

Romeo Kodra

Iconology and Iconographies of Boulevardisation.

Institutional Critique and Institutional Theory Challenges.



“Iconology and Iconographies of Boulevardisation:
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I.
This Text is About ...

Iconology and Iconographies of Boulevardisation. Institutional Critique and Institutional Theory Challenges is a text intended as a sort of *Conversations with Myself*, in the manner of Bill Evans. The text offers a conceptual synthesis of the boulevard, the main concept upon which the last urban plan of the Finnish capital is built, and which drove and underpinned the “boulevardisation of Helsinki”, in general. The horizon, which serves as the background to the “boulevardisation of Helsinki”, is made of, first and foremost, the iconology and iconographies of the boulevard and, consequently, boulevardisation. Secondly, it is made of the institutional critique, through which my personal artistic practice can be defined. Lastly, it is made of the critical institutional theory concerning the art and culture institutions in the Finnish context. For a better understanding of the latter and, in general, of these conversations, it is important to mention that this text is closely related to another text entitled *The Transparent Elephant in the Room: Things to Know About the Transparency of a Few Finnish Public and Private Culture Institutions*.

This text, considering its horizon, intends to evidence the challenges, but also to challenge, above all, the supposed democratic process of the highly-debated urban plan of the “boulevardisation of Helsinki” and its approval. A supposed democratic process which is a con-

sequence of the globally-accepted opinion that Finland is a knowledge-based economy and an advanced liberal democracy. Therefore, the text intends to challenge this knowledge, its conceptual means of production, in terms of artistic and cultural content, as well as the degree of individual freedom and democracy within the institutions that contribute to produce and use it for “the boulevardisation of Helsinki”.

The basic idea upon which this text is built is that, in terms of spatial rationalization, Finland has not followed a particularly “creative path on the way to its knowledge-based economy”¹. Finland depends on and follows established, existing paths. And, it does so superficially and in a highly literal manner, as demonstrated by the transformation of highways into densely populated boulevards (this represents the main idea behind “the boulevardisation of Helsinki”).

Consequently, considering the scarcity of creativity², the very idea of an advanced liberal democracy, within which the process of decision-making for the approval of the boulevardisation is inscribed, becomes a figurative and imaginary construction for the global public relations campaign of the state of Finland. A state that, in the past, has functioned in accordance with the needs of imperial powers and global corporates that supported and encouraged the construction of boulevards and highways. A state that, today, functions in the

1 Schienstock, G. (2007). *From Path Dependency to Path Creation: Finland on its Way to the Knowledge-Based Economy*. *Current Sociology*, 55(1), 92–109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392107070136>

2 In my understanding, creativity is resistance, following Deleuze’s conception of the creative act as an act of resistance (Deleuze, G. *What is the Creative Act in Two Regimes of Madness*, edited by David Lapoujade, translated by Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina Semiotext(e) / Foreign Agents, MIT Press, Massachusetts, U.S., 2006, pp. 312-324). Therefore, I see the partial approval of the urban master plan of Helsinki-Uusimaa Region, with its boulevardisation, as a lack of adequate resistance and, consequently, scarce of creativity.

same manner, with the same corporates, and a few new ones, which need, support, and encourage the densification of the Helsinki-Uusimaa Region.

The challenge of this text is to demonstrate how the above-mentioned figurative or imaginary constructions, as an instrument of power, are used and have the primary agencies in the public and private institutions of the corporate state, where the agents – all of the individuals who work within or for these institutions – who do not problematize their relation to the institutions and the corporate state, jointly perpetrate this instrumental use, firstly, through a prevailing focus on the form rather than content and, secondly, through either total or intentional ignorance of the quality of the content.

Therefore, my intention through this text, is to focus on and highlight the role of the boulevard/isation as a *locus amoenus*, where the “national imaginary construction”³, historically, unfolds its representational aspects. Of course, the Finnish national imaginary constructions and boulevard/boulevardisation, taken separately, each has a different temporal genesis. However, when taken into consideration together or, at least, when in relation to one another, they share the representational aspects displayed in the same space, the space of the boulevard and, consequently, the spaces of the boulevardisation of the Finnish capital, Helsinki. It is the analysis of the representa-

tional aspects of art and culture objects and subjects that will resonate throughout this text and help in deciphering the desiccated representational aspects of a heterotopic⁴ space like the boulevard and the (govern)mentality of the people that produced it.

3 See in Fewster, D. *Visions of past glory: nationalism and the construction of early Finnish history*. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2006.

4 [H]eterotopias [...] desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences. Foucault, M. *The Order of Things*, London-New York, Routledge, 2002, p. XIX.

II.
What is
the Boulevard?

II. What is the Boulevard?

In order to answer this question, one must begin from language, without limiting, prioritizing or lending it sole exclusivity. The boulevard, according to its official definition, is “a wide road in a city, usually with trees on each side or along the centre”¹. However, this was not its original meaning. Etymologically, the boulevard referred to something entirely different:

boulevard (n.)

1769, “broad street or promenade planted with rows of trees,” from French boulevard, originally “top surface of a military rampart” (15c.), from a garbled attempt to adopt Middle Dutch *bolwerc* “wall of a fortification” (see *bulwark*) into French, which at that time lacked a -w- in its alphabet. The notion is of a promenade atop demolished city walls, which would be wider than the old streets. Originally in English with conscious echoes of Paris; in U.S., since 1929, used of multi-lane limited-access urban highways. Early French attempts to digest the Dutch word also include *boloart*, *boulever*, *boloirque*, and *bolwercq*.²

Thus, the original meaning of this relatively well-known word was, even in French, different. It *originally* referred to the “top surface of a military rampart, a wall of a fortification” of the Medieval cities. This means that the boulevard once was an element and instrument

through which the political power – that governed the medieval city – defined and controlled its space and territory. It is crucial to evidence that this new linguistic term had a clear direction, from outside-inside (from the Dutch to the French language) and top-down (from the power or authority to the city and citizens), which designates a *dispositif*³ of territorial control.

The first boulevard, intended as a promenade lined with trees, appeared in Paris⁴ (1670 ca.) after the decision of the *Roi Soleil* to demilitarize the old Medieval walls of Paris and replace them with today’s *Les Grands Boulevards*. This demilitarization, through the replacement of the walls with an open tree-lined promenade, is part of Jean-Baptiste Colbert’s plan for the modernization of Paris.

It is important to note that Colbert’s had even bigger plans, which combined the demilitarization of the center with an almost military strategy based on the optimization and centralization of the profits from the peripheries of all French territories. He was the mastermind behind most of the key decisions taken by King Louis XIV, in terms of the institutional reformation of the state, centralization, control, and decision-making.

The term *colbertism* – characterizing the state interventionism in key sectors – influenced⁵ and still influences⁶ the French *étatisme* in our days. Its scope was not limited to Paris,

1 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/boulevard> (accessed on 25.11.2022)

2 <https://www.etymonline.com/word/boulevard> (accessed on 25.11.2022)

3 «[T]he coupling of a set of practices and a regime of truth form an apparatus (*dispositif*) of knowledge-power that effectively marks out in reality that which does not exist and legitimately submits it to the division between true and false.» Foucault, M., *The Birth of Biopolitics*, edited by Senellart, M., translated by Burchell, G., Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2008, p. 19.

4 Rouleau, B. *Paris, histoire d'un espace*, Paris, Seuil, 1997.

5 Minard, P., Pierre Gervais, P., Le Goff, J. *Colbertism Continued? The Inspectorate of Manufactures and Strategies of Exchange in Eighteenth-Century France*, French Historical Studies, Duke University Press, Volume 23, Number 3, Summer 2000, pp. 477-496.

6 Finon, D. (1996). *French Energy Policy: the Effectiveness and Limitations of Colbertism*. In: McGowan, F. (eds) *European Energy Policies in a Changing Environment*. Energy Economics and Policy, vol 1. Physica-Verlag HD. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-61492-7_2

II. What is the Boulevard?

or France. His authorship of the *Code Noir*, which defined slavery and race in France's colonial empire, is a demonstration of its wider, proto-biopolitical, imperialistic *weltanschauung*. Colbert gave priority to science and the arts which, through their contribution in terms of monumentalization of the power of Louis XIV and France⁷, demonstrated their clear militarism. In other words, Colbert was one of the first *experts*⁸ in the history of political economy thinkers to fully understand the importance of knowledge and information for the optimization of the management of the political power and the state.

Thus, the replacement of the old bulwarks of Paris with *Les Grands Boulevards* can be also seen from the point of view of Colbert's "*cosmos*"⁹, and his ideas of optimization and control of the financial, political, and cultural resources. In a broader sense, this transformation can be seen as something far beyond its strictly urban element. Instead, it can be seen as a central element which, through its representational aspects, highlights the imaginary and symbolic elements of a paradigmatic shift from one governmentality to the other. This means that, behind the idea of the boulevard, you find the Middle Ages and the cities defined by and through walls.

Yet, it is important to highlight that, despite the change of governmentality and a different concept of the system, everything in that period was done *pour la gloire du roi*¹⁰. Indeed, after the death of Colbert, Louis XIV confirmed his famous motto *L'État c'est moi* and dismantled Colbert's "information system", the "well-oiled state bureaucracy and central archive", seeing them "as a threat to his personal power monopoly"¹¹.

By 1803¹², after the French Revolution, the lexical development and consolidation of the term boulevard in French is noticeable. An interesting aspect of it is noted, among others, by lexicographer Pierre-Claude-Victor Boiste: "is said of men and institutions (- of our freedoms)"¹³. This specific metaphoric and figurative definition is important because it shows that, beyond the new meaning of the boulevard as a city street embellished with trees, the original military meaning of bulwark had survived, and Boiste gives us the figurative example of the boulevard of our freedoms referred to men and institutions. This means that the boulevard is not merely a word which denotes a wall that marks the limits of the city but it implies an institutive and constitutive image of the city and its possibility to go beyond its limits. And, con-

7 "Colbert, himself a member of the Académie Française, founded the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres (1663) to choose inscriptions for medals and monuments celebrating the king's victories; the Académie des Sciences (1666) to study how the sciences could be exploited to the kingdom's advantage; and the Académie Royale d'Architecture (1671) to lay down rules and refine the taste of French work. He also founded schools, such as the Académie de France in Rome, in which artists could be trained under some of the great masters of the time; and schools for practical purposes, such as the École des Jeunes de Langues, for the study of Oriental languages. The Observatoire de Paris, of which the Italian astronomer Giovanni Cassini was put in charge, was founded by Louis XIV at Colbert's instigation." <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jean-Baptiste-Colbert> (accessed on 15.11.2022.)

8 Soll, J. *The Information Master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert's Secret State Intelligence System*, University of Michigan Press, 2009, p. 13.

9 *Ibidem*.

10 Bailey, G. A. *Architecture and Urbanism in the French Atlantic Empire: State, Church, and Society, 1604–1830*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018, p.148.

11 Soll, J. *The Information Master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert's Secret State Intelligence System*, University of Michigan Press, 2009, p. 154.

12 <https://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/boulevard> (accessed on 15.11.2022.)

13 Boulevard, s. m. Propugnaculum. rempart (propre et figuré); terrain d'un bastion, d'une courtine; promenade plantée d'arbres autour d'une ville [sur l'emplacement d'anciens remparts]; (fig.) place forte qui couvre un pays, se dit des hommes, des institutions (— de nos libertés), -vard. c. r. v. al. (syn.) (bollwerk, rempart, allem. ou burg, bourg, ward, garde, teuton. See in Boiste's *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française avec le latin et l'étymologie*.

II. What is the Boulevard?

sidering that the “image [...] is defined not by its mere visibility but by its being invested, by the beholder, with a symbolic meaning and a kind of mental frame”¹⁴, this also means that the boulevard is a locus of institution and constitution of mentality.

¹⁴ Belting, H. *An Anthropology of Images: picture, medium, body*, translated by Dunlap, T., Princeton University Press, Princeton & Oxford, 2011, p. 9.

III.
The Boulevard,
its Subject/s,
its Mentality

The idea of erasing the old bulwarks of Paris and replacing them with Les Grands Boulevards operates, first and foremost, on a legal level, because it opens up the space, for a French subject under the rule of Louis XIV, to move freely on what was formerly a liminal space: the bulwark, transformed into a transitional space, the boulevard.

The erasure of the bulwark and subsequent paving of the boulevard also operates on a symbolic level. This symbolic level is activated through the King's subjective power to erase the military walls.

The streaming is the bouquet of a first stroke (trait) and of what effaces it. I have said it: it is from their conjunction that the subject is made, but in that two times are marked there. It is necessary then that the erasure be distinguished there.¹

In this manner, the erasure of the walls is a symbol which, when opened up, makes space for a distinguished spectacular promenade, where the imaginary level enters in function and enables the Roi Soleil and his subjects to free their imagination in showcasing themselves in this new theatrical stage. The Roi Soleil shows himself subjectivized, simultaneously the stage director and performer, by being fully aware of his power as a subject, while his subjects, the French people, show themselves as subjectified actors, performing the roles assigned them by the stage director.



Artist unknown, Louis XIV as the Sun in the ballet "La nuit", 1653, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Est., Hennis 3674.

In the Lacanian understanding of the subject, a fundamental difference between the subject *Roi Soleil*, the subject of the law, and the French subject, the subject that obeys the law of the *Roi Soleil*, is evident:

We must distinguish two *others*, at least two – an other with a capital *O*, and another with a small *o*, which is the ego. In the function of speech, we are concerned with the *Other*².

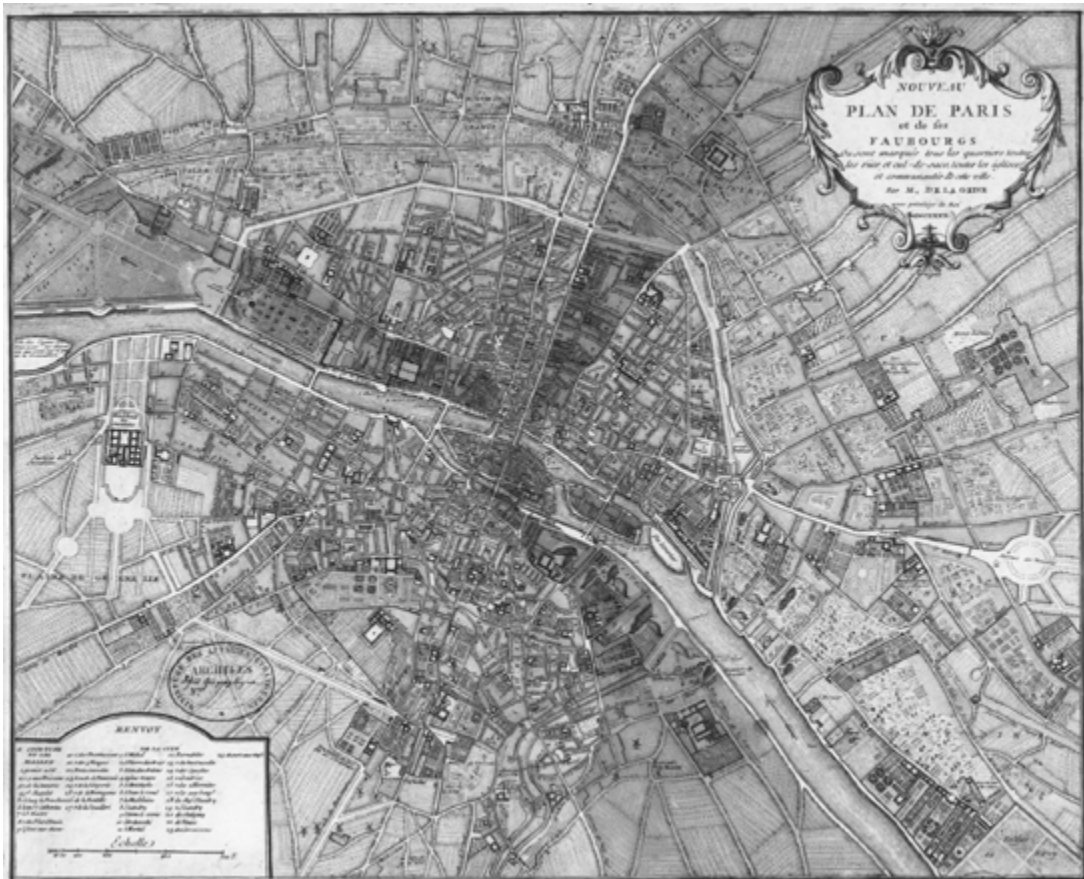
1 Lacan, J. *Litterature* (Larousse), #3, 1971. Re-published in *Ornicar?* # 41, April-June 1987, p.5-13. Translated by Jack W. Stone.

2 Lacan J. *The Seminar. Book II. The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-55*, translated by Sylvania Tomaselli, W. W. Norton & Company, New York – London, 1991, p. 236.

III. The Boulevard, its Subject/s, its Mentality



Gerard Jollain, Engraving, *Plan of Paris*, 1670.



Jean Delgrive, *Plan of Paris*, 1740.

III. The Boulevard, its Subject/s, its Mentality

For Lacan, the big *Other* is placed at the speech/*parole* level, *in the function of speech*, the first and most natural ability of men to institutionalize, to create a language/*langue*. The first, Louis XIV, is subject to the big *Other* and the second, the French subject, is subject to the small *other* or, in other words, to the ego of the king which, as in a kaleidoscope, is reflected by the myriad egos of his subjects showcasing themselves along the boulevard.

So, the erasure of the old bulwarks with *Les Grands Boulevards*, intended as the constitutional expression of *Roi Soleil*'s will, inscribed within the domain of the big *Other*'s speech/*parole*, operates on a fourth institutional level. Along with the legal, symbolic, and imaginary levels, the boulevard also operates on the level of language, the first natural human institution³. It becomes the *locus amoenus* where the symbolic-imaginary *langue* of the power produces and constitutes meanings and, through these meanings, rationalizes the space and institutionalizes the *subjects/egos* that populate it.

All four levels – legal, symbolic, imaginary, and linguistic – are interpreted and marked iconically and semiotically by the central authority, the subject of power, the *Roi Soleil*. Therefore, the interpretation of the ambiguous concept of the boulevard, as an exclusive wall/bulwark or as an inclusive street/boulevard, depends on the power authority and its mentality. This means that the spiraliform direction of outside-inside and top-down of the boulevard is designed to conquer other spaces and territories

by demilitarizing the center and militarizing the peripheries.

The mentality of Louis XIV and, in general, of the French ruling class at the time, had its roots in, among others, the Medicean tradition, the time of Catherine de' Medici and her Florentine Renaissance culture. This culture, with its images, mythology, philosophy, and history, according to the interpretation of Aby Warburg, was interiorized not only by the elite but by every citizen:

The citizen of Medicean Florence united the wholly dissimilar characters of the idealist—whether mediocrally Christian, or romantically chivalrous, or classically Neoplatonic—and the worldly, practical, pagan Etruscan merchant. Elemental yet harmonious in his vitality, this enigmatic creature joyfully accepted every psychic impulse as an extension of his mental range, to be developed and exploited at leisure. He rejected the pedantic straitjacket of “either-or” in every field, not because he failed to appreciate contrasts in all their starkness, but because he considered them to be reconcilable. The artistic products of the resulting compromise between Church and World, between classical antiquity and Christian present, exude all the concentrated enthusiasm of a bold, fresh experiment.⁴

Yet, the Florentine urban culture that influenced the mentality of the French, entered within the court from a top-down direction (Catherine de' Medici, the queen) and from outside-inside (Florence-France). In addition,

³ Paolo Virno, *Anthropology and Theory of Institutions*, translated by Alberto Toscano. Link <https://transversal.at/transversal/0407/virno/en> accessed on 19.08.2022.

⁴ Warburg, A. *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, translated by Britt, D., Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, Los Angeles, CA, 1999, p. 190-191.

it was formally crystalized by the court etiquette, full of pleonastic servilism and clientelage. Thus, the mentality of the French subject accepted and integrated opposites, compromises, and diversity, which appeared to be so natural and which defined the ethics of the “*citizen of Medicean Florence*”, through an etiquette conform to the interpretation of and permission granted by the power authority to accept and integrate opposites, compromises, diversity.

However, after the French Revolution, the destruction of the Bastille walls, and the execution by guillotine of Louis XVI, as expected, a change occurs, in terms of subject and production of subjectivity, as well as in terms of mentality. This change, that the destructive force of the French Revolution produced, is symptomatically visible or visible through symptoms of language, such as in the case of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*⁵, and art expressed through or within the boulevard, such as in the case of the mythic *Champs-Élysées* and *Place de la Concorde*, which were transformed into spectacular stages for the execution, by guillotine, *in primis*, of the king.

Yet, the question that remains is whether, after these drastic changes, there existed any conception, in the minds of the urban planners, in the paving of tree-lined boulevards, which had embedded in it, the original function of bulwarks as the spaces of the gatekeepers and

guardians of the city, the “men and institutions of our freedom”.

5 I highlighted these symptoms in bold. “The representatives of the French People, formed into a National Assembly, considering **ignorance, forgetfulness or contempt** of the rights of man to be the only causes of public misfortunes and the corruption of Governments, have resolved to set forth, in a solemn Declaration, the natural, unalienable and sacred rights of man, to the end that this Declaration, constantly present to all members of the body politic, may remind them unceasingly of their rights and their duties; to the end that the acts of the legislative power and those of the executive power, since they may be continually compared with the aim of every political institution, may thereby be the more respected; to the end that the demands of the citizens, founded henceforth on simple and incontestable principles, may always be directed toward the maintenance of the Constitution and the happiness of all.”

Overdubbing I: Consuming Mythologies of Finland.

Finland ranked happiest country in the world – again.

BBC, 19 March 2019

In the United States, education is a business. There are corporations making money. Here, it is so student-centered that, when we had to redo the playground, they had the architects come and talk to the kids. There are things on our playground that the students really wanted.

Megan Smith, a U.S. native teacher in Finland

Where to Invade Next? - A documentary by Michael Moore.

In 2019, I, along with my family, decided to reside in Espoo, a city neighboring Helsinki. At the time, I knew relatively little about Finland. For instance, the first Finnish person I ever knew was Huckleberry Finn. I loved him so much that my mother would call me Tom, as she thought, because of my voracious reading, that I liked Tom, the main character of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. But, what does a mother know?

I know that Huck Finn is an imaginary character and not a real person, and, apparently, he is also from the United States. But his surname is Finn and it sounded sufficiently Finnish at the time. To me, his name, Huckleberry,

sounded as if it referred to the delicious berries one can find everywhere in Finland, and thus, even more Finnish. Though, today, the majority of professional berry-pickers in Finland are foreign¹, I still imagine Huck as a berry-picker who, 200 years ago, emigrated to the United States. In addition, if one thinks that he was happier living as a vagrant in the forest, out of the reach of the civilized world, rather than living the domesticated life with his adoptive protestant family, and, above all, being abused by his alcoholic father, then, when considering all of these easily recognizable Finnish stereotype, without a doubt, Huckleberry Finn was and still is, in my imagination, 100% Finnish.

