**OPERATION:CITY 2008**

# THE NEOLIBERAL FRONTLINE: URBAN STRUGGLES IN POST-SOCIALIST SOCIETIES

**[ZAGREB, 04. 12. – 07. 12. 2008.]**
**CONFERENCE NEWSLETTER**

**2**

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

Petar Milat
*Introduction*

# CONTENTS

# IMPRESSUM

**PETAR MILAT**

# INTRODUCTION

## Minor and major

Setting the scope of conference on neoliberalism and Eastern Europe we have made a calculated risk, starting on rhetorical level. The methodological risk is evident in conjoining two denominations signifying the least of all and the most of all. On the one hand, there is a signifier with almost inexhaustible scope: neoliberalism - which today denotes all there is from measures one must take to repair broken windows in city districts, to everyday work stress, machinations of global high finances and the aspects of the political interventionism. On the other hand, Eastern Europe is the region whose proverbially assumed lack and deficiency makes any positive determination almost unattainable.

Minor and major, all or nothing. Does this rhetorical and logical convergence in fact make an otherwise improbable relation of Eastern Europe and neoliberalism viable, in as much as the broadest possible scope of the signifying range of the term "neoliberalism" at some point implodes into meaninglessness?

We are assuming that this is the case and that convergence of neoliberalism and Eastern Europe into semantic indetermination and analytical uselessness, dislocates the known models of interpretation and action.

As the prime example we have taken city-space as a paradigm of neoliberal strategies and the resistance to them. This is not the only way to question the neoliberal practice, but – we are taking this stand – this is probably the fastest and the most operative way to summarize all the divergent strategies of neoliberalism.

While back in the days of modernisation in the urban environment some kind of fragile and precarious balance has been attained between public and private interests - which was reflected on spatial organization of the cities with creation of so called public space – neoliberal doctrine for its proclaimed goal has chosen to deregulate public city space and to privatize it altogether.

But, in comparison to usual interpretation of neoliberal globalisation processes which find the impact of globalisation on the local societies as a top-down action, i.e. regarding them as the process dominated by transnational, global actors, the privatisation of the public city space could be seen, using here Saskia Sassen's terminology, in the light of globalisation as denationalisation. In other words, denationalisation marks here the phenomenon where the local societies themselves with their own measures and ways of social regulation dissolve the classical framework of nation state – resulting in sort of bottom-up globalisation. If globalisation is understood as the complex result of both processes (the umbrella like and subterranean one), the problematic of public space shows similar complex and vague features.

The public city space, that kernel of social development and modernisation, today is limited by processes of a top-down-globalisation and a bottom-up-denationalisation, and determined by still not sufficiently understood relationship between physical and digital. The clear cut neoliberal answer to this hybrid and ambiguous situation is the total privatisation of the public space.

## Neoliberalism compressed

The parameter of speed, urgency and operationality that we have noted in relation to description of neoliberalism is inscribed in the very neoliberal rhetoric, which additionally shows the extent of permeability of the lines of resistance, witnessing that even transgressive practices can well become instruments in achieving the social consensus.

Operation:city, under which moniker this conference takes place, makes this important differentiation: operation-city versus intervention into the city. Operationality and operativity as open, collective processes of reflecting, decision-making and acting as opposed to random interventionism of expert driven exclusivist politics.

The problem, and not only methodological one, which we are aware of, is that operativity of which we speak of is not a determination characterized by sole and unanimous mis-en-oeuvre of different desires and intentions, but that we are following here an articulation of intertwined circle of demands that are not a priori promising to come to a closure during their own operationalisation.

**OPERATION:CITY PHOTOSTREAM**

PHOTO BY Ana Hušman

Petar Milat
*Introduction*

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

3

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> Convergence of neoliberalism and Eastern Europe into semantic indetermination and analytical uselessness dislocates the known models of interpretation and action

global order, but a phenomenon for whose terminological designation the spatial extension bares a great importance, in the same way as in geographical context, neoliberalism doesn't represent a new geopolitical intuition, but it is rather seen as a description of new spatial constellations defined by concrete measures.

All of this makes of neoliberalism something new: neoliberalism is a system-space and notion-space, and we can't dispense with it recalling classical matrix of ideology and world order.

We can answer the question of how many neoliberalisms there is i.e. the question of its unanimity and/or multiplicity, by analyzing the extent of intersection between system and space.

If we consider neoliberalism as an uniform global narrative where system and space are almost completely overlapped, then we are talking about the assemblage of different measures that have eventually brought to dissolution the modern wellfare-state. Neoliberalism, for example, incites complete liberation of the market, privatization of the public goods, and exclusively limited state-intervention into domain of economy and trade.

This neoliberal model achieves its full affirmation in the beginning of 90s, with the new wave of globalization. From this moment on, the neoliberal economical measures are founded on already uneven level of development of world regions and societies, making existing difference between nations and regions all the more profound. The factual freedom of goods and capital circulation - as neoliberal peers are calling upon - doesn't lead to freedom of human circulation. On the contrary, the declarative freedom of the choice for many people has been diminished to exploitative work that doesn't even provide for their basic needs, even in the countries of the North (working-poor phenomenon). For the elite, however, new way of managing the economy brings surplus profits, based in the great extent on the extraordinary development of the information technologies that have con-

nected our globe into a tight network - or at least that part of the planet that possesses and manages information currents.

Neoliberalism, described in this way, creates the circumstances where a few enjoy all the benefits of this rapid technological development, while great majority of world population is destined to live in a permanent poverty on the margins of megalopolises. David Harvey equals this with the processes of primary accumulation, calling neoliberal social setup "accumulation by dispossession".

But, if we regard the overlapping of system and space in a less total way, we will face ourselves with a story, or better, with limitless stories about neoliberalism, which are almost untranslatable and incomprehensible outside the context of its own emergence.

Croatian society, for example, experienced the effects of neoliberal economy politics, with a delay, only in the recent years - mainly because of the war, and partially because of the economical transition (transformation and privatization) which is somewhat similar to certain neoliberal premises, but is isolated from wider, global courses.

In this loose narrative, neoliberalism is more an exception than the rule and it happens in strictly defined spatial pockets. Neoliberal practices parasitize here on already existent infrastructures, and extra/surplus profit is created by taking into account the differential between various regions and spaces.

