

## *WATERLOOPLEIN*

A theory about order and chaos

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### *WHAT DOES A NEW GENERIC PLACE MEANS FOR THE LIFE IN WATERLOOPLEIN?*

Waterlooplein has always been a symbol for street life. It is a place where life happens. It is a center for marginalized people to trade goods, make art, earn a living without neglecting the interest and fascination of the common population. When there is action there is left over, a little bit of mess, waste etc...

Already in the 70s the area started to go through infrastructural changes and now the municipality of Amsterdam wants to clean and specifically design the area, reduce the size of the market by half and create a square with benches and potted plants. All together, get rid of all the characteristics of this place and make a generic place that can be found in most cities of today.

By investigating the changes in Waterlooplein, we explored the role of a market in nowadays' society, we questioned the tendency of the authorities that wants to « demessify » every part of the cities.

First, we did historical research and reviewed planning documents to understand the actual facts of the development. Secondly, we analyzed social media and newspaper articles, we engaged in discussion with the merchants to see what really is happening in that area: how and why people use the market.

1 out of 4 market spots in Amsterdam are unoccupied and at some markets this is even 50%. An example is the Bos en Lommer market that will soon close-down. The market is not making enough profit, so the municipality wants the market to go. Merchants rather see the municipality helping them, but instead they feel pushed out. For new merchants at the Bos en Lommer market it is almost impossible to get a fixed spot from the municipality, so it feels like a slow and planned death. Merchants from several markets wrote a manifesto to address the problems they face. They want more autonomy in order to revive the market. Trying out new opening hours, for example, could attract new costumers that now make use of supermarkets that are open till late and online shops that are open 24/7. Street markets can also provide an experience that online shops and supermarkets can't.

Although people may find a greater selection of goods online and save time by the quickness of comparing products and paying online, physical shopping is still precious in people's life. It is a valuable, multi-sensory, social experience: you can sense the materials and have an immediate emotional connection to the items. It is also possible to wander around without looking for something special and interact with people. Also there is an increasing trend of conscious consumption and an increasing amount of people prefer the local and the second- hand.

In the end visiting the market can lead to spontaneous discoveries and meetings that give unexpected depth to an otherwise planned life.

Furthermore, we researched the spatial and sensory features of the Waterlooplein market. We examined the noises, the movements and the smells during market times and outside of market times. We translated this into graphics that you can see here. Having a market creates a more varied and lively sensory place. What we realized is that the population still has a demand for a genuine, atmospherical experience led with human interactions and spontaneous ideas and desires. This is quite contradictory with the general political measures regarding urban development.

At last, we looked into philosophical references about human behavior, social structures and chaos. For governments, positive propaganda and a general sense of well-being erase other disparities and social problems. The beautification of public spaces works as a facade.

The theory of the invisible hand by Adam Smith says that «individual ambition serves the common good». Moral sense is also inherent in nature: The ant or the bird haven't read Kant nor the Bible, yet they have the same notion of good and evil. Good is what is useful for the preservation of his race, and bad is what is harmful to it.

Moreover, chaos in contemporary scientific theory is considered a type of order. Phenomena such as the flow of clouds or crowd movements, long perceived as being determined by chance, follow certain particular patterns that are not linked to a linearity of cause and effect.

To conclude, disorder means freedom, diversity, individual expression. However this creates an empowered population that might be perceived as danger for the authorities. An informal practice of power needs a constant verification, the control is not automatic.

For Waterlooplein the creation of a new square will come with unsaid rules of behavior on how to act in a public space. For instance, we discovered that municipality wants to control what is gonna be sold in the market. This is only one example of these new rules that would apply in this generic space.

In a specifically designed area, people won't start playing music or selling their discarded household items which will result in a lack of human qualities.