

## CLOSELY WATCHED FILMS<sup>1</sup> On the Transformations of Eastern European Urbanism

Ana Miljacki

Harvard University

Kino-Eye is the documentary cinematic decoding of both the visible world and that which is invisible to the naked eye.

Dziga Vertov, *From Kino-Eye to Radio-Eye*

While Eastern European regimes of various degrees of rigidity 'discoursed' endlessly upon themselves, threw parties to celebrate their fearless leaders, and erected walls in the name of industrialization and protection from other ideologies and their armies, more modest, every-day narratives were assembling. Although it would be hard to argue with Manuel Castells' brilliant thesis that the demise of the Soviet Union was due to its systemic unfitness to adapt to the information revolution (taking place in the West), I would like to propose a minor narrative (perhaps a fairy-tale) on affective information and revolution from within the block.<sup>2</sup> By 'block' I mean the

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented in October 2001, at the *Eastern European Art and Architecture* conference, sponsored by MIT's Department of Architecture. Some of the research on Dziga Vertov began as a study on the *History of Communism* directed by Rem Koolhaas, as part of Harvard's *Project on the City*.

<sup>2</sup> The social theorist Manuel Castells dates the beginning of the end of the Soviet empire, in the nineteen-seventies. The development of information technologies, which seemed to unfold freely in the rest of the world, eddied around the Soviet Union. He fleshed out this argument in the chapter on the *Collapse of the*

Eastern Bloc, as well as the many housing blocks from New Moscow, to New Belgrade, and to Nowa Huta of Andrzej Wajda's films. The main protagonists of my story will be urbanism, film and the inhabitants of the block. This story will (unapologetically) investigate large geopolitical patterns and cross national boundaries in search of historical trends, rather than specificity.

Both urbanism and film belong to a series of microtechnologies of government (as for example: government of self, government of others...) clearly addressed by the early Soviet regime. Film was to be, according to Lenin, the most important art form of the freshly instated communist rule. The Soviet government had already set up a national film organization in 1918 and the production of film rose from 9 in 1922, to 112 in 1928.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, urbanism, just as in its 'western' precedents, was tightly related to modernization: the second five year plan in the Soviet Union asked for 64 million square meters of housing, which would have been a 40 percent increase of the total housing space.<sup>4</sup> Urbanism and film were simultaneously techniques of governing and methods for its aesthetic formalization (or expression). They can be read as, what Sigfried Kraacauer would have called, *surface expressions of an era*. And they changed as that era did: from *agitprop* to critique, from stadium spectacles to protests.

In his essay *What is Critique* Michel Foucault proposes that the history of governmentalization is necessarily also a history of its pair question: how not to be governed? This, according to Foucault, is not a binary opposition. 'How not to be governed *like that*, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them', has become a permanent question.<sup>5</sup> Not to be governed like that and for that and by them,

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*Soviet Union in the End of Milleniu*, Blackwell Publishers Inc: Malden, Massachusetts 1998.

<sup>3</sup> For film production numbers from 1918-41 see Table 2, in *The Film Factory*, eds. R. Taylor and I. Christie, Routledge: London and New York 1988, p. 424.

<sup>4</sup> For a thorough analysis of the Soviet Economy from the October Revolution to the 1970s, see A. N o v e, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.*, Penguin Books: New York 1982.

<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault does not state his own political program anywhere as clearly as in the collection of essays and lectures in *The Politics of Truth*. Influenced by his readings of the Frankfurt School oeuvre, and perhaps more importantly of

a notion present at the very inception of the communist ideology, was also the basis of its practical end in Eastern Europe.<sup>6</sup>

With time, urbanism in Eastern Europe *softened*.<sup>7</sup> I will examine its mutation in three filmic instances. We could think of them as three slices through Eastern European film history, or perhaps as three stills taken by a probe traveling through a film archive.

