

*How do you repair a weaving flaw?*

### **The weaver**

– If you repair a hole in a piece of fabric, you need to start weaving again within the hole, meaning that you have to make a warp – which are the vertical threads – like a kind of embroidery, and make large stitches. You have to fix it to the existing weave in a proper way. Then you have to fill the warp with the weft – the horizontal threads – in order to create a new weave.

Whenever there's a broken warp-thread, you do have to repair it in a different way by fixing new warp-threads where the old ones were supposed to be. You fix them to the weft, using a needle, and you just weave from there on. You can take away the loose threads afterwards. Whenever you restore a hole in just a piece of fabric, you will always see the restoration, or where it has been repaired.

*Remember what you said about Alison and Peter Smithson, their assertion that you don't always have to make connections?*

### **The architect**

– You don't need to make physical connections, you can also connect by leaving something open. Alison and Peter Smithson talked about distances, intervals, the measurements between things. And they believed that by manipulating these you can also make connections, or in any case suggest them.

There are different ideas about how to weave a fabric in the metaphorical sense. One more concept is that you purposely leave the holes in the social fabric open, and you cover the inside of those holes, as it were, with a lining.

The Smithsons talk about declining cities and the holes that occur, which are interesting places, unpredictable things happen there. These are places which the residents can re-appropriate in a new way. In this case it's not about filling up those holes so that the old fabric can be restored, it's about fastening off the edges in a good manner. And letting the holes be holes.

How can you understand the social fabric and architectural space as 'mat-building', a kind of

architectural and spatial fabric? Matt Jarrott implies that mat-building is both an object and an activity: carrying on with the weaving of the fabric. You have to do this critically, because some things are filled up in order to tack on a new piece.

It's on a larger scale than a single building and it's about the social aspect. How the social aspect and the architecture are interrelated. You construct a social space, a space that becomes a new area of the city.

### **The classicist**

– Weaving presupposes something really clever, it presupposes dexterity: people need to be clever. It's very often associated with women. And then it's also very common as a metaphor for poetry. Poets are usually male and they appropriate this metaphor. If you look at ancient Greek mythology you'll find that women are the weavers – they weave stories in their tissues. There's representation in it.

It is also a metaphor for the politician, the statesman. The statesman is the calm, the relaxed, so you have a topic of one of Plato's works, where weaving is a metaphor for the art of the statesman. The perfect statesman, manages to make the perfect tissue, the perfect weave and he does so by mixing.

*How did artist Richard Tuttle get interested in fabric?*

### **The artist-curator**

– Richard Tuttle tries to look at textiles as open as possible. He wants to get near to the making of it. So he first made all sorts of work with string. How do you derive meaning from a piece of string? In 1973, he made a piece called Ten kinds of memory and memory itself. He looks at what kind of knowledge is stored in that string. It can be a sort of cultural baggage, and something he can reflect upon as well.

Then he uses that knowledge, for example, to weave a tapestry later on, which he also sees as a beginning. He says, 'This is A', so then there comes B, C, D, E... He starts with weaving, with the quality of the thread. And he looks for a thread that has all sorts of colours in it, in order to make a uniform brown in the end – but not until all of those colours are in that one thread.

How to get as much information as possible out of the fabric? He needs openness, which is very important for him, to reveal the cultural baggage it contains – the energy that the makers have put into it. And thus it's actually all about how you can be as complete a person as possible. What does this existing piece say about my existence as a person? And what are the qualities that I have? Or what are the circumstances that I can run into?

In a book that we made the warp and the weft were very important. He invited me to make the weft throughout the entire book, while he made the warp: life and what you encounter in it.

### **The first philosopher**

– Ever since the 17th or 18th century, territory has normally been viewed as a kind of established unity, as a fairly essentialist and static concept, with a populace and certain norms and values that always remain the same. As if there could be any such thing as 'the' Dutch or 'the' people.

The idea of 'assemblages' turns that way of thinking around, because it does not start from an essentialist or static notion like territory, but sees a certain area or a certain unity as a combination of heterogeneous elements that come together in new forms, or new parts.

