

kritische berichte

3.2022

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Marina Otero Verzier

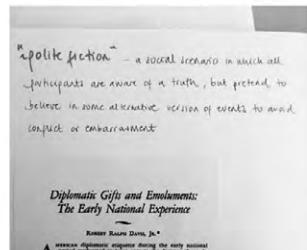
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Suzanne Schols
Polite Fictions
2019–2020



FIGURE 1.2 "Umsolde donne par le roy Louis XIV à l'ambassadeur de Perse ... 29 Février 1711" (a gift given by King Louis XIV to the ambassador of Persia ... 29 February 1711). Engraving by J. van der Donck. © The Trustees of the British Museum 1915,128,397.



In Ihrem künstlerischen Forschungsprojekt *Polite Fictions. Behind the Public Face of Diplomatic Gifts*, das zwischen 2019 und 2020 entstand, setzt sich die Niederländerin Susanne Schols mit der politischen Bildrhetorik des universellen Rituals des Schenkens auseinander (Abb. 1–3).¹ Ohne ihr eigenes Vorgehen selbst derart zu bezeichnen, bedient sich die Künstlerin dabei der kunsthistorisch-bildwissenschaftlichen Methode der Politischen Ikonographie, wenn Sie sich epochenübergreifend den Objekten und Objektgeschichten, den Inszenierungen und Gesten, kurzum den Bildformen und Bildwirkungen diplomatischen Schenkens widmet. In der Diplomatie kommt Geschenken dabei die Macht zu, Verhandlungen einzuleiten, Spannungen abzubauen oder subtile Botschaften zu übermitteln. Schols Arbeit fragt danach, welche Rolle Geschenke heute bei der Gestaltung und Pflege internationaler Beziehungen spielen: Welche Botschaften transportieren sie? Und was können sie uns über die Beziehungen zwischen zwei Ländern verraten?

Obschon sich die Regeln, Traditionen und die Kultur des Schenkens im historischen Verlauf geändert haben, bringt die Fortdauer dieser epochen- und kulturenübergreifenden Tradition weiterhin politische Beziehungen zum Ausdruck. Der Austausch erscheint dabei oftmals ‹bittersüß›, denn die bildhaften Inszenierungen eines Gabentausches auf gleicher Augenhöhe, überdecken nur selten die asymmetrischen Machtverhältnisse



Zusammenstellung von Ansichten aus zu *Polite Fictions* von Susanne Schols, Screenshot der einführenden PowerPointPräsentation auf dem Online-Workshop «Politische Ikonographie heute?» vom 3. Dezember 2021

der beteiligten Parteien. *Polite Fictions* versucht die Paradoxien des diplomatischen Geschenkaustauschs aufzudecken und porträtiert ein System der Konfliktvermeidung und Interessensicherung. Oder, um es in den Worten der Künstlerin zu sagen: Beim Akt diplomatischen Schenkens handelt es sich um «[a] social scenario in which all participants are aware of the truth, but pretend to believe in some alternative version of events to avoid conflict or embarrassment.»² Wie bereits der Titel von Schols' Arbeit andeutet, sollte Politik hierbei nicht nur als reine Repräsentation von Macht verstanden werden, sondern hängt immer auch mit politischen Emotionen und unterschiedlichen Versuchen derer Einhegung zusammen. Dies drückt sich u. a. in den Protokollen und Empfehlungen für diplomatische Geschenke sowie der Art ihrer Präsentation aus, die jedes Land durch seine Außenministerien und Botschaften erstellen lässt: Welches Geschenk eignet sich wann für welchen Volksvertreter, für welche Volksvertreterin? Welche Objekte gilt es dabei kulturspezifisch zu vermeiden?

Im Rahmen einer Rauminstallation (2020) sowie in ihrer gleichnamigen Buchpublikation (2021) machte Susanne Schols den Rezipient:innen von *Polite Fictions* über die bereits genannten Protokolle und Geschenkempfehlungen hinaus weitere Paratexte zugänglich (Abb. 2). Indem sie ihre umfangreiche Brief- und Email-Kommunikation mit den diplomatischen Vertretungen der unterschiedlichen Länder ausstellt und kraft fotografischer Re-Inszenierungen einen Eindruck des Archivs all jener Objekte vermittelt, welche die Europäische Kommission als diplomatische Gaben erhalten hat, und die – der Öffentlichkeit entzogen – in den Kellerräumen des Berlaymont-Gebäudes in Brüssel aufbewahrt werden, so ermöglicht uns Schols einen reflektierten Blick hinter die Kulissen jener öffentlichkeitswirksamen Zeremonielle der internationalen Politik. Besagtem Archiv im Berlaymont-Gebäude kommt dabei die Funktion eines «Endlagers kontaminierte[n] Gegenstände» zu, die nach ihrem politischen Einsatz als diplomatische Geschenke ihren Zweck erfolgreich oder aber auch nicht erfolgreich erfüllt haben und nunmehr als Kollateralobjekte politischer Inszenierungen ausgedient scheinbar zwecklos überdauern. Derart an den Rand der aktiven Politik gerückt, wird durch Schols' künstlerische Öffnung des Archivs das Potential dieser Objekte abermals freigelegt und sie werden als fruchtbare Material sichtbar für kunsthistorische Analysen ihrer Materialität, ihrer Gestaltung, ihrer Inszenierung, ihrer Rezeption etc. und darin letztlich ihres politischen Wirkungsspektrums.

Für eine Beschäftigung mit Politischer Ikonographie ist im Sinne Martin Warnkes die Überzeugung grundlegend, dass Bilder in politischen Kontexten eine hohe Wirkungsmacht erlangen können und dass sich ein großer Teil des politischen Handelns nicht in schriftlichen Quellen, sondern in visuellen Artefakten niederschlägt.³ Dies gilt epochenübergreifend etwa für frühneuzeitliche Festivitäten und Paraden, sowie auch den Tausch von Fußballtrikots zwischen den Präsidenten Jair Bolsonaro und Donald Trump im Jahr 2019 (Abb. 3). Bei erster Betrachtung mag dieser Austausch als bloße Geste des Schulterschlusses zweier Politiker gedeutet werden, die sich als »starke Männer« zu inszenieren versuchen. Für die Fußballnation Brasilien ist das leuchtend gelbe Trikot jedoch – fast mehr noch als die Nationalflagge – ein Symbol für Demokratie und Freiheit. Bolsonaros Geschenk an Trump war daher auch vielmehr als Botschaft an das eigene Land gerichtet, in dem bereits im Vorfeld der Zusammenkunft beider Präsidenten heftige Kontroversen über die Aneignung des Trikots durch die rechtsgerichteten Anhänger von Bolsonaro bei Protesten und Kundgebungen geführt wurden.