### **VERTOV: Cinema-truth and the generic city**

Our first stop, or sample, is the city in Dziga Vertov's 1929 *Man with a Movie Camera*. This film appeared at the height of the most virulent promotion of simplicity as the only modality of future soviet film. That is, it appeared at the twilight of an era in Soviet filmmaking usually referred to as *the golden age*. More than simply a moment of high levels of film production and of numerous formal experiments, this was a period in which the role of the medium of film was located definitively within the framework of constructing the Soviet brave new world. In this industrially backward country at the time of the October Revolution, one could not really speak of a working class with working class awareness, and yet for the proletarian dictatorship to make sense logistically, the existence of the proletariat was requisite.<sup>8</sup> From early on, film was thought to be well suited for inducing and fabricating the proletarian attitude and values. Its mass-communi-

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Kant's short (newspaper) piece in response to a question: 'What is Enlightenment?' Foucault draws a thread from the Enlightenment to his own present. This connection is defined by the critical attitude of both eras. In XVI century Europe there emerges 'a kind of general cultural form, both political and moral attitude, a way of thinking, etc.' which Foucault calls the 'art of not being governed like that and at that cost'. See M. F o u c a u l t, *The Politics of Truth*, Semiotext(e): New York 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Insofar as the communist ideology was based in class struggle as it was defined by Marx.

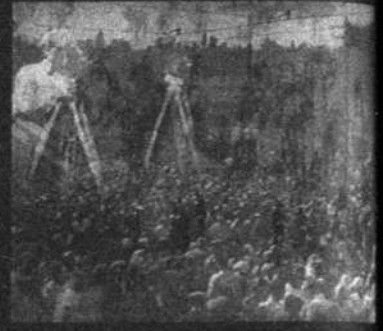
<sup>7</sup> The meaning of soft here is in opposition to the rigid planning, in opposition to scientific ideas about the efficient governing of people through urbanism.

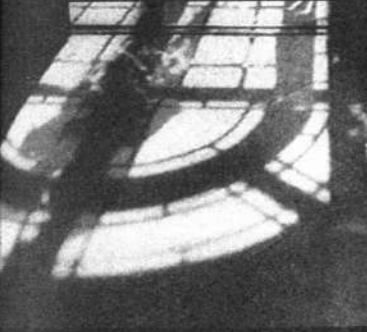
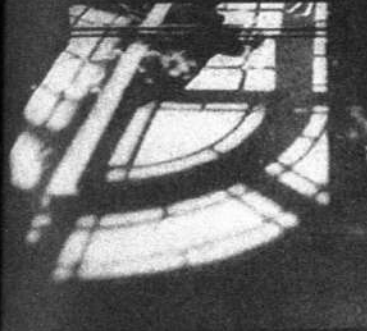
<sup>8</sup> According to the British historian Moshe Lewin, a measurement prepared for Lenin in 1920 showed that the city population fell from 19% in 1917 to 15% in 1920. Moscow and Petrograd nearly emptied out. This was a period of drastic, top down, measures that changed the makeup of the population in the Union. The official erasure of the bourgeoisie coincided with the shrinking of the working class.

Film stills from *Man with  
a Movie Camera*,  
several successive  
crossfades from city  
streets to audiences from  
the very end of the film.









cative aspect and deployment were critical for the Soviet embrace of film, both as a medium for communication and as an art form.<sup>9</sup>

Cities had an important place within the rhetoric of industrialization. No matter how the Soviet planners defined it (by its size, by the placement of the factory or the university), the city was the designated home of the proletarian masses. Since the industrial backwardness of the region was reflected in the lack of cities and even factories, one could not rely on a definition of the working class based in an analysis of the relations of production. Proletarians became entities that could be created through ideological conversion, persuasion and spectacle.

Vertov's metropolis, a celebration of the fast and furious modern city, or perhaps a celebration of citiness itself, participated in a cinematic discourse on the generic metropolitan condition. The city in *Man with a Movie Camera*, collaged out of the images of Moscow, Kiev and Odessa, was perhaps close to the image of a city anywhere in Europe of the nineteen-twenties. Although the Soviet capital was not yet developed like Paris or Berlin, and as Walter Benjamin noted in his *Moscow Diary*, the countryside unexpectedly appeared around every urban corner in Moscow, the party, the leaders, the artists, and everyone who took part in the Soviet dream and ideology, desired the generic Soviet city to be similar to the industrialized and busy areas of urban Europe.<sup>10</sup> Vertov's film follows a loose structure of a day in the life of a city, merged with another loose narrative: a day in the life of a filmmaker.

