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Sustainable Everyday: Scenarios of Urban Life by Ezio Manzini & Francois Jegou, Milan: Edizioni Ambiente, 2003

Synthesising and building on the results of 15 design workshops held in 10 countries, and an exhibition at the Triennale di Milano in 2003, Manzini, Jegou and their collaborators present detailed scenarios for more sustainable urban ways of living. Their focus is on transformation of the logistics and use of resources that support everyday life – living and work space, transport, heating, cooling, equipment, technologies, food procurement and preparation, social networks.

Proposals are presented descriptively in cartoon form and as highly staged photographic tableaux – for example: 'Town of Bikes' (local mobility service), 'Microclimatic Greenhouse', 'Kitchen Club' (common kitchen for residents) 'Sky Laundry' (clothes caring service). These are also fully documented in an accompanying booklet, *Album: a catalogue of promising solutions*. Most of the

proposals and scenarios are based on high density models of urban living, not surprising given the locales from which they were generated – design schools in predominantly large European, Asian and North & South American cities.

While these specific proposals and their style of graphic presentation will not strike a chord with all readers, the book does offer more. There are short essays by different contributors on technologies, materials, 'the natural', networks and energy as elements of a sustainable city. As well, scenario methods and strategic design are discussed; then there is extensive elaboration of the sustainability principles which informed the scenario process. These include obvious aims like: zero waste; reducing demand for energy and favouring renewables over fossil fuel; reducing the demand for products through sharing; incorporating more vegetation and vegetable cultivation into the urban fabric. Less obvious themes include: global/local articulation; social networks and social learning; and 'ecology of time'. The latter is about recognising when 'fast' is appropriate and when it better countered by 'slow' – such as 'slow food' (Ezio Manzini was one of the founders of Italy's Slow Food movement) or DIY maintenance – activities which not only deliver more materially sustaining results (more nutritious food, longer life products) but also increase life skills and knowledge. This goes in the opposite direction of many of the mainstream 'future visions' such as the 'smart home' or 'smart car' which will diminish (and already are!) enablement under the guise of relieving burdens.

The shortcomings of the book go to the project itself, which was a UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) sponsored exercise. Intended to provoke conversations amongst culturally diverse participants about pathways to sustainment, it tends to remain at a very general level. The approach to everyday life veers towards the technocratic, even when it embraces the social, thus the scenarios have a flat, one-dimensional feel about them. Although each proposal is supplemented with examples that are actually happening now ("there are housing co-ops in this city, car pooling systems in that one, communal vegetable gardens in another" and so on) the question of how these can ever get beyond being marginal, supplementary actitivities to the actuality of, and desire for, the consumerist norm of excess (respectively, of the already affluent west and the aspiring affluent of newly industrialising nations) is not addressed. Perhaps this is because the emphasis is on what the authors refer to as "design orienting" rather than "policy orienting" scenarios. Despite these limitations, *Sustainable Everyday* opens up possibilities and initiates a process that must continue – that of social learning towards sustainability.

For information about how to obtain a copy of the book contact the publisher, Edizione Ambiente, Milano box@reteambiente.it or www. edizioniambiente.it

Mind the Gap! on Knowing and Not-knowing in Design
Edited by Wolfgang Jonas & Jan Meyer-Veden, Bremen:
University of the Arts, 2004 ISBN 3-89757-245-1

Like Manzini and Jegou's book, *Mind the Gap!* is a documentation and reflection upon a design research project. This, and the fact that one of the authors of each book is on the Editorial Advisory Board of *Design Philosophy Papers* is about all they have in common. *Mind the Gap!* draws from 'the basic PARADOX', an online and live enquiry into the nature of design, involving "a non-representative number" of participants. This has been distilled into dialogues with five participants (Ken Friedman, Ranulph Glanville, Maren Lehmann, Terence Love, Harold Nelson) interdispersed with commentary essays by the editors. The interviews are generally tedious – the one with Friedman goes for 47 pages! Lehmann's is mercifully brief and Nelson's is coherent and straight-shooting.

'Design foundations' are what Jonas & Meyer-Veden have in their sights, and they pull no punches in their scathing attack on the very idea. So thorough is their demolishment, that it suggests they had no faith in the idea of 'foundations' from the outset, and their whole project was an exercise in irony. Certainly, throughout the book, they advocate irony as the only stance available now.

