

Radio Orbino, an art installation of Anton Dekker en Irene Janze

Asphalt is the sedimentary rock from (post) - modernity²²

Globalization exists *only* through being local. A contradiction in terms. To underline this statement, a group of artists focused on a world wide known phenomenon: **Asphalt.**

Artists studied 2,5 kilometer new *Dutch* highway, the N242, east of the city of Alkmaar. In December 2007 Radio Orbino - a small, local, live broadcasting radio station next to the highway- broadcasted their findings.



Asphalt seems a neutral carrier on which the world moves along. A long, linear, docile body, the asphalt bears its deterministic fate. Slavishly it lets itself be run over: without complaint and only the occasional crack or groan. But looks are deceptive.... Probing reveals that asphalt meanders, bows, cuts, divides and rules. Asphalt produces boundaries, islands and residual areas. She upsets just restored balances. If we are not careful asphalt might become our grave.

Along the 2.5 kilometers stretch of investigation, the road cuts through industrial areas, encloses greenhouses and cleaves the remains of an old village road. A mountain of old iron hovers above it. At the same time, the road falls into her form according to local peculiarities, the shape and reactions of its surroundings.



Bridges are being built and tunnels dug. The new route of the highway N242 hides the frayed fringes of older roads behind her sound barriers. The uniform barriers and the uni-form-ication of the highway look like a global phenomenon, yet at her base we find local history: bent spoons, forks and knives of the waste-processing industry near by.



Asphalt is an agency entangled in other agencies. I want to make it clear that I do not consider asphalt as an *autonomous* moral esthetical agent. Its specific performance exists only in relation to

²² J.Mesman, walking quotation

other human and non-human agencies. The relata are not preceding the relation, waiting to be discovered.

The geo(morpho)logy supports, guides and obstructs her way. For those 2,5 km the road slides over a geological borderline. It runs roughly in between ancient sand banks (behind the old dunes) and the sedimentation of Duinkerken III²³. This subterranean intra-acts and becomes cognizable in drainage systems and economic cultivation. Alkmaar (Alkmare) grew on an ancient sand bank surrounded by 'inland' clay. It is next to the former lake: Schermeer (Scirmere). In the museum of Alkmaar I saw on a map (written in French) Chermer = Dear Sea, but I presume that was a Freudian mistake (by the cartographer or my memory). The lake was connected to the Zuiderzee, which is now called the IJsselmeer. Today Alkmaar appears to be in the middle of land, but this situation is relatively recent. In the last 800 years, the region around Alkmaar was claimed from lakes and the sea - several times, as the land was flooded again and again. Alkmaar borders (to be precise: its neighboring village Oudorp) on the polder 'Schermermeer'. Hence the highway does too.²⁴ The polder is amongst the oldest ones in the Netherlands.



It is immediately clear, looking east from highway, that the landscape is old. That is to say: if you slow down or stop the car and perhaps paid a visit to our radio station Orbino. The station looked over the polder meadows. Here the highway is built upon old sand banks and follows a centuries-old track.

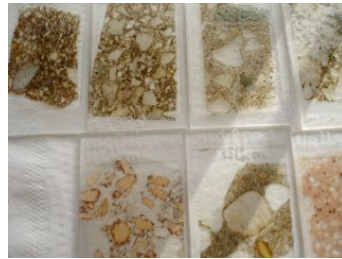
This geomorphology unfolds its subterranean character solely in relation to the sliding zone and the globalizing surface. At the sliding zone, globalization is made local and the asphalt road N242 becomes locally materialized globalization. This intra-active sliding zone makes the geo(morho)logical and globalizing phenomena cognizable, while simultaneously the sliding zone is becoming (shifting and modifying) due to these phenomena. As such the intra-active sliding zone can be regarded as a physical arrangement of both embodied and non-embodied matter and meanings.

Artists investigated the local character of the asphalt of the highway N242 and made comparisons with asphalt highways in other places. Thin cuts were made from samples asphalt to research small components and the composition of the blacktop.



²³ Duinkerken O/III is the name for sediment, deposited during the transgression of the sea in medieval times (it is the period of the birth of the 'big' lakes in the province: Noord Holland)

²⁴ It would go too far to describe the reconfigurations and the agencies peat moor, the drainages basins and water sheds, the sea floods, peat moor winning, dykes and mills, governments and ownerships, economical depressions and the canalization on the phenomenon: leveled landscape



grind room, VU Amsterdam Wijnanda Koot ,head thin cuts of asphalt blacktops

Archives and museums are visited. Geological and historical maps consulted.



maps

Experts were interviewed about the process of refinement, about the residual molecule bitumen, about the future of asphalt, about CO2.



