

# **Globalization, Violence, and the Visual Culture of Cities**

Edited by

**Christoph Lindner**

# Contributors

**Nezar AlSayyad** is Professor of Architecture, City Planning, Urban Design, and Urban History in the College of Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley.

**Richard J. Williams** is Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts, Culture, and Environment at the University of Edinburgh.

**Geoffrey Kantaris** is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and Director of the Centre of Latin American Studies at the University of Cambridge.

**Hugh Campbell** is Professor of Architecture in the School of Architecture, Landscape, and Civil Engineering at University College Dublin.

**Derek Gregory** is Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of British Columbia at Vancouver.

**Simon Ward** is Lecturer in German in the School of Language and Literature at the University of Aberdeen.

**Christoph Lindner** is Professor and Chair of English Literature at the University of Amsterdam.

**Stephanie Hemelryk Donald** is Professor of Chinese Media Studies at the University of Sydney.

**Shirley Jordan** is Reader in French in the School of Languages, Linguistics, and Film at Queen Mary, University of London.

**Ruth Cruickshank** is Lecturer in French in the School of Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at Royal Holloway, University of London.

**Sue Harris** is Reader in French Cinema Studies in the School of Languages, Linguistics, and Film at Queen Mary, University of London.

## 4 Temporary discomfort

### Jules Spinatsch's documentation of global summits

Hugh Campbell

#### NOTHING HAPPENS

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* was famously described by Vivian Mercer as a play in which nothing happens, twice. In a recent project by the Swiss photographer Jules Spinatsch, published in 2005 as a book entitled *Temporary Discomfort Chapters I-V*, it might be claimed that nothing happens five times. Each of the book's five chapters uses different photographic techniques to examine the short-term transformations visited on the venues of various meetings of the G8 and the World Economic Forum in Davos, Genoa, New York, Evian, and Geneva. The heavy security restrictions and procedures surrounding these events are what produce the temporary discomfort of Spinatsch's title. The title has a deliberately low-key, anticlimactic ring, at odds with the usual emphasis on the prestige and importance of the gathering and the scale and vociferousness of the attendant protests. Accordingly, the exclusion zones and security areas which Spinatsch depicts are mostly quiet, emptied of activity, often shrouded in darkness. Suspended between the political business and the choreographed theatre of the talks themselves and the drama and fervour of the protests surrounding them, Spinatsch's chosen territory is a no-man's-land, constructed precisely to put distance between the two main sets of actors. Except for a single shot of a protestor mounting a fence, the principal actors are absent. Instead it is those intended to keep them apart – the security men and police officers – who populate the photos. However, even these are rarely seen engaging in anything that might be construed as action. Mostly, they stand around and watch and wait. Mostly, in other words, these are documents of highly organized, technically sophisticated inactivity. Nothing happens.

Spinatsch's work in this project is, at least in part, a reaction against the established consensus that photojournalism is about getting as close as possible to the action in order to relay the truth of events. Robert Capa's iconic images of the D-Day landings are among the founding documents of this credo and the Magnum photo agency, founded by Capa with Cartier-Bresson and others in 1947, has long acted as its high church. To a veteran Magnum photojournalist like Philip Jones Griffiths, the well-known mantra 'If the

picture's no good, its because you're not close enough' still has the status of gospel. For Spinatsch, however, in the era of embedded journalism, where even the most seemingly spontaneous events can be staged, the imperative of proximity can no longer apply. Indeed, he suggests it might now be more appropriate to state that if your picture's no good, it's because you're not far enough away (Spinatsch 2004). Distance might now be the only means of achieving any kind of objectivity. It can also offer the freedom to see beyond the set photo opportunities, and the accepted signifiers of 'events'. Instead of wanting to capture those decisive moments when events reach their climax, when defining gestures are made, or when conflict flares into life, Spinatsch prefers to look away from the action, dwelling instead on the paraphernalia which surround and underpin these events. By keeping his distance, and by shifting his viewpoint so that he is dealing with absence rather than presence, he is able to reinvent the visual grammar by means of which such global events are depicted and understood.