*Man with a Movie Camera*, a formally radical film at the time (1929), and perhaps still one of the most visually complex among the 'classics' reflects Vertov's philosophy of documentary film as fact, as *film-fact*. Vertov promoted documentary's critical potential and thus its primacy over narrative, feature films. Embracing his role as a revolutionary filmmaker,

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<sup>9</sup> 'When the masses take possession of film and it comes into the hands of true supporters of socialist culture, it will become one of the most powerful means of educating the masses' said Lenin already in 1907. Lenin quoted in Inkeles, and originally published in *Lenin, Stalin, Partiya o Kino (Lenin, Stalin and the Party On Film)*, Moscow-Leningrad 1938, p. 7-8. Excerpt.

<sup>10</sup> I would argue that even the Deurbanist architects and planners of this period thought of Moscow as equivalent to other industrial European capitals, and thus needing change. 'Modern Metropolis' was a generic concept, with more or less consistent features.



Vertov believed that showing life *just as it is* would stir up the revolutionary sense of proletarian audiences. 'Filming facts. Sorting facts. Disseminating facts. Agitating with facts. Propaganda with facts. Fists made of facts.'<sup>11</sup>

The fact that we cannot distinguish Kiev from Moscow or from Odessa in *Man with a Movie Camera* seemed problematic to Vertov's more sympathetic critics, such as Viktor Shklovsky (the central figure of Russian Formalism) and Esfir Shub (another important figure of Soviet documentary). They both thought that the blurring of various documentary realities would eliminate precisely the critical capacity of the medium, or of the genre. They both implicated Vertov's formal experimentation in the eventual dissipation of the soviet documentary. Appearing at the height of discussions about the need for simplicity, clarity, accessibility, and *evidentness*, Vertov's film was a kind of suicide. It was a tremor in the context of aesthetic production of the Union, where Socialist Realism was not yet the aesthetic program *de jure*, but was already the only *de facto* acceptable one.

Vertov's attitude toward representing truth may have placed him in a progressively difficult situation *vis a vis* the Soviet world, which systematically disregarded the factual. Yet his urgency to find an appropriate aesthetic fold for the factual was outlined in the early communist programmatic texts. To begin to situate the importance of truth and of realism for the Soviet project, we have to think of Marx's famous words from *The Communist Manifesto*: 'All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.'<sup>12</sup> The second part of this particular melting vision makes a type of realism politically operational. For the prophesied change to occur, Marx's man has to face his reality 'with sober senses'.

In the 1930s, as the documentaries - records of history and for history - stopped distinguishing *unplayed* from fictional life, two types of repercussions eventually followed. On the one hand. The film was considered to be a truthful representation of life in the union as long as it

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<sup>11</sup> *Kino-Eye; The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, eds. A. Michelson and K. O'Brien, University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles 1984, p. 59.

<sup>12</sup> K. M a r x, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. F. L. Bender, A Norton Critical Edition, W.W. Norton and Company: New York and London 1988, p. 58.



showed the achievements, hardwork and the 'joyous life' of the Soviet citizens, it was considered a truthful representation of life in the union.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, a part a significant segment of the audience completely stopped believing the things they were shown. Dziga Vertov fell out of favor as Socialist Realism opened the door to other magicians of mass enlightenment, less modernist than Vertov in their rhetoric, but just as committed to the revolutionary 'cause'.<sup>14</sup> His experimental attitude and his view on the critical role of *the real* were officially replaced by another approach to reality - socialist realism. The critical went underground.

### **WAJDA: Mechanisms exposed**

In the 1970s there emerged in Poland a new movement in cinema, often referred to as the *cinema of moral concern*.<sup>15</sup> The time seemed ripe to begin discussing the reality of socialist Poland, but having gone through the excitement of Hungary's 1956 and having learned the hard lessons of the Prague Spring, no one in Eastern Europe was ready to speak out loud again, not for another two decades. This is not to say that passionate criticism was nonexistent, but to say that we have to look closely for its subtle incarnations. In the Polish *cinema of moral concern*, which is often thought to have been inaugurated by Andrzej Wajda's film *Man of Marble*, critique came camouflaged in the representation of the mechanisms of daily life and phenomena characteristic of the Polish reality, which despite its specificity, was not unlike the general situation in the rest of the eastern block.<sup>16</sup> The fact that in the 1970s film finally emerged as the

