

SUN CHANG

Permanent Alienation: Discontent or Impetus

LOST DAD PUBLISHING



TABLE OF CONTENTS	1	
INTRODUCTION	3	
Chapter I		36
ALIENATION IN THE PAST	7	"IDEOLOGICAL" COUNTERACTION AND A REAL PERMANENT ALIENATION
PAST THE PAST	-	
CASTING OFF THE INDIVIDUAL	10	41
Chapter II		
ALIENATION AT NOW	19	ART AS A TOOL TO CONFRONT ALIENATION ON A DAILY BASIS
RESTART FROM THE CURRENT	-	44
SLEEPING ON A MARKET SHELF	22	"FREE BOX AT DUWO", December 2017 - March 2018
URBAN PLANNING OR SUPERMARKET PLANNING	27	48
Chapter III		
ALIENATION IN RELATION	33	"KONVIVIALITI", December 2017 - May 2018
OPPOSING IDEOLOGIES AND INVERTED ALIENATION	-	52
		"COMMON BELONGINGS", November 2018 - Now
		59
		BIBLIOGRAPHY

For as long as I can remember, I have constantly been surrounded by a strong feeling, which could be defined by political and social theory as alienation. I want to analyse how this feeling is perceived in different times and historical backgrounds which have surrounded me, or I have surrounded myself with. In my research, I unpack the alienation through theory and contextualize them in similar backgrounds. Questioning what is the alienation I feel, what makes me feel alienated, why, and what these alienations can do.

Through the theory, I locate the definition I was looking for and clarify this feeling. It is one perceived by individuals in a social order and social structure controlled and shaped by a specific ideology. But rather than a single fixed feeling, I will demonstrate there are actually two types of alienated feelings which I have perceived in my past: the socialist, communist society in an era of industrialisation which I was born into, and now, the global social-political system that surrounds us all.

In this thesis, I will start by illustrating the different types, by going through architecture and urban planning as materialised

visions; analysing the reasons behind and comparing the relations in between these visions.

In the first chapter, I will exemplify alienation in my past. A “disaffection” that causes individuals to distance themselves from the imposed social identity in the situated social structure. It is a similar contextualization to the concept of alienation signified by Marx, as the split between life and labor¹.

The second chapter is about the alienation at my current moment. I will describe it as “concealment”; as the recognition that individuals feel they are barricaded and isolated in social networks which have replaced networks of capital. For this alienation, I will reference the philosophy of “Code and Simulation” from Baudrillard, to guide me in unpacking the capital system of today.

In the third chapter of this thesis, I will compare the relation of the two types of alienation and question why this alienation appears permanently by going through social commentary and social prediction by others. In the end, the answer will be located at the desire for individual freedom, which generates

1. In the “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (1932), Marx explained “alienation” thus: “In my production I would have objectified my individuality, its specific character, and, therefore, enjoyed not only an individual manifestation of my life during the activity, but also, when looking at the object, I would have the individual pleasure of knowing my personality to be objective, visible to the senses, and, hence, a power beyond all doubt.”

constant conflicts between individual freedom and social structure. Then, to end the thesis, I will illustrate different psychological perspectives towards the fact of permanent alienation, in order to face it and find methods to apply on a day-to-day basis.

Meanwhile, as a individual doing art, I will go through my recent art practice in the final chapter, to elaborate on how I can deal with permanent alienation in my daily life. Also I intend to propose the idea that art is my tool to confront my alienated surroundings and question it with others in the social context.

PAST THE PAST

2. The First Five-Year Plan (1953-1957) was part of Five-Year Plans of the People's Republic of China (PRC), a series of social and economic development initiatives issued by the Communist Party of China. It was to concentrate efforts on the construction of industrial projects, so as to lay that the primary foundations for China's socialist industrialization, and to implement on socialist transformation on all kind of economic industries.

My grandfather used to tell me that, when he was a graduate, the youth were motivated to support and work for the national construction project as part of the First Five-Year Plan². He registered without knowing where exactly to go and was assigned to a train with other comrades like him. He had been sent twice to different projects in different cities, according to the national labor demands at that time, from the east to the north, the north to the middle of China, ending up in a state-owned iron and steel enterprise where he spent rest of his entire life.

The district he lived in is called "Hong Gang Cheng" (红钢城), which means "the city of steel in red", a residential area built in red bricks and made for the company in the suburb of the city, Wuhan. Later on, after marriage, he was distributed to a spot in the family dormitory, and this apartment became the place I spent most of my childhood in (Fig.1).

I was born during the second stage of the Chinese Economic Reform³ lead by the one-party system, the Communist Party of China. Free market and private business as new blood were flooding into the Chinese economy. My hometown, which was dominated by the only national steel company, was shaken up. Meanwhile, on a global scale, it was the transformation point from the industrial age to the information age. The Internet started to change people's lifestyles, remediating the manner of information dissemination and restructuring social relations, at that time diffuse in the global network. Heavy industry was no longer the core of the economy. For these reasons, everyday life during my childhood came to change dramatically by switching into a different economical, political and historical background. The communist utopia and the socialist nostalgia were already in a past train, getting further and further away and fading away from both people's memory and contemporary life in China.

3. Chinese Economic Reform refers to the program of economic reforms termed "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" and "socialist market economy" in the People's Republic of China (PRC) which reformists within the Communist Party of China, started in December 1978. The first stage is de-collectivizing the agriculture and the permitting of enterprise (the late 1970s and early 1980s), and the second stage is privatizing and contracting out the state-owned industry (the late 1980s to 1990s).

