

IF THE CITY IS A STAGE, WHAT DO WE NEED THEATRES FOR?

Questions by Stefan Kaegi

- Why are monuments built for ever?
- How come most monuments are built for dead people, but hardly any for the living?
- Could a monument be something that comes and goes, something that doesn't stand in your way but that focuses your view onto your surrounding? Something that allows you to step out of it for a second and look at your life from outside?
- If the city is a stage, what do we need theatres for?
- If theatres want to talk about the city they are built in, why do they have no windows but thick walls to isolate you?
- How could a theatre be an institution without a place? How could it be an agency of appointments where artists tell you where and when to be and what to look at for how long and in which context?
- Why is everybody most interested in their own cities?
- When will cities replace nations?
- Why do demonstrations rarely talk about global but mostly about local issues – while our lives become more and more connected around the globe?
- Can urban questions travel and develop in different corners of the world instead of theatre sets travelling?
- How come the closer people live together the more lonely people feel?
- When will we stop talking about gentrification?
- Can we leave the city now and make art in the country side and in small villages where art festivals hardly ever go?

Stefan Kaegi, one of the three authors working in the frame of Rimini Protokoll, has created works in the cities and also about the cities throughout his career. The two most directly city-related works are [100 % City](#) and [Parallel Cities](#).

He has the immense talent to scratch the surface of normality or mundanety and find incredible stories and situations underneath that can take us through the rabbit hole and show us what lies beneath or at least play with our perceptions of the state of things. His work tackles world problems or challenges but at the same time touches us in a very intimate human way. The same is true for his thinking about the city and his artistic works that touch upon the city.

Stefan Kaegi grew up in Switzerland, where landscape was a place where you spend time, take walks, have vacation and now he lives in the cities, better said - works in them, so cities for him are transitory landscapes. Although transitory he is a constant observer and intervener, so his thoughts on the cities and the relationship between arts and the city range from how we all think we know some cities, such as big famous cities, but what we think we know are basically a few hundred meters of the strict center and the parts that people actually live in are outside this sphere and to thinking about how people seem to be more and more isolated as the city gets more and more dense. And theatre has always had the role of communication, interaction. From this also springs performative turn of architecture and urbanism. How to make places into spaces of interaction, how to use them, how to inhabit space with meaning? He believes that theatre or artists in general are taken very seriously in creating these spaces of interaction, much more serious than the historic monuments that seem to remind us that we can mark the space with art but have difficulties communicating with an object; so the challenge we face now is not how to intervene with art but how to defend some undefined spaces in the city, how not to prescribe everything and how to leave some space for conflict.

He is also interested in the new technologies of communication, but believes communities that share the same neighborhoods but not the same TV programs and the same books – for them it is essential to start using the real shared space not just the virtual one. And of course art can facilitate that.

He would love to work in the countryside, he thinks we should find ways to perform there ... People always talk about the gap between Europe and “developing countries”, but when it comes to opinions and beliefs the gap between the city and the rural regions within Europe are experiencing a

widening gap. He sees the tendency in Europe that the cities would replace nations, because he observes that people easily connect within regions and are more similar to each other within regions than within nation-states...

Slavoj Žižek was once asked how philosophy can contribute solutions for today's problems. Žižek of course answered that philosophy is not here to provide all the answers. What it can do however, which is more powerful, is ask the right questions. Art or artists hold the same power, so therefore some questions by Stefan Kaegi regarding the relationship of the art and the city.