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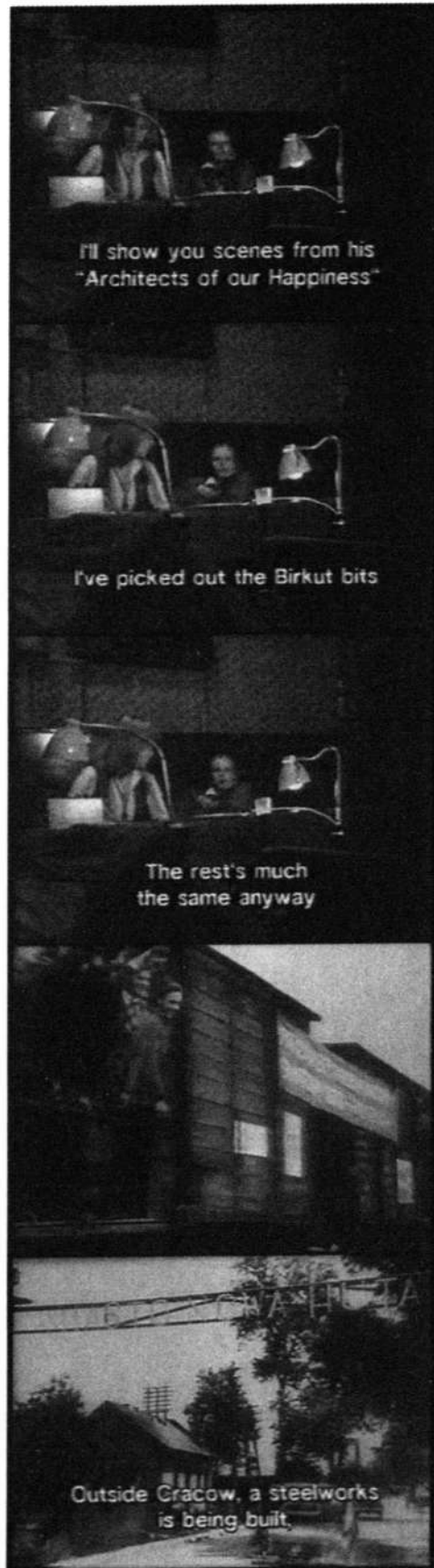
<sup>13</sup> In 1936, Stalin explained to a group of Stakhanovites that life had become more joyous in the Union, from then on every aspect of life had to express joy. Every country of the Eastern Bloc had their version of a model shock-worker, a worker whose productivity elevated him to a status of a national hero.

<sup>14</sup> Dziga Vertov spent the last ten years of his life making newsreels, away from the spotlights of the Soviet film industry. He died in 1954 with little fanfare.

<sup>15</sup> Just before this period in Poland, during the period of cultural thaw under Khrushchev, the cinematic production of the Soviet Union experienced a wave of mildly critical films, mostly involving representation of 'slices of the everyday life'.

<sup>16</sup> Andrzej Wajda produced *Man of Iron*, usually considered to be the sequel of *Man of Marble*, hastily in 1981 almost immediately after the Solidarity uprisings. While *Man of Marble* was viewed with consternation by the authorities, and thus released quietly at first to a single theater and then widely in order to

Film stills from *Man of Marble*, 1976, showing a piece of the fictional documentary of a couple 'moving into' their new apartment, this footage was supposedly uncovered by a filmmaker working on a documentary 20 years after that first footage was shot.





All around they can see their handwork



Each building contains a drop of their sweat



Mateusz and Hanka, can now start homemaking



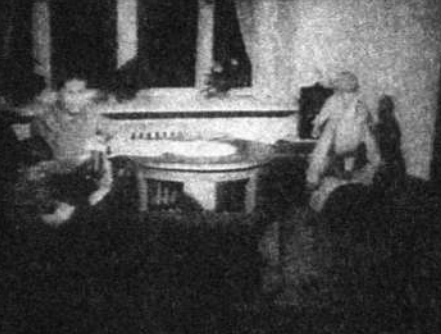
No wonder they're so moved







and the workers town of Nowa Huta named after it



A longed-for day has arrived



and the workers town of Nowa Huta named after it



A home of their own.