Wenn wir Kunstgeschichte als eine Disziplin auffassen, die sich stets am Anfang befindet, so gilt dieser Umstand umso mehr für das Feld der Politischen Ikon-

graphie als bildhistorischem Phänomen sowie als kunsthistorischer Methode. Mit dem zweibändigen *Handbuch Politische Ikonographie* ist 2011 das letzte epochenübergreifende Standardwerk zum Thema des politischen Bildgebrauchs, politischer Bildinszenierungen und politischer Bildwirkung veröffentlicht worden.⁴ Wie dieses konkrete Beispiel zeigt, wirkt eine solche Veröffentlichung, welche sich als enzyklopädisches Nachschlagewerk versteht, wissenschaftsstrategisch stets mindestens in zwei Richtungen: Zum einen bildet ein solches Grundlagenwerk die Basis für weitere Spezialforschungen und Einzeluntersuchungen aus dem adressierten Forschungsgebiet, zum anderen bedeutet es aber auch eine Setzung vermeintlicher Allumfasstheit, worin zugleich eine Art wissenschaftshistorischer Abschluss markiert wird, der vergleichbaren Projekten das Fundament zu entziehen droht. Gerade in Bezug auf das *Handbuch Politische Ikonographie*, welches ein Ergebnis der Forschungsstelle Politische Ikonographie am Warburg-Haus in Hamburg darstellt, und sich somit in die Tradition Aby Warburgs stellt und im Besonderen auf die Forschungen Martin Warnkes zurückgeht, tritt die sprichwörtliche ‹Ironie der Geschichte› in Erscheinung, da der Zeitpunkt der Veröffentlichung besagten Handbuchs in einen historischen Moment fiel, an dem die den politischen Bildphänomenen innewohnende Kraft eine ganz neue Qualität erreichte, die in ihrer medialen Dynamik bis auf den heutigen Tag nachwirkt.

So setzen mit dem sogenannten Arabischen Frühling ab Ende 2010 unzählige politische Transformationen globaler Dimension ein, die ganz neue aber auch altbekannte Ikonographien aus dem Feld des Politischen hervorbrachten, welche unsere gesellschaftliche Wahrnehmung bis heute und darüber hinaus prägen werden.⁵ Ohne Vollständigkeitsanspruch sei hier auf mehrere Ereignisse der circa letzten 10 Jahre verwiesen, die ihr stets eigenes Repertoire politischer Bilderzeugnisse hervorgebracht haben, die aber in ihren Verflechtungen und Parallelitäten aus bildwissenschaftlicher Perspektive wiederum vergleichbar sind und daher der Untersuchung seitens einer kritischen Kunstgeschichts- und Bildwissenschaftsforschung bedürfen und von jüngeren Studien bereits teilweise aufgegriffen worden sind: Occupy Wall Street (in 2011); Black Lives Matter (seit 2013);⁶ die sogenannte globale ‹Migrationskrise› (in der EU seit 2014/2015 öffentlichkeitswirksam); Pegida-Proteste (seit 2014); wiederkehrenden Massenproteste in Hongkong (seit 2014); jüngere rassistisch motivierte Attentate in München (2016), Halle (2019) und Hanau (2020); die letzten drei US-Präsidentenschaften seit der Amtszeit Barack Obamas (2009 ff.);⁷ globale Umweltproteste wie Fridays for Future (seit 2018); die französische Gelbwestenbewegung (zw. 2018–2019); die andauernde COVID-19-Pandemie (seit 2019/2020);⁸ der ‹Sturm› auf das Kapitol in Washington, D. C. Anfang des Jahres 2021;⁹ der Abzug der NATO-Streitkräfte aus Afghanistan (2021); Auseinandersetzungen um LGBTQIA+ und Frauen-Rechte wie etwa jüngst die Abtreibungsverbote in Polen (2021) und Teilen der USA (2022); sowie – *last but not least* – der aktuell geführte Angriffskrieg Russlands auf die Ukraine (seit Februar 2022), der mit der Besetzung der Krim vor acht Jahren bereits Ende Februar 2014 einsetzte.

Obschon sich das Thema des vorliegenden Heftes vor diesem Hintergrund von selbst zu verstehen scheint, ist es dennoch unerlässlich, den hier versammelten Beiträgen ein paar Bemerkungen vorauszuschicken. Der Titel des Heftes geht auf den gleichnamigen Workshop «Politische Ikonographie heute?» zurück, der am 3. Dezember 2021, gefördert von der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, online stattgefunden hat.¹⁰ Besagte Veranstaltung verstand sich als Diskussionsforum

zur kritischen Hinterfragung und zum gemeinsamen Weiterdenken von Konzept und Methode der Politischen Ikonographie.¹¹ Die Sprecher:innen des Workshops waren dazu eingeladen worden, in kurzen Inputs ihre jeweilige Perspektive zu unterschiedlichen Aspekten bildpolitischer Themen vorzustellen und in der gemeinsamen Diskussion mit dem anwesenden Plenum zur Disposition zu stellen. Vor der Folie der zuvor genannten Ereignisse zeithistorischen Ausmaßes war es das Ziel des Workshops einen Dialog zwischen unterschiedlichen Disziplinen und aktuellen Forschungsprojekten anzuregen, der einerseits eine Erweiterung des Kanons politischer Bildphänomene anstrebt, andererseits eine methodische Revision der Politischen Ikonographie anvisiert. Erfolgte in jüngster Zeit vor allem eine durchaus wichtige wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Kontextualisierung der Politischen Ikonographie,¹² verstanden sich die Beiträge des Workshops und verstehen sich die Aufsätze des vorliegenden Heftes als Anstöße für ein gezieltes Fortdenken und eine kritische Diskussion bildpolitischer Themen.