This way of looking at things is much more like a whole mix of little compartments with different colours, let's say, rather than a homogenous picture in one colour. There is more emphasis on variation, heterogeneity, dynamics – on change. You no longer can reduce or convert those dynamics to what once was the whole.

The idea of fabric as a metaphor for this way of thinking gains a more political significance in times when the current political scene, certainly with the rise of populism, emphasizes the idea of a oneness which remains the same throughout the centuries, and therefore no attention is given to heterogeneity, to variation or to change.

*But then are we speaking of a patchwork or a fabric?*

In my concept, we are speaking more about a patchwork. A patchwork that could indeed be symbolized by fabric in a certain

way, for instance in a harlequin's costume. The harlequin's costume also shows that all sorts of small patches ultimately form a whole, but that each can have an identity of its own.

The whole idea of a patchwork is some kind of critique that allows new images of thought of how the social is developed, or how you can look at the social. The idea more specifically of an assemblage, is that it gives an image of thought where you combine heterogeneous elements in new parts. These new parts are new parts in a whole. Such new parts in a whole must be defined by terms like variation, heterogeneity, dynamics, etcetera.

*Why is so often suggested that our 'social fabric' has been destroyed?*

### **the art historian**

– Well, because it has been torn apart, of course, and since it's torn apart, you naturally want to mend it, make it whole again. But apparently it has to be torn apart first.

Jane Jacobs' book 'The Death and Life of Great American Cities' of 1961 is one big argument for the fabric of society, and that people are what is most important. Whereas in that time, according to her, the social fabric was being radically ripped apart.

She especially blames the developers and their ilk, that it was only about money and not about people anymore. That has only become more intense, of course. On the other hand, you do have all those attempts at creating a social fabric, so it's not something like an absolute truth.

The book was written when modernism, functionalism, was a kind of dogma. It remained that way for a long time in the Netherlands. Reading the translation, around 50 years later, I suddenly noticed that everybody wants to go back to that social fabric.

The penchant for individualism, which occurred in the 1960s and 70s, and for breaking with tradition: it all goes together. I also experienced this in my own life: you leave everything behind and later come to the realization that it has had consequences after all.

*Does anyone have an idea why, in*

2011, *less is being written about the social fabric?*

### **The first philosopher**

– Every discussion, whether you're talking about urban space or the social fabric, is completely couched in terms of the economy. It's in the hands of project brokers, managers and regional developers. The moment you bring the economy into a discussion about the social fabric, you strip it of its political and moral content. You get a discussion in terms of profit or loss and cost-effectiveness.

Then a social fabric will also acquire an entirely different meaning, and an entirely different form: it becomes purely a marketable good. While originally, of course, it was not a marketable good – just look at classical antiquity. It has always been the perfect example of a political good.

*Often in journalism we see the term 'flaw in the weave'...*

### **The weaver**

– A hole in a piece of weaving doesn't necessarily have to be a flaw. A flaw is something that occurs through the improper use of equipment, the breaking of a thread, a mistake of the weaver's. That hole in your sweater, if it were a woven sweater, isn't a flaw, it's simply wear and tear.

*Supposing the newspaper asks you to visualize a social fabric?*

### **The illustrator**

– If it's about social occurrences, then naturally I would have to translate it by drawing people who interconnect with one another. Maybe you could weave them together, so that they all fit together like pieces in a puzzle. And maybe that would be more of a patchwork, but that interconnecting with one another would have to be in there.

Then I could draw it falling apart. Usually I look for examples because I want to exactly portray how it works. A fitting together could be represented by a kind of little figure. But if you add more details the forms become very different. It could be a head, an arm, you start in a very rudimentary way, as long as it fits together.

You can never weave with a drawing, of course, because it's not three-dimensional. The lines

can go over one another, but it still isn't weaving. The drawing is an illusion: I don't draw the lines that go behind. When I draw a thread, I let it go around so it looks just like it's been woven.

