and function. It is a project that asks the human subject to allow Other things to leave their imprint on them, to change them, to ruin them, in order to make way for something else. It is a project that asks from us, humans, that we treat Other (in)animate things not as things *for us*, but as things *with us*: things that shape and shake us, that co-constitute our very being. As such, ‘becoming-ruin’ by ‘letting go’ of the autonomous, individual sense of self, is an affirmative and inclusive project of creative destruction. As such a largely overlooked structure of the ruin turns out to be so valuable, we might wonder: what other valuable ‘odd assemblages’ are left unnoticed?

4.3 Further possibilities of research

In this thesis, I have mainly focused on the (social and material) production of planned and unplanned space. I have tried unravelling some important ontological and ethical lessons from our dominant and less dominant ways of organising urban space and the things we do and do not allow to take place in it. By analysing the spaces through which the urban dweller navigates as Deleuzoguattarian desiring-machines, I have simultaneously tried to examine the formation of the human subject entangled within those spaces. This process of mutual inscription of the city and the urban dweller, and the ways in which power structures figure in this constellation of bodies and cities, deserves further exploration.

Further research into the city as a locus of power, and the relation between our apparent need for structure in the city, within the things we use, and eventually also within ourselves, could benefit from using the notions of biopolitics and necropolitics. Michel Foucault’s (1976) notion of

biopolitics and Achille Mbembe's (2003) notion of necropolitics are intricately connected and both refer to power structures in which forms of life are constructed and annulled. Foucault first introduced his notion of biopolitics in *History of Sexuality* and in the lecture series "*Society Must Be Defended*" (both 1976) (Wallstein 2013, 8). For Foucault, biopolitics concerns structural technologies of power that actively construct a certain (normative) subject and as such exert control over a population a whole, or over 'man-as-species' or man as a 'global mass' (Foucault 1976, 242). In constructing a specific normative subject, other subjects are necessarily excluded from ('normal' or normative) life. Achille Mbembe highlighted this lethal side of biopolitics in coining the notion of necropolitics. Necropolitics refers to "the power and the capacity to dictate who may live and who must die" and states that the power to kill or to allow to live is the ultimate expression of sovereign power (Mbembe 2003, 11-12).

Taken together, these two notions can help to examine power structures in terms of how (human) lives and bodies are systematically included into (normal or normative) life or excluded from it. Further research into the city as a locus of (bio)power, in which (human) life is entangled, might then ask: how is biopower at work in the urban fabric and perpetuated in its material organisation? How does the fact that we apparently value an orderly and perfect city fold some people into urban life and mark others for (social) death? Does our expectation of perfect spaces seep through to the expectations we have of people, of our citizens, our demography? As such, a biopolitics and necropolitics lens could be useful to analyse processes of inclusion and exclusion at work in the city, to examine the materiality of the urban fabric as a solidification of normative power structures, and to account for the structural subjugation and exclusion of certain groups entangled within these systems.

Furthermore, the topic of the positive force of the ruin is neither exhausted in this thesis. I have used the philosophies of difference by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and Elizabeth Grosz. Their focus on machines, assemblages, duration and difference has given me useful tools to make sense of the ruin as an apparatus for ontological and ethical inquiry. For future research, Rosi Braidotti's notion of the 'nomadic subject' and Donna Haraway's notion of the 'cyborg' could open up new horizons for the exploration of the ruin as an affirmative 'thing to think with' through questions of ontology and ethics. There are many similarities between the figure of the cyborg as discussed by Haraway, the nomadic subject as discussed by Braidotti, and the post-industrial ruin as I have discussed it, which I suspect are worth looking into.

Haraway first introduced her notion of the cyborg in her *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991 [1985]), where it served as a lens to examine the ontological nature of all entities as constellations embedded within various power-networks of technoscience. Thinking with the figure of the cyborg, she argued

how entities are cybernetic assemblages, which consist of various human and non-human technologies from the very beginning. As such, Haraway's cyborg theory is a claim for a non-anthropocentric conception of the world, a claim for the acknowledgement of non-human technologies on the human subject, and consequently an argument for the de-essentialisation or de-naturalisation of the human subject. It is a figure that transgresses boundaries, that "skips the step of original unity, of identification with nature in the Western sense" and it is "resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy and perversity" (Haraway 1991, 151).