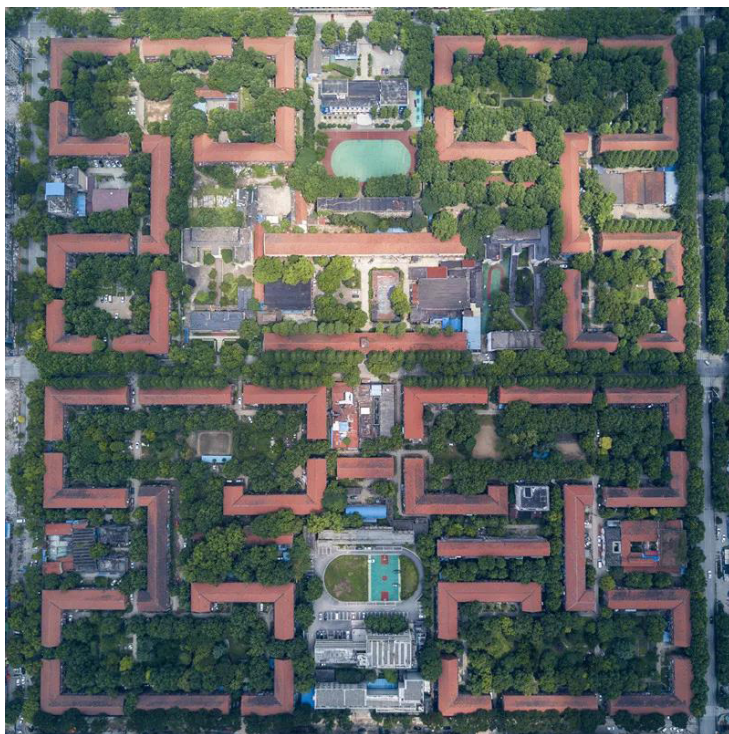


Fig. 1. Bajiefang community, Hong Gang Cheng district, Wuhan, China.

This is the complex next to my grandparents apartment, as part of the family dormitory area distributed by the state-owned enterprise,

Wuhan Iron and Steel (Group) Company. The building was designed by the architect from Soviet Union as the character of “囍” from the look above,

means “double happiness”. Now it is going to be dismantled for commercial high-rise estate.

I have always been fascinated by the radical social changes and the ways in which societies and daily life could be so powerfully influenced, adapted and re-written as historical circumstances changed. Not merely from the aspect of communism and socialism, but more generally, as a kind of enforced and implemented landscape. I realised it is most approachable to research this “landscape” using the formats of architecture and urban planning to mirror those changes. After all, architecture acts as an open archive standing in the city and urban plans offer a condensed overview, directly presenting the idea of design as embodied in specific a time. Both architecture and urban planning bring into vision the materialization of social and political changes as well as the resident’s fostered reactions to this, visible on site.

I use here some examples:

Anhua Lou (Fig.2), a residential building designed with private rooms only and sharing with other public facilities, and Aspra Spitia (Fig.3), a whole town furnished with different industries to support all the residents working for the same company.



Fig.2. Anhua Lou, Beijing, China.

Anhua Lou, was constructed in 1960, to manifest in the design the idea of a “high rise commune”. The building’s organisation exemplifies many of the ideal reforms for the worker’s domestic realm in striving towards a stronger communist society. People’s communes sought to create cohesive communities of laborers who shared their home and work lives. Most were organized around a basic unit of 2,000 people in 9 floors. Anhua Lou did not include any kitchens in the individual living units. Instead, the entire first floor served as a canteen, which served the building’s residents. Club facilities occupied the center of floors two through eight, and the top floor served as an additional meeting room. Other amenities included a general store, a collective washroom, a kindergarten, and a gym.

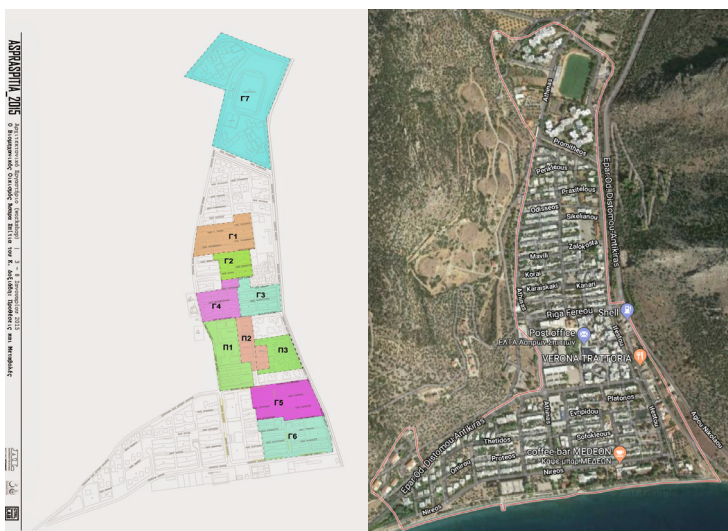


Fig.3. The master plan and the city overview of Aspra Spitia, Greece.

Aspra Spitia was assigned in 1961 and fully completed in 1965, during the New Towns movement. It is a small settlement planned by Doxiadis Associates for the company “Aluminiou de Grece” to house industrial workers and personnel employed at its nearby aluminum plant. Aspra Spitia (modern Greek for “White Houses”), situated on the coast of the Corinthian Gulf about a one hour drive from Delphi, was designed for a projected population of 5,000. The program proposed the construction of a total of 1,100 dwellings, including one and two-storey houses, bachelor apartments, stores and shops, a customs house, a school, and recreational and other facilities.