Neoliberalism: it is simultaneously a name for the new historical phase of capitalism, and a practice difficult to define which has tendency to parasitize on already established models, using and deepening previously existing differences. ■

The operationality taken as norm asks for responsible and consequential, efficient and measured behaviour, but calls for ludic, ignorant and stubborn actions, as well. Taken as a norm or operational stand it transversally cuts through professions, lifestyles and social groups – creating a real political solidarity against privatisation and gentrification.

### Neoliberalism, neoliberalisms?

How many neoliberalisms there are today? This question doesn't concern only the definition and taxonomy of neoliberal types, but it addresses the very foundation of what we call neoliberalism. Neoliberalism, on the one hand, seams as a well-established technical term, but it is essentially pejorative, and therefore polemic one. Talking about neoliberlisam, even if we want it or not, declares our views. But, other aspect of this term seems as more characteristic and more important: neoliberalism is a demarcation of the places or processes where the systemic categories are transferred and translated into geo-spatial categories. We could argue that neoliberalism, therefore, is not solely an independent assembly of practices and concepts, nor a description of new

> Creating a real political solidarity against privatisation and gentrification



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**4**

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

Neil Smith
*New urbanism*

\* excerpted from New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy [Antipode 34/3_July 2002]

# NEIL SMITH

# New urbanism*

rooted in specific places. This builds on a familiar picture of globalization, defined in terms of the economic shift from production to finance. Global cities emerged when, in the 1970s, the global financial system expanded dramatically and foreign direct investment was dominated, not by capital invested directly in productive functions, but rather by capital moving into and between capital markets. This, in turn, pollinated a broad expansion of ancillary producer services concentrated in command and control posts in the financial economy, and those new urban forms are marked by extreme bifurcations of wealth and poverty, dramatic realignments of class relations, and dependence on new streams of immigrant labor. This, of course, is the paradigmatic global city. The balance of economic power has shifted since the 1970s ìfrom production places, such as Detroit and Manchester, to centers of finance and highly specialized servicesî (Sassen 1992:325).

A welcome alternative to the blithe optimism of globalized utopias, Sassenís account is astute about the shifting contents of some urban economies. However, it is vulnerable on both empirical grounds, which indicate a far more complicated set of relationships connecting global cities and a wider range of cities that can be grouped under the label, global cities (Taylor 1999), and on theoretical grounds. In the end, Sassenís argument is a little vague about how places are, in fact, constructed. It does not go far enough. It is as if the global social economy comprises a plethora of containersónation-statesówithin which float a number of smaller containers, the cities. Globalization brings about a dramatic change in the kinds of social and economic relations and activities carried on in these containers, a re-sorting of activities between different containers, and an increased porosity of the national containers, such that turbulence in the wider global sea increasingly buffets cities directly. However, with the exception of some national containers that may actually sink, the containers themselves remain rather rigidly intact

n her skillfully synthetic accounts (1992, 1998, 2000), Saskia Sassen offers a benchmark argument about the importance of local place in the new globalism. Place, she insists, is central to the circulation of people and capital that constitute globalization, and a focus on urban places in a globalizing world brings with it a recognition of the rapidly declining significance of the national economy, while also insisting that globalization takes place through specific social and economic complexes

in this vision, even as the relations between them are transformed. As Brenner (1998:11) puts it, Sassenís account remains ìsurprisingly statecentric.î I want to argue here that in the context of a new globalism, we are experiencing the emergence of a new urbanism such that the containers themselves are being fundamentally recast. ìThe urbanî is being redefined just as dramatically as the global; the old conceptual containersóour 1970s assumptions about what ìthe urbanî is or wasóno longer hold water. The new concatenation of urban functions and activities vis-à-vis the national and the global changes not only the make-up of the city but the very definition of what constitutesóliterallyóthe urban scale.

Cities have historically performed multiple functions ranging from the military and religious to the political and commercial, the symbolic and the cultural, depending on the history and geography of their construction and transformation. The scale of the urban is similarly expressive of particular social geographies and histories. With the development and expansion of industrial capitalism, burgeoning cities increasingly express the powerful impulse toward the centralization of capital, while the *scale* of the urban is increasingly defined in terms of the geographical limits to daily labor migration. That is, as soon as the *social* division of labor between production and reproduction become simultaneously a spatial division, and whatever other functions the city performs and activities it embodies, the social and territorial organization of the social reproduction of laboróthe provision and maintenance of a working-class populationócomes to play a pivotal role in the determination of the urban scale. More than anything else, the scale of the modern city is thereby calibrated by something quite mundane: the contradictory determinations of the geographical limits of the daily commute of workers between home and work (Smith 1990:136ñ137).

The Keynesian city of advanced capitalism, in which the

state underwrote wide swaths of social reproduction, from housing to welfare to transportation infrastructure, represented the zenith of this definitive relationship between urban scale and social reproduction. This is a consistent theme that has run through the work of European and American urban theorists since the 1960s, from urban revolution (Lefebvre 1971) to urban crisis (Harvey 1973) and Castellsí (1977) explicit definition of the urban in terms of collective consumption, and has been an enduring concern of feminist urban theory (Hansen and Pratt 1995; Katz 2001; Rose 1981). Equally a center of capital accumulation, the Keynesian city was in many respects the combined hiring hall and welfare hall for each national capital. Indeed the so-called urban crisis of the late 1960s and 1970s was widely interpreted as a crisis of social reproduction, having to do with the dysfunctionality of racism, class exploitation, and patriarchy and the contradictions between an urban form elicited according to criteria of accumulation and one that had to be justified in terms of the efficiency of social reproduction. Let us now step back and look at the question of ìglobalization,î because if we are talking about global cities presumably their definition is implicated in the processes thereof. What exactly is globalizing at the beginning of the twenty-first century? What is new about the present? Certainly it is not commodity capital that is globalizing: Adam Smith and Karl Marx both recognized a ìworld market.î Nor, by the same token, can it be financial capital that is globalizing. Contemporary levels of global financial interchange are only now beginning to reach again the levels of the period between the 1890s and World War I. The Bretton Woods institutions established after 1944, especially the International Monetary Fund, were intended to re-stimulate and regulate global financial flows interrupted by depression and war. Viewed in this historical light, the global expansion of stock and currency markets and

