



# ***Video in the City***

***Possibilities for Transformation in the Urban Space***



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## Abstract

This thesis is an attempt at looking at the ways video can create a change in the city. The specific use of video by communities and activists is what is meant by video as opposed to its other uses. In this thesis video is not ascribed an emancipatory role per se, rather its potentials will be explored through its practice.

In order to understand the significance of different uses of video in the city, first the visual terrain of the city video is acting in will be explored around the concepts of spectacle and surveillance. After that the relation of the visual technologies of photography and cinema with the modern city will be analysed. Although these two are not taken as predecessors of video, some of their uses resemble to that of video's.

Video is a technology that is used in different contexts. In the scope of this thesis, video art, video activism and participatory uses of video will be dealt with in detail. Video is also defined as a *tactic* using de Certeau's terminology.

Process and practice are important in studying video's uses, so this thesis will also be informed by different practices of three different video groups. Karahaber in Ankara, PTTL in Brussels and Spectacle in London have developed different practices that are defined by their local conditions as well as aspirations of the group members. No matter how locally defined and specific they are, these practices can be assembled together under certain topics. Documenting, reconstruction, monitoring the monitors, having a voice, encounter(s) and transformation are such topics defined in this thesis.

The main argument of the thesis is that video is a tool that is capable of creating local narratives that can bring about the differential space Henri Lefebvre has situated against the abstract space of capitalism. The former will not emerge with an overnight collapse of the latter, but rather will infiltrate through the cracks left open. Video is one medium that can create more cracks.

*to Ülkü and Ahmet Sarıtaş*



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## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Table of Contents .....   | 7  |
| Chapter 1. Introduction .....   | 8  |
| Chapter 2. Visuality and the City: Spectacle, Discipline and Representation.... | 14 |
| 2.1. <i>Spectacle and Surveillance</i> .....                                    | 16 |
| 2.1.2. <i>Camera and Screen: Spectacle and Surveillance in City</i> .....       | 18 |
| 2.2. <i>City through the Lens</i> .....   | 22 |
| 2.2.1 <i>Early Modern City</i> .....  | 22 |
| 2.2.2. <i>Pre- and Post War Developments</i> .....                              | 26 |
| 2.2.3. <i>Postmodern City: Blade Runner</i> .....                               | 28 |
| 2.3. <i>A Need for New Narratives?</i> .....                                    | 29 |
| Chapter 3. Video: Art, Activism, Participation .....                            | 33 |
| 3.1. <i>Video Technology</i> .....  | 35 |
| 3.2. <i>Video Art</i> .....   | 38 |
| 3.3. <i>Video Activism</i> .....  | 40 |
| 3.4. <i>Participatory Video</i> .....   | 43 |
| 3.5. <i>Video as a Tactic in the City</i> .....                                 | 45 |
| Chapter 4. Case Studies: Karahaber, PTTL and Spectacle.....                     | 48 |
| 4.1. <i>Descriptive Analysis of Cases</i> .....                                 | 49 |
| 4.1.1. <i>Karahaber, Ankara</i> .....   | 49 |
| 4.1.2. <i>PTTL(Plus-tôt Te laat), Brussels</i> .....                            | 54 |
| 4.1.3. <i>Spectacle, London</i> .....   | 59 |
| 4.2. <i>Video In the City</i> .....   | 63 |
| 4.2.1. <i>Documenting</i> .....   | 65 |
| 4.2.2. <i>Reconstruction</i> .....  | 69 |
| 4.2.3. <i>Monitoring the Monitors</i> .....                                     | 73 |
| 4.2.4. <i>Having A Voice</i> .....  | 75 |
| 4.2.5. <i>Encounter(s)</i> .....  | 82 |
| 4.2.6. <i>Transformation</i> .....  | 84 |
| Chapter 5. Conclusion .....   | 86 |
| Bibliography .....  | 94 |
| Appendix.....   | 99 |

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*'Yet scattered and fragmented under the weight of technology, body and city can't be recovered by means other than those that displace them: they must be recorded or registered anew. Video replaces the personal diary. Made up of images, urban culture is like a hall of mirrors, its reflections reproduced to infinity. Confronted with their own technological images, the city and the body become ruins. Even technology is attacked by an obsolescence that renders it old instantly. We are faced with a transitory landscape, where new ruins continually pile up on each other. It is amid these ruins that we look for ourselves.'*

*Celeste Olalquiaga<sup>1</sup>*

The postmodern city is shaped by massive transformations that render the built environment as well as the communities in such a way that leaves no space for the participation of the inhabitants of the city. We have become spectators of these developments as our means to participate are curtailed. The lack of participation is not only because the urbanites do not possess the means, but also because they increasingly refrain from the city to the refuge of the suburbs, the animated and secure spaces of the malls, to the personal sphere and the screens at home. This is the bleak picture of the space of advanced capitalism; of postmodern city. Yet, such a picture should not underestimate the resistances that take place in the postmodern city. There is no system that establishes itself without resistance. There are always cracks left open and through these cracks, we can use our right to have a say on our own lives. This study will aim to look at one of the ways that is used to speak up in the city which is through using video.

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<sup>1</sup> *Megalopolis: Contemporary Cultural Sensibilities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992: 94-94.

After a long time of turning a blind eye to space by the critical theory, in 1974 Henri Lefebvre outlined a Marxist theory of space in his book *Production of Space*. Lefebvre's argument that space is a social product rather than being a frozen and static entity has been a threshold for the study of space. Within this general framework he introduced three concepts of space which are spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces which correspond to perceived, conceived and lived spaces. The first is the space of a society that is secreted by that society, the second is the dominant space of the planners, architects and social engineers, while the third corresponds to the space that is *lived* by the users through a system of non-verbal signs and symbols. (Lefebvre, 1991: 38) Representations of space construct the space through architecture and engineering; while the representational spaces produce only *symbolic works* which are "often unique; sometimes they set in train 'aesthetic' trends and, after a time, having provoked a series of manifestations and incursions to the imaginary, run out of steam". (Lefebvre, 1991: 42)

In such a conceptualisation, the space is constructed in accordance with dominant representations, while users are experiencing it passively. In the space of modernity, homogenised and ordered abstract space took over the historical space and made the representations of space triumph over representational space. Abstract space is about the silence of its users. However as noted by Lefebvre, abstract space is not without contradictions. "The reproduction of the social relations of production within this space inevitably obeys two tendencies: the dissolution of old relations on the one hand and the generation of new relations on the other. Thus, despite - or rather because of - its negativity, abstract space carries within itself the seeds of a new kind of space. I shall call that new space 'differential space', because, inasmuch as abstract space tends towards homogeneity, towards the elimination of existing differences or peculiarities, a new space can not be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences. It will also restore unity to what abstract space breaks up - to the functions, elements and moments of social practice." (Lefebvre, 1991: 52, parentheses belong to the author.)

The abstract space uses technology and sciences to improve its applications. (Lefebvre, 1991: 50) The differential space that would emerge out of the

contradictions of the abstract space can make use of technology as well. Both the connections between the fragments of the space that are disrupted under capitalism and the uniqueness of the space that is lost under homogenisation can be restored via the new technologies. The media that played a role in these processes of homogenization and fragmentation can also be used to reverse these processes.

Because of the increasing dissatisfaction by mainstream media, social movements and activists all around the world started to produce their own media with the help of the democratisation of the technologies. Among these technologies, video is a medium that is used extensively to expose state violence, global injustices, poverty, inequality, human rights violations and to defend democracy, environmental sustainability, social and economic equality. Video is employed by a variety of movements from most radical anarchist groups to organizations motivated with a developmentalist discourse. The scale of these groups are acting in also vary; there are international networks such as Indymedia (although it acts very locally too) and groups that act only in their locality. However, most of them act as part of the network of new social movements that are trying to define an alternative globalisation through the international networks they have.<sup>2</sup>

An important scale where video operates is the city. Although there are many rural communities that use video in their struggles, in terms of spatial connotations of video's use, city becomes prominent. Being a tool that has penetrated to our everyday lives as a result of its relative cheapness and easiness to use, video has the capacity to capture the mundane. It gives the urbanites a chance to talk about their environment in the way they experience it and tell their stories in an effective and powerful way. Moreover it can change the way they experience that environment. Video creates new ways of production and appropriation. This is why it can be a tool that has the potential to disrupt the silence of the users of abstract space.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.videoactivism.org](http://www.videoactivism.org) is an example to the international network between different media activist groups that use video. Alongside a long list of video groups all around the world, the site also includes some key texts about media and video activism, gives tips to activists and includes some online videos.

Before analysing the ways video can do that, first the landscape it is acting in is depicted. While this landscape can be defined through several other characteristics, visuality is chosen as the main focus in the scope of this study. One reason is that the environment we are living in is more and more visually defined. While this can be traced back to modern city, in postmodern city this visually defined environment gained a new face. Cities are being invaded by images of commercial capitalism and the built environment itself is becoming spectacular. The relation of the city with visuality is not only in terms of being a spectacle, but also in terms of surveillance where it is turned into a panoptic machine. Through both of these processes, urbanites are excluded from shaping their environment, and assigned the role of spectatorship while at the same time kept under the control of a constant gaze of CCTV cameras.

The relation between visuality and the city is also explored through the visual technologies of modernity, namely photography and cinema. The aim is not assigning them the role of being predecessors of video. It should be noted that any aim of looking at video's predecessors should include an analysis of television, as video and television share a similar technology while that of photography and cinema is fundamentally different. Television is excluded from this study as its relation to city has not been similar to that of cinema's and photography's and as a cultural form, it is mostly defined by its existence in the context of the personal sphere. Modern city and visual technologies of cinema and photography on the other hand, have a relation that can be followed back to their emergence, and the way they have been used in the city is comparable to that of video's in certain ways. However as being modern phenomena, they fall inadequate of capturing the postmodern city. Although cities have always been heterogeneous entities, the modernist totalising look at them is no longer possible in the context of postmodernism's questioning of modern metanarratives. Video is an adequate way to tell the small narratives of postmodernity that are to displace metanarratives.

Almost immediately after the first commercial video recorder was released, it was adopted by activists and artists, to challenge the visual domination of mainstream media both in terms of content and style. There was no strict separation between video activism and video art in the beginning, and although such a separation emerged later, it has always been a problematic one as there

are many instances that do not fit only in one of the categories. However for the sake of some analytical clarity, these two are analysed separately. Participatory video is given a special emphasis as two of the case studies actively use it. Video in general, as well as its particular use in the city, is regarded as a tactic acting within the place of the strategy. This is important as video practice is neither independent from the capitalist economy, nor from the dominant 'urbanistic discourse'.

In the light of this general framework that is nourished by a variety of theoretical sources, case studies will be analysed. The cases are three video groups in three different cities: Karahaber in Ankara, PTTL in Brussels and Spectacle in London. An empirical analysis about video's use in the city is necessary as the topic can only be studied through the analysis of the practices developed by video practitioners. The case studies are analysed both in terms of their ways of operation and videos they produced. The empirical ground of the work is formed by in-depth interviews, written materials and the videos. Because of the emphasis of video on *process*, these are not analysed separately from each other, but rather as a set of data from which the video practice of three case studies can be traced. After a descriptive analysis of the groups, their practices are examined under six headings; *documenting, reconstruction, monitoring the monitors, having a voice, encounter(s)* and *transformation*.

The main aim of this study is looking at the different dynamics created through the use of video by the 'silenced' users of the city. These are not 'any' dynamics, but the ones that have a subversive potential against the abstract space of capitalism. Video, being a visual medium itself, is a claim over the visuality that is shaping our environments in a way that leaves no space for interaction between the inhabitants of city among themselves and between them and the city. But more than being just a visual medium, video is a practice where the processes of production, and dissemination create a set of relations that bring urbanites together and empower them to speak up for themselves. As Lefebvre mentioned, a new space against the abstract space of modernity shall be about differences and particularities against homogenisation. What video can do in urban space is also about particularities and heterogeneity, and is shaped by the multiple and heterogeneous practices of its users. This is why, this study does not ask a

fundamental question about either the city or video. It does not claim to lay down a theory of video in the city, or provide an all-encompassing analysis of the ways video can operate in the city. It aims to track down some of the practices that are mediated via video in an urban context.

Being a local narrative, video is influenced by the local dynamics it is embedded in and with each case the ways it operate changes. What is driven out of the three cases might give clues about some common uses in different contexts, but the study is open to include different implications of video in the city that might be found out as a result of other studies about different cases. It should be reminded that, any study that aims to go beyond looking at the multiple practices of video in different contexts might reproduce a totalising look at the city, and the abstract space that is to be challenged.

## Chapter 2

### Visuality and the City

#### Spectacle, Discipline and Representation

Since the emergence of the modern city, its relation to visuality has been an interesting topic to explore. Most important accounts of the early modern city refer to the excess of sensual stimulus that is caused by the new complexity of modern life. Reactions to this new life varied from a reactionary condemnation to an over-enthusiastic celebration. In this chapter different faces of the relation between visuality and city will be explored. Included in this brief analysis will be the cities turning into *spectacle* starting with the early modern city and coupled with this development an increasingly visual disciplinary machine effective in the city. Later, modern visual technologies that became more and more popular starting from late nineteenth century and their relation to the city will be briefly analysed. The aim is not to look at those tools as predecessors of video, but rather provide a ground for analysis of video in the city through examining previous examples of documentation of the urban environment, and its reconstruction via different media. However it should be noted that video is significantly different from these media, as in video the process of production is as important as the product. Modernity is also defined with metanarratives which proved to become incompetent in the context of postmodern cultural forms. At the end of this chapter possibility of creating new narratives that are more adequate to postmodern city will be explored.

What made the modern city unique was the amalgam of images, sounds and smells that came together and being divorced from any original context they assembled a new whole that was difficult to perceive at once. Probably one of the most famous accounts of the modern city is sociologist Georg Simmel's famous essay "Metropolis and Mental Life". According to Simmel, in order to deal with the disruptions and complexities of the modern city, the metropolitan type reacts in a rational and impersonal way. This reaction is defined with the *blasé* attitude. In modern city, the nerves are stimulated so much that they can no longer produce any reactions. As all of their capacity to respond is exhausted, they become incapable of reacting to new stimulations. (Simmel, 1903: 14)

While all of the senses were subject to over stimulation, the visual stimulus has become abundant in the modern city more than ever. This was inline with the general dominance of sight in modernity. (Jay, 1988) The scopic regime of modernity was in turn shaped by the developments in the modern city.

However not all modern figures were over-exhausted by the intensified and rapidly changing visual stimulus. Maybe more famous than Simmel's concept of blasé is the figure of *flâneur* that is usually associated with early modern Paris because of the term's use by Charles Baudelaire. Being picked up by Walter Benjamin as a figure of modernity, the ambiguous *flâneur* has been used extensively by social scientists in various contexts. In the context of this paper, what is important is that *flâneur* was an observer of the modern city; he<sup>3</sup> developed a unique form of observing the built environment, the people and the activities in the modern city. (Frisby, 1994: 82) The *flâneur* collects and records the images of city. Although feeling at home in the metropolis; he is always aware that he is subject to others' gazes as well. Dialectics of seeing and being seen at the same time is embodied in the figure of *flâneur*. However the *flâneur* should not be reduced to a simple spectator, he is trying to read and disentangle the complexity of the signifiers in modern metropolis. (Frisby, 1994: 93)

Although some mark Haussmannisation of Paris as the end of *flâneur*, as Frisby notes this is open to discussion and the term could be employed in various different contexts. (Frisby, 1994: 88) Whether or not, it is for sure that the Paris of Haussmann with its big boulevards was a threshold in terms of the visual relation of city inhabitants to their environment. They created new 'spectacles'; the built environment; monuments, green spaces and new façades, the leisure spaces; terraced cafés, restaurants and new department stores; benches and wide pedestrian walks that enabled the Parisians to gaze around. Marshall Berman says: "All these qualities helped to make the new Paris a uniquely enticing spectacle, a visual and sensual feast." (Berman, 1983: 151) Haussmann's Paris also made anonymous 'other's more visible; privacy of lovers was exposed, different classes started to encounter each other. While the poor living conditions were exposed as

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<sup>3</sup> The term's gender associations has been discussed extensively by feminist scholars such as Janet Wolff and Elizabeth Wilson. The figure is a male one which is to be taken into consideration in terms of the visual relation he establishes with the city.

never before, the poor also had the chance to gaze upon things they never had a chance to. (Berman 1983: 152, 153)

Hausmann's Paris was also important in terms of the cleansing of medieval streets and slums that made inspection and control difficult. Policing of the city more efficiently and using new architecture for maintaining the order were definitely motives for Paris' renovation. Taken as the epitome of a modern metropolis, what is of consideration in Hausmann' Paris is that a mechanism of surveillance and spectacle was combined, which are two faces of the same mechanism that define modernity and modern cities. This structure, although underwent a transformation, was kept intact in today's cities as well. In order to understand it better, the two concepts - spectacle and surveillance - should be studied under the light of two key books; Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* and Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*.

### ***2.1.Spectacle and Surveillance***

The term spectacle is usually used by reference to Guy Debord's 1967 dated seminal book *Society of the Spectacle*. He claimed in the book that all life presents itself as an accumulation of spectacles; everything that was once directly lived has turned into representation. Spectacle should be understood as something more than a collection of images; it has become a social relation. (Debord, 1967) Making a separation between the lived reality and images is not useful as the lived reality itself is invaded by images. Spectacle is an affirmation of all of life as mere appearance, at the same time it is an affirmation of itself; it says everything that appears is good, and everything good appears. (Debord, 1967) Debord explains the way commodity fetishism of Marx has been transformed in late capitalism; *being* that was once replaced by *having* is now replaced by *appearing*. The spectacle is the moment when the whole life is occupied by the commodity. In such a picture, the worker is alienated not only from her products, but also from whole life that has turned into spectacle.

Urbanism is capitalism's seizure over natural and human environments; and its task is to secure the class power by keeping the workers isolated but still together: While they get together in massive shopping malls, they continue to be isolated as the empty space between them is filled with dominant images. (Debord,

1967) Writing towards the end of 1960s, Debord comments on domination of cities with consumption and dislocation of urban centres with ever-expanding cities with suburban shopping malls, private automobiles and highways. Like any other aspect of life, modern cities have turned into spectacles as well.

Less than ten years after Debord, Michel Foucault wrote; “Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance; under the surface of images, one invests bodies in depth; behind the great abstraction of exchange, there continues the meticulous, concrete training of useful forces ... We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage but in the panoptic machine ...” (Foucault, 1977: 217) Drawing attention to the power relations in the society, Foucault claims that regulation of relations both among individuals, and individuals and the state can be accomplished only in a form that is the exact reverse of the spectacle.

Jeremy Bentham’s *Panopticon* is used as an architectural model to explain the segmented, enclosed spaces in which individuals are fixed, and their every movement is recorded and supervised. (Foucault, 1977) Panopticon is a type of prison in which there is a tower at the centre, and the supervisor at the tower is surrounded by individual cells which are visible in contrast to the invisibility of the supervisor. The power is independent from its practitioner; the inmates in Panopticon never see or know if they are observed, so they constantly feel under control. Even when there is no one in the tower, Panopticon continues to operate perfectly. As Foucault notes, Panopticon should be seen as a generalisable model that can be - and is - applied in various contexts where a multiplicity of individuals are to be dealt with and is a lighter, more rapid and efficient form of control. (Foucault, 1977: 205, 209) More importantly, as mentioned earlier, it is a model that explains our society.

Writing in the after-math of 1968 events, Foucault’s remarks make a clear reference to Debord, however as Crary notes, he ignored the ways the two regimes of power, namely spectacle and surveillance, coincide. (Crary, 1990: 18) Although conquer of everyday life by the spectacle is much of a late modern phenomenon while Panopticon belongs to late nineteenth century, in analysing today’s society, it is important to see that vision has become a kind of discipline. While we are constantly observed, we have also become observers ourselves; although our eyes are not directed at our observer. The power relations entailed in the question of

visuality is much more complex than the simple model of the observer having power over the observed as there is no single observer and the observed, and not always the power relation between them is unidirectional.

### *2.1.2. Camera and Screen: Spectacle and Surveillance in City*

One of the areas where the mechanism of spectacle and surveillance becomes obvious is the city. Intersection of spectacle and surveillance was evident starting with early modern city as demonstrated in the example of Paris. Even before Haussmann's renovation of the city, there are examples such as the abundance of artificial lightning in eighteenth century Paris that demonstrated both a desire for security and a democratised spectacle for the city inhabitants. (Virilio, 1994: 9)

While this mechanism has changed its form since the early modern city, it is still an important aspect of contemporary cities. "For power over people, architecture had wielded the evil technologies of the eye: spectacle and surveillance. From the cathedral and palace to the housing development shopping mall -to start with spectacle - architecture has been characterised by grandiloquent display and forceful geometry. Its symmetries, hierarchies, and taxonomies fabricated the intoxicating dream-worlds of authority, commodity, and consumption. As for contemporary surveillance, architecture was at first blamed for not providing it ... Instead came the videocam and armed response." (Tabor, 2001: 123)

Spectacle's abundance is obvious. From new architecture to all pervasive advertisement, the city is bombarding our visual perception. One of the main factors that causes an overwhelming accumulation of images in the city is consumption. Advertisement boards, shop windows, spectacular architecture of shopping malls attract us and imprint images on our unconscious. As the public space is more and more overloaded with advertisement, advertisers have become the manipulators of the public space. (Boyer, 1996: 147) Capitalism's image has become all pervasive; local authorities invent new ways of turning the whole city into a big billboard. Metro tickets, bus handles, public toilet doors etc. From the smallest detail of everyday life to the sky, anywhere we look at is invaded by the images of commercial capitalism.

