Truth Games

Hanneke Van Deursen

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TRUTH GAMES

NATURALIZING THE NEOLIBERAL SUBJECT

HANNEKE VAN DEURSEN
Truth Games
Naturalizing the Neoliberal Subject

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Syracuse University School of Architecture

Hanneke van Deursen

Candidate for Bachelor of Architecture and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2020

Advisors:
Francisco Sanin
Yutaka Sho
Marcos Parga

Honors Thesis in Architecture
To the words which have carried me through this:

“There may not be much hope, but there remains a responsibility.”

Francisco Sanin

And those which started this whole thing:

“Economies are the method: the object is to change the soul.”

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher
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This thesis analyzes Neoliberalism, and architecture as its active agent, not only in constructing space, but constructing subjectivity within that space. If Neoliberalism exists in two forms, policy and ideology, I contend that architecture serves as a mediator between these forms: shaped by policy and naturalizing ideology. Truth Games – constructed “truths” which embed themselves in common knowledge and practice – allow the city to appear as banal and incidental, maybe even nice. However, the urban environment is a powerful weapon. The Truth Games embedded in architecture legitimate forms of power that operate on and through the constitution of the self (as per Foucault). This thesis operates upon the hypothesis that the city can be read, delaminated, unmasked, in order to script its Truth Games and therein begin to subvert them.

The array of Neoliberal policies manifest particular environments which aggressively naturalize Neoliberal subjectivity. I collect these spaces under the term, Capital Imaginaries, as they take on a utopian image of the city according to the market. It is within these islands of raw and exaggerated capital that Truth Games, typically obscured, sit in the foreground and begin to expose themselves. The objective of this thesis is to examine these spaces in order to unmask their Truth Games and lay bare the production of subjectivity, re-presenting the city without its veil.

The Capital Imaginaries of Kop van Zuid (Rotterdam), Canary Wharf (London), and Hudson Yards (New York) become the subjects of this examination, each revealing one aspect of the market’s ideal subject. The thesis works to uncover their truths hidden in plain sight, through the mechanisms of timelines, voyeuristic films, financial diagramming, and mappings of subjectivity. This unmasking of the city lead me back to the 1970s ideas of radical architecture: Superstudio, Archizoom, and OMA. I took ‘the manifesto’ as an operation, and revised Archizoom’s – by extension revising the images they use to explore their ideas and reediting them in relation to my three subjects. These ideas are collected in a digital exhibition, providing multiple paths that take one through layers of information on the same issue. This website architecture is akin to the layering and unmasking that the project aims to do, and constructs a truth within itself.

The exhibition and the manifesto are a call to see. To criticize. To reexamine the banal. The city is not incidental. It is deliberately constructed.
This document serves as an archive of the above digital exhibition. To best experience the work, visit the link.
This is an exhibition about the city, or at least about something that simulates the city.

It stems from a fascination with the built environment—its ability to shape our very perception of our world.
It stems from a conviction that the city is something to be decrypted. Something which can be unmasked.

This exhibition analyzes Neoliberalism, and architecture as its active agent: not only constructing space, but constructing subjectivity within that space.
Before you come in, there are 3 things you should know.

First, let's talk about the title, Let me introduce some of the terms which are essential to this thesis.

Truth Games is a term I use to talk about truth as a constructed entity.

A Truth Game is a series of reasonable assumptions which build on each other to mask reality.

One might call it ideology.

Truth Games can be scripted, and therein unmasked, to reveal something more clear operating beneath their veil.

TRUTH GAMES
NATURALIZING THE NEOLIBERAL SUBJECT

Truth Games do not rule from outside or above, but by embedding themselves in common knowledge and practice.

Truth Games must be concealed from their players, accepted as the given conditions.

This process of naturalization becomes the role of Architecture.

As both policy and ideology, Neoliberalism takes the market as the ultimate ordering mechanism for our society.

The Neoliberal Subject is the market's ideal citizen: pacified and in a constant state of production or consumption.
Second, there are **three places** you should know.

Shiny, tightly-controlled and inexplicably sterile, these sites begin to unravel the Truth Games at work in the city.

These places are **not cities**, though they are **city-like**

I call them: **CAPITAL IMAGINARIES**

as they take on a utopian imaginary of the ideal city according to the market
**Capital Imaginaries** are islands in the city made possible by **Neoliberal policy**: tax breaks, visa incentives, special enterprise zones.

It is within these **islands** of raw and exaggerated capital that **Truth Games**, typically obscured, float at the surface and **begin to expose themselves**.

The exhibition interrogates these spaces in order to **uncover their Truth Games** and re-represent the city **without its veil**.
And this brings us to the final thing.

This is a project of representation using Capital Imaginaries to uncover in the seemingly banal and everyday the Truth Games which sneak their way into Mental Conceptions about ourselves our relations to others and the space in which we exist.
It is an experiment through modes of reading the city, which involves
repetition

revision

unmasking

defamiliarization

All in an effort to see again what is right in front of us.
This page contains the various mediums through which to analyze Kop van Zuid, Canary Wharf, and Hudson Yards. By clicking any of the boxes, you can find a way in to the project. Use the modifiers on the side to add layers of information to this map.
I’ll begin with a series of assumptions. I contend that Neoliberalism exists in two forms: policy and ideology. That architecture serves as the mediator between these forms. On the policy side, Neoliberalism’s tenants are deregulation, privatization, and competition. It’s these policies which shape the space of the contemporary city. On the ideology side, I contend that the market is taken as an ordering system, not just for the economy, but for society. In order to naturalize its existence, Neoliberalism plays a Truth Game, telling us: our society is too complex for us to understand, and therefore it cannot be ordered by humans. By contrast, the market is itself a mechanism of spontaneous order, and therefore is better suited to calculate, process, and order our society. Subsequently, it is humans who must adapt to the needs of the market.

