

Craftsmanship & the City

Richard Sennett in dialogue with Henk Oosterling, Marli Huijer

26 November, 2010
19.30 – 22.00h
Arminiuskerk Rotterdam

Richard Sennett's book *The Craftsman* (2008, translated in Dutch as *De Ambachtsman*, 2009) counters the problems introduced by the new capitalism's requirement for flexibility, as described in Sennett's earlier books, like *The Fall of Public Man* (1977) and *The Corrosion of Character* (1998). Flexibility demands us to connect superficially to others: we have to be available and prepared to shift, according to the imperatives of market capitalism, abandoning our homes, neighbourhood, and even intimate relationships in order to start anew elsewhere. Values like social bonding, mutual responsibility and mutual dependence are dismissed in the new capitalism that governs life in modern cities and metropolises.

In *The Craftsman* Sennett redefines the practice of craftwork as a way to deal in more responsible and bonding ways to others. He proposes a broader definition of 'skill': professional, artistic, cultural and mental. In making physical things, like cooking food, writing articles, playing cello, building software programs, and designing buildings, we experience the repetitive and creative alternation of problem solving and problem finding. This crafty experience provides insight and techniques that reshape our commitment to others.

At this evening, Richard Sennett will respond to three cases:

*Craftsmanship as an urban developmental strategy: the case of Rotterdam Skillcity.*¹
Dr. Henk Oosterling, Faculty of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Rhythms of contemporary craftsmanship
Prof. dr. Marli Huijer, Faculty of Philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Chair: prof. dr. Wiep van Bunge, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, Erasmus University
Rotterdam

¹ Rotterdam Skillcity is a research model for urban revitalisation and renovation. This strategy was developed by Henk Oosterling in 2004 and adopted in 2006 by the projectteam Pact op Zuid that manages the 10 year renovation of Southern part of Rotterdam. Rotterdam Skillcity provides a bottom up analysis of the socio-economic and socio-cultural backlog of this area that was enhanced by the transition of Rotterdam from industrial harbor city to a cultural metropolis, famous for its architectural landscape, his urban festivals and top sport events. Skills are the core business of the educational and socio-cultural strategies that try to bridge this gap. Downscaling the concept of creative industries to a neighbourhood level, Oosterling implements a political philosophy of relations, actualizing philosophical concepts of Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. It is within this context that he acknowledges the importance of Sennett's publication on craftsmanship.