broad financial deregulation since the 1980s may be more a response to globalization than its cause. The globalization of cultural images in the era of computers and unprecedented migration is also very powerful, but it is difficult to sustain a claim for the novelty of cultural globalization given the extent of pre-existing cultural cross-fertilization. Long before the 1980s, all ìnationalî cultures were more or less hybrid. This leaves us with production capital, and I think a good case can be made that to the extent that globalization heralds anything new, the new globalism can be traced back to the increasingly globalóor at least internationalóscale of economic production. As late as the 1970s, most consumer commodities were produced in one national economy either for consumption there or for export to a different national market. By the 1990s, that model was obsolete, definitive sites of production for specific commodities became increasingly difficult to identify, and the old language of economic geography no longer made sense. In autos, electronics, garments, computers, biomedical, and many other industrial sectors ranging from high tech to low, production is now organized across national boundaries to such a degree that questions of national ìimportî and ìexportî are supplanted by questions of global trade internal to the production process. The idea of ìnational capitalî makes little sense today, because most global trade across national boundaries is now intrafirm: it takes place *within* the production networks of single corporations.

There is little doubt that in strictly economic terms, the power of most states organized at the national scale is eroding. This in no way invokes a ìzero-sumî conception of scale (Brenner 1998; MacLeod 2001), nor is it a simplistic argument that the nation-state is withering away. In the first place, the political and cultural power of nationalscale power is not necessarily eroding at all and may be hardening in many places. Second, the erosion of economic power at the national scale

> **❝** In the context of a new globalism, we are experiencing the emergence of a new urbanism



PHOTO BY **Tomislav Medak**

Why don't you adress the Mayor?
[workshop of cultural confrontation]



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OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

5

is highly uneven and not necessarily universal, with the US or Chinese state enjoying a quite different fate from Malaysia or Zimbabwe. For example, Mészáros (2001) has argued that the ambition of the US state seems to be its transformation into a global state, and the conduct of the brutal ìwar on terrismîóin reality a war for global hegemony (Smith forthcoming)óseems to confirm this analysis. Yet the sources of increased economic porosity at the national scale are undeniable: communications and financial deregulation have expanded the geographical mobility of capital; unprecedented labor migrations have distanced local economies from automatic dependency on home grown labor; national and local states (including city governments) have responded by offering carrots to capital while applying the stick to labor and dismantling previous supports for social reproduction; and finally, class and race-based struggles have broadly receded, giving local and national governments increased leeway to abandon that sector of the population surplused by both the restructuring of the economy and the gutting of social services. The mass incarceration of working-class and minority populations, especially in the US, is the national analogue of the emerging revanchist city. Comparatively low levels of struggle were crucial in the virtual nonresponse by government to the Los Angeles uprisings after 1992, which stand in dramatic contrast to the amelioretiveóif paternalisticó response after the uprisings of the 1960s.

Two mutually reinforcing shifts have consequently restructured the functions and active roles of cities. In the first place, systems of production previously territorialized at the (subnational) regional scale were increasingly cut loose from their definitive national context, resulting not just in the waves of deindustrialization in the 1970s and 1980s but in wholesale regional restructuring and destructuring as part of a reworking of established scale hierarchies. As a result, production systems have been downscaled. The territorialization of production increasingly centers on extended metropolitan centers, rather than on larger regions: the metropolitan scale again comes to

dominate the regional scale, rather than the other way round. In place of the American Northeast or Midwest, the English Midlands, and the German Ruhr, for exampleóclassic geographical fruits of modern industrial capitalismówe have São Paulo and Bangkok, Mexico City and Shanghai, Mumbai and Seoul. Whereas the traditional industrial regions were the backbone of national capitals in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, these new, huge urban economies are increasingly the platforms of *global* production. This rescaling of production toward the metropolitan scale is an expression of global change; at the same time, it lies at the heart of a new urbanism.

The corollary is also taking place, as national states have increasingly moved away from the liberal urban policies that dominated the central decades of the twentieth century in the advanced capitalist economies. In the US, President Fordís refusal to bail out New York City amidst a deep fiscal crisis (immortalized in the famous *Daily News* headline: ìFord to City: Drop Deadî), followed by the failure of President Carterís attempted urban plan in 1978, gave the first intimation of a national economy increasingly delinked from and independent of its cities. The wholesale demise of liberal urban policy followed in fits and starts, working toward Clintonís cynical slashing of the social welfare system in 1996. If the effects are often more muted and take myriad forms, the trajectory of change is similar in most of the wealthiest economies, although Italyóthe transfer of some national state power to the European Union notwithstandingó may be an exception.

The point here is not that the national state is necessarily weakened or that the territoriality of political and economic power is somehow less potent. This argumentóthat global power today resides in a network of economic connections rather than in any particular placeóis embodied in the influential treatment of *Empire* by Hardt and Negri (2000), but it is flawed by a certain necromancy with finance capital and a blindness to the contradictions of power that comes with the necessary fixing of economic activities and political control in space. Cer-

tainly, specific functions and activities previously organized at the national scale are being dispersed to other scales up and down the scale hierarchy. At the same time, however, national states are reframing themselves as purer, territorially rooted economic actors in and of the market, rather than external compliments to it. Social and economic restructuring is simultaneously the restructuring of spatial scale, insofar as the fixation of scales crystallizes the contours of social poweró who is empowered and who contained, who wins and who losesóinto remade physical landscapes (Brenner 1998; Smith and Dennis 1987; Swyngedouw 1996, 1997).

Neoliberal urbanism is an integral part of this wider rescaling of functions, activities, and relations. It comes with a considerable emphasis on the nexus of production and finance capital at the expense of questions of social reproduction. It is not that the organization of social reproduction no longer modulates the definition of the urban scale but rather that its power in doing so is significantly depleted. Public debates over suburban sprawl in Europe and especially the US, intense campaigns in Europe promoting urban ìregeneration,î and the emerging environmental justice movements all suggest not only that the crisis of social reproduction is thoroughly territorialized but, conversely, that the production of urban space has also come to embody that crisis. A connection exists between the production of the urban scale and the efficient expansion of value, and a ìmis-scaledî urbanism can seriously interfere with the accumulation of capital. The crisis of daily commuting lies at the center of this crisis. I once surmised (Smith 1990:137) that where the geographical expansion of cities outstripped their ability to get people from home to work and back again, the result was not just urban chaos but a ìfragmentation and disequilibrium in the universalization of abstract labourî that went to the heart of economic cohesion. While this contradiction between geographical form and economic process no doubt endures, the evidence from cities in many parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America presents a rather different picture. The daily com-

mute into São Paulo, for example, can begin for many at 3:30 a.m. and take in excess of four hours in each direction. In Harare, Zimbabwe, the average commuting time from black townships on the urban periphery is also four hours each way, leading to a workday in which workers are absent from home for sixteen hours and sleeping most of the rest. The economic cost of commuting for these same workers has also expanded dramatically, in part as a result of the privatization of transportation at the behest of the World Bank: commutes that consumed roughly 8% of weekly incomes in the early 1980s required between 22% and 45% by the mid 1990s (Ramsamy 2001:375ñ377).