¹ <https://toimistot.te-palvelut.fi/foreigners-picking-wild-berries-and-other-natural-products-in-finland>

The first real Finnish person I ever communicated with was Juha Varto, Professor of *Research in Visual Arts and Education* at *Aalto University*. In 2015, I wrote him an email, after reading his *The Art and Craft of Beauty*, where I perceived a certain level of attention, given by him, to context and contextualization when interpreting the artistic practice. I wrote to Juha Varto about my Ph.D. idea and the intention to develop it within *Aalto University*, considering that, at that moment, the idea to move to Finland was already mature. The proposal, entitled *Art, Space, Politics: (Albania) Lost and Found in Transition*, was focused on the rationalization of the space where there are tensions between the arts and the political power, as well as the development of a curatorial idea – *Curating as Polyphony* – which could take into consideration the transitional societies and/or contemporary societies transiting from an industrial to a post-industrial economy. The feedback of Juha Varto was very positive and it did help me better understand all of the bureaucratic formalities required in the proper structuring of a Ph.D. plan, by providing me with all of the necessary methodological questions. However, for him there was a concern:

Your plan is beautifully carved and certainly gives all the needed answers. I find the entire architecture of the research interesting and the pragmatic plan ambitious enough. What I don't find that important is the actual naming the names: the plan would certainly benefit if you try to elevate it towards a somewhat un-named sphere. The people you name are historical facts and true and they certainly will be important actual points

of reference in the research but in the plan, they guide the reader's eye to a particular case, not the ideological and historical necessity. I am truly pleased with the work you've done and know that you easily may rip off from it the local color that is its reality but that as well misleads the evaluators. Please, stay in contact!

The “naming the names” referred to the Albanian artist and Prime Minister Edi Rama and his circle of artist friends Edi Hila, Anri Sala, Adrian Paci, which could have “misled the evaluators” of the proposed Ph.D. plan. Prof. Varto had understood the idea perfectly but was suggesting *to name the names* in the research, not in the Ph.D. proposal. I also understood him perfectly. As far as I was concerned, this small change would be easy. Yet, in the following year-and-a-half of terrible delays, because of my fault, the crisis caused by the antinomianism of not “naming the names” which could “mislead the evaluators” of an institution named *Alvar Aalto University*, did not remain unaffected.

My first contact with a Finnish institution was, obviously, with MIGRI, the Finnish Immigration Service. There, surprisingly, I found that as a migrant in Finland, not as an EU citizen in Finland (for whom the procedure is immediate), I had to wait from four to six or more months for my Finnish Residence and Work Permit. I protested, kindly (relative to the kindness of the officer), the difference in treatment, especially as I am in possession of an EU Work and Residence Permit for Long Term Residents released by Italian authorities (I lived in Italy for more than 10 years), which, by the way, can also be granted by the Finnish MIGRI Office,

if a migrant regularly works and lives in Finland for more than 10 years. The officer ever so politely told me that she was “very sorry” and kindly reminded me that “this is the Finnish law”, to which I replied that I was “beyond sorry to have paid taxes in Italy, taxes for the EU and, consequently, Finland, which apparently was not entirely part of it”. The discussion on whether “Finland is or is not part of the EU” went on for quite some time and, in the end, neither one of us won.

However, once the residency and work permit issues were resolved, what impacted me most was the sheer quantity and aesthetically jarring quality of the urban construction sites in the Helsinki-Uusimaa Region. To be shocked with the quantity and low quality of these constructions is quite impressive for someone who is coming from Tirana, where the apotheosis of money-laundering and the late turbo-neoliberalism have produced a literally breathtaking jungle of cement and asphalt, with shopping centers as its main poles of attraction. Assuming I would escape these in Finland, I decided to not live in Helsinki but in Haukilahti, Espoo, which, for me, is a sort of *Villa Diodati*.

Yet, although situated on a much more human dimension, even Haukilahti is increasingly affected by the construction and asphalt bulimia of the surrounding neighborhoods and their mythical shopping centers²: Mätinkylä’s *Iso Omena* (*Big Apple*, in English, which is a clear reference to the contemporary myth of

New York City as the center of the world) and Tapiola’s *Ainoa* (a reference to the medieval mythological character *Aino*, the beauty from the national Finnish epic *Kalevala*). Both of them terrifyingly similar to the anonymous and metastatic shopping centers scattered throughout Tirana. Terrifyingly similar, because in Tirana, and generally in contemporary Albania, the instrumental stitching of contemporary and traditional myths to commercial activities for the attraction of consumers, and, consequently, mere profit, is very common. Yet, I somehow appreciate this practice of cheap and provincial marketing when it is excessive, beyond any sense of sobriety, composure, or minimal self-control. In other words, when it is not exclusively part of the bourgeois or the petit-bourgeois-wannabe-bourgeois mentality but goes beyond and exceeds any expectation.

Just to give an illustration, here are some examples where the tendency of the petit-bourgeois owners to inscribe provincial complexes of inferiority within the geography and history of the world is beyond the “obvious”, it’s “obtuse”³: Hotel *Arbëria*, referring to the name of medieval Albania; Bar *Iliria*, referring to the (Albanian?) territory as it was known in classical antiquity; Restaurant *Mrizi i Zanave*, referring to a place populated by fairies in Albanian mythology; Cafe *Europa*, referring to the geopolitical entity rather than the mythological figure; the various Cafe *Roma*, *Berlin*, *New York*, *Amsterdam*, *Oslo*, etc.; but also *Italian*, *Greek*,

² These shopping centers are also multi-functional. One can find public health offices (such as those for mental health and addiction issues), libraries, the offices of social insurance institutions, regional and municipal offices, as well as metro and bus stations, from where one can easily switch lines and reach different parts of the Helsinki-Uusimaa Region.

³ Barthes, R. *L’Obvie et l’Obtus. Essais critiques III*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1982.

British, German Pharmacies; the famous *Qendra Tregtare Univers – QTU (Universe Shopping Center)* owned by one of the wealthiest men in Albania which clearly shares the same impressive vision as the anonymous owner of the *Universal Funeral Agency*. Yet, years later, the owner of the *Universe Shopping Center*, moderated his ambitions and opened a larger shopping center called *Tirana East Gate – TEG Center*, this time directly in English. This double strategy of local pomposity and global modesty has not quite reached our anonymous owner of *Universal Funeral Agency*, who continues to stand by his initial idea.

It is possible that I am too naive and *consume myth innocently by taking a semiological system for a system of facts*⁴, as Roland Barthes may say. I may also consume naively the semiological system of the story of Huckleberry Finn, and even the semiological system of those what Juha Varto called *historical facts*, that may confuse and mislead the evaluators of a university. The same can be said regarding my understanding of the EU and the Finnish institutions dealing with migration. I may consume naively my daily life, as well, among shopping centres of mythological names. This may be but I may also have an idea of an escape from all of these. It is related to what I see as the most logical, coherent, and honest from all of the above-mentioned instrumental uses of myths, where one can spot the little tricks

and complexes of the provincial inferiority of the bourgeois profit-oriented mentality as well as their profound desire (unknown to them, as awareness would require some amount of accountability) to inscribe their name in the history, geography, and mythology of the world. More specifically, it is related to the last two examples: that of *Universe Shopping Center* and *Universal Funeral Agency*. Both have the power not only to change my mood and cause a certain level of amusement but also to decodify how the mythological, historical, as well as geographical foundations of the bourgeois mentality and its capitalist imperialism are radicalized and constructed as a *semiological system* of readable and understandable signs⁵ for all.

4 *In fact, what allows the reader to consume myth innocently is that he does not see it as a semiological system but as an inductive one. Where there is only an equivalence, he sees a kind of causal process: the signifier and the signified have, in his eyes, a natural relationship. This confusion can be expressed otherwise: any semiological system is a system of values; now the myth-consumer takes the signification for a system of facts: myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiological system.* Barthes, R. *Mythologies*, trad. Annette Lavers, The Noonday Press, New York, 1991, p. 130.

5 *What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality.* Barthes, R. *Mythologies*, trad. Annette Lavers, The Noonday Press, New York, 1991, p. 142.

IV.

A Terrifying Horizon
Beyond the Boulevard:

*La Liberté
guidant le peuple.*

IV. A Terrifying Horizon Beyond the Boulevard:
La Liberté guidant le peuple.

After *Les Grands Boulevards*, paved along the former bulwarks of Paris, there were other typologies of boulevards, called promenades, esplanades, etc. They were constructed throughout Paris, in other cities in France and elsewhere in Europe, and defined the potential and the possibilities of both the enlargement of cities and the extent of the control that political power can yield. However, not every one of these boulevards was paved by replacing older city walls. Thus, this second typology of boulevards did not have an immediate symbolic relation to the erasure of the old walls, to its constitutive image, but only an immediate cognitive relation to the institutive image, to the imaginary openness of new streets, triggering, in this manner, the collective mythological, historical, geographical, urban imaginary construction to accept the new model of a modern civilized life.

The constitutive and institutive mentality and governmentality inscribed within the boulevard, as a progressive concept transforming the old Medieval world into a modern one, was evident and physically tangible in Paris, with *Les Grands Boulevards* being the paradigmatic and prototypical example that still exists within the city. Thus, for the other types of boulevards, such as esplanades and promenades, the absence of the erasure of the physical walls as a constitutive function, in terms of definition and control of the city, was filled by an augmented and exaggerated institutive function, in terms of symbolic-imaginary and linguistic definition and control of the city. And, it is within the con-

stitutive and institutive image of the boulevard intended as an imaginary *locus* that this change, of mentality and governmentality, is visible.

[Mentalities] can be studied through an analysis of the social *locus* where they are created and popularized, and the groups and professions which act as intermediaries in their diffusion through society. Throughout the Middle Ages, the palace, the monastery, the castle, schools and courts are centres for the production of mentalities, which are taken up and sometimes elaborated at a popular level at the mill, the forge or the tavern, real centres for the reworking of mentalities. The mass media are the primary vehicles for the expression and ordering of mentalities: before the printing press, the sermon and the painted or sculpted image lie at the heart of emerging mentalities.¹

This “image” with its mentality and governmentality is appropriated by the masses, not only by the aristocratic or bourgeois elites. And the image of the boulevard changed because, as Belting suggested, the masses, as “beholders, “invested” it “with a symbolic meaning and a kind of mental frame”. From a historical point of view, this image with its mentality and governmentality can be seen as part of the July Revolution (1830), after which, a return to absolutism was clearly not an option for the masses. From an iconographical point of view, this is represented by Eugène Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People*.

It is known that Delacroix intended to paint a barricade. A barricade in the middle of a street,

¹ Le Goff, J. *Mentalities: a history of ambiguities*, in *Constructing the Past*, edited by Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 174-5.

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where the tension between different mentalities and the formulation of a new governmentality were taking place. The result of these tensions consists in the appropriation of the space by the masses of new subjects (bourgeoises, peasants), that were subjectivizing themselves and not being subjectified by the power. However, beyond the idea of the appropriation of the space by the masses, an analysis of the representational aspects of the pictorial space and Delacroix's rationalization of this space, one finds that there is no innovative symbolic or imaginary vision developed. Or, more precisely, for the artist, the new horizon beyond the barricade

is unapproachable, terrible, terrifying. Almost everybody in the painting is looking in the direction of this occulted new horizon, in which, neither the spectators of the painting nor the guards defending the city and the *Notre-Dame* in the background can take part. It is something else entirely. Disturbing. Unknown. Then, the artist intervenes by distracting the masses from this unknown void. Delacroix tries to direct the gaze of the masses elsewhere. This is transmitted to the viewer by the centralized focus and the pyramidal composition, following a top-down direction of the *Liberty Leading the People*. The iconographical references combine



Eugène Delacroix – *La liberté guidant le peuple*, 1830.

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the mythological *Venus de Milo* with the historical *The Raft of the Medusa* by Théodore Géricault. Through the resemblances to the *Venus*, the artist eroticizes the goddess of liberty while dressing her in the national colors of France. She is *Marianne* and is looking at the masses but her gaze remains unrequited. Then, the artist adds more pathos by inserting a combatant falling at *Marianne's* feet, dressed in the same national colors. This combatant is positioned exactly in between the direction of the viewers, whose gaze is drawn by *Marianne*, and the direction of the masses, that are attracted by the void. His function seems to be that of a synthesizer of the directions of the masses' gaze and that of the viewers: an idealized theatrical gaze upon the eroticized national symbol of *Marianne*. It seems that, in his final moment, the combatant has understood something that the others have not. The artist, then, inserts yet another character: a child combatant, who has advanced toward the horizon, ahead of the others. He is the avangarde, beyond *Marianne*, the eroticized national symbol. His gaze seems to be as hallucinated as that of the others, but his gestures are quite unnatural, as he handles two pistols, one pointing to the sky and the other to the barricade. Yet, oddly, he is not looking toward the horizon but directly at the viewer. It appears as if the revolution, symbolized by the anarchic child, is seen and represented by the artist through the use of a mythological symbolism turned into historical imaginary. The rev-

olution for Delacroix is an infant; it is new but with no new ideas; it is infantilized and framed within a proto-Freudian triangle set up within the space of a city street. A street that resembles a wide boulevard², which seems to be the perfect setting for a play, for the "race to the triumphant *ego* – as many objects as *egos*"³.

However, thanks to the artist's imagination, the vertigo caused by the gazes is made very clear when looking at the *Liberty Leading the People*. It is a vertigo of political, cultural, and artistic perspectives that are difficult to control, subjectify, direct, rationalize. For the artist, the liberty was *Marianne*, the French national state led by a civilized ruling elite. And it is the political transition from the monarchy to the nation state, the new *locus amoenus*, where the ruling elite will see the opportunity for rationalization and escape from the void, beyond the barricades or boulevards. This elite learned how to instrumentally use the mythology and history, as well as the vertigo caused by the void beyond any wall, barricade, or boulevard, by creating a myriad open perspectives with a clear centralized focal point. This was clear to Hausmann, years later, as pointed out by David Harvey:

Hausmann [...] needed to build a myth of a radical break around himself and the Emperor – a myth that has survived to the present day – because he needed to show that what went before was irrelevant; that neither he nor Louis Napoleon was in any way beholden to the thinking or the practices of the imme-

2 The place, considering the perspectives and the location of the Notre Damme and the other buildings, is an invention of Delacroix.

3 Lacan J. *The Seminar. Book II. The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-55*, translated by Sylvana Tomaselli, W. W. Norton & Company, New York – London, 1991, p. 241.

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diate past. This denial did double duty. It created a founding myth (essential to any new regime) and helped secure the idea that there was no alternative to the benevolent authoritarianism of Empire. The republican, democratic, and socialist proposals and plans of the 1830s and 1840s were impractical and unworthy of consideration. Haussmann devised the only feasible solution, and it was feasible because it was embedded in the authority of Empire. In this sense there was indeed a real break in both thought and action after the disruptions set in motion by 1848 had done their work. Yet Haussmann also acknowledged, in an exchange of letters with the Emperor that prefaced the publication of the first volume of the *Histoire Générale de Paris* (published in 1866), that “the most striking of modern tendencies” is to seek within the past for an explication of the present and a preparation for the future.⁴

⁴ Harvey, D. *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, Routledge, New York – London, 2005, p. 10.

V.
In Between
Kullervo and
Ilmarinen: The
Esplanadi-Bulevardi
Axis Planning
Mythologem

There was a ruler of the time, Alexander I of Russia, who had understood and personally experienced the change of mentalities and governmentality brought by the French Revolution. The czar anticipated Haussmann and the other revolutions that occurred in France during the 19th century.

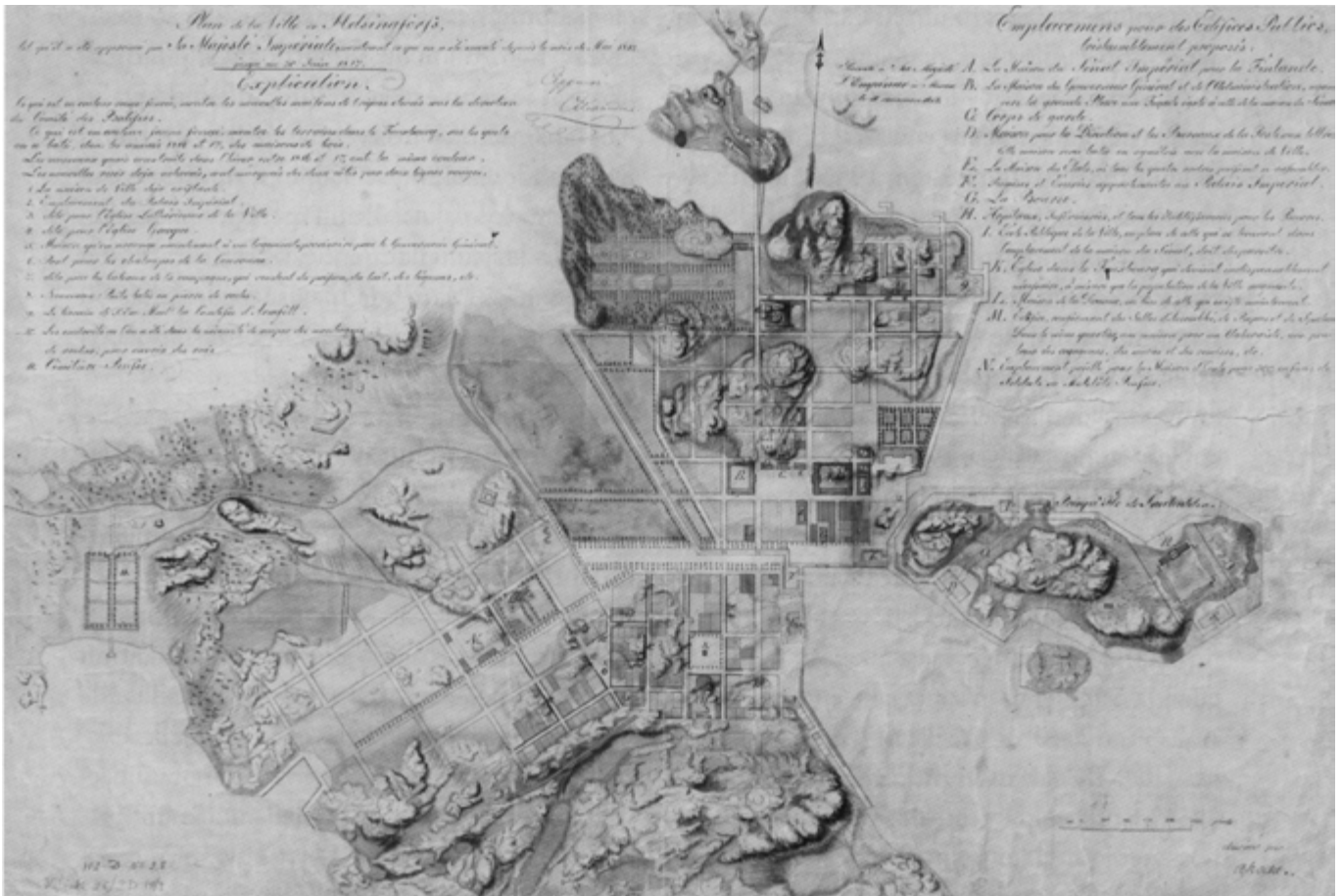
When the Russian army defeated the Swedish army in the Finnish War and transformed Finland into the Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire in 1809, Alexander I was a classic aristocrat with a mentality imbued with all of the mythological elements of his class, such as blood, land, lineage, chivalry. Yet, in 1812, he witnessed the Napoleon-led *Grand Armée* desecrating not only the heart of the holy Russia, the Kremlin, but also the mythology of his class. However, two years later, in 1814, he succeeded in paying back the *Emperor of the French*, by entering Paris with the Russian army, victorious. Yet, although his ego and the honor of his class was restored, the trauma of the desecration was not addressed.

Thus, to give a meaning and a scale to his geopolitical worldview, he understood the importance of the facade, of an ego that is intact, and focused his actions on the power of the image and its mythological and historical representational aspects. This focus, beyond the restoration of the facade of the ego, served to further accentuate the infantilization and inferiority complex of progressive classes, by highlighting their supposed lack of novelty and, consequently, reaffirm definitively the futility of every revolution. This geopolitical worldview and strategical approach become abundantly clear as one looks at the urban plan of Helsinki and its *Esplanadi-Bulevardi* axis.

Esplanadi-Bulevardi axis is Helsinki's main boulevard, without it ever having been a bulwark. Thus, it is important to evidence its essential institutive aspects and the lack of constitutive aspects. This axis is the work of Johann Carl Ludwig Engel (1778-1840), a German architect, who built it based upon Johan Albrecht Ehrenström's (1760-1847) urban plan of 1817. Ehrenström, Swedish by origin, became Finnish in 1811. He was one of the large group of courtiers that were easily transferred from the Swedish Gustavian Court to the Russian Court of the Czars. These courtiers were the new Finnish nobility, almost all exclusively Swedish and Russian speakers due to their family origins. The Finnish language at that time was not officially recognized in Finland. It would be added to the Swedish language, at the beginning of the 20th century, in 1902. In Finnish history, this class of principled reactionaries and anti-revolutionaries, that found a place in between two colonial powers – Russia and Sweden – is hailed as an enlightened class that guaranteed the autonomy of the Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire. Their mentality, as a bureaucratic class that dominated the Grand Duchy, assembled the mythological symbols of the traditional nobility of the ancient regime (including that of Alexander I) with the imaginary of the urban bourgeoisie of the French Revolution. The mentality of this class in their new context can be circumscribed through a general definition and the words of Felix Guattari:

Citizenship is deterritorialised here, it has absorbed something from the nomads and from the barbarian war machines of serf technologies, and

V. In Between Kullervo and Ilmarinen:
The Esplanadi–Bulevardi Axis Planning Mythologem



Johan Albrecht Ehrenström's, *Plan of Helsinki*, 1817.

has divided into two power formations: the ostentatious and arrogant formation of the feudal lords, and the hardworking but ultimately triumphant formation of the bourgeoisie. This dissymmetry and interdependence between the two social stratifications since the birth of feudalism, that is to say, the birth of 'modern times', goes beyond the simple framework of the putting into place of a new type of dependency of vassals and of the emergence of a social segmentarity surmounting the old, weakening political orders; it is, above all, the expression of the emergence of a new system of the economy of flows, of a new kind of society, a new way of living, thinking, and feeling the world.

Throughout the 'black hole' of the tenth century, in the meshes of a society in decline, a society which, in the normal course of things, would have disappeared under the impact of barbarian invasions, segmentary machines of all kinds started, on the contrary, to proliferate and to set to work on their own count.¹

However, in this case we are not in the 10th but in the 19th century, and the territory is not conquered by the *triumphant hardworking bourgeoisie* but it has become a donated territory that serves to guarantee an enduring compromise between the czar and the new hybrid

1 Guattari, F. *Lines of Flight*, translated by Goffey, A., Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 20.

ruling elite of bourgeois nobility or aristocratic bourgeoisie. Thus, in the case of the elite of the Grand Duchy of Finland, we have neither the “*ostentatious and arrogant land lords*” nor the “*hardworking and triumphant bourgeoisie*”. Therefore, to be more specific and to differentiate this class from the general description given by Guattari, it can be said that the dominant class of the Grand Duchy had, as its characteristic trait, an inferiority complex towards the *ostentatious* aristocracy – which was one of the traits of the military aristocracy of the medieval era – as well as towards the *hardworking* bourgeoisie, which was one of traits of the historical mercantile bourgeoisie. Thus, this elite lacked both of these traits. Therefore, it was clear that, in order to justify their dominant position in the new territory, in the new capital city of the Grand Duchy (in 1812 the czar decided to change the capital from Turku to Helsinki), something had to be done regarding *ostentation* and *hard work*.