It is not only the advertisements in the city; architecture itself is increasingly becoming spectacular. The architecture of transparency and reflection with its glass like structures and steel surfaces create a hall of mirrors where one is encapsulated in an endless repetition; an endless disorientation and feeling of dizziness. (Olalquiaga, 1992: 2) In this architecture of repetition, not much of a reference point that defines the city is left.

In this state of dizziness, we appropriate the images on an unconscious level. Although it is possible to avoid the images of popular culture in our private realm, in the urban context it is impossible to escape from them. Popular culture imprints itself on our consciousness through its penetration in the texture of the city. (Crouch, 1998: 172) Because of the flood of images, our perception of reality started to shift as well. It is not defined with the physical space any more; the complexity and nuances of everyday life are replaced by stereotypical images of hypervisualisation. (Boyer, 1996: 149-150)

The contemporary city does not have any clear boundaries any more. Suburbs and edge cities as well as the invisible network of cables, highways, computers, and televisions constitute a major invisible city. (Boyer, 1996: 139) It is not only this changing structure, but also the enclosed self-referential spaces such as shopping malls, business districts and gated communities that disturb our visual perception of the city. As these places are independent from the rest of the city, they are open to a number of relations that could be established among them. (Boyer, 1996: 173)

With the saturation of visual images and disappearance of the physical space of the city in our mental maps, it has become more problematic to develop an image of the city. (Boyer, 1996: 138) As Virilio says, the cities do not have gates that we can enter and our perception of city is not defined by an inside/outside dichotomy any more. (Virilio, 1991: 383) The space is no longer defined by depth but by the flat screen interface which manifests a lost dimension. While the old distances are diminishing, the screen interface introduced a new kind of 'distance'; "a depth of a field of a new kind of representation, a visibility without any face-to-face encounter in which the *vis-à-vis* of the ancient streets disappears and is erased." (Virilio, 1991: 382) Distant images that no longer have a location, meet on

a non-existing location; the screen has become where all the media intersects almost functioning like a city square. (Virilio, 1991: 385, 389)

Our perception of space is not independent from our perception of time. “Spatial and temporal coordinates end up collapsing: space is no longer defined by depth and volume, but rather by a cinematic (temporal) repetition, while the sequence of time is frozen in an instant of (spatial) immobility.” (Olalquiaga, 1992: 2) In the new temporal space the work and efficiency is located in the centre, while on the periphery are the vacations, leisure and the idleness of unemployment. (Virilio, 1991: 384)

The disappearing borders of the physical cities do not mean that there are no entry-barriers any more. While we do not pass an official gateway while entering the city, we enter zones under an audiovisual protocol of electronic surveillance systems. (Virilio, 1991: 383) The complex net of surveillance systems is composed of not only the surveillance cameras, but also a system of records that registers our social security number, home address, phone numbers, credit card numbers etc: Every code that we enter for any everyday operation create a profile, a social identity for each of us. (Fiske, 1998: 154)

The surveillance systems justify themselves with a need for more security and regulation. Leaving aside how much fabricated that need is, what it brings is more than security. It means exclusion of those unable or unwilling to subscribe to the norms of consumer citizenship from public space. (Fyfe and Bannister, 1998: 260-161) The homeless, the youth, and other low income groups whose appearance and mode of behaviour do not fit to the consumption spaces are the main targets of this kind of exclusion. Thus, surveillance is not only about securing the order and law; it reproduces and even strengthens the power relations existing in the society. For instances as Fiske notes, use of video technology in video surveillance is effective in racial surveillance, as racial difference is very visible. (Fiske, 1998: 156)

While the ones who are recorded on surveillance cameras are identified with visual codes of race, age, income and gender; the one behind the camera; the human witness is raceless, genderless and ageless. Just like the supervisor of

panopticon, he<sup>4</sup> is invisible. “This solemn farewell to the man behind the camera, the complete evaporation of visual subjectivity into an ambient technical effect, a sort of permanent pancinema which, unbeknown to us, turns our most ordinary acts into movie action, into new visual material, undaunted, undifferentiated vision-fodder ...”(Virilio, 1994: 47) The visual relation between the spectacle - which is urbanites themselves - and the spectator - which is also the urbanites themselves - become a mediated one, and even though in everyday life estranged from each other, behind the protection of the lens, urbanites become each other’s spectators and spectacles at the same time. “The lens then is a tool for mediating and managing social interactions, and for empowering those individuals who control it.” (AlSayyad, 2006: 166)

Because the camera is the eye that observes, it manufactures the conscience of the panopticon, it is a tool for self-exposure and electronic narcissism. (Tabor, 2001) Camera is like the mirror in which the infant becomes aware of its existence; we appear on it, therefore we are. But it also creates a split between the self that is observed from outside and the self inside; we spy on ourselves. (Tabor, 2001: 129) Surveillance arouses different desires, dreams of narcissism, voyeurism and exhibitionism. (Tabor, 2001: 125) Even though their actions are constantly spied - and usually by a private interest that decides who can participate in which space - as Fyfe and Bannister demonstrates, many of the urbanites are content with video surveillance systems. The explanation of the acceptance of, and even demand for, such systems has something to do more than the demand for security; there is also a more subconscious level of the desires mentioned by Tabor that play a role.

The camera that spies on us and the screen that bombards our visual perception are technologies that are employed in different contexts with different uses. Before looking at how they are used differently in the city by video activists, previous uses of visual technologies of cinema and photography in relation to the city will be explored.

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<sup>4</sup> Although the observer is said to be genderless, there is an implication that the gaze of surveillance is male, white and middle class. The gender of the eye behind the camera becomes even more crucial in accounts such as AlSayyad’s where he is taken as a revival of the *flâneur* to whom the city is exposed. (AlSayyad, 2006: 148)

## **2.2. *City through the Lens***

### **2.2.1 *Early Modern City***

Perception is historical. The technical advancements in a certain age as well as the way the society is organized determine the ways we perceive the world around us. With modernity, not only the environment we live in, but also our perception of it underwent a tremendous change. It is important to see the relation between the two as a mutual one; the changes in our perception also affected the way the “real” life is organized. The emergence of technical optical devices and the modern city are almost contemporary. There lies something more than a mere coincidence in that; the relation between the city and photography in late nineteenth century, and cinema in early twentieth century demonstrate that the modern ways of seeing are informed both by these technologies as well as the modern city’s above mentioned visual landscape.

The blasé attitude of the modern individual Simmel was talking about corresponded to a new way of perception. Impressions of the complexity of the city were recorded somewhere in the unconscious of the individual who was turning a blind eye to it. (Boyer, 1996: 85) The avant-garde of the twentieth century believed that the camera could capture this unconscious level. What the naked eye could not see - the hidden reality behind the complexity of transitory, fleeting images in the city - revealed itself to the camera. (Boyer, 1996: 85) With the aid of photographic reproduction, and processes such as enlargement, images that escape the natural vision could be captured. (Benjamin, 1973: 214)

Although earlier the city had been captured through different methods and with different motives - such as topographical images of mid-nineteenth century, and topographical photography that followed it - with the urban renewal projects that followed industrial capitalism, capturing the city through the lens gained a new face in terms of documenting these rapid transformations. With these images, the previously unrepresented parts of the city started to become subjects of photography as well. The urban photographer’s role was not only of a view-maker any more, he was to record and collect historical data. (Blau, 1989: 44)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Examples of such documentation are Charles Marville’s pictures, commissioned by Haussmann that cover the entire process of transformation of streets of Old Paris, Thomas Annan’s photographic survey of Glasgow between 1868 and 1871 which was mainly motivated with preserving an image of the past, Jacob Riis’ pictures of New York in late eighteenth century to show the social situation in

Photography was used to document the areas of the city that were perceived to be unhygienic, full of crime and a threat to the order. These pictures also demonstrated the visual experience of early modernity which was previously mentioned. As Blau notes, they were reflecting the fragmentary, discontinuous visual experience of modernity with fleeting, fragmentary images. (Blau, 1989: 53)

The crisis of the transformation was reflected most clearly in Eugene Atget's pictures of Paris from late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries that covered almost all of the streets, neighbourhoods and districts. Denying any status of work of art and keeping a deliberate distance from any highbrow association, Atget called his pictures, 'only documents'. (Nesbit, 1992) However as Benjamin noted, there is a hidden political agenda to them. (Benjamin, 1973: 220) This political agenda is in the details of popular life in the city, the history of the street, a Paris that the bourgeois was non-existent. As Nesbit puts it: "Atget's pictures reminded (them) that there was another version of modern life, a version that echoed from below. A version that unsettled when it did not echo *them*." (Nesbit, 1992: 5; parentheses belong to me) Against the modernity's attempt of projecting the popular as a passive, unified mass, his pictures captured the popular in its diversity. (Nesbit, 1992: 7) The lens was able to document what was left out of the official history of modernity in Atget's pictures.

Maybe more than its relation to photography, cinema's relation to modern city had been a subject explored by many authors. Only one year after the first meeting of CIAM (Congrès International l'Architecture Moderne) at La Sarraz, in 1929, CICI (Congrès International du Cinéma Indépendant) was held in La Sarraz, and the feeling that the two shared a common agenda was strong. (Bullock, 1997: 6) The cinematic city of industrial modernity both represented and contributed to rising feelings of alienation and blasé attitude that were caused by modern city, at the same time the fascination about it both because of its new dynamism and its perception as an emancipator from the repression of earlier forms of urbanization associated with feudalism. (AlSayyad, 2006: 41)

While cinema contributed to the rhythms of the modern life, it also helped to normalise the frantic pace of the city, reflected new forms of encounters and social relations in the crowded, anonymous streets, and documented and

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the slums and documentation of old Hamburg between 1883 and 1888 by Georg Koppmann and photographers that work for him. (Blau, 1989)

transformed the social and physical space of the city. (Clarke, 1997: 3) Benjamin wrote, “The film corresponds to profound changes in the perceptive apparatus - changes that are experienced on an individual scale by the man in the street in big city traffic, on a historical scale by every present-day citizen.” (Benjamin, 1973: 243) This perceptive apparatus corresponded to a more habitual, absent-minded perception instead of contemplation. While doing that cinema does not represent a space, but rather constructs one. Moreover the spaces it constructs, contributes to the making of the visualscapes, soundscapes and culturalscapes we move in. (Chambers, 1997: 230)

One of the reasons of the early attention of film to city life was that the film had the capacity to provide visual evidence about the city. The early films about the city were both a validation of cinema’s capacities that can make the magical appear in the details of everyday life and the depiction of the fascination with the new urban life. (Weihsman, 1997: 8) Films belonging to city-symphony genre of 1920s are the most prominent examples of that. The most prominent film of the genre is *Berlin—Symphony of a Great City* (1927) by Walter Ruttmann.<sup>6</sup> The film was to represent a typical day in Berlin starting with a train journey to the city in the morning and ending with another one out of the city. Ruttmann ignored the individual dweller and specific problems in the city, and created an orchestrated rhythm through abstract patterns that make all activities appear as if they were performed to fit into that symphonic structure. (Weihsman, 1997: 20) *Berlin* was expressing a celebratory vision of the modern metropolis in line with Weimar’s urban discourse, and even if it portrayed the classed society and its tensions, it was far from being critical. (AlSayyad, 2006: 27, Weihsman, 1997: 20, Thomas 2000). Also the film did not portray any conflicts that are specific to Berlin and makes it a generic and partly ahistorical film about the life in *any* metropolis. (Thomas, 2000)

If *Berlin* represented the celebratory account of the modern city life, another film that belonged to the same year, Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* can be taken as an account of the darker side of this new life. (AlSayyad, 2001, Weihsman,

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<sup>6</sup> *Paris qui dort* (1924) by René Clair, *Berlin von unten* (1928) by Alex Strasser, *Mit der Pferdedroschke durch Berlin* (1929) by Carl Fröhlich, *Markt am Wittenbergplatz* (1929) by Wilfried Basse, *Hogstraat* (1929) by Andor von Barsy, *De Brug* (1928) and *Regen* (1929) by Joris Ivens, *Menschen am Sonntag* (1930) and Jean Vigo’s *A propos de Nice* (1930) (largely compiled from Weihsman, 1997) and *Manhattan* (1921) by Sheeler and Strand from the USA are films counted among the genre.

1997:11) The film was a dystopia and although inspired by modernism of the cities, it was critical of the alienation that is caused by machination and capitalist way of organization of life. (AlSayyad, 2001: 91) The issue of panopticism is one of the most common references in dystopian projections of modernity and *Metropolis* is not an exception. Taking the utopia of modernity to its extreme, *Metropolis* provides us the strands of dystopia included in it; unfortunately many of these strands have come true in with the advancement of modernity and capitalism.

As Benjamin said, the new technologies had a mimetic faculty which made it possible to play with the images and sounds from everyday life to restore the power of senses once lost with the modern city. (Boyer, 1996: 90) Russian director Sergei Eisenstein declared that in the new era, we have the capacities to penetrate the appearance, and able to master it. The movie camera gave the insignificant details of the everyday life a new aura; while the environment the modern individual is embedded in became more and more alien, the camera made it possible to explore it to its smallest details. (Boyer, 1996: 92) The fullest expression of the revelation of the hidden reality was through montage, where the images were re-assembled in a way to make it visible to the eye what is invisible. Dziga Vertov's *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) is a manifestation about the new capacities that are in our use through the use of camera and montage. Vertov aimed the shock the audience through showing them the world in unexpected ways. Also using sounds from everyday life that are organized in a way to create rhythm that would simulate the rhythm of modern city, he aimed to organize a new mode of perception of the reality.

*The Man with a Movie Camera* is famous not only as a film but also as a manifestation of the theory Vertov called the *kino-glaz* (film-eye). This theory has been inspiring for the later, *cinéma vérité* genre, and for many independent video and film makers. According to Vertov, none of the films that were made till then revealed an emancipation of camera, but rather were subordinate to the imperfections of the human eye. (Vertov, 1984: 14) Camera as *kino-glaz* has the capacity to explore the chaos of visual phenomena that fills the world. "I am kino-eye" he declares; "I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it." (Vertov, 1984: 17) The film-drama, fiction films, that imitate the real life are condemned as the "opium of the people"; kino-eye should be present in

the real-life, while the kinok-editor organizes the real life moments to assemble a structure that the real eye has never seen before. “Kino-eye as the possibility of making the invisible visible, the unclear clear, the hidden manifest, the disguised overt, the acted non-acted; making falsehood into truth.” (Vertov, 1984: 41)

In *The Man with a Movie Camera*, like *Berlin*, any one day in a big city is depicted. All activities in the city are assembled to construct a new rhythm that does not imitate, but capture the essence of the dynamism of the city. Different from *Berlin*, the film is self-reflective and the cameraman as well as the editor is also shown as a part of that dynamic. The self-reflexiveness also demonstrates the audience capacities the new technologies of camera and editing. The film is actively engaged in a debate about how arts and film should be in the new society, but at the same time how the modern life should be organized in this new society.

Amongst the above mentioned ones, Vertov’s is the only attempt of documenting the life of city with an overt political agenda. While Atget’s pictures of Paris captured the real life with its uncanny face for the bourgeois society, its political agenda remained hidden. *Berlin* demonstrated a great example of capturing the industrial modern city, but today, its neutral depiction does not mean more than a historical documentation of big city life in 1920s. While *Metropolis* is a critical account of modern society, its criticism is not directed at the basic premises of capitalism, nor does it show a way out. Vertov assigns an active role to film in the society; not only of social education and propaganda but also of a direct way of controlling. (Daniel, 2002) However, as Daniel notes, the way Vertov does that is contradictory. He assigns a social role to the film - which is making a narrative - while at the same time questioning the narrative nature of the film. In order to solve that conflict he integrates the process of filmmaking into the film, yet the conflict is not solved and it remains to be a narrative about how to tell a story. (Daniel, 2002) When viewed like that *The Man with a Movie Camera* is a modern artefact as both the film and Vertov’s theory lying behind it, construct a metanarrative about film as well the modern life as it’s embodied in modern city.

### 2.2.2. Pre- and Post War Developments

As the technologies of photography and film got more established, the enthusiasm about the potentials of them was cooled down. However, both

photography and cinema were continued to provide documentation as well as a critique of modern city. Among all the examples, only a limited will be mentioned here.

Berenice Abbott's pictures of New York between 1935 and 1938 commissioned by Federal Art Project documented the city that was undergoing a rapid transformation. Abbott was very much inspired by Atget's attention for the details of everyday life and once told to a reporter she aimed to do what Atget did in Paris. (Yochelson) The collection of *Changing New York* documented most of the demolished streets and buildings of New York, though again with a very implicit political agenda, even more implicit than of Atget's.

The social agenda of urban life found itself a place on the pellicles with British Realist Documentary movement as well. While the earliest uses of the film was to document the modern city life, after documentary started to establish itself as a genre, it took a long time for it to take the urban life as its subject. .Until mid-1930s the city was ignored by mainstream documentary movements. (Gold and Ward, 1997: 62) British documentary makers John Grierson and Paul Rotha saw the documentary film as a tool for social reform and education, and the films they made about the city reflected their general approach to documentary film making. The documentaries of 1930s made in the United Kingdom focused on the poor housing conditions of the slums and some other social problems such as education. Some examples are *Housing Problems* (1935), *The Great Crusade: the story of a million homes* (1937) and John Grierson's *The Smoke Menace* (1937). Later on the films started to adopt a discourse of rational planning in order to solve the urban problems. (Gold and Ward, 1997)

Post-war urban developments, increasing suburbanization and consolidation of consumer society were themes that were critically evaluated by film makers in post-war European cinema. Although some other examples can be given such as *Alphaville* (1965) by Jean-Luc Godard which was a dystopian city where all details of life are predictable, Jacques Tati and his humoristic criticism of Fordist city will be discussed here. Jacques Tati's scepticism about the modern architecture and modern technologies can easily be seen in the series of films he made that revolve around the protagonist *Monsieur Hulot*. Tati's feelings about the modern city is well reflected in these lines: "I found uniformity unpleasant. I always feel

nowadays that I am sitting on the same chair. While sitting in a brassiere in Champs-Élysées, one feels as though one is in an airport, one never knows whether we are in a grocery shop or at the chemist.” (Tati, cited in Penz, 1997: 66) What is significant in his films is that Paris is not represented as Paris, but rather as any city on the world, as all the cities started to look alike. (AlSayyad, 2006: 101) The “efficient” environments of office, home, and shops all seem to be alien and unpractical for Tati’s alter-ego *Monsieur Hulot*. (AlSayyad, 2006: 116) Tati’s humoristic criticism is also reflected in the new spaces he constructed. Exploring the capacities of fiction film to establish a new time and space, he created a filmic space and time that captured the uniform, dull spaces of Fordist city and contrasted that with the organic spaces of city that left untouched by the rationalist society.

### 2.2.3. Postmodern City: *Blade Runner*

One of the films that is extensively studied in fields revolving around the themes of cinema and urbanism is Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner* (1982) - a cult science-fiction film that takes place in the post-modern city Los Angeles in 2019. The film was discussed as a metaphor for post-modern condition by Giuliana Bruno in 1987 for the first time, and followed by many authors that accept that the film reflects the postmodern city in its extremes where the urban decay and increased surveillance is juxtaposed with a postmodern aesthetic and a heterogeneity in the city that is no longer controllable by modernist desires. (Doel and Clarke, 1997: 144) The spectacle-surveillance mechanism of postmodern city in its exacerbated form is one of the attributes of the city; the skyscrapers of Los Angeles are covered with advertisements, while surveillance machines and searchlights define the landscape. (Boyer, 1996: 112) Behind the chaotic structure of the city, Tyrell Corporate that owns a big part of Los Angeles controls it through surveillance and police forces. Despite all the fragmented nature of the city in *Blade Runner*, AlSayyad claims that it is more unified when compared to today’s Los Angeles with its gated communities, ethnic neighbourhoods, abandoned sites. (AlSayyad, 2006: 135)

As Harvey notes, the film is full of images of creative destruction. (Harvey, 1996: 348) Also it is a manifestation of post-modernist city with the time-space

compression and flexible production. Harvey notes, because of its unique relation to time and space, film as a cultural form holds the strongest capacity to analyse the time and space compression experienced in postmodern condition. (Harvey, 1996: 342) Although this is partly true, as will be argued in the next section, postmodern condition created a need for more democratic forms of expression that would capture the fragmented and heterogeneous city as a result of its questioning of metanarratives.

### **2.3. A Need for New Narratives?**

The aim of this chapter is not to provide a list of photographers or filmmakers who are dealing with issues related to city, but rather provide an account of visual representations of the city that might be comparable to the way video is dealing with the city. However none of the examples mentioned above provide a comparison that would benefit the unique uses of video. First, it is important to note photography, film, and video are taken as fundamentally different mediums both in terms of their techniques and their production processes. Although photography and cinema have been appropriated in various ways in the modern city, these various uses leave out some of the most important aspects of the experience of post-modern city experience.

