

## THANKS FOR THE OPPOSITION!

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### Introduction

*For Frederic Taylor ... passion was an irrelevant category ... Mistakenly. As individual and collective creativity became of greater interest, greater became the economic importance of passion. Once in the periphery, now it became relevant. In the postwar years, quality became central. Total quality: efficiency and effectiveness, focusing on customer satisfaction. A phase, which brought its own end in sight. After efficiency, effectiveness and quality, the world enforces ... the next step. Making a distinction, being original, becomes the new adage. Creativity, once reserved for artists ... also gains prestige in business ... Commodities are falling in price and profit. Declining margins require creativity ... On the customer's side there is a growing need for an individual, personal approach. Tailored mass production ... The meaning of human relationship is evident. This requires a growing improvisational ability ... This in turn requires authenticity and passion ... It is no longer about motivation, it is about inspiration ... In the industrial reality it was not the person that was valued, but the function. We spoke about job evaluation. Imagine a service economy where each person is held to his position. Almost the opposite is desired. It is not the job requirements that are central, but the personal commitment and involvement: that is what it is all about ... Original quality is the success of individual and collective creativity ... It calls attention to an unstoppable phenomenon. Professionals ... search for standards to reflect their desire for autonomy (Starren 2003: 5-7).*

Harry Starren, the author of the text above, wrote this as an introduction to a book about passion, spirituality and authenticity in organisations. It is an exemplary example of most of his texts, inspired by the freedom and creativity of artists. Managers and professionals have to be like artists, combining their professional skills and creativity with the person they are. To be good leaders they have to be good listeners, showing trust and integrity, and have to combine this with their own personal experience. They should know their customers, and how to inspire the others. However, they should also know how and when to use their own voice. It is not about the job they perform, but about the person they portray themselves to be. The keyword is authenticity. Starren is well-known in the Netherlands as a management guru. He has his own shows on radio and television, has written several books about management and leadership, is the CEO of one of the largest management training centers in the Netherlands, and... he is my boss.

This "passion, autonomy and authenticity" struck me when I first commenced my current job at this management training center, almost 12 years ago. I was excited about experiencing this freedom, participating in all kind of projects, using my own voice, skills and experiences. It felt like the best place to be. Soon though, I began to wonder about authenticity. It seemed that being authentic is always *good*. But what about its dark side? Moreover, what about using the commercial value of authenticity? In Thomas Frank's (1997), and Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter's (2004) terms, *it sells*. Our website has to be authentic, our brochures have to be authentic, even our food has to be authentic. Soon I found out that being authentic was the only right way to act. It seemed like it was even demanded, not only by the organisation, but also by our clients. Then people started to talk about *real* authenticity, and my wonder changed to worry. Roland Barthes (2002) wrote that each ornament, with adjectives which give the nothing a qualification of the being, betrays a guilty conscience. It is this that I felt.

But how did this happen? Why do I feel this tension between authenticity and adaptability? Moreover, how did authenticity become the main discourse? To elaborate on this, I first return to Starren. With his background as a historian, Starren made a famous statement, 'Today's peripheries hold the essence of the future'<sup>1</sup>. As authenticity is the essence of the present, when was it then in the peripheries of the past? According to Heath and Potter (2004) it was the countercultural rebels from the sixties who revolted against the *inauthentic* modern life of those days, emerging from alienating effects of technocratic life, standardisation and commodification.

But it is Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello in their book, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, (2007) who make the connection, when they argue that whole sections of the critique of these rebels were integrated into the management rhetoric of the 1990s. The authors' objective in this book is 'to highlight the role played by critique in the dynamic of capitalism' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: xiii). Boltanski and Chiapello argue 'that criticism is a catalyst for changes in the spirit of capitalism' providing capitalism the lasting strength it seems to have, 'capitalism needs its enemies' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 163). Boltanski and Chiapello identify two different types of critique. The first is the *social critique*, a protest against inequalities, poverty, exploitation, and egoism. The second is the *artistic critique*. It criticises oppression, the uniformity of mass society and the commodification of everything, and values an ideal of liberation and individual autonomy, of uniqueness and authenticity (Boltanski 2002: 6). It is specially the artistic critique that is, according to Boltanski and Chiapello, responsible for the reinvigorated capitalism of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century which was capable of substantial absorption of this critique (Arnason 2001: 111). It seems that the term authenticity is borrowed from the critique of capitalist modernity to become a catch-phrase in capitalism's self-exaltation.

Although Boltanski and Chiapello limited their scope of analysis to France, they are convinced that in essence rather similar processes have affected the principal industrialized countries in the Western world. In this paper, I therefore explore the implications of their thesis for the Dutch situation in the 1960s by focusing on the role of the artistic critique, and the stories of the Magical Center Amsterdam and the Dutch Beats. By using the theoretical framework of *The New Spirit of Capitalism* and reviewing the ambiguous relation between capitalism and its opposition, it will be easier to understand the connection between these countercultural stories and the tension I experience with the contemporary management narratives.