Jonas & Meyer-Veden are skeptical of claims of scientific validity for design theory and research, as well as of the attempts to elevate design to the status of science, this not because design lacks the rigour of science, but because science's claim of priviledged access to truth is itself suspect., and that science is in fact becoming more 'designerly' (Jonas). Drawing occasionally on the insights of thinkers such as Feyerabend, Luhmann and Latour, *Mind the Gap* presents a somewhat dishevelled deconstruction of the idea of science as the basis for design or design theory. But the humanities and philosophy also get short shrift (Meyer-Veden: "philosophy is literature, at best" and "philsophy – a collection of fairytales").

There are some useful insights scrambled up with a good deal of opacity, irrelevancy and flippancy. The authors excel in bubble-bursting, such as the observation that design theory cannot make the same kind of claims as scientific theory because design as practised is chaotic, multi-directional, and not conducted according to a common methodology, like the 'scientific method' (and that this can be inverted – scientific method designs the observations of observers). Jonas & Meyer-Veden act as if they have nothing to lose, but perhaps also nothing to value. Their irreverence is refreshing, but one is left with the feeling that irony has crossed the line into deep cynicism and bad faith.

For information about how to obtain a copy of the book contact Wolfgang Jonas at University of the Arts, Bremen jonasw@ SNAFU.DE

The Archeworks Papers Volume 1 Number One edited by Stanley Tigerman, Chicago: Archeworks, 2004 ISBN 0-9753405-0-6

Archeworks is an alternative design school in Chicago, and this modest volume (44 pages, 145 x 145 mm format) marks their tenth year with a commisioned essay by Victor Margolin and responses by Douglas Garofalo, Eva Maddox and Stanley Tigerman.

A forthcoming edition of *Design Issues* will be carrying an extended review of this publication by Tony Fry. I urge readers to look out for this. The brief comments that follow here seek to extend the debate initiated by Archeworks – in this sense they do not add up to a 'review'.

Margolin's essay, 'Healing the World: A Challenge for Designers' begins by quoting from Heidegger's 'Age of the World Picture'. Yet Margolin skips over the fundamental significance of this essay in which Heidegger draws attention to the profound consequences of the very idea of 'the world' as 'a picture' – to plunge instead into the particularities of the more banal and familiar idea of there being 'competing world views'. This misses Heidegger's point of the very strangeness of 'world views' and the violence of the sundering of situated beings from their conditions of being that occurs in that imagined 'stepping outside, beyond or above' to observe, as if a detached being, something conceived of as 'the world' and furthermore, to understand 'world' in that panoramic, compelling and authorative mode that is 'a picture'.

To be sure Margolin's purposes are laudable. He is acutely aware of the destructive consequences of competing, irreconcilable 'world views' as they operate in global politics, and is highly critical of the one-eyed world picture of the Bush administration.

However, his misunderstanding of Heidegger is an object lesson in the pitfalls of always trying to understand things via example. Thus, he states that "a distinct world picture has justified" the 'US-centric' actions of the Bush administration, and that this is an illustration of Heidegger's point that "representing drives everything together into the unity of that which is thus given the character of object". In doing this, Margolin fails to see that the problem lies in the very nature of representation, not in the partiality of competing representations. The point here, is not just one of philosophical correctness, but rather, that mobilising restricted understandings of basic concepts leads to impoverished definitions of problems that lead inevitably to restricted, ineffectual solutions. Margolin and his fellow travellers *need* the complexity that a deeper engagement with Heidegger's thinking would offer to their understanding of the depth of injustice and unsustainability against which would pose themselves.

The rest of Margolin's essay deals with social change movements and how designers could have a role in them. This is picked up in Eva Maddox's reponse which reflects on Archeworks' experience

in offering their design expertise to disadvantaged 'client groups' who would normally not have access to 'good design'. She and her colleagues learned that whatever group they were working with (the homeless, the physically disabled, low income women, drug-ridden neighbourhoods) design could offer little, because the causes of disadvantage were always much larger and structural. A good part of the problem Maddox identifies lies in the limited concept of design mobilised (professional designers dealing in 'form and function' for clients). Yet it is precisely in the kinds of social projects she discusses where understandings of design that are simultaneously broader and more fundamental need to be deployed; ideas such as design as a crucial human capacity and a mode of prefiguring that is, and can be, refined and developed to enable a vast array of social, political and personal projects.

For information about how to obtain a copy of the book contact Archeworks, 625 North Kingsbury ST, Chicago, Illinois 60610, USA or Victor Margolin victor@uic.edu