

Moving in Free Zones #2: from dreams to deeds

Where we started

During the project *Moving in Free Zones #1*(<http://www.urbanbody.org/rotterdam>), an international and cross-disciplinary workshop - organized in Charlois (Rotterdam) in June 2007 by iStrike (www.istrike.net) in collaboration with Urban Body of TU Delft - we studied the redevelopment and gentrification of the neighbourhood of Charlois. In order to be accepted by the local inhabitants and to investigate their opinions about this urban redevelopment, we lived in Charlois for ten days and organized several public debates and initiatives with residents, professionals, politicians and civil servants about the future perspective of the neighbourhood and of the South of Rotterdam.

What we want

Driven by the issue raised up during *Moving in Free Zones #1*, Lucia Babina/iStrike, in collaboration with Urban Body/TU Delft, are going to set up the second edition of *Moving in Free Zones* with the aim to involve the inhabitants of Charlois in an active and participated debate on the development of the neighborhood and to define and design their common living space. The project *Moving in Free Zones #2: from dreams to deeds* entails 2 phases: *Phase 1/dream*, *Phase 2/deed*. The *Phase 1/dream* is about the production of a film that will involve the inhabitants of Charlois as main characters, that will investigate their sense of a community, that will stimulate them to re-imagine their common living space in the neighborhood, that will encourage them to create a positive scenario about Charlois.

The film as a tool will allow the inhabitants to re-enact their daily use of the neighbourhood and to understand its possible evolution. It will activate a participatory process in which residents are involved in re-thinking about a possible community life and in re-defining the space they live in everyday. By stirring up personal life-dreams, longings and imagination about their urban environment, and by involving the inhabitants into a real high quality film-production, the film will aim to empower residents to re-create a positive scenario for the neighbourhood and to trigger among them a sense of belonging and pride.

The film, as a final product, will contribute to give visibility to Charlois and to build up special and various points of view to look at it, by investigating what the inhabitants sense and think about it.

The international master-class of Urban Body/TU Delft will collaborate with iStrike and will contribute to the realization of the film in all its phases (casting, preparation and improvisation, plot and shooting, post-production, public screening and debate, evaluation and follow-up), as in the previous edition of *Moving in Free Zones #1* (June 2007). The students will experience a bottom-up process in which the architect's point of view will be questioned and reversed. In the end the architects of the masterclass will cover the role of interpreters of the people's real needs and aspirations related to their lives in the urban context of Charlois.

How we work

iStrike, a filmmaker of the Central Saint Martins London College of Art and Design and Urban Body/TU Delft will work together with a wide range of inhabitants (different backgrounds, age, descent etc.) of Charlois by involving them in a film production as the main protagonists. The inhabitants of Charlois will build up gradually their characters, they will embody it, and will be able, in the end, to define the plot of the film together with the filmmaker. We adopt a particular technique, called “devising”, that uses non-textual means to build characters and construct narratives. Actors learn how to improvise and to build their own characters through improvisation. It is a technique that was very common in the 60's and 70's in order to turn the hierarchical film and theatre realm into a democratic system, where actors were not only the main characters but became also the decision makers, together with the filmmaker or the theatre director. In many cases this practice has been used to portray the real, normal life of individuals and to bring it to the fore, through a film production or a theatre play. It is usually used by filmmakers such as Mike Leigh (Happy-go-lucky, Vera Drake, Secrets and Lies) or John Cameron Mitchell (Shortbus), or Tim Etchells of the theatre company Forced Entertainment.

Why in Charlois

After the workshop of last year we are convinced it is important to keep on carrying out the research process, as we think Charlois has the potential and specific social and urban characteristics to become an extraordinary laboratory and an exemplary model, at a national and European level, focused on re-defining a sense of community and of living together.

The film will focus on the **individual** longings, needs and aspirations of each inhabitant/character, concerning their life in the neighbourhood and in the community, and by confronting them, at the same time, with various experiences of community life raised up during the shooting of a short film in April/May 2008 in Charlois (Phase 1, Step 0, see the project plan).

What our results are

The film, as a product, will contribute to give visibility to Charlois and to build up special and various points of view to look at it, by investigating what the inhabitants and especially youngsters sense and think about it.

Around the film iStrike will organize 2 public moments:

- the public shooting of one of the last scenes of the film; the scene will be treated as a live performance, open to the public, and at the same time shot as a scene of the film
- the public screening of the film in the neighborhood and an ensuing debate, open to the inhabitants of Charlois, politicians, developers, artists, cultural producers, etc. and who is interested to participate in the debate regarding the future re-development of Charlois and the South of Rotterdam (in Stichting B.a.d. and Theater Zuidplein).