

WHAT IF THE MOON WERE JUST A JUMP AWAY?

BIK VAN DER POL



“The first person who, having enclosed a plot of land,
took it into his head to say this is mine and found people simple enough
to believe him was the true founder of civil society.
What crimes, wars, murders, what miseries and horrors would the human
race have been spared, had some one pulled up the stakes or filled
in the ditch and cried out to his fellow men:
“Do not listen to this imposter. You are lost if you forget that
the fruits of the earth belong to all and the earth to no one!”



Jean Jacques Rousseau
Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men
1755



...In the Beginning...

everything was
volunteer work and
very idealistic

Leadership is created by the people.

**AUTONOMY
EXPERIENCE
SELF-REGULATION**

A social contract doesn't function if
government is not
willing
to give up power
to share with community.

We need even
a planetary contract,
but it's impossible to
create
change
from the reality
of everyday functionings
of lives.

Without
political
willingness
to give up power
there will be no participation.
Politicians
get rid of participatory processes!

People should not agree
Different
experiences
passionately disagree.
They should
fight with words
be constantly alert,
believe
a space
occupied
Community,
take care.

Individuals
need to
take initiative
have to
BE RESPONSIBLE.

People stimulated
to go to
meetings
to share
their ideas
make
them operative.

I always infiltrate in politics.
I do this for the others.
But I am also part
of the community,
so I also do it for myself.
When you work for free, you are also free.

❖❖ I AM A REVOLUTIONARY. {chorus}
⋮ WE ARE REVOLUTIONARIES. {chorus}

Participatory decision-making works.

We have been taught
this process,
not to be afraid.
People
articulate themselves...

...to answer
the questions,
a contemporary community.

It is a
time consuming process
all these meetings.

Yes, but time,
can we do away with time?

Those who want
efficiency, objectivity
and technically perfect
solutions
don't accustom
sharing power.

To discipline and measure
the same as
not wanting
any participation
at all. To propose
a specific duration
for a meeting

is to apply
your way of measuring
time onto others...

Meetings
should be chaotic.
Learning and politicization
is slow.

Contradictions
within a society
cannot be technically or objectively
resolved.

Only by discussion, and discussion
requires time.

Time
and
process.

Ideas of
how we want to live
are dialectical,
the social process
must
constantly
be in flux.

❖❖ THE COMMUNITY
MUST BE ABLE
TO MODIFY IT! {chorus}

Self-regulation is
fundamental. But it is
also precarious,

we must avoid
to even try
to regulate too much
ourselves.

And then
we must
find ways
to create a large scope
beyond
what
we know.

Even if it is very abstract. Chaos contributes
very well
to that.

We don't need regulation.

This is
about accumulating
the strength
to build a different society

People begin
to understand
that their problems are not exclusive
are instead
part of the overall
situation
of the economy, the social situation
in the country
including the international situation.

They can share
and understand
that it is not only
them.

People are taught
to be leaders
they learn
to chair meetings, to lead work teams
to speak in front of the public
through a microphone
to defend proposals
ideas.

It is
not just education
It is also
Enforcement,
that the government cannot be
a transmission line
for any political party.
There should be
plurality, and contradiction,
divergence and conflict
must be acknowledged.

The entire world should
know this
policy of change.

We have
no intention of administrating
capitalism.

We are
fighting for
the progress
of a completely revolutionary experience
within the possibilities
of the city. But to achieve
this there will have to be

a commitment
so that the process
can continue
to advance.

There is no law
that regulates
the entire Participatory Budget.
Municipal Law states
that the leader must
consult
the people
to establish the budget guidelines
a more-year plan
just on paper.
What exists is
an internal regulation
for the functioning of the participatory budget
a kind of manual.
This is good.
To avoid
the trap of the law.

No Laws
Conflicts will occur
within the community
Conflicts
should not end up
in the judicial system.
To turn participation into law,
subordinates expression
of people's sovereignty...