Why is this happening? Many well-meaning planners indict the lack of suitable infrastructure, and that is undeniably an issue. However, if we step back one level of abstraction, there is a fundamental geographical contradiction between the dramatically increased land values that accompany the centralization of capital in the core of these metropolises and the marginal, exurban locations where workers are forced to live due to the pitiful wages on which that capital centralization is built. Yet, extraordinarily, chaotic and arduous commutes have not yet led to an economic breakdown; the impulses of economic productionóand, especially, the need to have workers turn up at the workplaceóhave taken precedence over any constraints emanating from the conditions of social reproduction. The rigors of almost unbearable commuting have not yet compromised economic production. Instead, they have elicited a ìdesperate resilienceî and been absorbed amidst the wider social breakdown that Katz (forthcoming) calls ìdisintegrating developments.î

Thus, the leading edge in the combined restructuring of urban scale and function does not lie in the old cities of advanced capitalism, where the disintegration of traditional production-based regions and the increasing dislocation of social reproduction at the

urban scale is certainly painful, unlikely to pass unopposed, but also partial. Rather, it lies in the large and rapidly expanding metropolises of Asia, Latin America, and parts of Africa, where the Keynesian welfare state was never significantly installed, the definitive link between the city and social reproduction was never paramount, and the fetter of old forms, structures, and landscapes is much less strong. These metropolitan economies are becoming the production hearths of a new globalism. Unlike the suburbanization of the postwar years in North America and Europe, Oceania, and Japan, the dramatic urban expansion of the early twenty-first century will be unambiguously led by the expansion of social production rather than reproduction. In this respect, at least, Lefebvreís announcement of an urban revolution redefining the city and urban struggles in terms of social reproductionóor indeed Castellsí definition of the urban in terms of collective consumptionó will fade into historical memory. If ìcapitalism shifted gearsî with the advent of Keynesianism ìfrom a ësupply-sideí to a ëdemand-sideí urbanization,î as Harvey (1985:202, 209) once observed, twenty-first-century urbanism potentially reverses this shift.

This restructuring of scale and the cautious re-empowerment of the urban scaleóGiulianiís ambition for a five-borough foreign policyó represents just one thread of neoliberal urbanism. It dovetails with the more culturally attuned assessment of political geographer Peter Taylor (1995:58), who argues that ì[C]ities are replacing states in the construction of social identities.î Cities like São Paulo and Shanghai, Lagos and Bombay, are likely to challenge the more traditional urban centers, not just in size and density of economic activityóthey have already done thatóbut primarily as leading incubators in the global economy, progenitors of new urban form, process, and

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**6**

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

Jason Hackworth
*Challenging the neoliberal city*

identity. No one seriously argues that the twenty-first century will see a return to a world of city-statesóbut it *will* see a recapture of urban political prerogative vis-à-vis regions and nation-states.

Finally, the redefinition of the scale of the urban in terms of social production rather than reproduction in no way diminishes the importance of social reproduction in the pursuit of urban life. Quite the opposite: struggles over social reproduction take on a heightened significance precisely because of the dismantling of state responsibilities. However, state abstention in this area is matched by heightened state activism in terms of social control. The transformation of New York into a ìrevanchist cityî is not an isolated event, and the emergence of more authoritarian state forms and practices is not difficult to comprehend in the context of the rescaling of global and local geographies. According to Swyngedouw (1997:138), the substitution of market discipline for that of a hollowed-out welfare state deliberately excludes significant parts of the population, and the fear of social resistance provokes heightened state authoritarianism. At the same time, the new urban work force increasingly comprises marginal and part-time workers who are not entirely integrated into shrinking systems of state economic discipline, as well as immigrants whose cultural and political networksópart of the means of social reproductionóalso provide alternative norms of social practice, alternative possibilities of resistance.

In summary, my point here is not to argue that cities like New York, London, and Tokyo lack power in the global hierarchy of urban places and high finance. The concentration of financial and other command functions in these centers is undeniable. Rather, I am trying to put that power in context and, by questioning the common assumption that the power of financial capital is necessarily paramount, to question the criteria according to which cities come to be dubbed ìglobal.î If there is any truth to the argument that so-called globalization results in the first place from the globalization of production, then our assessment of what constitutes a global city should presumably reflect that claim. ∎

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JASON HACKWORTH

# Challenging the neoliberal city

### Neoliberalism here, neoliberalism there, neoliberalism everywhere

*Once when I was in Yugoslavia, I calculated that the difference between the degree of socialism in Yugoslavia and in the United States at that time was, if my memory is right, fourteen percentage points. In the United States, the corporate income tax was then 52 percent, and so the government owned 52 percent of every enterprise. In Yugoslavia, the central government was taking about 66 percent of the profits of the worker co-operatives.*
— Milton Friedman, 1984, p. 16

I begin with this obscure quote from one of the patriarchs of modern neoliberalism, Milton Friedman, both in wry attempt to legitimate myselfóa scholar of American citiesóto a group that is primarily interested in post-socialist transitions, but also, more seriously to emphasize the lack of geographical difference within the neoliberal worldview. To Friedman, as with many of his ideological brethren, there was not much of a difference between the socialism of Eastern Europe, and high taxes in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. All forms of collectivization whether they be progressive taxation, labor unions, public space, subsidized housing, socialist societies, or simple planning proposals were, and continue to be, derided by neoliberal ideologues as ìenemies of freedomî. It scarcely matters whether these forms occur in Yugoslavia in 1965 or the United States in 2008óin the neoliberal worldview, all forms of collectivization are a ìroad to serfdomî, to borrow Hayekís (1944) famous title.