Looking at the urban plan by Johan Albrecht Ehrenström², one immediately notices its regular grid. It is designed over the existing city, the sole difference being a widened scale of the city and its streets. In addition, his³ and Johann Carl Ludwig Engel’s *Esplanadi* divided the city into two parts: the southern and the northern. In the southern part, there were not allowed any stone

constructions, only those made of wood. Those made of stone were allowed only in the northern part of the *Esplanadi*, where the Senate and the administrative buildings were located and consolidated.⁴ In addition, while the overall grid of the plan is inscribed within the history of urban planning since Roman and Greek Antiquity, in the western culture, the division introduced by the *Esplanadi-Bulevardi* axis is inscribed within the mythology of the Grand Duchy, where the north-south polarity can be found in the national epic of *Kalevala*. However, the division created by the *Esplanadi-Bulevardi* axis is a strange one. It is not a wall. It is a street. An open street that divides and unites. On the one hand, the Esplanadi-Bulevardi axis divides, physically, the ephemeral military and civil buildings from the solid buildings of the representative political power, while, on the other, it unites them within its spectacular space.

But, for this kind of interpretation, it is important to focus on the mythologem, on the most basic concept upon which the mythological discourse and its function are built. According to Kerényi:

A particular kind of material determines the art of mythology, an immemorial and traditional body of material contained in tales about gods and godlike beings

- 2 Apparently, even in this day and age, there is something to be done to highlight the aristocratic ostentatious and bourgeois hardworking traits of this class: *In the construction of Helsinki, Ehrenström was in a way the same situation as he was in the service of Gustavus III: the Grand Duchy benefited more from Ehrenström than Ehrenström benefited from the Grand Duchy.* - extracted from the website of The National Biography of Finland (<https://kansallisbiografia.fi/kansallisbiografia/henkilö/4497> accessed on 21.11.2022)
- 3 “Ehrenströmin lopullinen asemakaava muutti kaupungin kasvoja oleellisesti. Leveä Esplanaden (Esplanadi) raivattiin erottamaan varsinaisen kaupunki uudesta esikaupungista, jonka keskeiseksi väyläksi tuli pitkä puistokatu Boulevarden (Bulevardi) päätteensä Sandviks Torget (Hietalahden tori).” Ehrenström’s final plan changed the face of the city substantially. The wide-opened Esplanade (Esplanadi) and the long park avenue the central thoroughfare which became Bulevardi, ending in Hietalahti Market, separated the city from the suburb.” See in *The History of Helsinki’s Street Names.* https://www.hel.fi/static/tieke/digitoidut_asiakirjat/helsingin_kadunnimien_historia/pdf/Helsingin_kadunnimet_1.pdf (accessed on 29.11.2022)
- 4 “[Esplanadi] was laid out on what had been a water meadow before being enclosed and formed a demarcation between the civil buildings around Senate Square to the north and the military ones to the south. [...] Then Engels carried out the laying out of a second broad avenue, [...] which became known as the Boulevard.” Kent, N. *Helsinki: A Cultural and Literary History* Interlink Books, Northampton, Massachusetts, 2006, p. 109.

heroic battles and journeys to the Underworld – “mythologem” is the best Greek word for them – tales already well known but not unnamable to further reshaping. Mythology is the movement of this material: it is something solid and yet mobile, substantial and yet not static, capable of transformation.⁵

It is important to decodify the inferiority complex of the Grand Duchy’s elite, which, according to Carl Gustav Jung, is neither *negative* nor *positive*⁶ but it is very important to be aware of it. This complex is a node, mixing the history and mythology that is crystallized in the rationality and mentality of this elite. Its roots go back to Mikael Agricola (1510-1557), the first author to write in the Finnish language.

[Agricola] wanted to wage war on what remained of paganism and superstition, in the spirit of Lutheran Christianity. In spite of this, while presenting as gods Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen, whom he knew from ancient poems and incantations, he happened to influence the opinions of future Finnish folklore research in the central, disputed question of the historical or mythical character of the ancient poems.⁷

In this node it is concentrated this elementary power direction, from outside-inside and top-down, channeled in a singular mainstream flux, similar to Edgar Allan Poe’s *Maelström*⁸, which forces the inferiority complex upon a

territory, including its subjects (Finnish people) and objects (Finnish mythology included).

In the case of Mikael Agricola, his surname demonstrates the agricultural background of his family. Thus, he was not a descendant of the ruling military aristocracy. The inferiority complex characterizes his mentality and worldview, from an individual perspective to a collective perspective. Agricola recognized the sheer influence of Lutheranism, its intellectual and literary superiority for the territory. This intellectual and literary superiority was what had characterized not only the power of the early Christian Church but also the monastic orders and their independency from the Roman Catholic Church throughout the Middle Ages. So, by navigating the mainstream flux, Agricola segmented the power of the mainstream flux of Lutheranism at the local level and used it to segment and discriminate further, to ultimately wage war against the pagan gods.

Thus, the ruling elite of the Grand Duchy used the same mainstream flux, decoded by Agricola, to empower the subordinate position they held in relation to the czar. They individualized the mainstream flux and used it to capitalize political power control and profits. Thus, they pushed it further by plunging themselves into the historical and mythological Maelström. A good representative of this class was Elias Lönnrot [the collector of the Finnish oral songs published within the epic of *Kalevala*] who:

5 Kerényi, C. in *Essays on a Science of Mythology. The Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis*. C. G. Jung and C. Kerényi, translated by Hull, R. P. C., The Bollingen Series XXII, Pantheon Books, New York, 1949, p. 3.

6 See, for example, the paragraphs regarding the *negative* and *positive* aspects of the *Mother-Complex* in Jung, C. G., *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton University Press, New York, 1980.

7 Hautala, J. *Finnish Folklore Research 1828-1918*, Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1969, p. 12.

8 Poe, E. A. *A Descent into the Maelström*, Fantasy and Horror Classics, UK, 2015.

expresses his historical viewpoint rather clearly when writing in opposition to the explanations of Porthan's time: »I am asking why Ilmarinen has been taken as a god of wind, air and even fire? [...] Ilmarinen [...] was [...] a grave, serious and honest man, diligent in his work, seldom bothering others. And that is honourable enough, and there should be no need to elevate him into a wind-god. [...] Väinämöinen has, even without divinity, fame and honour, and it may be better for each of us to be a noble peasant rather than a bad lord, a wise man rather than a wooden god. [...] I do not doubt than even before Christianity our forefathers had knowledge of one and only god [...].»⁹

Here the mythologem is clear and shows its concrete archetype, the archetype of the child (*our forefathers*). With the help of Kerényi, which also analyzed it through *Kullervo*, a child character of the *Kalevala*, it can be further clarified:

In mythology itself the allegorical value of a mythological image, such as the image of all the child-gods, and the allegorical value of the natural phenomena themselves, the rising sun and the arising of a new-born child, are reciprocal and equal: the rising sun and the new-born child are just as much an allegory of the Primordial Child as the Primordial Child is an allegory of the rising sun and of all the new-born children in the world.¹⁰

This archetype represents not only the mentality of this elite ruling class but also its faciality¹¹.

In effect, after the rise of the Lady in the novels of chivalry and courtly romances, it is the child that comes to the front and centre of the stage in the eighteenth century. If the faciality of the Lady focused the nobilitarian deterritorialisation, it seems that it is that of the child that will, quite literally, submerge that of the bourgeoisie, and that remains true to the present day.¹²

This archetype and this faciality, with all of their complexes, characteristic traits and representational aspects, are internalized by the ruling class in Finland. They are the norm, its rhetoric, its ethic, and aesthetic, in the past as in the present.

9 Hautala, J. *Finnish Folklore Research 1828-1918*, Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1969, p. 29.

10 Kerényi, C. in *Essays on a Science of Mythology. The Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis*. C. G. Jung and C. Kerényi, translated by Hull, R. P. C., The Bollingen Series XXII, Pantheon Books, New York, 1949, p. 61.

11 Deleuze, D., Guattari, F. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translation and foreword by Massumi, B., University of Minnesota Press, 2005, p. 17.

12 Guattari, F. *Lines of Flight*, translated by Goffey, A., Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 26.

Overdubbing II: Child Archetype and Faciality of Today's Finnish Ruling Elite.

In very recent contemporary history, in order to clarify the symptoms derived from a lack of elaboration on the child archetype that defines the Finnish ruling class, it suffices to listen to the discourse of Finnish President Sauli Niinistö and his reasoning behind Finland's accession into NATO, i.e. without a democratic referendum, which simply demonstrates how advanced the Finnish democracy is. For the occasion, the highest representative of the Finnish people pointed the finger at Russia, declaring "You caused this – look in the mirror!"¹ That mirror, however, does not show only the face of Russia's decaying authoritarian, macho, and paternalistic imperialism, which to supposedly defend the Russians of Ukraine, indiscriminately bombed innocent people. That mirror also shows the face of the surrounding irresponsible, infantilized subjects, such as the one Finnish people have elected as their representative, egoistical subjects with countless inferiority complexes, that use the name of Finland in order to subjectivize themselves and transgress the law, order, and word of the supposed father by embracing another sup-

posed father, another supposed superior, the U.S. and NATO.

Even more clarifying is the case of Sanna Marin, the second highest representative that the Finnish people have elected for themselves (Prime Minister since 2019), who also signed for the Finnish NATO bid. Her neoliberal spin doctors prepped her as the most recent faciality of the political power elite which perfectly embodies the child-archetype of the neoliberal feminist mythology. She was the youngest female prime minister in the history of Finland. The public is informed that she was raised by her mother and her mother's female partner. When taking office, she presented herself joined by five other female leaders of the coalition parties forming the government. Moreover, she used to call her colleagues "comrades" and, when she took office, was "dead against NATO membership"². But after contributing to the preparation of the war machine, and anachronistically turning Finland back into a bulwark nation³, as it was during the Gustavian times, which contradicted the mythological feminist faciality and its child archetype, the

1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhLNBxpo8zY> (Sky News, accessed on 19.11.2022)

2 <https://www.politico.eu/article/sanna-marin-comrades-meet-finland-new-prime-miniester/> (link accessed on 20.11.2022)

3 See in Berezhnaya, L., Hein-Kircher, H. *Rampart Nations. Bulwark Myths of East European Multiconfessional Societies in the Age of Nationalism*, Berghahn, 2019.

ruling power elite and the spin doctors briskly got back to work by repairing the image and recomposing the new faciality.

It seems that in doing so they perfectly know how to “utilise a faciality of power [for which s] ometimes it is enough to show a face to change the dimensions of a problem (to ‘make an example’, to set off a scandal).”⁴ This is the very same idea that the spin doctors of the ruling class in Finland had, as well. A few months after Sanna Marin presented the decision of Finland entering NATO, a fake scandal of a supposed leaked video exploded: Sanna Marin was caught partying! The news went viral globally, much more than Finland’s decision to abandon its neutral and peace policies and enter NATO⁵. Apparently, a “*different*” Woolfian idea for this elite was impossible.

words and following your methods but by finding new words and creating new methods. We can best help you to prevent war not by joining your society but by remaining outside your society but in cooperation with its aim. That aim is the same for both of us. It is to assert ‘the rights of all – all men and women – to the respect in their persons of the great principles of Justice and Equality and Liberty’.⁶

Whatever the verdict of others may be upon the man in uniform – and opinions differ – there is your letter to prove that to you the picture is the picture of evil. And though we look upon that picture from different angles our conclusion is the same as yours – it is evil. We are both determined to do what we can to destroy the evil which that picture represents, you by your methods, we by ours. And since we are different, our help must be different. What ours can be we have tried to show – how imperfect, how superficially there is no need to say. But as a result the answer to your question must be that we can best help you to prevent war not by repeating your

4 Guattari, F. *Lines of Flight*, translated by Goffey, A., Bloomsbury, 2016, p. 51.

5 <https://twitter.com/cbsnews/status/1562734087466409986> (link accessed on 20.11.2022).

6 Woolf, V. *Three Guineas* in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, Oxford University Press, UK, 2000, p. 366.

VI.
Iconographies
and Iconology
of the Monuments:
Runeberg
and the *Czar*.

VI. Iconographies and Iconology of the Monuments:
Runeberg and the Czar.

To somehow follow the metaphoric definition of the “boulevard men and institutions of our freedom”, given in 1803 by Boiste, it is easy to see these men and institutions like vanguards, literally intended as the men and institutions on guard in the most advanced positions of the bulwarks/boulevards¹, be they those of the city, empire, or Grand Duchy. To better understand how, in terms of artistic production these men and institutions are made and what they represent, it may help to provide some representative examples.

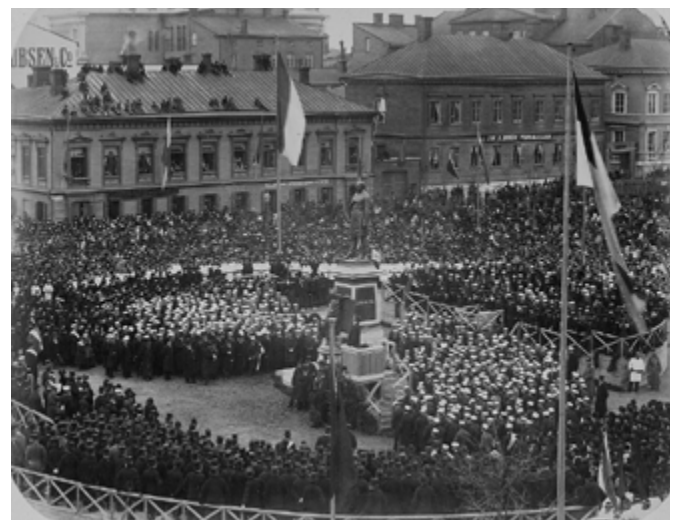
The first example is a monument, in the center of *Esplanadi*, where the statue of the national poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg is placed on a pedestal, on the foot of which the *Maiden of Finland* (*Suomi-neito*) is leaning on her left arm above the verses of the national anthem, written by the poet. The monument, unveiled in 1885, was commissioned by the son of the national poet, Walter Runeberg in 1878, who, at the time, was in Paris. In other words, the first monumental statue in Helsinki², was the monumental creation that a son (Walter) dedicated to his father (Johan Ludvig), and which represented the father (the poet Runeberg) superior (placed on a pedestal) to the country (*The Maiden of Finland*, placed on the foot of pedestal).

Walter Runeberg and Johannes Takanen are co-authors of another monument, dedicated to *Czar Alexander II*, unveiled in 1894 at the Senate Central Square. A competition was organized for the creation of this monument. The

proclaimed winner was Johannes Takanen, who, unfortunately, died in 1885. His sober proposal was completed by Walter Runeberg, ranked second in the competition, who maintained the same statue of Alexander II proposed by Takanen, but overcharged the monument symbolically by placing, on the foot of the pedestal, a group of other statues (*Lex, Pax, Labor, and Lux*).

In the second monument, as compared to the first, taking into account the inferiority complex and faciality of the ruling power elite as well as the child archetype, there is an inversion in terms of power relations. The emperor of Russia follows the iconographic representation of the national poet. In addition, the czar is dressed in a Finnish military uniform (the first militant of the country).

In terms of *pathos-formel* or “the emotive formula all’antica”³, the expression of the *Runeberg* in *Esplanadi* is more contained and in total control of his emotions. The czar in *Senaatti*



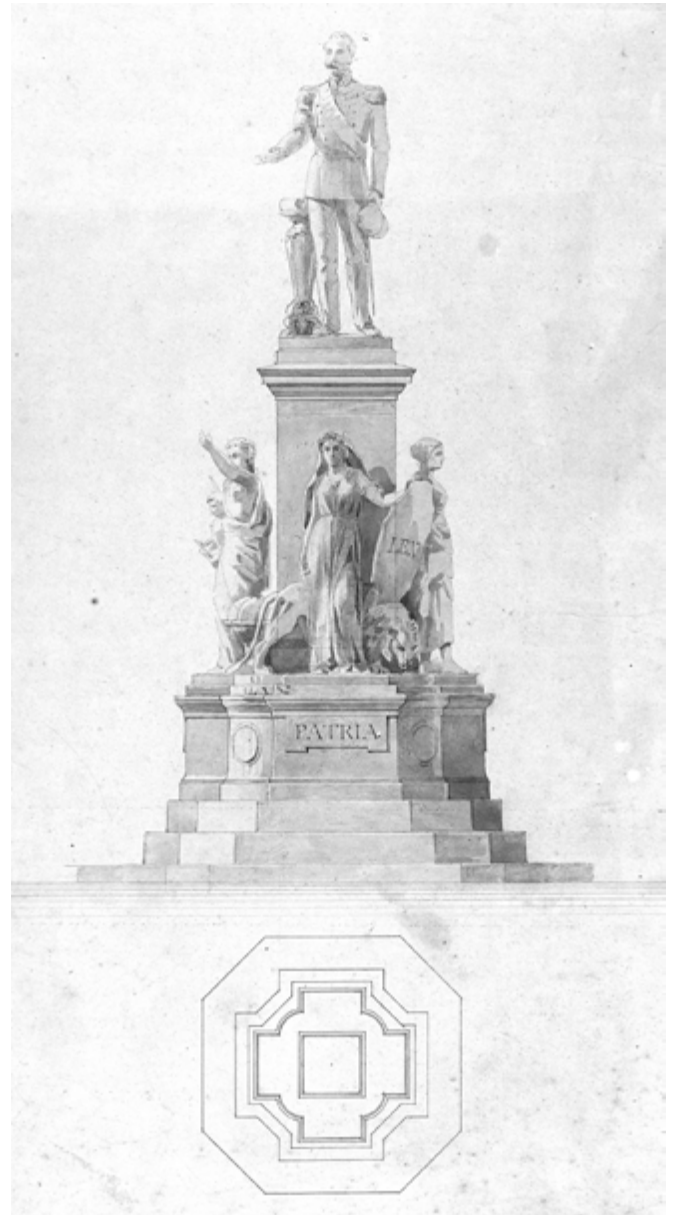
Walter Runeberg, *Runeberg and The Maiden of Finland*, Inauguration Ceremony, *Esplanadi*, Helsinki, 1885.

- 1 «What the avant-garde does not tolerate about the bourgeoisie is its language, not its status.» Barthes, R. *Mythologies*, trad. Annette Lavers, The Noonday Press, New York, 1991, p. 139.
- 2 Klinge, M., Kolbe, L. *Helsinki, Daughter of the Baltic: a Short Biography*, translation Malcolm Hicks, Otava Publishing Helsinki, 2007, p. 55.
- 3 Warbourg, A. *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, translated by Britt, D., Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, Los Angeles, CA, 1999, p. 321.

VI. Iconographies and Iconology of the Monuments:
Runeberg and the Czar.



Johannes Takanen's Drawing/Proposal for the Monument of Alexander II.



Walter Runeberg's Drawing/Proposal for the Monument of Alexander II.

Square, with his right hand open and the head slightly inclined, is more expressive and seems to be awaiting a response from his interlocutors.

In both cases, *Suomi-neito* is represented under their feet. However, while in the monument of *Alexander II*, she looks directly ahead while proudly and courageously holding a sword and shield of the LEX/Law, implying that, in Finland, the law is made by the Finnish people themselves, in the monument of *Johan Ludvig*

Runeberg, she looks down, her gaze empty, a lost animal, domesticated, as if suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, as she holds the laurel and artwork (national anthem) of the hardworking poet.

It seems that these two monuments imply that the child, although *de jure* is subject to the father's rule, *de facto* has surpassed the father. From an iconographic and iconological point of view, the subordinate position of the

VI. Iconographies and Iconology of the Monuments:
Runeberg and the Czar.



Walter Runeberg, *Runeberg and The Maiden of Finland*, particular *The Maiden*.

elite ruling class of the Grand Duchy towards the czar is inverted. It is the czar who, in the spaces opened, marked, and rationalized by his predecessor, such as *Senaatti Square* and the *Esplanadi-Bulevardi* axis, sees his subjects monumentalized, and has now become subject to their iconography and iconology.

Of course, there is nothing iconographically and iconologically innovative in the monument of *Runeberg and Suomi-neito*. There is merely a display of accurate formal academicism, which shows off the author's symbolic eloquence and his general knowledge of the official iconography of the political power at the time, especially that of an emperor at work. The most immediate iconographic reference, in historical terms, is

Jacques-Louis David's *The Emperor Napoleon in His Study at the Tuileries* (1812).

Thus, even *Runeberg* is represented as an emperor, on a pedestal, on the foot of which his work, the national anthem, is shown. In addition, this last element, the most literal part of the monument, leads to further interpretation, which, by contextualizing the hardworking character trait of the poet, brings in mind Ilmarinen, the mythological, hardworking and industrious character of the *Kalevala*.

However, Ilmarinen is also the inventor of the Sampo.

Ilmarinen is a man of action and sound reason, a realist who is free from sensitivity and vanity. His joy has always been in his work and his noble ambition to work well. He does not possess other ideals and therefore he lacks independent initiative. He must be incited to new efforts by something outside of himself, then he is perfectly diligent and able.⁴

Consequently, here, in the case of this monument, there is no invention from neither father nor son, only clean and clear rhetoric (of the poet) and academicism (of the sculptor) that must be related to the *necessary external incitements*.

Moreover, it is important to notice that the weapons, such as the sword that is present in David's *Napoleon* as well as in *Runeberg/Takanen's Alexander II*, are neither in the hands of the poet *Runeberg* nor in the hands of *Suomi-neito* in *Esplanadi*. The sword appears in the hands of a combatant, *Suomi-neito* in *Se-*

⁴ Ervast, P. *The Key to Kalevala*, translated by Joensu, T., Literary Society of the Finnish Rosy Cross, 2018, p. 177.

VI. Iconographies and Iconology of the Monuments:
Runeberg and the Czar.



Jacques-Louis David,
The Emperor Napoleon in His Study at the Tuileries, 1812.



Walter Runeberg, *Runeberg and The Maiden of Finland*,
particular of *Runeberg*.

naatti Square, placed right under the pedestal of the czar, who also holds a sword, though it is unsheathed. In this manner, the ruling elite of the country is represented through a demilitarized image. However, though the elite appears peaceful, the country, *The Maiden of Finland*, is prepared for battle in the name of the ruler. It is *Suomi-neito* that, in both cases, militarized and demilitarized, fully, metaphorically and literally represents the meaning of the “boulevard men and institutions of our freedom”.

With these monuments, the new elite ruling class of the Grand Duchy embellished the *Esplanadi-Bulevardi* axis and the adjacent *Sen-aatti Square* and, simultaneously, monumentalized the *ostentatious* and *hardworking* traits that it lacked from the aristocratic tradition and bourgeois characters. In other words, the child archetype, elaborated superficially at the ego level, needed monuments, in the middle of these transitional spaces, to fill the void of the missing character traits that belonged to the fathers (*the*

ostentatious and arrogant feudal lords and the hardworking triumphant bourgeoisie). The ruling class needed transitional objects⁵, monuments for its infancy and its infants, Finland and the Finnish people, to be used, from time to time, as *pharmakos*⁶. Through these, the ruling class was preparing to reformulate the faciality of its power: from the Emperor to the poet, in other words, the artist, the intellectual leading the country. A poet, an artist, an intellectual that, as a ruler, does not create and, consequently, does not resist, because the sword of the resistance transported to the hands of *Suomi-neito*/ Finland, to the hands of the ruled, to the hands of the perfect scapegoat. The ruler, the ruling elite class, from this moment onward, will solely represent the *poiesis* of the power.

The oppressed is nothing, he has only one language, that of his emancipation; the oppressor is everything, his language is rich, multiform, supple, with all the possible degrees of dignity at its disposal: he has an exclusive right to meta-language. The oppressed makes the world, he has only an active, transitive (political) language; the oppressor conserves it, his language is plenary, intransitive, gestural, theatrical: it is Myth. The language of the former aims at transforming, of the latter at eternalizing.⁷

5 Winnicott, D. W. *Playing and Reality*, Routledge, London-New York, 1999, p. 2.

6 In greek it refers to a drug (poison or medicine) as well as to a scapegoat or sacrifice to expiate the sin. See in Derrida, J. *Plato's Pharmacy in Dissemination*, translated by Johnson, B., The Athlon Press, London, 1981, p. 128.

