



**THIS
IS
WHITE
BUT
IT CAN
ALSO BE
PINK**

achieving
inclusivity ≈
the
marine terrain
case

by
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INSIDE

master of interior architecture

Georgina Pantazopoulou

for

Theory part - *studio III*

Tutor:

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INTRODUCTION

Ok, now imagine how the hard concrete becomes a soft textile.

The human environments either public or private, reflect all the established power relationships, the social norms, the rules, the automatisms, the symbols, and by extension the dipoles that make it up. At the same time, our inner bipolar direction and interaction with the surrounding objects, indicates the expressionistic use of our bodies perpetuating the underlying stereotypical view of each sex. These relationships differ each other. *Maurice Merleau-Ponty* in **Phenomenology of Perception** (1945), refers to the human body as the medium that is used in order to understand the world around us¹. Our body is the principle that constitutes our existence and our medium of experiencing the world. “We are concerned with what might be called ‘sense’: an organ that perceives, a direction that may be conceived, and a directly lived movement progressing towards the horizon”² refers *Sara Ahmed* in **Queer Phenomenology** (2006).

In this research paper, I focused on *Marineterrein*, a contemporary public space in Amsterdam, and its accessibility by a bigger portion of different people. In *Marineterrein* case, a study will be performed on the criteria which determine the space “accessible” for all not only by the physical aspect but also by the social aspect. How the human body confronts the place and what are the key elements that could unlock this site for everyone, making it more “inclusive”. This is the reason that I will also analyze how intersectionality approach (Kimberlé Crenshaw, 1991) led to the emergence of the power structures such as the ideological systems of sexism, racism and class oppression and how can be destabilized and reevaluated regarding public space.

It is rather interesting how such a vast area in the center of Amsterdam remained closed to the public until recently, a few years ago, open again for the public. Because of the previous identity of the site (military base, buildings used by army, naval history), there are numerous remnants of signs, naval objects, military elements, despite the site eventually transformed into a public space. Nevertheless, even after the identity alteration of the site, the area tends to gather/accept specific user profiles on a daily basis, often excluding minorities who also belong to the urban web. Instead of creating an architectural proposal that would give design solutions for the total area, interventions took place

only in specific locations of the site, without solving the real needs of a contemporary public space. Because of this fact, the most practical outcome is that the site does not ensure wheelchair accessibility, the safety for children, the spaces for mothers and childcare, or either minorities such as homeless people, automatically reducing the number of users of the space.

Focusing on the male-female dipole, we observe a continuous trend in recent years where everything tends to be reversed, to mix, to coincide, to become one in a world that is evolving, without inequalities where everyone has the right to choose. The public and private space must be adapted towards this path and the needs born out of it. In other words, the subject must consciously define the object, otherwise the bodies will continue to feel trapped in spaces without associations and emotional irritations. We will find our place in this world when we apply our personal sensations and associations in relation to objects.

HOW TO DESIGN A REAL WORLD FOR ALL ?

what should we consider in order to create
more **inclusive** environments?

IS MARINETTERREIN SUITABLE FOR ME?

Those who are aware of the history of the city of Amsterdam and specifically of the Marineterrein area will know that until 2016 the site remained closed to the general public, while until a few years ago it was mainly associated with a military base and naval history. These previous usages applied subconsciously to space a strong masculinist character. In addition to that, it seems rather difficult to find a photo of the past that depicts a person other than the typical “white male” [fig.1,2,3]³, probably because of the dominant Dutch army’s existence⁴ during the previous century⁵. In other words, the past users’ profiles were too limited, turning the place into an exclusive area. Returning to today and the new character of the site, as a big urban area in the center of the city, we understand the reasons why there was a need to transform the area into a public space open to all, as befits a modern European city like Amsterdam. The main question is whether the site is really “open to everyone” or whether the exclusive identity of users is still unconsciously maintained? Visiting the site multiple times and doing various interviews with current users, I noticed that even today the users’ profiles are very specific. For instance, on a daily basis, most of them belong to the 20-45 age range, are dog walkers or just walkers or work in a start-up company inside Marineterrein or just use the place for socializing. Of course, this is not a rule; is just an observation according to my personal experience as a visitor and an outcome of the various interviews that I did as a researcher in this area. On the contrary in the other big parks of the city such as *Vondelpark*, there are also minorities and greater diversity on users’ identities who “inhabit” the space.

