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ULDX: BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE OF WAR AND MILITARY URBANISM

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During an interview with Watanabe in 1978, Michel Foucault explained what the role of an intellectual in the 20th century should be. According to him, an intellectual's authority does not derive from his ability to tell us truths about the world but rather from his capacity to diagnose the present and decode its signs. He therefore compared the mission of an intellectual to "the slight gesture that entails shifting the gaze" and which makes "visible what can be seen", "brings to the surface what is so closely, so directly and so intimately connected to us that we don't see it"¹. Now, what clearly emerged from the two day conference "Between Architecture of War and Military Urbanism" held in one of Tallinn's cultural clusters called Telliskivi, is that architecture is a fine political act which needs intellectuals of that kind to disclose its camouflages. I think that Foucault's statement is of such great topical interest that any city specialist, as it were, should be aware of it and work in order to explain in detail how the (apparently) most insignificant urban disposition affects our everyday life. It is precisely what the two keynotes Steven Flusty and Stephen Graham tried to do.

1. Foucault, M. (1978) *The stage of philosophy, "Tetsugaku no butai" (La scène de la philosophie; intervjuu M. Watanabega, April 22, 1978, Sekai, July 1978, pp. 312-332.*

FIELD NOTES

The Postmodern disposition of space in Western societies resembles more and more the paradigm of a military camp. Graham explains that there is a sort of Foucauldian "boomerang effect" hitting our cities. The majority of the urban transformations that occurred in the 19th century had already been experimented with in the colonisation of cities and peripheral areas of the world. Contemporary urban space is being rapidly militarised through the extensive use of cameras for video surveillance, fences of all sorts and the disciplinary ordering of the public space. The so-called "boomerang effect" occurs when, for instance, "guided missiles and private armies work to secure key events, from the Olympics or World Cup, to G20 summits and political summits".² The constructions of "security zones" during summits (for example the clamorous divided and interdicted spaces in Genoa during the G8 in 2001 where the city became an open air war space), "echo the techniques used in Baghdad's Green zone".³

What are we losing through this incessant securitisation of cities? The proliferation of fences and the stiffening of urban space which was skilfully presented and commented on by Flusty, denounce a loss of faith towards those ideas of freedom and forwardness embodied in the genealogy of the western cities for centuries. Does (still) the city air make us free – "*Stadtluft macht frei*", as the medieval German motto suggests – or isn't the postmodern city becoming a huge and claustrophobic space without character and urbanity?

Phenomenas such as gated communities, for instance, or the disparate devices for discouraging any form of dwelling in the public space – if not coded through the everyday consumption, Zukin's "domestication by cappuccino"⁴ – are suggesting that what is happening is not a progression towards a better sociality and conviviality but rather a new modality of late medieval "encastellation". Again, Foucault's observation: "is it surprising that the prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?"⁵

2. Graham, S. (2013) "*Foucault's boomerang: the new military urbanism*", published on *Open Democracy*. Available at: www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/stephen-graham/foucault%E2%80%99s-boomerang-new-military-urbanism

3. *Ibid.*

4. Zukin, S. (2010) *Naked city. The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 4.

5. Foucault, M. (1995) *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, New