A flood of young volunteers,



A home of their own.



pours in by the day to help the effort



one of many built by the toil of their hands and hearts



Here, Mateusz Birkut, our hero.



one of many built by the toil of their hands and hearts

medium best suited to communicate a political attitude to large audiences and that those involved in aesthetic production found themselves in the role of (politically) committed artists certainly had an indirect impact on the representation (as well as the practice) of urbanism. Beyond that tenuous connection, urban life and in a sense aspects of urbanism become represented in films.

In *Man of Marble*, the story about a fictional shock worker Mateusz Birkut, we learn about the mechanism behind the propaganda and production of a new settlement - Nowa Huta. Birkut is a brick layer whose high productivity grants him a Stakhanov-like position. In this period, he and his wife are given an apartment in a new settlement, which they themselves helped build. Birkut's life story is recorded on documentaries, propaganda newsreels - something of a reality show before the genre existed as such. His rise to the status of shock worker is the theme of an ongoing documentary, and a momentary vehicle for the rise of a filmmaker in the 1950s. Through the nesting of stories about the making of documentaries on Birkut, we get a glimpse of the social and political situations of the two eras, and of their continuity. The early 1950s version of a documentary is embedded within another, supposedly being made in the 1970s, when the marble statue of Birkut lives in the basement of the national art museum surrounded with other members of the socialist realist menagerie, better forgotten in the 1970s. Wajda tells us that the mechanisms of the newsreel propaganda vehemently made and unmade heroes, and for most of those who lived in the block, this did not necessarily come as a surprise, but rather as an affirmation. Wajda's film affirms, by exposing the mechanism of propaganda; it affirms everyone's unspoken suspicion about the bravado of the weekly reports on the achievements of the thriving socialist state and its hard working and modest people.

At the beginning of *Man of Marble* the new industrial town in, Nowa Huta, is as generic and as naïve as the Stakhanovite worker, Birkut. In terms of the directives that would have surrounded and determined all of

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thin out the interested crowds, Wajda rushed *Man of Iron* for the Cannes Film Festival the same year. *Man of Iron* was 'protected' by the 'Golden Palm' and it was widely shown until martial law was declared in Poland in December of 1981.

the aesthetic production of the eastern block, the 1950s were in many ways an echo of the early 1930s in the Soviet Union, with a major difference: 20 years of industrialization and development on a different track (driven by capitalism). Still, the 'joyous life' of the 'workers' nations' was programmed top down. Watching the first mock documentary on Birkut, we were supposed to understand the happiness of a young, hardworking couple and desire an apartment like theirs (from the moment he and his wife get into their new prefab flat). We were supposed to seize upon the fairness of a state that guarantees rewards for hard work, as well. That is, in Wajda's film we see the mechanism of persuasion laid bare. We understand how the 1950s newsreel was meant to work. Wajda's fictional filmmaker, Agnieszka, discovers in the 1970s how Birkut's story went sour. Once Birkut began questioning the regime, he was crushed as fast as his role had been constructed. His idealism metamorphosed into disillusionment. Birkut was used for the purposes of propaganda. He was not particularly important as an individual, but his blind idealism had made him well suited for his role as a model shock-worker. Agnieszka uncovers a 50s story about the fabrication of happiness for purely rhetorical purposes.

However constructed the reports on everyone's welfare might have been, in terms of sheer numbers, the housing 'achievements' throughout the eastern block are hard to dismiss. In fact the housing developments are perhaps the most important feature of the cities in the now post-communist eastern block. In 1999, the information director for the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, Paul Csagoly, counted 170 million people residing in over 70 million apartments in pre-fabricated panel settlements throughout Central and Eastern Europe and Russia.<sup>17</sup> Thus, what we have in a sense is an urban condition specific to the geopolitical history of the eastern block, but which is at the same time a type of general condition - the Eastern European common, or, *generica*. It needed to enter film through small, personalized slices of life in order to become part of the discussion on the real conditions of life. Characterized often as obscene or brutal, and once in a while as possessing a discrete