## The New Spirit of Capitalism

'To reconstruct a critical sociology on the basis of the sociology of critique by hybridizing it with the old thematic of capitalism' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: xiii) was the ambition of Luc Boltanski, a professor at the EHESS Paris, and Ève Chiapello, an associate professor at the HEC Paris School of Management, in their book *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. The authors' starting point is born out of confusion of a revived capitalism and a worsening social situation for the last two decades. It is the reverse of the situation of the late 1960s and early 1970s. In those days, critique was at its peak 'with demands of a very different kind, appealing to creativity, pleasure, the power of imagination, to a liberation affecting every dimension of existence [and] to the destruction of the consumer society' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: xxxv). Quietly and smoothly, a new flourishing capitalism, which they label "connexionnist", took over at the end of the 1970s without attracting critical attention or any organized resistance from forces of opposition. Boltanski and Chiapello also wonder why many of the countercultural protesters of the sixties felt at ease in the emerging new society. The answer to this question is, the authors suggest, that capitalism is able to develop new forms to neutralize opposition.

Boltanski and Chiapello argue that capitalism, which they characterize as an 'imperative to unlimited accumulation of capital by formally peaceful means', is in many respects an 'absurd system' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 7). It is because of this that capitalism must make use of

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<sup>1</sup> Inspired by Gary Hamel ([www.debaak.nl/en/courses/tomorrowsworld](http://www.debaak.nl/en/courses/tomorrowsworld), retrieved on 26 April 2009).

ideologies through which commitments of its participants are realized and to justify engagement. The term 'ideology' here, is defined as 'a set of shared beliefs, inscribed in institutions, bound up with actions, and hence anchored in reality' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 3). This set of beliefs is what the authors call 'spirit' of capitalism, referring to Max Weber's (1958) classic study of the Protestant ethic, and they claim that capitalism has known three such spirits.

The first spirit, at the end of the nineteenth century, was represented by the person of the bourgeois entrepreneur, linked to the notion of the Protestant ethic, wherein capacity for speculation and innovation, was matched by thrift, parsimony and attachment to family. This made it possible for the young to liberate themselves from the village, the ghetto, and traditional forms of personal dependence. At the same time, this bourgeois-entrepreneurial spirit was denounced for its hypocrisy, caused by different and incompatible values.

The second spirit, developed mostly between the 1930s and the 1960s, and was more focused on the organization than on the individual entrepreneur; gigantic, centralized and bureaucratized industrial firms, with the manager as a heroic figure and faith in rationality and long-term planning. This manager was preoccupied by the desire to endlessly expand the size of the firm to develop mass production based on economies of scale, product and work standardization and new techniques for expanding markets, like marketing. This managerial spirit, often associated with the 'organization man' (Arnason 2001: 110) and especially exciting for young graduates, comprised organizations conferred with positions of power 'from which one can change the world' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 18). For the large majority this spirit offered security, liberation from need and the fulfillment of desires thanks to mass production, and its effect: mass consumption. Even more than in the first spirit, the second spirit involved a strong belief in progress, science and technology, productivity and efficiency. According to Budgen 'the crisis of 1968 dealt a deathblow to this spirit of capitalism, discrediting its forms of justification as archaic and authoritarian fictions, with less and less bearing on reality' (Budgen 2000: 152).

The third and last stage is characterised by the 'network' spirit of the 1990s. The central organizational figure became a lean company that externalized its costs to sub-contractors, and dealt more in knowledge and information than in manpower or technical experience, it 'operate[d] as a network' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 74). These flexible organizations are opposed to hierarchy and planning, and promote teamwork, personal creativity, flexibility and the 'capacity to connect'. The 'organization man' is replaced by the 'connexionist man'. The real employer is the customer and there are no hierarchical bosses, but leaders. The figure of the artist has become the model for a new leader: charismatic, visionary, intuitive, mobile, creative, always ready to operate a shift and take a risk, and strong at networking and cooperating. This third spirit of capitalism appeals to values of self-actualisation, freedom, authenticity and 'knowledge deriving from *personal experience*' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 113) which are the very values of countercultural activism of the 1960s, absorbed into capitalism. Starren, presenting himself as a connexionist man, does nothing other than bring these values into management rhetoric. Represented by the narratives of Starren, this shift from activism to incorporating it into the structures of capitalism, which disarms radical critique, and at the same time uses it to upgrade the performance of capitalism, is the challenging argument that Boltanski and Chiapello make.

The authors argue that the ambiguous relation between capitalism and its opposition will be easier to understand when reviewing the critique. The interaction between the spirit, the dynamic changes and the critique of capitalism plays a key role in *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, where they state that critique plays the role of a motor in the process of changes in the spirit of capitalism. This 'approach provides a justification both for capitalism and for the criticisms that denounce the gap between the actual forms of accumulation and the normative conceptions of social order' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 163).

## **The role of criticism**

Critical reactions to capitalism have accompanied its development from the very beginning. Anti-capitalism is as old as capitalism. Critique on capitalism is driven by a source of indignation, a bad experience that goads protest. It can either be a personal experience, or roused by the fate of others. According to Boltanski and Chiapello, 'without this prior emotional, almost sentimental, reaction, no critique can take off' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 36). This leads the authors to conclude that there are two levels of expression of critique: (i) the domain of the emotions; and (ii) the reflexive, theoretical and argumentative level. The former, primary level, can never be silenced and is always ready to become inflamed, but a long way from a theoretical fulcrum and an argumentative rhetoric to give voice to individual suffering. The secondary level makes it possible 'to connect the historical situations people intend to criticize with values that can be universalized' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 36). It is only this second level that can be disarmed. Even when critical forces seem to have collapsed completely, the capacity for indignation can stay intact. The domain of the emotions is especially attractive to young people, and that, according to Boltanski and Chiapello, is where 'the guarantee of a constant renewal of critical work is to be found' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 36).

