Shadow City: Gimme Shelter 1935-1945

1. Introduction
In F.M. Dostojevski's book *Notes from the Underground* (1864) a man elaborates in a monologue why he lives in a cellar (a 'mouse hole') and definitely refuses to abandon it. He brings out the contrast between his hole and the crystal palace, a monumental building elsewhere in town that is untouchable, knows no doubts, tolerates no denial, and at which you cannot even hideously put your tongue. Against this outward show he places his tactile mouse hole, which gives ample space for dubious practices, destruction and emotion. He is convinced 'that man will never renounce real suffering, i.e. destruction and chaos.' It is the irony of literature history that in the book of H.G. Wells, *The war in the air* (1908), the plans for a worldwide air war are being made in Crystal Palace.

Crystal Palace and the mouse hole are icons of the official city with representative buildings inside which decisions about war and peace are taken and in the cast shadow of it a parallel city that offers hidden shelter space. Such a Shadow City is justified by the protection of citizens against air attacks. Shadow City is the negative alter ego of the existing city: unwelcome and primitive, always underdeveloped and shaped from fearful impulses. The threat of war is the generator of Shadow City. War accumulates production-output, accelerates and standardises technical innovations, simplifies ideologies by antagonizing images of the enemy and legitimates actions by monopolising moral. This paper is about the protection of citizens against air attacks by collecting them in special spaces in the period 1935-1945.

2. *Aviation and Shadow City*
Technical developments in aviation created not just almost unlimited possibilities for the citizen to travel to cities in any corner of the globe, but also a intangible threat to his habitat. In the course of twentieth century aerospace, initially the realm of clouds and birds, was impregnated more and more by air planes, air ways, communication noise (radiowaves, radar, signal flares, searchlight) and menaces (attacks with gas clouds, microbes and bombs). All these motions necessarily get their impulses from ground stations on the earth. This fact urges specific design efforts: the architecture of communication. The performance of those tele-technical systems on a world wide scale is inconceivable without the explosion at distance and, as a consequence, the
(anonymus) attack on the habitat of the citizen. Hence the necessity of the Shadow City.

3. *Shadow City in Europe*
In large regions of Europe the existing cities got, from 1935 on, a fragmented complement of a Shadow City with claustrofobic traits. The principle of the Shadow City was a dark, blinded, introvert space with an artificial interior climate, comparable to the inner part of a submarine or the pressure cabin of an airplane. The exterior was hidden with earth and sometimes with a camouflage, causing the covering up the function of the caged existence. This redoubling of the city mostly consisted of trenches (sometimes covered), shelters and bunkers, technical facilities without a representative outside, decoration or presence. Only the protection qualities, the size and the capacities of such spaces counted. In such Spartan environments the inhabitants only needed to survive in a city that performed as a lifebuoy for some and as a coffin for others.

4. *Shadow City in the Netherlands*
As dictatorial states rose in Europe of the thirties, the massive production of weapons grew steadily and new military-strategic concepts dominated, reflection in Europe on powerful measures to protect citizens against attacks from the air started. Experts agreed that in an air

war cities would be important targets. Well aimed bombing of defence-objects, production sites and attacks on city dwellers were seen as key notes of modern war fare. The broadly accepted idea in public opinion that a war with air attacks on cities would herald the end of any culture and civilisation, was simply belied by the regularity that any weapon creates it own defensive counterpart. Although reluctant also the Netherlands started to be active in the creation of Shadow City. After the mobilisation of the Dutch army in 1939 the building activities enlarged. After invading the Netherlands in May 1940 the German occupiers continued building Shadow City. The military part of the occupation power extended the battlefield with bunkers, the civil government built – near homes, public buildings and production places – strong civil bunkers for protection against air raids. From 1942 onwards a feverish building activity followed, meant to protect the German civilians in cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and, most of all, the city of the Reichskommissar Arthur Seyss-Inquart, The Hague. So Dutch Shadow City also has a German layer, the remnants of which were reused in Cold War times.