Da in Bildern Aussagen über die kulturelle, soziale und damit letztlich auch politische Verfasstheit unserer Welt getroffen werden, drängen sich Fragen nach dem globalhistorischen Horizont auf: Welche globalen Dimensionen der Politischen Ikonographie als bildhistorischem Phänomen lassen sich festmachen? Und wie lässt sich zugleich vermeiden, dass mit der Politischen Ikonographie als kunsthistorischer Methode ein ‹westliches› Konzept auf die vermeintlich ‹restliche› Welt appliziert wird? Welche Wandlungen lassen sich in den Aufmerksamkeitsökonomien medialer Wahrnehmung von politischen Konflikten jüngerer Zeit ausmachen? Und welche historischen Kontinuitäten und Brüche, Verflechtungen und Entflechtungen der Themen und Motive politischer Bildkultur zeitigen sich in globalhistorischer Perspektive? Wie können wir politische Bilder durch kunsthistorische und bildwissenschaftliche Methoden für eine heutige Generation zum Sprechen bringen? Hierin angesprochen sind neben neueren Technologien, etwa den Tactical Media, d. h. Überwachungs- und Gegenüberwachungstechnologien sowie Praktiken der Maskierung und Anonymisierung, auch die sogenannten Social Media mit ihren politischen Rhetoriken und Ausprägungen von demokratischen Teilhabeverversprechen, über Clicktivism hin zu Tools politischer Manipulation und digitalen ‹Hassbildern›.¹³

Einige Beiträge besagten Workshops wurden für das vorliegende Heft der *kritischen berichte* verschriftlicht (D. Breitenwischer, B. Dogramaci, F. Liptay, K. M. Pahl, B. Sölich) und um zwei Rezensionen – zum einen des Tagungsbands *Politische Emotionen in den Künsten* (S. Haug) zum anderen der Edition der *Briefe Aby Warburgs* (S. Weigel) – sowie um eine aktuelle Kritik (C. Behrmann/F. Jäger/L. Wenzel) bereichert. Zugleich liegt zwischen Dezember 2021 und dem Erscheinen des vorliegenden Heftes nicht einfach nur eine längere Schreibzeit, sondern auch der Angriffskrieg Russlands auf die Ukraine. Dieses Ereignis in einem Heft mit dem Titel *Politische Ikonographie heute* nicht zu adressieren, erscheint unlauter. Mit den Beiträgen von Sasha Rossman, Elke A. Werner und Sabine Sörgel werden daher drei Schlaglichter auf die Politische Ikonographie des andauernden Kriegsgeschehens bzw. auf diejenigen den Krieg paratextuell rahmenden Bilder geworfen, die uns hier in sicherer Distanz erreichen.

Sämtlichen Beiträgen des Heftes ist die Auseinandersetzung mit der Bedeutung der Politischen Ikonographie als historischem Bildphänomen und als kunsthistorisch-bildwissenschaftlicher Methode gemein sowie die Frage danach, um welche Bildphänomene jüngster Zeit der Kanon erweitert werden muss? Welche Themenfelder wurden bisher vernachlässigt? Welche wurden komplett ausgeblendet, mar-

ginalisiert oder gar als apolitisch abgetan? Und um welche methodischen Herangehensweisen ließen sich Forschungen zur Politischen Ikonographie bereichern? Die Aufsätze der vorliegenden Ausgabe der *kritischen berichte* möchten als Kick-Starts verstanden werden, die Perspektiven eröffnen und mögliche Richtungen zum Weiterdenken aufzeigen, um unser stets mit Bildfragen verknüpftes Verständnis von Gesellschaft und Politik gemeinsam zu diskutieren.

Anmerkungen

- 1 Einen Einblick in *Polite Fictions* bietet die Website der Künstlerin, abrufbar unter: <https://suzanneschols.com/Polite-Fictions-1>, letzter Zugriff am 29. Juni 2022.
- 2 Schols, Susanne, *Polite Fictions. Behind the Public Face of Diplomatic Gifts*, Utrecht 2021, o. P. [S. 4].
- 3 Martin Warnke, Politische Ikonographie, in: *Die Lesbarkeit der Kunst. Zur Geist-Gegenwart der Ikonologie*, hg. v. Andreas Beyer, Berlin 1992, S. 23–28. Ders., Politische Ikonographie, in: *Kunsthistorische Arbeitsblätter*, 2003, Heft 2, S. 5–16. Ders., Politische Ikonographie, in: *Ikonographie. Neue Wege der Forschung*, hg. v. Sabine Poeschel, Darmstadt 2010, S. 72–85.
- 4 *Handbuch der Politischen Ikonographie*, hg. v. Uwe Fleckner, Martin Warnke u. Hendrik Ziegler, 2 Bd.e, München 2011.
- 5 Kairo, offene Stadt. Neue Bilder einer andauernden Revolution, Ausst.-Kat. Braunschweig/Essen/Hamburg, hg. v. Florian Ebner, Leipzig 2013. Siobhán Shilton, *Art and the Arab Spring. Aesthetics of Revolution and Resistance in Tunisia and beyond*, Cambridge/New York 2021. Zu Formen der Aufmerksamkeitsökonomie in den Sozialen Medien, u. a. im Rahmen des sog. Arabischen Frühlings, siehe Kerstin Schankweiler, Affektive Dynamiken von Bildern in Zeiten von Social Media. Bildzeugenschaften aus Ägypten, 2010–2013, in: *kritische berichte*, 2016, Jg. 44, Heft 1, S. 72–85; Dies.: *Bildproteste. Widerstand im Netz*, Berlin 2019.
- 6 Caesar Alimsinya Atuire, Black Lives Matter and the removal of racist statues perspectives of an African, in: *21: inquiries into art, history, and the visual*, 2020, Bd. 1, Heft 2, S. 449–467. Henry Kaap, «I Can't Breathe!» – Polizeigewalt und anti-rassistischer Protest in den USA, in: *kritische berichte*, 2016, Jg. 44, Heft 1, S. 12–21. Ders., Hoodie, in: *Aesthetics of Resistance: Pictorial Glossary: Weblog «The Nomos of Images»*, 12. Oktober 2015, <https://nomoi.hypotheses.org/21>, letzter Zugriff am 29. Juni 2022.
- 7 Für eine mögliche Anwendung der Methode der Politischen Ikonographie am Beispiel einiger Aspekte der politischen Bildsprache Barack Obamas vgl. Pablo Schneider, Politische Ikonographie, in: *Bild und Methode. Theoretische Hintergründe und methodische Verfahren der Bildwissenschaft*, hg. v. Netzwerk Bildphilosophie, Köln 2014, S. 331–338.
- 8 An dieser Stelle sei lediglich auf eine Tagung hingewiesen, die organisiert von Stefan Haug und Ursula Ströbele im Dezember 2021 am Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in München unter dem Titel «Digital realities in times of COVID-19» stattgefunden hat. Das Tagungsprogramm ist abrufbar unter: <https://arthist.net/archive/35487>, letzter Zugriff am 29.06.2022.
- 9 Charlotte Klönk, *Revolution im Rückwärtsgang. Der 6. Januar 2021 und die Bedeutung der Bilder*, Köln 2021.
- 10 Das Programm des Workshops ist dauerhaft im Web-Archiv des Fachinformationsnetzwerkes ArtHist.net verfügbar, über: <https://arthist.net/archive/35411>, letzter Zugriff am 29. Juni 2022.
- 11 Zu Gegenstandsfeld und Geschichte der Methode der Politischen Ikonographie siehe Urte Krass, Politische Ikonographie, in: *Metzler Lexikon Kunswissenschaft. Ideen, Methoden, Begriffe*, hg. v. Ulrich Pfisterer, 2. Auflage, Stuttgart/Weimar 2011, S. 345–347, mit weiterführender Literatur.
- 12 Wie verhandelt etwa auf der im November 2020 abgehaltenen Online-Tagung «Politische Ikonologie», deren Tagungsband sich im Erscheinen befindet. Für das Tagungsprogramm siehe: <https://arthist.net/archive/23920>, letzter Zugriff am 29. Juni 2022.
- 13 Einige Ansätze hierzu liefern Daniel Becker: Virtuelles Sit-In, in: *Aesthetics of Resistance: Pictorial Glossary: Weblog «The Nomos of Images»*, 21. März 2016, <https://nomoi.hypotheses.org/761>, letzter Zugriff am 29. Juni 2022; Moritz Queisner: Armchair Activist, in: *Aesthetics of Resistance: Pictorial Glossary: Weblog «The Nomos of Images»*, 3. Dezember 2015, <http://nomoi.hypotheses.org/252>, letzter Zugriff am 29. Juni 2022; Alexandra Waligorski, Datenmasken und Mugshots. Maskierung als künstlerische Praxis in einer transparenten Gesellschaft, in: *kritische berichte*, 2016, Jg. 44, Heft 1, S. 8–19; Daniel Hornuff, *Hassbilder. Gewalt posten, Erniedrigung liken, Feindschaft teilen*, Berlin 2020.