In these grand urban projects, infrastructure was built to create a social order following the visions of their creators. As Henri Lefebvre asserted in "Introduction to Modernity":

"There is something we call an 'ideology', a representation which combine illusion and knowledge and gives certain human groups the means to control their lives."

Lefebvre, "Introduction to Modernity", 1996, p.65

The "ideology" here is a force from idealist concept toward the control of people, to dominate their living condition, and structure social order. Domination would create a friction among the contained, which resists and detaches from the dominated power. To cite Jean Baudrillard from "The Agony of the Power":

"Domination is characterized by the master/slave relation, which is still a dual relation with potential alienation, a relationship of force and conflicts."

Baudrillard, "The Agony of the Power", 2010, p.33

In Anhua Lou and Aspra Spitia, there is an aspect of domination, between the designers and those who experience this design. The residents of those two projects were either objectified as a

communist test sample or as labor for the aluminium factory. The dominating force values the residents as social figures adapting to ideology. Meanwhile, in those closed communities, reputation, benefit, desire, and privacy all crossover and interact together into the daily life. Socialising is constantly required. Hence inside of the dominant ideology, there is also another dominated “ideology”: one of particular social relations that resists this force with its own.

I still remember the first day when I registered to a kindergarten. There was a strong fear striking me when I saw a lot of unfamiliar faces without the company of my family. I had been told that I have to spend my time with these strangers. I asked to leave immediately and burst into tears; I couldn't stop for long. I find my first memory of encountering socialisation on a large scale is similar to this quote from André Gorz in interview:

“Children have experienced their socialization, their education as violence, and an arbitrariness that were imposed to them.”

Gorz, *A voix nue*, 1991, 26:37

Whether child or adult, socialisation is a

form of violence, especially in the society focused on social relations and prioritizing the need of socialisation. Like in the animation “The Village”, by Mark Barker (Fig.6), the residents all hide their own secrets in public and spy on each other’s privacy, due to the closed social relationship. The residents in this village are already detached from one another, the social relations between the individuals have disintegrated but remain regulated by the forced socialisation.

To me, at this point, and from all the examples above, the alienation is “disaffection”, a way of escape without physical abstention. A feeling that comes when people distance themselves from the manipulation of the applied ideology among the structured environment, the social orders, and the social relations it generates, to keep the individual freedom. It is similar to the way when an insect casts off its skin, and the skin shed in this context is the social identity that the person has self-detached from.

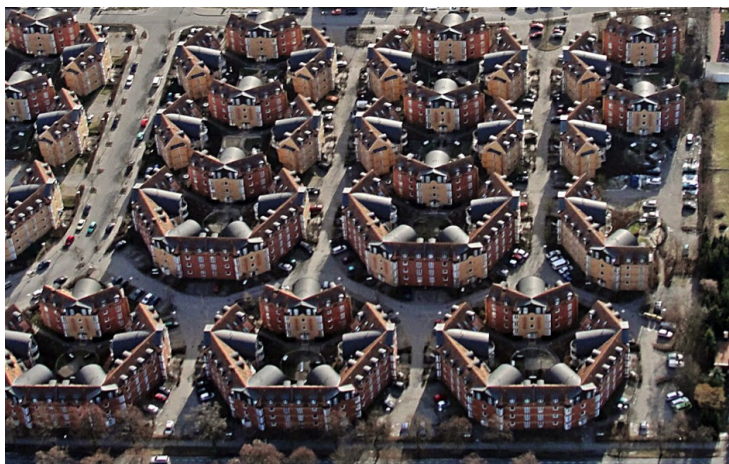


Fig.5. Hamburger Strasse, Nauen, Germany



Fig.6. Still image of The Village, Mark Barker, 1993



RESTART FROM
THE CURRENT

4. Amsterdam Nieuw-West was created in 2010 after a merger of the former boroughs Osdorp, Geuzenveld-Slotermeer and Slotervaart. In 2017, the borough had almost 150,000 inhabitants.

Since 2001, the borough has been subject to extensive urban renewal projects. Under the "Richting Parkstad 2015" plan, thousands of homes were demolished and replaced by new developments.

The realities described above may seem far away and utopian, perhaps mysterious products of experimental ways of thinking and representing society from a specific time and history - either the communist and socialist protocol, or the "New Towns Movement" from the industrial era. The alienation seems like only can be generated in those specific situations and centralised on forced social relations, not related to the current society. However, there remains ideology interwoven into the current constitution of everydayness, controlling the contemporary social structures.

In this section, I would like to continue the observation on the co-option of daily life by the format of architecture and urban planning, and start from the things next to me right now: Amsterdam Nieuw-West⁴ (Fig.7), my current place of living. What you can see from the satellite image is that there are many similar architectural designs next to each other that look very

different from other groups. The function inside of each architectural group is the same, usually either for living, working, or shopping. Meanwhile, some of the different groups also unite to function together. Those buildings or groups are quite invisibly managed by private companies. For example, Duwo is the administrator of my building. The housing corporation mainly rents out rooms to students from universities and the contract is usually between 1 and 2 years.