As a result, capitalism has not transformed its nature radically. Criticism stayed pretty much the same since the middle of the 19th century. Within this criticism, the authors identify four possible sources of indignation: (i) a demand for *liberation*; (ii) a rejection of *inauthenticity*; (iii) a refusal of *egoism*; and (iv) a response to *suffering*. As these grounds for indignation are so different, it is almost impossible to integrate them into a coherent framework. Sometimes accent is placed on commercial dimensions – like critique of impersonal domination by the market, or the supremacy of money which turns the most sacred entities (art work, and especially human beings) into commodities, making it an object of marketing and advertising like any other product, and sometimes emphasis is placed on the industrial dimensions of capitalism – like critique of product standardization, technology, the destruction of nature and authentic ways of living, factory discipline or bureaucracy. Whereas the critique of egoism often goes with nostalgia for traditional or orderly societies, mostly their communitarian aspects, and indignation with oppression and poverty in a wealthy society, is based on the values of freedom and equality. Of these, Boltanski and Chiapello identify two different critiques: the *social critique* and the *artistic critique*.

Stemming from socialist and Marxist political traditions, social critique emphasizes inequalities, poverty, exploitation and the egoism of a world that encourages individualism as opposed to solidarity, and even rejects the egoism of artists. It allies itself with science, technology and industry, and like capitalism itself, is attached to the idea of progress.

The artistic critique alternatively, was first developed in small artistic and intellectual circles. It criticizes oppression in the capitalist world; the domination of the market, the uniformity of mass society and the commodification of everything, and it valorizes an ideal of liberation and individual autonomy, of uniqueness and authenticity. The artistic critique is as strongly anti-industrial as it is anti-capitalist, and follows the tradition of revolutionary romanticism, but is not traditionalist. Only rarely does it espouse the return to an idealised past. Like capitalism, it hates the pre-capitalist past and looks towards the future. Though it emphasizes the spontaneity of individual creativity, the artistic critique can be non-egalitarian, or at least only weakly orientated towards the aim of equality. To achieve liberation, it is first necessary that people demonstrate radical resistance in the face of capitalist modernity.

As a consequence of these different ideological and emotional sources, the two critiques are not directly compatible. Depending on the historical events under consideration, they can be associated, or they may enter into tension with each other. In the opinion of Boltanski and Chiapello, one of the historical events where both types of criticism coalesced was the 1968 crisis in France, where the two critiques were equally important in the process. However in the aftermath the social critique became progressively weaker with the involution and decline of French communism, and the authors then go on to argue that the reinvigorated capitalism of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century owed much of its strength and confidence to a massive absorption of the aesthetic critique.

However as mentioned earlier, Boltanski and Chiapello's scope of analysis was limited to France. The authors decided to restrict themselves to studying one country, because they were

convinced that a detailed analysis of changes and conflicts was required in any such study, and they were confined by limited time. However, they were convinced ‘that it is basically, rather similar processes that have affected the principal industrialized countries in the Western world’ (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: xxi), or as Callinicos states ‘[t]he incorporation of soixante-huitards into a capitalism that adopted a mellow libertarian rhetoric is not by any means purely a French phenomenon’ (Callinicos 2006: 63).

Frank in his study *The Conquest of Cool*, also shows how in the United States counterculture and business culture influenced one another: ‘the corporate theory of the 1990s makes explicit references to sixties management theory and the experiences of the counterculture’ (Frank 1997: 28). Fred Turner also illustrates this idea in his book *From Counterculture to Cyberculture* (2006). With his analysis around a narrative of the life of Stewart Brand<sup>2</sup>, he shows the similarities between American countercultural ideology of the 1960s and the discourse of the network economy. Moreover, one of the founders of the Dutch 1960s Provo movement Roel van Duijn states, that when the imagination came to power in May 1968 in Paris, the Provo seeds germinated (Van Duijn 1985: 7-8). This statement was supported by the student leader during that time, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who dedicated a significant chapter in his reminiscences to the influence of the Provos on himself and his generation of young rebels (Horn 2007: 39).

Amsterdam operated in the sixties as a sheltered haven for the bohemians and adventurous young people who were lured by its magical attraction (Kennedy 1995: 131). Most of them joined a small group of free spirited artists from which *Magical Center Amsterdam* emerged. Nearly all literature on these countercultural movements includes a historical description of the ideas, practices and initiatives of the actors (e.g. Abma, 1990; Righart, 1995; Kennedy, 1995; Pas, 2003; Horn, 2007; Kempton, 2007). It is mainly focused on the generation clash, sometimes laying emphasis on modernizing traditional elites, and once urban social movements (Mamadouh, 1992). Only Zijdeveld (1970) diagnosed the sixties as a period of transition with rebellion against, what Boltanski and Chiapello thirty years later described as *the second spirit of capitalism*. But all of them try to debunk the myths by concentrating on the dialectic between political and cultural revolution, most of them arguing that it was all cultural. And now, forty years after May 1968, more and more observers reinterpret the sixties as the beginning of all evil in the modern world today, relating the emergence of hedonism, destructive cynicism and terrorism with this past generation.

