

To feed the interdisciplinary debate during The Atomium Session on May 14th, 2009, the speakers were asked to reflect upon some quotes and questions. The text below is a reflection upon the following quote:

[...] "In investigating the roots of our current environmental dilemma and its connections to science, technology and the economy, we must re-examine the formation of a world view and a science which, by reconceptualizing reality as a machine rather than a living organism, sanctioned the domination of both nature and women. The contribution of such founding 'fathers' of modern science as Francis Bacon, William Harvey, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes and Isaac Newton must be reevaluated."

Carolyn Merchant in The Death of Nature, 1980

In 1903, E. Richardson of Ontario (US), introduces the lightweight electric iron. A boat-shaped, electrically heated piece of pointy metal, pressed by the housewife onto the husband's intimate cloth, surpassing buttonholes whilst creating soft smooth topologies. Soon after, the toaster, the dust cleaner and other time-saving appliances invite the housewife to prove herself on other work floors.

These domestic appliances were designed to function on Alternate Current (AC), an invention of *Nicola Tezla*. AC became the main standard for the transport of electrical power after Tezla won 'The War of the Currents' from his former employer *Thomas Edison* whose company promoted Direct Current (DC). Edison failed despite his attempts to disparage the AC-system by electrocuting unwanted stray cats and dogs, horses and *Topsy* the circus elephant. In an ultimate attempt, he ordered the design of an Electric Chair. Unintentionally it became the model for the ultimate anti-men machine.

In the 2nd half of the 20th century electronic personal devices are introduced that respond intimately to the movements of body and fingertips. The solar powered calculator and wrist watch, demonstrate the advantages of on-site, stand-alone, clean and safe (low-power) DC energy production.



This explosive increase of mobile electronics and other DC devices, the 'natural' DC output of renewable energies like solar and wind, as well as new developments in long distance DC transportation surge the question if Edison hasn't won after all: DC/AC. With mankind facing upcoming *Water Wars*, the 'flagship' of 'the DC-movement' will be the solar water pump due to its life-saving and peace keeping qualities.

The electronic apparatuses require seemingly exotic resources, to be dug up from within the rich, dark Earth in the heart of Africa. A region where -after decades of digging- the interaction between men, women and children, gorillas, and the soil's microherds is fundamentally disturbed. With after effects that echo loud and clear throughout distant futures.



On a day's walk, westbound, women dig with their hands in the darkest of dark soils. They mix it with water and transform it with the help of the Sun's radiation and a sculptress from the capital into flower pots, tiles, cutlery. 'Vulnerable' they are called. The men with arms hide in the bushes at small distance. They are symbolically protected by armed men with blue helmets that reside in the adjacent compound. With the help of the rich black soil, foreign good intentions hope to restore some of the intimacy and reintegrate the women into the family and the local community. But after dusk, the diesel generators malfunction, again. On the wings of the silent darkness the armed men do their thing, again. With their pointy metal objects, they transform radically the topology of the most sensible body parts. To the extent that only one man -due to a lifelong built up unique vertical specialization, might be capable of restoring some fragments.

Kinshasa RDC
The urban jungled sprawl

Electricité coloniale AC: designed for
800 000 citoyens -> Est. actual
population: x 10

La pluie ici, c'est binaire:
il pleut / il pleut pas.

Et après la pluie, on compte les
électrocutés.

Bartaku, March-June 2006



In the capital K., a man connects an electrical wire to the AC-grid, originating back to colonial times. It will provide electrical power to some families, until the next downpour floods the urban jungled sprawl. Then the outer end - pending on the ground-, will transform the controlled energy in the wire into an extended electrocution field, silently and invisibly awaiting the bare foot pedestrians that are trying to wade back home in the heart of darkness.

Homo homini lupus est (T. Hobbes)

Photo Legend

1. *Sweet Water by Light*
Bartku. Intersolar 2006, Freiburg [Ge]
2. *Agit Hands*
Bartku. June 2006 Bukavu [DRC]
3. *Male Power in D[R]C*
Bartku [picture S.N.]. April 2006 Bukavu [DRC]

Bartaku, Brussels, October 2009