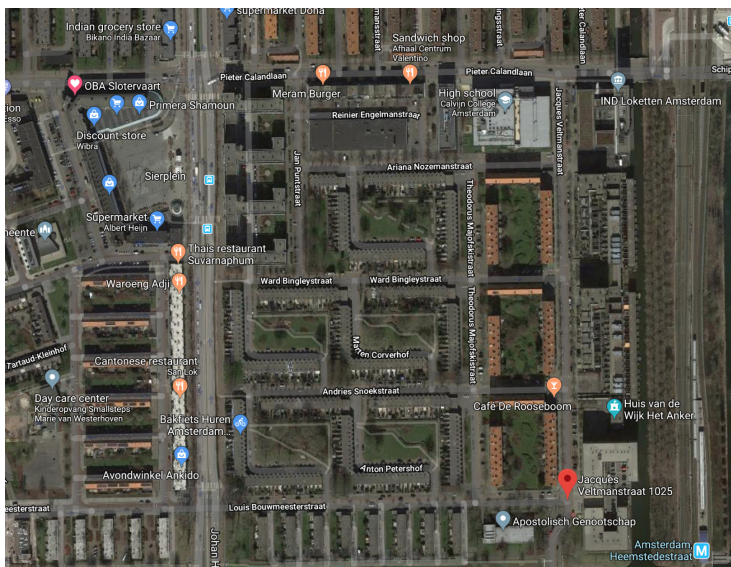


Fig.7. Overview of my current living area, Amsterdam Nieuw-West, The Netherlands

The complex of Duwo consisted by two buildings with 419 rooms, placed in a U-shape around an inner courtyard. One building has 7 floors, the other building 4 (both including ground floor). There are two different conditions for Dutch and international students, un-furnished and furnished. For the each furnished rooms, they uniformed with same style and same furniture. The public facilities like parking lot, laundry and BBQ stove are shared. The most recognized area is the floor of every corridor, which are painted in different vivid colors.



Fig.8. The outlook of the student accommodation, Jacques Veltmanstraat, Amsterdam, The Netherlands



Fig.9. The default looking of the furnished rooms, Jacques Veltmanstraat, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

In Duwo the majority of the students live alone, and a few with their partner or family. Normally there is a small chance for people to meet each other in the areas designed to be public. The corridors of each floors are also usually empty. Having lived at there for one and a half year now, I still do not know many of my neighbors yet, even though this floor is almost taken up by the students from my own university. At night, especially around 7 or 8 o'clock on the weekdays, it is the most active moment in the building. You can see through into many rooms from the other side of the U-shaped structure. The scenario reminds me of a theatre, which transforms the building into a huge stage; each individual is performing his or her own different life in each evenly and similarly arranged box, with lights on (Fig.10). They do not interact but cohabit in concrete blocks simultaneously, this building is made to be as an individual, to create individualism.

As a consultant who has many years experience working with Duwo told me: "the package of the price and facilities has been changed every year, according to the latest allowance policy". In the Dutch welfare system, low-income residents can apply for housing allowance

if living with a private kitchen and toilet. The allowance amount is calculated based on the resident's income and the scale of the space. The full-time student for instance, normally does not have extra time to work, so the average income is relatively low, which makes Duwo target students as their main clients. The social identity of student is exploited and the room is a business model adapted from the social policy. This is why each room all contain private cooking and shower facilities; the scale of the space is suitable as a small living unit, for one or two people; the lay out is evenly arranged with same furniture and style.

According to the theory of Baudrillard, each of those unified blocks is a "code", a model operated by the market, to reproduce and influence social relations across different spheres. In this case, the "code", each room, is the business model created by Duwo to earn profit. It is an efficient method to increase profit by simply repeatedly selling the best financial package attached to a unified model. They investigate and calculate the best business package by a series of market research. The price, space dimension, facilities are all formulated by Duwo to match the social policy and



Fig.10. A snapchat of the “open stage” from the other side of the Duwo building

housing market of the year. The risk of investment is reduced and the strategy of business is stabilised and managed within a certain range.

Therefore, the creation of the room, which was designed, developed and being managed by Duwo, is a product for selling. It is not built upon the customer's demand, but an investment tool for Duwo to gain income. The room is produced by the need of profit rather than the need of use, same as the existence of any other product in the market.

Imagine you are in a supermarket (Fig.11), the rooms of Duwo are products on the shelf, and the people who pay the rent are living inside. Instead of following the rule of arranging products by different types, the Duwo rooms are in a single model. The products produced by the same company with same looks. Normally they are stocked in line with a representative product in front of the shelf. Now, turn the shelf into a horizontal view, which transforms the market shelf into Duwo (Fig.10). Each similarly branded product, the rooms, is evenly displayed on each floor of the building, one after another. The tenants are sleeping on the market shelf.



Fig.11, The jam collection produced by Albert Heijn in Albert Heijn supermarket, Amsterdam

Basically, this Duwo residential situation is reversed from Anhua Lou, the example in the previous section. The Duwo building as another form of the community is not only an outline of the cohabitated individual, but also a collection of “code” in the market. The isolated living condition and the social separation is part of the design. The ideology moves from the forced socialisation (Anhua Lou) to the forced consumerization (Duwo), in the current free-market and private ownership society.

URBAN PLANNING
OR SUPERMARKET
PLANNING

Let's move to a larger scale - the neighborhood of my living area. The Nieuw-West is similar to Aspra Spitia, also as a newly planned and constructed urban district. However, unlike Aspra Spitia as a unified design, the urban planning of Nieuw-West is created by various urban designers independent from each other.

From the previous overview image of Amsterdam Nieuw-West (Fig.7), the overall functionality of the entire district and each areas are quite clear. First of all, this is a residential district. Secondly, it is an district occupied by private housing companies. As you can see from the

complexes next to Duwo, these also have unified structures inside of their own groups, which makes them look like they were all designed and developed by different companies from the start. The function of each group is fairly singular, either for residence, commerce, or working. They are making a similar gesture as Duwo, repeating and reproducing their own “code”. The urban patterns are duplicated within their territories.