This analysis however, I believe does not help to understand what happened in Amsterdam in the 1960s. It does not tell the story, but creates a contrast. By making use of the theoretical framework of *The New Spirit of Capitalism* though, it shows that the Dutch Revolt cannot only be celebrated or called destructive, but that it also manifests itself in the work of management in contemporary organizations, in particular by interpreting them through the vocabulary of networks and authenticity. It shows that the Dutch Beats, the provocative theatrical Provo movement, the psychedelic subculture, the inner reality of mysticism and the spiritual voice, not only coalesced in a critique of the second spirit of capitalism, discrediting its forms of justification as archaic and authoritarian fictions and transforming Amsterdam in the 1960s to a Mecca for an emerging international counterculture, but also challenged the values and options of capitalism providing it with new justifications, that resulted in the third and current spirit characterised as the ‘network’ spirit of the 1990s.

To develop this argument, I explore the sources of inspiration of the Dutch Revolt in the 1960s. In so doing, I show that the ideology-related transformation from the second spirit of capitalism into network capitalism of the 1980s and 1990s as identified by Boltanski and Chiapello, also took place in the Netherlands<sup>3</sup>. The source of Starren’s narratives on the creativity and authenticity of the artist, the essence of today can be found in the peripheries of the Dutch Beats and the Dutch countercultural movements of the 1960s. The source of my worry can be found in the

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<sup>2</sup> Stewart Brand (1938) is founder of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, *The Co-evolution Quarterly*, *The WELL* (Whole Earth ‘Lectronic Link), and the *Global Business Network*.

<sup>3</sup> Among others based on 15 in-depth interviews

artistic critique of the 1960s being translated into changes in practice in postbureaucratic organizations. However, before we 'travel' back to the 1950s, we first have to stop in 2008.

## The Homo Ludens

On Saturday 29 November 2008, Roel van Duijn, one of the founders of the Provo movement, said farewell after 42 years of politics. His friends and opponents celebrated this occasion with him, by indulging in a debate. One of the speakers was Professor James Kennedy, who gave his view on the significance of Provo and claimed that Provo was part of a broader movement in the 1960s. This movement focused, amongst other concerns, against consumerism. 'Provo has given an early contribution to this movement', said Kennedy. Following the theory of Heath and Potter, he described the image of the countercultural self-developing romantic warrior who wants to distinguish himself, and thus consumes differently, but also more. According to Kennedy, this movement had a strong presence in the Netherlands until the early 1980s, after which neo-liberalism took over dominant thinking. As a conclusion to the event, the last speaker, a former mayor of Amsterdam, Ed van Thijn described Van Duijn being 'a pain, a demagogue, a jammer and not really a democrat' in the 1960s, 'penetrating and [an] eloquent opponent' in the 1980s and a 'calmer and wiser' person in current time. Overwhelmed by emotion Van Thijn ended his speech with 'Roel, thanks for the opposition'.

Although Van Thijn made this last comment especially towards Van Duijn, it is also possible to see it in a broader perspective. The perspective of Boltanski and Chiapello, when they argue 'that criticism is a catalyst for changes in the spirit of capitalism' providing capitalism the lasting strength it seems to have, 'capitalism needs its enemies' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 163). By thanking his enemy for his critique, a seemingly authentic Van Thijn gives a nice illustration of this statement of Boltanski and Chiapello. But what was the criticism of Roel van Duijn and Provo that capitalism had to face? To answer this question, I have to start with the small artistic avant-gardes of the 1950s in the Netherlands and their artistic critique, especially the Experimental Group Holland and the Dutch Beats.

Before the Provo critique exploded into daylight in the sixties, the artistic critique could already be found in small artistic avant-gardes of the 1950s, not only in France or the United States, but also in the Netherlands. Already in the years that immediately followed the war, a number of usually quite young poets were able to break away from the thematic and stylistic formality of Dutch poetry. They came to be known as the "Vijftigers" (the "Fiftiers"). The main figures and early writers of the Fiftiers were Simon Vinkenoog, Lucebert, Gerrit Kouwenaar, Hugo Claus, Remco Campert and Jan Elburg. In his introduction of his book *Living Space* (1979) about Poems of the Dutch Fiftiers, Peter Glassgold writes that the Fiftiers' movement 'had its beginnings in the art world of postwar Amsterdam, among the painters who joined together in 1948 to form the Experimental Group Holland (De Experimentele Groep Holland), known internationally as Cobra' (Glassgold 1979: ix). The emphasis was revolutionary, the complete overturning of aesthetic, social and intellectual standards, with a special stress on the very physicality of art. They sought to make not so much a "new" poetry, but an "other" poetry, an antipoetry. Or as Fiftier Lucebert says, 'they wanted to write experiential poems, unfettered by form and subject matter, that explore "the space of complete living"' (Van der Bent 2000: 202). According to Glassgold, there is a striking similarity between the Fiftiers and the Beats, the physical quality and the social criticism of much Beat and Beat-related writing was also found in the work of the Fiftiers (2000: 203). And like the Beats, the Fiftiers provided the subsequent generation an escape from the conventional society, the conformity and seriousness. In particular, Constant Nieuwenhuys was able to give this generation an answer to their expectations and anxieties.