But why does this occur? Which space qualities and values exist that make the Marineterrein keen on hosting a specific group of people? *Doreen Massey* who was a British social scientist and geographer, in her influential article “A global sense of place” (1994) writes that it is a sense of place, an understanding of ‘its character’, *which can only be constructed by linking that place to places beyond*⁶. For instance, each time I visit the Marineterrein, immediately it comes to my mind my childhood memories in a seaside village, because of the sea existence. According to the theory of sensation of *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, the sensation of the creator of an object is a derivative of the knowledge that is accumulated based on some predefined qualities⁷ which sometimes referred to

its background. The question is how to build an object not to be necessarily compatible with the consciousness of some, but rather in a more real way that would translate the knowledge in a timeless and “un-bordered” manner.

Focusing on Marineterrein, I try to define the identity of the existing **objects** that derived from other projects and vary in style. First of all, the area is full of the naval element and its aesthetics. There are numerous signs, poles, and fences which are creating something like a physical or “atmospherical” obstacle for the user’s spatial experience. Furthermore, there is various public furniture [fig.4] that takes up space in a more exclusive way and does not let the imagination of the user take action and use the space as one would like in a specific time and case. Those static constructions tend to limit the use modification and aim to a distinctive usage, *-without resilience-*, depriving the space of other usages that could take place in it. This trend of exclusive design, subconsciously traps the everyday human in a specific way of approaching the construction and space, making both unapproachable and unusable for some. It seems that the character of the objects in relation to space has a strict tendency, pushing away minorities or diversity’s group of users that could contribute with their presence and interactions.

Leslie Kern in **Feminist city - Claiming Space in a Man-Made World** refers that “*At a minimum, an intersectional approach that starts from the needs and perspectives of the most vulnerable will be required*”.⁸ In general, the essence of the previous quote should be taken into consideration at all times in all the constructions either space modifications either objects creation. According to *Kimberlé Crenshaw* **intersectionality** is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects.⁹ The approach should not be only focused on the physical diversity of people but also on the psychological variations of multiple people regardless of their orientation and belief. The use of the objects and space around a common area should not impose a clear character but be more “flexible” as per their identity. Because, if the character is predefined then an unpleasant feeling is created in minorities and is reducing the intersectional and multivariate character of the space.

Moreover, the reality for each person is relational to their mindset, knowledge and perception. By forcing some specific characteristics to an area or

object you empower a small portion of people that coexist with this mindset. That way the power relation against those people and that area or object becomes obvious and usually forced on others. As Irene Molina says “*The space is a relational reality: dialectical materialist space, where this reality is created by and at the same time creates also power relations*”.¹⁰

At this point, it would be interesting to mention the extensive project **Exclude Me In** (2013) of MYCKET (Mariana Alves Silva, Katarina Bonnevier, and Therese Kristiansson) [fig.5] who created a queer feminist carnival and a map of queer geography of Gothenburg city at the turn of the 20th century¹¹. Starting in archival studies, which revealed the historic Gothenburg carnival as an extremely heteronormative, straight and patriarchal institution, MYCKET decided to **re-enact** it as an inclusive queer event.¹² It is both a pedagogical and reparative project approaching the meaning of “queer space” as a vital body experience within the body. “*They made visible what had been excluded*”¹³. That is a very inspirational example because they try to challenge people to claim and occupy the public space, applying their personal knowledge and acquirements.