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<sup>17</sup> See P. Csagoly, *Panel Buildings*, "The Bulletin" vol. 8, No. 3 (Budapest: the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, [www.rec.org/rec/bulletin/bull833/citiestonws.html](http://www.rec.org/rec/bulletin/bull833/citiestonws.html)).



charm, the housing developments of various architectural expressions have an important presence even if their actuality seems surreal to the uninitiated. Always centrally planned, laid out on clean slates, through the repetition of primary units, and as an expression of the ideology and demand for housing (but not necessarily of the most efficient technology), these housing blocks, which seemed to grow unauthored, like mushrooms (and still do in many places), took time to get territorialized by the lives of the inhabitants.<sup>18</sup> These large abstract structures were eventually appropriated by life.

### KIEŚLÓWSKI: Tableaus of heterogeneity

In 1988 Krzysztof Kieślowski organized his TV series *Decalogue / The Ten Commandments* around the structure of a housing block. As much as Godard's *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* is a self appointed critique of the industrial society and stars the *banlieux* of Paris, Kieślowski's series is a critique of the communist version of the industrial society presented under the cloak of moral education. The Ten Commandments that power the *Decalogue* could easily fit among the topics of the Polish cinema of moral concern. While Kieślowski is often grouped with some of his older colleagues, like Wajda, his particular attention and commitment to the quotidian (as opposed to the historical) set him apart. The housing block in *Decalogue* is not merely the organizing structure of the series; it is in a way its main protagonist. The housing block has many eyes and many stories to tell. As a form, it slowly mutated, from a container that effectively housed large numbers of people in apartments designed according to various versions of *existenz minimum*, to a disseminator of affective information.

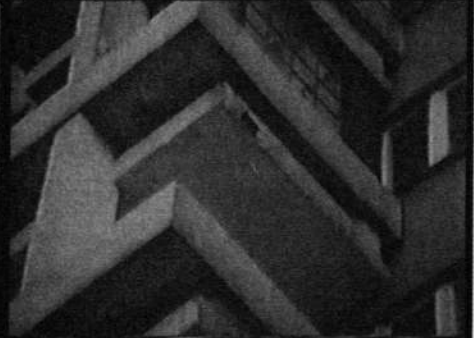
We return to the housing block in every episode, in a number of ways. The long panning shots are a device Kieślowski uses to give us the

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<sup>18</sup> In *Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari invented a coupling of concepts *deterritorializing* and *territorializing* that I am using here to mean encoding. Their concepts imply a system controlled by one entity, that is undermined by another, or at least claimed by another. In a way, one power structure is dismantled in the name of another, and although they would say perhaps of the first one to be totalitarian and the second move to be liberating, this judgement is relative and ever shifting.

Film stills from the beginning  
of four different episodes  
of the *Decalogue*.





OLGIERD ŁUKASZEWICZ

OLGIERD ŁUKASZEWICZ

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KRZYSZTOF PIESIEWICZ  
KRZYSZTOF KIESLOWSKI  
Scenarists



