

Restructuring the viewer's perspective part 2:

City 2.0: The Rhizomatic City

Theatre Research in Practice
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"If the body-city nexus is conceptualized as a thinking machine then the analytical focus shifts towards the identification of those critical networks or 'neurones' that sustain the relationship between the body and the city" (Matthew Gandy 2005: 30).

In this research the focus is on the question in what way the viewer's perspective can be restructured. The research is split in two. The first part is focussing on methods of giving the viewer different ways of looking at the same. If you have other information, and look again at the same movement or listen to the same text, what changes? In the playful performance *Pauze* (trans. Pause/ break), which will be shown at Huis aan de Werf in February, this is the main point of attention.

In the theme of the city as theatre the research is focussing on the question: in what way can restructuring the viewed restructure the viewer's perspective? By making performances, which include both the qualities of that specific location and means of redefining and restructuring that location, this research will be done. The restructuring should bring the attention of the viewer both to the new and to the old structure of that specific location.

My personal interest is on the possibilities of the metaphor of City 2.0. Communities in the city were torn apart because of radio, television and cinema. The social importance of the city seemed to vanish. With mobile technology new forms of relationship are formed. New floating worlds have come into being. The inhabitants of a city are no longer only geographically connected. They are connected to others through mobile phones and mobile internet. So what does the city have to offer to her inhabitants? What is the structure of a city in the digital age? Thanks to mobile technology we can revisit our view on the city as a social construction. To understand this new construction we can take a look at the internet which, with web 2.0, has taken a more rhizomatic, non-hierarchical, structure.

The city is just like (the metaphor of) the web a centralized structure. "Servers and clients are connected in an unambiguously hierarchical manner. In that sense the web is more locally centralised than we usually acknowledge" (Van den Boomen 2007: 1). Since 2002 the world wide web has gone through a lot of changes. There is a new fundamentally changed version of the web: Web 2.0. The role of the user has changed. We seem to be in control: we can add content, remix content, (re)connect content. The user of the web is a user of the city as well.

What if you would see the city as a rhizomatic web too? A social city revolution: City 2.0, as it were. There are new (re)connections between the different subjects and objects. The metaphor of city 2.0 gives us the opportunity of looking at the users of the city: inhabitants, visitors and tourists alike and their relation to each other and the different objects in the city. In the city 2.0 a geographical location is always changing or, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, it is becoming. It is neither one spot nor all the different perspectives of that spot, it is never one nor all. Just as a botanical rhizome (like ginger), you can't tell the beginning or the ending in time and space of a location in the city.

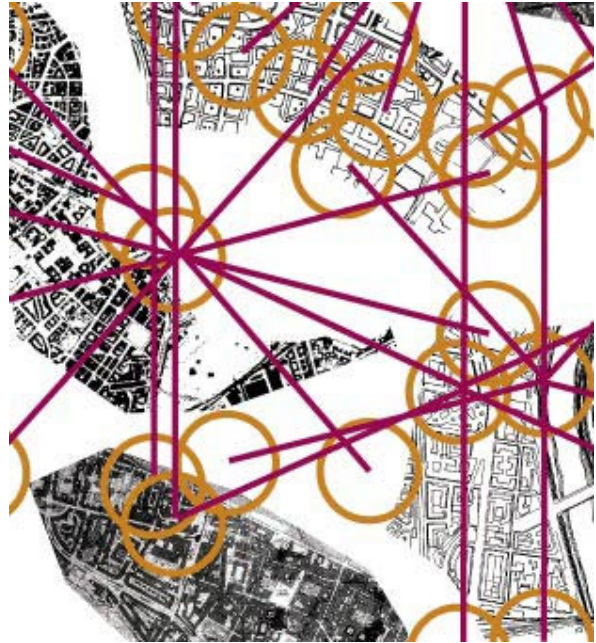


Figure 1: A rhizomatic map by Francesca Iovino, Sciatto Produzie.
http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol_2/contributors0/sciattomap4.jpg

I am interested in resocializing the city. The main question of my research is:

In what way can we restructure or redefine the existing city structure by using the metaphor of the City 2.0 and in what way does this restructuring or redefining change the viewer's perspective?

I want to investigate if looking at the city as a rhizome can help us understand the structure and function of the city in the digital age. The metaphor of the City 2.0 changes the perspective of the viewer, the question is in what way? Can this metaphor give us better insights in the structure of the city? By means of making small performances we can restructure the city and bring the rhizomatic structure to light.

The location I chose is the junction of Nieuwegracht, Maliesingel, Abstederbrug, Agnietenstraat, Zonnenburg and Manenburg (<http://maps.google.nl/maps?f=q&hl=nl&geocode=&q=abstederbrug,+utrecht&sl=52.084701,5.128056&sspn=0.001971,0.005257&ie=UTF8&t=h&om=1&ll=52.085034,5.128174&spn=0.001971,0.005257&z=18>). Old city structures are clear here: the edge of the city, a bridge, a waterway, and a former spot for a fort. But nowadays some of these structures are quite odd. The Nieuwegracht, which seems to be an important route to the city is barely in use. The hill is used for a telescope and there is a want-to-be-park. It seems interesting to me to revive the old city structures by using modern, City 2.0, rhizomatic structures.

Literature

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