Goodbye history

Wagenaar, C.

Publication date
2020

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
Dutch connections

Important note
To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable).
Please check the document version above.

Cor Wagenaar

Goodbye history

The retirement of Dr. Herman van Bergeijk marks the end of an era. At the end of his career at Delft University of Technology, Herman had become somewhat of an anomaly. Would he deny being out of touch with contemporary realities in architectural history? Probably not – more likely, he would claim that these realities have lost touch with him. His leaving (on the night flight to his next destination – Harbin, China?) robs the profession of its noisiest provocateur – serene calm will reign in the spaces of the History Chair. What would be more appropriate than to contribute a little provocation to this book? If Herman leaves the scene, why not say goodbye to history altogether? Why not admit that it has outlived its usefulness and has become the relic of the past, a pastime for hobbyists whose work echoes ways of thinking from long ago? As long as the ruined walls of the historical edifice erected between the 1950s and the 1980s were still standing, these sounds kept on reverberating in the intellectual circles from which the profession recruited its most loyal representatives. Now that they have collapsed, they sail away unheard. The audience has left. We should leave as well.

Of course, the notion that a new epoch is beginning is as old as history itself – at every moment in time, a new era breaks away from the past (as Robert Musil mockingly stated in his epochal novel *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930). Again, we are at the threshold of a new world, but the means to describe it in detail, in the way historians are able to paint a precise picture of, for instance, the rise and fall of the Roman empire fail us. All we know is that, from yesterday's perspective (our point of view), it is entirely new, though it has been in the making for quite some time. It is as difficult to relate to it as it is to accept the Inca-victory over Europe in the sixteenth century, a historical feat that never happened but has been studied with admirable precision by Laurent Binet is his novel *Civilizations* (2019). In the new era architectural and urban historians who ran the show for so long are no longer needed. The object they used to study – the city and its buildings – has liberated itself from the programs and ambitions that created it in de decades after 1950, the setting that shaped their profession. Who would disagree with Werner Hegemann's conviction that the city and its buildings are the accumulation, solidified in stone, of the infinite numbers of social, economic, and demographic data that shaped it over time? Hegemann, the 'transatlantic' urban planner, critic and theoretician, knew what he was talking about. He was the intellectual power behind Europe's first public exhibition of urban plans: the

Groß Berlin show in Charlottenburg, and what the 40.000 visitors who roamed the rooms of the Königliche Akademische Hochschule für die Bildenden Künste saw were grand visions of the Prussian capital after its merger with the surrounding communities.[1] If the historical city can, at least in part, be seen as statistics in a built form, plans for the city of tomorrow might be the very best way to give life to what otherwise would remain huge lists of data and dead numbers. In Hegemann's view, it required skillful design and aesthetic mastery to make them speak in ways everybody, including laymen, could appreciate. *Groß Berlin* gave life to the facts and figures that define the choreography of city life (which is an indispensible part of urban aesthetics – streets without people are dead museum pieces). Hegemann was a scientist, a theoretician – but he was also a political activist. Joseph Roth, the Austro-Hungarian journalist and novelist who worked in Berlin in the 1920s, was impressed and wrote in 1930: 'In Deutschland pflegt die Sachkenntnis in der formlosen Stammelsprache des schriftstellerischen Dilettantismus zu erscheinen. Die Gelehrtheit hat kein Temperament, das Wissen stottert, as wäre es Unwissenheit, und der Objektivität fehlt die eigene Meinung. Werner Hegemann ist eine der seltenen (deshalb nicht weiniger deutschen) Erscheinungen, in denen die Sachkenntnis die Leidenschaft schürt und die Leidenschaft Kenntnisse aufspürt.'[2] Facts, figures and plans for tomorrow's society – the curious mix that was to revolutionize the urban environment since the 1950s – is already present in Hegemann's mind.

The intimate relations between numbers and form, contents and imagery, program and plan, function and design have been accepted as a matter of fact by architects, urbanists, policymakers and historians alike. If we have indeed entered a new phase in history, the numbers must have changed, and if the numbers have changed, the prospects for the city of tomorrow must have changed as well. What does the new world look like? Many things are still unclear, but it is easy to see how dramatically it contrasts with the past. Especially with the phase that concerns us most: the first four decades after the Second World War, the years between 1945 and 1985. The gap between these years and contemporary society-in-the-making is immense. Let's take the liberty to mention a few remarkable qualities of this era.