With her theory of nomadic subjectivity, Rosi Braidotti also aims to deconstruct the fixed human subject in an affirmative way. She does this by arguing for the positive force of difference, of telling other stories than the ones we already know, of inviting more complexity, disturbance and 'monstrosity' in our worlds. Rather than treating difference as a threat to some original unity, she treats it as a realm of opportunity. Braidotti takes up an affirmative approach to odd, unexpected, destabilising, monstrous assemblages, and argues that: "[W]e have to approach the devalued and monstrously different others not as signs of pejoration, but in the positivity of their difference" (Braidotti 2014, 6). This qualitative shift of perspective she calls the process of "becoming-nomadic subjects" (Braidotti 2014, 6).

Both the cyborg and the nomadic subject are thus notions with which to examine the positive force of difference, or the creative potential of non-normative subject formations. As such, they both work from a perspective of creative destruction: from the understanding that, if we deconstruct dominant subjects in a critical way, we can open up new worlds, make room for other subjects, and thus create affirmative and inclusive alternatives. I expect that my examination of the ruin as an apparatus for ontological and ethical inquiry, and my argument for an ethos of 'letting-go' and 'becoming-ruin', might benefit from revision through the lens of Haraway's cyborg and Braidotti's nomadic subject. I expect that the approach of these two feminist philosophers exploring the positive force of difference could provide a significant additional perspective in further research on ruins, as they can serve as tools to examine the ruin as a "promising and dangerous monster" (Haraway 1991, 179).

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6.0 Appendix

‘Advies’ and ‘Aanbevelingen’ In: Harmsen, H. 2008. *De Oude Kaart van Nederland: leegstand en herbestemming*. Den Haag: Atelier Rijksbouwmeester.

Advies

Rijksadviseur voor het Cultureel Erfgoed

advies RIJKSDIENST ERFGOED

Aanbevelingen naar aanleiding van het project 'De Oude Kaart van Nederland: leegstrand en herbestemming'

Problematiek

Eenactie voeren en overzichten over structuurde leegstrand zijn noch op nationaal, noch op provinciaal of lokaal niveau beschikbaar. Structuurde leegstrand kan een indicator zijn van een slechter functionerend gebied in stad, dorp of landschap. Het kan tevens wijzen op gebied aan gebied of actie en dat kan betekenen dat leegstrand niet wordt erkend als een urgent probleem.

Rond leegstrand hoort een sector van verwaarlozing, verval, verfloetering, vandaalisme en onveiligheid. Het is evident dat elke leegzander ruimte binnen bestaand bebouwd gebied bouwcapaciteit vertegenwoordigt die eerder kennelijk zou moeten worden dan nieuwe ruimte in het buitengebied. Dit aspect is van belang voor het gebied van duurzaam ruimtelijk gebruik.

Structuurde leegstrand kan voortkomen worden als op gemeentelijk niveau – en voor het landschap op provinciaal niveau – ruimtelijk en sociaal-economische verkenningen plaatsvinden, op grond waarvan men op leegstrand en herbestemming kan anticiperen. Kwaliteitsverlies en materieel verval moeten zoveel mogelijk worden vermeden.

Per 1 juli 2008 is de nieuwe Wet Ruimtelijke Ordening (Wro) van kracht.

Binnenstedelijke bestemmingsplannen zijn voortaan verplicht en gemeenten dienen die plannen tijdige actualiseren (art. 3, lid 2 Wro). Will men, bij provinciaal gebied, op leegstrand en herbestemming anticiperen dan is de actualisering van bestemmingsplannen in de periode na 1 juli 2008, het meest getijde moment daarvoor. De te verwachten leegstrand biedt immers ruimte voor het realiseren van bouwprogramma's binnen bestaand bebouwd gebied.

Voor het anticiperen op leegstrand en herbestemming is geen nieuw wettelijk instrumentarium nodig.

De overgang van toelatingsplanning naar gebiedsonwikkeling vraagt van het architecturaal apparaat in plaats van een toetsende en ondermerende attitude. Een cultuurensdag die om training en bijspijting vraagt.

Aanbevelingen

1. Kennismanagement

Kennisontwikkeling, kennisbundeling, inzicht en kennisoverdracht in relatie tot het thema 'leegstand' in Nederland is gewenst. Een daarvoor ingerichte methode van ruimtelijke verkenning, inventarisatie en monitoring bestaat en aanzien van leegstand nog niet.