7 Barthes, R. *Mythologies*, trad. Annette Lavers, The Noonday Press, New York, 1991, p. 150.

VII.
Institutional
Pharmakopoeia.

The infancy perceived by the ego of the ruling class through its inferiority complex as something transitional, that should be bypassed – denying, in this manner, the continuous psychological elaboration of the child archetype – is not visible only through the pharmacopoeiosis of the art production and artists of the ruling elite, but also of the art institutions. In this regard, the case of the *Finnish Art Society* (*Suomen taidyhdistys*) is emblematic.

Below, a relevant excerpt from the webpage of the *Finnish Art Society*:

The year 1846 can justifiably be considered a landmark in the history of Finnish art, as that was the year in which the Finnish Art Society was founded. The purpose of the Society was to lay the foundation for Finnish art life. [...] The Society adopted as its ambitious goal the development of all these aspects of the Finnish art world. Another concern was to sustain artistic life in Finland: talents had to be discovered, scouted across the country, to provide them with education and training for their future role as pillars of the country's art life, as workers for national culture. [...] The core of the Society consisted of socially influential figures gathered around Fredrik Cygnaeus [...]. The [...] patron [was] none other than Grand Duke Alexander, later Emperor Alexander III of Russia. The date of the Society's founding was set for Alexander's birthday, 10 March 1846. [...] In 1851, the patron of the Society, Grand Duke Alexander, donated to the Society a, for its time, substantial collection of art. [...] These 28 works were the first public art collection in Finland, and comprise the core of the Finnish national art gallery. [...] A dedicated museum of its own – a house for art – was not

completed until 1887, and named the Ateneum at the suggestion of the then chairman of the Finnish Art Society, Professor of Aesthetics C. G. Estlander. [...] The Society's educational and museal functions were transferred in 1939 to the Finnish Fine Arts Academy Foundation, which had been established for the purpose. In 1990, the collections of the Ateneum Art Museum were transferred entirely to the State.

Its ambitions of being a *historical landmark* and at the very foundation of *the Finnish art world*, seen through the lenses of the mentality that marks the representational aspects of the boulevard, channels, at a symbolic level, the persistent inferiority complex interiorized by the ego of the ruling class, even at the institutional level. Its child archetype is a missing subject. It is unelaborated and unable to subjectivize itself. Therefore, it is subjectified, elaborated only at the level of the ego by the institutional pharmakopoeia of the ruling class.

Firstly, this recompenses its mentality deficit regarding “the ostentatious and arrogant feudal lord” fathers. The mythological-historical transcendentalism of this ruling class is confirmed by the founding of *The Finnish Art Society* on the same date as the birth of its patron, Alexander III. This demonstrates the willingness of the ruling elite to operate according to the status quo, which resonates with the mainstream tendency, or direction, toward profit and control of the powers that be, the outside-inside and top-down schemes. Thus, and secondly, the ambition to be fully operative in following the status quo, recompensing the mentality's deficit regarding “the

hardworking triumphant bourgeois” fathers. It recompenses the new, modern, historicized hardworking, but not innovative, *Ilmarinens*.

This recompensing completes the perfect mythological/historical imaginary machine, ready for use in future territorial conquests and production of *talented workers*, with a specific role, functional, as *pillars* of the *national culture of the country*. These are the concrete results. The mythological/historical imaginary machine, within the kaleidoscope of the boulevard, produces a myriad infantilized egos, reflecting the resemblances of the ruling class, not only along the boulevards of Helsinki and Finland but throughout the world.

I have made a compromise in my requirements and I have chosen research. But to be an art historian in a country with no museum, no artists working here, no public that understands art, and hardly any art at all! The objective of spreading knowledge of art history in our country would be like a tropical flower in a greenhouse.²

In his farewell address to the Art Society in 1878 [Frederik Cygneus] noted that in the London world fair of 1851 Finland had been left outside Crystal Palace, “but thereafter the doors to European exhibitions have been wide open”.¹

Yet, can this be considered a success? Was this the concrete reality of the Finnish art scene at the time? Or, is it simply a formal positivistic approach in order to “ostentatiously” show off the “hard work” of the institution, while lacking quality in terms of content? The answer is in a private letter, dated 1.9.1880, from art historian Johan Jakob Tikkanen addressed to Walter Runeberg, both representatives of this ruling class:

- 1 Pettersson, S. *For the People's Best. Fredrik Cygnaeus and the Course Taken By Art in Finland* in *The Shape of Art History in Finland*, edited by Renja Suominen-Kokkonen, Taidehistoriallisia tutkimuksia, 2007, Helsinki, p. 20.
- 2 Vakkari, J. *Focus on Form. J. J. Tikkanen, Giotto and Art Research in the 19th Century*, translated by Kokkonen, J., published by *The Finnish Antiquarian Society*, 2007, p. 11.

Overdubbing III: An Interview with Asko Mäkelä.

Firstly, the interview with Asko Mäkelä, Vice Chairman of The Finnish Art Society, is included here in order to maintain a sort of de-institutionalizing distance from The Finnish Art Society, an institution that kindly supported me for the interviews and graphic design of this text. It is also to avoid being swallowed by the “greenhouse” of “tropical flowers”, which, to me these days, seems to be the Finnish contemporary *art scene*. Moreover, it is in order to separate myself from the artists, researchers, and cultural operators, all apparently strict critics of capitalism, who do not criticize or question the origin of the funds and the ethics of the institutions that support them. Lastly, this interview is included here because, in my opinion, it actualizes the past institutional issues, in terms of subjectivization/subjectification and legitimization, within the public domain of art production and artists, not only of *The Finnish Art Society*, but also of the other public and private institutions that support art in Finland.

Asko Mäkelä – am

Romeo Kodra – rk

rk Your institution has a long history, but I am more interested in its actuality. Can you tell me about the most important directions on which your institution is focused at the moment?

am Yes, we do have a long history, but we are working just as much as in the old days. We still give grants to support the arts, or buy art to distribute it as part of a lottery, which helps the art market in the country. The latter, the art market, is very important and we are still struggling with it, with creating one.

rk Yes, traditionally, this has been very difficult in Finland. Your very institution is a demonstration of this, because it was created with the intention of raising awareness and supporting the Finnish arts and artists.

am Yes, it was the intention of several private founders who wanted to create an art scene and bring attention to art education. Our institution is the one that created the Art Academy and the National Gallery. We are no longer connected to these institutions, if only as part of the committees that monitor the administration and function according to Finnish law.

rk Before the recording of this interview, we were talking about transparency in decision-making within the institutions of art and culture. What is your point of view on this issue?

am I think that it is right, opening up the decision-making and making it transparent, even in our institution. I have always been interested to find out how the deci-

sion-makers of our institution have made their selections, in the past, and how they have succeeded in supporting art and artists. Generally, we give most grants to young artists, and a few to mid-career or senior artists. In any case, we have received very little critique on the selection process.

rk Have you ever had any complaints or appeals from applicants who were not granted?

am No, and that is very uncommon. I hear of a lot of complaints directed at TAIKE, for example, and other institutions. But here, we have not received any complaints. I think it is the merit of the committee that selects the applications. In this regard, I can say that, through the selected applicants, we have covered a wide range of interests in the art field, starting from the LGBTQ community to people dealing with personal issues, to those working with new technologies, video-art, etc.

rk Do you have any priority or special focus in terms of granting applicants? I mean, in general terms, when you think of what you have done thus far, and all of the distributed grants or awards, can you see a connecting thread in your decisions?

am I do not think so. We do not have one specific priority in this sense. I think it depends a lot on the applications we receive, and only after we decide, in terms of art fields or genre. It is difficult to decide what to prioritize beforehand. Considering the results, until now everything has gone well because the committee has selected the right applicants, ones that truly represent what is currently happening in the Finnish art scene. Of course, I agree

with you and your critical point of view in terms of institutional critique and the decision-making of institutions. However, setting priorities and criteria beforehand is difficult, because you have to consider that the committee, for example, also selects based on their knowledge of a specific art field and artists, but also on the concrete quality of the proposal.

rk Yes, I understand your point and agree that it can be an issue. I think that this problem in your institution, which marked the history of art in Finland by creating the National Gallery and Academy of Arts, has also marked the Finnish context through the problem of decision-making since the 19th century. I remember reading the critique of Johan Jakob Tikkanen (1857-1930), who was Secretary and later Chair of *Suomen taideyhdistys* as well as the founder of Art History as a scientific university subject, of the methods of directing an institution and the decision-making practices of his predecessor, Fredrik Cygnaeus (1807-'81), the central figure around whom your institution was founded, considered by Tikkanen as based more on a romantic view of the artist's genius and artwork than on a scientific basis. And, I think this productive debate should continue even today.

[Unfortunately, during the interview I made a mistake by exchanging J. J. Tikkanen with another art historian, Emil Nervander, who curated the works of Cygnaeus. Here is the quote I was referring to: According to Rafael Forsman and Emil Nervander, Cygnaeus was easily excitable and prone to ecstasy but at the same time impatient and incapable of working with perseverance.

According to Forsman, to Cygnaeus, are meant “an ideal state, a higher and nobler reality where man is freed from the constraints of every day life”. He describes how Cygnaeus was never satisfied to “coldly state something” or “to evaluate something carefully or with consideration” but stretched towards boundless eloquence. Nervander supports this view in emphasising that Cygnaeus avoided any academic relation to art and that he wanted to retain the right of a dilettante to view art with the eyes of a poet. [...] Nervander had a reserved approach to Cygnaeus’ way of admiring art without criticism.^{1]}

am Actually, now that I am thinking about it, we do follow the direction set by Cygneus more.

rk So, more focused on the artistic side of the applications.

am Yes, because Cygneus himself was a poet. Of course, his decisions also reflected the nationalistic ideas at the time, which were inevitable in that period, when Finland did not yet exist because it was under the Russian Empire. But, what is very interesting about him are his decisions to give grants to the first female artists in Finland. This was extraordinary and very important, especially considering the customs at the time. So, this kind of open-mindedness, at a time when the institution was undoubtedly a ‘*herraseura*’ or boys’ club, has somehow been a constant in our history, considering the grantees that we have supported. I am very interested in our

past but there are also the contemporary challenges on which I have to focus. For example, how to answer, as an institution, to the needs of the arts and artists of our days. This must be considered in the new strategy, to be developed soon on the arrival of a new director (the call will be open within days). For this, we have to understand how others, from the outside, see us and then think about the place we want our institution to have in Finnish society. Our reputation is generally good because of the choices we have made to grant the artists I mentioned before. But, we cannot be sure that this will continue. So, there is a need to bring our members and external persons together in discussing these institutional issues regarding the future.

rk When will you start working on the strategy?

am We will start next year and hopefully finish within a year.

rk Is there a time frame for this strategy?

am Yes, it will cover the next five years.

rk Has it always been like this, every five years?

am No, it is a new thing for us, something not done before. We had only one, which was compiled by the Board four years ago. The reasoning behind it was to change our institution so that it could face challenges in the near future. Before this, we had only our statute and rules, but no strategy.

rk I wanted to ask you about the financial aspects of the institution. In other words, where does the money come from?

¹ Pettersson, S. *For the People’s Best. Fredrik Cygnaeus and the Course Taken By Art in Finland in The Shape of Art History in Finland*, edited by Renja Suominen-Kokkonen, Taidehistoriallisia tutkimuksia, 2007, Helsinki, p. 13.

am We have the old donations, investments and shares. We have advisors for this and one person entirely dedicated to these issues. Of course, we also have people in the Board who are experts in this field. One more, very important, thing which helps a lot, is the money received from the testaments, which is around €450.000.

rk Are the shares you have publicly known?

am I think they are. We have not published this information online but every member can see it in the annual reports.

rk Who makes decisions on the institution's investments and shares?

am It is the Board that decides. We have a company that takes care of the investments, our own expert, and the experts within our Board that I already mentioned.

rk What do you mean by a "company"?

am It is a company, one of the banks, Nordea, that takes care of those.

rk It is more or less similar to other foundations or funding bodies such as The Finnish Cultural Foundation or Kone Foundation, correct?

am Yes, it is quite the same structure.

rk You also said that, for you, institutional transparency is important and that you wanted to address it during the development of the strategy. Has transparency been addressed as an issue before?

am We have started to discuss it in our Board on Strategy and Transparency. We would like to discuss it with others, as well, like members of our society as well as with the new Director. In our discussions, concerns were raised regarding the criteria of the open calls, because we saw that it has been

problematic in the open calls of other institutions, such as in the Kone Foundation, where they have a lot of debates.

rk Yes, I have read some articles online and opinions on this. But, I think these are very good opportunities to open up the institution and feed it with the information and knowledge from outside.

am Yes, but the issue remains how to express all of this information and knowledge in the open call and its criteria.

rk Sure, it is a challenge, because you will also influence the direction of the art applications that you will receive in this case.

am Yes, and this is what I have always been interested in. How to avoid this influence.

rk In my opinion, an institution should take responsibility. An institution always influences the direction of the arts through the decisions it makes. The question is, how can an institution maintain coherence between what it says and what it does. Its influence is inevitable but it can be balanced through the responsibilities taken by the institution and its openness to change. In other words, everyone in our neoliberal system talks about institutional change but proceeds to ignore its meaning in practice. For instance, if the institution wants to promote openness, democracy, diversity, freedom and similar buzzwords, this process should start from its strategy and form the internal situation of the institution itself, how open, democratic, diverse, and free are the Board, the employees, and the people working within and for the institution. The institution can have many priorities but each one, if the institution wants to properly address them, should first be taken into consideration from in-

side the institution and only after, can it be transferred outside.

am Sure, sure. I agree that all of these are buzzwords but, in our institution, we still want, by addressing all of these issues, to maintain the material quality and support art that represents it. For example, I hate these new waterfront transformations.

rk ... which are all the same, right? In Finland, France, Greece, wherever you see them, the same aesthetic visual elements are repeated.

am Yes, this is what I am talking about.

[The interview was interrupted for a couple of minutes by a phone call]

am The phone call was about the release of the open call for the new director. Returning to our discussion, I think that everybody knows these things, and everybody wants to change the situation. So, in our institution we try to do it, to make it possible for change to happen which, as I said, is not always easy. I remember when I was working with the EU projects, we had to evaluate projects based on a threshold, on a certain predetermined limit. With this method, 30% passed the threshold and only 10% received the grant.

rk I know. This is still, more or less, how it works to this day.

am The difficulty I saw then was that there were some very well-written and some poorly written projects. However, there were cases when we could tell, after having read just five lines of a poorly written project, that there was something very in-

teresting there, something that we could not find in the well-written projects. So, this is the challenge. How to decide in this case. I knew that the well-written project was prepared by an agency and the poorly written project most likely by someone truly involved with art and its materiality.

rk It is not impossible. I wrote a text about the transparency of Finnish art gatekeeping institutions, where the main idea was to neutralize the so-called expert evaluating the applications, myself in this case, in order to let the critic emerge and determine the quality of the applications by overcoming and moving beyond buzzwords.

am I am honestly telling you that it is difficult even for me, personally, to decide in such cases. I am not thinking in institutional terms but at a personal level. I see this as a very problematic issue.

rk Yes, it is normal. It is the crisis of the critic. Without the crisis, the critic, considering the etymology of the word, would not exist.

am Yes, it's true. I would like for every founding body to discuss this issue because it is fundamental to our work. This should be discussed more and at every level of the foundation. I mean, it should be discussed between us, between each other. Because, if everything is open, nothing new happens.

[PERSONAL NOTES AFTER HEARING THE
RECORDING OF THE INTERVIEW:

1. “I have always been interested to find out how the decision-makers of our institution have made their selections, in the past, and how they have succeeded in supporting art and artists. - Have they succeeded?
2. No complaints or appeals and “that is very uncommon” – Why? Domesticated artists? Or maybe they have just been really good at evaluating the art and artists of the last 150 years.
3. No “priority” for the open calls! – This makes space for the arbitrary decision but can also be very fair towards the arts and the artists if the decision is honest and justified. Do they justify? How?
4. Error: change Tikkanen with Nervander!!!
5. “Herraseura!” - The institution has supported female artists! Although not very open and democratic in terms of decision-making, this is a good example to point out the power of the individuals that go beyond the bureaucratic and technocratic institution!!!
6. Where the money comes from? - Not very clear. Investments and shares!! How the ethics are guaranteed, remains unknown. The relationship with Nordea, one of the corporates that will profit from the boulevardisation!!!
7. Asko knows the processes of evaluation but at an institutional level, they do not have clear ideas and what is the justification behind having a clear strategy, priorities, and objectives which are connected with the evaluation processes without killing the critique of art and artists for the sake of managerialism and expertism.]

VIII.

The Fading of the Boulevard Men and the Apotheosis of the Boulevard Institutions.

The exotic point of view of “*spreading knowledge of art history in our country would be like a tropical flower in a greenhouse*” closely resembles the thoughts of another professor:

The problem of what was considered to be Finnish art history was brought up during the 1880s by Eliel Aspelin’s brother, Johan Reinhold Aspelin (1842-1915), who examined artists working in Finland, from the Middle Ages to the 18th century. Even if most of the artists named in the archival sources were apparently foreigners, J. R. Aspelin was writing the art history of Finland in two distinct senses: the art history of a geographical entity and as he stated in the Finnish version of his study, the art presented to the Finnish people.¹

Apparently, the early public art institutions in Finland, through professors and educators, such as Tikkanen and Aspelin, or through art critics affiliated with private institutions, such as Cygnaeus and *The Finnish Art Society*, perceived the art of the time as oscillating between exoticism and enthusiastic exaggeration or pomposity, as something to be firstly presented to the external world, the other, the outside, and only subsequently, to the inside, to the Finnish people. But, what about the art of today’s institutions? According to Susanna Pettersson,

When discussing an early gatekeeper of art such as Cygnaeus, we encounter the same basic questions that concern theories that aim to define the underlying laws of art. What is good art? Who has the right to distinguish between art and non-art, between good art and bad? What are the definitions based on?²

The interview with Asko Mäkelä is a clear demonstration of the truth in this statement. Yet, although these basic questions *can concern us today*, at that time, there were names and institutions that were responsible for such decisions. This responsibility was also taken by institutions after the two world wars, despite a clear division between White Finland and Red Finland and the imposed balance of the two, forced by external geo-political interferences of the USSR and the US. Yet, this changed during the ’80s and ’90s, when the imposed external balance came to an end and the recession hit Finnish economy³. Thus, the institutional decision-making practices of the gatekeepers reverted to the elitist practices of the past.

“Finland” could be summarised in one work of art. And that was what Cygnaeus and his contemporaries aspired to. [...] Cygnaeus also believed that “natural talents” would arise from among the people, and these would develop into the elite of Finnish art with the support of the Art Society.⁴

1 Ripatti, A. *The Architect Jac. Ahrenberg and Studies on Turku Castle at the Turn of the 20th Century*, in *The Shape of Art History in Finland*, edited by Renja Suominen-Kokkonen, Taidehistoriallisia tutkimuksia, 2007, Helsinki, p. 55.

2 Pettersson, S. *For the People’s Best. Fredrik Cygnaeus and the Course Taken By Art in Finland* in *The Shape of Art History in Finland*, edited by Renja Suominen-Kokkonen, Taidehistoriallisia tutkimuksia, 2007, Helsinki, p. 15.

3 See in Heiskanen, I., *Public financing of the arts and culture – statistics and reality in Finland: methodological issues and identification of the 1990s turning points that re-shaped the conditions of cultural and art institutions*, in Finnish Kulttuurin julkinen rahoitus Suomessa – tilastot ja todellisuus: rahoitustilastojen käyttökelpoisuudesta ja 1990-luvun rahoitustilanteesta taide- ja kulttuurilaitosten kannalta, Taiteen keskustoimikunta, Helsinki, 2000.

4 Pettersson, S. *For the People’s Best. Fredrik Cygnaeus and the Course Taken By Art in Finland* in *The Shape of Art History in Finland*, edited by Renja Suominen-Kokkonen, Taidehistoriallisia tutkimuksia, 2007, Helsinki, p. 17.

Yet, currently, the gatekeepers, the “boulevardier institutions of our freedom”, do not have human names. There is no Cygneus, behind whose representativeness decisions, although questionable and not transparent, may be justified. Apparently, today’s *Runeberg* – the artist leading the country in the middle of the boulevard/*Esplanadi* – disappeared, fleeing from the enormous empty pedestal. After the 2003 reform, with the very Finnish interpretation of the New Public Management⁵ reform⁶, the art institutions are dehumanized, the art institutions appear impersonal, empty monumental pedestals of themselves. Today, these are purely bureaucratic and technocratic entities, empty mythological/historical imaginary machines which capture subjective ideas from artists, researchers, and cultural operators in order to subjectify and channel them within the kaleidoscopic flux of the Maelström, where exoticism and exaggerated pomposity curl up with one another in order to squeeze out, channel, or otherwise do away with any libidinal revolutionary and emancipatory potentiality. For those who enter these machines of shock therapy with their research, artistic, or cultural projects, the veto of not naming the names, in other words, not offending the reigning ego, and not problematizing the origin of the money, in other words, not questioning the profits and the ethics of the institution, becomes the travel visa that grants access to the public domain and space of the kaleidoscopic Maelström.

Today, it is unknown who decides what is good or bad art and how this is decided at such institutions like the *Kone Foundation*, *The Finnish Cultural Foundation*, *The Arts Promotion Center of Finland (Taike)* or other private or public institutions (such as municipalities or regions). Even if the names of the decision-makers are publicly known, as is the case at *Taike*, the institutions avoid taking any responsibility by exploiting the systemic lack of transparency, the latter used as the perfect shield for the techno-bureaucratic apotheosis of these mythological/historical imaginary machines.

From this perspective, it is relatively easy for someone like me, in 2022, and so almost 150 years later, to construct an opinion and gain a critical point of view on the work of Cygneus and *The Finnish Art Society*, as well as the elite ruling power of the time, rather than on today’s gatekeepers such as *Taike*, *Kone Foundation*, *Finnish Cultural Foundation*, and many others.

For instance, today there are plenty of scholars who instead of analyzing and interpreting texts by relying on their own expertise, simply resort to reproducing opinions taken from Matti Klinge’s sections on historical figures at *The National Biography of Finland* website, sections which present Cygneus or J. L. Runeberg or others as romantics. I believe this to be due to an institutionally widespread ignorance, or the intentional ignoring of the fact that the romantic writers are not romanticists, the proto-Instagram followers of the Romantic

5 See in Pollitt, C., Hanney, S., Packwood, T., Rothwell, S., and Roberts, S., *Trajectories and Options: An International Perspective on the Implementation of Finnish Public Management Reforms*. Helsinki: Ministry of Finance, 1997.