Back to the previous metaphor of Duwo. If the Duwo building was a display shelf containing the same branded products, then, the whole district is a shelf with different brands, or a series of shelves, or even an entire supermarket (Fig.12). An overwhelming number of represented and reproduced products arranged by their functions and categories, gather together to fit into the desires of consumer society.

As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri declared in “Commonwealth”:

“Capital, of course, is not a pure form of command but a social relation [...]. Through processes of globalization, capital not only brings together all the earth under its command but also creates, invests, and exploits social life in

its entirety, ordering life according to the hierarchies of economic value.”

Hardt and Negri, “Commonwealth”, 2011, p.ix

Hence, in the social-capital system nowadays, the alienation is “concealment”. It originates from a forced commercialisation of its subjects. The nature of things is replaced by commodities. The needs of the subject are modelled and replaced as “code”, to become a product. Then, by spreading to urban planning and architecture, and affecting social relations, humans started to become part of the commercialisation process. By enforcing the rule of the market, profit-driven entrepreneurs (such as Duwo) choose to follow a system where the market becomes the intangible master of both companies and individuals. As a result of this, humans can no longer reach certain subjects without joining in the consumer society. It means humans are coerced in the position of a consumer, barricaded and isolated in the everyday life, categorized by a fabricated “code”.



Fig.12. The shelf of commodities in the supermarket, one site of Albert Heijn, Amsterdam



OPPOSING
IDEOLOGIES
AND INVERTED
ALIENATION

From the first two chapters above, the two types of alienation to which the individual are subjected to in different social structures are depicted. One is defined as “disaffection” and the other as “concealment”. Both are generated by different ideologies of how to structure individuals together and create social order. Meanwhile, these ideologies have also changed regarding the method of control, with their specific social backgrounds and different historical moments. Shifting from the forced socialisation to the forced consumerization. By going through the examples of the past - Anhua Lou (the communist commune) and Aspra Spitia (the aluminum factory town), to the Netherlands in my own present - Duwo (the student accommodation administrator) and The Nieuw-West Amsterdam (the private housing district). However, these two examples show that alienation is an outcome of different – even opposed ideologies. It seems none of perhaps the most important ideologies

of the twentieth century – Communism and neo-liberal capitalism issue in nothing else than the same. The alienated feeling constantly exists in the daily life of different societies.

I am not here to argue why the alienation cannot be removed and attempt to look for a universal solution. However, I would like to unpack these two feelings of alienation, and look for the reason why the alienated feeling does constantly exist. First of all, I will start to compare these two feelings from the purely structural angle.

As with first alienation described before, the “disaffection” is the casting off of social identity from individual freedom but remaining within forced social relations. The process of the replacement, however, also exists in the second alienation, as the commercialised subject in that context. Therefore, the replacement transforms from self-detached human behavior to an attached subject reaction. Somehow, it is a way to release the burden of the imposed social identity from the subject, for the sake of their individual freedom. Money, during this transformation, is the tool to intermediate and emancipate the social identity,

for individual liberation. Nevertheless, the money-oriented system has developed ferociously through trading upon social relations, antagonized as a power to replace and reproduce subject as commodity. A commodity network has been built up and monopolized by the market to isolate humans. It means the freedom of humans has been restrained by money, which was the original wish for the liberation before the antagonism of the consumer's society.

In general, regarding the comparison with the first structural perspective, the ideologies of those two alienated feelings are in an oppositional relationship. It is a progression initiated by the desire of individual freedom, but eventually lost to domination. The alienated feelings are inverted.

I believe this inverted consequence is portrayed in this social commentary from "K-hole" magazine in 2013, as a mirror of how the seemingly self-imposed, but ultimately forced, isolation of individuals appears in contemporary society:

"Once upon a time people were born in communities and had to find their individuality. Today people are born individuals

and have to find their communities.”

“K-hole”, 2013, p.27

It draws the picture that individuals, who are presently drowned in the social-capital system, are wishing and looking forward to move back to an environment more focused on social relations, as “communities” instanced in this quote. It shows individuals are discontent with the restrained individuality by capital networks, and the desire of individual freedom is expecting for a new move.

FALSE
"IDEOLOGICAL"
COUNTERACTION
AND A REAL
PERMANENT
ALIENATION

To continue the comparison between the relations of those two alienated feelings, the image of the opposite ideologies and their inverted alienations seems like the two-sides of a coin. One side is the society oriented by social relations and the other is by capital networks. It is as though the social structure can only align to one side and antagonise the other.

The two sides cannot be simply pictured as counteraction. Instead, the two social structures are fundamentally in a progressive and escalated relation. The core medium of capital networks is the network of humans, as social relations, and the structure of capital networks is constituted on networks of replacing and reproducing subjects as commodities. In other words, the structure of capital networks is one kind of a structure of social relations. They were developed linearly as an evolution in history.

In this relation, to go one step further, the powers behind these two social structures have grown to be incommensurable. This is the world we live in now, a much more globally interconnected society than ever before. The authorities and ideologies of these structures transfer from a territorial restriction to a generalised global-capital scale. There are increasingly fewer regulations or restrictions imposed by the government or organisations any more, but the system is operated intangibly by market and completed by the people themselves. The field of control, the system of execution and the degree of penetration, are incomparable and completely goes beyond previous systems of domination.