One of the founders of both Cobra, as well as the Situationists, the Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys (primarily just known as Constant), developed a strong antipathy against Functionalism, which he considered an elite attempt to deprive the masses of play and creativity

(Kennedy, 1995: 9). Inspired by Lefebvre's book *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947)<sup>4</sup>, he started working in the 1950s on an architectural proposal for a future society, the utopian city, *New Babylon*. Its name was provocative, since in the Protestant tradition Babylon is a figure of evil, and was designed for the awakening new man, freed from the need to work, and replaced with a nomadic life of creative play: *homo ludens* (the playful man or as Constant stated, the creative man). Constant's protest represented the artistic critique as described by Boltanski and Chiapello, who argue that this critique is rooted in a bohemian lifestyle, counterposing the bourgeois society with the freedom of the artist, and that 'it is based upon a contrast between attachment and detachment, stability and mobility, as best formulated by Baudelaire' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 38). It becomes even more clear when looking in detail at what Boltanski and Chiapello identify as artistic critique of capitalism, when they portray it as disenchantment and inauthenticity of the misery of daily life, of the authoritarian oppression, of dehumanization of the world, and of the 'iron cage'<sup>5</sup> of instrumental rationality.

Later on, in the 1960s, the Provo movement drew inspiration from the ideas of Constant, inspired by, as the Provo Duco van Weerlee says, 'an elusive utopia that the future would create on the basis of artistic conceptions'<sup>6</sup>. With massification, bureaucratization and mass consumption as their main source of indignation, Provo tried to provoke the authorities at a symbolic level, based on anarchism, and through imagination and pleasure, hoping that these authorities will show their dehumanizing and oppressive character.

A large part of the Provo philosophy was based on the concepts of New Babylon and *homo ludens* (Pas, 2003: 138), it gave them a model that contrasted with the capitalist system and provided them with a radical socio-economic critique of society (Kempton, 2007: 117). Published by Provo's theorist Roel van Duijn, this philosophy was based on the dichotomy between authorities, as well as the addicted consumer versus the *Provo*ariat, which included not only Provos, but also students, beatniks, and artists, in short all the people who are not active in economic production processes. Inspired by Marx' son-in-law Paul Lafargue and his vision as described in his book *The Right to Laziness* (1883)<sup>7</sup>, this 'not being active in the capitalistic process' was one of the hallmarks of the *Provo*ariat and Provo. 'Call us anti-professionals', writes Van Weerlee, 'a job means co-operating with [...] capitalism' (Van Weerlee 1966: 19). Because of this they were called long-haired lazy scum by the media, an expression used by Provo as a *geuze name* (a negative connotation from the 16<sup>th</sup> century which became a Dutch word with positive meaning and stands for resistance against injustice, fighting for freedom and self government). '[Y]es, we hate work, we do not participate with it, this in contrast with the Calvinist notion of Beruf as life fulfillment', says Provo Bart van Heerikhuizen looking back forty years later, '[i]n Provo there was a strong element of criticism of the work ethic'<sup>8</sup>. Here, the strong critique on the work ethic of capitalism dominating human beings to work for the purpose of profit, and the refusal of work, is what Boltanski and Chiapello call the freedom of artists 'in its extreme forms' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007:38).

Through this revolt against the authorities and the addicted consumer, called the 'Provolution' by Provo, the *Provo*ariat will become the *homo ludens*. With Constant, according to Pas, Van Duijn had found a 'father' who stimulated his intellectual development and activated his fantasy (Pas 2003: 139). According to Van Duijn it was Constant and his ideas that gave Provo a future, which 'the classical anarchist movement unfortunately is missing' (Van Duijn 1985: 60).

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<sup>4</sup> A statement made in an interview, which Kristin Ross had with the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, who was a friend of Constant ([www.notbored.org/lefebvre-interview.html](http://www.notbored.org/lefebvre-interview.html), retrieved on 21 February 2009).

<sup>5</sup> In the climax to *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber writes of the *stahlhartes Gehäuse* that modern capitalism has created, a concept that Talcott Parsons in 1958 famously translated as the "iron cage". It refers to the increasing rationalization of human life, which traps individuals in an "iron cage" of rule-based, rational control.

<sup>6</sup> Email Duco van Weerlee, 4 February 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Email Bart van Heerikhuizen, 6 March 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Email Bart van Heerikhuizen, 6 March 2009.

Based on a blend of Calvinism and Dutch anarchism, inspired by the Lutheran preacher and first socialist in the Dutch parliament Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis (1846-1919), Provo was launched in 1965, as a first furious reaction, a new anti-authoritarian movement (Van Duijn 1985: 7). 'Anarchism', writes Van Duijn in their first monthly magazine *Provo*, 'as it aims for the most beneficial conditions for human freedom and creativity'. 'We have a negative view of capitalism, bureaucracy and the military-political complex' (Van Duijn 1985: 29-30), or as Van Weerlee states: 'the anarchist choose freedom and with that diversity' (Van Weerlee 1966:20). With this, Provo rejects the second spirit of capitalism through its articulation of anti-hierarchical, anti-bureaucratic, anti-work and anti-authoritarian values, and valorizes personal freedom based on the artistic critique.

However, New Babylon and anarchism do not tell the story of Provo in full. It was their connection with the *Magical Center Amsterdam*, that gave them the tools that 'made the youth of Amsterdam ready for Provo' (Van Duijn 1985: 13).