At the time the archive was formed, the structures were still standing. Dozens of self-built and ever-growing architectures for working and living, permaculture practices and cultural activities bloomed in what used to be a neglected shipyard. Dating to 1997, ADM (de Amsterdamsche Droogdok Maatschappij) was one of Amsterdam's largest self-organized communities.¹ Since the eviction of its 130 inhabitants and the demolition of their homes in early 2019, and despite the landowner's promises of immediate development plans, the land remains empty.²

Taking ADM to an end was not without struggle. The community had fought eviction attempts since 2015. Together with the support of a team of lawyers and a multitude of individuals and organizations, ADM survived 20 court cases and the authorities' mounting pressure on squatting.³ The court case verdict of summer 2018, which led to eviction a few months later, stands as a paradigm shift in the Netherlands's history,⁴ one that fractured its national imaginary as land for radical and experimental housing projects.

The occupation of a property without the owner's permission has been a common practice in the Netherlands since the 1970s. In October 2010, after decades of tolerance and endorsement towards squatting, it became a criminal offence punishable under Dutch law with up to two years and seven months in jail.⁵ Practices of squatting continued, albeit short-lived and on a smaller scale, relatively protected by article eight of the European Treaty for Human Rights, which prevented immediate eviction by recognizing the right to the privacy of one's home.⁶

On 19 May 2021, a new law to enforce the squatting ban enabled security forces to speed up evictions.⁷ It delivered a severe blow to present and future squatting communities. Meanwhile, the spatial practices of squatters epitomized in ADM, alongside those of Plantage Dok, Vluchtmuur, Wijde Heisteeeg 7, Poortgebouw and Landbouwbelang, are celebrated and preserved in the State Archive for Dutch Architecture and Urban Planning, funded by the Dutch state. Inside this symbolic, public, state-run institution, their criminalized and non-normative communal living (and the ideas informing them) are memorialized for future generations.

Architecture of Appropriation

Since 2015 Het Nieuwe Instituut has carried out a series of «archive explorations» to reassess the State Archive for Dutch Architecture and Urban Planning. One of the world's largest architecture collections, the archive hosts 1.4 million drawings, 300.000 photographs, 2.500 models, 70.000 books and magazines, alongside correspondence, posters and other documents of Dutch architects and urban planners.⁸ Of all the documents that compose the State Archive, white, male architects author 97% of them, with only 26 of 835 archives attributed to female architects.⁹ The

collection's origins are traced back to multiple archives that, over the course of more than hundred years, came to merge in the State Archive now part of Het Nieuwe Instituut. The obvious imbalance in the archive's composition demonstrates how methodologies, gazes and logics implemented in the past by the custodians of these various architectural institutions failed to recognize the work of agents involved in important transformations of the built environment, rendering them institutionally invisible.

Until recently, the primary focus of the State Archive was to preserve Dutch architecture and urban design and make them public. The archive explorations initiated in 2015 by HNI's research and the heritage departments brought a sense of urgency to inspect the past and depart from established modes of collecting and archiving. They aimed to reflect on received ideas and methodologies for assessing the cultural, artistic and historical value of examples of Dutch architecture and urbanism, and how they constructed a canon. Overlooked actors and forgotten stories in the State Archive, among them feminisms in architecture, queer perspectives, and the architecture and afterlives of Dutch colonialism, became the focus of these initiatives. Acknowledging the thematic gaps in the official historiography was only a first step towards future acquisition policies. Acknowledgement itself is insufficient, and the development of methodologies for including new documents, subjects, and media became paramount. Given its size, any endeavour to make a significant intervention on the State Archive seemed a titanic task. Nevertheless, these actions didn't intend to undoing the past. They aimed to instigate institutional self-reflection practices towards experimental yet consistent approaches.