On the one hand, such a ridiculous premiseóthat all forms of collectivization can be treated the sameómight be seen by progressive scholars with a certain flippant joy, as it *should* be easy to dispel this notion with simple research and activism. But the fact that we are gathered at a conference to lament the rise of urban neoliberalism and contemplate ways of reversing it suggests, if nothing else that, despite its transparently fallacious claims, neoliberalism and its proponents are a force to be reckoned with, and that simply ërevealing the truthí as scholars and activists is not enough. Neoliberalism, in the words of Perry Anderson (2000) is nothing short of, ìthe most successful ideology in the history of the worldî. It has transformed the developed and developing world alike. It has affected trading relations between countries, altered domestic policies in vastly different societies, and transformed basic notions of ëcommon senseí that are difficult to reverse. Its logicócentered on the veneration of individuals and markets, and the vilification of all that is social and collectiveóhas permeated societies and contexts across the globe. As with many social forces, its effects have been particularly pronounced in cities. Within cities around the world, it has been used as a logic to sell public goods, to privatize public space, to crack down on unions, and to destroy public housing. It is ësoldí to voters as a ësolutioní but rarely even comes close to achieving its putative goals. More often than not, it leads ironically to an *increase* in the power of the stateóexcept that rather than providing public housing and welfare, states are providing prison cells, more police officers and new rules to crack down on ëundesirablesí.

So why has it been so difficult to contest? As an abstract set of principles, it rarely enjoys widespread public support, and it has failed to achieve stated goals around the world from Zagreb, to Washington, to Toronto. No easy answers to this question exist, but I think that the crucial burden that we face as scholars and activists is to continually reinforce the point that, despite its successes in the policy realm, neoliberalism is not ëinevitableí or ënaturalí as its supporters often characterize it. Neoliberalism is incredibly powerful, but it is not inevitable, natural, or even desirable. It is a political philosophy that benefits a small class of people. Though it is a formidable political force, I do think that it can be challenged. What follows is a series of reflections on some strategic positions that could be reinforced by progressive scholars in the battle against neoliberalism. The list is necessarily partialóa starting point in a conversation, more than a definitive end point.

### Contesting neoliberalism

Let me start with a clarification that may not go over that well in this audience, but which needs in any case to be said. I think that scholars play only one, fairly small, role in the contestation of neoliberalism, or any social force for that matter. We can, and I believe *should*, challenge the nonsense that neoliberal political economists feed to the willing, unwilling, and ignorant press, and conversely support the clari-

Public Space Between Cars and Pedestrians: the Case of Kvaternikov Square in Zagreb [round table]

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**Jason Hackworth**
*Challenging the neoliberal city*

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

**7**

ty provided by progressive economists and the progressive press. But that is far from enough. The very institutions that Friedman and his ilk so reviledólabor unions, progressive state policies, socialism, cooperativesówere themselves the result of years of struggle by affected parties. Scholars were a part of many of these stories, but they only materialized when large numbers of workers, citizens, or students engaged in direct and electoral actions to affect such changes. There is a role for progressive scholarship, but only if it is engaged with the reality that it needs to be driven by and inspired by on-the-ground activism.

So what would such a role look like? I donít pretend to have all of the answers, but I do think that recognizing this as a long battle of ideasórather than something that can simply be explained away with a single studyóis crucial. In the last decade of studying neoliberalism in North American cities, it has struck me that progressive scholars have already scripted a convincing narrative that ties the movement to the ëusual suspectsíóReagan and Thatcher, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Worldbank, and right-winged think tanks in Washington and London. Though I do not want to diminish these narratives in any way, I would like to suggest that much of neoliberalismís political success does not come from a fair comparison with other alternatives, as though it was chosen by the world electorate, or by a jury at a trial. Much of its success, I think, derives ironically in its ability to morph and conform to *other* political movements that may or may not have anything to do with neoliberalism in an ideational sense. I think that it is crucial that we focus our attention on revealing and exposing the neoliberalism that hides behind centre-left governments, religion, and complicated financial institutions. To explain what I mean, I have summarized the contents of three separate research projects in which I am currently engaged,

and organized them into three strategies for challenging neoliberalism.

### Decoupling neoliberalism

Neoliberalism, in my view, owes much of its current power to its proponentsí ability to use other movements and ideologies as political cover. If neoliberalism, as an abstract set of principles, was placed on a ballot, it would rarely receive majority support. However, if as is often the case, it is coupled or connected to a different logicóone that has its own legitimacyóthe terms of such a political decision become more confusing. I think that it is important that progressive scholars work to decouple neoliberalism from the various movements its proponents use to confuse, distort, and legitimate its manifestations. By ëdecoupleí, I mean that we should aim to reveal and separate neoliberalism from the other movements to which it has been attached, and from which it gains some popular legitimacy. Take the case of evangelical Christianity in the United States.

Evangelical Christians are an enormously powerful voting bloc in the United States, with estimates as high as 41 percent of the adult population (Lindsay, 2007). Though there is no singular agenda of the evangelical community in the US, there are hundreds of powerful groups that organize its political interests in a way overstates their actual population count (Wilcox and Larsen, 2006). Often, though not always, the architecture of these political organizations have been mobilized to promote neoliberal ends. This is interesting at least to the extent that religion has been used historically to justify very nonneoliberal ideals like ëliberation theologyí (Beaumont, 2008; Jamoul and Wills, 2008) and union organizing (Sziarto, 2008). There is a contradiction, or at least a set of principles that have been mobilized for diabolically opposite ends. Dominionism invokes divine inspiration for challenging the secular state. Christian libertarianism invokes divine inspiration for abhorring socialism and the welfare state. Prosperity theology deploys divine absolution for accumulating capital. Each draws inspiration from the Bible and, as such, invokes a legitimacy that is rooted in faith. This is difficult to challenge in a rational manner, but it is worth decou-