In 1979, Jean-François Lyotard declared that the postmodern brought the end of metanarratives. A metanarrative is a discourse of legitimation that the rules of *valid* knowledge is based upon. Lyotard calls all sciences that legitimate itself in that way, *modern* sciences. *Postmodernism* is defined as a scepticism about the metanarratives. (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv) Instead of metanarratives, different language elements are used in a pragmatic way, without necessarily looking for coherency. On the level of official discourse; these language elements are appropriated for maximum efficiency although they are conflicting. (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv) Then the question is where does legitimacy of knowledge lie after metanarratives? (Lyotard, 1984: xxv)

What is meant by knowledge by Lyotard is much wider than science or learning; it includes denotative statements but also efficiency, justice or aesthetics criteria, coinciding with a wide array of competence building measures . (Lyotard, 1984: 18, 19) “In contemporary society and culture - post-industrial society,

postmodern culture - the question of legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation.” (Lyotard, 1984: 37) The reason for this loss can be sought in new technologies, or advancement of liberal capitalism; but without looking for its seeds in the grand narratives of nineteenth century, any explanation will be far from being satisfactory. (Lyotard, 1984: 38) Lyotard’s implications about science is applicable to the society level when considered that societies that lose their narrative culture undergo a similar crisis to that of scientific knowledge. Lyotard opposes to Habermas’ alternative that the metanarratives should be replaced by *Diskurs*- a universal consensus - on the grounds that there is a heterogeneity of the rules of discussion and a search for dissent which make it impossible to have the necessary conditions to have a debate and arrive at a consensus. He claims that the rules of any narrative - meaning the rules of the language game - should be decided locally, between the actors involved. This involves both a time and a space delimitation for a multiplicity of arguments to emerge. (Lyotard, 1986: 65,66) Lyotard argues that ‘computerization of society’ might be used to control and regulate the market system, but at the same time it might be used to aid the groups that discuss metaprescriptives to supply them the information they need to make knowledgeable decisions. (Lyotard, 1986: 67)

Lyotard’s argumentation can be broadened to another level by considering the use of other technologies than the ITs. The previous mentioned visual representations of the city provide us partial examples for that. They show how these forms could be used as documents of collective history of a specific time and a place. Pictures of sites that are to be demolished - both of late nineteenth century photographers and of Abbott’s - of everyday actors that the camera is turned away from - such as Atget’ pictures - demonstrate how photography can become a tool for a visual memory of a city. With city symphonies in general and *Berlin* in particular, and with *A Man With the Movie Camera*, the rhythm of modern city is re-established with the new capacities of film. As Özgun and Ocak says, cinema was the only modern form that could make the modern city to be felt because of the similarities between the way the space of modern city and cinema were constructed. (Ocak and Özgun, 1997) However the setting of rules of language

on a local level was not actualised in these forms. Although cinema continued to represent the urban reality in 1960s and of postmodern city, with the postmodern condition the need for new narratives have become more acute. These representations become a part of the spectacle, no matter how much they are critical of it. This has something to do with the film industry's place in the economy and its way of production that does not provide the flexibility necessary for the little narratives - *petit récit*.

The avant-garde of early twentieth century emphasised the emancipatory potential of new visual technologies that can make us 'see beyond'. In the context of cities, the new complexity that the individual was incapable of dealing with could be dealt with an aided eye. However, as Boyer asks, it is questionable how much of the guidance of visual technologies is achieved and whether we have become visually handicapped which is paradoxically caused by overexposure. (Boyer, 1996: 115) While talking about the democratising potentials of new technologies, Benjamin, was also warning against their threats. "Fascism attempts to organize the newly created proletarian masses without affecting the property structure which the masses strive to eliminate. Fascism sees its salvation in giving these masses not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves. The masses have a right to change property relations; Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property. The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life." (Benjamin, 1973: 234)

The totalising threats of these technologies led into the emergence of a triumph of the spectacle. The direct experiences we have today are limited and most of the relation we have with the time and space is mediated by technological devices. While the city has become subject to spectacle more and more, we have either withdrawn from the city or turned our senses numb against the abundance of images. Even if we did not want to withdraw from the city, with the increasing surveillance, cameras are given the right to decide who can participate in the city. The gap between our perception and memory increases both because our experience becomes more and more mediated but also because we do not have equal rights in participation for the making up of memory. Boyer says, the gap that emerged between time and space is getting wider. We need to fill that gap with

our stories before the history rearranges the relation between them and replaces the memory. (Boyer, 1996: 211)

Our stories, need to be told in a way that represents the new complexity and multiplicity that is experienced in postmodern cities. Metanarratives can not tell these stories any more. The fact that the little narratives are on a local level and correspond to their teller's everyday lives does not mean they can not communicate with other levels and remain locally bounded. The way they communicate with other localities show how new rules for language are established in the communication of different localities. What new technologies offer us in doing so will be illustrated with the example of video. Video and its uses do not operate outside the realm of dominant economy and politics of the society, on the contrary it expropriates its mechanisms in its own way. The camera and the screen that are the main actors in the spectacle/surveillance city become the main actors that tell the multiple (hi)stories of the city. Next will be explored video technology and how its radical capacities are used in different contexts.

### Chapter 3

#### Video

#### Art, Activism, Participation

Technological developments give way to more efficient control and operation of capital circulation and at the same time create new possibilities for new and radical forms of expression. Being an example to that kind of a technological innovation, in this chapter video technology and its uses will be explored. How video became widespread should be analysed in the context of democratisation of technologies and its effects. After having a brief look at that, video art and video activism will be explored more in detail. Later, participatory uses of video and its implications will be examined as participatory methods are employed widely by two of the case studies, and by one in a more limited way. Finally video's relation to city and how it can be seen as a tactic will be examined in the light of Michel de Certeau's analysis of everyday life.

All technologies have unprecedented repercussions and they could be used in unexpected ways. They potentially have democratising effects. Benjamin was talking about the possible democratising effects of mechanical reproduction techniques, and now the same claims could be made about digital technologies. The tension between the different uses of technological tools can be seen in the tension between photography as art and photography as a military documentation technique, or video as art and video as surveillance. There are technologies that are inherently destructive, such as arms, but claiming that a technology is inherently emancipative or progressive would be forgetting that today almost all technologies are developed within the realm of capitalist economy and they can only act as *tactics*, to use de Certeau's terminology.<sup>7</sup> It is not only because they are products of capitalist economy, but also because they are not impartial but rather social, cultural and political products of the era they emerge out of. However it is very rare that we reflect on the ideological nature of the technologies while we use them in our everyday lives. In fact, commercial and ideological success of a certain technology is more or less dependent to the extent it is naturalized and its ideological function remains unknown. (Legrady, 1995: 189)

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<sup>7</sup> The concept will be dealt with in detail later.

Deterministic claims about the social repercussions of formal aspects of technologies can easily be challenged as technologies become outdated, or disproved as newer ones are developed and the previous ones' formal aspects become irrelevant. However, what makes the sphere of new technologies a space that can resist the reactionary ideologies is constant innovation. (Wright, 1995: 98) "Technological art-forms become a way to continually defer the recuperative powers of cultural hegemony, a way to keep it off balance by always taking on a new guise, ready to introduce some new sector of the non-art community onto the scene." (Wright, 1995: 98)

Today the previous forms of communication models are challenged by more democratic ones. Not only producing cultural forms has become easier, but also their dissemination has become easier and they are accessible by larger audiences. An example to that is making a home video and uploading it to an internet broadcast station, and the video becomes accessible to millions. Popularity of such internet broadcast channels also show that there is also an increasing demand for further democratisation. These innovations create a crisis of representation within the more hierarchical forms of visual representation (such as television) and concepts such as democratisation of communication, accessibility to media, empowerment through new technologies are started to be used in a variety of contexts from academic discussions to activist circles and policy documents.

Accessibility refers both to physical, social and cultural accessibility. Physical accessibility of new technological products is largely decided by the commercial interests of the companies. These usually include decisions about research and development, expansion of markets and strategies of marketing. As more and more markets become profitable, geographical accessibility of products increase. And as more companies compete in the market, the prices become lower. With lower prices, the product becomes accessible to lower income groups as well. Of course companies are profit driven and the products that are cheaper are replaced by newer technologies that are accessible to few. So "democratisation" by the manufacturers also includes new ways of exclusion and is limited to accessibility of worn-out technologies to more. Moreover, although they want to sell their products in more markets, the manufacturers do not promote new uses

for the products other than the designed narrow uses.<sup>8</sup> (Wright, 1995: 91) And as Wark reminds us, inequality in terms of accessibility remains to be one of the main problems in terms of the critical potential of electronic media. (Wark, 1995: 10)

When democratisation is regarded in terms of the social and cultural accessibility of the media, what becomes important is how it is used. The common application of the electronic media that is physically accessible by many, usually does not circulate outside of the personal realm.<sup>9</sup> However this does not mean the personal use is unimportant. The immersion of new technologies such as copy machines, digital cameras and the like into everyday life is changing the image cultures in which they exist and cause for a more populist circulation of images with disregard to “high culture”. (Lovejoy, 2006: 279).

The old forms of resistant cultures can not remain unchanged, and the new technologies and new cultural forms provide novel ways to counter the dominant culture other than art based or propagandist. (Wright, 1995: 102) Mass culture also provides new opportunities for re-appropriation such as bricolage, plagiarism and collage. In the emerging new forms, mobility, technology and aestheticisation come together. Extension of popular culture and the immersion of the values of independent media producers into mainstream production mean democratization and aestheticisation is expanded out of the sphere of marginalised cultures. (Wright, 1995: 102)

### **3.1. Video Technology**

Video technology and its different uses out of the dominant economy and personal sphere should be analysed keeping in mind the general framework drawn above. It is true that personal uses of video can also be seen as *tactics*, however these kind of tactics are very difficult to trace and make records of. The users’ trajectories are unpredictable; although they act within the rationalized, ordered spaces, their use of that space is heterogeneous. (de Certeau, 1984: 34) What is focused here is more deliberate reappropriations of the medium than its designed

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<sup>8</sup> There are also exceptions to that such as JVC’s sponsorship to Tokyo Video Festival since 1978. However the manufacturers’ concerns about democratisation, or aestheticisation, are limited to their concerns about the profitability. In this case, JVC’s sponsorship coincides with its marketing strategies and its image.

<sup>9</sup> Even the theoretically public world of Internet remains to be highly personal with the use of blogs and other personal spaces.

uses. Although many of these uses are hard to classify under one title and blur the differences between activism, advocacy, community action and art, it would still be useful to make a distinction between video art and video activism. Before that, a brief history of the development of video and an analysis some of its technical properties will be provided.

Video technology developed as a by-product of television. (Özgun, 1997: 56) The first video camera/recorder called Portapak was released by Sony in 1965. Before that, video equipment was professional broadcast medium and it was practically not possible to use it for any other purpose. Both the quality and accessibility of video recording and processing technologies developed rapidly and today almost professional quality image capturing and processing is possible with most of the amateur products on the market. The rapid development of the quality and the expansion of the market for video recorders made it possible for independents to produce their own productions without a need for big investments. Video also offered cheaper and easier ways of distribution and screening when compared to cinema.

Both the widespread use of video cameras and the innovations it offers in terms of image production mean that video challenges our relationship with images and - like any other visual medium- and bring a change to our relation with time and space. (Özgun, 1997: 58) However, video has its unique characteristics in terms of the changes it brings. These stem both from its technical characteristics and its uses till now. Özgun claims that the technological differences that differentiates video from cinema and photography result in more ontological differences. However as Stewart Brand reminds us, with digitalization, all media became convertible to each other and any ontological division between different media and the repercussions of this division is not very meaningful. For instance saying that video does not have a memory, or cinema's memory is different from that of video's depending on the material characteristics of the material it is captured on is ignoring the fact that any kind of data can be saved today in almost any kind of form. (Ulmer, 1997: 270) As Sturken notes, there is a great deal of discussion about the inherent properties of video which almost imply that machines dictate aesthetic development and people are controlled by the machines, rather than the opposite. (Sturken, 1991:14) Keeping in mind all these, it is important to note that

video has some technical qualities that played an important role in its development.

First, video technology makes it possible the captured image to be viewed without any process and enables to have a total control over which image is to be kept and which not. If a certain shooting is not liked it can be erased from the tape right after it was shot. (Özgun, 1997: 68) This enables an immediate discussion about the images by a number of people and permits a more democratic aesthetics to rise during the filming process rather than an aesthetics defined by one person behind the camera.<sup>10</sup> Immediacy also means suitability of the medium to the emphasis on "process, not product." (Boyle, 1992: 68)

Another important difference is that there is no negative image in video. A negative images is the "real image" that is manipulated during the process of reproduction, but the original is there to take as a reference. However video does not have an original, *real* image. In its everyday usage, video image changes according to the screen it is viewed, each time there is a different framing, different colours etc. (Özgun, 1997: 69) This might cause a sense of indeterminacy but also is open to different manipulations; each time it provides a freer space for expression as well as the documentation of the "reality". (Özgun, 1997: 70)

Non-linear editing on computer has changed video production fundamentally as it meant that the editing does not have to be planned in detail beforehand. Before this technology was available, the sound, the image, the music had to be an organic whole on the paper before the actual editing started. However with non-linear editing, editing has become "drawing with video" according to some video makers. (Lovejoy, 2001: 131) What was even more important that the costs of editing dropped significantly, and with the availability of editing soft-wares on personal computers, the process became much lighter.

"Although video is far from causing a revolutionary structural change in the world of mass media, it brings certain economic advantages to independent producers and causes a positive political effect by giving marginal cultural formations a chance to express themselves." (Özgun, 1997: 65) In addition to the fact that video provides a sphere where dominant representations can be

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<sup>10</sup> This can be done with additional screens in professional productions, however in video even the screen embedded in the camera will be sufficient to do that.

challenged, it also creates a space for subject positions to be transformed and history to be written and shaped by its subjects.

### **3.2. Video Art**

Technological changes effect the ways art is produced, viewed and understood. They change the styles, content and form of the art works. (Lovejoy, 2004: 13) Video art emerged in a period when the borders between the traditional art practices were increasingly questioned and started to get blurred. It was a period when traditional formal approach to art was criticised severely and artists were seeking new forms of expression.<sup>11</sup>

Wolf Vostell and Nam June Paik were the early artists who used video as a part of their works. Video finally provided the opportunity to use television as a medium for art for the first generation of artists that grew up with TV. (Lovejoy, 2004: 94) The immediate feedback of the recorded image on the screen was experimented with. Nam June Paik's famous installation of *TV Buddha* (1974) played with that immediacy of the captured image. This also provided new opportunities for interacting with the spectators - for instance by recording the spectators and with small lag showing them their reactions. Some other reasons for the attraction of video were its portability that made it possible to record both indoors and outdoors and the ease with erasing and re-recording on video tapes. (Lovejoy, 2004: 95)

For the purpose of using self-images both in the form of performances and images to be appropriated elsewhere, video was very practical. Performance art and video has been linked to each other strongly from the very beginning, with works of artists such as Vito Acconci, Richard Serra and Joan Jonas, till now, with artists such as Gary Hill, Doug Aitken. (Rush, 2003: 9) The early relation between the two had something to do with the fact that there was no editing technology

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<sup>11</sup> Hermine Freed's quote from 1976 is illuminating in terms of understanding why video was welcomed by the artists: "The Portapak would seem to have been invented specifically for use by artists. Just when pure formalism had run its course; just when it became politically embarrassing to make objects, but ludicrous to make nothing; just when many artists were making performance works but had nowhere to perform, or felt the need to keep a record of their performances; just when it began to seem silly to ask the same old Berkleean question, 'If you build a sculpture in the desert where no one can see it, does it exist?'; just when it became clear that TV communicates more information to more people than large walls do; just when we understood that in order to define space it is necessary to encompass time; just when many established ideas in other disciplines were being questioned and new models were proposed - just then the Portapak became available." (Freed quoted in Rush, 2003: 13)

developed till mid-1970s. Most of the video projects were real time ones that experimented with close-circuit environments.

With the acceptance of video by museums, different funds and production centres emerged which in turn led to further institutionalization of video art under festivals and conferences. These events increased the visibility of video works and provided artists a ground for intellectual debate. (Lovejoy, 2004: 101) Publications started to give more focus on video and new journals like *Art Com* unified video movement, created a sense of community and provided a history for video and created critical discussion about the use of the medium. (Lovejoy, 2004: 101) From early to mid-seventies museums started to have separate video departments.

Independent film makers were also attracted to the medium because of its portability, price and immediacy. However it was not easy to screen early independent video films that were low in quality and unedited. (Lovejoy, 2004: 103) Although cinema and video are technically quite different media, the trends in independent film making since 1940s - breaking away from traditional film grammar, creating a new temporality and filmic space, establishing new links between image and meaning- were reflected in video making as well. (Lovejoy, 2004: 103)

Especially in its early uses, there was not much of a distinction between video artists and activists as in the atmosphere of 1960s art's social responsibility was an issue that was brought back into debate. (Boyle, 1992: 67) Video has become important in the context of questioning art's separation from social critique and enabled novel ways of integrating the two. "Video zigzagged between the cultured art world and ragtag counter-culture communes; the parallel politics, usually collapsed, did not necessarily intersect—one lodged with the art scene, the other with activist politics." (Mellencamp, 1988: 78) Examples such as *Global Groove* (1973) by Nam June Paik, *The Eternal Flame* (1975), magazines such as *Radical Software* were examples that blurred the distinction between art and activism. Today there are video works that are clearly art works, or activist material, but still a group of practices are difficult to put under one classification. However for the sake of a descriptive clarity, a basic distinction is kept in this paper and video's appropriation by activists is analysed separately.

### 3.3. Video Activism

Starting with its early use by social movements of 1960s, video has become an important technology used by alternative, radical media. As noted by Downing, radical media is a sub-set of popular culture, where its relation to power becomes more obvious. (Downing, 2001) Gramsci's reinterpretation of Marxism gains an importance in terms of the analysis of the relationship between culture and dominant power. Gramsci was the first Marxist scholar to emphasise the cultural aspect to the analysis of class domination and struggle through the concept of *hegemony*. However, as Downing notes, while a great-deal of radical alternative media fit into a framework of *counter-hegemonic* struggle, with regards to less structured, more everyday uses of media that do not have a clear revolutionary programme or vision, there is a need for a perspective that looks for everyday struggles and resistances. (Downing, 2001: 15,16) Scott's concepts of *hidden transcript* and *infra-politics* and de Certeau's *tactics* are concepts that can be used in such analysis. This is why the cases in this study are not defined as counter-hegemonic as they are groups that use video in a tactical way, and do not have an agenda that envisages a total revolution. Another important source that nourishes the debate, both in terms of self-reflexivity of radical media and academic studies about it, is the theme of multiple sources of oppression. Media resistance means a communication among the people of different groups that are oppressed by different mechanisms and strengthen each other - also themselves - through finding new ways of communication. (Rowbotham, 1981 cited in Downing, 2001: 18, 19) Video has been adopted by various groups that are subject to 'multiple sources of oppression' too: "... film and video were deployed as part of social movements that were variously - and sometimes overlappingly - pro-labor, antinuclear, and black, addressing people with AIDS and HIV, empowering low-income inner-city communities, and combating communalism in India." (Downing, 2001: 193) In all three cases, it will be seen that video is employed against the multiple sources of oppression and is used to give a voice to several groups marginalised by them in the urban context.

Although video is usually cited as a dramatic new development, it has its predecessors in social movements as 16mm and 8mm films. Some examples are labour struggles films by Nykino and the Workers' Film and Photo League in 1930s,

*Salt of the Earth* (1954) about Chicano miners' strike and independent film movements of Europe and the USA starting with 1960s. (Downing, 2001: 193, 194)

Although there was a variety of reasons involved in the early interest for video, dissatisfaction with the broadcast television played an important role. (Branson, 1976) The early uses of video was nourished by different sources; communication theory<sup>12</sup>, counter-culture, student protest movements, drug culture and a mystical metaphysics. (Mellencamp, 1988: 78) A criticism towards consumerism, political conservatism, and war was inherent in the groups that started using video. USA based Videofreex, People's Video Theatre, Global Village, Optic Nerve, Raindance Corporation, Ant Farm and Video Freaks were the early video groups and networks.

Through video, televisual images of the protest movements of 1960s and 1970s were challenged by counterculture's own images. (Boyle, 1992: 68) They saw video as mediator of social relations through engaging the viewers, guiding their attention and educating them as new users of the media, rather than consumers. (Hill, 1996: 6) It was a medium for arts, for politics, for experimentation, for joy. (Hill, 1996: 5) Michael Shamberg declared in his book *Guerrilla TV* (1970): "The death of hardware is the ultimate transformation of America to Media-America. It embodies our total shift from a product- to a process-based culture" (Shamberg, 1970:3, cited in Mellencamp, 1988: 80). Information structures were to be redesigned globally and power should be dispersed to people through access to information and video. (Mellencamp, 1988: 81) The homogenous voice of the mainstream media should be replaced by a multiplicity of voices. (Mellencamp, 1988: 81)

In the context of United States, with 1970s, under-ground media gradually became *above-ground* media as new magazines such as *Radical Software* by Raindance Corporation started to flourish and video works gained visibility on cable TV. (Boyle, 1992: 69) According to Boyle, the division between video activists and video artists started to emerge also in 1970s as a result of the availability of government funding in the context of the United States. (Boyle, 1992: 69) Teams and individuals started to replace collectives because of the changing funding patterns that favoured "artists" over collectives and independent documentary

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<sup>12</sup> Especially Marshall McLuhan and his proposition of a technological utopia has been an influential theoretical source for video practitioners.

makers that gained their skills from community productions started to make productions for cable and public TV. (Boyle, 1992: 74) As the funding schemes became more conservative, video makers started to look for different strategies to make independent productions such as using cheaper and lower technologies.

