

# **hunch**

## **double dutch**

# Corporate City

Privatization of Space

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In the last decades, more than 100 governments have sold state companies to private investors transforming the state's economic role. Based on economic issues, this development of a large-scale privatization program has turned into a highly political act. Privatization represents an ideological and symbolic break with the history of state control over a country's productive assets.

Recently, beside the already privatized public services such as infrastructure and telecommunications, public spaces like airports (today there are 100 privatized or partly privatized airport authorities worldwide), shopping malls (estimated total retail area in the world is almost

2,000 million square meters), and especially housing developments (40 million Americans live in common-interest housing), have been privatized. In all cases, the public space is controlled by corporations putting private interests above the general public ones.

## CID's

The two main characteristics of this new form of housing development, better known as "Common-Interest Developments" — in short CID's — are first that they are residential areas with restricted access designed to privatize normally public space. Second, that they imple-

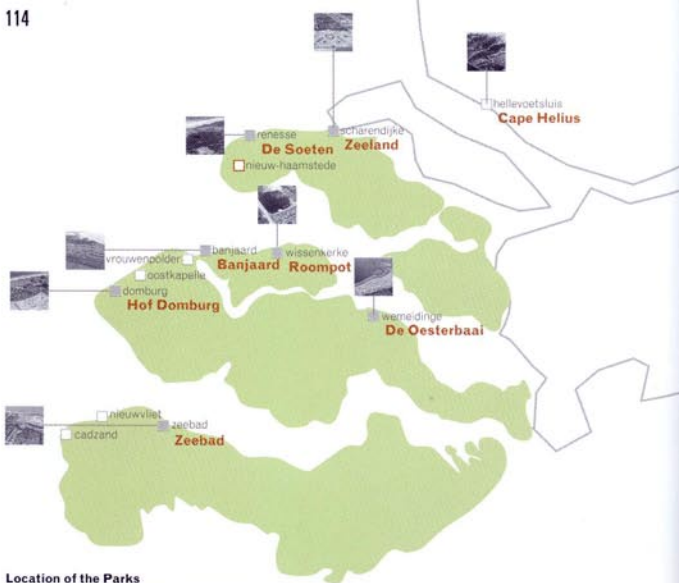


ment particular regulations, the so-called "Codes, Covenants and Restrictions" — in short CC&R's — in order to control and exercise the power of a non-public authority over a community. These rules, set up by developers, are exercised through bodies of homeowner associations or private corporations in order to define the look and use of private property and communal spaces. CC&R's are what Gilles Deleuze called in his essay *Postscript on the Societies of Control*, the gaseous mechanisms of control. Taking further Foucault's arguments, Deleuze elaborated how the "Disciplinary Societies" gave way to the "Societies of Control," where physical discipline had been replaced by more gaseous systems of control.

#### History

CID's find their roots in Ebenezer Howard's idealistic idea of the Garden City. Not only based on a physical plan, the Garden City was conceived furthermore as a radical proposal for public land ownership, where inhabitants rented the plot for their houses from the public.

In the 1920's Howard's ideas were picked up in America but the major, important change that took place was the approach to land tenure. The developers in favor of private property put aside Howard's idea that people rented a property instead of owning it. Radburn in New Jersey (1924) is one example that introduced a new form



### Location of the Parks

All the parks are attached to an existing city or town and located along the coast facing the North Sea.

of private government based on restrictive covenants and administered by a homeowners association. The CID was born.

After the Second World War, CID's became the standard used by housing developers in America. In the mid-1960s the real estate industry, supported by the Federal Housing Administration and sponsored by big corporations such as Gulf Oil, Goodyear and General Electric, started to promote CID's for the middle class. During the 1970s and with the advent of retirement developments like Leisure World in Florida, CID's incorporated lifestyle issues in the selection of a property in addition to a new physical exclusion device: the wall. These walled communities had their boom during the 1980s, when the public became increasingly preoccupied with violence and crime.