6 See in Bouckaert, G., Pollitt, C., *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis – New Public Management, Governance, and the Neo-Weberian State*, 3rd edition, Oxford University Press, 2010.

writers. The latter were not only for an individual but also for a collective revolutionary movement.⁷ And the revolution, be it the French or the Russian, despite Klinge's opinion, is what made Finland, though a revolution never occurred in Finland, mainly because the ruling class, to maintain its *status quo*, provided the nationalist petit-bourgeoisie and nationalist landowners with warrior mythological/historical imaginary machines which serve to eroticize the national ego by repressing any chance at a profound collective understanding and/or an elaboration of the collective inferiority complex through the assessment of the child archetype. This inversion, from the former inferiority complex toward the foreign ruler (be it the King of Sweden, the Russian Czar or any other top-down or outside-in authority figure) into a superiority complex towards the ruled (whether it be the industrial and agrarian proletariat or the sub-proletariat that are pushed outside and down from the centralization and agglomeration of the profits and power), brought on the civil war, the loss of territories, a disastrous alliance with Nazi Germany, the loss of additional territories, and the payment of war reparations to the Soviet Union which, coincidentally, had invaded and annexed Finnish territories.

Thus, today, all of these interpretations are made possible and it becomes easy to form a personal opinion on who the actors are, what do they discuss, and how do they discuss the art of the past in Finland. However, for my colleague 150 years from now, in the year 2172, it will

be very difficult to comprehend the institutional decision-making regarding art production and the legitimization of artists on the public domain, whether this includes the decision of an institution, such as The Finnish Art Society, in supporting myself and this text or the decisions of any other institution supporting other artists, researchers, and professionals, such as those involved in the design, approval, and implementation of the boulevardisation of Helsinki. It would be undoubtedly difficult, if the one who produces – the artist, the researcher, or the cultural operator – does not question and challenge the interests of the provider, the institution that guarantees the means of production.



Romeo Kodra, *Erectile Erasure*, particular, 2022. A few months ago, after receiving two negative decisions for two applications, I decided to ask for feedback regarding the modalities of Taike's evaluations, the names of the evaluators, the document showing the effective evaluation as well as the work plan of the successful applications considering that, as part of the process, was included the comparison of the applications. The document received from Taike, which I used as part of an artwork, shows the transparency of the institution.

⁷ «Impulses toward “Pagan” religiosity in Romantic writers should be taken seriously as challenging the established order in the West, and not merely as an aestheticized atheism» Butler, E. *Romanticism and Polytheism: The Modern Gaze on the Ancient and Non-Western Other* in *Walking the Worlds*, Volume 6, Number 1, Winter 2019.

IX.

How to Discover the
(Real) Author/s of the
Boulevardisation of
Helsinki in Two Years,
Three Interviews, and
Numerous Persistent
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In 2015, Helsinki's Urban Plan was drafted¹ by the Urban Environment Division of the Municipality. The first of ten themes of the draft claimed "densification", an "increasing of the population" caused by new arrivals, mainly "migrants" and people from other cities, as justification for the plan's necessity. In addition, "densification" was seen as a solution in the reduction of emissions, a way of improving the climate and environmental sustainability. In the *Plan*, the main urban tools proposed to tackle "densification" were "city boulevards". Simultaneously, the Urban Environment Division released another document entitled "City Boulevards in Helsinki"², where an unusual term appeared for the very first time in an official document regarding urban planning. The term is "boulevardisation."

On October 29, 2016, the plan was approved by the Municipal Council.

After reading the draft, the thematics, as well as the final Plan and the documents of the approval with all the amendments of the Municipality Council, I was very curious to know, not only who proposed the term boulevardisation, but also whether any analyses on the perception of Helsinki's citizens regarding "densification/boulevardisation" existed. Furthermore, I wanted to find out how could the planner/s draft and propose a plan citing the arrival of migrants and Finnish citizens from other parts of Finland as it justification, without knowing whether these newcomers would prefer to live in a denser Helsinki, whether was there any data confirming

the proposed lower environmental impact of a denser Helsinki, whether the internal and external experts involved in the planning process declared an absence of any conflicts of interest with the city and the companies interested in densifying Helsinki. With these questions in mind, I contacted the Municipality of Helsinki. After several e-mail and phone call exchanges, I conducted an interview with one of the interns.

The First Interview (video call):

Niklas Aalto-Setälä.

Niklas Aalto-Setälä – nas

Romeo Kodra – rk

rk What is your position within the Municipality of Helsinki?

nas I am mainly responsible for transportation-related issues of the Southern part of Helsinki. In a higher capacity, at the Municipal Urban Planning Department, I am involved in cases where transportation is combined with land use.

rk Do you remember the first person to propose the idea and use the term "boulevardisation" regarding the transformation of the highways into denser urban streets?

nas I do not know exactly, because I have not been involved in the planning from the beginning. I started later. From what I understood, the idea came up around the '90s or even earlier. It had been around the urban planning department for decades but

1 https://www.hel.fi/hel2/ksv/julkaisut/esitteet/esite_2015-1_en.pdf (accessed on 23.11.2022)

2 https://www.hel.fi/hel2/ksv/julkaisut/esitteet/esite_2015-4_en.pdf (accessed on 23.11.2022)

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was materialized only in the last planning process, which started in 2012 or 2013, if I am not wrong. I do not think it was one person in particular that came up with the idea of boulevardisation. It is more an issue of space that produces the idea of densification. If you look around Helsinki, there are a lot of spaces but their function is already clearly defined. You cannot cut out the green spaces. So, this was where the idea of boulevardisation came in. The idea was to transform all of the roads leading into the city into boulevards. This transformation frees up a lot of space that can be used differently, such as in the case of housing, commercial real estate, etc., and avoid cutting off a lot of forests and green space. In addition, the roads interrupt the city fabric and create a lot of gaps. By transforming the roads into city boulevards, we can fill the gaps and turn the city into a unified entity, without the scars. Moreover, there is the problem of real estate and the house prices in Helsinki, which through boulevardisation, can be mitigated.

rk I understood that perfectly by reading the plan. It is coherent, in terms of societal phases from the industrial to the post-industrial, as well as in terms of mentality and “governmentality,” especially dealing with space, its rationalization and its governance. However, I was wondering about the kind of data on which the decision of boulevardisation and densification was based. For example, who will buy these houses? What kind of people did the planners imagine as residents in the new boulevards?

nas I do not know if we had in mind any specific people who would live there. I do not think that we had this kind of a focus. Maybe, the construction companies that will build the buildings did. In Helsinki, the general approach to the housing stock market is that we try to have one-third unregulated market-oriented houses, one-third subsidised housing, where the city subsidises section of the houses for certain people who buy the houses for themselves, and one-third for rental. This is, more or less, the approach in any large project development of this city. Thus, the same principles apply to boulevardisation. Of course, it depends on each case, because it is not always divided exactly in these “one-third” proportions, but the logic remains. In the case of the new boulevards, there will not be only houses but also commercial spaces with shops as well as schools and kindergartens. So, we do not focus on the demographics of potential inhabitants, like age and profession. Ours is a more general approach that leaves the options of moving to and living in the city to those who are interested in doing so.

rk Yes, I understand perfectly. You have the citizen in general in mind, not the specific typology, category or class of the citizen. However, when the densification of the city is justified through demographic changes – and, as we know, the growing rate or birth rate of the Finnish people is not a trend that affects the growing demography of Finland; rather, it is the expected migrants, my question is, whether your focus on the citizen in general can be an issue. Don't you

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think that this might bring about future conflicts between Finns and migrants?

nas There might be. I am not saying that there will be but there might be. However, it is a more general topic, not just land use development. It is a topic that will affect the social sector and how we will manage these issues, how we will manage the integration of the migrants in Finland, in general. When we look into demographics, we also notice the growing trend of people from other parts of Finland coming to Helsinki. There are a lot of highly educated people moving to Helsinki, and the prediction is that this trend will continue for the next 10 or 20 years. People will come to Helsinki even from bigger cities like Turku, Tampere, etc. There was a trend about 10 years ago of the young families that, after having children, moved out of the city and into the suburbs, in single family apartments or row houses, etc. This trend has not died out but, in the last five years, it is diminishing and we see more and more families with new-borns living in Helsinki. But, regarding the migrants, it will depend on how our society will manage to integrate them, by offering proper work and, generally, a proper living. I would say that Helsinki's social mix, with that one-third/one-third/one-third division, is really key to maintaining the same social fabric and properly integrating migrants into Helsinki's social life and lifestyle, so as to avoid having areas populated only by migrants, in the future. Segregation is something that we take very seriously, in our city

planning as well as in general as an organization within the Municipality. For example, for the schools with a higher number of children with migrant backgrounds the city dedicates a larger amount of money for the integration of those children. Of course, there is a lot more that can be done but, hopefully, we succeed in integrating them properly.

rk Can you tell me more about the people working on the plan? Who are they? And, how many?

nas I have not been involved in the planning process from the beginning but I think it is about 20-25 people that have been involved in this process. However, there has been a lot of interaction and communication between these people and other professionals and organizations, which could bring the number from 50 to 100 people. In addition, we communicated with citizens, in a series of workshops and events organized for this plan. There was a lot of exchange, through internet-based questionnaires and similar activities. So, if you look at these numbers, the participation goes up to include thousands of people. This is limited to the participatory process, to which you should also include the politicians that took the final decision in the Helsinki City Council.

rk It is interesting to me to see how similar this process is with the process initiated by the Municipality of Tirana for its last urban plan, designed by Stefano Boeri. Even there, although the contexts are very different and may even seem to be opposites when compared to one another, the solution is a denser urban plan.

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Of course, even there, everyone was involved, citizens included. However, I think that this is a somewhat dubious process because, even when the planners take into consideration the contributions from the citizens, one cannot expect the citizen to get into the technicalities and fully understand the plan. Thus, it seems to me that the planner accepts those comments and ideas that naturally fit into the designed plan. In Albania, in the case of Tirana, the consequences become immediately visible because, thanks to the new urban planning, residents see their properties and houses destroyed without proper or any compensation. In Helsinki, it is different, but the level of knowledge of the citizens, I think, is the same. So, I would like to know more about the professional expertise of those 20 or 25 people who contributed to the planning process. Can you provide this information?

nas There have been different professionals such as architects, geographers, sociologists, economists, and also engineers.

rk So, there have been various professionals with different perspectives on the concept of boulevardisation.

nas There has been a study with different contributions, such as in the field of ecology and social sciences, regarding the topic of segregation, etc. I cannot remember the title, but it was done specifically on boulevardisation.

rk I saw something similar, of course in Finnish, and it may be the same one. However, there was nothing regarding the boulevard and what it means in the context of Helsinki, its history, its social and cultural meaning for the people living in Helsinki. Of course, this is what I am specif-

ically interested in, and I did not see anything related in the document.

nas If I remember correctly, there have been three contributions regarding boulevards. The first treated the shape of the houses to be built along the boulevards, with the traffic flow and acoustic noises. There was another study on the transportation and how it will function. And the last one, treated the idea of space, in general. There was also something regarding possible future scenarios but, of course, everything is in Finnish. There is nothing regarding a specific typology of boulevard but the idea was to build one and learn from it, in order to build knowledge for the second one and to have this step-by-step iterative learning process from the good practices and also mistakes from each boulevard that is constructed.

rk This is very clear, from my point of view, if one reads the plan. For this reason, it is even more interesting, in my opinion, to see how during the shift from an industrial to a post-industrial city, the people, and especially the urban planners, interpret the boulevard, which historically is found at the center of societal changes of modernity. Helsinki is very interesting and particular because, as you said, you and the people involved in the planning were thinking about the citizens living in these boulevards in general terms. Thus, my interest is more on the logic and thought-process of the planners who are planning something without *a priori* knowledge but working in a sort of “learn-by-doing” approach.

nas For me, personally, it is more about function. I like to simplify and think in sim-

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ple terms. Thus, it is about the function of transforming a road into a street. A road is intended for car flow while a street, more for the people, a place where people communicate and live but also serves as a place of transportation of these people. I intend transportation as mobility, which includes everything from cycling and walking to tram transportation. On all boulevards, there is high-speed tram transportation that passes in the middle, in order to reduce car use, which usually transports an average of 1.4 persons. So, the idea is to have a street where people can live and, at the same time, where they can be transported as fast as possible.

rk If we think in terms of using cars and pollution by CO², this concept might be efficient. However, the problem of pollution does not regard only CO² emissions. How does boulevardisation tackle this issue?

nas I like to think about it in a larger scale, taking into consideration the whole Helsinki-Uusimaa Region. Experiences from other countries thus far show that there is no way to stop a city from growing. In addition, considering that Helsinki has a carbon neutral target to reach within 2035, a denser Helsinki, according to the data, would be more efficient in terms of carbon neutrality. So, considering that in a denser city you will have more public transportation and more people riding bicycles, for example, the carbon footprint would be smaller than in a city where people live kilometres away and use their cars daily to come into the city.

rk When you say that it is better to have a denser city rather than have cars coming daily into the city, how do you measure it? as There have been different studies at the regional level regarding the carbon footprint, where it is shown that a denser city is more efficient than urban sprawl. I think that a denser city is better in terms of a carbon footprint, especially when you take into account that Helsinki owns HELEN, its energy company that produces fossil-free energy. So, it is something that should be tackled not individually but as a system.

rk Has there been any testing in this regard, in order to more concretely demonstrate, through data, this ecological efficiency?

nas I do not know, in terms of boulevardisation, if there is any concrete data because this is a complex process. However, I know that, a few weeks ago, a pilot project in the framework of a detailed plan in the Eastern part of Helsinki was concluded and the ecological efficiency, the carbon neutrality and related things were measured. But, this is something that has, since 2020, become an integrated part of our way of planning, and it was not so in 2016, when the boulevardisation plan was completed. In addition, there is also an issue to take into consideration regarding densification, which regards the conservation of the green spaces, like trees and forests, which you do not have to cut in the same amounts when you build one-floor buildings. So, it is more efficient if you build five or ten-floor buildings because you spare the green space. Of course, not much higher, because in Finland, espe-

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cially in this period of the year (winter), we do not have a lot of hours of sunlight. So, to maintain this natural environment that we have, it is better to build as dense as it is feasible.

rk OK, I think the whole process is much clearer now. I will listen to our entire interview and, if I am lucky, I will be able to interview some other people from the Urban Planning Department of the Municipality who were involved in the boulevardisation plan from the beginning. I will also find the author who used this term for the first time.

nas Quite a lot of people that worked back then no longer work for the city. Some of them have retired and others have moved to different positions in different companies. In our field, this is quite common and the cycle of working in one place is not very long. But, I will try to find some more information about the names of the people involved in the plan since its beginning and will let you know.

[PERSONAL NOTES:

1. "City without scars" – Is Helsinki a human, an animal? See *The Metabolism of Albania and Helsinki: Daughter of the Baltics*. Who caused the scars? Humans, by asphaltting the highways! How can you repair the scars with more concrete and asphalt?
2. "Society will manage the integration of migrants" – Why a solution should come from the "society" when it can be tackled from the beginning, at the planning process phases?
3. "Participation of thousands of people" in the planning process – How realistic? Any evidence of concrete contribution from the "people"?
4. "Build one (boulevard) and learn from it!" – Why? Is it the first time that a boulevard is built in Finland? In Europe? Worldwide? Is it planned in a desert? Far Wild West? Lazy researchers, planners, urbanists? Are not they paid with public taxes for their knowledge? What is the value of their knowledge, diplomas, university degrees? See the same concept in *The Metabolism of Albania!!!*
5. "There is no way to stop a city from growing!" – Mythology? Ideology? Ignorance? Intentional ignorance? See the quote from *Helsinki: Daughter of the Baltics* and the "growth" of Helsinki from 1960 to 1990.]

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From the interview with Niklas, I was not able to find the first person who used the term boulevardisation. In addition, there was no information on any analyses on the perception of Helsinki's citizens regarding "densification/boulevardisation". Furthermore, the issue of the environmental impact was interpreted through the false flag of carbon neutrality and Helsinki's fossil-free energy production, which, instead of highlighting the necessity of focusing on the sustainability of renewable energy production, leaves space for the use, and abuse, of a much more environmentally dangerous nuclear energy production. Moreover, the learning-by-doing approach confirmed that the decision was taken without a real consideration of the context. This, in my point of view, is an approach that is difficult to justify, especially in such a well-known context. Learning-by-doing is more appropriate for an unknown context, where it may become necessary for one to have to learn lessons step-by-step, from previous actions. I see this approach as necessary when astronauts undertake lunar, interplanetary, or interstellar expeditions but entirely inappropriate for internal and external urban planners of the Municipality of Helsinki, all of whom are compensated for their supposed expert knowledge of the context. However, taking into account his position and responsibilities within the planning process, I knew I could not receive, from Niklas, the in-depth information I sought on the declarations of any conflicts of interest among the experts participating in the planning process. Yet, his last words, citing that experts have "moved in different companies" and that "this is quite common", made me think that the focus of my

research should have been broader to include the relations among the people who provide their expertise to the Municipality, their relations to the private companies interested in the densification/boulevardisation of Helsinki or to the philanthropic foundations, supported by funds from private companies interested in the densification/boulevardisation of Helsinki.

Overdubbing IV: Interviewing (?) Foreign Urban Planners Working in Exotic Albania.

1. On April 8th of 2016, I participated in a public hearing organized by the Municipality of Tirana at Tirana International Hotel, located in the main square and main boulevard Albania's capital¹, regarding the last urban plan of architect Stefano Boeri, whose expertise was personally selected, without any competition, by the Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama.

The hearing was organized in different roundtables, among which one was dedicated to *Tirana Calling: Culture*. In this table, 10 people employed in the Municipality were presents, including one Italian artist who is active in Albania and who mostly translated for the Boeri team, and one manager from the cultural scene, who is known to be a close friend of the mayor.

After the meeting, I spoke with Boeri and asked him whether he knew what he was doing. He replied, in a similar tone, that the government was more or less open to this and that "we should take advantage of this opportunity". I asked him about the idea of the extension of the monumental boulevard, which both the government and the opposition party wanted to implement, and which was an integral feature of his draft plan. He agreed that it was "una megalomania" and he was already "working on it", which I un-

derstood as his way to say "I will try to modify it".

Considering Boeri's openness and will to discuss, I invited him to participate in a conference supported by the European Commission by the end of April. In this manner, interested citizens could have the chance to participate in a real public hearing. He gladly confirmed his availability and asked me to write him, via e-mail, all of the necessary information and logistics. Immediately, I compiled a papyrus of all of the key topics, in order for him to have an idea of the overall approach of the conference. However, when I asked him to join the conference, he declined because of "travel to China" but asked me whether we could "meet in May." I agreed but did not hear from him. I wrote to him again in October, when he presented his ideas regarding the draft plan in Tirana, at the *Pyramid*, and asked him if he could meet up somewhere, but he had "unfortunately already departed for Milan". I, then, asked for a video call interview. He agreed and asked his secretary (?) whether she could organize: "Martina organizza?". I never heard from neither Martina, nor him.

The plan that Boeri proposed, and which the *National Council* and the Municipality of Tirana approved in 2017, was called *Tirana030*.

¹ The link is in Albanian, but an online translator in English gives the general idea
<https://aksrevista.wordpress.com/2016/04/13/tr030-plani-urbanistik-i-tiranes-dhe-degjesa-publike-sipas-bashkise-romeo-kodra/>

Overdubbing IV: Interviewing (?) Foreign Urban Planners Working in Exotic Albania.



Author unknown, Tirana's Boulevard, 1928 (ca.) Regarding the concept of Tirana's Boulevard, constructed before and during the fascist invasion of Albania by Italian troops, see in *Studia ethnologica Croatica*, vol. 29, str. 193–224, Zagreb, 2017, Romeo Kodra: *Architectural Monumentalism in Transitional Albania*.



Romeo Kodra, Tirana's Boulevard, still image from personal video archive, 2018

The building of his famous green-washing idea of the *Vertical Forest* (i.e. buildings with trees on the balconies), for the exotic capital of Albania, was exaggerated further, by green-washing and proposing an *Orbital Forest*, which is anything but the enlargement of the city center, the creation of a larger *Big Ring* that provides the destruction of legal and illegal buildings, and the consequent densification of the capital city.

To this day, the *Orbital Forest*, green-washed with 2 million trees, is still missing.

On July 2018, the European Council launched its report on Albania, encouraging an immediate implementation of anti-money laundering measures² of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which is the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog.

On 2020 Albania appeared on FATF's *grey list* and, by March 2022, it is labeled as a *Jurisdictions under Increased Monitoring*³.

2. Since 2014, when the artist Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama presented *Atelier Albania*, an agency that organized and controlled every urbanistic and architectural competition in the country, I sent several e-mails to the *International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam* (IABR) and the Belgian architectural studio 51N4E, the two founders of *Atelier Albania*, which had become a national agency without having ever entered any competition. However, I never received a reply. I insisted until May 2016, when I started working at the *Institut national d'histoire de l'art* (INHA) in Paris as an

invited researcher, and from my office, I once again sent some questions to the IABR regarding *Atelier Albania*. This time, however, I sent my questions not from my usual Gmail address but from my personal institutional e-mail, which ends with @inha.fr. Surprisingly, I received an almost immediate reply.

In the e-mail, sent directly to the IABR's director George Brugmans, I asked who had been the initiator of *Atelier Albania*, whether was there any competition to have that privileged position through which all the urban-architectural competitions and tenders of a country were managed by IABR and 51N4E, as well as some information regarding the concepts and processes. The director replied by asking whether I had read their book *The Metabolism of Albania*, where I could have found the answers I was looking for. In addition, he added:

One question that's not answered in the book: *Atelier Albania* was an initiative of myself, and thus of IABR – a logical thing for me to do as we, at the time, were also running *Ateliers* in Istanbul, in São Paulo, and in The Netherlands. I thought the instrument of the *Atelier* would be very helpful in the Albanian situation given the need for deep reflection on new sustainable spatial development and planning policies. I brought 51N4E in and together we explained the concept to Edi Rama. This all happened at the Next Generation Albania meeting in Tirana, in August 2013, that is, before Edi Rama's new government was officially installed. Subsequently, the concept was further discussed with

2 <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/media/fatf/documents/reports/mer-fsrb/MONEYVAL-MER-Albania-2018.pdf> (accessed on 27.11.2022)

3 <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/publications/high-risk-and-other-monitored-jurisdictions/documents/increased-monitoring-march-2022.html> (accessed on 27.11.2022)

Edi Rama, and with the Deputy Prime Minister, Niko Peleshi, and the Minister of Urban Development, Eglantina Gjermeni, after which the Atelier was installed in the first months of 2014.

So, George Brugmans had been the one to come up with the idea of *Atelier Albania*. Yet, I had the impression that the genesis of the proposal materialized during Edi Rama's participa-

tion at the *IABR* (I don't remember the year) as a "guest star". However, considering that I had not read the book, the director, Brugmans, was kind enough to send it to me at my INHA address, adding that, after my reading it, we could proceed with the interview via e-mail or video call. Thus, after reading the book, I sent an email with questions on the methodology, the concepts,

I would like to start, once more, with the methodology applied by Atelier Albania, because I still didn't get clearly the concept of "research by design" and your choice for it. I'll try to explain it better. Generally I've seen this concept applied on territories without data, a sort of vergin territory, or on overexploited territories, turned into "swamps" because of the inefficiency of the ideas or lack of the new ones, which could "energize" the environment. Now, none of these cases could fit with what I've in mind for "research by design", because Albania it's not a vergin land or a sort of "Far West" and the new ideas, when there were, were never applied and curated by professionals. This, of course, is noted even in "The Metabolism of Albania", where you use terms such as "preservation" of what the context have and can offer, or phrases like "artificially transplanted (planning) without relating to the actual context". So even for you it is clear the risk of non-contextual planning and the need of re-evaluation. In other words, why you've choose this highly experimental methodology when it is not sure the cause of the failure of the other ones implemented in the past?