Continuing with Marineterrein’s case, in the area, my colleagues and I created a big map which refers to objects that someone can confront on the site, calling them “**orientation points**” and provides information regarding the user profiles who inhabit the place before. The meaning of the word “orient”, refers not only to space or to directionality but also takes us to a “*specific direction*”¹⁴. As also Sara Ahmed noticed “*I want to explore here how public space take shape through the habitual actions of bodies, such that contours of space could be described as habitual*”¹⁵. Knowing this fact, it can be easy to understand which power structures were and still are dominant at the Marineterrein.

Aiming to make the space more “inclusive” and looking back to current objects’ identities, we need to think about the architectural qualities beyond accepted structures. This will become more understandable if we first approach the concept of resilience. Cultural theorist and urban researcher, *Elke Krasny* and architect, *Meike Schalk* approaching this term as the ability of systems to cope with change¹⁶. According to this, there is a big-scale urban phenomenon about the public/private type of building in Athens -**polykatoikia**- [fig.6] which is the epitome of resilience. Approaching the build-

ing as an object, it is observed that despite the socio-political and economic fluctuations throughout the years this type of building was and continues to be the only one that manages to adapt to any condition while accepting any kind of user. “*The postwar polykatoikia may have, at first, been very successful in the production of a nonhierarchical urban environment and in the absorption of cultural and social differences*”¹⁷ refers *Panos Dragnas* and this is because from the beginning the typology of this building was designed in such a way that nothing is “very specific” but at the same time it is “very functional”. “*The polykatoikia achieves vitality, diversity, and adaptability: essential factors for any city subject to change*”¹⁸, refers *Richard Woditsch* and that is the reason I associate this example with Marineterrein. The concept of accessibility is inextricably linked to these factors and if future design practices need to focus somewhere, it is to obey the needs and predispositions of the subjects.

In other words, if we define the example of polykatoikia as a queer object, we should consider how I should create new design significations with a charge on multiplicity, openness, contradiction, and contention. Queering becomes a strategy or method of questioning what exists, but also a way of identifying the potentials that exist for further evolvment and creation. *Frantz Fanon* in his book **Black Skin, White Masks** speaks of a world when he describes the “*implicit knowledge*” we might have of “*where things are*”, as a knowledge that is exercised by orientations toward objects¹⁹. The future architects and designers should focus on the creation of more “**open**” spaces where the human bodies as subjects would feel free to use the objects around them, without the latter restricting the former with their imposition. Then, public spaces will automatically be created capable of accommodating the diverse group of people who can occupy the space. Thus, the spaces will be more familiar to the users in order to experience them freely, and as *Sara Ahmed* says “*this familiarity is also the capacity to use objects and how they are within reach as objects we do things with*”²⁰.



Marineterrein 30.03.2021



Marineterrein 12.03.2021

Marineterrein

VERY SMALL STEPS FOR A MORE *INCLUSIVE* WORLD

As an architect, I am often looking back at my childhood and trying to think like a child when I am facing a situation like this today. That is because children tend to use their *imagination* to the fullest and solve their problems using play. Without a doubt, we all remember a time when we created our own worlds using the furniture we found in the house, replicating adult behaviors when playing with our friends, shuffling the letters of words to come up with new ones and finally, challenging the rules and created new ones that made us feel better. *Maurice Merleau-Ponty* refers that it is known that the uniformity of apparent size of objects at different distances, or of their color in different lights, is more perfect in children than in adults. It follows that perception is more strictly bound up with the local stimulus in its developed than in its undeveloped state, and more in conformity with the theory of sensation in the adult than in the child.²¹ Therefore children are able to face the world in a “purer” way while at the same time being able to challenge or protest if they think that a situation is not as it should be.