Cartier-Bresson's decisive moment, the dominant idiom of the past half-century or more, had been made possible through advances in the technology of lenses and shutters. Now the digital era might offer new possibilities for different kinds of looking, and different forms of photographic representation. Images such as Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin's meticulous digital reconstructions of suicide bombs might be more eloquently communicative of the impact of terrorism than countless hours of rolling news coverage. Ironically, the longer, slower looking at the aftermath of war evident in, for instance, Simon Norfolk's work in Afghanistan owes more to nineteenth-century images like Roger Fenton's classic Crimean War photo 'The Valley of the Shadow of Death' than to the twentieth-century journalism permitted by fast, light cameras.

## **THE VALLEY**

The photos in Spinatsch's first chapter – entitled 'The Valley' – were taken during the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in 2001. Chaotic demonstrations the previous year meant that on this occasion, as Spinatsch puts it, 'The question was "How to spot a protestor"' (Spinatsch 2005a). He notes that 'the authorities even recommended to locals not to leave their houses in order not to appear suspicious' (Spinatsch 2005a). Under these circumstances, Spinatsch observes, 'everything or everybody – photographed from wherever – was suspicious and the landscape itself became political' (Spinatsch 2005a). Spinatsch portrays this political landscape through night-time shots of parts of the perimeter fence, and of the security personnel that police it. He also takes photographs of what he calls 'hotspots' from a vantage point on the Schatzalp at over a kilometre distance and 500m elevation from the so-called summit.

Shooting at night using a 2400mm telephoto lens, the photographer's extended gaze lights on locations in the town, some the settings for the



*Figure 4.1* Jules Spinatsch, *TEMPORARY DISCOMFORT CHAPTER I, THE VALLEY*. Hotspot No. 3, World Economic Forum (WEF), Davos-CH, 2001 (courtesy of Jules Spinatsch).

forum, but others innocuous places like resort hotels or the night-skiing trail. The telephoto technique in itself is enough to make all the locations portrayed seem as if they are being surveilled. And this in itself is enough to render them simultaneously significant and suspicious: something interesting must be going on there, we think. As Spinatsch puts it, 'technology and nocturnal light add up to images imbued with an aesthetics of surveillance and an atmosphere of all-encompassing suspicion' (Spinatsch 2005a). Long exposure times give ordinary lights the same intense brightness as the beams that scan across sections of the perimeter fence. Taken together, the distant shots and the close-up fragments communicate an atmosphere of tense anticipation.

## **OPPIDUM**

The same atmosphere is conjured in a different manner by the images in Spinatsch's second chapter, taken at the G8 meeting in Genoa in July 2001. The title, 'Oppidum', refers to the enclosed military settlements of the Roman Empire, suggesting parallels between that regime and the intense, extensive, and heavy-handed security surrounding the Genoa event:

The Genoa summit promised to be bigger than any other and the protest against it loomed equally large. The Italian government shut down most

of the center of Genoa for several days, creating various restricted areas such as the Blue Zone, the Yellow Zone and the sacrosanct Zona Rossa, the Red Zone, in which the summit meetings would take place. Normal transportation and life ground to a halt for miles around the city. 15-foot-high barbed wire fences were built across every street and alley leading into the Red Zone, like a kind of Berlin Wall in the middle of the city. The atmosphere was eerie: the streets and piazzas, with their renaissance palaces and baroque fountains, were entirely empty and quiet, while the protestors massed on the periphery of the city, miles from the Ducal Palace, the main seat of the summit. Many Genoans living in the city center left town, and most shops and cafes closed, leaving the oldest and poorest residents of Genoa in an ill-served ghost town. A rumor swirled among the community of protestors that the people trapped in the center had run out of garlic, and so some protestors were passing or pressing garlic through the barbed wire fences leading to the Red Zone. ‘Free Genoa!’ was one of the cries of the demonstrators.

(Stille 2002: 4)

Stille’s description is contained in Joel Sternfeld’s photographic study of the summit, *Treading on Kings*, which, following an opening selection of images of the aftermath of the notorious police raid on the Armando Diaz school, consists of characteristically frank portraits of protestors, accompanied by brief quotes outlining their rationale for being in Genoa.

Sternfeld’s instinct is to humanize the protest by offering intimate glimpses of the participants and their heartfelt, often self-deprecating, and never confrontational statements. But Spinatsch has no interest in this kind of approach:

What was there to be photographed? Naturally, there had to be an iconic image of an activist of the type 2001, but then it was necessary to withdraw from the protest in order not to succumb to its predictably sensationalist temptations. The alternative was a stroll along the red zone, as close as possible to the actual conference location, the Palazzo Ducale – as close to power as possible.