Research played a critical role in assessing the relevance of existing and emergent ideas. Candid questions such as «what should be collected today?» or «what and in which way should it be preserved?» complicated the histories safeguarded in the archive. These questions first came from the outside of the institution through the series *Archive Interpretations*.¹⁰ Researchers, artists, and designers were invited to look at the collection to unveil untold narratives and practice alternative readings. Under this lens, the State Archive became the outcome and subject of research. Yet these projects, labelled as artistic experiments, lacked sufficient institutional support to alter existing collecting policies and actualize the archive according to higher values, and diversity, equity and inclusion principles to be passed to future generations. *Architecture of Appropriation* (2015–2021) was the first long-term research initiative to assess the State Archive's dominant historiography and institutional memory.¹¹ It sought to recognize forms of architectural practice beyond the traditional notions of authorship, focusing instead on intersectional, collaborative and non-normative strategies.

Against the dramatic difficulties for large parts of the population to access affordable housing both in the Netherlands and abroad, *Architecture of Appropriation* mobilized the spatial practices of the squatting movement as a case for alternative, non-market-oriented housing policies. The actions of squatters are not arbitrary. By appropriating vacant premises, they denounce the systems exclusion prevalent in urban developments under political democracy and call for different modes of redistribution. Their spatial and legal strategies expose the disparity between those treating the architecture as an asset, a repository of capital, an object of speculative operations, and those defending the right to housing. Squatters disrupt neo-liberal dreams and defy patriarchal structures informing normative domesticity.¹² By cre-

ating intergenerational networks of solidarity and creativity, their communities are epicenters of urban culture.

In this context and taking responsibility for the position of HNI as an institution mediating between the government, the professional field, and the general population, *Architecture of Appropriation* aimed, perhaps naively, to start a debate capable of overturning the criminalization of squatting. Often labelled as a pilot project,¹³ a speculative project, or an experiment – terminology used to downplay its disruptive potential – *Architecture of Appropriation* was an attempt for the people involved to challenge current housing policies and transform the acquisition policies at the State Archive. Methodologically, it primarily focused on the latter. The project proposed the inclusion of architectural drawings, interviews, and other material related to Netherlands-based squats into the archive to build up a record of their spaces and oral histories. In doing so, it addressed notions of vacancy, property, ownership, and the right to housing. It also raised questions on the institutions' role in writing the history of cities and their inhabitants and imagining their futures.

In urging the representation and collection of precarious and often criminalized practices within the institution, the team sought to interrogate acquisition policies at the State Archive and others of its kind. In certain ways, they succeeded. Their work unleashed better institutionally funded initiatives led by HNI's research and heritage departments that question decision-making processes, heritage practices and their ultimate implications. Some of these projects are *Collecting Otherwise*,¹⁴ that mobilizes gender, queering, decoloniality, or crip studies to conduct archival research; *A Collecting History Of The New Institute 1842–2020*,¹⁵ devoted to the critical analysis of the collection, its history, and the ideologies behind acquisition practices; and *Rethinking the Collection*,¹⁶ aimed at defining a valuation criterion for the collection based on inclusive and polyphonic policies and methodologies.

Architecture of Appropriation also inspired community organizations, universities, museums, and archives in the Netherlands and abroad. The conversations and reactions it instigated reflect the current debates on the notion of heritage and its volatility, subject to societal, technological, and cultural changes; to political, national and market ideologies.¹⁷ Yet, heritage ultimately belongs to society. Rather than understanding heritage as a neutral and objective inheritance, the project's team conceived heritage preservation as a public, collective negotiation, engaging with traditionalist perspectives and experimental approaches.

The Politics of Architectural Representation

From August to December 2016, HNI's research department set up a working group to document the spatial practices of the squatting movement.¹⁸ At the core of their work were questions regarding the adequate methodology and medium to incorporate the spatial practices of the squatting movement in the State Archive. The group took inspiration from previous initiatives to represent informal, temporary, and precarious spaces, from conversations and workshops with activists and archival professionals and, more importantly, from the collaboration with the squat's inhabitants. The resulting methodology also reflected on the State Archive's policies as a framework to navigate and eventually subvert. As such, it appropriated, when convenient, institutionalized representation tools.

In collaboration with the architecture students from TU Eindhoven and the squats' inhabitants, the group used architectural drawings – floorplans and axo-

nometric views – to present these architectural practices not generally included in the histories and archives of architecture. Architectural representation was not mobilized as an innocent medium. It involves selecting, emphasizing and obviating elements of reality to make them plausible, measurable and governable. It determines who or what is represented, being fundamental in the distribution of power.

Whereas one could argue against the use of normative techniques to represent non-normative spatial practices, architectural drawings proved essential to legal claims around squatting practices. The spontaneous and non-regulated nature of the daily practice of squatters is generally not formally documented. Yet, deploying technical drawings allowed squatting spatial practices to infiltrate architectural and legal discourses. Drawings were even used as evidence in court cases, where arguments concerning the right to housing are generally unsupported by legally binding documents, such as a cadaster plan or a contract, or images of future developments presented by property owners.¹⁹

The architecture drawings of squatted spaces represented spatial and material strategies for transforming a vacant and often deteriorated building into a communal living space. They showed the diversity of squatted spaces in the Netherlands regarding typology (monumental canal houses or industrial complexes), size (small or large groups), temporality (squatted for months, years or decades) and status (squatted or legalized). And yet, these drawings did not fully succeed in depicting the squats' architecture. Even less in documenting their critical spatial practice as told by those who had not been previously heard, considered or invited to the institution; by those who have been criminalized. In mediating the voices of those who design, build, care for and inhabit these spaces, the technical drawings had flattened the intricate practices inside, around and between the squats. Drawings might be acceptable for their inclusion and preservation in a heritage institution but failed to embody the cultural process that made these spaces relevant. As scholar Laurajane Smith reminds, heritage has to be experienced; it is an experience that involves acts, performances and embodied practices of remembering and passing knowledge.²⁰ Heritage is not necessarily the conservation of objects or sites as frozen in time, Smith argues. All heritage is ultimately intangible, and results from everyday life cultural and social processes where bonds are formed through shared experiences and acts of co-creation.²¹

Despite being effective tools for specific forums, technical drawings were not enough. In consultation with the squats involved, the group organized annotation sessions with their inhabitants (Fig. 1).²² During these gatherings (conceived in collaboration with Poortgebouw in Rotterdam) the communities shared food, drinks and memories as they wrote and draw stories directly on top of technical drawings or tracing paper (Fig. 2). Individual and collective accounts addressed the evolution of the space from its pre-occupation state to the first squatting action, significant life events, social practices, forms of collective care and decision making, approaches to economic and cultural exchanges, and plans for the near future. These stories, fundamental for understanding the squat's spatial and material arrangements, reflect multiple and even dissonant accounts, making their representation a negotiation.