Within the activist circles, there also emerged a divide between guerrilla television groups and community video advocates. (Boyle, 1992: 69) Although this was not a strict separation, guerrilla groups focused more on getting the tapes aired. Mellencamp says that video followed a similar trajectory of development to television, and directed its resources and energies towards distribution and exhibition, yet different from television it emphasized decentralization and process. (Mellencamp, 1988:80)<sup>13</sup> The relation between independent video/film making and TV has always been problematic as TV is a medium that is highly controlled by corporate media and have strong restrictions both in terms of content and style. Some public broadcast provided<sup>14</sup>, although limited, space for artists and independent film makers space to broadcast their works and some commissioned them for some of their productions. However the public broadcast brought into question what is actually demanded by mass audiences who did not show big interest for the visual language and content of video works. (Lovejoy, 2004: 115) As a result of reactions and non-profitability of the programmes, television channels gradually stopped broadcasting and commissioning experimental works.

Starting with the 1970s, there was a flourishing of community video groups. The ideological aspirations and lifestyle choices of earlier groups informed the community structures of the later ones. (Hill, 1996: 10) The communities that never had a cultural currency out of their local scenes, such as minority groups and geographically isolated communities, deliberately positioned themselves on the margins of culture. (Hill, 1996: 10)

Sturken draws attention to the fact that most of the history of early video-activist groups created a myth of innovative capacities of the medium as well as the progressive aspects of the groups while still many of them were hierarchical

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<sup>13</sup> One of the well-known examples of guerrilla groups is TVTV (Top Value Television) founded in 1972. With their first show they provided national viewers an alternative vision of the American political processes with support from groups such as Videofreex, Raindance, and Ant Farm. (Boyle, 1992: 70)

<sup>14</sup> Channel 4 in Britain, PBS in the USA, Arte in France were the channels that encouraged independent video makers the most.

and sexist. (Sturken, 1991) But video was adopted by feminist movement as well and there was a number of feminist collectives both in the USA and in Europe. Video was a medium without a history, or an agreed-upon value which opened a way for new meanings and uses to be attached by feminists. (Lovejoy, 2004: 96) With its feminist uses, video has become a phallic tool that is used against phallogentrism; a phallus for women. (Özgun, 1997: 89) The fact that women's relation to visual representation has been problematic in terms of objectification of the female body, having women behind the camera with a deliberate aim of challenging this representation is significant. In the context of AIDS videos in the USA, video became an important means to challenge homophobic representations as well. (Downing, 2001: 195)

One of the most important problems independent video making has faced since its emergence is funding. It is necessary not only for the provision of technical equipment, but also for distribution. With the absence of a market - or even if there was a market, an unwillingness to take part in it - and insufficient broadcast capacities, in years video practitioners developed a variety of ways of distribution that are employed depending on the aim and the budget available. It is also important to note that many video production do not primarily seek to reach a wide, national or international, audience and are made for local groups and specific situations. (Downing, 2001: 197) Harding summarises the methods of distribution of video under five categories which are public screenings, tape distribution, private screenings for the key positions such as decision makers, broadcast media and internet and wireless networks. (Harding, 2005: 236) The case studies combine all or several of these strategies, however the weight they give to a single one changes.

### ***3.4. Participatory Video***

Community media make it possible the voices of the unheard to be heard. The injustices in power relations are tried to be challenged by having a representation on a different ground other than the one shaped by those power relations. "By using video to bring images of these injustices to new public arenas, traditional power relations are challenged and contested." (Dudley, 2003: 148) Participatory video is a use of video that makes the community to be involved in

these processes. “Participatory video is a special kind of storytelling that ideally involves the community in telling a story, listening to a story, interpreting the story in its own lens and being empowered to retell and change it to create a community -a political reality- that matches one’s own desired conditions.” (Bery, 2003: 102) Participative process does not only imply a multiplicity of voices telling a story, it also changes the entire way a film is framed and edited - its whole aesthetics. (Cizek, 2005)

The emphasis on *process* rather than on *product* that is usually existent in independent video production, gains a different aspect with participatory video. Though such a participatory process, video making gives the community a sense of pride; not only through producing something together and seeing that they are capable of doing it, but also by seeing themselves on the screen, realising that they have a story that worth being told and listened to. (Balit, 2003; Berry, 2003; Caldwell, 2005; Crocker, 2003; Dudley, 2003; Gadihoke, 2003; Gomez, 2003; Guidi, 2003; Nair and White, 2003; Varghese, 2003; White, 2003) Transformation through participative video is three-fold; transformation of the individual, transformation of the community, transformation of the external space. These three interact with each other; especially the first two’s transformation shape each other, finally resulting in the transformation of the outsiders. (White, 2003) An awareness is gained about one’s position in existing political and economic systems, which makes the individual to think and act independently. (Bery, 2003:103-104)

One assumption about the empowering aspect of participatory video is that it will magically give a voice to the voiceless. (Gadihoke, 2003: 281) Participatory video does not offer a prescription for empowerment, but rather it is a tool that could be used for empowerment. It should not be forgotten that the any venture of participatory communication should be accompanied by a deeper socio-political engagement with the community and video can only be a facilitator in a larger process. (Gadihoke, 2003: 282) Teaching people simply how to use the medium would not automatically result in empowerment.

The hierarchical structures will not be challenged automatically by participative video either. As there needs to be a division of work in participative processes, hierarchy might emerge and it should be actively avoided all the time. Giving voice to the neglected can only be established in a non-hierarchical

structure, otherwise only voices of the few that are dominant in group would be heard. The importance of non-hierarchical structures and how to maintain it will be analysed in detail with case studies.

### **3.5. Video as a Tactic in the City**

As told before, in order to analyse resistances and struggles that take place on everyday level, there is need for a theoretical framework that concentrates on the smaller scale resistances. Especially in the context of city, where a multiplicity of struggles on everyday level takes place, need for such a framework becomes even more necessary. Michel de Certeau's distinction between tactics and strategy is important in terms of depicting such resistances.

While strategy is a power or will that assumes a place -a *proper* - and can be isolated from an environment, tactic acts within that place without taking it over; it insinuates itself to that place. As it does not have a place of its own, it is more dependent on time than place. (de Certeau, 1984) A strategy first tries to define its own place. A proper is the 'triumph of place over time' and a mastery of sight over the place; so it also implies a panoptic practice in that place. (de Certeau, 1984: 36) Tactic acts in the place of the "other" and within that place it manoeuvres, manipulates the events to turn them into opportunities. However it does not possess the means to conquer, impose or create a place. (de Certeau, 1984: 37) Many of the everyday practices, such as walking, reading, shopping, cooking, are tactics according to de Certeau. They all use and manipulate places of strategies and turn them to their own advantage. (de Certeau, 1984: 30) "(Tactic) takes advantage of "opportunities" and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids. What it wins it cannot keep. This nowhere gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment. It must vigilantly, make use of the cracks, that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse. In short, a tactic is an art of the weak." (de Certeau, 1984: 37) Today the system where the users act, where the tactics insinuate themselves is too vast that they are scattered around everywhere

and can not be fixed in one locality. However, at the same time, this space is too constraining that there is nowhere to escape, everywhere has become the “proper”. (de Certeau, 1984: 40)

The urbanistic discourse is trying to produce a city that is spatially as well as politically and psychologically rationalized, and create a universal concept of “city” that is defined by a set of stable, isolatable concepts. (de Certeau, 1984: 94) However today the urban life challenges this totalizing discourse: “The language of power is in itself “urbanizing”, but the city is left prey to contradictory movements that counter-balance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power. The city becomes the dominant theme in political legends, but it is no longer a field of programmed and regulated operations. Beneath the discourses that ideologise the city, the ruses and combinations of powers that have no readable identity proliferate; without points where one can take hold of them, without rational transparency, they are impossible to administer.” (de Certeau, 1984: 95) Instead of focusing on the decay of this discourse, one can look at the microbe-like practices that outlived this decay, that insinuated itself in the network of surveillance and make up the everyday practices. (de Certeau, 1984: 96)

Video is a tactic in itself as it is acting in the dominant economic sphere as told earlier. It does not offer a new sphere of economics, nor it produces its own technologies. Within that sphere, it insinuates itself to cracks left open, and shows another way of existence within that domain. The prescribed use of video is manoeuvred within that sphere. Also within the sphere of image production, video is used as a tactic. It challenges the spectacle by using the ruins of the spectacle.

Within city it also acts as a tactic. Its view is not from above - the view of a panorama city. On the contrary it is on the level of walkers' who are drawing their trajectories in a state of blindness and together writing a story nobody can read. This story is not representable, and this holds true for everyday life in general. It can not be represented, because it can not be fixed in a place. But video in the context of the city is not a representation, it is one of the microbe like activities. It insinuates the space it creates in the place of the urban discourse. Through video we can have a feeling, a glimpse of the contradictory movements in the city that escape the totalizing eye of the panopticon. Cinema also captured those

movements, but orchestrated and ordered them in the time and space it constructed. It was the memory of modern city, and it separated the masses from their everyday life through that time and space. Video insinuates its time and space to the real ones in the city. Opposite to the frozen, yet durable memory of cinema, it creates memories of places that are fleeting images of everyday life, and also active in the writing of the memory of the city. These images belong to the bearers of everyday life, and they are active in making of that everyday life. How these can be done through video that will be analysed under the light of three cases; Spectacle in London, PTTL in Brussels and Karahaber in Ankara.

## Chapter 4

### Case Studies

#### Karahaber, PTTL and Spectacle

The city has countless stories, and video tells those countless stories in countless ways. An attempt at reaching at a general theory about the use of video in the city is deemed to exclude one of the ways, as all stories find their own way of expression. However they all share the simple characteristics of video which is recording of the sound and the sight. Referring to the early video collectives in the context of the USA, Sturken says: “Throughout the country, they produced an abundance of “street tapes” that epitomized the drama and excitement of capturing images and people on the street, characterized by a tangible immediacy and fascination with the simple act of recording.” (Sturken, 1991: 13)

In this study, the relation between video and city is not taken as an essential one. It is multi-faceted, and claiming that there is an essential or inherent connection between the two would rule out one of the faces. Leaving aside the impossibility of it, the study is not an all-encompassing one, as it looks at the use of video in three cities - three capitals- Ankara, Brussels and London and limited to one group in each city, which might only give clues about how the multiplicity of stories of the city tell themselves in multiple ways through the video. These are not stories of the past, they belong to present as well the future. Video’s use is active in all three cases in terms of constructing the city and not only being representations. The focus of the study will be three video groups - Karahaber in Ankara, PTTL in Brussels and Spectacle in London - that are different from each other not only in their organizational structure, but also in their approaches, intentions and methodologies. However they are all critical about the city and employ video as a deliberate tactic in their criticism. It is important to note that, while they are very much concerned about the city they are in, their agendas are not limited to the city and they address several more issues. Among those issues which ones are taken as relevant to this study are decided in terms of the contents of the work, the dynamics that they create in the city and the relevance designated by the video practitioners themselves. It would be clear from the list of

the works that, most works cited have an undisputable relation with the city, and it was not difficult to decide on the focus videos.<sup>15</sup>

Not only the videos, but also in-depth interviews with video practitioners and written material on the web-sites of the groups form the empirical basis of this study. The previously mentioned emphasis on *process* in video production is an important reason for that. It is impossible to analyse the videos independent from dynamics of the city, group dynamics or production and post-production (mainly distribution) processes, neither it is possible to analyse the latter independent from the videos. One shared emphasis among the groups, and something mentioned by all video practitioners is the emphasis on process, so no formal “film analysis” of the video works mentioned should be expected from this study. Just like the video practice itself, this study’s focus will be the *process* which includes the video works as well. Before making an analysis that will give us some clues about the possibilities that video offer in the city, a descriptive analysis of the three groups is necessary. They will be analysed briefly in terms of their history, organizational structure and their ways of operating in the city.

#### **4.1.Descriptive Analysis of Cases**

##### **4.1.1. Karahaber, Ankara**

Starting with the motto “From the image of action, to the action of image”, Karahaber<sup>16</sup> (Black news) is formed by a group of video makers that were already involved in several video groups in Ankara. The video community in Ankara, largely formed by personal acquaintances, can be traced back to a university institution in Middle East Technical University in Ankara; GISAM (Audio Visual Research and Application Centre). The centre was established in 1993 and has been running workshops about video production, photography, documentary films that are open both to students and outside participants, offering courses that provide not only the skills of basic video production, but also create a theoretical discussion around issues of new media, cinema, image and culture. The centre has technical equipments including a studio, editing units and video cameras. The importance of the centre for this study is that it has created and nourished an interest in video in

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<sup>15</sup> See Appendix for a list of the video works cited.

<sup>16</sup> Dark, and bad are other two meanings of *kara* in Turkish. Also there is a saying “Kara haber tez duyulur” meaning; bad news are spread fast.

Ankara, and enriched video production with a profound theoretical discussion about experimental new media, image production, video and its radical capacities. Ulus Baker who had been teaching at the centre too, and lost his life during the course of this study on July 12th 2007, is cited as an important inspiration by all of the video practitioners interviewed in Ankara.

People who started to get to know each other and produced works together around the centre formed groups outside the university, issued zines and spread both the production of and theoretical discussion on video. Karahaber is formed by some of members of the association VideA that is described as “an artistic, politic, mediatic collective in Ankara”. VideA had a legal status of being a foundation which made it more risky to address some of the controversial political issues within it. Moreover as Oktay İnce from Karahaber says, VideA embraces a variety of issues including video-art, short-film making, installations etc. “The idea of Karahaber emerged as a result of a need for, in my opinion, a militant, blunt video that would speak up about issues that can be seen as political taboos and not be shunned by the police or trials.”<sup>17</sup>

Karahaber refers both to a group of video activists and to a website, [www.karahaber.org](http://www.karahaber.org). This is also a news site where news stories that can not be accessed anywhere else can be found. Video is the medium of telling the news about social movements in Ankara, and as Oktay İnce says, one of the aims of Karahaber is to write down the history of social movements in Ankara via video. The local news and social movements - both of which are neglected by mainstream media - are offered a ground on [karahaber.org](http://karahaber.org). However it is not only the news that are on the website. There are three sections represented by the icon of three monkeys; *I did not see*, *I did not hear* and *I do not know*. On *I did not hear*, news videos exist. They are edited very simply, and are documentations on what happened in a specific time and location. Press conferences of various political groups, continuous demonstrations, and reporting of certain events such as beatings of transsexuals, transvestites or demolishing of squat neighbourhoods<sup>18</sup> of

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<sup>17</sup> Karahaber fikri siyasal tabu sayılabilecek her konuda, mahkemeymiş polismiş çekinmeyen ve sözünü sakınmayan, benim açımdan militan bir video hareketi gerekliliği üzerinden oluştu. (From interview with Oktay İnce, 13.08.2007. Translation belongs to me).

<sup>18</sup> Within the framework of this study, squat corresponds to the term *gecekondus* in Turkish. The literal translation of the terms means ‘built in one night’, meaning that the houses were built with very basic construction material in one night. Especially in the big cities *gecekondus* are crucial in

the city can be found in this section. As Özlem Sarıyıldız said they are trying to look at everything that no light is shed on, that is left in the dark.

*I did not see* corresponds to more conceptual works, where the visual language and style is given more importance than the almost raw material of *I did not hear*. Existence of both side by side make Karahaber a ground for both more artistic, experimental works and bare documentation that is focused on following a day to day agenda. *I do not know* is where the self-reflexivity of the group is reflected. Theoretical discussions about video, visual culture and Karahaber itself are posted on this section. This section can be seen as a reflection of video as praxis<sup>19</sup> where theory and practice are taken along. However each activist's distance to theory, and what they focus on theory differs. Almost all activists interviewed agreed that existence of a ground for discussion of different ideas about video, and each other's works enrich the works produced.

The group has around seven core members. As mentioned before *I did not hear* is about following an agenda, and not everyone is able to go and shoot all the press conferences, or demonstrations in Ankara which are not infrequent. Core members are the ones who follow the passing events more frequently than the rest. The organizational structure is quite loose and it is based on friendship and personal acquaintance. Although there are no barriers of entry in theory, entrance to group is possible only through personal acquaintance; which is defined as an *organic* way by Oktay İnce. Both Oktay and Özlem from Karahaber said that they would prefer such a structure to be kept. They said going beyond those organic relations would mean an impersonal group of people and would lead into the emergence of a structure above that would unite them. The loose structure is related to the hesitancy to become a large institutionalised group. Although there are some significant differences among members, the group's overall political inclination can be defined as new left with strong ties with anarchist, feminist, LGBTT and anti-militarist movements. Questioning of large, bureaucratic and

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terms of defining the urbanity since early 1960s. With the inadequate infrastructure to handle the rural migration to big cities, *gecekondus* emerged initially as a survival practice. Today the squat neighbourhoods face demolition as a result of the urban regeneration projects. Although most squat inhabitants own the land of their houses, in the regeneration projects they are forced out of their houses and given no right to participate in the decision making.

<sup>19</sup> Although the meaning of the word *praxis* is translated as process, what is meant here is not video as process, but rather the use of the term by Karl Marx in *Theses on Feuerbach*.

impersonal organizational structures have something to do with the identification of Karahaber itself with these movements that all question hierarchy.

The group does not hold regular meetings, and try to sort the everyday problems through their personal relations. However when necessary they come together and discuss. There has also been some meetings where they got together and watched each other's videos and discussed. Karahaber videos are produced individually or in groups of two/three. While on *I did not hear* there is not much space for individual expression, still the choice of the event to shoot, or which aspect to focus on in a specific event are all decided on the basis of individual preferences and interests. Usually big events are recorded by several members and put as separate accounts of the same event; they all represent a different point of view but when put together they portray the event in a more comprehensive way. Being segmented, such a portrayal of a subject is more democratic than a single narrative from one point of view.<sup>20</sup> Also some issues that are followed up for several years make up a story when taken together and Karahaber started to compile those issues under DVDs that would circulate outside the Internet.<sup>21</sup> The interesting thing about the movements that are followed up by Karahaber is that on any other platform they would not get together because of the differences in their political orientations. Videos on anti-militarists and political movements that support armed struggle are side-by-side. The movements followed are Ankara based, so Karahaber's approach to video activism is very local.

The relation between Karahaber and social movements in Ankara is described as *organic* as well where parties know each other personally and have a confidence based relation. However not all members of Karahaber agree with all of the ideas or action methods of the political groups, and as mentioned before some of the groups have every conflicting views themselves. Karahaber tries to encourage social movements to pick up cameras themselves and record their own

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<sup>20</sup> Some examples to that are videos about the assassination of Armenian intellectual Hrant Dink including his funeral and other smaller scale demonstrations, or field day of May 1st demonstrations in Istanbul in 2007.

<sup>21</sup> On the website, these topics are collected together under certain files: *Si Nan (Otuz Ekmek)* (Si Nan (Thirty Loaves of Bread)) about the resistance of Sinan villagers in Diyarbakır, *Hiçkimenin Askeri ~ Antimilitarist hareket* (Nobody's Soldier ~ Antimilitarist movement), *Yasama Hakkı* (Right to Live) about the systematic abuse of transsexuals and transvestites in Ankara and their resistance,  *ark Etmeyiniz ~ Tecrit Öldürür* (Isolation Kills) about F type isolated prison cells and the resistance of relatives of political detainees that are kept in those cells, *Kimseinin Namusu* (Nobody's Honour) about feminist movement and protests against honour killings.

struggles. This is done both through workshops and the previously mentioned organic relation with movements. Oktay İnce said that while political groups have not been very eager about it in general and find it easier Karahaber members to shoot them, some started using video as a result of their relation with Karahaber. The effort to spread the use of video is not limited to political groups. Through Karahaber members' acquaintance with scavengers in Ankara, some amongst them learnt how to use the camera and editing and started using the medium in their own ways. Also some video workshops for children have been organised.

The main method of distribution of Karahaber is through the web. Among the three cases, Karahaber is the only one that uses internet broadcast as the main medium for distribution. As Oktay İnce said, unlike YouTube or other popular internet broadcast sites, using the web does not make Karahaber a mass medium. On the contrary, the number of people who visit the site is usually limited to the activists and video makers. "We show them to themselves" said Oktay. This is important for the movements to become self-reflexive, but at the same time be aware of other movements in their city. Although there are some other video works that are not distributed on the website, Internet is the only steady distribution method Karahaber uses.

The artistic and activist aspects of video are emphasised differently by each activist, but it can be agreed on that artistic value of videos in *I did not hear* section is very low, while on *I did not see* it is higher. Özlem noted that they are not being very experimental on *I did not hear* as reporting and producing a memory of events have a priority. Moreover as the videos are to be uploaded very fast, there is usually no time for experimentalism.

Karahaber has not received any funding or grants yet. It is important for the group to remain independent as in Turkey it is difficult to get any financial support without being interfered in the work done. Oktay İnce said that they would not like to see a sign of a logo of a financial backer on the website unless it is a union or any other organization with similar political agenda. However, that kind of institutions are usually in financial need themselves.

As mentioned earlier, Karahaber is operating on a very local level not only because of its network with other local groups, but also its videos are primarily aimed at a local activist circle in Ankara. Some groups they are in an *organic*

relation with are Kaos Gay Lesbian Foundation, Pembe Hayat foundation of transsexuals and transvestites, TAYAD foundation of the relatives of political detainees, Kırk Öruk women's cooperative. There is also a strong relation with other video groups both in Ankara and Istanbul. Ankara is a city where segregation in terms of income level and ethnicity is very clear and Karahaber creates important links that will be explored later. It is important to note that, in the capital which is normally represented almost only with its official face - meaning with the state organs - Karahaber looks at the other face of the city.