Baudrillard perceived and declared this tremendous power shifting in his essay "From Domination to Hegemony", written in 2005. He states that the power to control the current society is no longer "domination" but "hegemony" and comes to be the only authority of today:

"Hegemony is the ultimate stage of domination and its terminal phase. [...] Hegemony begins here in the disappearance of the dual, personal, agonistic domination for the sake of integral reality - the reality of networks, of the virtual and total exchange where there are no longer dominators and dominated. "

(Baudrillard, "The Agony of the Power", 2010, p.33)

Apart from disagreeing on the ultimate arrival of the sovereign, indeed, the evolution of social structure is getting to a point where the power behind is much more irresistible. The social-capital system, where we currently reside, could be entering this "terminal phase". It is a certainly difficult time to imagine a way back to a better structure of social relations, as a way to reduce the power concealed and isolated within "individual freedom". Also the future of the new, on this evolution, is not been ready to be recognised commonly yet.

Instead of regretting the antagonized individual liberation and drowning in the horror of unknown, the fact that cannot be neglected is that alienation is permanent. This is because the desire of seeking for individual freedom inside of a social structure is interactable. No matter if the structure is for local or global; particular community or allied countries; defaulted on social relations or developed as something else. Individual liberation and social structure are real dialectical opposition but the synthesis always leads to alienation. Meanwhile, the desire for liberation leads to a constant conflict, which motivates humans looking for a balance, a social harmony. This ongoing force could be passively treated as an unceasing discontent or a perpetual impetus for new moves.

After all the research, then, the next step is to question myself. As an individual who constantly perceives alienated feelings and is trained to be an artist, in a background of social-capital system at large and social groups as small - what can I do?

To start with, I would like to cite the argument of Eric Hobsbawm in "Globalisation, Democracy and Terrorism" in 2007 that:

4. *Gemeinschaft*:

a term proposed by Ferdinand Tönnies, as social relations between individuals, based on close personal and family ties; community.

5. *Gesellschaft*:

a term proposed by Ferdinand Tönnies, as social relations based on impersonal ties, such as duty to a society or organization.

"As globalization turns the entire planet into an increasingly remote kind of 'Gesellschaft', so too collective identity politics seeks for a fictitious remaking of the qualities of 'Gemeinschaft' by artificially reforging group bonds and identities."

Hobsbawm, "Globalisation, Democracy and Terrorism", 2017, p.93

First of all, the quote briefly shows the two kinds of social relations, categorized as 'Gemeinschaft'⁴, directly translated as "community", and 'Gesellschaft'⁵ as "society". The general concept of "soci-

ety” is internally formed by multiple “communities”, based on the scale where the social relations are located.

Due to the vague image of globalization, however, the globalized social and political theories neglect the constructed base of “community” in social relations and simplify the question of multiplicities and locality. They go beyond a daily-basis, which increase the difficulty of relating with humans in daily life and cannot accurately locate their social environments.

This is why I decided to work on the level of the daily-basis, observing, analysing and reacting to local scenarios. No matter in this thesis or my practice, I always start from my life and myself - the alienated feelings I perceive through my social identities and social environments. Using the alienation as a perpetual impetus to transfer discontents to affections both for myself and others.

During this process, I always zoom in on one social fabric. To act on spot, transforming the alienation from the social relations where it is rooted. Then, conveying this transformed alienation to the people in the social fabric, through personal encounters and the impersonal intersections of platforms. This in order

to invite others to read the transformed alienation in their own way and then make these personal recognitions circulate horizontally, from individual to individual.

My intention is similar with the concept of “resonance” by Hartmut Rosa, which was introduced by Thijs Lijster in the book “The Future of the New”, as:

“A relationship of mutual recognition and transformation.”

Lijster, *The Future of the New*, 2018, p.13

Hartmut Rosa, in the conversation with Thijs Lijster and Robin Celikates, used a figure of “violin” to describe how “melody”, the “resonance” in this context, is conveyed. The affection way requires a certain closed and open form.

“If you have a musical instrumental, let’s say a violin, it will only make its sound - that is resonate - if it is closed enough to have its own voice. So, it needs to be closed and it needs to be open in order to be affected. It is a very specific form of being closed and open.”

Lijster, *The Future of the New*, 2018, p.39

The figure of the violin is similar to the social context where I perceive alienation

and focus to be able to act. The interaction and communication functions as the “open”, making the transferred alienation perceivable by others, no matter the format. To demonstrate this, three of my recent works can illustrate how my intention is developed chronologically.

"FREE BOX
AT DUWO",
December 2017 -
March 2018

The first social context was the residential group of Duwo and the building itself. This was when I just moved to Amsterdam and starting to live there. The first alienation I perceived was the individualism within the building and the forced commercialization and privatization fostered by the surroundings. As such, a free and common resource is precious to this context, so I was looking for an approach. I started with an individual research and discovered a food waste rescue group: Guerilla Kitchen. Guerilla Kitchen is a volunteer group which recycles abandoned food and cooks proper meal with

them. They serve once a week in a small restaurant inside of an activist building. The meal is donation based, pay as you like, and all the profit goes to other activist projects through the networks of main crew.

The wasted food pick up was at the Amsterdam Food Center. The main crew had negotiated with the staff, so the volunteers just need to collect and transport the food directly to their kitchen. There is a lot of food waste produced by the center everyday, even though it is normally in fair condition. Everytime, after the meal service, there is still a lot of food left which didn't get a chance to be cooked. It can only be dumped out, since there is no extra storage for it. The leftovers of the rescued food becomes waste again...