The hybrid and unstable nature of the resulting documents – between technical drawings, performative acts, and oral histories directly annotated by the community – also served to accommodate the archive's policy strategically. Archives have historically privileged originality and authenticity. Although digitally born

documents and new scanning and fabrication technologies have given copies an essential role in the discourse and practice of preservation, archives are generally involved with originals. The squat's archive, consequently, challenges notions of authenticity, authorship, and the designer's figure as an autonomous mastermind favoring instead co-authorship and collaborations. The documents are of the squat's collective authorship, while the role of the research collective as *archive former* evidence how archival practices contribute to the making of documents.

The methodology, therefore, opens up the possibility that those involved in scanning or photographing a document, deciding the resolution at which it could be seen and downloaded, and tagging the objects are participants in this act of co-creation. While often unacknowledged, every expert in preservation is aware of how their work fundamentally transforms the object to be collected. Their interventions and their gaze upon the object transform how it is positioned and understood historically. They are handlers of culture and history and subjective makers of it. Similarly, digitalization is not a neutral technique. It involves decisions around categorization, presentation, access, or context. Once shared digitally, any document or object acquires new readings through reception, usage, manipulation, decontextualization, thus questioning the traditional distinction between original and copy.

Preserving as a Collective Responsibility

Inside the archive, each squat has its box containing a self-description, annotated architectural drawings, a timeline of the origins, occupation and life at the squat, alongside photographs, historical documents from the State Archive, city archives, the International Institute for Social History, and copies of the squats' sketches, meeting notes, and photographs (Fig. 3). Their originals are kept by each squat in their respective private archives. Names and private details are protected if requested by the community. Each box functions as a node in a distributed system extending beyond the State Archive's walls and accessible via the Adlib database and search portal.²³ This decentralized archive enhances the archive's societal embeddedness. It highlights the notion of heritage as a shared responsibility between institutions, communities, professionals, and the general public and operating across walls, borders, and nations: an open-ended network of organizations and individuals who come together around shared and still unrecognized commons.

Whereas the national focus of the State Archive for Dutch Architecture and Urban Planning conditioned the selection of squats included in the archive, this networked collection accounts for the open character and ideologies of the movement. International alliances connected *Architecture of Appropriation* and the Dutch-based squatter communities with similar movements in Brazil (Ocupação 9 de Julho, São Paulo), Italy (Macao, Milan), Hong Kong (Community Farming Project, Hong Kong), among others.²⁴ Heritage, according to Smith's definition, is a cultural process that engages with acts of remembering that allow to engage with the present. Archives are *living* entities. And yet, transforming squats into heritage also flattens many of their constitutive layers – those impossible to preserve inside the State Archive. Therefore, a central question haunts the project: if to archive squatting practices in the State Archive risks separating squatting from its political, economic, and cultural contexts, why do so? Why institutionalize a purportedly anti-institutional practice? Why would an archive funded by the Dutch state be a place for the spatial practices of squatters that this same state criminalized since 2010?

Appropriating the Archive

Despite acknowledging the communities' precariousness and the need to limit institutional appropriation processes, various paradoxes and forms of violence were at play during the archiving process. The Dutch state was simultaneously criminalizing squatting and acknowledging its societal and architectural relevance by extension of the State Archive. Rather than obscuring these tensions and contradictions, the project explored them publicly. Discussion on the possible extractive relations that the project would establish was not censored nor mitigated but encouraged. To counter the often opaque archiving methodologies, the team organized exhibitions, events, parties, and publications debating the project's aim and courses of action. If anything, *Architecture of Appropriation*'s team consistently displayed openness to self-awareness, self-assessment and criticism.

There were also meaningful causes that kept the work going despite the apparent perils. The institutional support by HNI and their inclusion in the State Archive served to mobilize arguments for preserving these spaces in the face of eviction. As representatives of HNI in decision-making positions, members of the team wrote letters of support arguing for the heritage and the cultural and architectural importance of the squats.²⁵ Their communities often used project's documents during court cases and negotiations with local, national and international governments.²⁶ In some cases, they argued, these documents were fundamental to supporting their claims and protecting the squats.²⁷ One of the squats, Vluchtmaat, was even nominated for the 2017 Dutch Design Awards in the category of *Habitat*.²⁸

The squats were also financially supported through the project's activities. Given the annual budget of the State Archive, the project embodied a strategy for the redistribution of public funding across communities that are generally excluded from financial support despite their relevance for the city's life. The *Architecture of Appropriation* publication, for instance, was designed to circulate freely, being available to download as a PDF file.²⁹ Revenues from sales of the paper version, printed at Raddraaier in Amsterdam (the Squatters manuals printer), contribute to the legal costs of squatting communities threatened with eviction other similar initiatives.³⁰ While archiving practices of architectural appropriation, we were simultaneously appropriating the workings of the archive.

Yet, even if having the highest ambitions and achieving some of its aims, the initiative could become an alibi to maintaining the archive's exclusionary structures. During the process, the team often contemplated that a seemingly critical work would only introduce the small changes that would legitimize existing institutions to make them bearable and respectable enough to avoid their collapse. What could a series of small interventions do against millions of documents and generations of decisions based on a canon no longer adequate? Some navigated the impossible line between the comfort of institutional affiliation and the willingness to change things from within. All worked towards a societally embedded practice of heritage that privileged interpersonal attention and affection instead of institutional bureaucracies, codes of conduct and efficiency dogmas. The work of Felix Guattari on «institutional psychotherapy» came to mind often. Institutions are ill, Guattari argued, and it is necessary to treat them before treating or assisting others by «[...] replacing bureaucracy with institutional creativity.»³¹

Long communal dinners, walks, and parties replaced office meetings. Writing petitions, letters of support, and attending court cases became usual activities. To

counter those who claimed the unworthiness of squatters to institutional support, the team railed voices in architecture, preservation, culture and policymaking. They also crossed lines that left assumed notions of professionalism aside to participate in squatting actions and provide shelter for asylum seekers in need. Jobs were several times put at the HNI director's disposal when the repercussions could fall into the institution. Taking risks and challenging the status quo are seemingly at odds with preserving heritage. Critical experimentation, however, is fundamental to enhance our understanding of the past, present and future, to channel the powers of imagination.

