I am cold. Walking briskly to catch a bus. I'd like to sit down, but the bench is wet, with a pool of vomit right next to it. I strike the pose of "standing figure deep in thought". It's good, I think. It looks authentic. I identify with it.

I have a ticket, but still feel like I am fare-dodging. A reflex from times past. I take a seat and strike the pose of "seated emphatic composure". The emphatic part is meant to send a message of my willingness to give up my seat should the need arise.

My phone is in my pocket. In its place. I am all set, on my way and on time. Before getting off the bus I decide on the choreography of "getting off the bus and walking to the train at a leisurely pace". But perhaps I should have gone for the "brisk pace" style instead, which would have enabled me to overtake the enormously obese figure blocking all traffic by its laborious progress.

At the train station I perform the routine of "taking off, rummaging through my backpack and putting it on in public" and move on to my preferred front third section of the platform to strike the pose of "almost unnaturally erect standing figure," to prevent backache. I like this figure, but have to make an effort to ward off being self-conscious about it. Perhaps it's a trifle too non-standard. Subsequently I opt for the most casual manner of boarding the train possible. Stepping over the mysterious gap between the platform and the train, there follows the critical decision of whether to turn right or go straight and to the left, climbing onto the upper level of the carriage. I make my decision rashly, impulsively, unsystematically, opting for the left, and the upward climb, and reproach myself for my rashness. I look for a place to strike the "classical seated" figure, almost like in the pictogram. No other option is actually possible with this type of traffic. Moments into the ride I am already looking forward to the "brisk walk" choreography that makes me feel good.

2

Pseudo-Public Space
of an Adolescent City

We all test on ourselves not only our online present time, but also the new conditions of the physical experience of public space. We are living at a time when new conditions for the transition from analogue to digital society are being established. And it is these very conditions that in terms of public space are at this moment being changed into general consensus, if indeed that has not already happened without us being aware of it.

Our cities, planned as they are by the state from the perspective of control, place their participants in the position of adolescents, as the phenomenon was defined by the US sociologist Richard Sennett. According to him, a certain type of natural disorder must be present for a person to develop into an adult individual. Sennett draws on an analysis of the historical development of urban planning, which in his account has since the 19th century followed from "a group of assumptions of terrible simplicity".[3] His misgivings stem from the rise of technocratism rooted in grand-scale planning in the style of Baron Haussmann and his concept of urban planning for Paris as the transformation of a medieval town into a modern-day metropolis with broad boulevards and avenues.

This 150 year-old concept, the product of the Newtonian and Cartesian notions of science resulted in the hegemony of expert knowledge over the actual needs and desires of the inhabitants. It remains even today the most frequent vision which big cities and the fastest-growing

agglomerations rush to make reality, regardless of its side effects, such as segregation, unaffordable housing, the mushrooming of slum neighborhoods, civic unrest, etc. The precedent forged by Haussmann in terms of the conception of public space (broad boulevards to facilitate the movement of troops, class stratification by district, etc.) represents a tool of control and conflict prevention. In addition, new priorities which appeared in the second half of the 20th century, such as automobile traffic, systems of utilitarian prefabricated units, infrastructure for electricity distribution and so on, gave rise in turn to an order where the human dimension is lost. From there also follows an absence of room for change and the organic functioning of society.

City dwellers and visitors find themselves in a position that offers no solution or way out. For the *authoritative concept of city planning* denies two fundamental attributes of adulthood – freedom and responsibility. Pascal Gielen notes the system's efforts to keep people in the position of adolescents, prevented from testing their identity, becoming self-reliant and growing up by maintaining their ego in safe homogeneous comfort zones. In this respect it is important to note that the rules of public space in this way disregard the identity of its users. The city, as with adolescents, places a stress on homogeneity, ensuring a structure that is easy to survey, and thus facilitating control.

Since the 1970s and increasingly since the 1990s, the Western world has seen the weakening of the role of the state and the merger of the private and state sector, with the economy in general becoming more abstract. The environment is friendly to the real estate market and developers, whose projects thus easily attain space. The late 1990s saw an increased focus on the creative class (legitimized by the controversial theses of Richard Florida, criticized for favoring gentrification and social elitism). As Gielen points out, control escalates into repression, and as he puts it, we are witnessing the rise of the *"creative-repressive city"*.[4]

Gielen sees the tools of control in direct connection with an interpretation of global political trends such as rampant neoliberalism and the rise of neo-nationalism. Encounters with the unknown or otherness are eliminated as purposeless. Inhabitants of neighborhoods segmented on the basis of social class have little need for shared public space or participation in community politics. Where it is not necessary to question and defend one's identity on a daily basis, there is little desire or will to contribute to events in the public arena. As a result, such functionally segregated cities push politics out of their streets, limiting it to participation in elections. Public space thus becomes entirely depoliticized. One cannot but agree with Gielen, noting that in the former Eastern Block countries the depoliticized nature of public space in terms of the active assertion of civic freedoms was caused by the Communist regime, but that even after the re-establishment of the democratic-capitalist system little has changed.

Exclusion of the Non-Consumer Pedestrian

The development of urban public space is shaped by global political and economic interests. The consequence is that public space becomes prey to consumerism, commercial exploitation and restrictive security measures. Since the 1980s, Western Europe has seen a rise in private ownership of public space, a phenomenon attendant with neoliberal municipal policies. These consist of a long-term tendency of the rise in investment in the commercial sector and its influence, and inversely a decrease in state or public investment in public space. The resultant phenomenon of POPS – privately owned public spaces – presents a situation by definition prey to a fundamental conflict regarding their purposes and the services they are expected to provide.

This inherent conflict of interests is evident not only in looking at the globalized and homogeneous appearance of such places, but also their functioning, designed to encourage consumerist behavior. The most frequent criticism notes the rules they impose, which apart from protecting private property by imposing dominant tools of control via private security agencies, also implicitly call for the exclusion of certain social groups, not to speak of other questionable issues such as bans on assembly and public performance, which in extreme cases can border on violating basic human rights. Restrictions are also caused by so-called hostile architecture (or defensive

architecture), designed to discourage certain groups of people from dwelling in a given area, via a sophisticated morphology of uncomfortable design and psychological means of discouragement. The exclusion of risk groups and the marked preference for the use of public space by potential consumers corresponds with a situation where the market and public space are globally controlled by the interests of a narrow minority of investors.

In the introduction to the catalogue *Skulptur Projekte Münster* (2017), Claire Bishop describes the phenomenon of POPS as spaces owned by private persons, yet public in character (city squares, lobbies, or parks). The paradox of these spaces lies in the fact that they are even more thoroughly monitored under the social choreography of neo-liberal space, which advantages the individual who is in line with the consumerist ideal over everyone else, thus causing further alienation of socially excluded groups.[5] This exclusion is a serious issue, affecting as it does not only certain groups of people, but also the very notion of freedom of decision regarding one's behavior in an arena which ambiguously defines itself as a privately owned public space. What this ultimately does is stifle public interests by manipulating people for the purpose of generating profit.

3
Richard Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life*, London: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 104

4
Sander Bax, Pascal Gielen and Bram Ieven, *Interrupting the City: Artistic Constitutions of the Public Sphere*, Amsterdam: Valiz, 2015, p. 278

5
Claire Bishop, Black Box, White Cube, Public Space, *Skulptur Projekte Münster – Out of Body*, Münster: Skulptur Projekte Münster, 2017, pp. 1–4

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