≡ TO AN INSTITUTION! TO AN INSTITUTION_{chorus}

The community can institute
their own priorities
of investments,
the way in which the
meetings function,
make decisions
have criteria
for establishing
priorities,
work that will be done,
the manner in which
delegates,
councilpersons
are elected.
This can be autonomously
achieved.

What if the moon was a jump away?
It is utopian thinking
indeed.
Thinking
the moon as a public image
close enough
to imagine
and far enough away
not to claim...

The Moon
this Idea
it is radical democratization,
can we do this

without the government?
The Left has never
been able to convene
with those who feel excluded. What does it
have
to offer them?

If we think
we are in a process to accumulate
policies to destroy
a bourgeois state, if we think
there is
a possibility
of a revolutionary break
on the immediate horizon
it is
obvious
that the participatory budget
as a
democratic
strategy
contributes.
But
if one has a dream...

that progress will be
served by revolution
of the historical development
of capitalism
and of crisis in the bourgeois state,
then
the participatory budget experience
would be an unnecessary experience.

But
if one thinks
that
it is necessary
to accumulate
political
and organizational experience,
then,
the participatory budget
is a
very positive
and highly revolutionary
experience.

Agh
You are
all communists!

Well
if we are the ones
that work
meet
decide
then, what is the function
of the
council person? Why
do the people
only discuss
15 % or 17 %
of the budget? Why
don't we
discuss the rest? Why
can't we

discuss the whole budget?

This
has nothing
to do
with the co-opting
of grass-roots
organizations by the state
or
of their dissolution
within the state.
A nucleus
of power is here
formed outside
the state, outside
the legislative and executive
branches.

This is the
exact
opposite
of the
neoliberal dismantling
of the state.
They say the state
must be
reduced
to give way to what is private
we say
that it was
always private
because it catered to
the interests
of specific sectors.

Now
it should be
de-privatized to
serve the interests
of the entire population.

✦✦ **SOMETHING TAKES
PLACE
IN THE
MINDS
OF THE MOON MAKERS...
THE MOON
IS MADE
WITH ITS IMAGE
NOT BESIDE IT.** {chorus}

§ **WE
CANNOT STAND BY
AND
REMAIN SIMPLY SPECTATORS,
SAYING THAT
EVERYTHING HAS BEEN BADLY DONE.** {chorus}

✦ **OUR IMAGINATION IS
ALWAYS
CALLED FORTH.
JUST AS SURELY AS
THE MOON IS LUMINOUS.** {chorus}

For social activists
outside of
Porto Alegre,
the Participatory Budget
was also a dream.

To be able
to establish that
in their cities...

Inspired by
participation,
with roots
in participation!

Without the budget, but with the political discussion.

‡ **THAT WAS THE PARTICIPATORY IDEA!** {chorus}

To emphasize things
that were missing
in the
Participatory Budget
at
that time,

participatory planning
and
self-management utopias.

With the occupation of
actual territory

the creation of
a living laboratory

it was possible
to experiment
further!

After 2002, I
became a
PB advisor. Then still,
investment
priorities
were determined
by the communities.
State level
processes were less easily controlled.

Councillors
not parties,
inside the process
but critical of the process.
The role of neoliberals,
and of the
different kinds of leaders
coming up in
the process.
Development,
learning.

If you
listened to
people
then,
you could see
them participating.

interesting not
the meetings themselves,
but the day to day
life, that
made me
go.

It was the
process before the meetings,
identified
as crucial
to know.

Why people
were gaining power over the law,
the legislation, their rights.
That really justified
the practice of democracy.

**\$ WHAT IS
AT STAKE?** {chorus}

The thinking
beyond our selves,
being bound to share the planet...
How has that worked?
What could be
the moon's
social contract?

**✦ THE THINKING OF PARTICIPATION
HAS TO CHANGE.** {chorus}

You are going
to dream up
a place where
problems that
are non-existent,
are solved.