*prof. Jan Smit, Prof. Olaf Schuiling, Drs Peter van der Gaag,
interview drs G. Heidweiler, drs J Baker.*

Dr. Jean van Berkel

Sounds of asphalt highways in the world were collected. The local flora and fauna of the roadside were studied. Reports, (live) interviews and collected sounds: all data were broadcasted. Radio Orbino was on air in December 2007 for 24 hours a day (10 - 12 hours live). The station was reached by telephone and many people found their way to the studio and paid us a visit. Life performance of artists took place and trans passers used the open microphone. Local shop owners, garden owners, inhabitants of the small village 'de Omval, ants, cars and roadblocks, road menders, tree planters, green houses, a local physical geographer, the environmental engineer, poets, dancers, musicians, writers, artists, school classes, the local tango society: all got their say and performance. Workshops were given. On Internet at www.orbino.nl / projects/ Radio Orbino is an archive of impressions (in sound, pics and movies) of the programs and performances.



Interviewing a construction worker in the pit

Why radio?

The stream of cars appears as an un-interruptible global phenomenon as well.

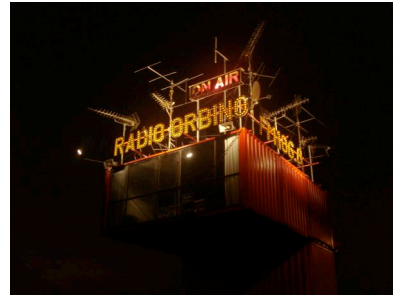
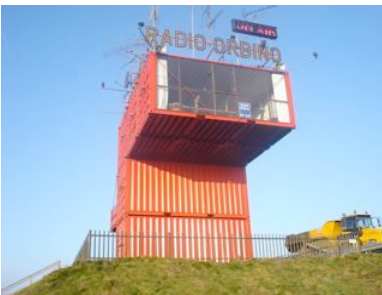


WorldwideWindows Radio Orbino

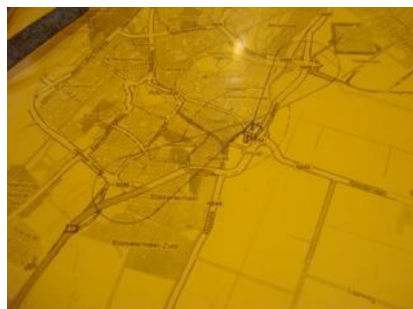
Overlooking the highway from Radio Orbino

Still it consists of different cars and road-users. Asphalt gathers the vehicles and enacts mobility by means of braking distances to relative positions and speed. How can we communicate with such an inert system? How can we draw attention to the local components of the highway as cars pass by with such a speed that all differences are eliminated? We will try to infiltrate private cars with radio waves.

By invitation of Unit1, an artists' initiative, we transformed the art laboratory Orbino of the Belgian architect Luc Deleu into the radio station Orbino with a broadcast radius of 2,5 km. Relicts of a lost landscape, the 'Areal Antennae' were taken down from the roofs of Alkmaar and were put on Orbino around the 10 meter high transmitter. A pulsating light 'on air' transformed Radio Orbino into a beacon, a postmodern lighthouse. So the architecton sculpture of Luc Deleu got a vertical extension and by means of radiowaves a horizontal extension.



At first we wanted to drown out the regular stations as soon as the cars entered the ring around Alkmaar. But if you think highways in the Netherlands are crowded, that is still nothing compared to the 'frequency-scapes' above them. The transmitter was designed in such a way that no other (emergency) frequencies can be disturbed. The radio could only be received on those 2,5 km investigated highway and his surroundings. (2.5 km length and 2 times 3.6 km broad)



You had to switch to our frequency right away, as you were out of reach in a split second. Luckily the car park of the garden centre Ranzijn was our neighbor. So everybody could park his or her car to

listen to Radio Orbino. In fact, Radio Orbino and the artists were intra-actively related agencies intending to slow you down. Two swimming pool speakers could be switched on and created a sound bell over the cycle path.



On our so called Orbino Hill (the slope of the N242 opposite the studio) people could sit and rest and enjoy the sound-scapes, interviews and performances on radio orbino.



the studio



Anton placing billboards

The studio was a stacked-container sliding zone with a hart-shaped transmission extension. Or, as an interviewer from a neighboring local radio station called it: a local 'google-machine', absorbing all the surrounding information and spitting it out in the air again.