ANNA POLONY  
MAJA BAREKOWSKA

scenariusz  
KRZYSZTOF PIESIEWICZ  
KRZYSZTOF KIESLowski  
Scenarists

scenariusz  
KRZYSZTOF PIESIEWICZ  
KRZYSZTOF KIESLowski  
Scenarists

WŁADYSŁAW KOWALSKI  
BOGUSŁAW LINDA

DEKALOG, SIEDEM

THE DECALOGUE: SEVEN

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1988

DEKALOG, SIEDEM

THE DECALOGUE: SEVEN

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1988

overview, to remind us of the larger picture. We usually think of this totalizing perspective as that of the privileged position of the planner, however, in a housing block every apartment has the possibility for its own 'total view'. In his introduction to the script, Kieślowski described his desire to avoid representing the drudgery of the Eastern European quotidian, the long queues, the petrol shortages and the many incarnations of bureaucracy, and used the housing block to stylize the representation of the everyday life of its inhabitants. In concept, if everyday life was worthy of scrutiny, the camera could pick its topic randomly: '...we decided to place the action of *Decalogue* in a large housing estate, with thousands of similar windows framed within the established shot. Behind each window, we said to ourselves, is a living human being, whose mind, whose heart and, even better, whose stomach is worthy of investigation'.<sup>19</sup> The logic of living in a housing block is explained through the accumulation of individual apartments, through random meetings in the elevator involving the cast of several episodes of *Decalogue*, through entire life stories that revolve around the view from one apartment to another. Kieślowski's panning shots are dynamic, they change from an overview to a close-up in a matter of seconds. Their drama animates both the camera and the housing structures. They engage the viewers emotionally, before any specific content is presented. Since the audience of *Decalogue* is predominantly constituted of the inhabitants of housing estates with unmistakably similar features, which would be the case for a television series in Eastern Europe, then already the fast panning shots and the misty morning images of the housing playgrounds jolt the audience straight into a world whose logic they are very familiar with, but rarely think of as having any aesthetic merits. As the audience relates to the circumstances and stories of the *Decalogue* series, their reflection about their own position is imminent.

Film and housing simultaneously moved toward actualizing the critical potential they had by definition, as aesthetic formalizations of an era. The moment we are able to motivate our critical examination by reflecting upon surface expressions, we start to problematize historically our relation to our present and the constitution of our subjecthood. Siegfried

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<sup>19</sup> Krzysztof Kieślowski' introduction in *Decalogue - The Ten Commandments*, Faber and Faber Limited: London and Boston 1991, p. xiii.

Kracauer, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School theoreticians, concentrated their work on the surface level expressions of various invisible phenomena, which constituted their era. For all of them, although admittedly with slight conceptual variations, small details of life presented the possibility to access knowledge about the large systems that produced them. In one of his most important essays on the mass ornament, Kracauer stated that the surface level expressions 'by virtue of their unconscious nature, provide unmediated access to the fundamental substance of the state of things'.<sup>20</sup> When Kracauer said 'unmediated', he most likely meant unmediated by art or perhaps by reason.

The three directors we examined, were all involved with the production of documentaries: Vertov almost exclusively, Wajda simultaneously with the production of his feature films, and Kieślowski mostly at the beginning of his career.<sup>21</sup> If any genre of film could fit Kracauer's desire for the masses to have unmediated access to their conditions of life, then perhaps documentary could.<sup>22</sup> Although this is in a way a reductive understanding of the levels of mediation involved in producing documentaries, it defines the stylized realism of someone like Kieślowski primarily through a parallel between film's fundamentally indexical nature and its representational capacity.<sup>23</sup> Not unlike Italian neorealism in cinema, Eastern Euro-

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<sup>20</sup> S. K r a c a u e r, *The Mass Ornament*, in: *The Mass Ornament*, edited by Thom Levine, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA 1995, p. 75.

<sup>21</sup> After thirty documentary films, and having said that documentary is a superior art form to fiction film in 1979, during an interview in 1995 Kieślowski explained why he abandoned the genre. 'I began with the documentary. I abandoned it because every nonfiction filmmaker ends up realizing one day the boundaries that can't be crossed - those beyond which we risk causing harm to the people we film. That's when we feel the need to make fiction features.' Quoted in A. I n s d o r f, *Double Lives, Second Chances: The Cinema of Krzysztof Kieslowski*, Miramax Books: New York 1999, p. 31, from an interview originally published in "Positif" May 1996, no. 423.

<sup>22</sup> Vertov's entire worldview was based on this assumption. For all three directors, the factual, or, the task of representing reality carried a moral and political weight (affecting both their documentary and fiction films).

<sup>23</sup> In a documentary on Kieślowski, *I'm So-So*, he spoke of the need to bring into discourse aspects of life that were consistently not represented in the officially promoted art and media of the socialist world. 'Our descriptive tools had been used for propagandistic purposes...Outside Poland, you don't know what it means to live without representation.' Quoted in I n s d o r f, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

pean film at the end of the eighties represented life for the scrutiny of its protagonists, one step removed from it. If the settings and the logic of a film are entirely imbedded in the reality of a housing block (as they are in Kieślowski's *Decalogue*), we may in fact learn how to 'read' the housing block itself. It may be enough to think of it as indexical in a way similar to film, to begin to understand its new representational capacity, representing life and the 'things as they are'.