5. *Bunkers for military and civil purposes*
The large scale bunker projects during the Third Reich sometimes is called the most extensive utilitarian building project in the world. This wrinkle in the face of mother earth had two components. The Westwall (1936-1940) and the Atlantikwall (1942-1945) had a purely military significance as a conventional front that was not designed of air fights. The other component had, fitting in the idea of Total War, a civil target: the protection of citizens, administrators, workers etc. against air attacks by constructing trenches, cellars underneath existing buildings, tunnels and underground and surface bunkers. Adequate protection against the impact of air attacks meant the construction of a cuirass around buildings and a virtual ceiling above the city that resulted at its utmost in an doubling of existing cities. In cities like Berlin, Hamburg and The Hague surface and underground worlds were shaped with survival machines that enabled a surrogate life. These resorts of fear and hope were a secular addition to the cityscape. In desert of ruins of after war cities these bunkers still stood as twentieth century menhirs.
There are great differences between the construction of bunkers for military purposes, like the Westwall and the Atlantikwall and bunkers for civil purposes. The first mentioned bunker complexes have been studied extensively and documented rather well. They were designed for a traditional landfront; in the case of the Atlantikwall it was about a wall (with a back side cover) against a possible invasion across the water. These bunkers were manned by soldiers. In terms of air defence this wall had no significance. But there are more differences between military and civil bunker constructions. These raise from the fact that in the case of military utilities the anticipated war situation is determining the design and shape of them. In case of civil construction normal civil life brings its demands and one of them is that living in the city means more than dwelling in a fortress. In the typology of Atlantikwall bunker one sees the strong inclination to standardisation, the expression of the functions of the bunkers and the reflection of the army hierarchy; moreover there is strife for conciseness and sprawl. In civil bunkers no perpetrators are housed, but victims of different sex, different ages and different place of the societal ladder.

6. *The elements of Shadow City*
The city of mouse holes turned out to be better protected against vertical attacks than the city of crystal palaces. The mouse holes can take many shapes. For convenience's sake we call them bunker, first of all because they are a more or less bombproof survival machine and secondary as a cultural, technical and architectural phenomenon that, by omnipresence in the unbuilt spots of the city influences the shape of cities. In the cellar or garden of the house, in

shelters of premises, offices and factories, in government's buildings and in public shelters in parks, public gardens, roadsides and on school squares Shadow City took command of the city image. Unsorted the exited citizens are put on speed in masses to dark square or oblong boxes, where they have to wait patiently till the bombs have done their job and then can inspect the leftovers of their family and worldly goods. In a behaviouristic sense the civil bunker is a test tube in which the extremes of human fears, hope and claustrofobia mingle. In case of a long or repeated sojourn in Shadow City an alternative society can develop from which one cannot always easily return.

7. *Shadow City research*
The historical reconstruction of Shadow City, some remnants of which are still showing themselves off as theatrical memories or are stored in deeper layers beneath the surface, can be compared with a medical metaphor: one needs an echo of the body of the city to visualise Shadow City. As a contrast to Great-Britain and Germany the history of Dutch air raid protection and the fortunes of Dutch Shadow City has not been written. The image of Dutch air protection was not very heroic from the beginning, not only because of the weak position of the municipal air protection services (dependant of the occupier) and the not very effective or even amateurish performance of the Shadow City's staff, but most of all because of the post-war image of civil protection. As in the thirties criticism concentrated during the Cold War on the government's unwillingness to invest in civil defence and the incredibility of the volunteers' tasks and training.
As it is a technological pattern that each weapon calls for an effective defence and that this defence has repercussions town planning, construction and architecture, the study of Shadow City in all her aspects therefore needs a specific approach of architectural historians, in which the connections between ideology, civil culture, technique and communication systems are uncovered. These connections can be found by viewing the civil air raid protection as a design job that combines social and spatial claims.

The survey I am working on, has an international potency. Despite local and regional differences there is a general pattern: the foundations of Shadow City were constructed during World War II, recycled, extended and tuned during the Cold War. Also nowadays echoes of these era's are present in all kinds of instable regions like Iraq; the technical strive for bombproof shelters has not weakened. The fear for sudden death by air-, gas- or microbe attacks is unrelenting.

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