this contradiction. Radical conservatives have not only successfully mobilized the institutions of the Religious Right for neoliberal purposes like lower taxes and deregulation; they have also managed to lend a sort of spiritual credibility to neoliberalism by invoking a literal divine inspiration. Within the evangelical Christian movement, at least three logics have been used to justify such a position: 1) Dominionism; 2) Christian libertarianism; and 3) Prosperity Theology. Dominionism was a term first coined by the sociologist Sara Diamond (1995) referring to the principle amongst conservative evangelicals that secular laws and institutions must be replaced by religiously-inspired ones, particularly those that were inspired by collectivist ideals. Its proponents draw inspiration from the book of *Genesis (1:26; 1:28)* where human ëdominioní over the earth is justified. Its proponents have extended this logic to argue that Christians should seize control over the institutions of secular governance for their own ends. Similarly, Christian libertarianism invokes the Bible to justify an anti-socialist outlook in life. It argues that libertarian (or neoliberal) principles can be justified by Bible, namely *John 8:36*, which invokes the language of ëfreedom for mení. It is powerfully articulated by chief advisor to President Bush, Marvin Olasky, and is promoted by the think tank the Acton Institute. Finally, prosperity theology is a movement that offers an ostensible vehicle to wealth and the evaporation of guilt for being wealthy. It draws on a number of biblical verses and is the organizing principle for many high profile televangelists in the US, including Joel Osteen and TD Jakes. Though they have different purposes, all of these movements lend credibility to neoliberalism by reinforcing its agenda. Dominionism invokes divine inspiration for challenging the secular state. Christian libertarianism invokes divine inspiration for abhorring socialism and the welfare state. Prosperity theology deploys divine absolution for accumulating capital. Each draws inspiration from the Bible and, as such, invokes a legitimacy that is rooted in faith. This is difficult to challenge in a rational manner, but it is worth decou-

> **All forms of collectivization whether they be progressive taxation, labor unions, public space, subsidized housing, socialist societies, or simple planning proposals were, and continue to be, derided by neoliberal ideologues as "enemies of freedom"**

pling from neoliberalism, as the latter is able to absorb legitimacy from the invocation of religion.

Progressive scholars thus need not only to point out the obvious contradictions but to delve deeper to challenge the sources of legitimacy that gives neoliberalism some of its power. Once decoupled from movements that give it political cover or legitimacy, it can be critiqued and perhaps more successfully contested in its own right. As the case of evangelical Christianity implies however, this might require progressive scholars to supplement their current focus on the ëusual suspectsíóthe IMF, Worldbank, Thatcher, and Reaganówith one that also critiques the role of ostensibly non-neoliberal legitimators.

### Destabilize neoliberalism

Neoliberalism also derives a great deal of power from the assumption that, in the words of Margaret Thatcher, ìthere is no alternativeî. Pro-neoliberal politicians have, for decades, been able to frame neoliberalism as a matter of necessity. Markets will crash, jobs will be lost, peopleís lives will be ruined unless we privatize, lower taxes, and deregulate. The Left has been slow, shy or reluctant about countering this logic with plausible alternatives of its own. Surely, a great deal of this has to do with the complexity of problems that are at stake, and no reasonable critic could say that the Left ësimplyí has to come up with an alternative of its ownóas though we were dealing with a refereed debate in which rational thought would win the day. But while a comprehensive, progressive solution to the various problems to which neoliberal solutions are thrown, may be impractical without the think-tanks and ideologues that the Right enjoys, it is far from impractical for the Left to challenge the individual premises upon which neoliberal solutions are built. Unfortunately, progressive scholars have shown little interest in taking on

such battles.

Take, for example, the academic literature on ëgovernment failuresí. Over the past thirty years or so a group of right-winged scholars has quietly developed the concept of ëgovernment failuresí as a counter to the notion of ëmarket failuresí. The notion of market failures is linked to socialist and Keynesian skepticism of how markets had inherent flaws which blocked their ability to provide goods and services in an efficient or equitable manner. An enormous literature of case studies, theoretical statements, and analyses emerged in the mid-twentieth century to demonstrate and elaborate upon this fact. This research was used to justify government interventions to ëcorrectí market failures. Right-winged political economists and economists have, since the 1970s, tried to shift the attention away from market failures to an ostensible analog, ëgovernment failuresí. A large literature has emerged, mostly published in conservative journals and think-tank publications to bolster the claim that governments are materially inferior to markets at providing a whole host of goods and services. Such economists deliberately position their work as a justification for market-based solutions, especially privatization of public goods. Extending this logic, this group of thinkers aims to use ëgovernment failuresí to justify ëmarket solutionsí. This is a key premise in the larger neoliberal argument, but very few progressive economists, geographers, or political economists have spent time countering this premise, or many of the others upon which the movement exists. This is unfortunate, as such ideas percolate into mainstream thought unchallenged.

This logic percolates to the mainstream press in a variety of ways. I just completed a study, for example, of the way that Habitat for Humanity, a worldwide housing non-governmental organization is framed in the main-

> There is a role for progressive scholarship, but only if it is engaged with the reality that it needs to be driven by and inspired by on-the-ground activism



PHOTO BY **Ana Hušman**

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# 8

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

Jason Hackworth
*Challenging the neoliberal city*

> **"** Right-winged political economists and economists have, since the 1970s, tried to shift the attention away from market failures to an ostensible analog, 'government failures'

stream press in North America (Hackworth, 2008). What I found was disconcerting, namely that there has been a steady rise in the positioning of Habitat for Humanity as a replacement for the welfare stateóa ësolutioní to ëgovernment failureí. This happened in a variety of waysófrom directly suggesting that such organizations should replace the welfare state, to more subtle jabs that local government should deregulate the sector so that such organizations could flourishóbut in each case the government is framed as the ëfailureí and the private non government organization is framed as the ësolutioní. This assumption permeated centre-left newspapers like the *New York Times*, and right-winged ones like the *Wall Street Journal*; Canadian papers like the *Globe and Mail*, and American ones like the *Washington Times*. Differences in approach certainly exist, but all of these newspapers were carelessly building their journalism on the premise that government-provided housing was a ëfailureí and that Habitat for Humanity was the ësolutioní. It is impossible to establish a direct link between the activities of right-winged economists and what counts as ëcommon senseí to newspaper reporters, but it is clear that the ideas of the former percolate to the mainstream with too little challenge from progressive scholars.

The assumption of neoliberal inevitability rests on a number of smaller assumptions that are not challenged enough by progressive scholars. The Right is very effective at using the legitimacy of scholarship to bolster such assumptions. The academic literature and accompanying mainstream absorption of the idea of ëgovernment failureí is one such assumption. All too frequently such work goes completely unchallengedósmugly dismissed by many of us as so transparently ideological as to not necessitate a retort. Neoliberalism cannot be destabilized until such assumptions are more aggressively challenged.

