

Claiming Space

by Daan and Job Roggeveen

Possibly the most underappreciated quality of 2nd rate cities is the fact that you can park your car almost anywhere. Thanks to an abundance of space, the joy of parking your car wherever you like is not only available for the rich and famous: everyone can always access his private parking lot in the 2nd rate city!

Such a waste of space is not possible in a metropolis where each square meter is valuable.

Welcome to Luik / Liege; 2nd rate city.



1. Parking

12 square meters of asphalt become a fixation for many of us. Just as the roman character Guggenheimer, created by the Belgian writer Brusselmans, we all seem to have an obsession with parking our car as closely as possible to wherever we go. And not only closely to the front door of our houses. People want to park as close as possible to their office, their supermarket, their gym(!). three or four times 12 square meters of temporarily claimed public space.

Whole sections of cities are considered inaccessible due to a lack of parking. Office rents slump when parking facilities are scarce. The difference between a successful and unsuccessful shopping mall mainly lies in its parking facilities. Parking is a main element in spatial planning, but in large, first rate metropolitan centers it is generally not treated that way.





2. Wasting

The contrast between a metropolis and a 2nd rate city becomes apparent in the way left over spaces are treated: density vs. waste. The ambition in a metropolis is to hide parking away, in a 2nd rate city parking can be seen everywhere around, namely in those left over spaces.

One could consider the fact that much public space is used as parking space in the 2nd rate city is waste. But maybe it is exactly one of the qualities of this type of city: parking wherever and whenever you want, (almost) for free. Heavenly conditions and ultimate freedom for the motorist!





3. Claiming

The only way modern man can make a claim to a piece of public space - apart from putting up his tent on a camping site - is in a parking lot. People claim their own parking lot at the office (at lunch: 'Who is standing on my spot today?'), at home (to a neighbor: 'Excuse me, but you know that's my place.') and at the supermarket (in the car: 'Do we take our usual spot?'). Maybe it has to do with the possibility of feeling at home in the city: the car as a piece of furniture in the urban living room.

Yet sometimes this claiming of public space seems to be obsessive in its territoriality. Paradoxically, people keep on claiming the public area, even where there's a surplus of space. Parking space is not scarce in the 2nd rate city. And so it is remarkable that in these cities the claiming of public space seems to be even more pronounced than in high-density metropolitan centers.

49

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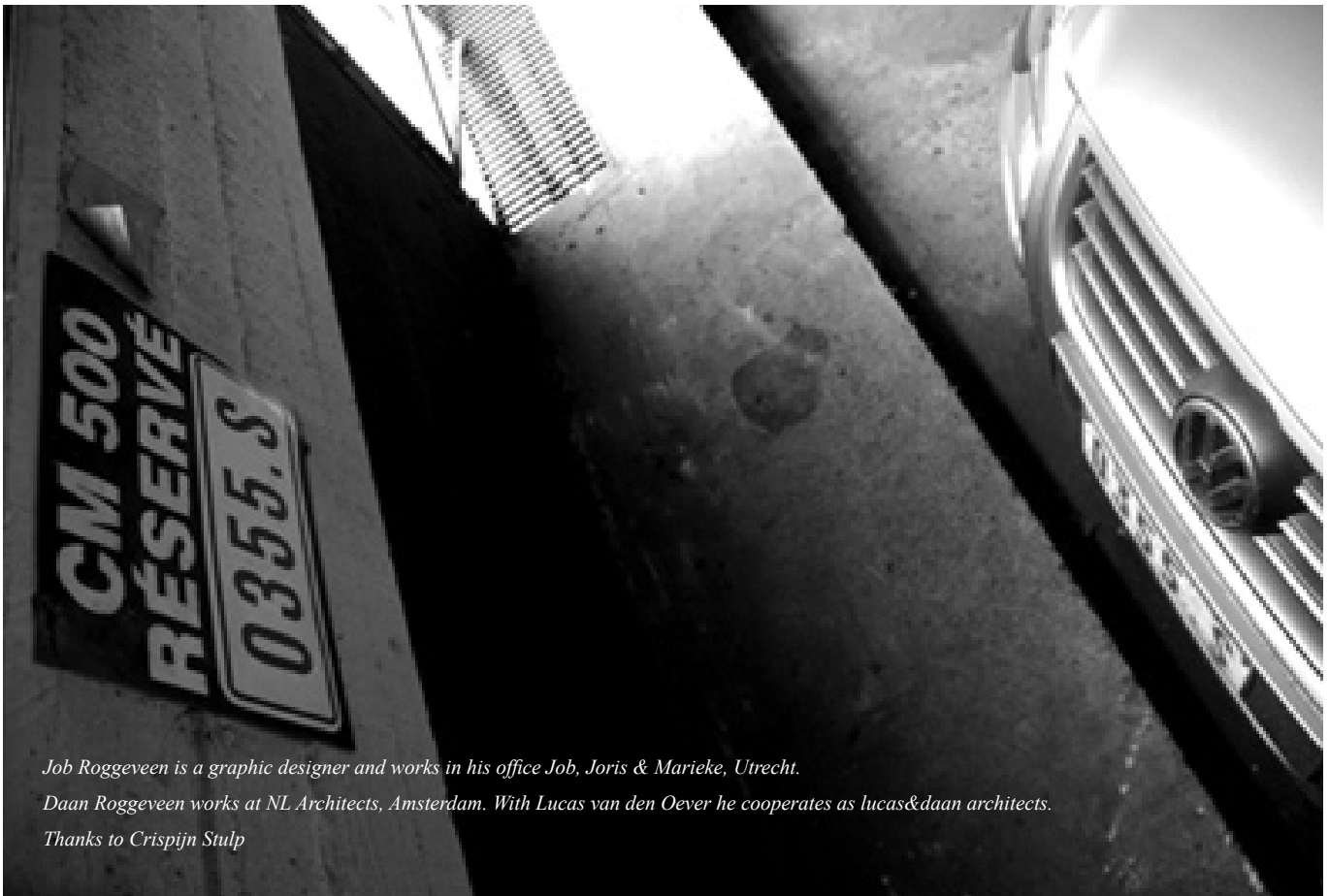
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Thanks to Crispijn Stulp