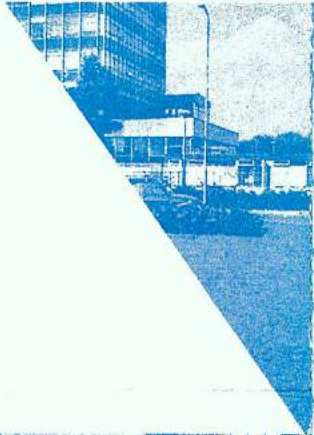


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CRITICISM IN THE CITY.

Josh Plough

Eindhoven Footnotes is a grassroots project investigating the lived experience of citizens in a technocratic city. Through the lens of design, writing, researching, archeology and artistic practice the city is investigated both speculatively and critically by an editorial board overseeing a group of students and citizens. There have been countless previous projects, interventions, books and research papers that deal with issues like surveillance, nudging, behaviour mapping and the quantification of the self. So why should a new one be initiated? The glib answer to this would be urgency. While there's no doubting our global situation, when used in the context of design the word can sometimes end up becoming a synonym for 'we're all fucked anyway, so why not?'. But it feels like urgency is not the only answer, there's something else in the air. Hopefully community action, walking, talking and free tea and coffee will go some way in pushing the debate further. It's though these acts that Eindhoven Footnotes has been creating a base for critical reflection since September.

Even though we're all becoming more and more aware of the consequences of our actions, there is still a gaping void between the producer, product and human. It's in this space that corporate and governmental interests can pour in, justifying their existence by saying they're the glue that can hold it all together. We need this data because it will help the council improve housing; we need to monitor how many times you use the bin to improve services; we need to watch and map you while predicting and normalising your behaviour so we don't have soldiers on every street corner. We want this data because we can monetise it. The everyday nature of our actions now covers up those of other, more connected parties.

The first iteration of Eindhoven Footnotes is Criticism in the City and it's been a challenge working out just what criticism in the city actually is. It first began as a pile of horse shit placed in a vitrine. The intention of this was to shock, to force someone to stop and ask why a

steamy glass case can be considered an act of allegorical criticism.¹

Then, after several weekly meetings the idea of developing a toolset to dissect the city was proposed. Footnotes could be something that would tessellate out and be used by other interested people. But the notion of developing more toolsets felt counter intuitive. Tools, while they're something we can all share and help position our bodies, also dictate. Our hands follow a specific line because of the moulding, fingers curl round and find their trenches having been ordered into place by a designer they'll never touch. Comfort and ease are pre-designed into our lives under the fractured guise of ergonomics. And it's both those promises that are forever present in the smart city.

Throughout the meetings the word frictionless kept coming up time and again. It became a kind of mantra that was chanted at Onomatopée to concentrate our thoughts; frictionless, frictionless, frictionless, frictionless. The smart city is something that thrives off ease of passage.² We should drop like a google pin onto our collective mapping; but instead of sitting neatly on the surface, we must puncture it.

It's the spatial qualities of criticism that are coming to the fore of this project, revealing themselves like the copper strands in our shoddily made Mac chargers. They manifest themselves in the curatorial part of the project as they dissect the research space in Onomatopée. Footnotes first attempted to serve the public, but having struggled to engage the everyday, it has morphed into a space where students, researchers, technologists, politicians and citizens can transform the space anew each time they use it. They connect their subjectivities with our research and after some

◆ 99.9% of the time you can be sure that horse manure on the ground means that there has been a police presence in the city. This is the physical manifestation of power. While Stratumseind, the longest bar street in the Netherlands, is an example of invisible policing with six smart cameras, 64 microphones and 22 lampposts with adjustable lighting.

◆ If you have the right documents and citizen numbers. Because of the digitisation of the city, vulnerable people are often locked out of simple urban infrastructure like access to rubbish disposal and buses.

time white threads crisscross the space and visitors have to bend and contort their bodies when engaging with it.

My role as city curator has meant Onomatopée has extended design and art research into the Archeology and Heritage House, the Eindhoven picture archives, the 15th Architectural Humanities Research Association Conference and the local market. Through this, networks have been developed between politicians, student protest movements, local radio stations, academics, students and the public. Whatever Criticism in the City is it will define itself through action, not by walking on well trodden paths but by digging, acting, dancing, intervening, deleting and meeting. Throughout the project the one thing we can ask with confidence is: 'If a city projects, what do its citizens emit?'

All Welcome, All Free.

PEOPLE, INSTITUTIONS AND MOVEMENTS INVOLVED SO FAR...

Josh Plough
Callum Dean
Alorah Harman
Robin Weidner
Pete Fung
Colin Keays
Helen Milne
Ben van de Broek
Paolo Patelli
Jacqueline Schoemaker
TU / Eindhoven
Dr. Sergio M. Figueiredo
Justin Agyin
Dario Sposini
Design Academy Eindhoven
Lennart Arpots
Freek Lomme
Noud Sleumer
Aaron Garlick
Siem Nozza
DIT is Transitie in Eindhoven
Giulio Squillacciotti
Giuseppe Licari
Eindhoven Heritage House
Eindhoven Student Housing Protest
Raradio