Back then, everything was marked by growth and expansion. Economic growth, demographic growth, growth in people's purchasing power. The most striking quality of yesterday's world was, however, the ambition to give the lower classes a fair share in the benefits of economic prosperity. Reducing inequalities was one of the main targets. This happened in all Western European countries, but also in the United States (and, for a time, in countries in Latin America). It even occurred in the socialist countries in Eastern Europe, some of which for a time were more effective than popular opinion in 'the West' is nowadays inclined to

believe – one may even argue that political strife between the two political systems fueled the social policies of Western Europe. All this resulted in grand visions of a bright future. Leisure time increased as working days got shorter and the weekend off became the norm. In the 1960s, this fueled the perspective that 'the stunning competition between automation and rising consumption is likely to result in more time off for more people who earn more money'.[3] Both trends combined resulted in a vast increase in consumer goods and consumer places (shops, cinema's, facilities for outdoor recreation, to name but a few). Industrialization was the power pack of the economic boom in the first few decades, but it was gradually surpassed by the emerging service economy – after January 1981, more than half of the working population of the United States worked in offices.[4] Factories and office buildings produce all kinds of goods and services, but much more important is that they created jobs. According to some scholars at the time, they produced a new type of personality, labeled 'organization man' by William H. Whyte in his well-known book of the same title. What distinguished this new type of personality was 'a belief in the group as the source of creativity; a belief in belongingness as the ultimate need of the individual; a belief in the application of science to achieve the belongingness'.[5] One of the characteristics of modern mass society was, not surprisingly, its uniform quality, a consequence of the standardization of people's needs and wishes that is also manifest in the uniform qualities of some of the most widespread icons of urban happiness. In *The Lonely Crowd*, the authors explained this unifying tendency by the 'other directed' psychological make-up of the organization man. 'What is common to all the other-directed people is that their contemporaries are the source of direction for the individual – either those known to him or those with whom he is indirectly acquainted, through friends and through the mass media.'[6] Thus a kind of uniform, collective and allegedly classless society emerged even – or maybe even especially – in the capitalist welfare states. The wages these people earned represented the vast bulk of the purchasing power and their preferences shaped the so-called consumer society – something like that had never existed before.

These were the facts and figures, or at least their backbone. They came to life in urban realities and daring urban plans that prove that Hegemann was right when he attributed great powers of conviction to plans as a vehicle to make utopian futures tangible. The urban landscape they resulted in, however, could hardly contrast more with the ideals that had inspired his *Groß Berlin*. For the first time in history, the entire political, economic and cultural apparatus of the state was geared to the social needs of the working classes, which, for political reasons, were referred to as the masses of 'common men' in most Western countries. (The term working classes was associated with the socialist countries in Eastern Europe, and directly linked to a central theme in Marxist thinking: the class struggle. Western

Europe and the United States preferred to cultivate the notion of a 'family of man', not by accident the title of the world's most successful photo exhibitions ever; organized in 1955 by the New York Museum of Modern Art, it gave an idealized view of a society that was the very opposite of the one socialism cherished.) The new facts and figures culminated in what in the 1960s was often referred to as a Megalopolis. This became the planners' ideal of a society where class distinctions had disappeared, and where the relationship between individual and collectivity was radically redefined. Active participation in the (local) community became the norm, and it implied both total participatory democracy and a different perception of privacy. The public domain should become a theater where individuals manifested as much of their private sphere as they felt comfortable with, the assumption being that this enhanced their individual personality. Thus, social connectivity became a crucial factor. Whereas in previous decades this had culminated in projects for spatial structures at an urban or even metropolitan scale, it now revolved around functions: living – including shopping, sports – leisure and work on the one hand, and accessibility of these function on the other. This was the essence of the Megalopolis. Megalopolis is a dream come true; it is also the climax of decades of consistent anti-urban ideals by – paradoxically – urban planners. Instead of forcing facts and figures in a fixed physical and spatial form, it saw them as formless. It gave a completely new meaning to the work of what became known as the spatial sciences (and which J.M. de Casseres had dubbed 'planology' in 1929, stressing its scientific qualities): facts and figures alone suffice to identify and analyze urban phenomena – there is no need to study its form and design.[7] Nevertheless these numbers had to be accommodated in space. 'The continuous molding of the Western European spaces', the urban planners claimed, 'is a task that has to be fulfilled, not only and not even primarily to serve certain interests, but for the benefit of all mankind.'[8] Megalopolis refrains from Hegemann's ideal to represent facts, figures and numbers in urban aesthetics. Instead, it proposes an open field without limits where all human activities are connected by a car-based infrastructure. Ultimately, the Megalopolis revolves between two poles: the individual home, and the network of streets, roads and highways that disclose the other amenities needed for a full life. These serve no other purpose than traffic. Not technology took command, as Sigfried Giedion, one of the intellectual powers behind the modern movement had claimed, the car did. Martin Wagner, Berlin's chief town planner in the 1920s, had predicted that the car was going to liberate modern man from the constraints of space and time.[9] At that time he was one of the very few urbanists who had something positive to say about the car. Now planners almost without exception began to celebrate the car. Few people cared about one of its side-effects: wherever the car appears, all other modes of mobility are likely to become impossible. Since the car, even more so than the television set, became the ultimate symbol of success in the consumer society, most planners did

not dare criticize it. The infrastructure connects the individual home to a number of well-defined functional zones or centers (malls, sports centers). Some coincide with old historical cities; ideally, however, these were also re-planned as shopping centers, which implied that they served well-defined functions and opened up to the car. The Megalopolis is the result of a managerial approach to modern life in which the future is calculated in economic and social terms in a way that, thanks to the improved quality and status of social sciences, had become much more sophisticated than it had been when Hegemann worked on his urban planning exhibitions.