This Truth Game is action-oriented. Those market-needed thoughts, beliefs, and aspirations, the market-needed subjectivity must be formed. It is here that architecture assumes her role in the cycle of ideology informing policy, policy creating space, and space naturalizing ideology.

And so the proposition of my thesis was to uncover the Truth Games played by architecture in the Neoliberal city. To unmask the production of the Neoliberal subject through spatial means.

**Truth Games Naturalizing the Neoliberal Subject**

**Neoliberalism**

I’ll begin with a series of assumptions. I contend that Neoliberalism exists in two forms: policy and ideology. That architecture serves as the mediator between these forms. On the policy side, Neoliberalism’s tenants are deregulation, privatization, and competition. It’s these policies which shape the space of the contemporary city. On the ideology side, I contend that the market is taken as an ordering system, not just for the economy, but for society. In order to naturalize its existence, Neoliberalism plays a Truth Game, telling us: our society is too complex for us to understand, and therefore it cannot be ordered by humans. By contrast, the market is itself a mechanism of spontaneous order, and therefore is better suited to calculate, process, and order our society. Subsequently, it is humans who must adapt to the needs of the market.

This Truth Game is action-oriented. Those market-needed thoughts, beliefs, and aspirations, the market-needed subjectivity must be formed. It is here that architecture assumes her role in the cycle of ideology informing policy, policy creating space, and space naturalizing ideology.

And so the proposition of my thesis was to uncover the Truth Games played by architecture in the Neoliberal city. To unmask the production of the Neoliberal subject through spatial means.
In order to unmask this production of the subject by architecture, I choose three paradigmatic islands of Neoliberal City-making: Kop van Zuid, Canary Wharf, and Hudson Yards, which I have called Capital Imaginaries. The proposition of my thesis was to unmask the truth games at work within these spaces. These mechanisms of unmasking included timelines, site plans, financial diagrams, films, and image manipulation. This first series of drawings establishes Kop van Zuid, Canary Wharf, and Hudson Yards as paradigms of Neoliberal Policy through site plans situating their form, timelines exploring their political context, and economic elevations diagramming their financial underpinnings.
Truth Games
Naturalizing the Neoliberal Subject

Created by Neoliberal Policy

Kop van Zuid

Economic Elevation
Kop van Zuid
Truth Games
Naturalizing the Neoliberal Subject

Created by Neoliberal Policy

Hudson Yards
Economic Elevation

Hudson Yards
In another layer, the Neoliberal Subject is understood as a pacified individual in a constant state of production or consumption. This subjectivity is produced in all spaces, but I identified that each of the three Capital Imaginaries exemplifies one aspect of that Neoliberal Subject. This subjectivity is legitimized through spatial mechanisms which I explore through these images. I concluded that in Kop van Zuid, the rendering of the city as view constructs the Depoliticized Individual. In Canary Wharf, the simulation of an idyllic city produces the Uncritical Laborer. And in Hudson Yards, the spectical-ization of the city constructs the entertained consumer. Together, the Capital Imaginaries reveal in exaggerated form the subjectivity which is naturalized in all times and all spaces. A subject comprised of the three characters, at once the depoliticized Individual, the uncritical laborer, and the entertained consumer.
Delaminated Marketing Material
Delaminated Underground Station
Truth Games
Naturalizing the Neoliberal Subject

Delaminated Car Launch Event

Hudson Yards
The Neoliberal Subject

The Experience constructs
the Consumer

The Consumer is Entertained
by the Experience

Hudson Yards is about
the Experience

The City as Backdrop
Built to Instagram,
Experience of Place
Ground down to
allow for Happenings,
Keep moving,

Objects of
Consumption as
the Spectacle
Distorted Consumers
Touristic Leisure

Option A: Stand out
Pick the Tide
Option B: Blanche
What is important to understand about Truth Games is that they do not rule from outside or above, but by embedding themselves in common knowledge and practice. Because Capital Imaginaries are raw and exaggerated moments of Neoliberal space-making, I hypothesized that within them, their Truth Games would float at the surface and begin to expose themselves. Therefore I turned to daily life as a window into these Truth Games. The medium of film allowed me to capture the relationship between the subject and their spatial environment. These films, produced in five-day on-site immersions, utilize slowness and the long take to invite criticality back into the banal and everyday.
Canary Wharf: The Uncritical Laborer

https://vimeo.com/383173141
Capital Imaginaries

In January, the films were presented in an exhibition I designed which sought to throw the viewer into the role of voyeur, peeking into the surreal world of Capital Imaginaries, looking closely, defamiliarizing them. The exhibition simulated the wealth of information that becomes available when one stops and looks around.
Frame by Frame

The storyboards were a mechanism to qualify the observations gleaned from the filmmaking and break down the films frame by frame. A layer of annotation seeks available information revealed in every still.
Truth Games

With the discoveries of the conceptual analysis and the long takes of daily life, the Capital Imaginary’s Truth Games began to reveal themselves, and I began to script them. Similar to the observed Truth Games of Neoliberalism, the new Truth Games were held to parameters. They all begin with a neutral statement about a requirement of the market. From there, they build, one statement on top of the next, to reach seemingly absurd conclusions about the purpose of the city. Unveiled, I renamed the Capital Imaginaries: The Empty City, The Factory City, The City™.