Then, I would like to know something more on your relation with the Prime Minister Edi Rama. Do you think it is normal that Atelier Albania is chosen without a competition to filter all the Albanian urban planning projects? How does it work in Netherlands or Belgium, I mean, if you as Atelier Albania would apply for the same position in these countries? Do you know that, historically, the Albanian urban planning has a strict relation with the political power that wanted to mark symbolically the territory (King Zog, Mussolini, Enver Hoxha) and for this has these enormous contemporary difficulties? And as I remember all of them wanted to bring Albania in the "modern times", to "modernize", all of them wanted to create "the Albanian new model", to "progress toward the future re-evaluating the past".

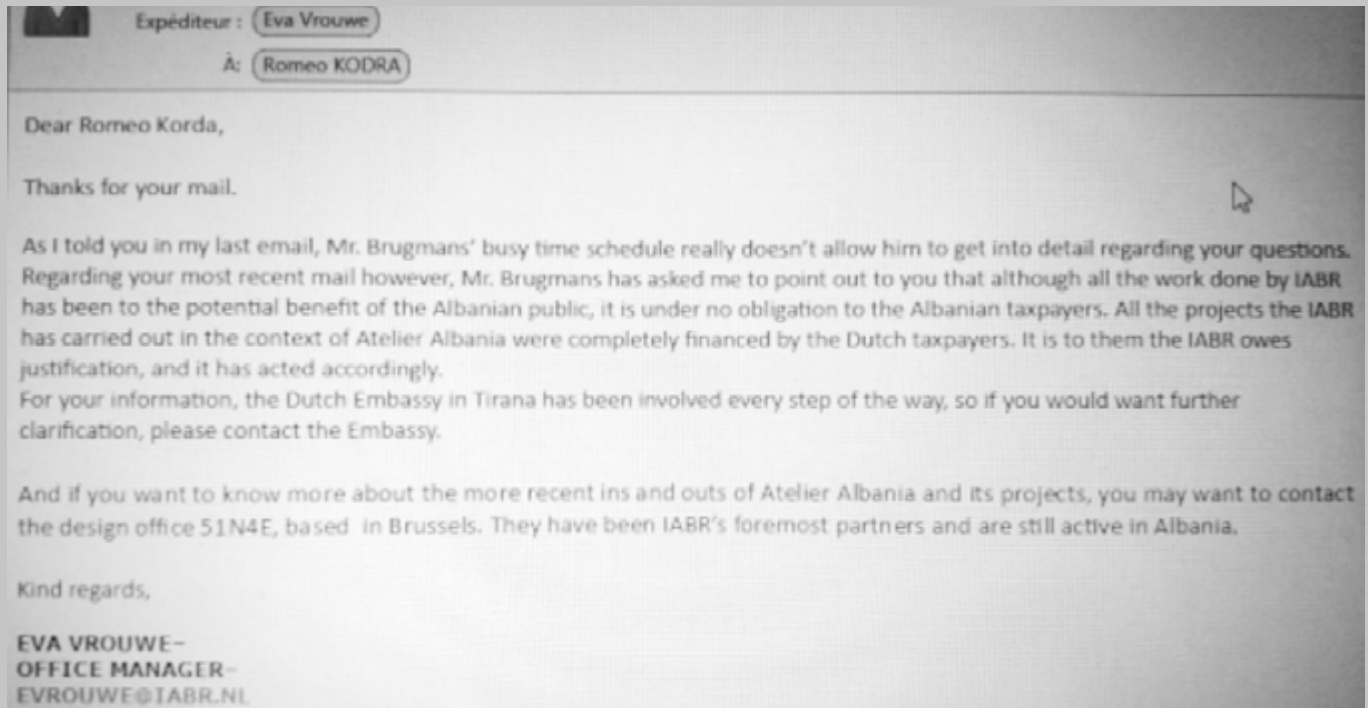
And what about the "conflict of interests" in the competitions managed by Atelier Albania? How do you control it? Have you encountered, till now, any problem in this regard?

Another question is about "public hearings". Do you know that the projects of Atelier Albania are quasi entirely closed to the public? I'll give you only one example: Park Entrance in Tirana. And in this regard, do you know anything about the protests of this year for the Park projects?

Lastly I wanted to know something about the lack of the "culture" in "The Metabolism of Albania". I think you know that, especially in Mediterranean area, focusing on "food", "water", "energy" and "tourism" has to deal always with the culture in its wider sense (art, history, anthropology, ethnology, sociology)? Don't you think that passing over culture (it is missing as a focus in the book) the risk of erasure by gentrification, consumerism, ultra-neo-liberal economy is too high? Even here one example: Durana. Do you know anything about cultural diversities for example in the area between Durres and Tirana?

the transparency, and the conflicts of interest:

I waited two months for an answer, but Mr. Brugmans did not reply. A few weeks later, I sent the same email. The answer I received was:



Screenshots from the email sent to the director of IABR, George Brugmans.

3. I had a similar experience when *The Architectural Review* (AR) asked me to write a review⁴ of the transformation of Tirana's central *Scanderbeg Square* by the Belgian studio *51N4E*. Considering my passion for the critic and historian of architecture, Nikolaus Pevsner, and his contribution at *The Architectural Review*, I gladly accepted the commission. However, in order to be honest with the editors, I immediately expressed my negative opinion of the activities and work of *51N4E* in Albania and, especially, its conflicts of interest with the Prime

Minister. Nevertheless, the intention to proceed with the commission was confirmed by *The AR*. A few days later, I sent my first draft and we agreed to supplement my article with an interview with Johan Anrys (co-founder of *51N4E*), who had confirmed his availability to the editors. Thus, after reading the draft, the editors asked me to discuss some issues with Johan and further elaborate others that they had found throughout the text. After replying to their questions and further elaborating on all of the issues, I sent to Johan Anrys an email with all the questions.

4 <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/square-dance-skanderbeg-square-and-tid-tower-in-tirana-albania-by-51n4e>

1. Is there anything in particular in TID Tower and in Skanderbeg Square that you'd consider as purely artistic? Something that does not have any connection with the context, but it is yours, as creators? How different are these, or not, to a Belgian tower and square?
2. In different occasions, such as presentations, interviews, etc., you (and your colleagues from 51N4E, Mr. Persyn & Mr. Swinnen) refer to Sheshi Skënderbej or the square on which is built TID Tower as "communist". Why?
3. Can we consider TID Tower and Skanderbeg Square apolitical?
4. Regarding the shape of Skanderbeg Square I quote from 51N4E website "standing at its tip, the citizens find themselves at par with the authoritarian architecture of the past". What is your intention focusing on citizen 'performativity'?
5. Could TID Tower and Skanderbeg Square be built in Belgium? Why?
6. Do you think that the parking in Skanderbeg Square affects positively the problem of car traffic? Do you know Fusha sh.p.k. that implemented the works? Do you know who was Ardit Gjoklaj?
7. Why the use of stones from different Albanian territories, as well as Kosovo and other places populated by Albanians?
8. In a lecture of Mr. Swinnen on 6/2/2006 at AA School of Architecture he refers to the square on which was erected TID Tower as "undefined". In addition during presentations of Skanderbeg Square I've seen online a sort of demonstration of the concept with some LEGOs thrown on the floor and someone making space in the middle as I quote "an abstract representation of Tirana". Why is important this 'undefined and abstract' space in your work?
9. What is the role of Atelier Albania today?

- What other projects are currently in progress?
10. How does 51N4E work on the Square and the Tower inform their role of co-administrators of Atelier Albania?
 11. The concept of Atelier Albania is "research by design". If I am not wrong means design and research, in the same time, or design and, consequently, research. In my knowledge methodologically it is applied in contexts with no data or over-exploited. What was the reason behind this choice?
 12. What is the role of Atelier Albania today? What other projects are currently in progress?
 13. How does 51N4E work on the Square and the Tower inform their role of co-administrators of Atelier Albania?
 14. Was there any open call or competition, or you just proposed Atelier Albania to Prime Minister? Is it possible to propose and realize the same thing in Belgium?
 15. Is it important for architects to collaborate with politicians? If the collaboration includes the commissioning of personal projects, at which point is there a conflict of interest? Do you know Rea Xhillari?

He replied by answering only to a few of them.

1. *Is there anything in particular in TID Tower and in Skanderbeg Square that you'd consider as purely artistic? Something that does not have any connection with the context, but it is yours, as creators? How different are these, or not, to a Belgian tower and square?*

by production of space and architecture we ambition to help realizing transformations in society. This is how we envision the power of architec-

ture. So the tower and the square are projects that exist because of its context, because of the (long) learning process (since 2005), because of an alliance with many stakeholders and future users and because it embodies something of a shared dream. Both the square and the tower are project in the very centre of the city. we were very aware since the beginning these projects would have a tremendous impact on how citizens will envision their future. In this perspective i do not really connect to the terminology of artistic. I cannot agree with a personal expression of architecture in this position. I rather see the role of an architect to be super sensitive and use his capacity to wait to envision the meaning to emerge in the process. Like that a specific architecture will exist that people can appropriate and dream.

2. *In different occasions, such as presentations, interviews, etc., you (and your colleagues from 51N4E, Mr. Persyn & Mr. Swinnen) refer to Sheshi Skënderbej or the square on which is built TID Tower as “communist”. Why?*

It may refer to the square as it was before its renovation. It was not a square but rather a junction of boulevards with the clear ambitions to represent the power of the dictator. The statue of Enver Hoxha and Stalin was positioned in the axes of these boulevards. So when someone came out of the house 2km away from the centre, still the perspective the dictator was omnipresent and watching. (please note that Peter Swinnen is since 2012 no longer partner in 51N4E)

3. *Regarding the shape of Skanderbeg Square I quote from 51N4E website “standing at its tip, the citizens find themselves at par with the authoritarian architecture of the past”. What is your intention focusing on citizen ‘performativity’?*

The intention is to change the impact and meaning of the buildings not by changing the (protected) architecture or -by doing so- changing the history but by changing the today’s perspective of the people towards the history.

4. *Why the use of stones from different Albanian territories, as well as Kosovo and other places populated by Albanians?*

This decision came during the building process. It was not part of the initial design intentions. But there were different reasons to that: pragmatic, economical and aesthetic. First of all we did not want to import stones outside from Albania knowing that Albania has extremely beautiful stones and even unique conglomerates due to the conflict zone between European and African tectonic plates. I did travel throughout Albania with the best geologist that worked in the centre of geology during hoxha times. I learned there is a great treasury and resources of stones but a complete absence of knowledge and capacity to mine and process these stones. We made an analysis of the stones that were able to be used for this purpose (outside heavy use). It was not possible to clad the square with only one stone because of lack of quantity available. So we found a solution to make a colourful mosaic in gradient of a mixture of different adequate stones. Small and disparate capacities can also make a monumental square. The colourful mosaic softens the square, it makes it less monumental, more human and in combination with the water and daylight it takes amazing colours.

5. *In a lecture of Mr. Swinnen on 6/2/2006 at AA School of Architecture he refers to the square on which was erected TID Tower as “undefined”. In addition during presentations of Skanderbeg Square I’ve seen online a sort of demonstration of the con-*

cept with some LEGOs thrown on the floor and someone making space in the middle as I quote “an abstract representation of Tirana”. Why is important this ‘undefined and abstract’ space in your work?

The movie of the lego’s was made to represent an intention to make a space where one can escape the busy city. A refuge Where one can feel again things like wind, water, where one can smell greenery, see the mountains, and even the horizon. The horizon one can literally see because of the shape of the pyramid. It creates an enormous mental space in the very center and in the most populated place. We believe a square can offer this. it gives the quality of life. It is absolutely democratic. The lego represents beautifully an informal grown city. The “undefined and abstract” allows the project to be flexible and adaptable. This is indeed a very important strategy in our approach. We tend to start from a few very “open but clear” ambitions that can be coloured and detailed during the process. In case of the square a very simple “masterplan” was projected with some clear goals: a rectangular open space, giving address to the different past and future histories of Albania and creating around an urban forest of negotiations between private and public life. The realisation of the project has changed almost all solutions on the table except the main abstract concept. In case of the TID tower a strong formal shape had the intention to reflect the beautiful Mediterranean light and create a new sculptural monument in the very centre of the city, not expressing any functional use of the project. the actual façade was a study that took a few years to realize. But resulted in solution I couldn’t have

imagined in the competition phase.

Abstract thinking allows to define a shared goal in the same time leave an open collaborative process where everybody can inform from his knowledge and perspective.

In addition, considering the unusual answers and not very fast reply of the co-founder of 51N4E’s founder, I inquired whether The ARs editors had shared my draft, with the elaborated questions and issues, with Johan Anrys but I was assured that, at The AR, they “don’t usually share the texts with anyone else before publication.” However, though I do believe them, my original text was unfortunately published with many editorial changes, a fact that made me wonder whether the texts of Nikolaus Pevsner have had a better editing experience at The Architectural Review. In any case, I published the original version of the text at AKS Revista⁵.

⁵ <https://aksrevista.wordpress.com/2018/09/19/skanderbeg-square-and-tid-tower-by-51n4e-romeo-kodra/>

IX. How to Discover the (Real) Author/s of the Boulevardisation of Helsinki in Two Years, Three Interviews, and Numerous Persistent Calls and E-mails.

The Second Interview (video call):
Rikhard Manninen.

Rikhard Manninen – rm
Romeo Kodra – rk

rk In 2016, the City of Helsinki, represented by its City Planning Agency, presented “City plan – Helsinki’s new general plan”. There, I saw that you were the Master Plan Manager who coordinated a working group of 40 people, experts of different fields involved as advisors for the Master Plan. Can you tell me a bit more about this experience and how you involved these people in the plan?

rm Yes, at that time I was the Head of the Strategic Planning Division. We started to work on this Plan in 2012. Firstly, we designed a draft with a vision, an urban structure, goals, the expected population growth, the timing, etc., and there was also a political process and involvement. It took four years to present the final draft to the Municipal Council, in 2016. In addition to the Strategic Planning Division, external experts were involved, including architects, geographers, environmentalists, and several people with different backgrounds. The idea was to involve them in the strategic process and utilise their expertise, or collect data which could help us with the Plan. The idea of the boulevards was inspired by the fact that the city center is in a challenging position, from a geographical point of view. It is located in a peninsula, which has been growing since at least the 19th century. So, the city is developing and

the region around it is growing, as well. We analyzed the situation and concluded that we needed more space for a real kind of dense urban development. Since World War II, Helsinki has been growing as a suburb and car-dependent urban structure, with motorways as its main feature. So, we already recognized this idea of more people using cars and the ideology behind it, the dense urban space where green space becomes more and more important. This is how we came up with the idea of the green fingers, which grow from the central park of the city. Our aim was to match both the will of the people and that of the politicians, and to preserve the green space in the city. Thus, the only space left was that of the free state-owned motorways. There was also an economic reasoning behind this decision, as the transformation causes the land of the motorways to become more valuable. This led us to present our final idea on the boulevards, the most important strategy in the development and planning of the city.

rk Who was the first to suggest this idea? Do you remember the first person who spoke of boulevards or boulevardisation?

rm It was me, although a group of architects had previously made a kind of analysis on the Lahdenväylä corridor and its land use, recommending that it be used more as an urban boulevard, with constructions around it. When the group and I saw it, we realized that it was a good solution for the motorway corridors. So, we discussed and debated on the concept and built the entire boulevardisation strategy on this idea.

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rk Do you recall when the analysis on Lahdenväylä was published? I ask because I have come across a similar study on Länsiväylä.

rm Oh, yes, but this one on Lahdenväylä came out earlier. It was conducted by Jaako Kaarala, Ilmari Tavasharina, Jan Liin(?), a group of architects working for the city of Helsinki. They retired quite early, I think, but they were the ones who did this study, maybe in 2005, 2006, or 2007. I do not remember the exact year. They did not publish it but they made a report that I saw. After this, there was this other analysis by Carlos Lamuela on Länsiväylä, but it came later.

rk I think he was also one of the persons involved in your group of experts.

rm Yes, he was but he came in later. We hired him later.

rk How did you involve all the people who formed the final group of experts? Did you contact them personally?

rm Yes, it was me and Marja Piimies, the former Head of the Urban Planning Department and still working for the City. Basically, the two of us selected and coordinated the groups. I was also in charge of presenting our plan to decision-makers and politicians within the Municipality.

rk Reading the plan, I noticed that, the need to densify the city was offered as a reasoning behind the concept of “boulevardisation” because, according to existing data, in the future, Helsinki will continue to develop demographically, with an increase in both immigrants and Finnish citizens residing in the capital. Another justification given involved the environmental

impact, caused by the use of the cars, and the need to conserve green spaces.

rm Another important aspect, from the strategic point of view, concerned the value of the land. We did an economic analysis on how much land value the city had and the agglomeration benefit it could have had in case we would densify the city structure. So, there were more points, four to be exact, on which we focused from a strategic point of view.

rk Yes, sure. But, as I mentioned, my focus was on these two: the expected demographic boom and the environmental impact. In this regard, I wanted to ask about the arrival of immigrants. For me, as an outsider to your process but a resident of Finland, it is difficult to imagine immigrants coming to Helsinki and buying apartments in buildings constructed on these boulevards. I also see a problem with the existing residents, for example, the older Finnish citizens who see their surroundings changing due to densification, and also the arrival of more people from different backgrounds and cultures, which may cause difficulties in terms of wellbeing and quality of urban life, or even social conflicts, in the future. Did you take these issues into consideration when you proposed the “boulevardisation” concept?

rm Not exactly. I think that these questions concern a more general perspective regarding “boulevardisation”, a more general point of view. Also, there is the case of Kalasatama, where there were no inhabitants, because it was the former harbor area. There, the question of conflicts does not exist. And, in any case, the conflicts and

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affordability regard a more general point of view of city planning. So, we did not think much about these questions in relation to “boulevardisation”. It was just a physical concept, designed to address challenges related to the growth of the urban structure. These issues are tackled later, through housing policies, etc. You should consider the options for densification? That is an issue, as well, when you know that the urban sprawl in these regions will happen anyway.

rk Yes, sure. I completely understand this point of view. But, I am focused on the boulevards. Etymologically, the root of the term boulevard comes from *bulwark*, which was the wall that surrounded the medieval fortress-city, where guards surveyed the area for imminent attacks or invasions, in order to protect the people within the city. Then, in the 17th century, the Roi Soleil, Louis XIV, demolished the old bulwarks of Paris, and replaced them with tree-lined promenades, today’s ring of Les Grands Boulevards in Paris, known as the first example of a boulevard, as we know it today. A century later, the French Revolution and Bastille happened, which demonstrated that walls were no longer effective in protecting the insiders from the outsiders. For me, it was interesting to follow the meaning and semantic development of the boulevard, from the linguistic point of view but also as this line of a wall transformed in an urban dispositive, and to see what remains from that original function of controlling and dividing the people between those who lived outside and inside of the walls.

rm Yes, though we basically thought about

it just as a main street with buildings and trees. We did not think about it in depth. Of course, we had in mind the boulevards of Paris, but we did not consider such aspects as etymology etc.

rk OK. Another issue regards the environmental issue and the reasoning provided. Of course, the transformation of motorways into boulevards, will result in fewer people using cars. However, in this same place, previously occupied by motorways, there will be more buildings and constant 24/7 human presence and activity. Did you have any data and/or analyses to confirm the decrease in the environmental impact after the transformation of motorways in boulevards?

rm We had an analysis on people’s dependence on cars. And, again, you should think about the idea that, with this transformation, there will be more people living in the city center and thus will not rely on cars to get to the city. In addition, there is a good tramway connection and much better walkability. Moreover, in certain blocks, you have services that are more local rather than large commercial centers, which are characteristic of the suburban development of a city. We did this kind of analysis. And, of course, you have to think of the whole region as well, its mobility and accessibility, etc.

rk But was there a concrete analysis of data that compared and/or demonstrated the improved environmental impact resulting from the transformation of motorways into boulevards?

rm There was this analysis of *kantakaupunki*, the city center, which shows that people

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own and use fewer cars, that they are less dependent on cars and use public transportation as well as walk more. So, the analysis was on the existing situation or place and we based our idea on that.

rk I saw a report or study of the Institut Paris Région (Institut d'aménagement et d'urbanisme de la région Île-de-France) and METREX (The Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas) "Helsinki. City Boulevards Strategy and Projects". Were you involved in this study?

rm I am not sure. Someone from the Urban Planning Department may have been involved.

rk OK. I was interested to know more about this study and the involvement of the people from the Helsinki Urban Planning Department, because in Paris, they have many studies on several of the transformations around the world. In Paris, they have also transformed the motorways entering within the city center into boulevards with trees, by decreasing the speed limit. But, in Helsinki, it is quite different, because you are not transforming an existing city center motorway. You are densifying motorways and further expanding the city.

rm Yes, exactly. We are expanding the city center through the boulevard strategy, which is an alternative to the complete sprawl.

rk I read extensively on the difficulties, from the political and technical point of view, with the approval of this plan. Can you tell me a bit more on how you personally, as a person directly involved in this process, perceived these difficulties?

rm It was a difficult process, with a lot of debates and juridical conflicts resolved in the

highest court of justice. The Plan was not unanimously approved.

rk Yes, I remember that it was partially approved. The part specifically pertaining to boulevards in the western side, with the motorways coming from Espoo, was not approved.

rm The major motorway transformations were not approved. We are continuing our work on the three smaller boulevards of Vihdintie, Tuusulanväylä, and Itäväylä but not on Lahdenväylä, Länsiväylä, and Turunväylä, which came to a halt due to a conflict in court. One of the greatest opposers, who complained to the Court, was the National Road Authority.

rk I had wanted to know who the first person to use the word boulevards and/or boulevardisation was. So, I am very happy to finally talk to you and find that you were the person I was looking for. But, now, I am thinking that if I want to specifically name the planner, the author of this Plan, I am not quite sure that it is possible to mention one specific person. Thus, I wanted to ask you about the participation in this planning process. Can I say who the author of this Plan is? Who is the planner?

rm You cannot name any one name or person. It is a kind of a synthesis of different ideas and strategic choices made during the process.

rk Were there concrete ideas and inputs from the public during the presentation meetings organized by the Municipality? Do you remember any particular idea?

rm I remember that the people generally supported the Plan. Of course, there were various interest groups, like the Chamber of

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Commerce or other so-called “car-oriented actors” that strictly opposed the Plan. There were various newspaper articles wherein they expressed their views on the Plan. But the main factor that helped us was the support of the decision-makers. I do not know if you know the Helsinki political scene very well but I can mention Osmo Soininvaara and other members of the conservative parties, who were instrumental in the process.

rk Who were the ones, among the political parties within the Municipality Council, that supported you the most and who opposed the Plan until the very end?

rm The most supportive were the Green Party members. The Social-Democrats were OK as well as the Liberals, in general. The Conservative Parties did not support it at first but, ultimately, even they approved the Plan. I think, at the end, there was a political deal or compromise among the parties for this Plan of 2016, because everybody found a potential interest in it and, in this manner, they began optimizing their position and views on it.

rk Do you remember anyone who was not OK with the Plan until the end?

rm From the politicians and decision-makers within the Municipal Council, there was no one. However, from the city officials, there were, and still are, some groups or persons that do not like it.

rk Do you mean groups organized outside of the Municipality?

rm No, I mean people working for the Municipality, like in the Economic or Finance

Departments. However, they did not have any decision-making power when it came to the Plan.

rk I wanted to ask you one last thing regarding the conflicts of interest. From my perspective, focused on the fields of art and culture, when institutions (especially public but also private institutions), with large financial resources make decisions, they influence the field and define the mainstream. In other words, they support some interests. Was there any concern, in your group, about any potential conflicts of interest of the people involved with the Plan, such as external experts and advisors?

rm No, I do not think so. I do not remember such a thing, if I understand you well.

rk I mean, you, as part of a group working for the Municipality, are a public official and, by law and contract, cannot have conflicts of interest with private companies that have an interest in the urban planning and densifying of the city. So, my question is, did the external experts and advisors involved with the Plan declare an absence of any conflicts of interest?

rm I do not recognize any conflict of interest in this case. No, I do not think they have any conflict of interest. If you are talking about consultancies ...

rk Yes.

rm ... I do not see any economic profit and cannot recognize a conflict of interest there. You have to remember that this is quite a general Plan, a strategic masterplan. In this case, we are planning on a very general level. You do not have a direct, concrete, or specific project elaborated in this Plan. It is still at a very abstract

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level. The only conflict of interest we had involved national authorities and certain interest groups that were talking about the car accessibility of the Helsinki City Center; organizations that are pro private car ownership, or neighboring Municipalities, such as Espoo and Vantaa, that did not support the idea of boulevardisation. So, I do not recognize any advisor that directly benefits from the boulevardisation.

rk So, the external advisors did not sign any paper stating their absence of conflicts of interests.

rm No, because the Plan is at such a generic level that I do not see any possible conflict of interest for the consultants. There are some consultants involved with the economic impact but, no, they do not sign anything.

rk I think I have all the information I needed. Just to clarify, can you tell me your current position?

rm I am still working for the Municipality as the Head of the Land Use Department. After the Plan of 2016, the structure of the institution has changed a bit. So, I am in my branch dealing with master planning and detail planning, land use policy, landscape planning, transportation planning and so on. All these functions are under my branch.