I strongly believe that often the solution to many of the contemporary problems lies in the use of childish imagination and ingenuity as the means of dealing with them alternatively. In order to create more inclusive spaces, creativity skills and the ability to “*seeing*” and “*hearing*” must be developed first and foremost. And also, as *Hannah Arendt* says “*Being seen and being heard by others derive their significance from the fact that everybody sees and hears from a different position. This is the meaning of public life*”²². At the same time, listening to our sensations, we will discover which are finally our personal orientation points and by this way, we could also find our place in this world. This process maybe is endless and we must always remember to be open-minded and eager to try different possible solutions. *Leslie Kern* refers that world-making means the process of both imagining and creating space(s) where things can unfold “*otherwise*”²³.

Sometimes, when I wake up in the morning, I look out the window at the view of each city I am in, I observe and think what is the moral obligation of a designer towards the public realm. If I was making a toolkit as Georgina and giving it to myself as Georgina - *the designer*, then I would like this to contain the following advice:

to start from my own privileged space.
to escape from that.
to listen carefully the others.
to listen carefully the space.
to have the ability to judge.
to search always for possibilities.
to respect the human.
to respect the space.
to discuss before doing.
to do experiments.
to be able to destroy something.
to be able to make it better.
to read, to informed, to know.
to have the ability to read over the 2 sides.
to remember what I would do if I was 5 years old.
to help always for a more inclusive world.
to be orientated.

NOTES

- 1** Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The ‘Sensation’ as a unit of Experience”, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962, p. 5-13
- 2** Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology – Orientations, Objects, Others*, Duke University Press, 2006, p. 12
- 3** <https://www.amsterdam.nl/kunst-cultuur/monumenten/erfgoed-week/marineterrein/>
- 4** <https://www.stelling-amsterdam.nl/kazernes/amsterdam-marinekattenburg/>
- 5** According to google images search
- 6** Doreen Massey, “A global sense of place” (originally published in 1991), in *Space, Place and Gender*, University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis, 1994, p. 156
- 7** Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The ‘Sensation’ as a unit of Experience”, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962, p. 13
- 8** Leslie Kern, *Feminist city – Claiming Space in a Man-made World*, Verso, 2020, p. 165
- 9** <https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later>
- 10** Irene Molina, “When Space Intersects Feminism”, in *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice: Materialisms, Activisms, Dialogues, Pedagogies, Projections*, AADR, 2017, p. 98
- 11** MYCKET, “Through our dance we weave the dance floor – a conversation amongst MYCKET”, in *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice: Materialisms, Activisms, Dialogues, Pedagogies, Projections*, AADR, 2017, p. 59-73
- 12** Nina Lykke, “Anticipating Feminist Futures while Playing with Materialisms”, in *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice: Materialisms, Activisms, Dialogues, Pedagogies, Projections*, AADR, 2017, p.28
- 13** Nina Lykke, “Anticipating Feminist Futures while Playing with Materialisms”, in *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice: Materialisms, Activisms, Dialogues, Pedagogies, Projections*, AADR, 2017, p.29
- 14** Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology – Orientations, Objects, Others*, Duke University Press, 2006, p. 112
- 15** Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology – Orientations, Objects, Others*, Duke University Press, 2006, p. 129
- 16** Elke Krasny and Meike Schalk, “Resilient Subjects: On Building Imaginary Communities”, in *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice: Materialisms, Activisms, Dialogues, Pedagogies, Projections*, AADR, 2017, p. 139
- 17** Panos Dragonas, *Design Adventures in Ad-Hoc Urbanism. Mapping the Connections between Construction Industry, Real Estate and Modern Architecture in Greece* Archithese, 2014
- 18** Richard Woditsch (Ed.), *The public Private House – Modern Athens Polykatoikia*, Park Books, 2018, p. 249

19 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Pluto Press, 1986, p.129

20 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology – Orientations, Objects, Others*, Duke University Press, 2006, p. 124

21 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The ‘Sensation’ as a unit of Experience”, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962, p. 13

22 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, second edition, 2018, p. 57

23 Leslie Kern, *Feminist city – Claiming Space in a Man-made World*, Verso, 2020, p. 57



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thank you