### The Magical Center Amsterdam

At the end of June 1962, Robert Jasper Grootveld, the anti-smoke magician as he was called, introduced the Magical Center at the "Sociaal Religieus Gesprekscentrum" (Social Religious Debate Center). Starting with the phrase 'Last night I had a dream' he launched Amsterdam as the Magical Center of the western asphalt jungle, attracting thousands of American beatniks to the biggest public urban park in Amsterdam, the Vondelpark. Although he later admitted that he had not had a dream that night, but only mentioned so during his speech, he predicted an event that would take place ten years later<sup>9</sup>. As envisioned by Grootveld, this Magical Center became not only a center of dope, but also a detoxification center creating an awareness of the hypnotic and manipulative power of advertisement, and the addictiveness of cigarettes, other dope and mass consumption. To launch a run to the Magical Center, Grootveld saw a major role for 'the at least hundred prophets' in Amsterdam; magic and publicity. (Duivenvoorden 2009: 213-214).

Grootveld met most of these prophets at the Social Religious Debate Center, a center that Pas calls 'a stopping place for "dissidents", one of the sites in the social margin, where try-outs took place before a flow to the public occurred' (Pas 2003: 59). Fiftier Simon Vinkenoog visited it on a regular basis, and Van Duijn gave his first speech in Amsterdam there. According to the other founder of Provo Rob Stolk it was a place where 'interesting political debates' took place. Provo Hans Plomp called it 'an interesting and hip place'<sup>10</sup>, and persons who later met each other in Provo visited the place.

But in the spring of 1964, Grootveld found the place to bring the Magical Center to the next stage: the happening at "Het Lieverdje" (The Little Darling) statue. Grootveld considered this bronze statue, which represents a young Amsterdam rascal, as an omen, because it was located at a square that is part of the "Miracle of Amsterdam" procession route since 1345. Moreover, it was placed at the end of the street in which all the major newspapers and publicity agencies of the tobacco corporations were housed, and above all, the statue was financed by a tobacco company. For Grootveld, it was a magic spot (Pas 2003: 95).

Fiftier Harry Mulisch described the happening performance of Grootveld in his book *Bericht aan de Rattenkoning*<sup>11</sup> (Message to the Rat King, 1966) as 'when the clock struck twelve [at night], the high Priest appeared, all dressed up, from some alley and started to walk Magic Circles around the nicotinic demon, while his disciples cheered, applauded and sang' (Mulisch 1966: 62). Inspired by religious and spiritual elements, and with forms of expression borrowed from the repertoire of

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<sup>9</sup> At the beginning of the 1970s, thousands of American beatniks came to the Vondelpark. It became a symbol of a place where *everything was possible and (almost) everything was allowed*. In 1971 Pan Am advertised worldwide with special flights to "a nice hippie park" in Amsterdam.

<sup>10</sup> Interview Hans Plomp, 25 September 2008.

<sup>11</sup> *Message to the Rat King* is an essay on the students' revolts in Amsterdam in the 1960s.

festivals, play, poetry, liberation of speech and Surrealism, Grootveld brought 'art, freedom of expression in general, literally on the street' (Duivenvoorden 2009: 273). The performance of Grootveld is what Boltanski and Chiapello call the form of expression of the artistic critique in general, a manifestation of a desire to express oneself, and of a spiritual demand (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007:170). It was Fiftier Vinkenoog who in 1962, inspired by his contact with the New York artist Allan Kaprow, introduced the first so called happening in Amsterdam, but it was Robert Jasper Grootveld who made the happenings in Dutch style, very successful (Kennedy 1995: 131). Partly due to cooperation with artist Aat Veldhoen, and Vinkenoog, the happening grew into a weekly ritual. Within a year this dynamic open-air performance functioned as a local meeting point and a national inspiration point, attracting over a thousand spectators (Pas 2003: 100). Every week, a collection of outsiders gathered at Het Lieverdje: artists, students, writers, poets, nozems, religious fanatics, latent homosexuals and even tourists to be part of the event. By that time, Constant called the happening the first social space of New Babylon. It was at this moment that the Provos showed up.

Provo founders Van Duijn and Stolk, were inspired by this visionary magician, with his subjectivism and irrational anti-bourgeois stance, because, 'the changes they sought should come from the creative individual himself and not of a social revolution' (Pas 2003: 106). Van Duijn's theosophical and esoteric background, and Stolk's advocating change and self-actualisation through spectacle and direct action on the street, explains their fascination for Grootveld (Pas 2003: 103). According to Plomp, Grootveld made it possible to connect the Provo philosophical theories with the street: 'he was someone who created the magic formula'<sup>12</sup>. 'An alliance was struck' (DeGroot 2008: 197).

This alliance made it possible to connect 'a heterogeneous bunch, bound together by a common ideal of personal freedom and finding expression in radical nonconformity', writes Provo Bernard de Vries (De Vries 1967: 78). Or as Van Weerlee says: '[w]hat attracted me towards Provo was that one did not have to be a member. Everyone was welcome. Nobody asked for credentials, everyone could introduce his or her own hobby, trauma, or dream ... The shared hobby was to put the outside world on the wrong foot'<sup>13</sup>. Composed of like-minded people, the Provo movement shaped itself and gave itself a focus, copying Grootveld's art of the use of irrational mythical arguments, which made the creation of the characteristic features of this phenomenon possible: their playful actions.