Standardization of people's needs was essential, and translated in the standardization of space. Industrial building methods, needed to accelerate the pace of production, was perfectly suitable to provide this standardized environment. Neighborhoods were the basic modules of Megalopolis. They were the result of a building boom of unprecedented proportions. The expansion plans were conceived of as social catalysts that should enhance a strong sense of community and foster equality. That justified the unprecedented degree of standardization and uniformity of the newly built housing stock. From a hygienic point of view, the new dwellings were superior to what the inhabitants left behind. Running water, a shower, a private indoor toilet connected to a technically sound sewage system was part of the standard equipment. This was progress at a grand scale. Equally revolutionary was the setting of the new dwellings: usually they were located in standardized, collective buildings set in a lavish, green environment. Whether people lived in row houses, slabs of high-rise flats or, as was common in the Netherlands, in elongated three or four storied blocks with interior staircases that gave access to six or nine apartments (the so-called 'portico flats'), there was always a view on abundant greenery. Openness was key – the planners envisaged space without limits, a Cartesian field with loosely distributed volumes, grouped together in small units that had little in common with what was formerly referred to as cities or villages. Openness even got a metaphorical ring: it was supposed to symbolize an open, democratic society.[10] Apart from zones with specific functions, the open field was spiced with special facilities.

The Randstad has all the chracteristics of a Megalopolis. It is the anti-metropolis *par excellence*: an empty 'green heart' where the bustling, thriving urban core should be, surrounded by a built-up area consisting of low-density neighborhoods with the older historical centers as the struggling remains of the past (many lost substantial numbers of inhabitants who preferred the car-friendly suburbs). All this was radically new, marking the most pronounced breaks with the past ever. All major characteristics modern town planning developed in the 1930s – compactness, easy access to greenery by parkway systems that permeated the built-up areas,

protection of open landscapes – were suddenly abandoned. With it, the formal repertory of urbanism was discarded: streets and squares were no longer seen as places that needed careful design to disclose their aesthetic values for spend time on them for reasons of social interaction and entertainment. The planners of Milton Keynes, the famous English New Town, for example, saw the combination of public places and public facilities as characteristically European – and, therefore, as a thing of the past. Inspired by the American automobile society, they replaced the original 'European' network of main streets with access to the facilities that lined it by a grid of highways embedded in green belts, celebrating the transition from past to future, from yesterday's cities to tomorrow's Megalopolis.[11] Radical architectural movements – Archigram, Superstudio, Archizoom – only needed to extrapolate key tendencies underlying this concept to arrive at their 'utopian' projects. In Archizoom's 'No-Stop City', for example, 'the metropolis ceases to be a "place", to become a "condition": in fact, it is just this condition which is made to circulate uniformly, through consumer products, in the social phenomenon. The future dimension of the metropolis coincides with that of the market itself.'[12]

If Yury Slezkine interprets the Soviet experiment the Bolsheviks began after the October Revolution in Petersburg in 1917 as fundamentally religious, he provides an ideal template for understanding the modernization campaign that completely changed European society and European cities in the first three quarters of the twentieth century.[13] Architectural and urban historians did not simply describe this campaign, they were part of it. Religion, in this study, is defined as the uncritical acceptance of facts that are not based on religion (and therefore cannot be facts), and reasoning based on false logic. It is made up of interpretations based on ideology rather than on empirical analyses, and statements based on convictions that defy factual scrutiny. This attitude defines most of the production of architectural and urban historians in the previous decades. Most of them revolved around the notion of modernism. Modernism has been the faith that sanctioned the megalopolis. While celebrating the Megalopolis – its openness, its egalitarianism, its democratic values – as the ultimate outcome of the Enlightenment, nearly all historians forgot its most essential quality: the need to be very, very critical. In the words of Kant in his 'Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?' (1783): *'Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbsverschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. Selbstverschuldet ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschließung und des Mutes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines andern zu bedienen. Sapere aude! Habe Mut, dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung.'*[14] Kant had the general public in mind, but what he says is true for everybody, including scholars, among them architectural and urban historians. They, however,