The Truth Games play like a film, each claim paired with a speculative rendering of a space their description illicits. The defamiliarization of the film’s imagery through repetition re-presents the Capital Imaginary in its unmasked form. The images, simply banal architecture mirrored, retain an incredibly seductive power, reinforcing the fantastic hidden in the everyday.

NEOLIBERALISM

1. Individuals can only obtain a limited knowledge of the real complexities of the world
2. Thus, cannot plan our society
3. The market, a complex system, is uniquely able to handle the complexities of our world
4. Thus, the market should calculate, order and process our society
5. And, people and social practices must adapt to the market

KOP VAN ZUID

1. The market trades architecture as a speculative product
2. Thus, the value of architecture resides in its ability to reproduce capital
3. And, the city becomes a mechanism to produce private property
4. Private property constructs the individual as separate from the city
5. Thus, rather than a collective space, the city becomes an aggregate of individualities
6. And, the space of the city is created to be looked up-at and out-from, but not in-to
7. The city of private property is an empty city
8. Because there is no there, there, the empty city is occupied by the spectacle of its occupants
9. Only in the space of private property do individuals take refuge from their own performance
10. However, inside, the subject is neutralized by their status as viewer, depoliticized, their ability to participate in the city negated by their view upon it

CANARY WHARF

1. The market seeks to maximize efficiency
2. Because post-industrial labor is in ideas/emotions/desires, the factory must resemble the daily life in which this human capital is produced
3. Therefore, the factory must resemble the city
4. However, it is not a city, and all spaces within it are spaces of labor
5. Friction and criticality threaten distraction and alienation, so the factory must maintain its illusion as city
6. Thus, it must be tightly controlled and perception closely monitored
7. And, all conditions of labor and infrastructure must be concealed
8. And, it must be monitored by an army of working-class laborers, their right to the space peddicated on their productive state
9. The illusion of the city produces the factory’s human capital

HUDSON YARDS

1. The market must maintain 3% growth
2. Thus, it must continuously find new commodities and consumers for those commodities
3. Experience is the ideal commodity, because it is instantaneously consumed
4. The corporation constructs a city in which to sell its experience
5. In order for the city to appear in its commodity form, labor and inequality must be concealed
6. The commodified-city must sustain the illusion of choice, so consumption can construct identity
7. As production becomes automated, humans’ utility is primarily within their consumptive capacity
8. As attention and consumer data become commodities, the act of consumption becomes an act of production
9. Thus the consumers of the city-experience become the commodity themselves.
Kop van Zuid

THE EMPTY CITY

THE MARKET TRADES ARCHITECTURE AS A SPECULATIVE PRODUCT
THUS, THE VALUE OF ARCHITECTURE RESIDES IN ITS ABILITY TO REPRODUCE CAPITAL.
AND, THE CITY BECOMES A MECHANISM TO PRODUCE PRIVATE PROPERTY
PRIVATE PROPERTY
CONSTRUCTS THE
INDIVIDUAL AS SEPARATE
FROM THE CITY
THUS, RATHER THAN A COLLECTIVE SPACE, THE CITY BECOMES AN AGGREGATE OF INDIVIDUALITIES
AND, THE SPACE OF THE CITY IS CREATED TO BE LOOKED UP-AT AND OUT-FROM, BUT NOT IN-TO.
THE CITY OF PRIVATE PROPERTY IS AN EMPTY CITY
BECAUSE THERE IS NO THERE, THERE, THE EMPTY CITY IS OCCUPIED BY THE SPECTACLE OF ITS OCCUPANTS
Only in the space of private property do individuals take refuge from their own performance.
However, inside, the subject is neutralized by their status as viewer, depoliticized, their ability to participate in the city negated by their view upon it.
Canary Wharf

THE FACTORY CITY

THE MARKET SEEKS TO MAXIMIZE EFFICIENCY
BECAUSE POST-INDUSTRIAL LABOR IS IN IDEAS / EMOTIONS / DESIRES, THE FACTORY MUST RESEMBLE THE DAILY LIFE IN WHICH THIS HUMAN CAPITAL IS PRODUCED
THEREFORE, THE FACTORY MUST RESEMBLE THE CITY
HOWEVER, IT IS NOT A CITY, AND ALL SPACES WITHIN IT ARE SPACES OF LABOR
FRICITION AND CRITICALITY THREATEN DISTRACTION AND ALIENATION, SO THE FACTORY MUST MAINTAIN ITS ILLUSION AS CITY
THUS, IT MUST BE TIGHTLY CONTROLLED AND PERCEPTION CLOSELY MONITORED
AND, IT MUST BE MONITORED BY AN ARMY OF WORKING-CLASS LABORERS, THEIR RIGHT TO THE SPACE PREDICATED ON THEIR PRODUCTIVE STATE
AND, ALL CONDITIONS OF LABOR AND INFRASTRUCTURE MUST BE CONCEALED
THE ILLUSION OF THE CITY PRODUCES THE FACTORY’S HUMAN CAPITAL
Hudson Yards
THE CITY™

