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## Het Urban Future-project

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## English Summary

### **The *Urban Future*-project**

Central to my research is the *Urban Future*-project, which consists of a large archive of artworks made from 2002 until now. The original question underpinning this project was: *what influence do chaos, entropy and fragmentation have on the viability of the rapidly developing urbanizing world?* In the course of the research project, my (literature and field) explorations led me to the assumption that there is a demonstrable and necessary link between the quality of life in the city and vital social cohesion on the one hand and chaos, entropy and fragmentation on the other. In the artistic part of the research I then began to focus on the question: *is it possible to make the supposed connection between quality of urban life and chaos, entropy and fragmentation visible in art work and, if so, how?* Thus, the research project also involved a critical reflection on the conditions of a specific art practice and on the creative process.

In the written dissertation, I contextualize and analyze my working methods and strategies. 'Sitting down at the table' with scientists and thinkers in the domain of urbanization, my contribution to this conversation first and foremost derives from an artist's position which uses non-verbal, sensorial strategies to reach new insights. My research is concerned with the *experience* of urbanization. I mainly focused on the visual and aesthetic possibilities of aspects of fragmentation, chaos and entropy because I consider these aspects, as productive forces, to be the core of the experience of urbanization.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters:

In chapter 1, **Background of the *Urban Future*-project**, I describe how the personal experience of the rapid growth of urbanization and my consequent fascination with the invisible forces behind decision making related to urbanization, constitute the starting point of the *Urban Future*-project. It is a quest in which thinking about the past, present and future plays an important role and in which a critical analysis of my work and method prevails. Without pretending to be an art historian, sociologist or philosopher or any other kind of scholar, I examine, from an artistic point of view, the question of how my work can contribute to the debate on urban development. I explain that the base of my current (archival) work lies in a period of ten years during which I photographed 'gray areas' – the 'forgotten' and neglected parts – of global urban areas. I elaborate on how my photography takes a 'sculptural' point of view and how my gaze during this project was focused on specific constellations of space where the effects of human activity are recognizable. Finally, I position myself in relation to American conceptual landscape photography, land art and my predecessors in the field of photography and sculpture and I explain where, how and why I differ from these artists.

In chapter 2, **Chaos, fragmentation and entropy in the context of the archive**, I zoom in on the notion of the archive, specifically the art archive, and I describe precedents that were useful for my research. During and through this research, the *Urban Future*-project evolved into an art archive. As a consequence, the position of the work – and of the individual works in the archive in relation to one another – entirely changed. The work

could take more 'fluid' forms because it is underpinned by the overall context of the archive. The *Urban Future*-archive became an *open* archive. The artist-as-archon can always re-interpret the contents of the archive, change parts, allow branching out of the structure or let parts mutate. This allows the archive to reflect and mirror in its structure the trends of its time and hence to remain viable. In this chapter, I posit the productive potential of chaos, fragmentation and entropy in the context of the archive as an integral part of my key argument regarding quality of life and urbanization.

In chapter 3, **Working with the Urban Future archive**, I take a closer look at the parallels that can be drawn between my artistic strategies and the topic of my research project. I describe a selection of works in the archive, their specific characteristics and backgrounds. My artistic attitude and gaze, the sculptural (physical) thinking while photographing formed the base for the work with the images: the act of unfolding the 'leporello' of the Cahiers reveals the image slowly, the exchange operation between the two and three dimensional works as in the in the wall-sized photo work *Urban Future # 6* in the Urban Monument and *Urban Monument* where fragments of pictures are clasped between strips of glass. All works are created almost as a performative act, acting and thinking at the same time. This is also obvious in the process-oriented approach to the working prints on the table in the work *Urban Future # 2*, the making of the model for the work *Urban Future # 6* and the different ways of showing *Urban Monuments* and *Urban landscape* (where photos stuck in between glass bars are leaning against the wall) in different exhibitions in different arrangements. I have described the similarities and differences between the *Urban Future*-archive and how other artists use similar media from a similar perspective in global urbanization.

In a **Postludium**, I conclude that by focussing on the artistic and creative potential of fragmentation, repetition and the act of 'piling' (in the literal sense), I have visualized new insights into chaos, fragmentation and entropy as productive forces, as well as the interconnection between these forces on the one hand and increasing global urbanization on the other. This interconnection is made perceptible and phenomenal in my artistic work, in a physical as well as mental sense. Through this new way of thinking and visualizing I hope to have delivered a valuable contribution to the debat on a urbanized world.