### Denaturalize neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is routinely presented not only as necessary but natural, or non-political. Often this form of neoliberalism is attached to large institutions whose purpose is much broader than simply promulgating neoliberalism. Take the case of bond rating agencies and their impact on cities and sovereign governments around the world. Bond rating agencies are secretive, non-elected organizations, that have an incredible amount of power in financial markets, and in the day-to-day governance of cities, states, and national governments. They have power over the latter because they effectively set the terms of a governmentís ability to borrow money for infrastructure, labor costs, and the like. If a government is behaving in a way that is ëtoo socialistíóbuilding too much affordable housing for exampleóa rating agency can decide that their credit rating is at risk and release this opinion to investors, who will then charge that city significantly more interest if they do want to borrow capital. They do this by hiding behind the language of nature. They impose such conditions because it is ënaturalí for investors to expect such conditions. In their view, they are doing nothing that is controversial or politicalóneoliberalism is common sense to them.

Bond-rating officials regularly meet with city officials in the US (and increasingly abroad) to map out future allocation plans. Their role has grown more powerful in the last three decades for a variety of reasons (Hackworth, 2007; Hackworth, 2002). First, the general shift away from the federal maintenance of collective consumption in the United States has accelerated in recent years. Cities now receive fewer dollars per capita than before but their responsibilities often remain high. Municipal lending has partially covered extant housing, welfare, and general assistance demands, as well as more recently intensified pressures, such as prison construction and law enforcement. Cities are thus, by default, more

vulnerable to the decisions of capital market gatekeepers. Second, because of demographic changes and the generalized shift toward generating wealth through finance capital, institutions such as pension funds, money market funds, and insurance firms now constitute a greater share of the securities industry than before. Several new and existing federal laws in the US and abroad place limits on the amount of speculative-grade debt institutions can hold. Given the increased presence of funds with such limitations, the judgments of rating agencies have, by default, become more important because there are fewer bond buyers willing and legally able to ignore their assessments. Third, less municipal lending takes place through traditional banking institutions than before. The relative security of this form of lending and investment has been replaced by a more volatile system of direct lending. The remaining investors (households and funds) are more reliant on ëprofessionalí assessments than before because the banking intermediary has disappeared.

The interesting element of this series of events is not just that the power of institutions that lurk in the shadows has increased during the last thirty years, but also that it has happened with very little challenge from the Left. That is, a great deal of the critique against neoliberalism is aimed at the ëusual suspectsíóReagan, Thatcher, the IMFówhile much of the ëdirty workí of the movement is done behind the scenes by organizations like rating agencies. Their actions are dismissed as confusing or irrelevant by critics of neoliberalism, and as ënaturalí and ënecessaryí by proponents of neoliberalism. Progressive scholarship needs not only to continue its critique of the ëusual suspectsí but to devise a language to criticize the shadow enforcers of neoliberalism like rating agencies. The first step in this is a denaturalization of their work. They operate under the assumption that their work is non-controversial, and not political, when it is most assuredly both controversial and implicitly political. Exposing this reality is the first step toward changing it.

### We are all neoliberals now?

In 2005, the scholar David Harvey penned the book *A brief history of neoliberalism*. In it, Harvey expertly traced the rise of the ideology from the debates in the Mont Pelerin society to the policy changes instituted by Thatcher and Reagan. In reflecting on the 1990s, Harvey raised the question of whether "we are all neoliberals now", provoking us to remember that US President Richard Nixon once lamented that "we are all Keynesians now". Nixon wanted to enact neoliberal policy forms but could not because the prevailing wisdom of Keynesianism so dominated political thought. Harvey invoked this moment not to argue that we all secretly pine to be neoliberal, but rather to suggest that the political ethos has changed so much, that the assumptions of neoliberalism are hegemonic, and that changing those assumptions would involve more than simply proposing superficial alternatives. Though I think that Harvey is largely correct in asking this question, it is still difficult not to be overwhelmed by a sense of nihilism – if neoliberal assumptions are so deep, so the pessimism goes, what is the point in trying to reverse them? Call me naïve if you will, but I would like to think that there is still some room for change.

Iíve tried to sketch out some of these thoughts in this essay. I think that progressive scholars can make an impact by decoupling, destabilizing, and denaturalizing neoliberalism. They should decouple it from the other discourses that give it legitimacy. They should destabilize it by becoming more involved in challenging the various micro assumptions upon which the meta-theory of neoliberalism sits. And they should denaturalize it by challenging policy forms and practices that are positioned as ënormalí, ënaturalí, or ëjust part of doing businessí. But above all else, progressive scholarship should proceed forward with the assumption that such work is only a small part of the pictureóthat we should support, not replace, social movements whose aim it is to challenge neoliberalism. Only then can we begin to plausibly imagine a world where neoliberalism is a subject only taught in history class. ■

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PHOTO BY **Boris Cvjetanović**

**Mladen Stilinović**
For Marie-Antoinette '68, 2008. [installation]



PHOTO BY **Boris Cvjetanović**

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Boris Buden
*God is back in town*

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

**9**

# BORIS BUDEN

# God is back in town

Why there is so much interest in urban space? We are so keen to reflect on its transformations although we know very well that they are only impacts and effects of another transformations that happen elsewhere, in politics, in society or generally on the scene we still call history? Why don't we grasp them where they originally happen instead of chasing them around in the urban space? In the same context we are also talking about urban struggles. Aren't these struggles in fact political, social or historical struggles? Why then do we call them "urban"? If urban space is more than a simple site of these struggles, can we think of some sort of their urban cause that transcends their political, social or historical meaning?

There is no simple answer to these questions. We are therefore best advised to look for some concrete case in which urban space has become an authentic site of political conflict, in which it is articulated as a texture of social transformation and saturated with historical time; a case in which urban space also appears as an ideological battlefield, on which we can deploy our analytical concepts.

Fortunately, there is an artistic project – at the same time a project of social and political criticism – that has already tackled this problem. A group of architects from Croatia called *platforma 9.81* has been analyzing for years the changes in urban space taking place during the process of the so-called post-communist transition. We will focus on one particular part of their research labelled *Crkva d.o.o.* (Church Ltd.). It is dedicated to the role the Croatian Catholic Church has

> The process of the post-communist transition has an ambiguous character and must be reconsidered in terms of its regressive tendencies

played in this new urban development.