Is that worthwhile?

To understand
this detachment
from politics,
technique,
space.

Where are our feet?
Always
on the ground.
if you don't give space,
you don't have a ground.

✦ IMMOBILARIA {chorus}

means
cannot be moved.
Is not the moon
a public property?
public fantasy,
that cannot be moved?
Could it not be
a very different
probe,
of real estate?
A real state
sur-real state?

Consider imagination.

That is
a major
human
factor.

Territory is
Imaginary
and real

at the same time.

But

**IF WE
NEED TO THINK
SO FREELY.** {chorus}

When we own
we
risk losing
the moon as
a metaphor

ours and
not ours,
it is
letting us debate again.

But see
here,

super-individuality
in full swing
now. Even at
the level of imagination.

But is that not
why it is
so
important
to reach anew?

Some of this is empirical

and some of it is lyrical
We tell the story
of the Participatory Budget
because
it is a Participatory
Idea.

So we think
with a
new territory
and dream
up against
the way things have

turned.

**◆◆ THE MOON IS AN IMAGE
WE ALL OWN.
WE SEE IT EVERYDAY, AND WE CAN SPECULATE.
BUT WHO REALLY OWNS THE MOON?
EVERYONE! NO ONE!
A TABULA RASA, OR AT LEAST A CONTAINER.
FILL IT WITH IDEAS!
FILL IT WITH EXPERIENCES!** {chorus}

What
could
we achieve if
we could start over?
Would
we do the same as
we do now?

A new imperium...
"I decide over my territory."

**I FIND THIS VERY SCARY.
IT IS SCARY.** {chorus}

**BUT I DO NOT WANT TO BE AFRAID
WE HAVE LEARNT NOT TO BE AFRAID.** {chorus}

The Participatory Budget
It is play money.

When government starts
to behave like a
company,
this becomes
dangerous.
Things move
towards being
only
about profit.
They have entered this
arena, and now
there is almost no
correction
possible
by the population, since they
have no voice
in business. The public
cause
is lost.

The government
should do
what they
must.

Nothing more, nothing
less.
From public money, because
it is public!

We
need to think
Infrastructure
at the level of
Participation Again!

Participatory Budget
decreases
dramatically with the coming of the Cup.
That is worth
emphasizing,
though nobody mentions it.

Too much democracy
can be harmful,
FIFA expressed this
during the World cup.
This is
business management
thinking.

Brutal

They
gave it all
away

**✦ GAVE IT ALL
AWAY**

**ALL THAT
WE ACHIEVED.** {chorus}

Many voices
showed many different figures
concerning
government investments.
They showed
the state spent
more on debts than investment.
So if 6-8 %
was for the people to decide, now
the money for PB,
came through loans.
New loans!

✦ **BUT SOME DAY
SOMEONE
WILL PAY FOR THIS.** {chorus}

Participatory Budget
generated
resistance against the World cup
too.
In an optimistic scenario
this could lead to
gains.

Tension between
the principle
of participation
and participation
as a strategy.

We had government
representatives themselves
introducing
the things they wanted
discussed. And if you
didn't discuss
what they
wanted you
to
they would
not
vote for your proposals!

Remember
what happened
at the meetings:
the police
were stopping all the cars,
and
they got pamphlets
to ask the people to
vote for the police!
130 policemen
coming to the meeting
in police uniform.

The government
found a way to
control
the people
again. So we
were back to
where we started: dependent
all over

on government
and politicians.
A shame
such
good processes
became
part of party politics.

So let us
loudly
acknowledge too
that the participatory
budget
has become a fraudulent
copy
of its initial ideals!

PB has been
very
important
for this city, because of
what it
represented in its
first 10, 12 years
of practice,

but, it
was clear that
they would never
allow
such a powerful
tool of
popular participation
at the disposal

of the population.

It was
always said:
'we discuss
the
whole budget,'
but we
only

have this available.