#### 4.1.2. PTTL(*Plus-tôt Te laat*), Brussels

“There are still too many cows in the meadow being painted, only now you cannot recognise them so easily because they are abstract. There is nothing to see except the social decipherment of language and forms. Put oil paint in the hinges. Be your own daily producers and fire question marks at all the institutions that try to control our lives. Collectively or individually.”(<http://www.pttl.be/en/index.html#>. Retrieved in August, 2007) The passage above is the opening statement of PTTL. Being a critical ground on everyday level against the *strategy* of the institutions, PTTL is described as a place for a work ground for temporary work groups that can make interventions to the operation of those institutions.

PTTL started in the unemployment office of borough of Saint-Josse-ten-Noode in Brussels in 1998. With the invitation of local civil servants, five *local unemployed* artists set up an exhibition in the unemployment office. The exhibition was important not only because it was something done in an unemployment office by unemployed themselves; but also because it was a statement against the law that prohibited visual artists from producing art publicly<sup>22</sup> if they benefited from unemployment benefit. The exhibition has become quite successful and with an extensive press coverage the issue of unemployment benefits was carried to the agenda. In 2000 the law was abolished and in 2002 a new law that created open access to unemployment benefits for visual artists was put into effect.

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<sup>22</sup> According to the law, even if the artist did not earn any money, art could be performed only in family relations and between eight in the evening and six in the morning, if the artist received unemployment benefits.

In 1999 an urban regeneration programme started in Saint-Josse while the PTTL group was still in the unemployment office. They applied to become a part of the urban regeneration process thinking that it was a good opportunity for some extra money coming in and also making the unemployment office somewhere the neighbours could meet. (Interview with Axel Claes, 16.12.2006) They were able to get a grant and having met Mark Saunders from London who was already involved setting up video workshops for community participation, they decided to organize a workshop together in Saint-Josse. That was the beginning of a continuing partnership between Spectacle and PTTL.

PTTL is a group where the number of people working changes according to the project. Axel Claes is the only worker with salary, however when there is a project as much as income possible is tried to be generated for the participants of current PTTL group. (Interview with Ruth Pringle, 15.12.2006)

One of the most cited aspects of the group in the interviews conducted is its non-hierarchical structure. Unlike Karahaber, who was formed by a group of friends that have a similar background of education and similar levels of income, PTTL is a very diverse group. The internal conduct of the group and non-hierarchical decision making does not emerge naturally. There are *sans-papiers* without a steady income as well as white Belgians with a higher education that come together under the roof of PTTL. This makes the issue of hierarchy more crucial and active mechanisms should be employed in order to avoid its emergence. Although it should be acknowledged that the course of empirical observation was quite short, depending on the interviews conducted, it can be said that non-hierarchy is maintained. Everyone involved has equal right to participate in the decision making as well as the production processes.

The group is heterogeneous not only in terms of backgrounds and class positions, but also in terms of the abilities. This means that in PTTL, there is a continuous process of learning for the group members. It is not only learning how to use the equipment, but also learning about the issues addressed, or the methods of production. As a graduate of arts student, Ruth Pringle knows a great deal about visual arts and also has had some previous video experience, but she noted that she was weak in terms of political involvement. Kodjo Dengbey is from Togo and in his videos he is usually addressing issues about the authoritarian regime of Togo and

also his status in Belgium as a refugee waiting for papers. However before joining PTTL, he had no previous experience with camera other than shooting a funeral because a friend asked for help. This diversity also challenges conceptions of “proper experience” and legitimate knowledge about what is to be learnt.

Openness, as well as diversity, is emphasized both by PTTL members and workshop participants as an important characteristic of PTTL practices. However, just saying that a workshop or a group is open is not enough, as usually many of the people belonging to disadvantaged groups -such as immigrants, lower income groups, women, gays and transgender- would need incentives to participate. So, if there is a woman who showed up in the first meeting of a workshop but did not come to the second, Axel said he would pay more effort to make her come again when compared to the effort he would pay for a man. But the aim is not to create a homogenous group of immigrants or women, but rather to have a mix of people.

When compared to Karahaber, video practice is much less informed by theory in terms of reference to certain names or ideologies. It is not that Karahaber follows a certain ideology or name, but in the interviews conducted certain names such as Guy Debord and Dziga Vertov came up. However, in my interviews with PTTL members, if there is any reference to theory, it was more on the level of discussion among people about the practical work, and they were more sceptical about named ideologies when compared to activists in Turkey. Ruth Pringle said that any theory that an organisation is founded upon would exclude people. Absence of such a theory is mentioned as a strength rather than a weakness and Ruth added that they are not an academic institution but rather one that is founded upon experience. The principle of having a mix of people is reflected in this aspect as well. Both in terms of the diversity in educational backgrounds as well as the diversity of political opinions within the group, it would be difficult to have a theoretical grounding of that sort.

Although both groups’ political orientations are similar with an identification with New Left, it is much less explicit in PTTL in terms of the interviewees’ comments, PTTL’s website and the works done. In such a diverse group, any explicit political claim would have caused tensions that are difficult to overcome. However, what is explicitly mentioned in the interviews is that anything homophobic, sexist or racist is strictly unacceptable in PTTL.

Process is emphasized in PTTL as well as the other two cases. However, when compared to Karahaber the process is extended to a larger group of people. The distinction between videographer and the subject in Karahaber, that was still there although challenged, is almost non-existent in PTTL. Starting from video's very early use in Saint-Josse, the relation between the filmed material and the discussion about the subject matter has been mutual, both feeding each other. While the interviews filmed stir the debate, the debate enriches the actual production. This becomes obvious especially in the workshop practices. In a workshop, participants learn how to edit and use the camera, as well as some other media skills such as making interviews. While the formal aim of a workshop is to produce a video together with all participants, it is an opportunity for the community members to attain some basic media skills and at the same time come together with members of the community and discuss. The empowering aspect of the participative video is realised on different steps of the workshop process.

The group holds regular meetings every week. In those meetings issues regarding to internal organization as well as future projects are discussed. PTTL provides a ground for group members to come up with their individual projects as well as working on common ones. Having rotating presidency and secretariat in weekly meetings is one method of avoiding hierarchy. But as Ruth Pringle noted it is never possible to have complete democracy as not everyone is interested in every issue equally and participate equally. There is common technical equipment to be used by the members, and unlike Karahaber not many own their own camera or computers. There is a notebook where everyone notes which equipment they used and when they used it. For the workshops where there is a need for more cameras, PTTL sometimes borrows or rents cameras from outside.

PTTL receives steady grant from the Flemish community.<sup>23</sup> This amount does not make PTTL self-sufficient and even together with the project-based funding they get, financial difficulties remain intact. Even though the Flemish community provides such financial support, Axel Claes noted that they can not interfere with what PTTL does. One example is that PTTL's website is in three languages -

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<sup>23</sup> Here Flemish community refers to one of the communities in Belgium - other two being French and German speaking communities - and it has certain legal responsibilities covering areas of education, culture and welfare in Flemish region and bilingual Brussels region. Both French and Flemish communities are active in Brussels in the mentioned areas.

English, French and Flemish - while, as Axel said, Flemish community would prefer it to be only in Flemish.

While there are some online videos that can be accessed through PTTL's website, web is not the primary way of distribution. Screenings is one important way of reaching an audience. Having had several screenings in different contexts, PTTL videos reached different audiences; local communities, academicians, art circles and authorities. Also being part of larger events, the screenings stir debates about issues that are already on the agenda, or bring some issues to the agenda. They are also important in terms of presenting the end result of a participatory process and receive feedback which create a sense of pride for the makers of the video.

Just like Karahaber, both artistic and experimental aspects and political aspect of video exist side by side in PTTL. However there is no work that is strictly political unlike Karahaber. The style and visual language is always of a concern while the contents are politically very crucial especially in the local context. But as Axel Claes noted, not only the content but also the production method is highly political in which a multiplicity of eyes, views and approaches are behind the camera in a democratic way.

Being in a continuous network with Spectacle in London, PTTL is also linked with many organizations and groups in Brussels. Some are squatted cinema Cinema Nova, City Mine(d) - an organization that makes creative interventions in the city, BRXL Bravo art festival in Brussels, Parcours citoyen XL Dept - a local neighbourhood organization. PTTL is part of a network in the Brussels that try to bring new alternatives to urbanity. "In a city with a diversity of histories and cultures, the need to find alternatives to the political discourse of integration emanating from a dominant culture is significant. Thus a process is sought by which meaning is not imposed, but by which meaning is the object of dialogue and negotiation; a practise that is not only applicable within an urban context, but in any situation whatsoever."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> From "Process as Practice" available at <http://www.pttl.be/en/07.html#>. Retrieved in August, 2007.

#### 4.1.3. *Spectacle, London*

Spectacle is defined as “an independent television production company specialising in documentary and community-led investigative journalism” on its website. ([www.spectacle.co.uk](http://www.spectacle.co.uk)) Structure of Spectacle is different from other two groups where there is a collective of video makers producing together. Spectacle is a television production company, as said in the quotation above, and does not operate as a collective. Currently there is one full-time worker and two free-lancers working at Spectacle. As a part of its effort to promote community based media, Spectacle helps other video groups to be established in different places.

Spectacle emerged out of the practice of a community media group *Despite TV*. Mark Saunders, who started Spectacle and the only current full-time worker, planned the structure of *Despite TV* in 1980s London. The context is important as during that time in London there was a vibrant video scene with many video groups, festivals, conferences, publications and a magazine called *Independent Video*. Coupling with that was the existence of a relatively open space in mainstream media for independent media production and availability of funds for independent video making. It has been mentioned before that Channel 4, which was established in 1982, was one of the broadcast channels that provided such a space. *Workshop Agreements* made it possible for a group of people (a minimum of four) get together to make productions for Channel 4 and receive a wage that the unions would find acceptable.

When the funds started to get curbed towards the end of 1980s, many of the video groups either started to shut down, or turned into training organizations. *Despite TV* was one of the survived as it was not too much dependent on external funding. (Interview with Mark Saunders, 26.03.2007) The end of that era is also marked by the hysteria created by Thatcher government about *video nasties* and the Video Recordings Act of 1984 which introduced a strict mechanism of censorship on video production. As Mark Saunders noted, one of the real reasons that lied behind the fears of Thatcher government was that they saw the power of independent media in the context of *Miners' Strikes*, where videos made in one location were shown in others and helped the strikes to spread.

*Despite TV* started in 1982 with the idea of producing a video magazine which would cover local political, social and cultural events. It was an open group

where everyone could come and join the meetings.<sup>25</sup> As Mark Saunders noted, the number of people who showed up in the meetings was quite high, and it was a good opportunity for people to get some media skills. After some years, *Despite TV* came to an end. It is important to see that some of the principles that characterise Spectacle's and PTTL's projects were already shaped by then. An emphasis on non-hierarchical organization structure, openness and equal access for everyone who want to participate are some of them. Also an interest in urban regeneration that was changing London drastically in 1980s was carried on in later years.<sup>26</sup>

The workshop practice in terms of establishing a participatory frame emerged out of *Despite TV* as well. The emergence of Spectacle as an establishment that would facilitate workshops can also be traced back to a workshop in former East German city of Rostock. After having participated the first conference of INURA (International Network for Urban Research and Action) in Zurich in 1991, Mark Saunders was asked to go to the city to set up an alternative media group. Although tremendous changes were going on in former East Germany with the fall of the wall, the general feeling was that people did not have a say on these changes. (Interview with Mark Saunders). Mark Saunders went to the city and made a series of workshops that documented the transformations in the city, and established a video group over there.<sup>27</sup> This experience was significant in terms of shaping the current practice of Spectacle. "I suppose after the experience of Rostock, I felt like we arrived at a point how to get people to collaborate on a project, about how to harness people's voluntarism, how to maximise people's individual creativity, collectivise the equipment as much as possible and drop the costs of production. In terms of economics the biggest cost of production is labour and if a group decides to do something, they can do something outside of the economics of production." (Interview with Mark Saunders)

Spectacle has organised workshops which lead to establishment of video groups in different neighbourhoods in London and in Brussels as a result of its collaboration with PTTL. The communities, where the workshops are organised, are

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<sup>25</sup> At the end of *Despite the Sun* and *Despite the City* videos, which are *Despite TV* productions, there is a call for anyone interested with the address and time of the meeting of the group.

<sup>26</sup> *Despite the City* is a community based video about the 'colonisation of the docklands' of London and the regeneration of East London.

<sup>27</sup> *The Truth Lies in Rostock* is a video telling how a refugee house in Rostock was attacked and set to fire by neo-Nazis and the withdrawal of the German police. The video was produced as a result of a workshop practice, and presents an inside perspective about the event.

usually the ones subject to rapid urban transformations, and especially to urban regeneration. In regeneration schemes, although there is a large budget to ensure the communities' participation, most of the time this budget is not used in an efficient way. One of the things Spectacle does is introducing video into the regeneration process in terms of eliciting participation of the communities. Although the rhetoric of participation of urban regeneration is exactly what Spectacle's workshops are doing - meaning bringing the community together, introducing a more democratic decision making process and increasing the accountability - when this rhetoric starts to get actualised, regeneration companies demand more control over the process because they fund it or stop financing. (Interview with Mark Saunders).

The workshop practice is informed by the principles of non-hierarchy and openness as well. What video does in giving people the opportunity to speak up will be elaborated later, but it is important to note that in order video to do that, the groups that are formed have to be constructed in a way to avoid a part of the group become dominant, or someone to adopt the role of a community leader. The mechanisms of rotating leadership, and secretariat are again mechanisms employed. Spectacle crew participates in the workshop as facilitators, teach the skills of camera, editing, making interviews etc., but they also participate in the discussions as equal partners. So even though there is no control over the content by Spectacle, they get involved in the debate during the production process. However there would be an intervention by them if there is something sexist, homophobic or racist trying to be produced in the workshops. But, having a heterogeneous and non-hierarchical group already curbs any tendency to produce that kind of material.

The video groups do not use Spectacle as a base, and the Spectacle office is used for administrative things and for keeping the archive. Spectacle does not receive any steady funds, and most of its income is generated through project based funding. What is earned by Spectacle is usually re-invested and through that way technology they use is tried to be updated. Although there is an emphasis on process than on product, the quality of the material produced is not unimportant.

Distribution of Spectacle work is done through various ways. As some of Spectacle's work is PTTL's at the same time, screenings of them is also part of

Spectacle's distribution. Screening is an important method of distribution for Spectacle only material as well. For the videos produced by local communities, screenings become significant in terms of bringing the community together as people are interested in watching a video while they are reluctant to participate in a meeting about the same subject. Selling of DVD's through the website of Spectacle and independent distributors such as Culture Shop website<sup>28</sup> is another means of distribution. But as Mark Saunders noted a small portion of Spectacle work is sold through that way. Selling of the videos to university and college libraries is an important way of distribution as the videos become accessible to many through the libraries. Mark Saunders said that the best way of distribution is via television broadcast in order to reach a wide audience and create more effect.

The audience of Spectacle work changes with each video as some are really local, and while they might be very interesting for the community members, they are not very appealing in other contexts. Like PTTL's work, Spectacle's work is used in different contexts such as universities, activist circles and art galleries. However the activist aspect of video is more emphasized by Mark Saunders than the art aspect. But it does not mean that the videos are rough material without any style; on the contrary they have a peculiar language that is shaped in participatory processes and people watching the works in festivals, or art environments appreciate their quality without really knowing that they emerged out of a participatory process. (Interview with Mark Saunders)

While the name Spectacle is a clear reference to Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, Mark Saunders said that there has been no identification with any movement or ideology in Despite TV or in the video groups Spectacle facilitated. He said most of the time he has no idea about the political opinions of the people in the workshops outside the matters addressed. However as being able to work in a non-hierarchical way, and being open to listening everyone's opinion is a must to be able to be a part of workshop practices, that usually implies a political positioning which is not directly related to a political movement or ideology.

In addition to its relation with PTTL, Spectacle has relations with other organizations in Brussels, is involved in the European network INURA and Interreg IIIB programme that aims to stimulate interregional cooperation. Within London,

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.cultureshop.org>.

Spectacle is in relation with Silwood, Marsh Farm and Stockwell communities where workshops have been organized and video groups were established, and some independent media and film-making groups. Where the local communities are swept to the margins in the immense global city of London, Spectacle looks at places where the increasing commodification of space and anti-democratic regeneration schemes ignore. With its European network, it sets an example of grassroots supranational networking against top-down globalisation.

#### **4.2. *Video In the City***

When the technologies that are invented by the power bloc are challenged by their users in terms of the dominant ideologies they are attached to, there is always the threat of investing too much meaning in the medium. This would lead the medium to become self-referential and gain an independent meaning from its use. However, when the dominant meaning is challenged through alternative practices, they give the medium a meaning which is neither essential nor singular, but rather multiple and re-invented in every use. This is why this study is not seeking one use of video in the city that would indicate a total revolution through the medium in the urban context. Rather it will look at the different implications of video in the city that are shaped by its uses. These emanate from the capacities of the medium, its relation to the users and the local contexts video's use is embedded in. The previously mentioned urban landscape shaped by excess of visual stimulus, panoptic disciplining mechanisms and segregation make up the space that the video is operating in. However in each city this landscape gains a new face, so do the ways video challenges it.

As mentioned earlier, in terms of defining these different ways, video works and interviews with video practitioners are analysed together. The topics are not defined in terms of a separation between the two. Moreover the different localities' uses are not analysed in isolation from each other as the similarities between different uses, as well as the contrasts become more striking when they are analysed jointly. The aim of having a comparative analysis is to see how the small narratives of video are informed by their localities and in turn shape them. In order to find the possible ways through which local narratives might influence each other, it is important to search for the threads of some common characteristics as

well. It should not be forgotten that cities all over the world face similar challenges in terms of commodification of space, segregation and polarization and elimination of public space where urbanites can interact. Keeping that in mind, it is not surprising that activists all around the world develop similar tactics to tackle with these developments. But as capitalism adapt its strategies to the conditions of each location, so do the resistances against them.

Video can be both a very intimate and personal medium as well as a public one. A distinction between video on an individual level and a societal level can be made, however these usually merge, a simple example being the screening of a personal video in a public environment. As said by some of the interviewees, in their uses of video, there is no aim of having a total revolution, and the individual changes might very well be reflected on a societal level. The merge between social and individual levels can be found in the urban experience itself. As an aggregation of isolated selves, the city has individual affects on us that are experienced collectively. However, there is not much space for urbanites to share these individual experiences. Video offers such a space and no matter how much personal a video is, it is to be shared with others. This is why personal and societal implications of video are not analysed separately in the scope of this study.

There are six main categories defined for describing the ways video can be used in the city by the urbanites. Video's (and screens) existence in the city as a part of spectacle-surveillance mechanism has been explored before. What is significant in the uses designated is that they are not independent of this mechanism. If video is taken as a tactic in the urban environment, the disciplined and spectacularised urban context can be seen as the strategy it is acting in. These tactics are tried to be summarised under the topics of documenting, reconstruction, having a voice, encounter(s), and transformation. It should be noted that these categories are overlapping and are not aimed to be defined as exhaustive ones, meaning that there are uses that do not neatly fit into one or any category. However for the analytical clarity these separate categories are seen as necessary.

#### 4.2.1. Documenting

The simple act of recording the environment is the most obvious way video can be used in the city. No matter how simple it is, the act of documenting is very important. It effects both our personal and collective memories. In postmodern city we are accustomed to constant changes in our everyday environment, thus our sense of belonging is less tied to a stable physical environment. Our everyday memories are becoming more short-termed which in turn effects the collective space-time apprehension.

As previously mentioned, within Michel de Certeau's theoretical framework, video's look at the city can be analysed through the analogy of the view of the walker as opposed to the totalistic panoramic view. By video, the streets are documented both metaphorically and literally from the level of the walker. As used by the urbanites themselves, video's documentation is different from other means such as of television or surveillance cameras' which have a totalising look that ignores the heterogeneities of the street. The spontaneous documentation via video is not possible by the movie camera either.

Being a tool for recording movement, sight and sound, in all videos analysed, the city is documented, either as a "background" or as the main subject matter. Some that do not take the city as the main subject matter, such as the news videos on Karahaber site, still document the city by recording the struggles almost nobody else pays an attention to. It is evident that mainstream media turns a blind-eye to certain matters such as the press declarations of transvestites and transsexuals who they prefer to present as violent, loathsome creatures, or anti-militarist protests and conscientious objectors who are seen as traitors by the majority of people in Turkey, or women who do not accept being "honour" of men. As Alper Şen says, most of the time Karahaber is the only one there to record these small scale local struggles, so just being there and documenting is significant. (Interview with Alper Şen, 13.08.2007)

Documentation of violence against socially excluded groups and exposure of that violence are important functions of video as well. Ece, a transsexual living in Eryaman Ankara, was attacked by a group of men with guns on May 20th, 2006. Trying to save her life, she threw herself on a motorway and was run by a car. The video *Yasama Hakkı* (Right to Live), which was shot right after Ece was discharged

from hospital, is one amongst the videos telling the violence against transvestites and transsexuals in Turkey. Listening to Ece and her friends telling the story to the camera, and seeing the bruises on her face (and her body on the pictures) we become witnesses of a crime as well. Referring to the same video, Gürşat from Karahaber posted on the *I don't know* section that as Karahaber crew they are eye witnesses and depict the events as they witness them. (<http://www.karahaber.org/bilmiyorum/karsipencere.html>. Retrieved in August, 2007.) Living in the same city, maybe in the same neighbourhood, without a tool documenting and disseminating it, our chances to know what happened to Ece are low. Even if we can hear about it through other means, seeing her telling the story helps us to realise how real and how close violence is, even if not everyone experience it equally. As Alper Şen said in our interview, their aim is as simple as making things visible by recording them and making them available to people's access.