It is these actions that made Provo world-famous. 'With immense creativity Provo continually devised new campaigns, usually under the general rubric of "White [Plans]"' (DeGroot 2008: 198). These "White Plans" were largely influenced by Grootveld. 'It was very shocking to the establishment, [t]hey realized they were not mere dopey scum but were quite capable of some sort of organization', he recalls later (Voeten 1990: 35). 'Our tactic for the attack against the authoritarian society should consist of a mixture of reforming and provoking', writes Van Duijn, '[a]gainst every part of their machine, we need both positive white plans as well as negative provocative acts, white plans to show how it could be, and provocative acts to show how it is. The playful provotariat has to play a smart game', Van Duijn goes on, 'a play with the effect of a sophisticated battle ... but nevertheless a play' (Van Duijn 1985: 68). Provo decided to aim there provocative acts at the authorities: 'Firms and the State, personalized in large entrepreneurs and officials. They are in a[n] ... authoritarian society ... closely linked with each other. Firms dominate under capitalism. Under capitalism, the government and officials too, are bound by the decisions of large firms ... to play an independent role' (Van Duijn 1985: 67). It is this critique of the state, that was one of those appearances of critique that expresses the rejection of the second spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 202).

The main targets of Provo became the Police, the Mayor of Amsterdam and The Royal House; all seen as the main symbols of these authorities. And these authorities, represented by the police, did exactly what Provo wanted. They were unable to play along, and acted with violence,

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<sup>12</sup> Interview Hans Plomp, 25 September 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Email Duco van Weerlee, 29 January 2009.

according to Constant 'proving that they defended the world of yesterday' (Van Duijn 1985: 135). This reaction of the police helped attract many sympathizers, and was essential for Provo's growth in size. 'The police, just like we do, are provoking the masses', said Van Duijn, 'it is obvious that the cops are our best pals' (Voeten 1990: 35).

It was the Magical Center Amsterdam, and the happenings, that provided the breeding ground, inspiration, a stage, and tools for the Provo movement to connect their visions and dreams of New Babylon and the homo ludens, with the need for action of the Provos street activists. But it did even more than that. It was able to coalesce the outside world of protest with the inner reality of mysticism, the psychedelic subculture, and the spiritual voice.

### **The "road inward"**

In the beginning of the 1960s, a group of free spirited individuals gathered around Fiftier Vinkenoog, and started to experiment with psychedelia. According to Van Weerlee '[a]n attempt with social interaction was created in which spiritual needs of people could find a way out, [w]ith the drug as a sacrament and extravagant behavior as a unifying ritual, an experiment in the Magical Center began to show' (Van Gasteren 1984: 13). Meeting at the Social Religious Debate Center and Het Lieverdje, and introduced by Vinkenoog and Grootveld, this group became part of the Magical Center. 'In Provo the artistic and spiritual came together ... Amsterdam was the Magical Center', recalls "King Acid" Peter ten Hoopen, 'Provo was more active in the outside world and we watched it with interest, and we appreciated it ... and we had a strong sense of connection, because they also were freethinkers, but I felt the most connected ... [with the] feeling that we should not change the outer world, but that we must change is the inner world. We must change ourselves, we should live a conscious life. And then at some point ... when the riots in the city around Het Lieverdje started, the two groups melted. Then there were moments that we ... and Provos acted jointly'<sup>14</sup>.

It is the characteristic of the group that Zijderveld calls "The Gnostics" in his study *The Abstract Society* (1970), that he sees as a prominent way to escape institutionalization and rationalization. This hippie-like group follows the "road inward", withdrawing from the outer world into their own subjectivity. According to Zijderveld 'many techniques have been designed to enable man to follow the "road inward" - from religious mysticism to the artificial trip of psychedelia' (Zijderveld 1970: 95-96). Aupers, in his study of the contemporary New Age movement, *In de ban van de moderniteit* (Under the Spell of Modernity, 2004) describes how this group is radically opposed to the modern society in all its manifestations and the dynamics of the capitalist system in particular. According to the author they oppose the dehumanization, and the restrictions imposed by the bureaucratic apparatus to self-actualisation, authenticity and personal growth. He noticed that this movement belongs in the 1960s to the counterculture, but shifted from 'world-rejecting' to 'world-affirming' (Aupers 2004: 59). Aupers noticed that they become an integral part of the mainstream, which connects his thesis with that of Boltanski and Chiapello, when they state that the 'class of '68 felt so much at ease in the emerging new society' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: xxxvi).

The source of indignation was similar to all the groups who were part of the Magical Center Amsterdam, but the same goes for their sources of inspiration. Vinkenoog introduced the homo ludens and Constants' New Babylon to the spiritually oriented persons, calling it 'prophetic'<sup>15</sup>. 'In the words of Simon [Vinkenoog], from early times, it was imprinted how important it was to be a Homo Ludens', says Ten Hoopen, and because of that 'people were able to see other realities, and capable of dreaming again'<sup>16</sup>. It gave them the same future as it did to Van Duijn and the Provos. For Grootveld, his favorite cause was to promote marijuana consumption, mainly to show the absurdity

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<sup>14</sup> Interview Peter ten Hoopen, 21 October 2008. Peter ten Hoopen is one of the founders of the 'Amsterdam Psychedelic Research Centre' and the author of 'King Acid'.