(Spinatsch 2005a)

Again, the territory that Spinatsch depicts is largely emptied of life. There is an eerie, unnatural stillness. Images such as ‘Empty Sea, Pool and Sports-ground’ show how the normal activities of the city on a beautifully clear July day (everyone remembers the day of the riots as being unusually clear) have been suspended. As a report in the *Guardian* noted, La Superba had become La Vuota (‘the empty’) (Vidal 2001). Of course, Spinatsch may also have been referencing the tendency towards the sober formal depiction of empty urban space in the work of prominent contemporary photographers such as Thomas Struth. But there are enough signs of power evident – a line of police looking

out to sea, a helicopter overhead – to make us understand that this stillness is an enforced state rather than a discovered condition.

It is precisely this ordered space of absence which makes possible the spaces more traditionally characterized as the inside and the outside of the event – the summit within and the protests without. Each has its own visual grammar: on the one hand, the formal structure conferred by the dais and the conference table; on the other, the teeming mayhem of the boulevard. By holding his focus on the zone between, Spinatsch misses out on conveying the atmosphere of the talks or the brutal and tragic events which surrounded them. Nonetheless, he relies on us knowing this context in order to appreciate that what his images show is the armature of exclusion which produces both.

## **REVOLUTION MARKETING**

This same armature of order is made more intimately apparent in the next chapter, which looks at the 2002 WEF (World Economic Forum) meeting that took place in New York as a ‘gesture of solidarity’ with the city in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Instead of the expected air of hysteria and panic, however, the gathering had a very low-key atmosphere. This was, at least in



*Figure 4.2* Jules Spinatsch, **TEMPORARY DISCOMFORT CHAPTER II, OPPIDUM**. Empty pool, sea, and sportsground, G8 Summit, Genoa-IT, 2001 (courtesy of Jules Spinatsch).

part, due to a security strategy in which all the blocks immediately surrounding the Waldorf Astoria on Park Avenue, where the Forum took place, were treated as a single high-security zone. With no outsiders able to enter, there was little need for the overt presence of cordons and police on the ground.

Spinatsch's strategy at this meeting was to get himself accredited as a participant. He was in fact the only photographer to have this access. This allowed him access to the hotel and its immediate surroundings, known as Zone B. As he points out, 'this illustrates to what degree images are a question of organisation these days. The "decisive moment" often takes place ahead of the actual event' (Spinatsch 2005a). Having acquired such access, however, Spinatsch chose not to enter the main venue, but instead to photograph the activity of the guards around its perimeter. Again, he deliberately avoids the centre of attention, continuing instead to explore the possibilities



*Figure 4.3* Jules Spinatsch, TEMPORARY DISCOMFORT CHAPTER V, REVOLUTION MARKETING. Antilogo No. 1, G8 Summit, Geneva-CH, 2003 (courtesy of Jules Spinatsch).



of a kind of peripheral vision. All of the work is done by night. Internal and external lighting combine to create a pervasive glow, intensified by the long exposure times. Immersed in this artificial aura, police and security guards are shot mostly in extreme close-up. Figures intended to blend into the background become the centre of attention. The bleeding of the images across spreads and pages in the book adds to a feeling of these shots being 'stolen glimpses'. Such intimate access, combined with the pervasiveness and warmth of the light, gives the chapter an almost domestic feeling, although the title 'Corporate Walls' reminds us that it is through the participation of the corporate tenants in the surrounding towers that this cosy, temporary oasis has been constructed.

But in 'Revolution Marketing', the final chapter of the book, the corporate presence in the city is itself perceived to be under threat. While the 2003 G8



*Figure 4.4* Jules Spinatsch, TEMPORARY DISCOMFORT CHAPTER V, REVOLUTION MARKETING. Antilogo No. 8, G8 Summit, Geneva-CH, 2003 (courtesy of Jules Spinatsch).



*Figure 4.5* Jules Spinatsch, TEMPORARY DISCOMFORT CHAPTER IV, PULVER GUT. Discontinuous Panorama C240700: World Economic Forum WEF, Davos-CH, 24 January 2003. Camera C: Congress-Center North Entry, Promenade Davos Valley. 817 still shots from 07h00–08h30 (courtesy of Jules Spinatsch).