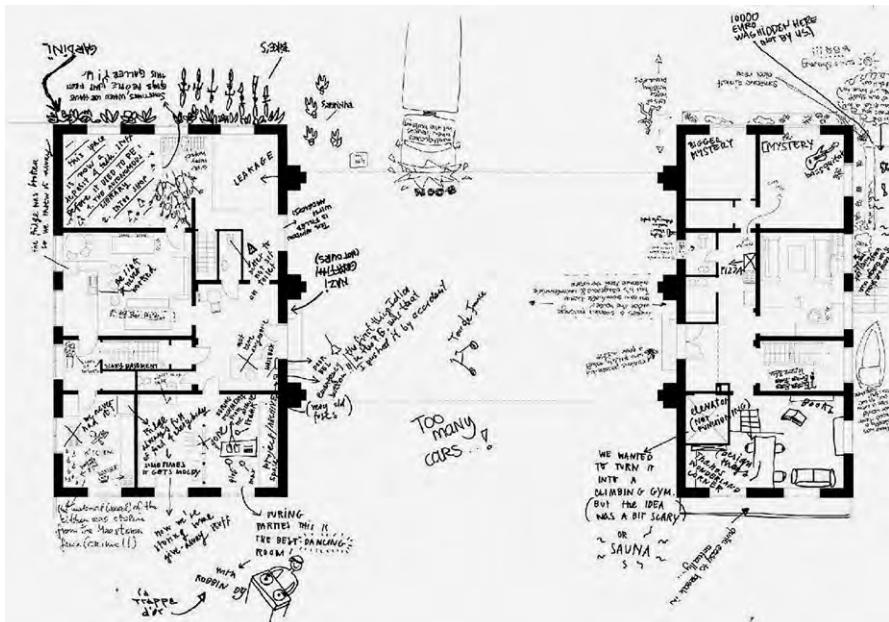
Afterlives

In early 2022 many of the HNI research team members left the institution, taking the project to a provisional end. Supported by the Dutch State, archivists and custodians continue to care for the archive. However, as squatted spaces are increasingly targeted and threatened, many of the communities represented in the archive have disappeared after forced eviction and demolition. An archive envisioned to celebrate contemporary spatial practices has soon transformed into a historical artefact, putting pressure on the question of how better to protect and recognize forms of intangible heritage, often more fragile than cultural objects.

Still, illegalized practices inside the State Archive stand as a political act. One that instigates ethical, methodological, disciplinary and historiographical debates; one that acknowledges practices and actors otherwise excluded by official narratives; that exposes the forms of violence intrinsic to the apparatus of the state, becoming a catalyst for present and future activism. The *Architecture of Appropriation* archive is a political act that reminds us that to conceive housing beyond property and ownership is possible and was longtime legal even within capitalist regimes. The squatter's archives are a generative medium, ready to be appropriated, improved, and used in support of these and other non-normative spatial practices. They exist to be kept, studied, and shared, but more importantly, performed.



1 The first annotation session at Poortgebouw in Rotterdam, September 2017, Photographer: Marina Otero Verzier



2 The outcome of the first annotation session at Poortgebouw in Rotterdam, 2017, Photographer: Marina Otero Verzier



3 ADM archive box included in the Het Nieuwe Instituut collection, Rotterdam, Photographer: Johannes Schwartz

Notes

1 The research leading to this essay was conducted as part of the Architecture of Appropriation project initiated at Het Nieuwe Instituut's research department, for which I was director from 2015–2022. It has previously been presented in public events and informed the book *Architecture of Appropriation. On Squatting as Spatial Practice*. As such, the author of this essay is indebted to team members and contributors to the project. ADM, in: *Architecture of Appropriation. On Squatting as Spatial Practice*, ed. by René Boer, Marina Otero Verzier a. Katia Truijen, Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam 2019, p. 327–271, <https://architecture-appropriation.hetnieuweinstiutuut.nl/en/publication> (Open Access), last accessed 20 December 2021.

2 Martijn Bink, ADM-terrein in Amsterdam ontruimd, krakers naar de rechter, in: *NOS Nieuws*, 7 January 2019, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2266436-adm-terrein-in-amsterdam-ontruimd-krakers-naar-de-rechter>, last accessed 20 December 2021. See also Amsterdam: ADM eviction, [en.squat.net](https://en.squat.net/2019/01/07/amsterdam-adm-eviction/), 7 January 2019, <https://en.squat.net/2019/01/07/amsterdam-adm-eviction/>, last accessed 20 December 2021.

3 I have previously written about ADM in Marina Otero, *Infrastructures of Domestic Solidarity: Squatting as Spatial Practice*, in: *Domus* 1032, 8 February 2019, <https://www.domusweb.it/en/speciali/guest-editor/winy-maas/2019/02/08/infrastructures-of-domestic-solidarity-squatting-as-spatial-practice.html> (Open Access), last accessed 20 December 2021. See also Overnachtende ADM'ers weer vertrokken van de Dam, in: *Het Parool*, 20 January 2019, <https://www.parool.nl/nieuws/overnachtende-adm-ers-weer-vertrokken-van-de-dam~b09a35d1/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>, last accessed 20 December 2021.

4 Sanne Derkx, Life in Amsterdam's biggest squat – in pictures, in: *The Guardian*, 8 October 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/gallery/2018/oct/08/life-amsterdam-biggest-squat-amsterdamse-droogdok-maatschappij-in-pictures>, last accessed 20 December 2021.

5 Wet kraken en leegstand, Wettenbank, in: [overheid.nl](https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0028053/2010-10-01#Opschrift), 24 July 2010, <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0028053/2010-10-01#Opschrift>, last accessed 20 December 2021.

6 A conversation with lawyers Rahul Uppal and Willem Jebbink, in: *Boer/Otero/Truijen* 2019 (as note 1), p. 278–280. See also Guide on Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, *Council of Europe/European Court of Human Rights*, updated 31 August 2021, https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/guide_art_8_eng.pdf, last accessed 20 December 2021.

7 Wet Handhaving Kraakverbod (Law to Enforce the Squatting Ban), *Staatsblad van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, June 18, 2021, <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stb-2021-285.html>, last accessed 20 December 2021.