There was
no longer
any discussion
of the whole
budget. Now it
is only
about how we
divide
this little piece of cake,
some
small
piece of the moon.

Imagining participation
beyond
what we know is
key.

We don't need
to break
down what
we have built.

**\$ WE DON'T NEED
TO BREAK
DOWN WHAT**

WE HAVE BUILT. {chorus}

Some needs
we had,
utopian thinking
cannot
even imagine.

The
basic conditions
to be
mobile,
to attend,
to have access
to home
to reproduce,
were
not
there.

The middle class values do not apply.

To deal with
property development
and real estate....spaces
which don't fulfill
required social
functions. The moon might
fulfill this
criteria. We should
claim the
function of
public interest.

Destine
these spaces
for fantastic communities

Destining
as a
matter of principle.

Like the moon
Participatory Budget
in Porto Alegre,
was not entirely
real.

We can
admit this.
There was
such a monopoly
of speech, still.
The zones were often
too big
to be able to
reach out to
the people.

Still
we cannot
stand by
and allow
the top
down
moving
of communities to make place
for infrastructure
again,
as was
the case
with the World Cup.

This
is counterproductive for
what this
community
can build.
Has built.

We stay to
promote the
city, we will
not be
“removed to promote.”

A participatory
world image
cannot allow
this
any longer.

It is
impossible to
gain a
critical sense
of your environment,
your city,
your planet,
or yes, the moon,
without this
fundamental tool
from which you
can determine connections.

City planning
and satellite images
for
thinking

and speculating
otherwise.
With access to information,
we share
access to
the planning.
Images are
crucial for inserting
the territory
into
the imagination.

The
Participatory Budget
and the moon
are
by no means
regular territories. They are
irregular.
The best ways to
break and accelerate
integration
and ownership
is to use
processes that
intervene and
draw on
collective methodologies.
Combine techniques
and
think aloud.
Collective telescope!

With many
disciplines, and
multiplied ways of
thinking, you
can develop
peripheral vision,
other cognitions,
other relations with
the debates
in and about
the city and elsewhere.

We must
educate (ourselves) on
the spatialization of
issues
like
this.
Quality citizenship
needs to
walk
around.
With the
Image idea
of
the moon, yes.
With the
image idea
of
looking from above and from afar.
Because learning
to see
differently
can end up

generating a
re-signification of
the community
struggle.

This is
very concrete,
reinforcing the
idea of
the moon as a stand in!

Imagination can
enter all
spaces and places.

But our
politicians create
a false polemic by
taking ownership
of culture
and,
by
doing
that, of
imagination
itself,
in order
to remove
freedom of thought.
We must
politicize technique,
we must
politicize culture
and also
make politics

cultural.
This is the
important role
that imagination has.

PB was
a great school for
developing many
leaders for
this reason...It was
a political school,
giving transversality
to public policies, and
inserting the territory
into
the political discussion.

The lesson,
then,
is this:
building
participatory democracy
requires more than
“good models.” Deepening
democratization
will require new
creativity
in the art
of politics in
the coming years.

The participatory
budget
in fact was the

political education of
an avant garde movement.

The most
important experience
of
our
lives.

This experience
made many
believe

that
it is possible
to be very
ethical, very
responsible and to
have results.
It
is
possible.

Yes,
the most
important is
that people have
places to
express themselves.

If that
is gone or
becomes limited by
protocols,
democracy
will

go
nowhere.

Only
spaces for
discussion
enable places of
resistance and
creativity.

Many roots
came together in
this form, which
is
discursive, in a
theatrical
sense. A live
event is a
space where
non-power can be
played
out.

The model
of the moon should
allow us
to imagine things
differently. Making
an artistic
qualification for our
search, is what we
have been
looking for, for a
long

time. We need
artistic forms
built on
dialogue, we
need spaces
temporarily freed
of power, even
if they
are fictional
and temporary.

The model
of the moon should
allow us to
do so.