Summit was officially held in the small resort town of Evian, it was the nearby city of Geneva which acted as the main logistical centre, and therefore also as the potential focus for protest. In preparation, most of the city's shop fronts and signs were boarded up. In Spinatsch's view this was as much to do with invisibility as protection. Any well-known logos were seen as likely targets. Hence something as innocuous as a freestanding roadside signboard became a shrouded, ghostly presence. The yellow plywood sheeting wrapping the stores and signs conferred a kind of homogeneity on the city. In turn, this became a blank canvas on which the protestors could create their own logos and signs. Again, the summit produced a kind of absence or clearing within the city. Its buildings were rendered temporarily mute.

## **PULVER GUT**

Chapter IV of the book is perhaps its most ambitious. Certainly it contains the most widely discussed and exhibited of Spinatsch's work. In photographing



the World Economic Forum at Davos in 2003, Spinatsch moved away from traditional camera techniques and instead adopted the very instruments of surveillance and control he was critiquing. Interestingly, though, he insists that his initial inspiration also came from the town's own website, which offers hourly updated panoramic views of the valley and the surrounding slopes. (*'Pulver Gut'*, the chapter's title, translates as 'Good Powder Snow', and refers to Davos' usual identity as a ski-resort).

In order to make the works in this chapter, Spinatsch mounted three programmable network cameras in and around the security area of the Forum (again, this was done with the cooperation of the authorities), creating a triangle of surveillance. For the duration of the forum, an empty library became the location for programming and downloading the images. Each camera was capable of sweeping 180 degrees horizontally and about 40 degrees vertically, and could be programmed to track up and down and gradually across a territory over a number of hours. From the matrix of images produced, Spinatsch could create vast tessellated panoramas which, read from left to right, traced the passing of time (usually about two hours) as they panned across the perimeter territory, picking out the fences, guard huts, and security personnel which by now had become the familiar leitmotifs of his work. Most are taken in the early morning, so that we witness dawn light gradually flooding the scene.



*Figure 4.6* Jules Spinatsch, TEMPORARY DISCOMFORT CHAPTER IV, PULVER GUT. Discontinuous Panorama B251356: Anti-WEF World Economic Forum Demonstration, Davos-CH, 25 January 2003. Camera B: Hertistrasse, Talstrasse, Congress-Center South Entry, Kurpark. 1740 still shots from 13h56-17h15 (courtesy of Jules Spinatsch).

The image shown in Figure 4.5, for instance, consists of 817 still shots taken from Camera C between 7.00 and 8.30 a.m. on 24 January. Despite the ninety minutes encompassed across its breadth, there is very little evidence of activity, or even of human presence, besides the three (or more like two and a half) guards at the building's entrance. Other images in the series betray more signs of life. In the scene shown in Figure 4.6, taken from Camera B, there are figures scattered across the territory, and we are able to begin to trace movement within the image – of this guard moving in the direction of the camera, for instance, his upper half captured repeatedly as the camera's trajectory bisects his. This reminds us of course that the nature of the technique means that the camera's path might conceivably miss out on any amount of significant action. This is certainly the case in this image, where a substantial gathering of protestors is reduced to a single lone figure with a placard. His companions have all escaped the camera.



In the most elaborate of the series, Spinatsch set Camera A to record activity around the entrance to the forum for three hours over each of the six days. Each day the camera made between three and four horizontal sweeps of the territory. The images were relayed to a Zurich gallery, where they were printed on A3 sheets and assembled on the gallery wall. Over the course of the week, the panorama gradually built up to an overall size of 20m by 5m. But again, the cameras captured only vestigial signs of activity. Spinatsch had to rely on a parallel series of so-called ‘hotspot recordings’ in which the same location was repeatedly photographed, in order to catch anything of the comings and goings – a bus entering the compound, a few token protestors.

In part, the relative lack of activity was due to what had by then become the standard security strategy of having protests staged at a considerable distance from the summit – in this case, in Zurich and Bern. But nonetheless, the relative blindness of even the most elaborate and seemingly comprehensive surveillance is striking. On the one hand, the picture shows every aspect of the terrain. On the other hand, it shows almost nothing of the action. Furthermore, we only recognize action as such by the way in which the movement of the camera has distributed its elements across the picture. (This is reminiscent of the way in which the finish line of a race is photographed so



*Figure 4.7* Jules Spinatsch, *TEMPORARY DISCOMFORT CHAPTER IV, PULVER GUT*. Discontinuous Panorama A240635: World Economic Forum WEF, Davos-CH, 24 January 2003. Network-Camera A: Promenade, Congress-Center North and Middle Entry, Kurpark. 2176 still shots from 06h35–09h30 (courtesy of Jules Spinatsch).

that eight separate instants become assembled as if they were a single episode in time.)