THE MARKET MUST MAINTAIN 3% GROWTH
THUS, IT MUST CONTINUALLY FIND NEW COMMODITIES AND CONSUMERS FOR THOSE COMMODITIES.
EXPERIENCE IS THE IDEAL COMMODITY, BECAUSE IT IS INSTANTANEOUSLY CONSUMED
THE CORPORATION CONSTRUCTS A CITY IN WHICH TO SELL ITS EXPERIENCE
IN ORDER FOR THE CITY TO APPEAR IN ITS COMMODITY FORM, LABOR AND INEQUALITY MUST BE CONCEALED
THE COMMODIFIED-CITY MUST SUSTAIN THE ILLUSION OF CHOICE, SO CONSUMPTION CAN CONSTRUCT IDENTITY
AS PRODUCTION BECOMES AUTOMATED, HUMANS’ UTILITY IS PRIMARILY WITHIN THEIR CONSUMPTIVE CAPACITY.
AS ATTENTION AND CONSUMER DATA BECOME COMMODITIES, THE ACT OF CONSUMPTION BECOMES AN ACT OF PRODUCTION.
THUS, THE CUSTOMERS OF THE CITY-EXPERIENCE BECOME THE COMMODITY THEMSELVES
With the Truth Games scripted, and the cities unmasked, the thesis became a project of representation. I designed this website as a digital exhibition to allow for a simultaneity of looking at the city and its truth games. With its multiple paths that take one through layers of information on the same issue, the structure of the website is akin to the layering and unmasking that the project aims to do, and constructs a truth within itself. These diagrams are navigation assistants, unpacking the website’s architecture.
A Revised Manifesto

And then, there is a moment of closure that is the manifesto. Through these multiple layers, and the Truth Games, I arrived at an overwhelming complexity, and I needed to test how these things came together. I found an echo of my work in the radical architectures of the 1970s. This moment of the 1970s was a crisis, economically and socially. It was a moment where the ideology of capital was reaching a breaking point, and its truth games were floating at the surface. Superstudio, OMA, and Archizoom saw these Truth Games and used spatial provocations to unmask them and represent the city underneath. That moment of crisis in the 1970s was saved by a new ideology, Neoliberalism, but now again it reaches a breaking point.

I wanted to test this parallel. I saw that the idea in Archizoom’s No-stop City, that the city had become something obsolete to capitalist production, was similar to my idea that the city has become a simulacrum of what is in reality a factory constructing subjectivity and ideology. So, I proposed to revise their manifesto, recontextualizing it in today’s Neoliberal City.

In the tradition of manifestos as forward-looking or maybe retroactive, this is a revised manifesto. The act of revision as a form of design concludes that it is not new ideas that we need, but instead to think deeply about old ones and what they reveal about the environments we find ourselves in today. By extension, I took the images that Archizoom, Superstudio, and OMA used to explore their ideas and reedit them in relation to my Capital Imaginaries. To edit, to defamiliarize, allows me to re-represent what is right in front of us.
Nowadays there can be no hesitation in admitting that the urban-phenomenon Capital Imaginary is the weakest point most intense unit in the whole-industrial global capitalist system. The metropolis Capital Imaginary, once the traditional liberating “birthplace-of-progress free enterprise zone”, is today, in fact, the most backward and confused clear and controlled sector enclave of Capital in its actual state: and this is true to such an extent, that one is led to wonder if the Capital Imaginary modern city is nothing more than a problem which has not been solved the utopian dreams of big Capital, or if in reality, it is not a historical-phenomenon which has been-objectively-superseded the moment in which the city’s Truth Games, its ideology, floats to the surface. That is, we must determine whether Capital still confronts the task of managing its own organization and image on an urban level shaping the city to its logic, as it did a hundred fifty years ago or whether the changes which have taken and are taking place it has so thoroughly achieved this aim that it have has not altered its actual sphere of action, thus transforming the concept role of the city. The problem then is no longer that of creating a metropolis, which is more humane and better organized, but rather that of understanding the objective laws Truth Games which control the shaping of the urban-architectural phenomenon, using Capital Imaginaries to demystify the complex ideology and resultant policy which surrounds the discussion and conditions the form it takes.

According to the naturalistic myth of free competition Truth Games of Neoliberalism, it was the city deregulated zone, as a centre for trade and commerce, that guaranteed allowed ideal market conditions freedom, making for a natural equilibrium between opposite interests an escape from the interference and regulation of the city, in the general background of the harmony reached between technology and nature public and private interests. But now the use of electronic media Capital Imaginary’s immersive simulation takes the place of the direct urban praxis: artificial inducements to consumption the naturalization of the market’s ideal city allow a much deeper infiltration into the social structure than did the heterogeneous city’s weak conflicting channels of information. The metropolis Capital Imaginary ceases to be never was a “place”, to-become-condition: but was always a simplified simulation thereof: in fact, it is just this condition illusion which is made easy to circulate uniformly, through Consumer-Products across borders and cultures, in the social-phenomenon as an ideal urban prototype. The future dimension of the metropolis Capital Imaginary coincides with that of the market itself.

The intensively concentrated tangled metropolis corresponds to the now superseded phase of spontaneous regulated accumulation of Capital. In a programmed market-ordered society, the management of interests perception no longer needs to be organized on the spot where for trade is in human capital to take place. The complete penetrability and accessibility simplicity and shininess of the territory Capital Imaginary does away with the terminus complex city and permits the organization of a progressive international network archipelago of organisms-of-control-over-the-area hyper-controlled urban islands.