✦ **PASSIONATE INTERESTS INTERSECT
ALONG THE LINES OF IRREGULAR TERRITORY,
PROJECT THIS ONTO THE MOON,
PROJECT
PROJECT
PROJECT THIS ONTO THE MOON.** {chorus}

POST-SCRIPT

A dynamic script based on conversations from the research of artists Bik Van der Pol into the Participatory Budget (PB) in Porto Alegre (Brazil). This material has been (re)composed to allow the different voices that occur in each instance of the discussion of PB to become manifest as a dispute, as a discursive and imaginative fight in space. The moon, an image shared and owned by all inhabitants of this planet, is conjured as an other location towards which it might be possible to exercise and activate a new participatory imagination, to eventually implement change to take hold here on earth.

Imagine that people have the power to decide how the moon as a model is managed? What kinds of recommendations could they make based on the experience gained from the public control of government in Participatory Budgeting? As an image that all inhabitants of the planet share and a 'tabula rasa' in the sense of ownership, the moon potentially serves as a location of reflection towards re-divisions and re-negotiations of political claims on space. Here we can start exercising and fully activating a participatory process on a global scale, opening up the senses to what things might look like when nothing and everything is at stake.

In Brazil, the agora is where different voices assemble in the tradition of the *repentistas*, conducting improvised poetry duels in the streets. In this form of grassroots poetry, two poets play and sing verses made up in the moment. The words are usually performed to the rhythm of a tambourine, guitar or other instrument. Bringing together form and agency, the tradition is used to stage the dialogue on the Participatory Budget by actors in Porto Alegre, with the artists' dynamic script as a point of departure. Here, claiming space as public and politically charged enables the bridging of a gap between knowledge and emancipation, establishing the activity of art, as performing and singing become political activity. The element of 'en-passant' (passing through) is essential; it is temporal and

implies action, so that learning and the emergence of new forms of discourse may occur. Set in motion, the actors open up different and oppositional ideas in a public dialogue... and from here these ideas may continue to develop further and become effective as they disperse.

A first version of this script has been performed during the Mercosul Biennale in Porto Alegre in 2013. The script developed from conversations with Danilo Streck (Professor at the Graduate School of Education at the Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos – UNISINOS in Brazil) and his students of the Research Group on Participatory Budgeting Department at the Department of Human Sciences; José Luís Ventura in Restinga; Hilda and Bernardo de Souza; Leandro Anton, architect, geographer and one of the forces behind Quilombo do Sopapo; Maria Deloi and Rose Canabarro at Cesmar; and with diverse materials available in the public domain, including that of Marta Harnecker, 'Delegating Power to the People, Participatory budget in Porto Alegre,' 1999, Washington, DC, The *WorldBank*, and Celina Souza's 'Participatory budgeting in Brazilian cities: limits and possibilities in building democratic institutions,' in: *Environment & Urbanization* Vol. 13 No. 1 April 2001.

This publication is a next remediation of the script, staged for the page in collaboration with poet and editor Rachel O'Reilly and designer Dongyoung Lee, together the Labin publishing imprint at Van Eyck Academie, 2014.

WHAT IF THE MOON WERE JUST A JUMP AWAY?

Script - Bik Van der Pol
Imprint editor - Rachel O'Reilly
Imprint designer - Dongyoung Lee
Printed at - Van Eyck Academie, Charles Nypels Lab
Lab technical support - Jo Frenken
Printed with - Riso 1070E
Paper - Munken Lynx Rough 120 g/m²

Publisher - Bik Van der Pol and Labin Imprint
in cooperation with Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht NL

ISBN 978-90-812018-0-3

© 2014 Bik Van der Pol / Labin Imprint / Van Eyck Academie

**VAN
EYCK** Labin Imprint 

BIK VAN DER POL, WITH LABIN INPRINT, VAN EVCK ACADEMIE

ISBN 978-90-812018-0-3



9 789081 201803