[PERSONAL NOTES:

1. “has been growing since at least the 19th century” – See mythology/ideology/ignorance/intentional ignoring the fact that the city has been de-growing from 1960 to 1990. Connect with the quote from Laura Kolbe’s book.
2. “Green fingers of the city” – Anthropomorphisation of the city.
3. Idea of the boulevardisation ... “it was me, although ...”!!!
4. Rikhard “was also in charge of presenting our plan to decision-makers and politicians within the Municipality.” - See the suggestive power of the image of the boulevard and boulevardisation as embellishment as well as a dispositif of control and profits. Attractive for politicians and corporates!!!
5. Boulevardisation is a solution for the demographic boom because it is justified by the demographic boom. However, when it comes to a justify how it is a concrete solution ... it “concerns a more general perspective regarding boulevardisation ... these issues are tackled later, through housing policies”. He might be right. Actually, the housing policies are good compared to other EU countries!!! See onethird/onethird/onethird division mentioned by Niklas!
6. The boulevard is just “a main street with buildings and trees”!!! - No big picture on corporate profits and the global impact, which cannot be mitigated by good local policies (housing, environment, etc.) The corporates contribute to the migration by exploiting people globally and make also profits locally through boulevardisation which is promoting for the people’s and migrants good/wellbeing!!!
7. We had an analysis on people’s dependence

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on cars. - See the greening as a false flag! The greenest city in Europe is Chernoby and there are no cars!!! Having nuclear plants in Finland and Putin at the borders does not assure a quite future.

8. No personal involvement with METREX.

9. “alternative to the complete sprawl” - Why complete? Is there any other possibility beyond “the complete”?

10. NO AWARENESS ON CONFLICTS OF INTEREST!!!]

From this interview, I finally found the author of boulevardisation, who happened to be the interviewee himself: Rikhard Maninen. However, as he admitted, he cannot be considered as the author of the concept of the *Plan*, as many others involved had proposed similar ideas and, above all, his understanding of boulevardisation was entirely literal, i.e. a “main street with buildings and trees”. Yet, as I see it, this adds interesting elements to the iconographical and iconological focus of my research and to the issue of a collective inferiority complex as a result of total lack of elaboration of the child archetype.

Another interesting fact was that Rikhard Maninen’s focus, or the starting point, in designing the *Plan* was that of an agglomeration economy. However, from this agglomeration economy, there was no focus on the people and no input based on their opinions and ideas were added to the *Plan*. It was planned to involve people at a second stage, after the decision to densify had already been taken. In this manner, the people would be able to decide only on the typology of the densification they would like for their neighborhoods (and, certainly, the artists would

subsequently help in art-washing all of these). Therefore, though the densification was justified with the arrival of migrants and other Finnish citizens from other parts of Finland, it remains difficult to determine whether the real focus of the *Plan* was indeed placed on people’s needs.

Moreover, even the argument on the positive environmental impact of densification, considering the lack of data – which was limited to the car use assessment and did not rely on a calculation of the overall impact of densification, taking into consideration other typologies of pollution and waste and especially the risks of nuclear waste – pointed instead to land use profitability. As such, the fact that the only objections to the proposed *Plan* came from “city officials” (civil servants) with “no decision-making power” serving in “the economic and finance departments” of the Municipality, becomes very significant. It seems to me that these would be the most independent people within the Municipality, the ones who could have accurately assessed the real profitability of the land use.

Taking all of this information into account, after the interview with Rikhard, I shifted my focus to the people affiliated with the political parties within the Municipality, in order to be able to trace and fully understand what Rikhard had referred to as the “political deal or compromise among the parties”.

The Third Interview (video call): Laura Kolbe.

I contacted Laura Kolbe via e-mail in September 2020 in order to ask her about the possibility of conducting research on the last *Plan*’s boulevardisation concept at the University of

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Helsinki. I did not receive a reply. However, a year later I found out that, in addition to being a Professor of European History and an expert on the urban planning history of Helsinki, she was also a member of the Municipality Council. Thus, I decided to contact her again in 2021, by sending the same email as the year before. This time, she replied and apologized for not having replied a year earlier. She stated that, although the research idea was interesting and she would have been happy to help in its realization, she added that, unfortunately, I needed a lot of “basic education in history”, as my studies were not orientated towards the “academic humaniora” of the History and Cultural Heritage programme at the University of Helsinki. Nonetheless, I insisted, and replied that I could have integrated all necessary but missing elements in my plan, in order to overcome my lack of basic education in history. She replied by underlining the difficulties of “doing research at the University of Helsinki”, that I must have “a solid research plan”, ideas on how to “fund my study”, and “a good/excellent level of degrees from my Master studies in the same field (in this case history)”. I was already aware of this information, however. I also had never had any problems with research fund applications, especially as I am an expert evaluator for the European Commission in several research funding programmes. Moreover, my Master studies in the same field – namely, History, Theory and Critique of Arts and Architecture – are excellent. As such, in replying to her email, I also included a more detailed research plan entitled *Towards a Boulevard’s Genealogy and the Boulevardisation’s Archeology*. In other words, the research idea was the

same as the one on this text, where the boulevard and boulevardisation are seen as *dispositifs* of political power, which mark the transition from one governmentality to the other (*ancien régime* – enlightened despotism/ imperialism; industrial-postindustrial). However, once again, after two emails sent as reminders, the communication came to a halt and I never received any feedback on my drafted research plan.

This year, in September 2022, I called Laura Kolbe and requested an interview regarding the boulevardisation of Helsinki and her role as a member of the Municipal Council that approved the last urban Master Plan. She agreed to do it on November 9th, 2022.

Laura Kolbe – lk

Romeo Kodra – rk

rk I saw in the Helsinki archive that you, as a member of the Helsinki Municipal Council, voted in favor of the last urban plan, the one regarding the boulevardisation of Helsinki. I also saw that, before its approval, you contributed with some amendments.

lk Yes, maybe. I do not remember but, if it is documented, then it must be true.

rk What did you think about the concept of boulevardisation, overall?

lk Well, boulevardisation came as a solution after the evaluation of the city growth rates which, at that time, were very positive. Of course, it is also because of the general urbanization megatrends in Europe and the world, and Helsinki was deeply impacted by these. Not only by the idea but also because, in fact, the city grew a lot

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and the plan had to respond to this growth. So, there was not much to debate. Actually, very few criticized this evaluation of the growth. On the contrary, it is part of Helsinki's identity. The city is constantly growing. So, there were very few voices that criticized this, especially among the decision-makers in the Municipality.

rk Yes, I heard about this almost absolute concordance and agreement on the plan among the political parties within the Municipality Council, while talking with Rikhard Maninnen. Was there any concern on the plan from your side?

lk Well, it does not matter if I had any concerns because, in the Municipal politics, it is always the political parties as a group that decide. I am part of a party with only two representatives in the Council, out of a total of 85. I was not part of the negotiations at that time and, so, I do not remember specifics, but I have always been in favor of Helsinki as a growing city. That's part of my identity. Throughout my career, I have been involved with the city, and have contributed different kinds of approaches on how the city grows and how urban planning develops historically, and I have always brought different European examples to the table. So, even the idea of the boulevards was sort of "back to basics". It was about the functioning of the city, about its transportation, etc. So, I was not really one of the critical voices within the City Council because, I think, when done properly and is respectful of the historical context, boulevardisation can create something really good, based on Europe-

an examples and knowledge.

rk Yes, this was also clear when reading the plan. However, I think that giving as justification the demographic boom, which basically refers to the arrival of new migrants in Helsinki, makes this plan somewhat less coherent, especially when one thinks that, first of all, the migrants were not asked whether they wanted a "denser" Helsinki, and, secondly, there was no way of knowing how these future migrants would be able to afford the houses in the new boulevards. As I see it, a possible justification not mentioned in the plan, is that large construction corporates would invest in buildings and make profits.

lk Yes, sure.

rk And, when you think that in Helsinki and in Finland, in what is referred to as a knowledge-based economy, the urban planners still focus exclusively on densification, following the same path of many other parts of Europe like France, Italy, Greece, and also Albania, then calling Finland a knowledge-based economy seems to me not justified, when considering its last urban plan.

lk I think that has been evident since ancient times, the Renaissance, the 19th and 20th centuries, and so on. These are transnational approaches in urban planning that are based upon the re-shaping of the centers, like Paris at first, then Vienna, Berlin, London or like those in United States, with their car-based approach, etc. In my opinion, there is no national urban planning. It is always a transnational understanding of the urban developments. And in this sense, what happens in Helsinki is exact-

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ly the same as what happens everywhere. In Helsinki, it might differ, compared to other contexts, as the guys within the City Urban Planning Department might have explained to you, because the city owns the land it plans. This is an exceptional case, compared to other cities like Moscow, London, or New York or maybe Tirana, as well, I do not know who owns the land. But, here, the city can control and can decide what kind of urbanity it wants to create based on its political decision-making. Here, the civil servants prepare the plan and the politicians decide if they accept it. It is a very complicated interactive political and administrative process. Usually, the urban planners also follow very closely what happens in other European centers like Copenhagen, London, Vienna, Paris. So, the ideas are universal and they are applied in local settings, such as Helsinki, where the city is shaped and re-shaped, but there is no national understanding of urbanity, per se. It is transnational, European, global. This is exactly what happens with the idea of the city boulevards. It is not national but a transnational idea, based on the fact that we have very limited land resources. The city cannot expand beyond the existing land. We cannot fill the sea because it has been done already and it is very expensive. Because we are situated on a peninsula, the land should be re-used, like in the case of boulevardisation, where the roads are transformed into streets and there is increased construction on the remaining land.

rk Don't you think that this might be interpreted as a problem of profit accumulation and centralization of power, especially financial?

lk Yes.

rk Can it be that a few corporates want to have everything under control, located as close as possible, in order to exploit the resources as much as possible?

lk Yeah.

rk Don't you think that this is also a problem of the same typology of growth that has brought us to this point, to the present global environmental crisis? Is this, in your opinion, also a problem of politicians, urban planners, architects, academics, cultural operators, and others not taking a clear position against this kind of growth?

lk Of course, there is a lot of discussion on the primary value of city development. Is it to shape and re-shape, develop and build and re-build? Or, is it to respect urban nature and cultural heritage? These tensions are present at all times in the discussion. But, unfortunately, the Municipal politics are based on a principle, according to which, one must have 51% of the votes of the decision-makers in order to decide on these issues. And these decisions are taken by two major parties. The first is the right-wing Kokoomus, the second biggest is the Green Party, and the third are the Social-Democrats. It suffices that these parties negotiate with one another and take the decision. And, all of these parties were pretty much in favor of the boulevardisation plan.

rk Actually, this is true. I was surprised when I saw that one of the major supporters of this

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plan was the Green Party, through its members within the Municipal Council. It was this fact that made me think that there might be something wrong with this plan and the overall context, that something was not right. From my perspective, as an objective outsider, when one sees that, in Helsinki, the main idea of the plan is based on a denser city, the same as in other contexts, - which are extremely different in terms of knowledge and, above all, financial possibilities, - and no person within the Municipal Council points to this as an issue, or tries to somehow put a stop to certain practices that have brought us to this critical point, then one would be right to think that something is going seriously wrong in Helsinki and its Municipal Council.

lk Yes, of course, but, as I explained to you, at that time, in 2016, as well as in the last 50 years, Helsinki has had a problem with decent housing. Today, we still have a housing shortage. The reason is clear: the city is growing. So, we need to build houses for the new residents. This reasoning is not from a social and political standpoint and it does not include the multi-cultural element, at all. This is discussed very little. But there is this fact, that cities grow, and, when they grow, we have to build decent housing. When you look at Helsinki's map and see all these green areas, it is obvious one cannot build there. So, you can understand that through the boulevardisation of motorways, which represent wasteland, as a planner you see this as an opportunity, because this wasteland is a land that no one uses. It is a land that does not have a value for urban development.

rk It might have value in terms of environment. Don't you think that it depends by how one sees it? For example, living in Haukilahti, I see a lot of interventions throughout the green seashores of Espoo where the Municipality invests in embellishing the natural environment by transforming it into cozy spaces, using materials like concrete and asphalt for people to sit and enjoy nature, when it is clear that, even without these interventions, people do enjoy and do feel comfortable in the natural environment which, as it is, does not influence or affect the animal life in its surroundings. So, I think, it depends on how one views this wasteland.

lk Yes, but the city owns that land and wants to use it and make a profit out of it. It has been this way for the last 200 years. Why should it change? Of course, it is a continuous negotiation with the residents, who have different opinions but are also very aware of the value of the land. So, it is all about negotiations and balancing. At the moment, in my opinion, we are on the strong side, considering the war in Ukraine as well as the Covid-19 and energy crises, because all of these re-shape the value of the land and nobody speaks about the mega-question of our time: urbanization. This slogan is not used anymore. Now, we have different kinds of approaches. So, it is very difficult to take all of these needs into consideration and to find a balance. And, if the majority finds a consensus on planning through negotiation, then it goes through. That's what we call Municipal politics. It is deeply rooted in the system that the biggest parties nego-

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tiate with each other and arrive at the best solution.

rk I wanted to do this interview because you are right at the intersection of my interests in politics, institutions, arts and culture. I read *Helsinki: Daughter of the Baltics. A Short Biography*, of which you are co-author. In the text, I found a very clear point that you made, which demonstrates how the system works, its mentality. When writing about the approach towards the urban developments, you mentioned the relation between the university, private companies, and the Municipality, which, for me, as well, represents the right thing to consider in terms of approach. However, in these relations, there are a lot of questions in terms of transparency and conflicts of interest, because it is difficult to understand how these people, from the universities, private companies, and the Municipality will make their deals and make decisions. The question is, who decides? The private companies? The academics? The politicians? The people?

lk Well, it's a big question. There are no simple answers. But, let's put it like this. The university does not have an influence, at all, except in the creation and the re-shaping of its territory. The university is, of course, a landowner, not only the University of Helsinki but all of the universities, such as Aalto University in Espoo, which owns its land and, of course, they have a role in decision-making. But the university as an institution at the local level does not have any role in decision-making. This is due to the fact that the university is part of the state and not of the municipality. So, it is very complicated to say who decides.

I have tried, during my entire life as a researcher, to find out who really decides in the City Hall. Partly, it is transparent because we have elections, every four years, where the politicians are elected by the people. But it is a very conservative system, which goes back 100 years, when the municipal structure was created, and when 50% of the people voted for the social-democrat parties and 50% voted for the bourgeois parties. So, to simplify, the system functions in such a way that the socialists and the bourgeoisie have to negotiate and decide jointly. This has created a particular system, that is common to all Scandinavian countries. So, you have to negotiate. Behind each block, of the socialists or of the bourgeoisie, there are of course private interests and money. Both of these blocks are deeply rooted in society and its interests. Yet, this is, of course, very difficult to verify. It is extremely difficult. We know, for example, that this construction company is related to one or the other political party. I have been doing this work for nearly 40 years, to find what kind of network exists between these parties, private interests, and the Municipality.

rk You are talking about non-declared networks, right? So, you know that they exist but you cannot prove it, right?

lk Yeah, it is not that you cannot find meeting documents to prove it. Of course, as a researcher, you can investigate and trace history by checking the material documents that the City Hall has produced regarding urban planning, see what kind of decisions

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were taken in the '60s, '70s, '80s, '90s, and draw some conclusions on the people who were in charge of making this decision in the Municipal Board, their parties, and the companies involved during the implementation of the projects, provided by the urban planning. But, it is very complicated, because there is a lot of work to be done, and, usually, people do not know about it. To this day, we still have a 50-50 division of the political parties and their coalitions. The system is transparent, in terms of elections, but also conservative, with the same division of left and right parties.

rk Has anyone questioned this situation, publicly, at the Municipal Council, for example? I think that this is not normal. If you are telling me that everyone knows that these networks exist, and if one does some research, then these networks can be traced, then why does no one raise their voice and tries to investigate and expose these interest-based networks? If this situation is tolerated, then anything is possible. It is a problem of legality. Behind these networks, there can be hidden conflicts of interest, unethical decision-making, favoritism, cronyism, etc.

lk Yes, but it is not illegal. Nobody is doing anything illegal. The political parties represent certain circles within the Municipality but there is nothing illegal. It all takes place through legal channels, legal and democratic channels. Yes, you can interpret these like ... how can I translate it into English ... The Brotherhood of the War blocks, made of the right wing and the left wing, which negotiated with each other during the war. Yes, this still exists.

You have to negotiate with the each other. That created and shaped the specific decision-making process in the cities. I repeat, you have to get 50% of the votes in the City Council in order to push the decision that you want. There was never a single party that claimed, on its own, 50% of votes of the City Council. So, you have to negotiate all the time. This is the system we have and, so far, it has functioned. This is how the cities and towns used to be planned and are still planned, to this day. By finding the best solution for everyone, by negotiating with each other, the left and the right. It is difficult for normal people to understand.

rk Yeah.

lk It is difficult because of the disparate ideological positions. You cannot reach ideological solutions through an ideological basis. At this point, the ideology does not matter very much.

rk I think that everybody knows this. It is not that people have no idea. If I know it, then most others probably do, too, because I have not lived in Finland for 30 years but only for three years. What the people do not know, in my opinion, are the bases of the concrete deals made by Municipal-level politicians. So, people do not really know the consequences of the deals and where or to whom the profits of these deals go.

lk No.

rk This is what I think. In terms of urban planning, densification of the city, profits, etc., it is a good thing that there is negotiation in the decision-making process. This is one of the strengths of the institutional political deci-

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sion-making, but there should be transparency, in terms of the bases upon which the decisions are made and on the destination of the profits.

lk Yes, of course. And today, as we know, it is no longer about national interest but international interest. Just look at the largest real estates in Helsinki. Look at who the owners are. They are not the national boys and girls anymore. They are international companies that operate here. So, yes. You are right. But, tracing the money is very complicated and the people of Helsinki seem to be satisfied, because they keep voting the same political parties and individuals to represent them. Overall, there have been three main political changes here. The first happened in 1919, when the Social-Democratic Party entered in the City Council for the first time. The second was in 1945, when the Communist Party entered. The third was in 1984, when the Green Party could be represented with a member in the Municipal Council for the first time. And, maybe, there is a fourth time, in 2011, when True Finns came into the City Council. However, none of these parties have ever had a majority. They have been forced into adjusting their ideology according the existing City Hall ideology. So, no revolution has ever occurred in the Municipal politics.

rk Yes, sure. I agree. Yet, when you say that people are satisfied, and we know that Finland is considered to be the happiest country in the world, we have to consider that this may also be a perception and we should calculate this by taking into account the appropriate context

because, if this same situation were to be presented in a country other than Finland, which is currently one of the world's most successful economies, then a revolution would not be entirely out of the question. In this kind of scenario, you could see the True Finns Party fight against the migrants. For example, to return to boulevardisation – a tool that is used to tackle the densification of the city and the use of which is justified by the demographic changes and the arrival of new migrants in the city, in order to show the openness of the municipal policies towards the migrants – then, it will not be a surprise if, in the future, one sees the True Finns using the migrants as a pretext for the use of concrete and asphalt which may destroy Helsinki. It will not happen tomorrow, because of the economic situation, but it cannot be excluded in the future. These are my main concerns.

lk The good thing is that the True Finns will not have sufficient support to decide by themselves. They are completely marginalized from the City Hall decision-making. They can make a lot of noise. And that's called populism. But, in reality, I would say that their opinion does not play a significant role.

rk I hope so.

lk No, no, no. Look, after the war, 25% of the citizens voted the Communist Party into the City Hall but it remained completely isolated for 30 years. As I explained earlier, when you take into account the City Hall system and the necessity to have at least 51% for decision-making, this meant that the Communist Party was completely out of the negotiations. That's exactly

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what is happening with the True Finns. They may have their representatives but, in actuality, they are completely out of the decision-making negotiations. And, they prefer it this way. Being outsiders is very much part of their political strategy, because it is easier to make noise from the outside. But, in reality, I cannot see 51% of Helsinki ever voting for the True Finns. It is not realistic. I do not know if this is good news or a bad news for you, because I do not know your political stance.

rk No, no. I do not feel represented by any of the parties of the political scene. I have never felt represented and, actually, have issues with representation as a concept. I've never voted. I have other ...

lk Interests.

rk No, I am interested in politics, but not in delegating my representation.

lk Yes, but what I wanted to say is that if you want to be a successful political party in the City Hall in our Scandinavia system, you have to adapt to the system, you have to benefit from the negotiation position, and be part of the negotiation process. That's the way you make your voice heard. If you just shout, it does not work. As a historian, that's what I've learned. It is not enough that you shout from the university against the City Hall. Nobody will listen. But, if you enter the system and try to negotiate your position, whatever it may be, than you have a chance at being heard. From within the system, not from the outside. The system is *betonized* (sic. set in stone)!

rk Don't you think that this logic, in terms

of outside and inside, brings up the idea of the revolution that you would like to avoid? Because, in this manner, we have insiders and outsiders. And we return to the idea of the boulevard which, etymologically, refers to the wall of the Medieval fortress, from where the guards surveyed and secured the city, the insiders kept if safe from the outsiders. If you think in these terms, you are playing the same game.

lk But, I mean, what is the other option?

rk The option, in my opinion, is to make an open and transparent boulevardisation. Open the walls and make streets.

lk So far, we have not seen any boulevardisation. And, I wonder whether we are going to see one, at all.

rk Hahah, you will see three of them, for sure, because not all six boulevards proposed in the last urban plan were approved.

lk Yeah, but democracy, though a very nice system, is also very slow. In this system, every voice should be heard, and for every voice to be heard might take 10 to 50 years. It took 100 years to build the main library of the city of Helsinki. It is very safe and guarantees that everybody is heard but does not guarantee quick solutions. As I see it, at the Municipality, if you want to get anything done, like in the case of boulevardisation, it takes, at least, 10 years. Nobody decides within a day. This is not China, where one decides to make a railway to the airport and it is done the next day. Here it may take 10 years of negotiations. It is good and bad, but this is our way of understanding the democratic processes. And, there were a lot of critiques

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of boulevardisation. Maybe not concerning the environment and nature as much as the cultural heritage sites, architecture, and the city as it is. So, this is how I see it. I do not see a revolution happening soon, at least not in the near future and at the city-level. There may be significant critique but no revolution. We have had our city war and we know what it means.

rk Lastly, I wanted to ask about your position within the City Council, because I am not sure how it functions in Finland. Are you paid for this position?

lk I am not paid by anybody. However, as a Council member, you are paid a fee for participation in a meeting, which are determined every four years before the work of the councils begins.

rk Does holding a position as a representative of a political party impede you from having grants or doing your work? Does your position impede you from applying for grants in public and private institutions?

lk No, no, because I am not a politician. I am a professor. For me, politics is a hobby. I do not consider myself, at all, a politician.

rk But you hold a political position. You are a representative of a political party within the Municipality.

lk Yes, here comes the university's tradition, in which you are interested. Since the 19th century, when the municipal councils were created, the Municipality has been an arena where the university's specialists could use their expertise for the common good. So, we have a long tradition of university professors and students engaged

in local politics. Different professors have held positions, within city Boards, related to their expertise and fields. So, the position is always related to your professional expertise. I repeat, if you want to influence local politics, you have to enter into the system. That's the decision I made. And, of course, if I were more clever, I would join the bigger parties and not the small one [Keskusta] in Helsinki. I would go to the Kokoomus, the Green, the Social-Democratic parties, which are the negotiating parties, but I am not interested in power. I do not want to be the Mayor, a Minister, or Prime Minister. I want to exercise my profession for the common good. That's my ambition.

rk So, there are no bureaucratic impediments that might prevent you from obtaining grants from public or private institutions and do your research?

lk No, sure. I can apply for funds everywhere. Of course, I have a permanent position at the university, and, in that sense, I am economically in a safe position. But, I apply for grants for my students and Ph.D. students. A couple of weeks ago I was in Colombia, in Barranquilla, where they could not believe my position as both a professor and a politician. For them, this was impossible. It could never happen in Colombia, because of these two very different spheres and the existing corruption there. It was very difficult for me to explain to them that this is a very normal role for someone engaged in the cultural sector, for example, to offer one's professional expertise to

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a public institution like the Municipality. Many of my colleagues are currently doing the same thing as I, and this is how it has been in the past, as well.

rk Is there a conflict of interest in case you vote, for example, for the boulevardisation of Helsinki, which is proposed by a party that is part of the government, and you are funded by a governmental institution?

lk No. The government of Finland does not have any interests, at all, in the boulevardisation of Helsinki.

rk But they might be governed by the same parties, the central government of Finland and the government of the Municipality.

lk Yeah, they are the same parties but they are not working ... it is the division of labor; the government works on the governmental issues and the Municipality works on the municipal issues. Historically, there has been very little communication between the Helsinki Municipality and the national government. Actually, this is one of the problems we are working on, because the city of Helsinki has always been very independent. Of course, many politicians can be part of both the municipalities and the national government. Sanna Marin, our Prime Minister, is in the Tampere City Council, Li Andersson is active in the Turku Municipal Council, but they are simply collecting votes and not involved in the municipal politics. It is a completely different thing, different guys and girls are involved in these politics.