8 See Search the Collection, Het Nieuwe Instituut online portal, <https://collectie.hetnieuweinstiutuut.nl/en/search-collection>, last accessed 24 February 2022.

9 P. J. H. Cuypers, H. P. Berlage, J. J. P. Oud, Gerrit Rietveld, Van den Broek & Bakema, Herman Hertzberger, Piet Blom, OMA and MVRDV are among the collections included in the State Archive. Some of the few female authors included are Margaret Staal-Kropholler, Lotte Stam-Beese, Bé Niegemann-Brand, Elsbeth Bout-van Blerkom, Lida Licht-Lankelma, Lica Hafkamp-Cosijn, Cora Nicolai, Nel Verschuuren, Nathalie de Vries (MVRDV), I. G. Bekker-Kok, Nel Klaasen, Koos Pot-Keegstra, Luzia Hartsuyker-Curjel, Catharina Boeree, Vrouwen Bouwen Wonen, Guus Gratama, Johanna Eleanor Ferguson, Winka Dubbeldam, Mien Ruys, Caroline Bos (UN Studio), Sabine de Kleijn (Herk & De Kleijn); *ibid.* (as note 8). See also *Building HERitage*, Het Nieuwe Instituut online portal, <https://thursdaynight.hetnieuweinstiutuut.nl/en/activities/building-heritage>, last accessed 24 February 2022.

10 See Archive Interpretations, Het Nieuwe Instituut online portal, <https://collectie.hetnieuweinstiutuut.nl/en/research/archive-interpretations>, last accessed 24 February 2022.

11 Architecture of Appropriation, Het Nieuwe Instituut online portal, <https://architecture-appropriation.hetnieuweinstiutuut.nl/en>, last accessed 24 February 2022.

12 See, for instance, the manifesto by the Anarcha-Feminist Group in Amsterdam, <https://afga.neocities.org> and their squatting actions, <https://en.squat.net/2021/06/05/amsterdam-anarcha-feminist-group-squat-building-on-sint-willibrordrusstraat>, last accessed 23 June 2022. See also accounts from the squatting movement in the United Kingdom, such as Feminist housing activism in the 1970s–1980s, Glasgow Women's Library, website, <https://womenslibrary.org.uk/2021/08/17/feminist-housing-activism-in-the-1970s-1980s-1-making-space-for-feminist-infrastructures/>, last accessed 23 June 2022.

13 See Methodology, in: *Boer/Otero/Truijen* 2019 (as note 1), p. 34.

14 Collecting Otherwise, Het Nieuwe Instituut online portal, <https://collectingootherwise.hetnieuweinstiutuut.nl/en>, last accessed 5 March 2022.

15 A Collecting History Of The New Institute 1842–2020, in: *Architectuur Dichterbij*, <https://www.architecturdichterbij.nl/rethinking>, last accessed 5 March 2022.

- 16** Rethinking the Collection, in: *Architectuur Dichterbij*, <https://www.architecturdichterbij.nl/en/projects-0>, last accessed 5 March 2022.
- 17** I am referring here to the work of preservation scholars such as Laurajane Smith and the work of experimental preservationists including Jorge Otero Pailos. See *Experimental Preservation*, ed. by Jorge Otero Pailos, Erik Fenstad Langdalen a. Thordis Arrenius, Zürich 2016.
- 18** The group included Marina Otero, Katia Truijen, Marten Kuijpers, Maria Fernanda Duarte and Roos van Strien of the institute's research department, researcher and activist René Boer, photographer Johannes Schwartz, and students from the MA Architecture, Urban Design and Engineering at the Eindhoven University of Technology. Later the group was joined by Aimée Albers, Anastasia Kubrak, Flora Bello Milanez, Fiona Herrod, Jere Kuzmanic and Maria Fernanda Duarte.
- 19** A conversation with lawyers Rahul Uppal and Willem Jebbink, Het Nieuwe Institute online portal, <https://architecture-appropriation.hetnieuweinstituut.nl/en/conversation-lawyers-rahul-uppal-and-willem-jebbink>, last accessed 23 June 2022.
- 20** See Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, London/New York 2006.
- 21** Ibid.
- 22** See Methodology, in: Boer/Otero/Truijen 2019 (as note 1), p. 44–45.
- 23** See, for example, ADM online entry in HNI collection, <https://zoeken.hetnieuweinstituut.nl/en/persons/detail/?q=ADM&page=2>, last accessed 20 December 2021. At the time of writing this essay, HNI collection's search portal is experiencing technical problems in the backend that prevented the actualization of broken links. As a result, some of the materials from the Architecture of Appropriation archive are temporarily not accessible online but are available upon request.
- 24** Upon invitation by the 11th São Paulo Architecture Biennial, the *Architecture of Appropriation* team collaborated with the Ocupação 9 de Julho, a squatted skyscraper in the city center, to organize public discussions with representatives of the housing movement, community members, and international guests. See also Macao in Milan, Het Nieuwe Instituut online portal, <https://architecture-appropriation.hetnieuweinstituut.nl/en/activities/macao-milan>, and *Architecture of Appropriation* in Poortgebouw: forms of resistance in Rotterdam, Istanbul and Hong Kong, Het Nieuwe Instituut online portal, <https://architecture-appropriation.hetnieuweinstituut.nl/en/activities/architecture-appropriation-in-poortgebouw>, both last accessed 6 March 2022.
- 25** See ADM, in: Boer/Otero/Truijen 2019 (as note 1), p. 325–326.
- 26** According to representatives of Landbouwbelang, the book *Architecture of Appropriation* [= Boer/Otero/Truijen 2019 (as note 1)] was crucial for proving the cultural and societal relevance of the squat during the community's negotiations with the City of Maastricht.
- 27** In early 2019 a court case prohibited the Dutch state from evicting a group of squatters in Amsterdam. The court weighed the squatters' right to stay as more important than the owners' right to regain control over their property.
- 28** We Are Here & Stichting Noodzaak, Vluchtmaat, 2017 Dutch Design Awards, <https://www.dutchdesignawards.nl/gallery/vluchtmaat/>, last accessed 7 March 2022.
- 29** Boer/Otero/Truijen 2019 (as note 1).
- 30** Ibid.
- 31** Félix Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality: Texts and Interviews 1955–1971*, first published Paris 1972, South Pasadena, CA 2015, p. 62, 17, 214.