De Stichting Dorp, Stad & Land te Rotterdam heeft voor het project *De Oude Kaart van Nederland* een onderzoeksopzet en een interactieve website met een kaart (op GIS-basis) voor vrij gebruik ontwikkeld.

Deze expertise kan als basis dienen voor een dergelijke methode, waar van de uitwerking door het rijk samen met VNG en IPO verder ontwikkeld kan worden.

2. Handhaving Legebruik Ruimte

Het College adviseert om op grond van dit onderzoek een Plan van Aanpak op te stellen waarmee de lokale bestuurders leegstand en herbestemming kunnen integreren in hun reguliere planologische werkprogramma. Centraal kan aan de hand van praktisch voorbeelden worden onderzocht welke de succes- en falie-toeren zijn. Dit naar aanleiding van de invoering van de nieuwe Wro en de kansen voor bouwen in bestaand bebouwd gebied.

Met structurele leegstand van cultuurhistorisch interessante gebouwen en complexen loopt men het risico op cultureel kapitaalverlies. Wanneer wereldse en banale gebouwen en complexe straten te verloederen mist men de kans met vervangende nieuwbouw een sterke Nederlandse omtromen.

3. Ruimtelijke Adressen en Gebouwen (RAG)

Het verdient aanbeveling om de gemeenten op de mogelijkheid te wijzen om het attribuut 'gebruik/oude gebruik' in de levensloopstatus van objecten in de BAG te benutten. Deze BAG zal medio 2009 actief worden en jaarlijks worden geactualiseerd. Dit nieuwe instrumente kan overheden inzicht geven in de geografische verspreiding, de typologie van leegstaande gebouwen en de duur van leegstand.

4. Trendverwachtingen

De opgave voor herbestemming en herinrichting in de toekomst maakt het noodzakelijk dat overheden nu reeds anticiperend beleid ontwikkelen. Het verdient aanbeveling om lokaal en regionaal trendverwachtingen te signaleren, waardoor actief beleid op de te verwachten leegstand mogelijk is. Door periodiek een verkenning over planologisch relevante trends te organiseren onder betrokken ambtelijke afdelingen, vastgoedpartijen en belangengroepsacties kan hier beeld over aard en omvang van de herinrichtingsopgave geactualiseerd worden.

5. Leegstand als publieke zaak

Leegstand is een actueel thema. De eigenaar van een structureel leegstaand pand is als private partij weliswaar primair verantwoordelijk, maar omdat leegstand in het publieke domein problemen veroorzaakt gaat het ook de overheid aan. Het faciliteren van onafhankelijke haalbaarheidsstudies voor hergebruik kan vastgelopen leegstaandkwesties weer op gang helpen.

6. Leegstand als fiscale zaak

Het onderzoek van het ministerie van Economische Zaken naar nu en mogelijkheden van een leegstand-tax toont aan dat leegstand als zorgwekkend ervaren wordt. Het is logisch dat onder andere onderzoek wordt of het wel wenselijk is de negatieve inkomsten van structurele leegstand onder bepaalde omstandigheden als fiscale aftrekpost te honoreren.

7. Leegstand als bestrenging voor de leefbaarheid

Het *Actieplan Kwaliteitswijken* van w w t brengt leefbaarheid indirect in verband met leegstand. Het gewel van urgentie kan versterkt worden door leegstand – en methodes om die te bestrijden – op de politieke agenda te zetten. Daarbij kan worden aangehaakt bij de *Nota Ruimte* en het beleidsstema *Mooi Nederland*.

8. Wat je moet doen, doe dat buitengewoon!

Leegstand moet niet alleen als probleem benaderd worden, maar ook als een kans. Waar vorm en functie van onze leefomgeving disfunctioneel zijn de volgende stappen in successie het meest kansrijk:

- een grondige waarverkenning door alle acteren
 - herbestemming door de overheid
 - herontwikkeling door de markt of in pps-verband
 - herontwerp door ontwerpers
 - hergebruik door beleggers of eindgebruikers.
- Het Rijk is bij uitstek de partij, die krachtens de *Nota Ruimte* en de *Nota Belevingsde rol van inspirator en aanjager* op zich kan nemen. Tevens is het een uitdaging voor de regionale en lokale bestuurder om met bestaande middelen 'het gewone buitengewoon te doen'.

Fons Asselbergs
namens het College van Rijksadviseurs