2030: War Zone Amsterdam
Imagining the Unimaginable

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Open is conducting structural research into the current conditions of public space and changing notions of publicness. This implies an experimental and interdisciplinary exposition of the reality, possibilities and limitations of contemporary urban space, notably from sociological, philosophical, political and artistic perspectives. Within the scope of this 'project in progress', themes such as safety, memory, visibility, cultural freedom, tolerance, hybrid space, the rise of informal media, art as a public issue, social engineering and precarity have come up. When *Open* was approached by the independent Amsterdam curator Brigitte van der Sande about working together on an issue of this journal whose contents would tie in with an art event she is organizing, *2030: War Zone Amsterdam*, this presented a chance to further these explorations and editorial goals.

2030: War Zone Amsterdam as perceived by Van der Sande will be an exercise in imagining the unimaginable: civil war in Amsterdam in the year 2030. This subject, no matter how absurd it may seem, immediately prickled the imagination of the editors. Extrapolating an extreme situation to a near future, and turning the city of Amsterdam into a concrete case and a projection screen, makes it possible to continue, specify and sharpen *Open*'s reflection on a number of fundamental and urgent topics. Moreover, the fictitious element presents the contemporary social reality of Amsterdam, which shows little creative development in the debates on some social issues, in a radically different light.

What must be emphasized, however, is that no enemies are named in *2030: War Zone Amsterdam*. Rather, it is an intensified impression of an actual urban space in which certain social, historical, co-political, cultural and urban conditions are magnified. Neither do all of the contributions in *Open* 18 literally refer to Amsterdam. Some essays take a more global approach in analysing significant developments and scenarios of the future with respect to the contemporary city and/or forms of warfare. Using Amsterdam as a test case, this issue of *Open* ultimately is about questions and problems generally facing Western cities today: fear and safety, privacy and biopolitics, control and militarization, globalization and virtualization, commercialization and neoliberalism.

In the introduction to *Open* 18, guest editor Brigitte van der Sande explains her motives and the history that is behind *2030: War Zone Amsterdam*, and partly also behind this issue, under the motto 'There is no audience, there are only participants'. The Rotterdam sociologist Willem Schinkel discusses the implications of an urban policy for Amsterdam that employs war rhetoric and marketing strategies. In a fictional contribution, the novelist and philosopher Dirk van Weelden imagines what it is like to live and move about in an Amsterdam at war. The British Frank Furedi, author of *Politics of Fear* (2005), analyzes the politicization and dramatization of fear. He calls upon Amsterdam to conduct a public discussion in which the participants are not the objects but the subjects of change. John Armitage interviewed the philosopher and urbanist Paul Virilio on the contemporary conditions of the city in relation to the concept of war zone for *Open*. Virilio speaks of 'cities beyond the city' that are anchored in the electromagnetic waves of increasingly faster information and communications technologies. Stephen Graham, whose work on

the one hand investigates the relationships between urban locales, mobility, infrastructure and technology, and war, surveillance and geopolitics on the other, is interviewed by Bryan Finoki on his viewpoints. In the column, writer Tom McCarthy rakes up an Amsterdam experience in which Mexico City, Dante's *Inferno* and *The Fall* by Camus converge. Starting from the concept of 'urbanibalism', Wietske Maas and Matteo Pasquinelli test the edibility of the city in times of war. Among other things, they search for Amsterdam's hidden 'third landscape of food'. In architect and theoretician Eyal Weizman's adapted article, he uses an interview with two brigadier generals of the Israeli Armed Forces to illustrate the importance of theories derived from figures such as Tschumi, Deleuze and Guattari for recent ways of conducting war. Weizman wonders what the implications of this deadly theory are for the city and its inhabitants.

This issue also includes artists' contributions by Gert Jan Kocken and the Israeli duo Adi Kaplan & Shahar Carmel. Kocken placed a large number of historical maps of Amsterdam one over the other, with their combined information trying to capture something of the city's recent war years, which are still interwoven in its present-day structure. His contribution is introduced by the art critic and historian Bianca Stigter, author of, among others, *De bezette stad. Plattegrond van Amsterdam 1940-1945.* Kaplan & Carmel visited Amsterdam and drew a cartoon speculating on a possible future based on their experiences. Imagine a city – your own city, for instance – in which everything is on edge . . .

Jorinde Seijdel is an independent writer, editor and lecturer on subjects concerning art and media in our changing society and the public sphere. She is editor-in-chief of *Open! Platform for Art, Culture & the Public Domain* (formerly known as *Open. Cahier on Art & the Public Domain*). In 2010 she published *De waarde van de amateur* [The Value of the Amateur] (Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam), about the rise of the amateur in digital culture and the notion of amateurism in contemporary art and culture. Currently, she is theory tutor at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and Head of the Studium Generale Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. With Open!, she is a partner of the Dutch Art Institute MA Art Praxis in Arnhem.

Tags

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