I decided to distribute part of the resources and set up a free food box in Duwo. I tried different ways to communicate with the other residents under the administrative control of Duwo. For example, I found a stable and public space for the box, wrote relevant information about the resource, drew images on the wall or on the box, sent facebook notification to the residents group and so on.

During these three months, there was no other level of interaction and circulation in the social relations, besides the box being empty every time and people showing interest online. The food resource was only distributed as material and dispersed privately. The free and common resource was privatized by residents and digested in their individual rooms. Meanwhile, the “free” aspect becomes another shade of value, that of an advertisement for the food association (fig.13). The association becomes a power excluding others from accessing the free food by taking it, just like a private company would do it... The “free” is actually a free product people cannot have it if they don’t join the association.



Sun Chang

17 January at 15:51 · Amsterdam

Rescued food waste in front of the left building entrance. Green beans, bean sprouts, cabbage, potatoes, avocados, mushrooms, blueberries, figs etc. Take and eat what you want. 🍽️



👍 Like 💬 Comment



and 8 others



Wow, where did you find this? ❤️

Like · Reply · 3d



Sun Chang with Guerilla kitchen group in Amsterdam food center. Food pick up at 10am in every Wednesday, welcome to join in. 🌟

Like · Reply · 3d



6



Write a reply...



Fig.13. "Free box at Duwo", facebook dialogue, 2017

"KONVIVIALITI",

December 2017 -

May 2018



labor exchanged
soybeans, photography,
2018

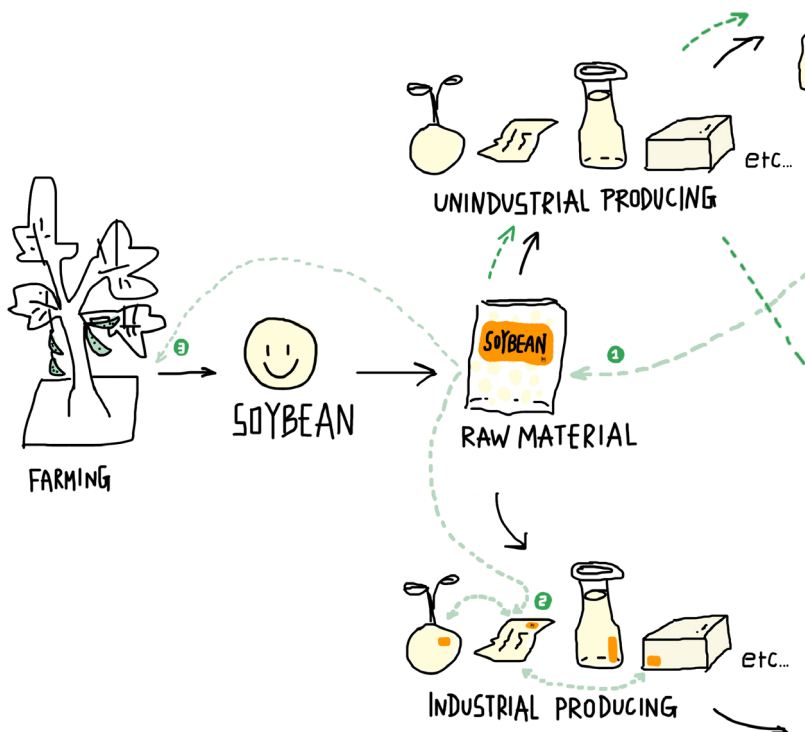
After the “free box”, I decided to focus more on interaction and communication between people and initiated a program called “Konvivialilti”. The goal is to use the value of art to connect people of different disciplines in the city of Amsterdam.

To broaden my reach, I decided to invite a sculptor, Youwnon Sohn, to collaborate on the artistic direction and production, and a designer, Léo Ravy, for the visual communication. Meanwhile, I moved on from the fantasy of free products and started to do exchange as an attempt to un-commercialize commodity through social relations. For example, the material, soybeans, was supplied through a labor exchange with the supermarket, Toko Dun Yong Amsterdam. We traded our artistic interventions for material. Furthermore, after doing a trial presentation at De KasKantine, an urban farming community, part of the soybeans was planted there.

The social connections are mapped and framed in an ecological method upon shifting the functions of soybeans (fig.14): seed (farming), product (selling/rearranging), material (making), aesthetic (arting), and food (digesting).

It was presented in the final format of a four days event at the art space Rietveld Pavilion, including a workshop, a diner and an exhibition, and a parallel exhibition at the local supermarket Toko Dun Yong Amsterdam.

This program made a progress in connecting people by guiding them physically or psychologically to encounter others and connect through the recognitions raised by the art intervention. However, since the final result was framed as an art show, the social aspects were presented as part of the production process. The social circulation and the non-commercialized material became an anecdote appending to the exhibition. The intention of the art show also made it hard to maintain the ecological method, since the social aspect dissolved after nice images were taken to present a romanticized representation of social art production.



→ MARKET RELATIONS

---> ARTIST INTERVENTION

---> SOCIAL EXCHANGES

① LABOR EXCHANGE (ART FOR MATERIAL)

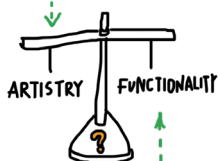
② ART COMMISSION (SUPERMARKET RE-ARRANGEMENT)

③ SUSTAINABILITY (PLANTING THE SOYBEANS)

Fig. 14, Social relations and artist intervention, diagram, 2018

AAT

ARTING



DIGESTING



COOKING

"COMMON
BELONGINGS",
November 2018-
Now



Mobile kitchen
in serving,
photography, 2018

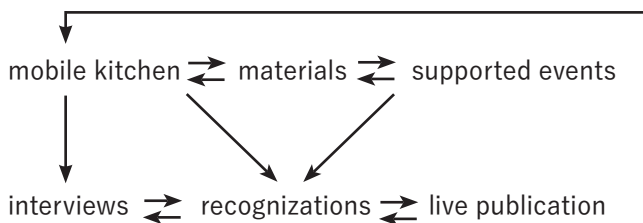
My latest practice is “Common Belongings”, an ongoing program initiated by Sara Santana and myself in November 2018. This time, the social context and the art intention are separated clearly. The goal is not to make an art show, but to use the locality as a field to work in, at the student community of Sandberg Instituut in front of its internal audience.