preferred to behave like religious zealots. To their credit it can be said that history gave them several clues. Megalopolis does show many features that look modern. Much of the housing stock was industrially built, which implied a high level of standardization of floor plans and building materials. Transferring methods from industry to architecture had fascinated most pioneers of modernism since the 1920s. The mindset behind industrial production, which favored the elimination of everything superfluous (because it boiled down to wasting money), perfectly coincided with preference for abstraction. Industry gave birth to management as a new profession; originally it coordinated the use of manpower, later it developed into the science of streamlining everything that was needed for the optimization of production procedures, from the definition of individual tasks to the rationalization of transportation both within and between factories, and between supply and demand; modernists wished to be rational and managerial. Many favored a leading role of the state; an ideal that abruptly became reality after 1945. It was welcomed as kind of salvation. The *coup d'état* by the state suddenly liberated Cornelis van Eesteren, for instance, the master mind behind Amsterdam's general expansion plan of the 1930s, from the need to negotiate with private investors.[15] Part of the architecture of Megalopolis perfectly reflects all these ideals. So does the urban layout with its dispersed neighborhoods in low densities. In the 1930s this decidedly anti-urban approach had been idealized in various studies, many of them leading up to the floating conference on board the Patris II, which hosted a group of modernists of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM); though with very few exceptions all of them were architects, not urbanists, they tried to develop ideas on the future of the city.[16]

On a different note, the emergence of the modern world after 1945, epitomized by the Megalopolis, could be seen as inevitable. Modernists tended to see it as something that could not be stopped. It was predestined, determined by history. The vast majority of modern architects believed in the concept of an evolutionary development of the arts, which can be traced back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[17] J.J.P. Oud, Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier cherished this idea. In 1941, Sigfried Giedion, secretary of the CIAM, summarized the gist of it in his *Space, Time and Architecture*.[18] It's a historical overview that proves how architecture and urbanism, intimately linked as they are to social and economic trends, inescapably culminates in modernism. Industrialization, scientific and technological progress, the emergence of the masses, and the development of management – everything pointed in the same direction. In the 1950s and 1960s, these trends were believed to culminate in the social, democratic systems of the western world, an assumption that was underpinned by the fact that modernism had been banned by the Nazi regime in Germany and Stalin's communist rule in the Soviet Union. For modern architects, urbanists, critics, and architectural and

urban historians, Megalopolis was a dream come true: it represented the ultimate triumph of modernism, a victory that had been unavoidable all along.

Very soon, however, the dream turned into a nightmare. Megalopolis collapsed – not because the theoretical foundations were defective (which they were), but because it didn't work. It didn't work because the people who were enveloped by Megalopolis could not cope with it, least of all with the post-war housing estates. Whereas most of the new neighborhoods experienced at least some happy years after their completion, their fate quickly turned out to be very grim almost without exception. The dozens of case studies collected in *Neue Heimat* tell a sad story: hardly any of the large-scale settlements built in Germany by the largest housing corporation on the world (not including the Soviet empire) escaped deterioration, social decline and high levels of criminal behavior, that can at least in part be attributed to the way they were designed.[19] Especially the two spatial phenomena that were most affected by the consequences of private car ownership, inner cities and the open landscape, were severely damaged. Since they stuck to the basis assumptions, reform movements within the modernism could do little to amend things. Neighborhoods inspired by their alternative visions suffered the same fate as their predecessors. Far from liberating their inhabitants, these housing estates forced them into a straightjacket that determined their lives.

What could have been more telling than the fate of these people? The masses of 'common men' Megalopolis promised to lead to paradise? Nobody wanted to listen to them, architectural and urban historians least of all. The believers in modernism did not want to see what happened. They virtually ignored the criticism of, for instance, public health experts, who already in the 1950s wrote extensively on the dramatic situation in post-war housing estates.[20] When design approaches emerged that contradicted their views, they were utterly shocked. What specifically stung them was the radical distinction between social conditions and design – the primary dogma of modernism had been that design should reflect contemporary society (an assumption that can be traced back the evolution theory of the arts). Neo-traditionalism manifested the departure from modern times most clearly – and caused reactions not unlike that of the catholic clergy when it confronted Protestantism or the Aztec religion of the sun in Binet's *Civilizations*. *Fuck the Zeitgeist* was Bernard Hulsman's ultra short summary of the essence of neo-traditionalism.[21] Religion and science don't go together well. Blinded by faith, the flag bearers of architectural and urban history, today a very dead discipline, overlooked the immense gap that separates pre- and postwar modernism. In the 1920s, modernism was a design oriented, artistic movement – whatever form its representatives preferred, all of them abhorred shapeless cities and buildings. They turned a blind eye to one of the most fascinating and remarkable,