In these islands of raw and exaggerated capital, Truth Games, which are typically obscured, float at the surface and begin to expose themselves. Through an interrogation of three Capital Imaginaries: Kop van Zuid (The Empty City), Canary Wharf (The Factory City), and Hudson Yards (The City™), their Truth Games can be uncovered and scripted, in turn unmasking the city and revealing what is under its veil.
The City™

In the bourgeois market’s ideology Truth Games, ecological balance pacification and social-justice exploitation become part of the same battle for maximizing human capital: the appearance of the city™—constructed to sell its experience—gives a formal verification of this equilibrium ideology. In Town Master Planning, therefore, an attempt is made to achieve a not impossible harmony between the space of Public interest consumption and the Private interest production: these two categories, however, are always taken as antithetical, contrasting and irreconcilable competing but interrelated phenomena, both required for compounding growth. The problem therefore becomes that of finding a two-dimensional new commodity, to guarantee the fitting together of these irreconcilable inverse components. The traffic data flow can be taken as the most general means of communication between the two, as it becomes the objective and figurative productive scheme of the functioning of urban the entertained life. In fact reads data does not merely serve exploit the compact fabric of what is private information, but they also dissect it and makes it communicating, making way for the emergence targeting of architectonic language signals. The skyline becomes a diagram sensor of the natural for data accumulation which has taken place of serves Capital itself. So the bourgeois metropolis City™ remains appears mainly a visual place of leisure, and but its experience remains tied to that type-of-communication exploitative production and consumption.

The carrying out of a social organization of labor by means of Planning private ownership of entire districts eliminates the empty interstitial public space, into which Capital expanded during its growth period. In fact, no reality exists any longer outside the system itself: the whole visual relationship with reality loses importance as there ceases to be any distance between the subject and the phenomenon Truth Games. The city Capital Imaginary no longer never “represented” that system, but becomes naturalized the system itself, programmed and isotropic, and within it the various functions are contained homogeneously, without contradictions.

The Factory City

Production and Consumption possess one and the same ideology, which is that of Programming maximizing human capital. Both hypothesize require a social and physical reality completely continuous smooth and undifferentiated banal. No other realities exist. The factory city and the supermarket shopping mall become the specimen models of the future city factory: optimal urban structures hallucinations, potentially limitless closed systems, where human’s functions creative and emotional labor are is arranged spontaneously rigorously in an free ordered field, made uniform by a system of microacclimatization surveillance network and optimal persistent circulation of targeted information. The “natural and spontaneous” balance of light work and air life is superseded: the house apartment / café / gym / bar / park becomes a well-equipped parking lot office, Inside it In the Factory City, there exist no hierarchies boundaries, nor only spatial figuration of a conditioning nature.

Typology Architecture, as a functional figuration of society, undecided between the certain datum of a survey an expression of a social structure and the almost certain datum of an assumption a vertically-integrated generator of the aspirations of that society, rests so entangled in the allegorical representation of such a conflict life that it becomes an extra-functional-cultural coefficient the battleground of ideology. In an attempt to supply the user with the highest degree of liberty freedom within the most rigid banal possible “figuration”, architecture comes to recognize its real destiny in the urban phenomenon cycle of ideology informing policy, policy
creating space, and space naturalizing ideology, and its real nature in service to the private market. Thus, in contradictory fashion, on each single occasion it will generically prefigure an entire district general lay-out of things and at the same time set itself up to defend the partially superiority of the individual experience with respect to the collective experiences. Thus it mediates between the contradicting forces of public and private: now, however, this conflict is no longer left on the speculative level of existential consciousness. Economic Planning Neoliberalism's Truth Games, by organizing ordering the whole of society productively along the needs of the market, eliminates the conflict collective, considers the contradiction its power fictitious and takes any strictly individual datum as experimental presents the city as an aggregate of individualities.

The Empty City

Up till now, the mass of the general public has been excluded from part of the architectonic phenomenon: of the city. But as the collective was bought out, the city has emptied, leaving its occupants to assume the simultaneous roles of spectator and spectator. Being temporary guests tenants of the integrative ‘Existenzminimum’ of a much more real day’s work stagnated wage, people have used home been left with an apartment only to eat and sleep in, and an empty city that can be locked up-and out-from, but not in-to. Inside the house apartment everything has been thought out value-engineered by an architecture developer whose aim was to console profit nothing was left is allowed but to hang a few pictures-on-the-walls gaze out at the view. The house apartment’s view was the first, most important step in the total adoption of the bourgeoisie alienation from the collective way of life. But And now people, being strengthened exhausted by the new and ever increasing capacity obligation to decide for themselves consume an identity, which they have won at pay for with work, must take housing into their own hands as the refuge from their performance, freeing it relieving them from all preconstituted participation in cultural and social models, breaking the subtle intellectual links and hysterical linguistic knots which characterize architecture the individual as the figuration of space part of a collective. Freed from the armour duty of its own character citizenship, architecture must become an open structure, accessible to intellectual mass-production as the only force has neutralized the subject with the status of viewer, symbolizing removed from the collective landscape. Therefore, the problem becomes that of freeing returning architecture to mankind from architecture insomuch as it is a formal structure relationship.