<sup>15</sup> Interview Simon Vinkenoog, 28 July 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Interview Peter ten Hoopen, 21 October 2008.

of Dutch drug law. But at the same time, he was the ideal mediator for Provos showing them the world of drugs. 'Many Provos who joined the movement choose to do so not only for an intense life in a rebel club, but also because [the] introduction to the world of "resources" is often just as exciting and revolutionary' (Duivenvoorden 2009: 326). It is here that the spiritual beliefs and activities of the Gnostics are fully integrated with the active protest of the Provos, and the Provos are in their turn involved in spirituality and psychedelic resources. Or as Plomp expresses it: 'I think Provo actually ... belongs in the spiritual world to the mad wisdom schools, the court jesters the troubadours, the satires, the commedia dell'arte. All these people denounce things in a playful way ... and also use their wisdom in a non-religious and pleasant way. It is ... an ancient conflict between the euphoric spirituality, ... the joy, the dance and the music, and the strict Calvinist life, life is a vale of tears, human suffering, work, work. ... [It] is the oldest play there is'<sup>17</sup>.

### So what?

My analysis demonstrates, as Boltanski and Chiapello already suggested, that the processes of their theory of *The New Spirit of Capitalism* in France, have also affected the Netherlands. Inspired by the Experimental Group Holland and the Dutch Beats, the Fiftiers, the artistic critique in the Netherlands, and especially Amsterdam, focused mainly on opposing standardization and massification (effected by the media), and the loss of authenticity. It was derived from the condemnation of mechanization, and its result; mass production. Based on what Boltanski and Chiapello describe as 'accused of conditioning and standardizing consumers of mass cultural products by transforming them into passive recipients of a standard message, and hence predisposed uncritically to adopt the ideologies imposed upon them from above' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007: 440), the Dutch countercultural movements found their indignation. This standardization was even extended towards language being manipulated, as in the case of advertising. Thus, according to Boltanski and Chiapello, the propaganda of advertising let the individual dissolve into the mass, and is therefore no longer anything but an illusion (2007: 441). The denunciation of mass production, cannot be disconnected with the denunciation of the massification of human being. This is why Grootveld wanted to create a detoxification center, the Fiftiers revolted against the aesthetic standards, Provo called for the need of a Provolution, and the Spirituals choose for the "road inward".

'Capitalism's response to the demand for differentiation', argue Boltanski and Chiapello in line with their theory of absorption of the aesthetic critique, 'was to internalize it' (2007: 441). Entrepreneurs sought to create products and services that were differentiated and authentic, in such a way that the impression of massification would be dispelled. But there was also development in the direction of involving personal dimensions in transactions. Interpersonal qualities, present spontaneously or derived from selection or training, are important in a connexionist world. The fading of the distinction between private life and business life, has brought relations into the commodity sphere (2007: 442-443).

However according to Boltanski and Chiapello, the commodification of authentic goods and services as a response to capitalism, possesses a paradoxical character. It is this paradoxical character that I feel so vividly every day. As Boltanski and Chiapello so appropriately describe it, 'one no longer knows if they are 'authentic' or 'inauthentic', spontaneous or re-engineered for commercial ends' (2007: 447). It reveals a tension between the truth of the original, and the artificiality of the fabricated.

Next to that, there is a contradiction between the requirement of adaptability and the requirement of authenticity in network organisations, as I described in the Introduction. For me, it is strange to experience that in a world where relationships rest upon the authenticity of the person, these same relations are used in strategies aimed at generating network profits. 'It makes work situations in today's firms, write Boltanski and Chiapello, 'especially open to accusations of

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<sup>17</sup> Interview Hans Plomp, 25 September 2008.

manipulations' (2007: 459). Where Provo criticized the authoritarian oppression of traditional forms of hierarchical command, today people are induced towards doing what one wants them to do, by themselves as a seemingly autonomous decision. The tensions between engaging in relations based on authenticity and manipulative manoeuvres, are at their greatest when people have to distinguish themselves as professionals.

Thanks to the opposition, capitalism was able to assimilate the artistic rejection of consumer goods, inauthenticity and massification into a discourse of the network, supplying arguments and legitimating an increase in commodification, particularly of human beings. But does this mean that the artistic critique may be seen as a success or a failure? It was successful in the sense that the avant-gardes of the Dutch Beats and the Experimental Group Holland, coincided in the 1960s with the aspirations of the audience of Magical Center Amsterdam. It possesses a base and spokespersons, and it occupies a significant place in the media. It failed in as much, that by helping to overthrow the conventions of the second spirit of capitalism and to overcome the inflexibilities of the industrial order, bureaucratic hierarchies and standardized production, the artistic critique opened up an opportunity for capitalism to base itself on new forms of control, and commodify new, more individualized and 'authentic' goods. According to Boltanski and Chiapello it is this success and failure that currently paralyse the artistic critique. 'To escape from this dead end', the authors go on, 'perhaps the artistic critique should, to a greater extent than is currently the case, take the time to reformulate the issues of liberation and authenticity, starting from the new forms of oppression it unwittingly helped to make possible' (2007: 468).

This leads me finally to the conclusion that to me, it is clear now where this management rhetoric came from, and why I feel uncomfortable with what seems to be one of the main tensions of a connexionist world. The next step will be, as an escape from the dead end, to raise my voice to bring to the fore the dark side of authenticity in our world. Within my organization it probably plays a relatively marginal role. But do not today's peripheries hold the essence of the future?

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