but from their point of view very problematic aspect of modernism's post-war breakthrough: the role of the United States in promoting it as the popular style of the free world. Prewar modernism had been elitist to the bone. It never appealed to the masses. It was utterly hopeless for propagandistic use – that was the main reason it was banned in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Stalin favored a style that oscillated between neoclassical megalomania and homely coziness, with national elements integrated in it that the people could easily associate with. Modernism should play a similar role, but could only do so if it shed its elitist, 'monastic' qualities. In the U.S.A., supported by state organizations, among them the CIA, the New York Museum of Modern Art and many other organizations, modernism transformed itself in a hyper attractive, consumer oriented style. The San Fransisco Bay houses (building on the style of prewar Californian bungalows), the so-called 'bachelor houses', and the Case Study Houses are perfect examples: happy, convenient and appealing to the general public. Buildings for leisure (hotels, beach resorts, cinema's, theaters), shopping (department stores, malls) and everything associated with the car created an entirely new, carefree architecture. While most of the Megalopolis in Europe was dominated by austere, repetitive housing, it was spiced with numerous specimens of the new style. Far from merely reflecting contemporary society, this style was deliberately developed to convince the people in 'the West' of the superiority of the American way of life – it was a product of the Cold War.[22] For decades, historians refused to see this. Moreover, they did not question the evolutionary concept of the arts and clung to the belief that modernism was inevitable. Obviously, this concept was the result of the transplantation of methods from the natural sciences to the humanities; allegedly scientific, it had all the characteristics of a religious creed, and those promoting it acted as representatives of monastic order. The evolutionary concept is, of course, utterly nonsensical. So is the one-dimensional connection between society and the arts. To justify the assumption that modernism must be democratic because the totalitarian regimes of the mid-twentieth century rejected it, is clearly a sign of fuzzy logic. (If one were to assess the behavior of modern architects during the Nazism, one would find out that they were at least as willing to collaborate than those who opposed modernism – this definitely was the case in the Netherlands.) Paradoxically, they also failed to notice that the times were changing, creating new conditions that highlighted their most dramatic fiasco: the refusal to analyze the performance of architecture and urbanism.

Megalopolis sadly failed. It was the urban representation, albeit formless, of facts and figures that qualified the first four decades after 1945. From yesterday's perspective, the new realities that have emerged are as alien as the ones Binet dealt with in his *Civilizations*; from the viewpoint of young scholars, on the other hand, the setting of Megalopolis may look like a wonderful, unrealistic fairytale. Even

from their perspective, however, yesterday's world may have had its appealing aspects. No wonder, then, that many comments about the emerging new order have a tendency to sound a bit worried. Nevertheless, some scholars claim that it represents the normal, natural order of things, implying that the previous phase was exceptional and artificial; this suggests, moreover, that there was no moral justification for it. For the time being, however, a distinct feeling of nostalgia permeates most analytical treatises. This appears to be especially true in the Anglo-Saxon world, where it is associated with its diminished role in world politics.[23] The economy has changed. What Karl Marx predicted has become reality at a scale not even he could have imagined: capital is concentrated in financial markets that appear to have a life of their own, independent from what now is sometimes referred to as the 'real economy', where the vast majority of the people still have to try to make a living.[24] Some links between the two are likely to remain, if only because the financial markets are not likely to let go of the opportunity to extract money from the real economy. In many countries, they now earn less money than their parents did, and they have to work longer days – leisure time becomes an unaffordable luxury. Abject poverty is still rare, but for the majority of today's citizens, the period of increasing prosperity is a thing of the past and access to the higher strata of society is cut off. Even if factory and office workers face decline, the economy as a whole may still flourish. The fragmentation in two or more separate economies, all operating on a global scale, coincides with rapidly growing inequality – which has also been recognized as the normal, 'natural' ways of things, the 'default setting of economic evolution'.[25] In 2018, the eight richest Americans owned as much as the entire bottom half of the American population; on global scale, the 62 wealthiest persons possessed as much as the 3.5 billion people who represent the poor half of the people. (Writing about these phenomena has become very popular, especially since the publication of Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* in 2013.)[26] The new realities may look abnormal, a deviation from ways of doing things we got used to and see as the norm. They are not. As stated earlier, it appears to be the other way around: a return to normalcy after a very exceptional phase in history. Throughout history, the existence of large, underprivileged classes who make up the vast majority of the population is the standard. It was like this in the Ancien Régime, it has always been the case in countries like India and many African nations, it used to be typical for the Netherlands in the nineteenth century, as Auke van der Woud has eloquently analyzed in *Koninkrijk vol sloppen*, which demonstrates the existence of a large part of the population who depended largely on charity for survival.[27] One of the most striking qualities of the new realities is the trend to analyze all human activities as if they take place on markets. If their value cannot be assessed or isn't recognized, they will be seen as useless. Value is expressed in metrics: what cannot be properly identified and quantified has no value and should not be financially supported. Quantifiable performance is all that