The social context of the community revolves around that it is generally a rather closed group. It contains 152 students, mainly expats, being together for two years intensely training as artists or designers. The community itself becomes disconnected from the wider student community of the city. Meanwhile, due to the pedagogy concept from the institution, the community is divided into 8 departments, which function more as separate team projects and studios. The social segregation is created inside of its own frame.

As two individuals residing in this convention, we started the program to address on this alienation, with the intent to connect and circulate relations by our inventions, which join in a progressive and sustainable structure in general (fig.15). The aim is to regain a soft community of the dynamic features from its own participants, with the demodulated sense of being together.

The whole structure is consisted by four interventions: “mobile kitchen”, “live publication”, “interviews” and “supported events”. They create a flux of goods and relations, which goes through the membranes of those four interventions. Specifically, “mobile kitchen” runs once a week, in which we acted as needle travelling each department to meet each individual and to provide lunch. During the process, we started to build up our relation with others through this donation-based transaction, with proceeds acting as the flux to impulse the other interventions. “supported events”, for instance, provides, support and assistance to other students, as a chance for opening up more personal perspectives towards their alienations, in our position of shared identity and specific situations. It also provides moments for others to

sphere. The collaboration is based on exchange, in reciprocation of contributions by the will of the participator to enrich the content of the flux. Such as, one participator labored one day in the kitchen, and another transferred the left-over material from her event into a new meal for serving next day, etc. The whole process is translated as publications on plates, mobilizing back to the community and visits at the student's working tables.



In this layered program, alienation is more specifically defined and addressed to the social context. The fantasy of free and common resources was dissolved and flipped into a collective circular relation, growing and interweaving with its public and quotidian experiences. It takes up the issue of art as process rather than product.



Fig. 15, Supported events - "Cooking with ambition" by Karina Zavidova, 2019

student community of sandberg instituut

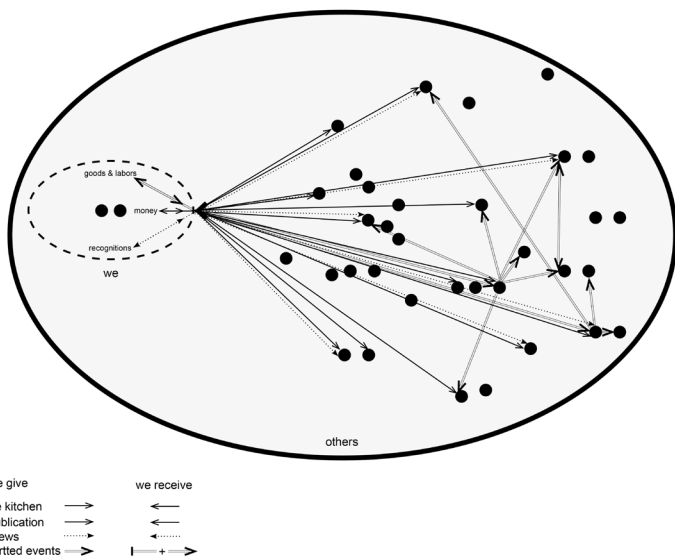


Fig. 15, Relation flows, diagram, 2019

To temporarily conclude and answer the question of what I can do about permanent alienation, I would like to answer that art is my tool to confront it on a daily basis. I position myself, an individual, as a thread to stitch social fabrics. By acting on the spots and specifying the alienation in local scenarios, I am processing and transforming them into affections with the aspiration. Connect and build multiple links of personal recognition between people that go on to circulate in relations. Permanent alienation is my motor to build critical reflections, question and react on social structures with others, circulated in the social context.

- Baudrillard, Jean. "The Agony of the Power",
Semiotext(e), 2010
- Baudrillard Jean. "Symbolic Exchange and Death (Revised Edition)",
SAGE Publications, 2017
- Box 1824. "Youth Mode, a Report on Freedom",
"K-hole", 2013
- Hobsbawm, Eric. "Globalisation, Democracy and Terrorism",
Little Brown UK, 2007
- Hardt, Michael,
and Negri, Antonio. "Commonwealth",
Harvard University Press, 2011
- Lefebvre, Henri. "Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes,"
September 1959-May 1961", Verso, 1996
- Lijster, Thijs. "The Future of the New: Artistic Innovation in Times
of Social Acceleration", Valiz, 2018
- Gorz, André. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKZO-38HQ04>,
"A voix nue", 1991
- Marx, Karl. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844",
Dover Publications, 1932

Master Thesis, May, 2019
Dirty Art Department
Sandberg Instituut, Amsterdam

Supervisor: Catherine Somze
Assessor: Xenia Kalpaktsoglou
Copy editor: Christopher Lawrence and Dani Ordonez Munoz

Design with the assistance of Léo Ravy

©2019 Sun Chang
www.sun-chang.com
Lost Dad Publishing