*To live within truth*, or in a sense to understand how everyone was complacent within the farce of the communist system, was Vaclav Havel's most important request.<sup>24</sup> It is a prerequisite for asking 'how not to be governed quite like that?' Perhaps we could say that the uprisings across Eastern Europe, beginning with the Solidarity strikes and continuing through the protests of the late 1980s and early 1990s, were spurred by the question of government. Then, in a way, every instance of exposing the real conditions of life in the communist system made asking this question possible. In a sense, the ideologues of communism were not entirely wrong, the infrastructures planted by the regimes, to better organize their masses, did in fact become the vehicle of enlightenment and conduit for another collectivity.

#### Filmy pod specjalnym nadzorem.

#### O przekształceniach wschodnioeuropejskiego urbanizmu

W tym samym czasie, gdy wschodnioeuropejskie reżimy tworzyły niekończący się „dyskurs” o sobie, urządzając przyjęcia dla uczczenia swych nieulękłych wodzów, wznosząc mury w imię industrializacji oraz w celu zabezpieczenia się przed obcymi ideologiami i ich siłami, powstawały i gromadziły się skromniejsze, codzienne, narracje.

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<sup>24</sup> The notion of truth here is not metaphysical, it is defined in opposition to a diagnosis of a society living within a lie, of an automatism spread throughout the ordinary people whose acts maintain the appearance of the communist system, despite the fact that they know it is all a hollow façade, a slogan. Both the concept of *living within truth* and *living within a lie* are explained in depth in Havel's *Power of the Powerless*, in: V. Havel et al., *The Power of the Powerless; Citizens against the state in Central-Eastern Europe*, Hutchinson and Co. Publishers Ltd.: London 1985).



Choć byłoby trudno nie zgodzić się z błyskotliwą tezą Manuela Castellsa, mówiącą, iż przyczyną zniknięcia Związku Radzieckiego była jego systematyczna niezdolność dostosowania się do rewolucji informacyjnej (zachodzącej na Zachodzie), artykuł proponuje skromniejszą narrację (być może – bajkę): o uczuciowej informacji i rewolucji wewnątrz bloku. Przez słowo „blok” rozumiem zarówno „wschodni blok”, jak również liczne bloki mieszkalne z nowej Moskwy, nowego Belgradu i Nowej Huty z filmów Andrzeja Wajdy. Niniejszy artykuł bada mutacje urbanizmu w trzech filmowych przypadkach: w *Człowieku z kamerą* Dżigi Wiertowa, *Człowieku z marmuru* Andrzeja Wajdy i *Dekalogu* Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego. Pierwszy epizod pokazuje znaczenie zobrazowania realnych warunków życia w porewolucyjnej Rosji, kładąc nacisk na zobowiązania Dżigi Wiertowa do prezentowania *faktów*. Drugi epizod przedstawia powstanie polskiego kina *moralnego niepokoju* jako najodpowiedniejszego środka służącego komunikowaniu politycznych postaw szerokiej publiczności, a odtwarzającego urbanizm razem z innymi aspektami życia, które składały się na polską rzeczywistość lat 70. Wajdowski pozorowany dokument o budowie nowego przemysłowego miasta, Nowej Huty, wkomponowany w *Człowieka z marmuru*, demaskuje mechanizm propagandy, potwierdzając powszechne podejrzenia co do zuchowatości tygodniowych raportów, dotyczących osiągnięć prosperującego socjalistycznego państwa oraz ich ciężko pracujących i skromnych ludzi. W końcu akcja *Dekalogu* Kieślowskiego rozwija się nie tylko w sąsiedztwie bloku, ale można powiedzieć, że blok jest jego głównym aktorem filmu. Z chwilą, gdy sceneria i logika filmu są całkowicie zanurzone w rzeczywistości bloku mieszkalnego, jak ma to miejsce w *Dekalogu* Kieślowskiego, uczymy się, jak „czytać” sam blok. Może wystarczyłoby pomyśleć o bloku mieszkalnym jako znaku indeksalnym, podobnym w tym względzie do filmu, aby zacząć rozumieć jego nową zdolność odtwórczą: odtwarzanie życia i „rzeczy takimi, jakie są”.