counts. This is also true for architecture and urbanism – and whatever can be said about the downside of this way of looking at things, here the focus on performance appears to be long overdue. What about the viability of the new – natural – way of the world? If the vast majority of today's citizens face decline – a fact nobody denies, except some of those who have to cope with it – why don't they use their democratic rights to correct things? Because they can't. The public has ceased to be a factor in politics – populism, does not affect the power structure of the new world in any way. Jeremy Rifkin, the guru of governments all over the world and much appreciated by the CEOs of major companies, thinks that in return for the instant and perfectly personalized satisfaction of their most personal needs thanks to the Internet citizens should give up their privacy and their role in politics.[28] Some commentators suggest that this deal is reminiscent of the one allegedly made in Megalopolitan times, when, in exchange for safety and wealth, people had to accept being encapsulated in organizational structures that were designed and supervised by managers. Whereas the deal back then had been concluded, however implicitly, between collective bodies – the state, labor unions, the institutions that ran social security systems – what has emerged now are billions of deals between individual citizens and the companies that are capable of catering for all possible needs. New realities emerge that are powered by the Internet, the Internet of Things and the companies that run it (Google, Facebook, Amazon, a handful of others). These are post-democratic times and they might be here to stay. The vested interests behind the new world don't have to worry about a thing: thanks to the Internet, the public has become disempowered and harmless, no matter how much noise it sometimes produces ('black lives': noise without the sustainable accumulation of power; the abolition of policies supporting low income people to move to richer neighborhoods: hard fact based on power). All key documents of, for instance, the European Union or the United States fully support the new conditions (or at least contain hardly any restrictions). So this is where we are now, or so it would seem. We live our own version of Binet's *Civilizations*...

Facts and figures clearly have changed and that is one reason why Megalopolis has lost its charm. Even worse: it has become an anomaly. The bottom line is that urban life is not an abstract condition. Urban form accompanies and partly even determines how people live. If Megalopolis performed very poorly, it is because of two principal factors that were deliberately banned from it: use and experience. These can only be assessed by analyzing everyday behavior (most importantly: daily living patterns) of the inhabitants. Urban form can have a profound impact on, among other things, people's lifestyles. If the term 'social' that figures so prominently in all modern documents really is supposed to mean something, the very least one would expect is that the opinions and experiences of citizens are somehow taken seriously. Their preferences are expressed in many ways, and one

of them is the market: suburbia, the low-density 'tapestry' that covers large parts of Megalopolis, is out: the disadvantages outweigh its positive aspects by far. The metropolis has returned as a powerful living ideal that, of course, is supported by cannonades of marketing. It is also supported by a huge body of expertise that proves that suburbia, the quintessential quality of Megalopolis, is detrimental in terms of the economy, wasteful in terms of travel time and infrastructure, leads to unfruitful competition between (sub-)urban centers that are in each other's vicinity, destroys vast areas of open landscape – and to top it off, causes serious health hazards.[29] Megalopolis has become a ruin. We're surrounded by a legacy of the past, and it will stay with us for decades. So far, rescue operations have sadly failed. They have failed because they need to comply with the markets, and the markets are not ready to declare their investments dead losses; moreover, they can still make money by pouring money in suburban development... For the time being, this leaves planners and policy makers few other options than invest time in money in rhetorical maneuvers. If the Megalopolis is dead (which seeing the fate of so many postwar housing estates, is hard to deny), and if the metropolis has become the form of the preferred lifestyle – what would be more appropriate than to simply endow parts of Megalopolis with metropolitan qualities? Of course, the words and images to do so cannot possibly refer to real physical, spatial conditions. This abstract way of doing things appears to hark back to the formless, 'planological' facts and figures of Megalopolitan times, when the links between abstract numbers and concrete form had also been severed – today, obsolete ideas float around like dead bodies after a flood and are reprocessed as propaganda tools in the best Rifkinian fashion... They result in 'Amsterdam metropolitan region' (with Zandvoort as 'Amsterdam Beach'), or 'Delta metropolis', and dozens of similar concepts that ignore the essence of cities, which is that they accommodate urban life in a physical form that can be used and experienced by its inhabitants.

Clearly, marketing is useless if it comes to understand cities and urban life. As useless as architectural and urban history in the times of Herman van Bergeijk. If we think it somehow makes sense to understand cities, villages and landscapes, how they came into being and how they work, the first step is the elimination of whatever remains of yesteryear's way of doing things, including a large part of the corpus of knowledge it produced. Thus, it can discard the many aberrations, distortions and fake assumptions of architectural and urban history – there are many more than the ones we discussed here: what about the virtual omission of Europe east of the former iron curtain? If medical doctors would base their expertise on half a body, would that make sense? Yet that is what historians have been doing for decades. More importantly, in the total void that needs to be made there is no place for religion. The successor discipline will have to come to terms with the new social and economic conditions in which it has to take shape, and here the