Nowadays the only possible conceivable utopia is quantitative within the infinitely adaptable market. Social conflict is no longer going through the phase of the confrontation of alternative models, but is in that of dialectical negotiation between a balanced development of chronic crises the system and the growing cost of the labour-force their designed fixes. The clash no longer takes place in the field of ideology, because ideology has become reality but in quantitative terms; it is via this-parameter the raw and diagrammatic capital imaginaries that the summing together is made possible of different phenomena which apparently have no link with one another is made possible in Truth Games. Quantitative language is replaced by qualitative delirious, thus becoming the only scientific rational means of approach to the undifferentiated stratification of production landscape of the Neoliberal City and hence of reality. As general terms the illusion of reference the city disappears, behaviour becomes a structure free from moral-alligations subjectivity. Freedom Truth Games, as an end, becomes an instrument of struggle.
Flagrant Délit
Madeon Vriensendorp

Truth Games
Naturalizing the Neoliberal Subject

City of the Captive Globe
OMA
The Depoliticized Individual emerges in a city which has lost its ground. If the anthropomorphic skyscraper's in Madelon Vriesendorp’s Flagrant Délit show the double life of modern architecture, the icons of Kop van Zuid lead passive lives, their participation in the city neutralized by their status of view. The collective destroyed by the picture plane. What is left is a city composed of alienated domestic cells, without a ground to connect them. The placeless city is filled only by the spectacle of its occupants. And so OMA’s city of the captive globe, once celebrating the simultaneity of ideology made possible by a regulated grid, now leaves an empty city at ground level. Eliminating the collective and presenting the city as an aggregate of individuals.
The Uncritical Laborer emerges in an environment dominated by surface. Surface is smooth, and demands movement and productivity. In their projects Supersurface and the continuous monument Superstudio uses the surface as liberator, freeing man from induced needs and behaviors. But in Canary Wharf the surface is deployed as an undifferentiated factory floor. There is no interior, there is no city only ground, because the apartment / café / gym / bar / park have all become a well-equipped office. When unmasked, Canary Wharf is a factory, which is posing as a city in order to co-opt the emotions, desires and creativity that fuel post-industrial production.
All Spaces Become Spaces of Labor

Well-Equipped Office
Hudson Yards

The Entertained Consumer emerges in a city which has made consumption a productive act. If Archizoom concludes that the city is obsolete, and takes the factory and supermarket as models for total urbanization, I draw the illusion which Neoliberalism requires in order to maintain consumptive production. Architecture becomes the container of experience, producing an environment for the body to be entertained. Consumption is as much an obligation as production and by repeating the components of Hudson Yards, the futility of the spectacle is revealed. The Vessel only makes sense if there is one.
Truth Games
Naturalizing the Neoliberal Subject

Menu of Experiences

There Can Only Be One
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**KOP VAN ZUID**


Truth Games 
Naturalizing the Neoliberal Subject

CANARY WHARF


Truth Games

Naturalizing the Neoliberal Subject

Hudson Yards


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Honor’s Reflection

A reflection on the production of the three-part film series: Capital Imaginaries in fulfillment of the Honors Requirements for an Honors Thesis in Architecture.

My Experience Producing Capital Imaginaries, A Reflection.

Hanneke van Deursen

When given the opportunity to engage a field adjacent to architecture for the honors component of my thesis, I challenged myself to try something new. From early on, there were ideas about making a movie. The first source of inspiration was a documentary, The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces, which analyzed the use of urban plazas in the 1970s. It made me wonder, fifty years later, how has our use of space (and the space itself) changed? Second, there was a gloomy Sunday afternoon in London stuck in my head. In February 2018, on a class assignment, I had stumbled into Canary Wharf. Its eeriness had haunted me since. These two experiences gave me the idea to implement film as a medium to research the urban condition.

In the following months, I built my thesis. By final Thesis Preparation reviews in early December, a body of research had emerged which
established a three-way analytical case study of Kop van Zuid in Rotterdam, Canary Wharf in London, and Hudson Yards in New York. I began to call these environments Capital Imaginaries, interpreting them as the dystopian imaginations of perfect urbanism under capitalism. The analysis danced between politics, economics, geography, and urban studies to establish between the Capital Imaginaries a common origin in Neoliberal policy. From there, a hypothesis was established on truth games, the play of logics which Capital Imaginaries employ to naturalize Neoliberal Ideology. I positioned architecture as an active agent in these truth games and argued that architecture works in service of the market, naturalizing a passive subject in a constant state of production or consumption: the Neoliberal Subject.

At the Thesis Preparation review, each Capital Imaginary was presented in a series of analytical drawings. Each began with a detailed site plan, the drawing of which granted me immense control and understanding over the physical space. Next to the site plan hung a multi-layered timeline, which tracked connections between policy, public institutions, public/private partnerships, private individuals/companies, and the construction of the site. The timelines revealed that Neoliberal policy (tax breaks, quasi-public organizations, visa incentives) was directly responsible for creating each of the Capital Imaginaries. Next to the timeline hung elevational drawings. These street elevations layered information about financial models, tenants, architects, and programmatic functions onto each individual building. Next to these three research-based drawings hung my hypothesis on each Capital Imaginary. I extracted their truth games and represented them in both text and image. For example, in Rotterdam’s Kop van Zuid, the truth games say that it is the architectural mechanism of ‘view’ which flattens the city to an image and constructs the depoliticized individual behind its picture plane. It is those truth games, a means of understanding ideology, which enable the architectural environments of Capital Imaginaries to construct the Neoliberal Subject.