In the act of documenting, video might also become the evidence of someone's life-experience at a personal level. After they learnt how to use the camera, scavengers in Ankara started recording their lives and what they do as an occupation - which is collecting paper from Ankara's trash and something that embarrasses them - to show it to their relatives in Eastern city of Van. In one scene in the video *Hakkari'den Ankara'ya: Kağıtçılar* (From Hakkari to Ankara: Scavengers) a scavenger is shooting his friends while piling the papers in Türközü Warehouses and says: "I will send this tape to Van and say 'Look, this is our life... Look at what we are doing'." In another scene we see Ramazan's family watching the recordings of their village, and an old lady from the family with tears in her eyes.<sup>29</sup> Alper Şen said that after seeing their villages on the recordings, many decided to go back and see their hometown: "The shootings revitalised their visual memory. ... This showed what Karahaber can do in relation to space. Maybe it is not

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<sup>29</sup> Most scavengers working in the centre of Ankara are Kurds from the South-eastern city of Hakkari. Their villages were evacuated by soldiers and they were forced to leave their villages because of the war between Turkish army and the Kurdish guerrillas. Having migrated to big cities, they are forced to live on the small amount they earn out of collecting paper. The scavengers not only have no social security, or any favourable working conditions but also face racism, and oppression by the authorities that try to ban them from collecting paper.

a very sublime cause, but a very important cause; you remind them of their homeland.”<sup>30</sup>

The memory that video is related to is an open-ended one. As Can Gündüz from Karahaber said writing down the history from below via video reminds us that the history is open to manipulation. (Interview with Can Gündüz and Bilge Demirtaş, 09.08.2007) In the video *Burası Ankara* (Here is Ankara) Bilge Demirtaş and Can Gündüz re-appropriated old images of Ankara from Sergei Yutkevich’s film *Ankara: Serdtse Turtsii* (1934) (Turkey’s Heart Ankara), and images from Yılmaz Güney’s *Sürü* (1978) (The Herd) together with images from today’s Ankara. The sites and images that exist in collective memories of Ankarites but diminished physically are reminded, by juxtaposing them with current images. Appropriation of past images is not aimed to create a nostalgia about a city that *faded away*, but rather reminds that urbanites should take responsibility on the environment they are living in rather than only complaining about current developments. (Interview with Can Gündüz and Bilge Demirtaş, 09.08.2007) In a similar fashion, in *Cité Administrative* video which is the end product of a workshop organised by PTTL and Spectacle, a lot of archive images are used. Shootings from the huge complex of Cité Administrative site in the centre of Brussels that is currently empty are counterposed with archival images from times when the building was still in use. While counterposing these two periods, the video also documents a site with an indefinite destiny. This can be seen in most videos that take urban regeneration as its subject which document the sites before, during and after the regeneration projects.

Silwood Video Group’s three volume videos about Silwood Estate in London documents all phases of the massive regeneration project that the estate underwent. Starting with a video workshop organised by Spectacle, the video group documented the drastic changes in built environment and the community for 5 years, while at the same time documenting how the promises given by developers were not kept. While some of the videos might not be very interesting for outside viewers, for the community keeping a record of the transformation they are important. Just like the urban transformations of late nineteenth century which

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<sup>30</sup> “Çekimler görsel hafızalarını canlandırdı. ... Bu Karahaber’in mekana dair ne yapabileceğini göstermiş oldu. Çok ulvi bir amaç değil belki ama çok mühim bir amaç; adamlara topraklarını hatırlatıyorsun.” (Interview with Alper Şen, 13.08.2007)

Atget and other photographers documented, and New York streets captured by Abbott, video can be a tool to document the rapid transformations. Talking about a video workshop in 1991 in Rostock, Mark Saunders said: “What we are filming is the constant transformation of the built environment. When we did week one workshop in Rostock and everyone went and filmed the city centre, I knew it would not look like that in three months time. There is that kind of way that you can use it to capture particular moments.” (Interview with Mark Saunders, 26.03.2007)

As the users of the city record it according to their own experiences, multiple memories of the city emerge. Everyday stories are accumulated in the use, but never captured to be told to the others can be told through video. *Pea Souper*, in the collection of videos of Silwood Video Group, is a video about Shirley’s memories about her childhood and how she could walk a route only by following the smells of certain locations such as the factories on her way home. Another video in the same collection *Jacci’s Tour*, is a ‘diary of a refurb’ by Jacqueline Dyer. Here all the details of Jacqueline’s not refurbished house are recorded: worn out paint, wholes in the wall, scratches over the toilet seat... While the personal sphere becomes public through her video diary, Jacqueline documents how she has to struggle with the defects in her house by herself as refurbishers do not do . Personal sphere’s documentation collides with a more general level about the state of the buildings. When put together, the above mentioned two videos and others by Silwood Group that depict the *life in the estate* - the Lambourne House which is an important landmark in the estate, the youth centre that is in a miserable state, or LOOP (Life Opportunities for Old People) - provide a picture of Silwood. This is not a totalising or an inherently coherent picture, but as said before, life in the city itself is experienced in such a fragmented way that any memory that would correspond to it should avoid any unitary memory.

As mentioned earlier, Oktay İnce said in our interview that Karahaber aims to write down the history of social movements in Ankara via video. Just like the memory of the Silwood estate, this is a fragmented memory; when you put together a single movement’s past struggles you get a history, and if you put together all different movements’ histories together, you get an alternative history of the city which is written from below.

Social movements also shape the collective history of the city. Over the years, certain sites and landmarks in Ankara gained a new meaning through their use. For 1231 days, TAYAD members -a foundation for the relatives of political detainees- sat under a statue in the Abdi İpekçi park in inner city Ankara to be in solidarity with the detainees on hunger strike and to protest the F type prisons. The statue of two hands positioned upright side by side has become the symbol of the resistance against the isolated F type prison cells. Another example is the Human Rights Monument in the pedestrianised part of the centre of Ankara. Many of the press decelerations and smaller scale protests take place around this monument. These two structures appear in many of the Karahaber videos as the background of protests and press declarations. As Oktay İnce and Alper Şen said, the videos contributed to the place of these two symbols in the collective memories of Ankarites. The official symbols of Ankara that can be seen in dominant visual representations of the city - mausoleum of Atatürk, or the tower of the first shopping mall Atakule - are challenged by creating new symbols with the struggles around it. This is different from the official memory - or more correctly history - which eliminates the multiplicity of practices, histories and resistances. Bringing together the fragments, the history is told and written at the same time. The active role prescribed to camera is not revealing the reality or scraping off the surface of the spectacle, but rather looking at places that are not yet invaded by spectacle and having a constructive role rather than a representative one. What it constructs changes in each case; stating it precisely would be another kind of essentialism. Video offers a way out of essentialism.

The memory recorded via the video camera has a dubious nature as well. As Alper Şen reminded, once it is recorded, it is no more possible to imagine something freely. It is imprinted on our memories through the frame of the camera. Recording of an image, either through video camera or any other optic means, reframes our experience, thus it also means a reconstruction of the *real* experience. The second way camera operates in the city is its reconstruction.

#### 4.2.2. *Reconstruction*

Similarities between architecture and city is demonstrated by Russian director Sergei Eisenstein. Taking architecture as predecessor of cinema, Eisenstein

says that cinema is able to represent the multi-dimensionality of reality on a flat surface. (Eisenstein, 1994: 60) Just like the film, architecture also operates on the basis of a montage effect where shots are brought together in a sequential way. "... film and architecture share a dimension of living that in Italian is called *vissuto*, the space of one's lived experiences. In other words, they are about lived space and the narrative of place. They are both inhabited sites and spaces for inhabitation, narrativized by motion. Such types of dwelling always construct a subjectivity. Their subjectivity is the physical self occupying narrativized space, who leaves traces of her history on the wall and on the screen." (Giuliana, 2002: 64-65) Leaving aside the discussion about the difference between cinema and video, the editing process that puts different images together and that is found in the montage effect of architecture, is the same in both cinema and video. It is also important to realise how lived space and represented space merge in the practice of being with video on the street. The same experience is in turn reflected on the viewer's experience on the street, which is much more subtle but still there.

We move along the streets with a certain way of looking that we have developed over the years. While there are personal elements to it, such as paying more attention to certain things more than others because of our personal history, there are also common patterns that can be found. For instance few of us pay too much attention to the billboards that surround us, but rather appropriate them in a rather unconscious manner. These common patterns are shaped by our practices, mainly the visual ones such as watching television, or looking at the glossy pictures of magazines. If one uses a video camera on a more or less regular basis, it is very natural that it would effect one's perception. A frequent sentence that came up in my interviews with video makers was that: "After a while you start looking at the world from camera's frame."

Bilge Demirtaş from Karahaber said that when one looks at the city through the camera, one can single out the pieces and then relate them back to the whole. (Interview with Bilge Demirtaş and Can Gündüz, 09.08.2007) The defects - or beauties - that are lost in the general picture are detected by looking at the pieces, the particular. Can Gündüz added to that, having started to experience the world in general, and the city in particular within the frame of the camera makes him realise that the world is made up of units that can be played with. This

broadens the perception. Such a transformation is on an individual level and there is no way observing its direct impact on the city. But it does not mean that it is of no effect. It is a continuous process of knowing better the city one is living in and video as the medium of experiencing it.

*Bir Türkü Söylesem Orda Çıkar mı?* (Will It Appear on This If I Sing a Song) is a video by Oktay İnce about the Ulus Square which used to be the centre of Ankara during the War of Independence and the early years of the Republic.<sup>31</sup> The video takes place on the day of Turkish Republic's official date of foundation and shows how the ceremonies remain external to the daily practices of the usual users of the square; homeless, beggars, shoe shining kids etc. We see only parts and pieces of the activities - both the everyday practices and ceremonies taking place - as well as the built environment including the Atatürk monument. Juxtaposed with each other, those fragments depict the square in a fashion that is similar to actual appropriation of the space - the haptic appropriation of built environment which is rather fragmented and partial - which reminds of the remarks of Eisenstein about montage and architecture. Oktay İnce said he made an architectural argument in the video by showing the square in its fragments. He aimed to disrupt the totality of the square which represents the modernist ideals coupled with nationalistic discourse.

In the video *Burası Ankara* by Bilge and Can, such a look at the city through its fragments can also be seen. Different parts of the city that are segregated from each other, flows of people and cars with a different rhythm are brought together to show how the city is fading away as a result of arbitrary decisions of local politicians. The mayor of Ankara on television, through 3D animations speaking about his projects about a massive aeroplane statue placed on a high hill, images of artificial waterfalls that invaded the city in the last ten years, squat residents forced to move out of their houses, buildings being torn down and old films about Ankara brought together to make up a picture of Ankara. The spectacle is attacked by breaking it to pieces and constructing something out of its pieces. The spectacle

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<sup>31</sup> The Atatürk monument and the square around it was to symbolise the new Republic and its heroic establishment. However today the square is devoid of its early meaning and is a centre for lower income groups both in their commercial and social activities. Although the square is ignored by the higher-educated middle classes, it still serves as a ceremonial place for them in special occasions such as the National Day.

is both the waterfalls and other animated spaces in the city, and the mayor's presentation of another spectacle he is aiming to construct. The way he presents the statue is not a *representation of space* in Lefebvre's terms, there is no rationality or planning aspect to it. It is mere spectacle that is out of any context. Can Gündüz said that as the mayor uses visuality in such a ruthless way in shaping the city we live in, we should attack his use by using visuality too.

By de-contextualising certain images and re-contextualising them under video, Özlem Sarıyıldız from Karahaber believes that video's rhythms resemble to that of the city. She added, although there are some local differences, a similar rhythm can be found in any city. *1+1=1* is a video by her where two cities, Ankara and Karlsruhe in Germany are added together yet end up being one. Everyday life rhythms from the two cities - a man shaking his legs while waiting for the tram, manual workers breaking pavements on the street, children shining shoes, a man making candy apples - are accompanied by the lapses of that rhythm- a taxi driver waiting for a passenger, a frozen figure in the midst of busy traffic. Just like the metropolis, video brings together things that are seemingly disconnected from each other in a unique harmony.

When seen in this way, almost all of the video works that are in the scope of this study are reconstructions of the city. They all appropriate images from different contexts and assemble them in a new fashion to produce meaning. Although there is no strict separation, while documenting corresponds more to the recording phase of video production, reconstruction corresponds more to the editing process. Through the collective editing process employed in PTTL and Spectacle workshops such a reconstruction is also done in a more collective way. Members of Ixelles video group who made the video *XL Workshop* depicted their neighbourhood in fragments from a street-fest, construction works that make the everyday life difficult, water problem of Ixelles neighbourhood, some history of the Flagey square which is to be refurbished, the things that they like about their neighbourhood - such as its multiculturalism. These themes do not follow each other in a linear way, rather they are coming up through the video several times. These bits and pieces that make Ixelles a unique place are collected together like a pastiche. While depicting Ixelles, at the same time it constructs it where different

languages, different ages and views find equal space and communicate with each other on a new ground.

Not only through editing, but also by using the camera in the city in a playful way, the city's parts and pieces can be reassembled. Bilge Demirtaş talked about a psychogeographical<sup>32</sup> game they played with a group of friends. They decided to find where the old synagogue in Ulus neighbourhood was as they have forgotten where exactly it was. Separately they started searching for it, and in their quest for the synagogue they recorded their routes via certain tools; video camera, sketches they draw, photographs and sound recordings. After, they exchanged these materials and tried to find the route followed by each other. Bahar watched Bilge's recordings and tried to find which roads she had taken, while Bilge did the same through Bahar's sketches. Through this way they took roads that they have never taken before, and talked to people they would not normally talk to. New relations between certain streets and locations are established than the ones imposed by rationalised modernist geography. That kind of practices aided by video camera are also part of an effort to know the city one is living in better, trying to look at it in a different way with the aid of a medium and at the same time exploring the capacities of the medium further, whether it is a camera or a drawing.

#### 4.2.3. *Monitoring the Monitors*

It has been previously explored how new surveillance mechanisms turn the city into an electronic panopticon. Being critical about the current city's disciplinary face, most of the videos cited include shots of surveillance cameras. Especially in the videos by Spectacle in London, the scenes with CCTV cameras are very common which is not surprising when it is considered that London is the 'CCTV capital of the world'. Recording the surveillance cameras is significant because it reminds that there is an eye behind the surveillance camera and it should be accountable. The fact that video camera can be in the hands of the ones who are tried to be disciplined challenges the aimed *panopticization* of the city. It calls to

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<sup>32</sup> *Psychogeography* is a term used by Situationists to define the emotional affects the environment creates on us. The traditional geography blinded us to the feelings and emotions that are aroused by space and replaced them with a dry physical geography. *Psychogeography* on the other hand: "could set for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals." (Debord, 1981: 5)

attention that the power of the authorities is not unlimited and they can be held accountable as well. “(V)ideo has ... contradictory uses ... It can be used by the power bloc to monitor the comings and goings of the people, but equally its cameras can be turned 180 social degrees, to show the doings of the power bloc to people. ... (V)ideo technology still allows, on occasion, those who are normally monitored to monitor the monitors. This technological engagement in the social struggle never takes place on equal terms. Opportunistic tactics are set against strategically deployed power; the handheld home video camera has a mobility that makes it a good guerrilla weapon, whereas carefully located surveillance cameras are typical of a powerful strategy that is well planned and highly efficient, but cumbersome.” (Fiske, 1998: 161, parentheses belong to me.)

The power bloc feels threatened by the existence of the cameras that belong to *people*. Oktay İnce said that a video camera wandering around the city is something uncanny for the authorities. He talked about examples where he has been warned by security guards even in the most harmless locations such as public parks. “In Kurtuluş Park a guard came up to me and said it was forbidden to make shootings there. ... They are afraid that rival political parties would make shootings to the disadvantage of the municipality.”

A camera in the hands of activists is also threatening in the context of protests. Knowing that they are being recorded by *rival* cameras, the police can not use its force as arbitrarily as it could. Oktay İnce said there are three cameras in a demonstration that record the event: Police cameras, cameras of the press and activist cameras. Even though they all record the same event, their positioning are fundamentally different. The activist cameras not only monitor the police cameras but also the press and challenges the legitimacy of the “objective” information it provides. In *The Battle Of Trafalgar* made by Despite TV about the anti-poll tax demonstration on Trafalgar square in London in 1990, not only the police violence is demonstrated but also how the media misrepresented the event by saying that the demonstrators assaulted the police. In a similar fashion, we see clips of news from several television channels in *Kağıtçılar* video that present resistance of scavengers in Ankara against the police forces when the warehouses they were working were demolished, as if they attacked the police. Media’s accountability is a wide topic to explore, but here it would suffice to say that without the existence

of activist cameras, there would be no way to challenge the visually dominant *misrepresentation* of television of the above mentioned events.

It is not only in the context of surveillance cameras or demonstrations, but also in other situations where the power bloc is encountered by the people, video camera's existence provides a certain power and might influence the decision makers. "A lot of the work we do might be about arriving in a meeting with a camera which makes sure that in that meeting people who want to manipulate that meeting know that it is being recorded. Or the promises that are made, there is a record of. So the use of the cameras to bring about change do not always depend on the process of making people watching things, it might be in the process of filming." (Interview with Mark Saunders, 26.03.2007)

The effect of the existence of both surveillance and activist cameras changes in different countries. Surveillance cameras, although increasing rapidly, are not yet an important part of the daily practices of people in Turkey. In London, as mentioned before, they are not only a lot more in number, but also made more visible by being exposed by activist cameras more often. The surveillance is much less haptic in London, while in Turkey one to one encounters with the members of the power-bloc - such as the guard of the park, or soldiers in military zones who warn not to use a camera - are more frequent. Strangely enough, in Turkey, in the context of demonstrations, the police seems to be less aware about how existence of activist cameras might be disadvantageous for them. Overall, the video camera is a less encountered by people in Turkey when compared to Western Europe, thus it is attached much less meaning whether is a CCTV or an activist camera.

#### 4.2.4. *Having A Voice*

Among all the uses of video in the city, providing a ground for the ones who are not represented to have a voice is maybe the most prominent one. Through mainstream media our chances to be heard is very limited. By producing their own media, various groups and communities that live side by side in the city get a chance both to express themselves and hear about the others. The bottom-line of all the practices of the three groups mentioned in this study and all the videos mentioned is about giving a voice to the unrepresented, where the form of *mis* or *unrepresentation* and how it is tackled with change.

It has been mentioned earlier how massive regeneration projects all around the world take away urbanites' right to make a claim about the environment they live in. In the context of Brussels and London, there is a participatory mechanism that is to integrate the residents to the regeneration process. However, most of the time participation remains on the level of rhetoric and residents end up being frustrated by the inadequacy of participatory processes. In some cases, video projects of PTTL and Spectacle are funded by the builders, and they are integrated as a part of the participatory scheme. Whether or not they are funded by the regeneration companies, using video in that context provides the residents a space to express their frustration with the undemocratic nature of urban redevelopment projects and create a more efficient ground for debate and influencing the decision making processes. *Participation, Cité Administrative, Je Vous Salis Ma Rue*, , *XL Workshop* by Spectacle and PTTL and *Silwood Video Group, Olympic Stories: Clays Lane, Marsh Farm: Master Plan* by Spectacle and *Burası Ankara and Tebligat X* are about the (lack of) say of urbanites in the urban developments.

In most of the above mentioned videos, we see the residents confronted with the scale models of the proposed plans by the regenerators. The scenes where the residents look at the plans and discuss them with the consultants set a good example of how *representations of space* - the space of the architects and planners - excludes the *lived space*. Allying itself with the residents and being a part of the lived space, video positions itself against the planning of space by a master planner. A quote from *Cité Administrative* video that is accompanied by the images of the architects of the typically modernist Cité Administrative building is a clear statement against the engineering of the space on paper: "An architect only has contact with life through paper. The paper on which he draws his plans, the paperwork of administration approving his plans, the photographic paper that provides an aura of realism, professional newspapers and publications that inform and endorse of the idea that he works for history. A history of paper is a history of architecture and urbanism. Paper is flat. You can not live in it."<sup>33</sup>

*Marsh Farm: Master Plan* is a collection of small clips of interviews with residents of the Marsh Farm estate in London and consultants of the regeneration project during a master planning day. Although the interviews might not be very

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<sup>33</sup> From the video *Cité Administrative*.

interesting for an outsider, they demonstrate how residents' demands are non-existent in the master plan. Video provides a free space for residents to talk about matters such as the failed promises of the developers, express their demands about the future developments and discuss. Screened later, the interviews would be useful for the residents. As Mark Saunders noted, in community meetings people with more dominant characters tend not to listen to the others, and some people not feeling confident with speaking in front of a public remain unheard. But when it is recorded, people have to sit and listen to what is said on the video. Marsh Farm video is a good example of how people can express their concerns about regeneration schemes easier with the aid of video.