In a subsequent project, Spinatsch trained a similar network camera on Berne stadium during a World Cup qualifying match between France and Switzerland. Over the course of 160 minutes, the camera captured crowds arriving before the match, surveyed the length of the pitch during the ninety minutes of action and then covered the gradual dissipation of spectators after the game. The match ended in a 1–1 draw, but, despite consisting of 3,300 shots, Spinatsch’s image doesn’t depict either goal, or indeed the ball itself. As he writes:

On 8th October in Berne the ball flew twice into the goal but never into the picture, during a later game it could well be the other way round.

The football panorama shows, in both its speculative and precise way, just what the media presentations in the press and on television do not



show, and vice-versa. In the media the ball is in the centre, the cameras and the players follow it like magic and everything else, especially the bodies, are composed in relation to it. In my concept, however, it is clear from the start that the camera even with 3000 exposures can only with any luck really capture the ball once. A ball in the picture is almost as rare as a hole-in-one in golf.

(Spinatsch 2005b)

What we are being shown is what Spinatsch terms the ‘event landscape’ rather than the events themselves. Things are put in context. This, it might be argued, is much more like what it feels like to be at a football match, where the long spells of relatively uneventful activity usually far outweigh the occasional climactic moments.

## **ANTECEDENTS**

Usually the photograph is far more associated with these climactic – or decisive – moments than with the wider spatial and temporal landscape within which they occur. However, almost since its inception, photography



*Figure 4.8*

Jules Spinatsch  
HEISENBERG'S OFFSIDE

Panorama – Installation of 3003 still shots from interactive network camera  
Duration: 165 minutes

Switzerland – France  
World Championship Qualification  
Stade de Suisse, Bern Wankdorf, 8 October 2005

1 : 1 (0 : 0)

Goals: 52. Cissé 0 : 1, 79. Magnin 1 : 1 (Freekick)  
Attendance: 31 400 (sold out)  
Remarks: Free swiss flag on every seat

(courtesy Jules Spinatsch)





has periodically sought to extend its own capacities to depict space and time. In the late nineteenth century, Eadweard Muybridge explored both. His panoramic view of San Francisco was painstakingly assembled from thirteen large glass plate negatives. And later, of course, came his more famous experiments in capturing the motion of humans and animals using rapid sequential shooting. But while this work contributed to the development of moving pictures as well as feeding into the aesthetics of the Cubists and the Futurists, photography itself tended to remain largely wedded to the single, perspectival frame.

It was a frustration with this self-imposed limitation that led David Hockney to begin experimenting with multiple images in the early 1980s. Initially he worked with a Polaroid camera, assembling gridded, composite portraits of people and places over the course of a couple of hours. For Hockney, the technique produced what he called 'the revitalisation of depiction' by allowing him to dwell more fully on the inhabited spaces, or to extend an event like someone swimming in that iconic pool across a whole matrix of images. In his

later, more complex Polaroid collages, he began to build into the finished works references to the process of their own construction. In one image, the photographer Bill Brandt and his wife are looking at early photos in the collage, which – in a further twist – Hockney then later substitutes with photos of himself.

Subsequently Hockney abandoned the Polaroid format for a 35mm camera, which allowed him greater freedom. He began to create what Lawrence Weschler has memorably called ‘long banners of looking’, distributing individual photos in looser, overlapping arrangements to create cumulative images of places and events which achieve, in Weschler’s words, ‘the depiction of real space and real time, the rendering of people in the fullness of their living, the breaking of the rectangle’ (Weschler 1984: 31). As if to point out the advance this represents over traditional photography, Hockney recorded a photo shoot with Annie Leibowitz in which, next to Hockney’s fluid account of events, her single frame seems meekly inadequate. ‘With this kind of photography there is no out-of-the-picture’, Hockney remarks (in Weschler 1984: 34).