During the review, two big questions arose: what’s next? And where is your voice? What’s next was straightforward, at least in the short term. I was flying to London two days later to begin producing a 3-part film series. As far as finding my voice went, the production of the films, and therein taking a month-long detour from the policy / economics / architecture side of the thesis, was intended to shift my focus towards observation and image production. The films would be the lynchpin between my thesis prep research, and my thesis design project. My honors reader, Vasilios Papaioannu, came to see the review, and put his perspective on the work. For him, it was a project of translation. He saw the same place unpacked through the lenses of politics, geography, economics, sociology and architecture. To follow his rhetoric, my next step was to make another translation, this time articulating the ideas through film.

There was a bit of a problem with my filmmaking plan: over the years, I developed a sensibility for taking photos, but had never worked with moving pictures. Rather than attempt to master filmmaking in a month, we decided it would be stronger to leverage my existing skills of careful observation and photographic composition to create for a simple, static, and voyeuristic film that would offer a peek into the world of a Capital Imaginary. Each clip would be a living photograph. Professor Papaioannu lent his sensibility for the editing and in the end we were able to create something I had never expected to turn out so well. The following is a reflection on my experiences making the films, Capital Imaginaries: Canary Wharf, Kop van Zuid, and Hudson Yards.

As scheduled, I flew to London two days after my thesis prep review. Emerging from Canary Wharf Underground station, my eyes darted around in wonder. It was like stepping into the world of a videogame I had been playing for months. Since October images, google models, and drawings of this strange place had occupied my screen. And now I was in it. The next six days were spent fully immersed in Canary Wharf. Armed with my subtle little video camera, I walked and observed and sat and chatted. My hope was to capture the way in which Canary Wharf avoided criticality, and perpetuated a constant state of work. As I looked around, moments would catch my eye (a beautiful composition, an interesting interaction). Doing my best to keep still, I would aim the camera at that moment and wait. At least 30 seconds, no more than five minutes. This became my technique for all three films: full immersion into the environment, long and steady takes, keep looking for the next shot. In the process of making each film,
and thus in occupying the Capital Imaginaries, a series of unexpected observations surfaced. The following are my observations in Canary Wharf:

1. At first, I was extremely paranoid about getting caught. Canary Wharf is private property, and the private security could remove me from the premises at any moment for any reason. The website specified that filming required a permit (though not for student work) and filming security equipment, building entrances, etc was strictly prohibited. This is precisely what I needed to film. A man with a large camera told me that security had spotted him within fifteen minutes. But, after a while, I began to realize that no one really noticed me. My camera was small, which helped avoid security, but even those being filmed at a single meter’s distance did not see me. My paranoia waned as time and time again I was completely invisible to the subjects of my film. Those who did notice me were typically not those wearing business suits.

2. My hotel was just beyond the border of the property, which meant it was 4m below the ‘ground level’ of Canary Wharf. This strange boundary was masked by an art piece that obscured the view from Canary Wharf beyond its border. To get to the hotel, I would have to go to a stair tucked into a neighboring building to get down. From street level, a tunnel entrance was visible. It took me four days to build up the courage, but after going inside I discovered the entire site is connected by the tunnel system.

3. Those who did not appear to be high income individuals were almost always in a uniform which clearly communicated their occupation. It appeared as a sort of justification for why these people were occupying the space of Canary Wharf, that without the uniform they would be out of place.

4. After three days of filming within the Canary Wharf property, I needed some shots from the surrounding area with the skyscrapers in the background. The experience of leaving was surreal. It was as if I had forgotten what a city really was like. There was a texture to the surrounding neighborhood, sounds, grit, people hanging out, that had been smoothed out in Canary Wharf. What stunned me was that even while making a film about the editing of urbanity which Capital Imaginaries produce, I too fell was subject to its naturalization.

The themes which emerged in the Canary Wharf film were: relationship between upper class and working class, the radiant gentrification impact, the edges/borders, the tight control of the environment, the obliviousness of the workers, and the banality of the architecture.

After my week in London, I took a train to Rotterdam, editing together my first cut of Canary Wharf on the journey. It was coming together nicely, and so expectations for the Rotterdam film were high. The goal for this film was to capture how Capital Imaginaries distance their occupants from the life of the city, and instead make the city an object to look at. This film was going to be different. I had lived in Rotterdam for 7 months in 2018, and so the city was familiar to me. While I assumed this would make things easier, Kop van Zuid became by far the most difficult place to figure out. The following are some of my observations:

1. My approach matched that in London: walking around and filming compositions and interactions. The issue was I could not get a feel for the place. After filming some ‘B-roll’ (nice shots of buildings without any action), there had not been many interactions to observe. There were few people to begin with, and when there were people they would be strolling, seemingly going nowhere. I did not know what to film. No themes were emerging.

2. After a few days of stressing about the illegibility of Kop van Zuid, I spoke with a Rotterdam-based friend of mine who put it quite simply. Kop van Zuid is a destination, not a place. With this in mind, the argument of the film began to fall into place. I focused on the
relationship between the image of Kop van Zuid from far away, the urban skyline, and the reality of the experience on ground level, sterile, empty and windy.

