

## **wild city**

bureau annex is a 'wild' praxis, coming forth from being at North Station in Brussels. Brussels' North Station presents a living space for numerous people, who pass, sleep, live and spend time there for diverse reasons. As in all other social spaces there exist structures, hierarchies, specific behaviors and perceptions. Like in perfectly separated worlds people do their daily business, typical for stations which represent 'transitory' and busy spaces, next to a population which 'hangs out' in the same space.

Gradually bureau annex became an experiment, researching our ability of being public: an attempt to create an active space for people dwelling in the city's streets, houses, villas, palaces or even underground. At first sight unacquainted to one another.

## **notes**

(...)

As soon as we rationalize how we cope with our living conditions in today's so-called democracy it seems that we miss one stressing element: how do we want to live and what do we want to do in our social life? What is our passion in this society really? How can we participate or assume responsibility to perform democratic action?

Is it possible to create a team, consisting of people that lead their urban life in very different ways and based on obviously incomparable conditions. Can we overcome to think in terms of victim-offender perception by keeping an artistic attitude by definition: a not helping, not discriminating, not pitying attitude. Is the desire 'to work together on something' a means to explore another democratic chance? Can 'making art' serve as a tool to re-define democracy?

Excluding one way of living and its community from another is just one of many possibilities to deal with diversity. bureau annex is interested to stimulate new and other habits and behaviors.

(...)

Amongst others, we made contact with a homeless woman and her friend, who are earning their living through begging. After they had told their story and they realized that we were artists and not social workers, their attitude as well as their stories changed radically. They started to show interest in what we might want to do here and told us proudly of their own achievements in live, professional and otherwise.

They brought us in contact with La Maraude, an initiative of Jean-Michel Sorel (Service Prévention - 6th direction / Community St.Josse) which works with homeless people: La Maraude presents itself within the urban landscape as a simple and artless container on St. Lazarus Square, just behind Rogier Square. La Maraude invites people from Monday to Friday between 10h and 16h to pass and describe their needs in order to receive personal mediated support. On purpose they make no difference between drug addicts, homeless people, delinquents, illegal immigrants etc. in order to enable a low-threshold access.

In our first conversations with Jean-Michel Sorel, Luc Bolssens and Christine Pauporté from La Maraude, we talked about the possibilities as well as limitations of their social work. They welcomed the idea for an active space, which allows to work with 'their clients' on an artistic level.

We spoke about the possibility to work in an experimental way, where the social altercation with living conditions should be running parallel to an artistic approach, allowing for and presenting self-determined creative behavior and activity. There should be a complementing collaboration, without blurring the respective ambitions and passions, nor the social neither the artistic ones.

## **La Maraude**

The collaboration with La Maraude offered in the beginning appropriate support and orientation within the site-specific labyrinth of role-definitions and power-relations, existing at North Station Brussels. While being able to fully dwell with La Maraude we want to be transparent about the difference between the social knowledge on the one hand, and the artistic on the other. Our mutual interest is the maceration of the classic victim-offender perception, which defines a space automatically as passive and to be 'treated', establishing and consolidating the roles of helper and the help-seeking.