Seceding to Survive: The Ecologic of AVL-Ville

This paper will offer one provisional way of working through questions of criticality by investing in an example put forth by Dutch artist and iconoclast Joep van Lieshout at the dawn of the 21st century. His ecologically-minded, socio-urban assemblage entitled AVL-Ville (2001) proffered a line of flight between reform and revolution by simply refusing both options. Rather, AVL-Ville seceded- creating an entirely new free state in the harbor of Rotterdam as an alternative to contemporary political-economic structures. The project presented an experiment in articulating both material and organizational schema for an intentional community decoupled from the corrosive socio-environmental effects of capitalist growth economies. Although it only remained operational for approximately one year, AVL-Ville drew together a rich mixture of critical art practice and activism, architectural and urban-territorial configuration, and a healthy dose of counter-positional rhetoric that at once extended similar work from the 1960s and ’70s and at the same time engaged the new reality of the neoliberal, post-statist environment. This paper will outline the essential qualities of AVL-Ville, and account for its increasing relevance nearly 20 years later through recourse to a range of
supporting concepts such as autarky and autonomy, which continue to gain currency in critical resistive practices of art, architecture and design. In particular, the paper seeks to understand and contextualize the environmental dimension of the project, an aspect that has not been adequately accounted for thus far and which represents a distinct form of critical spatial practice that remains pressing in contemporary discourse.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Jason Rebillot is an architect and academic working at the intersection of political economy, political ecology, and urban transformation. He is currently Associate Professor at Woodbury University (Burbank, CA), where he leads the year-long thesis sequence for the Master of Architecture program. Rebillot has served as a visiting researcher at Tokyo City University, and has participated in symposia and workshops at the Politecnico di Milano, MIT, London School of Economics, and École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne. His writings can be found in journals such as Scroope, Lunch, Monograph, and Planum, as well as in edited volumes including The Horizontal Metropolis: A Radical Project (Springer) and Rebel Matters, Radical Patterns (Genova University Press). Rebillot holds degrees in architecture from the University of Wisconsin and University of Illinois, and an interdisciplinary doctorate from the Harvard Graduate School of Design.