### **The weaver**

Weaving is different from many other techniques, like knitting or crocheting or embroidering. Those are one-thread systems, because you in fact can start from one spool of thread or ball of yarn, from that one thread. Weaving is different because it is a two-thread system. The two are interwoven and if done right, it becomes a compact fabric.

If the warp is not well stretched and the threads are not all equally tight, or if there is a difference in tension, that's one of the biggest problems, you'll see it reflected in your entire piece of weaving, and it's very difficult to get it even again.

### **The classical scholar**

– What Plato said about the statesman is interesting for the comparison with people's characters, because the warp threads are in fact the only ones that have tension on them, right?

Those are the fiery people, the courageous people and so forth. And the relaxed ones that you interweave with them, those are the moderate people. And that's how you get a well mixed society. Plato really takes into account the character of the different parts of the loom.

### **The weaver**

– A warp thread has to meet very many criteria: it has to be extremely durable, there's a lot of wear and tear, so it has to be very strong. You can't use just any thread as a warp thread, but with a weft thread, there's very little tension. In fact you can use anything for that, it doesn't matter.

If you want to, you can hide a weft completely. Or the other way around, you can hide the warp threads completely. Of course, they always have to be there, otherwise you wouldn't have a piece of weaving, but there are techniques to make either one or the other completely invisible, by covering them with the other thread.

*Is it true that there is confusion about the terms 'weaving' and 'interweaving'?*

### **The weaver**

– What is interweaving?

### **The classical scholar**

– Well, that's the process of bringing that warp thread and your weft together, so it resembles weaving but it puts more emphasis on the product, which shows cohesion.

### **The weaver**

– Things are interwoven with one another. 'Weaving' is more of an action.

*What technique are we going to be living in, in the near future?*

### **The first philosopher**

– Well, not a technique that you could learn and apply to any situation and at any moment, because then of course you fall back into the old mistake of manipulability. After the 1970s we lost the illusion that you can design an entire society from one point of view. The idea of manipulability should be the main thing, but it should be put in an entirely different terms.

Terms like 'expertise' should come back. Terms like 'subjectivising': that at certain places you can adopt a particular identity based on that place and that moment, but that that identity cannot be converted, be reduced, to one all-encompassing identity that would include everything or everyone.

If you look at society like that, you can keep manipulability at the forefront. If also initiatives and activities develop from the bottom up, which perhaps can create or produce arrangements themselves – which might be temporary, or long-term, it doesn't matter – thereby you do have a kind of identity or certain stability.

It is in these gradations, between the two extremes of chaos or anarchy and the law or the state, where you find the most interesting questions about the organizing of society. Not at the level of the law or the level of pure chaos...

Arrangements occur between those two levels. How you design this, how you accommodate this, how you steer this... these are truly the guiding questions for the coming period. And they are indeed different questions from the ones we have traditionally posed.

You need new concepts in order to think about these things, without falling back on positions like public, private, micro, macro, the people, the state, and so forth. New concepts are necessary in a new way of thinking and most important, an entirely different political vision about what you tell the public, and thus also what you can promise people.

### **The architect**

– As far as weaving is concerned there is the question of what difference the loom actually makes. In addition to what goes from the bottom up, there's also the question of what is organized from the top down. Things like change, bottom-up, dynamics, non-essentialist thinking, can only be useful within another, larger framework.

Everybody shies away from thinking about another, bigger framework, you see this a lot now. I find that thinking about those very big frameworks, about the loom itself, is simply absent. I don't see it happening.

I'm not a philosopher, but in a way one could see a different kind of manipulability, in which expertise is very important, and subjectivity, and that everything we do is thus ultimately embedded in a material world. It is not only about virtual and digital and ideas; in the end, everything comes down to this planet and this earth and matter, and thinking also comes down to here and everything that goes on in these little cells.

So finding a different kind of manipulability, making a different kind of connection – so here's a technical question related to social questions after all – that is really a very important question, but I wouldn't have an answer to it right away.