only things that counts is hard fact. One of the consequences is that it has to leave the framework of the humanities, or more precisely the section that deals with cultural phenomena. This section is stone dead, partly because it was slaughtered by politics and budget cuts, but mostly because it voluntarily committed suicide. It climbed the stakes and set fire to it. What did it in was the conviction, in itself rather religious, that social irrelevance was its most cherished quality. Untainted by social realities, the absence of practical meaning was cultivated as a sign of academic independence (which was true: it could be independent because nobody needed to rely on it). Then it tried to resurrect itself by copying methods and approaches that are partly alien to it. Metrics is one of them. Instead of using it as a tool, it cherishes it as a new religion, manifesting all the mistakes and disasters critics have pointed out for quite some time. 'It is commonly observed', Stefan Collini comments, 'that the rise of metrics is an expression of, and a response to, a decline in trust [...] At bottom, performance metrics operate through a culture of fear, but one in which the arbitrary whim of a lord or master has been replaced with the terrifying implacability of a row of figures.'[30] (Writing in 1973, Thomas Pynchon suspected that something similar was one of the objectives of the political establishment back then: 'One of the dearest Postwar hopes: that there should be no room for a terrible disease like charisma. That its rationalization should proceed while we had the time and the resources'.)[31] How curious that the humanities, which should explain the world by focusing on what people have on their mind, has become so very keen on leaving the mind out of the equation – the humanities have dehumanized themselves, the successor discipline we're looking for cannot afford this. What would it be like? Surely, it needs a crystal clear signature – lest the people it addresses don't repeat what the Berlin based architect Paul Kahlfeldt stated at the 'Why History' conference Herman van Bergeijk organized in 2013. Is it useful for architects in any way? No, not at all, Kahlfeldt claimed.[32] Nobody needs architectural and urban historians. What a useless discipline. The promoters of its successor discipline better make some clear decisions. First of all, its core business is designed space: objects (buildings), the way they are positioned in their urban setting (urban planning), the functions they have to accommodate and the ways of living they foster (but only if they determine the shape of buildings and cities). Facts and figures matter, but only if they are strongly embedded in buildings, cities or plans. Facts and figures without form – be it the abstract Megalopolitan cloud of the 'planologists' of those days or the metropolitan utopia's of their successors of today – have to remain outside the scope of the new discipline. Moreover, the undeniable fact, clearly recognized by Hegemann, that facts and figures define cities, cannot justify a shift in focus to the fields of scientific endeavor that study them – the new professionals we have in mind will never be able to beat experts in energy sciences, transportation, legal systems, financial constellations. They should start from the other end, from the formal qualities of cities. Then, whatever

this discipline will be like, it cannot be a design discipline. Its representatives should not claim skills they do not have; if they dream of glamour and want to walk around with Ray Ban sunglasses, please let them do so, as long as they don't begin to make drawings. Finally and most importantly: everything it does has to relate to fields of performance. If the new profession refuses to expand in this direction, the pioneering innovations of, among others Ed Taverne (Herman's 'Doktorvater'), who stressed the former field of architectural and urban history's autonomy relative to art history, incorporating many aspects art historians tended to ignore, will turn out to be in vain.[33] This expansion may require intense cooperation with other disciplines. Whatever can be measured should be measured, but only if it makes sense. All claims need to be assessed. Finding out what design does in terms of social cohesion, community building, sustainability, urban metabolism, financial feasibility, health – everything planners and politicians claim – is part of what the new discipline has to study (and that should also protect it from developing into yet another religion). Moreover, it should meticulously reconstruct design as well as (political) decision making processes. Only if it manages to achieve these goals can the successor discipline be successful. It can re-assume its role as one of the power packs of the design disciplines (which, at the turn of the new era, are in a deplorable state, its autonomy having been destroyed by a straightjacket of rules and regulations of the metrics type). The new discipline may even accumulate the scientific and practical power needed to position spatial issues at the heart of the healthy cities concept (for which the medical profession, rigorously framed by the religion of metrics, has very little understanding). It may, in the long run, even play a role as a catalyst of reform of the new realities (re-assuming a role once, in a completely different setting, played by Manfredo Tafuri, for example). For now, however, we have to be satisfied with the disappearance of the obsolete profession formerly known as architectural and urban history, a fact timely marked by Dr. Van Bergeijk's departure from Delft. To conclude in his style: the more people this little essay will infuriate, the more it suits a a bulky volume in his honor. So, goodbye Herman – goodbye history.

Notes

1   Christiane Crasemann Collins, *Werner Hegemann and the Search for Universal Urbanism*, New York/ London 2005, 51.

2   Michael Bienert (ed.), *Joseph Roth in Berlin. Ein Lesebuch für Spaziergänger*, Köln 2010, 163.

3   F. de Soet, 'Groenvoorziening en recreatie', *Bouw* 20 (1965), 17.

4   Walter B. Keeman, 'The Office of the Future', in Jean D. Wineman (ed.), *Behavioral Issues in Office Design*, New York 1986, 251.