[PERSONAL NOTES:

1. "the city owns that land and wants to use it and make a profit out of it." - Who is the city? The people of Helsinki? Or the institution? Do people care about profit or about benefit? What is the logic behind this mentality?
2. VERY CLEAR IDEA ON RELATIONSHIP ACADEMICS-POLITICIANS-CORPORATES/BUSINESSMEN!!!
3. "as a researcher you can investigate these networks" of hidden relationships – Why she does not do it? If she does not, who other can do it? Is it risky? Scary? Possible problems with losing the position (social, professional, political, etc.)? Problems with coming out of the comfort zone?
4. "YES, BUT IT IS NOT ILLEGAL!" - hidden networks, hidden conflicts of interest, unethical decision-making, favoritism, cronyism, etc.
5. "THE BROTHERHOOD OF WAR BLOCKS" ... THE BOULEVARD MEN!!! check also the story of the good "old boys" she mentions in Helsinki: Daughter of the Baltics.
6. "It is difficult for normal people to understand" - see the possibility of developing further the normalization of the people in Finland.
7. "tracing the money is very complicated and the people of Helsinki seem to be satisfied, because they keep voting the same political parties and individuals to represent them" - who should trace the money? academics? politicians? who normalizes the people to make them "seem to be satisfied"?
8. Outsiders and Insiders ... of the boulevard ... of the NE-GO-TI-A-TIONS?
9. "both a professor and a politician" ... "it could never happen in Colombia, because of the existing corruption there" – Or maybe because in Colombia

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they call it a cartel or mafia! Does she know what is a cartel, like the one for which the EU Court fined The Kone Corporation and other elevator companies with the largest fine in EU history? Maybe the corruption, cronyism, conflicts of interest, favoritism in Finland are hidden because there are no Colombian politicians or academics that fight against it!]

During the interview with Laura Kolbe, I noticed that there is a common denominator with the other two persons working within the Municipality, Niklas Aalto-Setälä and Rinkhard Maninnen. It consists in the mental framework through which the growth of Helsinki and, consequently, its boulevardisation/ densification, is perceived as perfectly natural, so *normal* that it naturally rules out any other *alternative* or *option*. Especially for Laura Kolbe, “growth is part of Helsinki’s identity”, although according to her own words “the population of the city proper, both the center and the residential areas to the south of it, decreased steadily until the early 1990’s, so that where it had had 260 000 inhabitants in 1962, the figure had dropped to only 160 000 by 1987.”⁶ This brings to mind the text of the late Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*⁷, which evidenced the introjection and perception of the Reaganian and Thatcherian neoliberal ideology and policies, as normality, by both left and right-wing political decision-makers.

In addition, this ineluctable homologated and hegemonizing *weltaschaung*, which I see

as related to the Maelström of profits and power control institutionalized, through the collective inferiority complex with its characteristic traits of exaggerated pomposity and exoticism, is problematic and contradictory to the history and cultural heritage that the institutions, such as the Municipality of Helsinki, which employs Niklas and Rikhard, or the University of Helsinki, where Laura is employed, supposedly promote, which is to highlight the diversity of histories and multiculturalism of heritage as the basic elements of a civilized world. In other words, I would posit that it takes a full and complete interiorization of the inferiority complex to see growth as the only alternative when, with each passing day, we confirm the earth’s limited resources and the direct consequences of massive migrations, pandemics, wars, climate change.

Another contradiction, in Laura’s interview, consists in her description of the “Scandinavian” mentality and democracy, where one has to “ne-go-ti-ate-all-the-time”, and the tendency to diminish both her personal profile and her role, contribution, and, consequently, her responsibilities in decision-making, when confronted with the plausible arguments of possible corporatist profit accumulation as well as Finland’s apparent disregard of the global environmental crisis with the approval of Helsinki’s boulevardisation. In this regard, not seeing any legal problems with the ways the network of power functions is, at the very least, suspicious. For in-

6 Klinge, M., Kolbe, L. *Helsinki, Daughter of the Baltic: a Short Biography*, translation Malcolm Hicks, Otava Publishing Helsinki, 2007, p. 114.

7 «Without a credible and coherent alternative to capitalism, capitalist realism will continue to rule the political-economic unconscious.» Fisher, M. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, Zero Books, UK, 2009, p. 78.

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stance, the fact that Laura was granted by governmental institutions following the approval of the Municipal Plan, and the fact that her Party was in the coalition that formed the central government and the municipal government, may appear as a very fortuitous result of the “Scandinavian democratic” way of decision-making and “ne-go-ti-ate-all-the-time”, which does not seem to be an especially impressive model. In this case, I do not know if this is a clear case of conflicts of interest, exchange of favors, or cronyism among members of political parties, but, personally, I cannot find a reasonable argument to exclude a severe, yet glaringly obvious, hypothesis, which is that the entire system is aware of the illicit and fraudulent activities covered by clear cases of conflicts of interest, unethical decision-making, cronyism, and favoritism.

Overdubbing V: Fugues on Aki Kaurismäki's *Boheemielämä* and Pajtim Statovci's *Tiranan sydän*.

There are very few artistic productions, always peripheral and sporadic, that succeed in evading the mainstream Maelström of profits and power control of the ruling elite in Finland, with their inferiority and superiority complexes, where the ego is cradled by the institutionalized cognitive capitalism of the corporate state. These artistic productions are rarely recognized by the gatekeepers and, when every so often it does happen, it is due to a fundamental intentional or unintentional misinterpretation.

The sample artistic productions considered here, through their images and imagery, define fugues, ways out, *alternatives* or *options* (to use the language Niklas, Rikhard, and Laura), which do not contrast or defy the kaleidoscopic Maelström of the boulevard and boulevardisation, but follow it along its spiral, by reflecting and documenting, through *exaggerated pomposity* and *exoticism*, its limit/s, all the way to the point where it loses its symbolic function and shows its real face, the void at its center. In this manner, considering that “the more the image serves a fiction, the more it loses its authority as symbol”¹, these examples are not only possible fugues for artistic productions but can define a strategic approach toward possible *alternatives* or *options* to the kaleidoscopic reproduction of

images and imageries of the boulevards and the boulevardisation, that feed the institutionalized mythological-historical machine of the capital and its faciality.

The first fugue, upon which I see the possibility not of a new model but a strategic modulation for artistic and cultural productions, is that of Aki Kaurismäki's *La Vie de bohème* (*Boheemielämä*), a variation that represents, discloses, and goes beyond the boulevard-bulwark dicotomy without negating the exoticism and exaggerated pomposity.

The film premiered in 1992, a year after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

[SIDE-NOTE I: Until then, Finland had existed in an open and peaceful geo-political balance, a sort of boulevard without a bulwark, between the USSR and the US, especially during the almost 30-year-long presidency of Urho Kekkonen, leader of *Keskusta*, which ended in 1982. However, with the election of a supposedly more progressive president, the social democrat Mauno Koivisto, Finland began to lean toward the West, aided by the liberalizing policies of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. «As the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Finland was more than ever before free to re-negotiate its geo-political situation and join the European Community.»²]

1 Belting, H. *An Anthropology of Images: picture, medium, body*, translated by Dunlap, T., Princeton University Press, Princeton & Oxford, 2011, p. 14.

2 Käätä, P. *The National and Beyond. The Globalisation of Finnish Cinema in the Films of Aki and Mika Kaurismäki*, Peter Lang, Bern, 2010, p. 4.



Aki Kaurismäki, *Boheemielämää*, still image, 1992.

It is in the culmination of this geo-political re-collocation, with Finland joining the European Union, that Aki Kaurismäki, being fundamentally a nonconformist and a Romantic author, (dis)places his black and white, cinematic, heterochronotopic version of imageries of boulevards in Paris. The film could not be placed in Helsinki and its boulevards. It could not be placed in the copy (Helsinki) of a copy (St. Petersburg) of a copy (Paris on 1991)³.

The first image in the film is that of a Parisian rooftop, where the lyrics of an old song entitled *Chantez pour moi, violins*, introduces the basic notes of the cinematic theme:

Va, chante encore!

Ton adorable mélodie

À mon cœur porte l'oubli

Then, uninterruptedly, the camera moves downward and, from an oblique angle and top-

down direction (the direction of the authority, power, director of the Maelstöm, Aki in this case), shows the first character of the film, the Parisian poet Marcel. Drunk, and searching for something in the garbage bins, the poet falls dawn. His first utterance is “Shit!”. Bleeding, he collects a couple of bottles and brings them to the nearest bar. The barman recycles the bottles and serves him the smallest glass of red wine that has been served in the entire history of cinema.

The film’s main character is the Albanian painter Rodolfo, an illegal migrant living in Paris. The viewer sees him painting *The Crossing of the Red Sea*, a clever reference by Kaurismäki which seems to refer to the Albanian historical events of the time: the beginning of the transition from the dictatorship of the proletariat to a capitalist system and economy. Rodolfo also has a dog named Baudelaire and a painting of him.

³ In the documentary *Where is Musette?*, Kaurismäki speaks about this impossibility and points out that even Paris is no longer the same, that it “has changed a lot”. <https://areena.yle.fi/1-3858106> (accessed on 03.12.2022)

The painter receives his first commission for a portrait from a bourgeois, who later becomes his collector. The collector, whose desire it was to have his own portrait made, modeled for the artist, but what the mustached Rodolfo presents is the portrait of his own mother. In other words, Rodolfo/ Kaurismäki offers the bourgeoisie all of the stereotypes expected of him: the epic pathos of the survivors of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the dog-Baudelaire which every bohemian artist should have, the mother-father-Oedipal-family complex, among others.

Unfortunately, Aki, being an incorrigible Romantic author, changes the end of the story, as pointed out by Andrew Nestingen⁴. Compared to Henry Murger's *Scènes de la vie de bohème*, on which the film is loosely based, where at the end Marcel has received some recognition from the system and can enjoy "a good bottle of wine [...] seated in a comfortable chair", in *Boheemielämä*, the story ends after Mimi's death, with Rodolfo and Baudelaire disappearing in the black hole of the hospital arcade, possibly a reference to Benjamin's *The Arcades of Paris*. Thus, after all, according to Aki Kaurismäki, there is still room for pathos in representing the bohemian life, which finishes again and again in *l'oubli* within the black hole of *The Arcades of Paris*.

However, capitalism has left no space for Kaurismäki's bohemian images and imagery and, consequently, for any pathos in representing them, as they are instantly absorbed within the domain of the bourgeois patheticism. While the noble, pompously exaggerated and exotic

behavior of these bohemian characters still had a grain of truth, the political power's institutionalized mythological-historical imagery machine has already absorbed it and transformed it into a pathetic re-production for its faciality.

[SIDE-NOTE II: In 1992, as Kaurismäki presented Rodolfo to the world, Albania was undergoing the first political change after 45 long years of the dictatorship of proletariat. At that time, Albania, as declared by the regime, was a society without classes but with sporadic petit-bourgeois phenomena, especially present in the ranks of the state bureaucracy. Yet, strangely enough, it was the proletariat itself, not only in Albania but in the entire so-called Eastern Block, that went on strike and protests and eventually brought down the dictatorship of the proletariat, a feat that has never been accomplished by the bourgeoisie. The latter never changed, or strove to change, its status quo. Of course, this fact is not found in history books and it appears difficult to accept by the ego and inferiority /superiority complexes of today's bourgeois neo-liberal democracies. Today, in history books, one reads about *the fall of the Berlin Wall*, as if it toppled over by natural causes or collapsed due to faulty engineering and construction. Yet, this is precisely how cognitive capitalism and its institutions maintain the status quo: through simple linguistic expropriation. This does not work only through linguistic appropriation, but through the appropriation of images and imagery production, as is the case of the bohemians whom Kaurismäki represents with such pathos.]

⁴ Nestingen, A. *The Cinema of Aki Kaurismäki. Contrarian Stories*, Director's Cut Series, Wallflower Press/Columbia University Press, London – New York, 2013, p.55.

An accurate example of building the power's faciality through this expropriation is that of the current Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama who, in 1992, much like Rodolfo, was an Albanian migrant and bohemian painter living in Paris, not illegally, of course, being the son of a deputy of the former regime. He had a travel visa and, at the time, was supported by the Soros Foundation in Albania, which had gathered and financially supported the intelligentsia of the country, especially the sons and daughters of the former regime's elite. He is supported today by the contemporary art system, especially after becoming Minister of Culture in 1998, Mayor of Tirana from 1999 to 2011, and Prime Minister since 2013.

However, the difference between the bohemian faciality of the political power and the bohemians of Kaurismäki consists in the strategic or methodological approach towards the exaggerated pomposity and exoticism. And it is due to this difference – consisting of Kaurismäki's fundamental self-irony which sabotages the façade of any ego constructions – that his characters, though they can be used as simulacres by the faciality of power, do not present *options* or *alternatives* and, consequently, do not feed the machine and, thus, avoid the bourgeois patheticism.

In this regard, there is a second, more recent, example which, despite abundantly feeding the machine succeeds (I am not sure whether intentionally or unintentionally) in suggesting another fugue, beyond the mainstream Maelström of profits and power control of the ruling elite

in Finland. It is the case of the Finnish novelist of Albanian origin Pajtim Statovci⁵. His success consists precisely in the capacity of the author to present, by eschewing any self-irony, *options* and *alternatives* for the political power's institutionalized mythological/historical imagery machines and the re-production of its faciality.

In his books *Kissani Jugoslavia (My Cat Jugoslavia)*, *Tiranan sydän (The Heart of Tirana)* translated into English as *Crossing*, and *Bolla*, the main characters are defined by the hegemonic discourses of the neoliberal institutions, which have managed to extrapolate, de-contextualize and domesticate artistic ideas and turn them into catchy slogans, through which the cultural industry productions of Finnish society are filtered and formally packaged. In this manner, processes of independent de-subjectification, collective de-individualization or constitutive de-institutionalization are transformed, through the institutionalized mythological/historical imagery machines of the political power, in prolific processes of ego production. In the voice of Statovci's narrators in *Kissani Jugoslavia*, *Tiranan Sydän*, and *Bolla*, there is evident gentrification and the ennoblement of the ego of a sub-proletariat class – which consists of women, homosexuals, transsexuals, bisexuals, queer migrants, and all types of minorities – in order to masturbate the ego and clear the conscience of the ruling elite of Finnish society. Thus, in Statovci's novels, the one who says 'I', is always a subject subjectified by the mainstream discourses of the ruling elite. This 'I' is a militant,

5 This part regarding Statovci's work is a synthesis of my article *Reading Pajtim Statovci. The Unbearable Lightness of Being from the Orient, the Balkans, the Communist Bloc, Albania, and a Coup de Théâtre* published in four parts at AKS Revista. www.aksrevista.wordpress.com

a *boulevard man of the freedoms* of the ruling elite and its status quo. Here are some passages:

“Poverty is a state of mind.” (*Crossing*, p. 150) which refers to the situation in Tirana in 1991, during the regime change, from a dictatorship of the proletariat to a capitalist economy; “The drunks are a spectacle to behold. [U]npleasant, disgusting, and unforgivable.” (*Crossing*, p.197) referring to the Finnish context; “I imagine that if I had grown up in a country like this [Statovci’s family came in Finland when he was two-years old], I would have read so many books that I wouldn’t have been able to keep my eyes open, I would have gotten myself a university education [Statovci has a degree from University of Helsinki and working on a Ph.D at Aalto University] and joined a respected profession, I would have lived the best life possible and made those closest to me positively burst with pride” (*Crossing*, p.198); “I sit down at the front of the church [in Helsinki], pull my new pendant bearing the cross from my bag, and place it around my neck, and when a priest greets me by nodding in my direction with the subtlest of gestures, like a barely perceptible brushstroke, I feel as though I understand something essential about Finland: people here are not impolite, they are lovely, they like to be left in peace, and they don’t need anything extravagant around them” (*Crossing*, p. 202); “He [Sami, the Finnish lover of the narrator/’I’, who may suggest how well are integrated Sami people into the Finnish society] wore a bespoke suit, a tie, and leather shoes, and I felt like asking him to stop so that I could look at him from head to toe and admire myself

standing next to him in the mirror. I wanted to be envious of myself, of this moment. Of the fact that I had found a man like this, my very own bank manager with whom I could come to any agreement whatsoever.” (*My Cat Yugoslavia*, p.224).

However, to be perfectly honest, in Statovci’s interviews, there is very little elaboration on this glaringly evident offering to the system that which it expects from the author. Perhaps one day, after having taken and enjoyed as many prizes and funds granted by the system’s institutions as possible, Statovci will have his *coming out*, where he will disclose that all of his kaleidoscopic imagery of homo-eroticized and exiled characters were generated to supply the clear demand from the capitalistic erotomania and the façade of the successful integration of migrants within Finnish society.

X.

Conclusions:
OverDubbingOver
... and Over and Over
and Over ... Again.

In Finland, and not only, one cannot produce research, artistic, and cultural content while feigning ignorance about the well-known but occult institutional and personal relations and networks among the political power and the ruling class elite, supposed elite, and the wannabe-elite. One cannot produce research, artistic, and cultural content while feigning ignorance about the fact that all of the institutions, public and private, small or large, base and calculate each one of their decisions on quantification, sidestepping, due to their mediocrity, incapacity and/or convenience, any explicit and critically justified reference to the quality of the research, and the artistic and cultural content they support and/or produce.

Yet the drive to assess the performance of workers and to measure forms of labor which, by their nature, are resistant to quantification, has inevitably required additional layers of management and bureaucracy. What we have is not a direct comparison of workers' performance or output, but a comparison between the audited representation of that performance and output. Inevitably, a short-circuiting occurs, and work becomes geared towards the generation and massaging of representations rather than to the official goals of the work itself. Indeed, [m]ore effort goes into ensuring that a local authority's services are represented correctly than goes into actually improving those services[...]. This reversal of priorities is one of the hallmarks of a system which can be characterized without hyperbole as 'market Stalinism'.¹

However, as an Albanian, I remember how the dictatorship of the proletariat ended when the proletarians realized the emptiness of the political power's faciality marketing. If in the West, according to Fisher, existed the *market Stalinism*, in the East there was *Stalinian marketing* which, in the Albanian case, was the marketing of Enver Hoxha's image. The image of Enver Hoxha, as the faciality of power, in 1991, when the proletarians violently tore down his monument from its former privileged position in the Albanian capital's central square, was apparently serving the people a tall tale, fiction. His quantitative presence exhausted his qualitative presence and turned his image into an empty symbol which could no longer feed the imagination but only "serve a fiction".

Thus, today, considering my limited but privileged point of view, and without any trace of nostalgia for the past Enver Hoxha's regime, and post-Enver Hoxha's regime – with all their childish fury against transitional objects (monuments, artworks, etc.), which continue to proliferate – but with a whole-hearted repulsion for the present, I believe that the only way out of market Stalinism is to encourage the exhaustion of the qualitative value of the image (intended as the formal representative aspect) of the research, artistic, and cultural contents, in order to force this image, by quantitative exaggeration and exoticism, to its last limits, to make topple over. The quantitative excess brings the image, and its qualitative value, in the domain of ceding, giving, falling (etymologically in the Latin words

¹ Fisher, M. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, Zero Books, UK, 2009, p. 42.



The empty pedestal of the monumental statue of Enver Hoxha in Tirana's central square, in the middle of the boulevard, 1992. File Reuters.

cèdere, càdere), there where its meaning, which feed the imagination of the ego and symbolism of the subject, becomes so precarious that it can no longer sustain additions, only subtractions². The idea is to push further and not to cristallize in forms, postures, gestures, expressions – facial or mental – the Baudelaire's concept of modernity as “the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable”. This, at least, represents the methodological modulation upon which I base my research, artistic, and cultural production, including this text.

² See in Bataille, G. *Visions of Excess*, edited by Stoekl, A., translated by Stoekl, A., Lovitt, C. R., Leslie Jr., M., University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2008.



La Vie de Bohème as Drama(turgy) of Boulevardisation: An Auto-Bio-Geo-Graphic Performance. Helsinki, 2021

Romeo Kodra's practice consists of basic applied artistic research on visual culture, which combines institutional critique with institutional theory. Everything in his research starts from an analysis of the idea and the concept of the space and, subsequently, the generation of meaning through the rationalization of this space, especially in cases of tension between the arts and politics. His interest is often projected on this tension, the outcome of which is the production of subjectivities; in other words, the abstract machine of faciality, the locus amoenus for visual representation and visibility.