*Participation* by PTTL and Spectacle is about the participation process of Saint-Josse residents in Brussels in the regeneration process of the commune and at the same time it shows how video works as a part of this process. Residents talk about the regeneration schemes, what they dislike and like about them, what they want in their neighbourhood as well as the difficulties that arise in the participation process. The need to have a democratic process where the demands of the residents are replied quickly is underlined in the video. *Participation* is a good example of how video can be used to give an equal chance to speak about regeneration as well as the participation processes. Axel Claes said in one occasion: "What we are trying to introduce with the video in this district contract program is using the video as an active strategy, not only as a simple registration of what is happening but voluntarily decide that we, for instance, are going to do an interview with the Mayor, or with the group of white people involved in the district contract who after one year were in a very depressed mood because nothing was going forward. For one year they had been discussing re-arranging public space but not one new light has been put on. You couldn't see or touch anything about the district contract. There was just meetings, and that's the point where we chose to make interviews with each of them. Some of them didn't even want to come to the meetings anymore."<sup>34</sup>

*Je Vous Salis Ma Rue* is about Rue de Laeken which is the street where gentrification is experienced most dramatically in Brussels. The video tells gentrification from the point of view of different actors in the street from Flemish

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<sup>34</sup> From "TV-Nova debate: Discussion Media activism", available at <http://www.pttl.be/en/07.html#>. Retrieved in August, 2007.

creative class members to immigrants and shop owners. The street itself being one of the most mixed places of Brussels with two theatres, design shops, homeless people, prostitutes, and a reception centre for asylum seekers situated at the least gentrified end of the street, is portrayed in the video through a mix of these voices. *Je Vous Salis Ma Rue* is rich in details from everyday life on the street that are reassembled with different associations. While the prostitutes are mentioned stills of commercials on the street that represent an adoration of female (and male) sexuality flow, and few minutes later with a similar speed we see still images from the run-down face of the neighbourhood with graffiti referring to the neighbourhood as the Chicago of Brussels. The sexuality of the former set of images corresponds not only to prostitution but also to the glossy face of gentrification. Both the glossy and shabby faces of Rue de Laeken are given an equal weight, however this does not mean the video is impartial. The video is critical about the unevenness of gentrification and the polarisation it creates. While the spectacle created by gentrification veils the ugliness of the life style of some and marginalizes them even more, video gives a voice to this ugly face of the street.

While there is - although most of the time only in rhetoric - some space for participation in urban developments in the case of Brussels and London, in Ankara there is literally no mechanism of consultation to residents in regeneration projects. *Tebligat X* (Notification X) is a video by Can Gündüz and Oktay İnce about the destruction of the squatting houses in Yenidoğan neighbourhood in Ankara. Leaving aside the fact that they have no say on the regeneration schemes of their neighbourhoods, the residents are forced out of their houses without even being notified beforehand about when their houses are going to be demolished. When they go and ask about it to the officials, they say that they put an X mark on the doors of the houses to be demolished. The video demonstrates only one instance of the despotic decisions of local authorities in developing regeneration plans and applying them. In *Kağıtçılar* video, we see how the warehouses where papers are collected are demolished and how scavengers are forced out one week after the local elections, while a week before the local elections, a municipal candidate had visited the scavengers and promised them to provide a proper working environment. While the populist policies of the local authorities are exposed, both videos narrate what happens in “distant” squat areas of Ankara.

In the above mentioned videos, both the scavengers and squat owners are happy to find a camera that they can tell what is going on, the injustice done to them. Having an access to visibility brings empowerment to groups who are marginalised by economic, social and cultural exclusion. In the case of participatory video production, empowerment occurs also because these groups come to possess the means to tell their stories themselves through a powerful medium. Empowerment takes place both on the level of acquiring new skills and professing them, and at the same time knowing that through these new skills, one can express herself.

In participatory video, having a multiplicity of the marginalised voices behind the camera makes video a medium that is capable of representing the new complexities of postmodern cities with new waves of immigrants and increasing polarities. “There is not one city or one neighbourhood, everyone is part of it, and that’s what is interesting about getting lots of people behind the camera. Whoever is behind the camera, changes what is filmed. Not only what they choose to film but it also changes what happens in front of the camera” (Interview with Mark Saunders, 26.03.2007)

Once the skills are acquired, they can be used in any context, even to address the seemingly mundane problems experienced in daily life on the street. Amir Najmi from PTTL said that he did a video about pavements because he is bothered by the fact that they are full of obstacles for pedestrians. Another example is the video *Sakın Ona Basma* (Beware Not to Step On It) by Bengisu Dönmez about the electric cables that are left bare on the streets. Not only the issues but also the makers of both videos are not likely to have a voice through traditional means; Amir Najmi is an Iranian in Brussels while Bengisu is only thirteen years old.

Voices of children and elderly are usually given a chance in many of the videos cited. In the context of regeneration projects, needs of young or middle aged professionals are usually given prominence to the needs of the young and the elderly. Youth centres, community centres, green spaces are usually on the top of the list of unkept promises by the developers. Users of the elderly sports centre LOOP in Silwood Estate made a video about the centre where they expressed how important it is for the elderly to have a place of that sort. It is not only a place for

the elderly to get exercise under supervision, but also a reason to get out of their houses and get socialised. Inadequacy of the facilities for children come up in videos by Marsh Farm and Silwood video groups as well as videos such as *Participation, Je Vous Salis Ma Rue, XL Workshop*.

It is not only adults speaking up for children, but through video children get a chance to speak up for themselves. Easy to use, and a fun way to interact with their environment, children seem to enjoy using video in a playful manner. Gomez claims while they get the chance to observe the world behind a camcorder, children also develop a critical media literacy through video. (Gomez, 2003) I believe such a critical literacy already exists in children, even more than it does in the adults. When they pick up the cameras, children frequently imitate the language of television in a mocking way. *Class X* is a collection of small clips of children interviewing with each other. Although the clips are usually about education, there are news shows in between the clips where an “anchor” is reporting that the old factory behind her is “where they are building a new bomb”, or the location of the first rocket to be launched from London. Part of the video *Kağıtçılar: Hakkari'den Ankara'ya* is filmed by child scavengers. In a scene Emrullah picks up the camera to interview with his friend Mr. Nurettin and asks him questions about their working conditions, bosses and education in a style that is used by the news anchors in Turkey. He later pretends to be a politician who promises to support Nurettin's education if Nurettin pays a visit to his office. Camera becomes a tool in the *hidden transcript* in Scott's terms, where the power of both the media and the politicians is mocked offstage .

A recent project that Alper Şen from Karahaber is involved in aims to depict different environments children are living in from the eyes of other children. Children involved in the project are from different economic and social classes and different locations; some being from a village in Göcek on Aegean coast of Turkey, some from middleclass neighbourhoods of big cities and some from the low income squat neighbourhoods. The life in the neighbourhoods the children are living is depicted through the story of the everyday life of one child in each location. Children will not only record their own life experiences but also compare it with the others' involved in the project. The end product will be a documentary about the lives of five different children.

One of the groups that can not find a space to be represented via the mainstream media are the immigrants and refugees. Another recently finished project by PTTL gives a chance to *sans-papiers* in Brussels to talk about their experiences of living without papers, and about what they will do when their papers arrive which is at the same time the name of the video; *Quand les Papiers Arrivent...* Spectacle and PTTL were commissioned to make a video about the immigrants who live without any legal papers in Belgium aimed at Belgian voters before the 2007 general elections of Belgium. Within the framework of the workshop practice of PTTL and Spectacle that was described earlier, *sans-papiers* make statements to the camera about what they will do when their papers arrive. They also talk about their personal stories or what they would say to a racist Belgian. (Interview with Mark Saunders, 26.03.2007)

*Sans-papiers*, scavengers, transsexuals and transvestites, squatters, homeless, feminists, anarchists, anti-militarists, children and the elderly... all *aliens* of the society can find a space for themselves in video. At the end of *Kağıtçılar* video, we see Nurettin, a child scavenger, looking green in the light of night shot, with glowing eyes and wearing a t-shirt with an alien on it. The screen is framed with the news frame of the story that followed the news story of scavengers “attacking” the police in Türközü. It says on the frame “A New Crack Found on the Surface of Mars is Named After Anatolia”. Nurettin is talking about his alien t-shirt within the frame. As Oktay İnce said in our interview, video looks at the city through its cracks - the *aliens* - while at the same time aiming to create new ones. This reminds of a quote from de Certeau where he says that tactics should make use of the cracks open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. (de Certeau, 1984: 37) Video offers a tool for the emergence of ‘differential space’ Lefebvre mentioned as against the abstract space. It tends towards heterogeneity by giving a chance different voices to express themselves. However as Lefebvre noted, differential space is also to restore the unities that are broken up by abstract space through setting links between different actors, moments and practices in the city. Next will be explored to what extent video does this and provide a space for the cracks in the city to interact and not be aliens to each other.

#### 4.2.5. *Encounter(s)*

In the context of more and more purified urban experiences, the chance to encounter, let alone interact with the 'other' is minimised. Traditional sites for gathering and interaction are destroyed and people are isolated in enclave neighbourhoods. However new collective forms of organization and production creates novel environments for such interaction. Video might become a way to restore the heterogeneity in urban communities. The process of video providing a space for encountering new subject positions, new ideas and being aware of the lives of others in 'distant' neighbourhoods takes place in different ways in different cases. While in the case of PTTL and Spectacle it is usually the production process that creates encounters, in the case of Karahaber where production takes place in a more or less homogenous group, it takes place mostly on the web; during distribution.

It has been mentioned before that PTTL is a mixed group and it is a deliberate choice to have a group of that sort. Frequently mentioned by group members is how such a mix makes the group more productive while at the same time makes the video making a more challenging process. Karin Vyncke from PTTL talked about an incident where a simple joke she made created a tension in the group as what might be a joke in Belgium is not in every culture. She added, although it is sometimes difficult, the most interesting thing in PTTL for her is being a part of such a mixture and producing together with people whom she might have never met outside PTTL. Ruth Pringle from PTTL said everybody experiences Brussels differently because of their social positioning. A *sans-papier* would experience it differently than her as a Scot who does not speak French. By discussing and producing together, she gets to know the city she lives in better.

The principle of having a heterogeneous group of people applies in the workshops organised by PTTL and Spectacle as well. As mentioned earlier, it is not likely to end up with a mixed group if a special effort is not paid. Axel Claes from PTTL gave the example of the first workshop they organised in Saint-Josse where there was only two Turkish men in the group while Turks make up a majority in the population of the commune. It is easier for someone with a background as a lawyer to participate in such an event than someone with the background as a housewife he added. In order to appeal a housewife, it should be assured that she will feel

addressed by the activity. It is not only different backgrounds, but also the clash of different views and opinions that make the production process as well as the product more interesting. “I would say a very high percentage of benefits and advantages of the workshops is what happens off the camera, between people in the workshops. The kind of networking, different kind of understanding people have of each other through the experiences they have together... The fact that people find out about each other’s skills... there are people working together, who may be on a purely political level not working together well outside of our group.” (Interview with Mark Saunders, 26.03.2007)

The differences in political opinions of the groups that exist side by side on the Karahaber page is also an example of how video can create a space for encounters. Videos of groups that can be defined with more orthodox Marxist tendencies that think homosexuality is an illness exist side by side with the videos about the struggles of LGBTTT. Although through the site of Karahaber many get the chance to know about other movements as well as news about groups that are not represented anywhere else, it is dubious that to what extent that really creates an interaction between groups and challenge their prejudices. Moreover, although the production process is largely informed by the discussions amongst the group members, as mentioned before the group is rather a homogenous one - in comparison to PTTL or workshop groups - and the encounters that exist in the other two cases within the group does not take place in Karahaber. However the video makers in Karahaber get to know new groups and confront new situations and after following the passing events about these groups for some time, they establish *organic* links with them. In that process both sides learn from each other. For instance Tennur Baş from Karahaber who regularly follows the protests of feminists in Ankara, told that she learnt a great deal about issues of patriarchy and gender as a result of her relation with feminists. These kinds of encounters and what is learnt out of it are carried to the discussions within the group, creating a more indirect, but an important affect on the production process.

There is another level of encounter which is done by making people aware of what is happening in other parts of the city. As said before, Ankara is a city where segregation is extremely high, and there are certain neighbourhoods about which a middle class professional might have never heard of, such as the neighbourhoods

where the scavengers are living. The ironic thing is that, as scavengers collect the papers in the city; the same person might see them everyday, yet know nothing about them. Through Karahaber - if the middle class person knows about Karahaber and is interested in it - she can encounter a way of life that she does not know anything about. The segregation is not only spatial but also temporal. The transvestites and transsexuals who use the city mostly during the night remain invisible and unheard for many, and when they are visible it is through television news where they are presented as violent and anti-social people. Without any other means of representation, they would remain to be *aliens* to people that have no chance of encountering them. In a country where polarization amongst people is so big, what Karahaber does is important in terms of making the gap between people a little bit smaller.

#### 4.2.6. Transformation

When asked the question how video can transform the city, many of the activists I interviewed stopped for a moment. It is difficult to envisage a direct way that video can make a change in the city. The most obvious example could be creating an influence on the decision makers via the “power of the image”. However it is not very likely to happen frequently, given the reluctance of decision makers to include the urbanites in the decision making processes. As Can Gündüz from Karahaber said, video only as a technology can create nothing, but might have an affect with the social formation behind it. The content of the video, its production process, the context it is produced and appropriated add up to this social formation.

In order the videos to become more influential, the problem of distribution becomes a key factor. None of the case studies analysed above have the means to reach a wide audience as they are independent groups that are struggling with financial problems. However as Can Gündüz noted, even if the videos reach a wide audience, what they can do is nothing more than telling what is going on. “If everybody already knows what is going on, but still does nothing, then there is not much video can do.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>“Herkes zaten olanın bitenin farkındaysa, ama hiçbir şey yapmıyorsa, o noktada video’nun yapabileceği çok şey de yok.” (Interview with Bilge Demirtaş and Can Gündüz, 09.08.2007)

If the direct effects are left aside, and the dynamics video can create in the city are considered, a multiplicity of transformations it might create becomes visible, which have already been analysed in this chapter. Although classified under certain topics, these are overlapping processes. For instance a *documentation* of an event, or a site that is to be demolished, is done through the frame of the camera, and usually it is edited; so it is at the same time a *reconstruction*. While different subjects *have a voice* on the same platform through video they also *encounter* each other. These overlaps can be observed in many of the above mentioned examples.

Video creates a practice where the audience, the producer and the subject matter are not demarcated clearly. As mentioned above, even in the case of Karahaber where video making is less of a participatory process compared to other two cases, through the *organic* relations between video makers and the social movements, the separation between ‘videographer’ and her subject diminishes. The transformations video might create should be sought in the merge of different things that exist separately from each other in other visual expressions. It is a space where an interaction on different levels might take place. As there is no hierarchy in between the spectator and the image, the producer and the user, the camera and the subject; any transformation taking place on one level would affect the others.

It should be reminded that ascribing too much role for video would be disregarding all the social and cultural dynamics that video practice is embedded in. Without its interaction with its environment, video would have no effect. Being a tool, but an effective one with a lot of possibilities, its power is not self-referential. “And in the end, you see that you are telling something about what is going on in the society. It is not organizing a total revolution. Not at all.” (Interview with Karin Vyncke, 16.12.2006)

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

*“Life is complex. Movement and multiplicity make it so. There is no way to define it, to study it, to abstract it. The only way we can know life is through experience. Complex systems can only be experienced in movement .*

*Complex systems, such as a city, have to be understood in their multidimensionality and in their dynamics. The more dimensions a space links together, the richest it becomes.”<sup>36</sup>*

*“There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in.”*

*Leonard Cohen*

Now that the world is increasingly shaped by visual technologies, and our perception of it is not independent from the constant flow of images that has penetrated every aspect of our lives; our claims of having a say on our own lives should make use of these technologies as well. We can give a new meaning to the media that have been used in repressive ways by the *power bloc*. One of these media is video. As demonstrated in this paper, video has gained multiple meanings as a result of its appropriation in various ways to claim the right to our lives. Among all these meanings, the ones that are significant in an urban context were the focus of this study.

Video's significance in the context of the city is important not only because it is a medium that can challenge the dominant representations of the city by the mainstream media, but because it can be appropriated to challenge the *abstract space* of capitalism, in Lefebvre's term, that has silenced us; its users. The main question of this thesis was how video can be a tool for the urbanites to challenge

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.nomadology.com/conflicts.html>. Retrieved in August, 2007.

the passive role that is ascribed to them in the urban environment, and claim their right to the city. As tried to be demonstrated throughout the paper, this does not happen in a single way; and claiming a right to the city via the video does not necessarily mean that video practice has to address directly issues of urbanity.

There are multiple mechanisms at play that alienate us from the environment we live in. The built environment is shaped by the demands of neo-liberal capitalism and whether be massive regeneration projects or gentrification, the lower income groups', the immigrants', the children's and the elderly's demands are ignored in the processes that shape the cities. The public space is privatised through the exclusion of the above mentioned groups and others that are pushed to the margins of the society. With no space left to interact, the urbanites are increasingly alienated from each other, and driven to enclosed and homogenised zones. Cities all around the world started to look like each other as a result of the invasion of cities by images of commercial capitalism and spectacular architecture. The same means that alienate us from media are used to turn our cities into a spectacle. While a lot of investment is made on the 'image' of the city, social services that everyone can benefit from are curtailed. This increases the polarities and isolation in the city: Because of the lack of adequate services, communities develop survival strategies in their own localities and can not and do not need to get out of the informal social and economic networks that they have established.

Video's multiple uses challenge these processes in various ways. Sometimes it makes exclusion visible, while in others it actively encourages more participation. What it can do depends on the context it is acting in. Video is a medium that does not have any pre-established rules of use, and it can gain any meaning or use in the hands of individual, communities or organizations. (White, 2003: 65) This is why, any analysis of video should take its practice as its focus.

Before having a look at these practices, the terrain video is acting in is tried to be examined. Although postmodern city has important differences from the modern city, most of its characteristics can be followed back to it. Especially the visually dominant environment of the modern city remained intact in postmodern city although it changed its form. Modern city's complexity was tried to be homogenised and ordered in order to make capitalism's operation more efficient.

Modernist architecture's main motivation was to create this ordered environment. In this environment, urbanites were both tried to be kept under control, while at the same time being assigned the role of consumers of their environment with an emphasis on visual consumption. This structure is tried to be defined with the concepts of *spectacle* and *surveillance*. The haptic (yet visual) organisation of the dual mechanism of spectacle/surveillance is transformed and gained an electronic nature in postmodern city through the introduction of the screen and the camera.

The relation of visuality to the city is examined also on the level of visual representation of the city through photography and cinema. While the former was mainly used to document the sites that disappeared under the rapid urban transformations of modern city, the latter depicted and contributed to the new rhythms of the metropolis. Although there are similarities between their documentation of the city and that of video's, there are also some fundamental differences. The most important one is that, these media's relation to city was usually on the level of representation. Except for one example - which is Dziga Vertov's *A Man With The Movie Camera* - they did not ascribe the camera an active role. Moreover, although they had a political agenda - as no representation can be without a political agenda - it was either very implicit or one that could be articulated to that of the power bloc's.

Vertov's use of the movie camera in the urban environment should be analysed within the framework of the emancipative role assigned to camera by the modern avant-garde. As a tool that can make us see beyond the fleeting and ephemeral images of the city and can scrape off the surface through penetrating to the everyday details of life, the camera was assigned a supreme role. Vertov, by showing the world in unexpected ways to the audience, was aiming to reconstruct the city by making use of its rhythms. Both his theory and the film as a manifestation of this theory, stated a narrative about the camera and its capacities. The role he assigned to camera was essential and universal. The rhythm of the city reconstructed in *A Man With the Movie Camera*, as well as in the city symphonies *Berlin—Symphony of a Great City* being the most well-known one, was also universal and cinema was the medium through which the 'universal' metropolis could find its form. However as clearly put by Jean-François Lyotard, postmodernism is marked by the end of the universal and totalising

metanarratives. A new form that corresponds to it should have the potential to be a local, small narrative. Video has that potential.

As a tool without agreed upon rules of application, video practice is largely informed by its previous uses. This is why it was important to look at the previous practices of video in the scope of this study. Video's subversive capacities have been explored right from the beginning by activists and artists. In the art world it became a tool to challenge traditional art forms as well as the separation between genres. Formalist and conservative approaches to art were already being questioned when the first portable video recording camera was released in 1965. During that time art's social responsibility was also a hot debate and in the early uses of video there was no obvious separation between art and activism. Although later this separation became more visible, it has never been a strict one. The activist use, however, has had more emphasis on the claim over people's right to make their own media and challenge the uni-directional flow of information. Today, video activism is used in different contexts and proved to be an efficient tool to document the conflicts as well as the struggles, to create participatory channels, to empower communities, and disseminate knowledge about events happening in other localities that we do not get a chance to hear about. Being a powerful medium because it's visual, video is widely used by social movements.

Although there is no aim of reaching a general theory of video in the city, it was found appropriate to define its use as a *tactic* in the city in the light of Michel de Certeau's use of the term. Against a look that totalises and aims to discipline the city, video is both capable of capturing the several microbe like activities in the urban environment, as well as being one. These microbe like activities are local resistances against the strategies dominant in the city whether be the local social movements (feminists, environmentalists, LGBTT...) or resistances against the top-down transformations in the city. Against the unitary and finalised accounts of official history, video can capture the multiple and evolving histories of the city. Even when that official history is about the inhabitants of the city, it does not give a voice to them and tells their stories for them; moreover it freezes the history and create an image that is immune to any intervention. Through video, city dwellers get a chance to tell their own (hi)stories while at the same time creating them.

It is important to note that no theory, or no concept is employed as a singular and all-encompassing one in the scope of this study. Rather theoretical frameworks that belong to several authors - such as Lefebvre, Debord, Foucault, Lyotard and de Certeau - are employed in a complementary manner. Moreover these frameworks are not used in their entirety and concepts such as *abstract* and *differential spaces*, *spectacle* and *surveillance*, *meta* and *little narratives*, *tactic* and *strategy* are used in the contexts that they were seen as appropriate. The pastiche like structure of the theoretical framework is deemed to be compatible with the avoidance of making big theoretical claims about video in city.