Under the fear of crime and segregation, other countries, like South Africa, witnessed the rapid spread of secured CID's and even the closing off of non-private developments. In these cases the services were not provided anymore by the municipality but by security firms that became multifunctional enterprises providing not only security but also garden services, waste collection and cleaning tasks.

The evolution of CID's found its climax in 1996 with the opening of Celebration in Florida. Following the Walt Disney Company's principles for animation, cinematography, scale manipulation, forced perspective, and the "wienie," Celebration mimicked old American towns in order to conjure a deep sense of identity, nostalgia and community.



**Roompot park**  
1,166 inhabitants  
in 226 villas.  
Urban plan evokes  
modernistic  
suburbias.



**Zeeland village**  
1,144 inhabitants  
in 226 villas.  
Urban plan evokes  
a renaissance city.



**Oesterbaai park**  
954 inhabitants in  
141 villas. Urban  
plan evokes a  
camping park.



## Zeeland Province

Zeeland Province is a case study in Zeeland, a southern province of the Netherlands. This research intends to explain further implications of the phenomena of privatization of space using the example of the holiday housing corporation: *Roompot*.

Originating as a camping park, Roompot introduced in the late 1970s the second house as a more exclusive way to have holidays in one's own property, enjoying the benefits of shared services. Since then, ten parks were built, two more are in the project phase. One of these two intends to transform a whole historical town into an exclusive villa park.

Looking at the different parks, the first interesting aspect is the percentage of territory that is consumed by them. In relation to the adjacent towns, Roompot park footprints range from 3 percent to 86 percent covering a considerable amount of "public" territory. The contractual agreements are another important issue. There are three possible contracts between an owner and the corporation:

1. Exclusive use of the owner only.
2. The use by the owner is restricted to four weeks per year. The house is rented out through the owner and the Roompot Corporation.
3. The use by the owner is restricted to four weeks per year. The house is rented out through the owner and the Roompot Corporation only. Roompot guarantees a fixed amount of "rent" per year to the owner.

Comparing this model with those of normal CID's, we realize that Roompot is present in all stages of the process of making and of the future running of the development. Nothing is left undefined by the corporation: from urban design to interior design.

Roompot Corporation addresses the market by offering various aesthetics and different lifestyle options. Every park has its special look combined with a unique urban scheme.

The contractual model absorbs possible differences between more and less wealthy people. In that sense they accommodate "different" social classes with invisible means. To keep quality standards for rent, the corporation also penetrates the interior of the houses by regulations (CC&Rs), thus preventing possible conflicts among the inhabitants. Spending time in a Roompot park means gaining access to different leisure activities. These are

specially selected and composed for each park in order to target a specific group of buyers and users in every location. They serve as social filters to get more homogeneous communities, not only to reduce possible conflicts but also to give the people a common experience.

In the case of the Roompot Corporation, the supply of housing, communal facilities and holiday destinations for the middle class goes beyond the supply of housing. What we see here is that *ownership* is detached from the use because the renting out mainly serves to finance the property. Roompot Corporation makes a strong emphasis on the *community* aspect in order to enhance their corporate image. They supply homeowners an efficient system that guarantees cleanliness, security, the prevention of neighborhood conflicts, and in case that will occur, an *intermediary* who will solve them. Another striking argument here is that homeowners and home renters are not the only customers. *Local authorities* are making a major shift from the supply side to the demand side. When we compare the territories of the villages and their adjacent villa parks, we can imagine that municipalities will gradually lose *public control* over their "public" property to the corporations.

The economic significance for the *councils* of the Zeeland region makes them strongly dependent on the parks. Roompot Corporation provides them with housing taxes and tourist magnets and exempts them from investments costs, such as for infrastructure, maintenance cost and conflicts. Roompot Corporation selects the best spot for its parks, partly overwrites local law and regulations by transforming public territory into a privatized one, and then limits the freedom of the individual.

The impact on the cultural landscape of Zeeland is a total change from its original agricultural identity to "imported" and boldly recombined images.



**De Soeten Haert**  
1,056 inhabitants  
in 100 villas.  
Urban plan evokes  
a bungalow park.



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