3. I began to notice that most of those strolling were couples. Their walk was a promenade of sorts, like they were parading their relationship in the place so it could be seen. Most visitors seemed to come over the Erasmus Bridge and do a lap around Kop van Zuid without any particular destination, just to get out of the house and stroll around.

4. There were many people at Kop van Zuid to take selfies, the city serving as backdrop.

5. There were multiple tours: segway tours, school groups, which reinforced the idea that Kop van Zuid is a place to go. Usually, the tours had little to see once they arrived, the group and I being the only people around.

6. So many people saw me and the camera. After my experience in Canary Wharf, this reinforced the see-and-be-seen nature of Kop van Zuid. I, with my camera, was a spectacle for visitors to observe, while, at the same time, some performed for the camera (waving, kissing, pointing).

The themes which emerged in the Kop van Zuid film were: city as photo backdrop, seeing and being seen, image of the skyline vs. experience at street level, and emptiness/non-place.

After a two-week break, I moved to my final location: New York City. Here, the film would capture how Capital Imaginaries relegate free time to consumption. This film was the easiest. Hudson Yards is small in comparison to the other two Capital Imaginaries, and it is exceptionally clear in its production of an Entertained Consumer. It was packed with people, so I had no shortage of subjects, and the mall even had a charging station, eliminating camera battery concerns. The following were some of my observations producing the final film:

1. Like in Canary Wharf, my fear of getting caught waned as I realized that no one noticed me. Moreover, everyone was there taking photos, so if anything I blended in.

2. The security, while less overt than in Canary Wharf, was incredibly present. People were frequently directed, checked in on, and monitored to ensure that the place ran like a well-oiled machine.

3. Everyone there looked like they would shop at the stores in the mall (ranging from Zara to Rolex). There were no homeless people, artist-types, and barely any working class people from my observations. There were, however, many tourists.

4. There was an extended metaphor between Little Spain (the Spanish ‘market’) and the entire complex of Hudson Yards. Little Spain reflects the Chelsea Market permanent-food-stall model, but all by a single chef. It is intended to recall a Spanish market, as the branding on the walls heavily insinuates, with around ten stalls that each sell a different category of product (sandwiches, meat, seafood, fruit). The displays are so neatly staged that the food appears fake. In the case of the jamón (an entire pig leg), the grossest part (the foot) is cut off so as to alienate the product from the animal it came from.

5. There is a store called b8ta full of gadgets that people can play around with. The place was always packed. On my third day, I learned that the business model of the store does not derive profit from sales, but instead from data collected on the customers. The whole store is rigged with cameras which detect age, race, gender, and duration of interaction to sell the consumer data to the startups.

6. I overheard someone say “they just don’t build stuff like this anymore, it’s all in China now, all the good architects are over there.” This was quite amusing, especially considering that the buildings he was referring to were likely designed by western architects, a condition made possible by Neoliberalism.

The themes which emerged in the Hudson Yards film were: control of space and movement, commodification, spectacle, selfie-taking as...
interaction with public space, the shed as controlled public space, and the banality of the architecture.

After the shooting, came the editing. I made an effort to finish at least the first cut of each film before starting to shoot the next. That way, the editing occurred in the same headspace as the shooting. After a ‘first cut’ was ready, Professor Papaioannu would watch the film together via Skype. He would pause and give notes: “put this one a little bit longer,” “wait until she leaves the frame to cut,” “cut before he moves his head.” Because I had never made a film before, the editing session on the first movie, Canary Wharf, required about two hours to work through the 20 minute film. Professor Papaioannu was incredibly helpful in describing to me the rationale of where you cut and when. Through the editing process my sensibility began to develop.

Editing the Kop van Zuid film was as difficult as shooting it. There was 500GB of footage, but no clear direction. In an effort to make sense of it, I went through all the footage, selected the clips that were working well, and set in and out points for them (where the clip will start/stop). With screenshots of the 80+ selected clips, I started arranging the scenes in Adobe Illustrator to make a storyboard. With the visual oversight that Illustrator gave me, my architectural brain was much happier and the clips started to form more logical sequences. In our first-cut Skype session, Professor Papaioannu agreed that Canary Wharf and Kop van Zuid were two very different movies, but validated that it was because of the qualities of Kop van Zuid (or lack thereof) that the movie was so difficult to make. In the end, the film managed to capture the confusion of place that Kop van Zuid produces.

Hudson Yards was by far the easiest. This was a combination of my skills improving with every movie, the conceptual clarity of ‘The Entertained Consumer’, and the overt presence of this subject in the environment. This time having a printer on hand, I cut out my storyboards and began to move them around. There was so much strong footage that the initial storyboard contained 120 possible clips (to be whittled down to 66). The editing session with Professor Papaioannu was quick and easy, he noted that my skills as an editor had improved drastically, and that in every movie the strongest element was my composition.

It was an incredible feeling to finish the three movies, and I truly surprised myself with the result. The films were shown in an immersive installation designed for the thesis mid-reviews in early February. The films began as a fun project, and a way to engage another discipline, but they have revealed themselves to be the mechanism for carrying my thesis project forward. The long-takes, prolonged shots where the camera does not move, force the viewer to unpack the image themselves. In so doing, the films begin to unravel the illusion of the Capital Imaginaries. It returns criticality to the banal environment. In the coming months, my thesis will draw from these long-takes to produce a project which unmasks the truth game. The films will invariably remain an active agent in the development of the thesis from here on out.