5   W.H. Whyte Jr., *The Organization Man*, New York 1956, 7.

6   David Riesman, Nathan Glazer & Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd. A Study of the Changing American Character*, New York 1956, 37. Mores extensively explained in Cor Wagenaar (ed.), *Happy. Cities and Public Happiness in Post-War Europe*, Rotterdam 2004, 120.

7   J.M. de Casseres, 'Grondslagen der planologie', *De Gids* 93 (1929) 2, 367-394.

8   G.J. van den Berg, J.P. Thijsse & G.A. van Poelje, *Nieuwe steden in Nederland? Preadviezen uitgebracht aan het Nederlands Instituut voor Volkshuisvesting en Stedebouw*, Alphen aan den Rijn 1957, 9.

9   Martin Wagner, *Städtebauliche Probleme in amerikanischen Städten und ihre Rückwirkung auf den deutschen Städtebau*, Berlin 1929, 5.

10   Hans Ibelings, *De moderne jaren vijftig en zestig. De verspreiding van een eigentijdse architectuur over Nederland. The modern fifties and sixties. The spreading of contemporary architecture over the Netherlands*, Rotterdam 1996, 20

11   Michael Edwards, 'City Design: What Went Wrong at Milton Keynes?', *Journal of Urban Design* 6 (2001) 1, 87-96.

12   Archizoom Associates, 'No-Stop City. Residential Parkings. Climatic Universal System', *Domus* March 1971, 53; Kazys Varnelis, 'Programming After Program: Archizoom's No-Stop City', *Praxis, Journal of Writing + Building* 8 (2006), 87.

13   Yuri Slezkine, *The House of Government. A Saga if the Russian Revolution*, Princeton 2017.

14   Immanuel Kant, 'Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?', in *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, 1784, 481-494.

15   Noor Mens, *Een architectuurhistorische waardestelling van naoorlogse woonwijken in Nederland (2). Het voorbeeld van de westelijke tuinsteden in Amsterdam*, Eindhoven 2019, 135.

16   *Atlas of the Functional City. CIAM 4 and Comparative Urban Analysis*, Bussum 2014.

17   Cor Wagenaar 'Towards and evolutionary theory of art', in Wagenaar, *Town Planning in the Netherlands since 1800. Responses to Enlightenment Ideas and Geopolitical Realities*, Rotterdam 2015, 185-187.

18   Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture. The Growth of a New Tradition*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1941.

19   Ullrich Schwarz (ed.), *Neue Heimat. Das Gesicht der Bundesrepublik*, München/Hamburg 2019

20   For example: Paul Volger & Erich Kühn (ed.), *Medizin und Städtebau. Ein Handbuch für gesundheitlichen Städtebau*, München/Berlin/Wien 1957.

21   Korrie Besems, Bernard Hulsman & Ingmar Heytze, *Verzonnen verleden / A Contrived Past*, Rotterdam 2009, 12; Hans Ibelings, *Unmodern Architecture. Contemporary Traditionalism in the Netherlands*, Rotterdam 2004.

22   Cor Wagenaar & Noor Mens, 'Amerika: het nieuwe Duitsland? Of Duitsland: het nieuwe Amerika?', in Anne Schram et al. (ed.), *Stadsperspectieven. Europese tradities in de stedenbouw*, Nijmegen 2015, 160-183.

23   Neal Ascherson, 'As the toffs began to retreat', *London Review of Books* 22 November 2018. Ascherson reviews two publications: James Hamilton-Paterson, *What we have lost: the dismantling of Great Britain* (2018), and David Edgerton, *The rise and fall of the British nation: a 20th-century history* (2018).

24   'A dangerous gap. The market v the real economy', *The Economist* 9 May 2020.

25   James C. Scott, 'Take your pick', *London Review of Books* 19 October 2017.

26   Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge (Mass.) 2013.

27   Auke van der Woud, *Koninkrijk vol sloppen. Achterbuurten en vuil in de negentiende eeuw*, Amsterdam 2010.

28   Jeremy Rifkin, *The Third Industrial Revolution. How Lateral Power Is Transforming Energy, The Economy, and the World*, New York 2011; Sue Halpern, 'The Creepy New Wave of the Internet', *The New York Review of Books* 20 November 2014.

29   Stephen Verderber, *Sprawling cities and our endangered public health*, London 2012.

30   Stefan Collini, 'Kept alive for thirty days', *London Review of Books* 8 November 2018. The review analyzes two books: Jerry Z. Muller, *The Tyrrany of Metrics* (2018), and James Wilsdon et al., *The Metric Tide* (2016).

31   Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*, London 2000 (first edition 1973), 95.

32   Paul Kahlfeldt, discussion at the *Why History Conference*, Delft, May 30, 2013.

33   Cor Wagenaar, 'In memorian Koos Bosma', *Planning Perspectives* 31 (2016) 3; https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02665433.2016.1166980