As the aim is not creating a general theory of video, results have been reached through the study of experiences and practices. In order to trace some common tactics that are employed in all three cases, five main categories which are *documenting*, *reconstruction*, *monitoring the monitors*, *having a voice* and *encounter(s)* are defined. They are defined according to the five main trends that the particular uses can be gathered under. The topic of *transformation* includes the other five, as they all bring about a transformation in the city. Under these broader topics, particular tactics are studied which vary according to their local contexts as well as different aspirations of the groups. Karahaber is mainly aiming to provide a space for local movements in Ankara to announce and document their struggles and for video makers to present their work. PTTL and Spectacle, on the other hand, put a bigger emphasis on using video as a way to participate in the transformations taking place in the city. This creates a difference both in terms of production and dissemination methods used by the groups. For instance, operating as a news site, using the web is a more efficient and fast way for Karahaber. As a means for participation, video screenings are more crucial for PTTL and Spectacle.

One of the issues all three cases are dealing with is exclusion of certain groups from economic and social lives as well as the decision making processes. In the case of Karahaber, the primary aim seems to be exposing the exclusion and how violent it is through the examples of transphobic violence, beatings of scavengers and eviction of squat owners from their homes. When compared to the exclusion(s) taking place in London and Brussels, these instances are much more intense. Although not working efficiently, there are certain participatory

mechanisms both in the case of Brussels and London, but in Ankara in particular and in Turkey in general, there is almost no such mechanism. Moreover, as a result of high degree of segregation and isolation of different groups from each other, multiple sources of oppression and exclusion remain invisible. Although same sources of oppression and exclusion are at play both in London and Brussels - meaning racism, patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, class distinction as well as educational obstacles - there are open channels that the exclusion can be turned into participation. In the case of Turkey, exposing these mechanisms is sometimes what can be done most. Although there have been efforts such as giving the camera to the scavengers to shoot their own lives, these efforts remained on a personal level. Another reason for the stronger emphasis on participatory uses of video might be that in the UK and Belgium democratisation of technologies is wider when compared to Turkey. Not only more people have access to them, but also visual technologies are perceived to be less external to everyday practices of people.

Influence of past experiences in a particular locale and the tradition the video practitioners are coming from also play an important role in terms of giving the local specific character to video's appropriation. Mark Saunders comes from a background of being a user and a practitioner of participative community media. His role in the adoption of participatory methods in Brussels and London is not small. Another example is the influence of Ulus Baker, a lecturer in Ankara who recently died, in begetting the interest in practice and theory of video in Ankara. He is cited by some of the activists as the reason for the emphasis on theory in the video practice in Ankara. Keeping in mind that without the adequate environment it is not possible to develop a certain practice, affects of individuals or particular events should not be ignored.

It has been examined how all cases use their video practice as a space for encounters. These might be encounters between video makers and groups that are initially the 'subject matters' such as scavengers, or between individuals and communities that get to know each other in the workshops of PTTL and Spectacle. As mentioned before, distribution methods of groups change according to their main aim. Different distribution methods lead into the emergence of different forms of encounters. In Karahaber, web is the main method of distribution and

through the web videos reach a wide audience both in quantitative terms and in terms of the variety of political orientations. As mentioned before movements that would never get together under normal circumstances exist side by side on Karahaber website. However web does not offer an actual platform for discussion amongst these groups. The screenings of PTTL and Spectacle on the other hand, offer such a platform and sometimes video becomes instrumental in triggering discussion about certain issues. Although the screenings attract a variety of people with a variety of interests, depending on the context (the time and the location, and through which channels the screening has been announced) the audiences are more or less homogenous, meaning it is more likely to have people from the community and their friends and relatives in a community screening than in an art gallery.

*Monitoring monitors* practice shows local differences too. As mentioned before in Turkey surveillance is still more haptic and personal, meaning that the actual people responsible for disciplining and control are still visible in contrast to the invisible eye behind the surveillance cameras. Police buses, panzers and policemen are waiting ready to intervene to anything that they think is upsetting the order for twenty four hours in Güven Park in the centre of Ankara. Of course physical existence of power bloc in the city did not diminish in Brussels and in London, but it is much less visible when compared to Ankara. Monitoring the mainstream media is also a concern of all the groups. However it must be noted that while a great deal of independent media all over the world is specialised in media watch, this is not the primary concern of the cases studied.

As strategy is constructing itself differently in each case, the tactics also adapt. However, I am not trying to find the reasons for differences between these tactics. In order to do this, there is need for a more comprehensive research about the conditions of each locality. Neither I want to reach at a comparative analysis of London, Brussels and Ankara through the differences in video practices. Moreover, it should also be noted that as I am from Ankara, I can observe Ankara's particularities much easier when compared to differences between Brussels and London. The differences that have been dealt with above are local factors that play a role in the emergence and development of different practices, and they are not insignificant. However from this study, nothing more than a speculation about

their reasons should be expected. Such a speculation on some of the possible reasons might as well be useful in terms of asking questions for further research.

The transformations analysed in this study might not have direct effects on the city. Neither they are part of a bigger revolutionary project that envisages an overall transformation. Particular and micro-scale, these transformations point to a different trajectory of development that could take place in the urban environment. What we can say about the subversive uses and transformative capacities of video in general and in the context of city in particular is deemed to be restricted to what we learn out of its practices till now. The aim of this paper is not assigning the video camera an emancipatory role in its own right. The avant-garde of modernity has assigned such an emancipatory role to the movie camera which was to reach the genuine reality behind the surface of appearances. Leaving aside the question whether such a genuine reality exists or not, it is important to note that assigning an essential role to a medium would be creating a grand narrative about it, which is something not viable under postmodernity. Technologies often have contradictory uses that can not be reduced to a single function. CCTV cameras is the best example of such contradictory use of video cameras.

The tools and techniques that can be used to claim the right to the city are multiple. It can be a graffiti, a creative intervention to the built environment, or a street fest. They all promise a potential of creating a differential space as opposed to the abstract space. With its fragmented and heterogeneous nature, the postmodern city inherits endless capacities for its own transformation. These may not be part of a structured programme of a total revolution, but they transform the environment we live from within bit by bit. Through the cracks they open on the abstract space of the city that is defined by disciplinary mechanisms, segregation, isolation, homogenization and dominancy of the spectacle, a different life can infiltrate.

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## Appendix Cited Videos<sup>37</sup>

### Karahaber Videos<sup>38</sup>

*1+1=1*. Dir. Hatice Özlem Sarıyıldız. 2004.

Available at: <http://www.karahaber.org/gormedim/birartibir.html>.

The film is the individual product out of an exchange programme between students from Karlsruhe (Germany) and Ankara. Instead of comparing two cities, 1+1=1 asks questions that emerge from within the city in order to understand the city through its elements. <sup>39</sup>

*Bir Türkü Söylesem Orda Çıkar mı?*. Dir. Oktay İnce. Cam. Oktay İnce, Mehmet Ali Üzergün. DVD. Prod. VideA, 2006.

Will It Appear If I Sing A Song.

The video is about celebrations of Republican Day on Ulus Square in Ankara. The square, everyday life and ceremonies are depicted through images of the built environment, people using the square as a meeting place, beggars, homeless, street children etc. While the daily life is going on in the square, the ceremonies - flowers around the Atatürk Monument, some singing the Turkish national anthem - remain external to it and seem absurd.

*Burası Ankara*. Dir. Bilge Demirtaş, Can Gündüz. 2006.

Available at: <http://www.karahaber.org/gormedim/burasiankara.html>.

Here is Ankara

Ankara is depicted with its several faces. Images from Sergei Yutkevich's film *Ankara: Serdtse Turtsii* (1934) (Turkey's Heart Ankara), and Yılmaz Güney's *Sürü* (1978) (The Herd) are used together with images from today's Ankara. Buildings that are demolished, artificial waterfalls that animate the city, squat residents

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<sup>37</sup> Summaries of the videos without a reference belong to me.

<sup>38</sup> All videos from Karahaber site are retrieved in August, 2007. Translations of the names of videos belong to me.

<sup>39</sup> 1+1=1 Karlsruhe (Almanya) ve Ankara'lı öğrencilerin bir haftalık değişim programının bireysel sonucudur. İki kenti karşılaştırmak yerine 1+1=1, kenti elemanları aracılığıyla anlamak adına, kentin kendinden çıkan soruları sorar. <http://www.videa.org.tr/kisadalga/detay.php?entryid=104>. (Retrieved in August, 2007. Translation belongs to me).

evicted from their houses, traffic, the weird structures built by the municipality, and the mayor talking about some more weird structures he is planning to build such as a huge aeroplane statue on a high hill, make up the picture of Ankara.

*Hakkari'den Ankara'ya: Kağıtçılar.* Cam. Mustafa, Alper, Emrullah, Mehmet, Nasip, Ursula, M. Ali, Oktay, Samet, Tahsin, Nurettin, Turgut, Ramazan. Ed. Alper Şen. DVD. Prod. Karahaber, 2007.

From Hakkari to Ankara: Scavengers

“Hundreds had to migrate from Ördekli (Kotranıs) village of Hakkari to Ankara in 1994. These people still live on by collecting paper from the trash in the centre of Ankara. ... This documentary narrates the stories of people from 13 year old child who is trying to keep his family on what he earns from trash to 60 years old elderly being expelled from his village, who try to survive with their labour despite being expelled, despised and excluded.”<sup>40</sup>

*Sakın Ona Basma.* Dir. Bengisu Dönmez. 2004.

Available at: <http://www.karahaber.org/gormedim/sakinonabasma.html>.

Beware Not to Step On It.

The video is about the electric cables that are left bare on the streets. Without any warning around them, the cables make the simple act of walking on the street very risky.

*Tebligat X.* Dir. Can Gündüz, Oktay İnce. 2006.

Available at: <http://www.karahaber.org/duymadim/tebligatx.html>.

Notification X.

A news video about the Yenidoğan neighbourhood in Ankara. Residents of squat houses who have been living in the neighbourhood for three generations are expelled from their houses with an X mark put on their doors because of the urban regeneration project of the area.

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<sup>40</sup> “1994 yılında Hakkari'nin Ördekli (Kotranıs) köyünden göç etmek zorunda kalan yüzlerce kişi, halen Ankara'nın merkezinde çöplerden kağıt toplamaya devam ediyor ... Bu belgesel, 13 yaşında Ankara'nın çöpünde ailesini geçindirmeye çalışan çocuktan, 60 yaşında köyünden kovulan amcaya kadar, yaşadıkları tüm sürgünlere, hor görülmelere, dışlanmalara inat sadece emekleriyle varolmaya çalışan insanları anlatmaktadır.” (From the back cover of the DVD. Translation belongs to me).

*Yaşama Hakkı*. Dir. Özlem Sanyıldız, Mehmet Tarhan, Alper Şen. 2006.  
Available at: <http://www.karahaber.org/duymadim/yasamahakki.html>.

Right to Live.

Ece, a transsexual living in Eryaman neighbourhood in Ankara, was attacked by a group of armed men. The news video was shot right after she was released from hospital. A short compilation of interviews with Ece and her friends about the event.

#### **PTTL Videos<sup>41</sup>**

*Cité Administrative*. Dir. Axel, Amir, Benoit, Bouchra, Bruno, Bruno, Caroline, Dya, Elhadj, Esmatulah, Freddy, Inbal, Junior, Marcus, Mark, Mirjam, Myriam, Nadine, Pascal, Pierre, Pol, Polly, Rafaela, Yassin, Xavier. DVD. Prod. Spectacle and PTTL, 2004-2005.

The video is about the Cité Administrative site in Brussels and redevelopment plans of it. Cité Admin is a huge complex of official buildings that are currently empty. The video is produced as a result of an open workshop organised by Spectacle and PTTL.

*Je Vous Salis Ma Rue*. Dir. Nadine Abril, Joyce Amparbeng, Françoise Calonne, Axel Claes, Kodjo Degbey, Laurence Langlois, Stéphane Le Lay, Marc Meert, Eleonore Molenberg, Amir Najmi, Nisse, Ruth Pringle, Noemi Rodriguez, Mark Saunders, Toos van Liere, V.L.A.D. DVD. Prod. Spectacle and PTTL, 2006.

“Rue Laeken, the inhabitants and local workers reflect on the gentrification of their neighbourhood, situated between the freshly renovated KVS theatre and the new National Theatre.”<sup>42</sup> The video is produced as a result of an open workshop organised by Spectacle and PTTL.

*Participation*. Dir. Habitant of Saint-Josse. Videocassette. Prod. Spectacle and PTTL, 2001.

“Participation’ speaks about a project that took place according to a neighbourhood contract, a government initiative wanting to stimulate their inhabitants and involve them in interventions in the public space. Since the

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<sup>41</sup> Although all PTTL videos cites are co-produced with Spectacle, they are cited as Spectacle videos because they are products of the workshops in Brussels.

<sup>42</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue\\_production.php?id=103](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_production.php?id=103). Retrieved in August, 2007.

occupants had lost their confidence in the official reports of the commune of Sint Joost ten Node, it was decided to record the meetings with architects and civil servants on video.”<sup>43</sup>

*XL Workshop 1*. Dir. Abdoulaye, Alain, Ali, Amir, Angèle, Axel, Bouchra, Caroline, Céline, Cindy, Dominique, Dorothee, Dya, Emilie, Guy, Harry, Iseut, Jean-Marie, Jebrane, (Mansour), Jérôme, Joyce, Karin, Kodjo, Mauricio, Marcus, Marianne, Marie-Paule, Mark, Michele, Miriam, Myriam, Nadine, Nicole, Noemi, Pierre, Pejman, Reda, Ruth, Sabine, Samba, Soufiane, Thomas, Vlad, Yves. DVD. Prod. Spectacle and PTTL, 2007.

“This is the first video produced by the XL Video Group, a group of local residents formed in a Spectacle/PTTL video workshop in 2006. This video is about the changes in Place Flagey, Brussels' largest square and the surrounding area. Place Flagey is being transformed, against the wishes of the majority of the residents, from a large open public space into a subterranean storm-basin with a car-park on top. The aim of this video is to stimulate debate among the residents about the future of the square and the effects of gentrification.”<sup>44</sup>

### **Spectacle Videos**

“Architect Talking” *Silwood Video Group, vol. 2*. Dir. Silwood Video Group. Prod. Spectacle, 2004.

“Architects and Planners introduce themselves and explain the aims of consultation.”<sup>45</sup>

*Battle of Trafalgar*. Dir. Despite TV; Clare Casson, Siobhan Cleary, Linda Eziquier, Hinchee Hung, Chris Kilby, Chris Maguire, Mark Saunders, Martin Slaney, Mark Steventon. Prod. Despite TV for Channel 4, 1990.

“An account of the anti-poll tax demonstration on 31st March 1990, one that is radically different from that presented by TV news. Eyewitnesses tell their stories against a backdrop of video footage showing the days events as they unfolded. Demonstrators' testimonies raise some uncomfortable questions: Questions about

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<sup>43</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue\\_production.php?id=49](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_production.php?id=49). Retrieved in August, 2007.

<sup>44</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue\\_production.php?id=196](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_production.php?id=196). Retrieved in August, 2007.

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue\\_production.php?id=129](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_production.php?id=129). Retrieved in August, 2007.

public order policing, the independence and accountability of the media and the right to demonstrate.”<sup>46</sup>

*Class X*. DVD. Prod. Spectacle, 2005.

“Shot on the Silwood estate, Rotherhithe, South East London, and in Stockwell & Kennington South West London, these clips were produced in Spectacle workshops by 11 to 15 year olds on the theme of education.”<sup>47</sup>

“Demolition”. *Silwood Video Group, vol. 2.*. Dir. Silwood Video Group. DVD. Prod. Spectacle, 2002.

7’52’’ long video of demolition of a building.

*Despite the City*. Prod. Despite TV; Renee, Siobhan, Joy, Gareth, Chas, Linda, Martin, Mark, Hin Chee, Lynne, Claire, Paul, Vasoulla, Marcus, Engel, Bruce, Ken, Syed, Mike, Emma, Miriam, Annie. Ed. Renee, Siobhan, Hin Chee, Lynne, Martin, Joy, Clare, Linda, Gareth, Mark, Chas, Ramona. DVD. 1988.

“A scurrilous and irreverent investigation of the City and its colonisation of London’s docklands. Community based video at it’s best. A critical look at the city of London and the financial heartland’s encroachment onto the East End and Docklands.”<sup>48</sup>

*Despite the Sun*. Prod. Despite TV; Mark, Siobhan, Paul, Gareth, Conrad, Dave, Chris, Catherine, Chaz, Shane, Anne, Ken, Mike, Tracy, Gillian, Suj, Lee, Alex. DVD. 1986.

“In January 1986, Rupert Murdoch moved his printing operation, News International, publishers of the Sun and the Sunday Times, from Fleet St to Wapping in East London. Over 5,000 print workers, clerical staff, cleaners and secretaries were sacked in one day.

*Despite the Sun* is an investigation into the year-long dispute, which shook the print industry. Produced from the point of view of the residents and print workers, the camera records the effects on residents harassed by the police and Murdoch’s

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<sup>46</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue\\_production.php?id=55](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_production.php?id=55). Retrieved in August, 2007.

<sup>47</sup> From the back cover of the DVD.

<sup>48</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue\\_production.php?id=56](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_production.php?id=56). Retrieved in August, 2007

lorries alike and cavalry-like charges of police horses on the picket lines. Vital questions are raised on the ownership and control of the media, access to it, the organisation of work and impact of the so-called 'new technology'.”<sup>49</sup>

“Jacci’s Tour” *Silwood Video Group, vol. 3*. Dir. Silwood Video Group. DVD. Prod. Spectacle, 2004.

Jacqueline Dryer’s video-diary of refurbishment of her flat.

“Lambourne House” *Silwood Video Group, vol.1*. Dir. Silwood Video Group. DVD. Prod. Spectacle, 2004.

“Vicki, talks of how it feels to have her home of 30 years “soft demolished” around her ears.”<sup>50</sup>

“LOOP” *Silwood Video Group, vol.1*. Dir. Silwood Video Group. DVD. Prod. Spectacle, 2002.

“Lifestyle Opportunities for Older People: A Silwood video group produce their own recruitment and fund raising video.”<sup>51</sup>

*Marsh Farm: Master Plan*. Dir. Marsh Farm Residents. DVD. Prod. Spectacle, 2005.

“An interactive DVD of the Marsh Farm Master Planning Day produced from a Spectacle workshop with the Marsh Farm Video Group. Residents documented the event and interviewed other residents about their thoughts on the proposed plans and their ability to participate.”<sup>52</sup>

*Olympic Stories: Clays Lane*. Dir. Noemi Rodriguez. DVD. Prod. Spectacle, 2006.

“The proposed Olympic site had often been presented as “empty”, much as Africa was during the colonial land grab. In fact it is home to many inhabitants and businesses. This is a snap shot story of one of these, Clays Lane Housing Co-operative, threatened with eviction to make way for the 2012 London Olympics.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue\\_production.php?id=57](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_production.php?id=57). Retrieved in August, 2007.

<sup>50</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue\\_production.php?id=128](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_production.php?id=128). Retrieved in August, 2007.

<sup>51</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue\\_production.php?id=128](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_production.php?id=128). Retrieved in August, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/archive\\_production.php?id=127](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/archive_production.php?id=127). Retrieved in August, 2007.

<sup>53</sup> From the back cover of the DVD.

“Pea Souper” *Silwood Video Group, vol.1.* Dir. Silwood Video Group. DVD. Prod. Spectacle, 2005.

“Shirley reminisces about her childhood and describes her walk home through a London fog from Elephant & Castle to Deptford, by smell.”<sup>54</sup>

*The Truth Lies in Rostock.* Dir. Siobhan Cleary, Mark Saunders. DVD. Prod. Spectacle, 1993.

“August 1992 Lichtenhagen estate, Rostock, former East Germany. Police withdraw as fascists petrol bomb a refugee centre and the home of Vietnamese guest workers while 3000 spectators stood by and clapped. Using material filmed from inside the attacked houses and interviews with anti-fascists, the Vietnamese guest workers, police, bureaucrats, neo-Nazis and residents, a story of political collusion and fear unfolds.”<sup>55</sup>

“Where is the Community Centre?” *Silwood Video Group, vol. 2.* Dir. Silwood Video Group. DVD. Prod. Spectacle, 2002.

How the promises about keeping the community centre are not kept during Silwood’s regeneration.

“Work in Progress”. *Silwood Video Group, vol. 1.* Dir. Silwood Residents. DVD. Prod. Spectacle, 2005.

The video “is recording the changing face of the estate. Captures the human side of the process. Showing from the community perspective how it is like living in a building site for 6 years. The methodology encourages participation and involved many who are alienated by more traditional methods of consultation by giving them a neutral platform to comment. The project also helps them to gain media skills.”<sup>56</sup>

“Youth Facilities” *Silwood Video Group, vol. 1.* Dir. Silwood Residents. DVD. Prod. Spectacle, 2004.

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<sup>54</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue\\_production.php?id=128](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_production.php?id=128). Retrieved in August, 2007.

<sup>55</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue\\_production.php?id=30](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_production.php?id=30). Retrieved in August, 2007.

<sup>56</sup> From the DVD.

“The sad story of the Silwood Youth Centre, demolished and not replaced during SRB.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> [http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue\\_production.php?id=128](http://www.spectacle.co.uk/catalogue_production.php?id=128). Retrieved in August, 2007.