For all its seeming comprehensiveness as a way of looking, however, this method of picture-making is in fact both extremely selective and unexpectedly composite. For proof of the latter, look at the iconic *Pearlblossom Highway* and consider how what appears as a single, centralized view is in fact composed of many individual shots, the taking of which involved several trips, climbing up ladders, etc. For proof of the former, look at Hockney’s depiction of a lunch at the British Embassy in Japan and note how some aspects are dwelt on (his neighbour’s face), some merely sketched in (his host’s face), and others almost entirely omitted (lunch). The work demonstrates more about the selectivity of human vision than its ceaseless inclusivity. In his discussion of this work, Weschler draws attention to the maid in the background. Hockney’s expanded vision has managed to incorporate her, but, as with the security guards in Spinatsch’s panoramas, only half of her makes it into the picture (Weschler 1984: 31).

In making these works (he made about 200 between late 1982 and mid-1983, and stopped soon afterwards) Hockney speaks about ‘figuring out ways of telling stories in which the viewer can set his own pace, moving forward and back, in and out, at his own discretion’ (Weschler 1984: 33). In fact, the panoramas of the late eighteenth century might be seen as offering precisely this kind of immersive experience. These vast wraparound paintings were displayed in cylindrical, top-lit buildings specially designed to maximize the feeling of being in the location depicted – what Bernard Comment has described as ‘the pursuit of maximum illusion’ (Comment 1998: 21). In their early years, most of these panoramas were content simply to transport their visitors to these locations, showing them every detail of the physical landscape, offering glimpses of the inhabitants going about their business.

However, the panoramic form also proved highly suited to the depiction of epic scenes of battles and historic events. Like latter-day Bayeux tapestries,



Figure 4.9 David Hockney, 'Luncheon at the British Embassy, Tokyo, Feb. 16, 1983', 1983 (© David Hockney).

360-degree panels allowed entire historic episodes to be played out. Spinatsch explicitly refers to one of the most famous of these in his notes on '*Pulver Gut*': the Bourbaki panorama in Lucerne (which, while undergoing restoration, itself became the subject of a panoramic photograph by Jeff Wall). He points out the contrast between the staged drama of such epic scenes and the inchoate, undramatic nature of his own work – its refusal to conform to the expectations of spectacle. In reality, though, there are as many elements in common as there are points of contrast. The events portrayed in the Bourbaki panorama are in fact decidedly unheroic – 88,000 French soldiers laying down their arms in order to gain asylum in Switzerland at the end of the Franco-Prussian War. This is unpromising subject matter for spectacle, it might be argued, and in its way is every bit as downbeat and anticlimactic as Spinatsch's security zones. And, of course, despite his protestations, when installed in a gallery, Spinatsch's work is undeniably spectacular thanks both to its scale and to the iterative manner of its execution.

## NOTHING HAPPENS, TWICE

Despite these aspects of the spectacular, it can safely be asserted that, compared with the usual means by which global events are reported and represented, in Spinatsch – as in Beckett – nothing happens. However, the atmosphere is charged by the constant possibility that something might. His deflatory title – *Temporary Discomfort* – knowingly takes the sting out of the vast panoply of security measures on display in his images and renders them faintly comedic. Just as Beckett's tramps found that there was 'nothing to be



*Figure 4.10* Rotterdam: Schouwburgplein at night (courtesy of West 8 urban design & landscape architecture).

done', Spinatsch's security personnel are there to ensure that there is nothing to be seen, nothing to detain us. Beckett conjured the landscape and atmosphere of *Waiting for Godot* while walking south in voluntary exile from Paris during the German occupation (another kind of temporary discomfort). In the wake of invasion, and in the midst of tumultuous upheaval, here was a landscape trapped in inaction. Similarly, Spinatsch discovers within the shifting drama of global events an unexpectedly inert centre, but one made uneasy by an immanent sense of threat, a feeling that at any moment, as it did in Seattle and in Genoa, violence is still liable to erupt. This is the eye of the storm.

Indeed, sometimes it feels as if this kind of no-man's-land, in which spatial and temporal codes get rewritten, has spread beyond the summits and forums to become the current model for public space itself. The poster for the symposium at which this paper was first presented featured an image of the Schouwburgplein in Rotterdam designed in the late 1990s by West 8 architects. This square might be taken as emblematic of the nature of much contemporary public space: empty but tense, highly mechanized and choreographed although rarely inhabited, its forms and surfaces hinting at a latent violence, offering nothing but temporary discomfort.