There are few reasons why this project suits well our analysis. First, it is clearly framed in historical terms, namely within the event called "the democratic revolutions of 1989/90". Secondly it explicitly addresses an important social transformation that is as one of its consequences ascribed to this event – a phenomenon we can call "desecularization" of modern societies, or at least the crisis of modern secularism. Finally this phenomenon has political meaning or more precisely, implies and articulates a political conflict. For what is actually "desecularization"? Jürgen Habermes, who explicitly attaches this phenomenon to the historical change of 1989/90, defines it in political terms: since 1989/90 religious traditions and religious communities have gained in – until then unexpected – political importance.[01]

In fact, Habermas addresses a common impression that we have been witnessing recently a worldwide renaissance of religious beliefs, which has radically put in question the process of modernist secularization. There are many strong symptoms of this change we are very aware of like for instance the so-called religious fundamentalism and religiously motivated terrorism, a renaissance of religious beliefs in the former communist countries, or even in the very centre of the Western capitalist world, in the United States, as well as a growing impact of religion on public life all over the world. In short, the assumption that we live in a secularized world is generally false.[02] Habermas calls this new historical condition "post-secular". In a post-secular society "we must adjust ourselves to the consistency (Fortbestehen) of religious communities in a continually secularizing environment."[03]

This post-secular condition can be conceived of as general historical context of *platforma's Church Ltd*-project. Here we are invited to challenge the phenomenon of desecularization precisely in the form of its urban consequences, the transformations of urban space that it has directly caused.

> The difference between "private" and "public" cannot be conceived of in terms of a clear-cut and stable boundary. We can think of this difference as being itself a sort of space – the space of translation.

However, there is one particular element in the project that makes it especially interesting. This small abbreviation added to the notion of church – *Ltd*. It implies an economical meaning of desecularization, a dimension, which is normally excluded from the attempts of political – mostly liberal – theory to deal with this phenomenon. Is this because the economic dimension cannot be simply ignored if we are going to seriously reflect on transformations in urban space? Probably, but it is precisely this economic dimension that evokes the original meaning of the notion of secularization. Namely, its historically first meaning was a juridical one. It meant an enforced transfer of ownership over church properties to the authority of secular state. So has the phenomenon of desecularization *platforma 9.81* deals with precisely the reverse meaning of the original concept of secularization, the passing of public properties into the church ownership, or as it is also called, privatization, a key concept of the process of post-communist transition.[04]

The architects from *platforma 9.81* focused on the situation in city of Split, on the Croatian Adriatic coast, where the Church together with the political representatives of the city including the city planners realized the project called "Spiritual Ring of City of Split", a plan to build 16 new church buildings, mostly in the new suburbs around the centre of the city. The realization of the project started 1993 and it is today almost completed. However, its origin lies in the political change that happened 1990, the overturn of communist rule in Croatia. Croatian Catholic Church, which helped the nationalistic movement led by Franjo
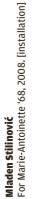
Tudjman to come to power, has presented itself as both the leading force of democratization and retroactively as the main victim of the communist past. As a consequence it has also claimed both the right to exert influence not only on political life in the country but on all the spheres of social life, like education, public moral, or media, as well as the compensations for the loses it had suffered under the communist rule. One particular element of this compensation claim was the demand for permission to build new sacral buildings. Naturally the Church got this permission without any problems and the result was already mentioned project "Spiritual Ring of City of Split".

Let us put aside the concrete results of this building campaign, i.e. the quality of the new buildings and the new urbanity that it has created, both subjected to the critical analysis of *platforma 9.81*. Generally, the critique suggests that the whole building campaign has in fact regressive effects. It rolls back the former achievements of modern urban development that had been realized under – or to stay within today's hegemonic ideology, despite of – the communist rule.[05]

However, the key element of their analysis that has made this insight possible is the difference between "private" and "public" or rather a – historically, politically and theoretically – specific understanding of this difference. In short, it is not value free, i.e., it presupposes a clear normative claim: "public" is, at least in the case of urban space, better than "private". So is the process of historical regression presented – and spacialy visualized – as the expansion of the private space at the cost of public.

> Croatian Catholic Church owing to its properties, annual income and investments has become recently one of the leading entrepreneurs in the country
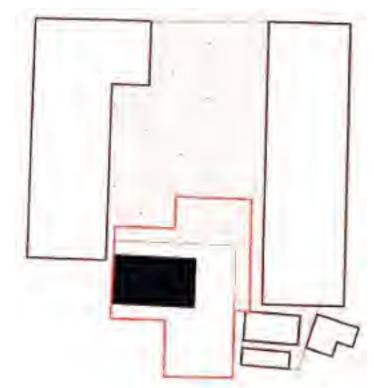
**Mladen Stilinović**
For Marie-Antoinette '68, 2008. [installation]

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**10**

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

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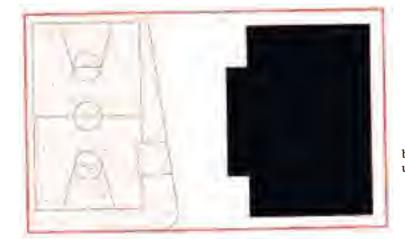*God is back in town*

Let us take a look at few diagrams presented in the analysis:

1. An interpolation in the centre of the city, a monastery being reconstructed within an already defined urban space. The building has expanded at the cost of the square.



Monastery at Dobri Square

Another example: A new church built directly nearby *Kaufland* shopping mall. In Split people call this church "Our Lady of Kaufland". The space for parking was taken from the already existent basketball playground.



Ravne njive – "Our Lady of Kaufland" – parish church.

2. One form of post-communist privatization is the so-called property return. An originally private property, which had been nationalized, that is to say, appropriated by the communist state after 1945, is now after the collapse of the communist rule returned to its primal owners. This has also happened to one part of the church property. The next diagram shows one example of this phenomenon: The Bishop's palace in the centre of the city with a large park nearby before and after property return.
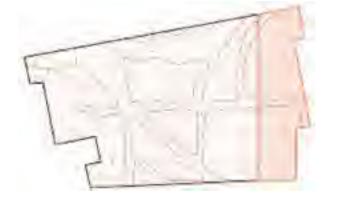
During the socialist period in the building were accommodated few faculties of the Split university, city library and the Art academy.



After the return the whole building is occupied by the Church and used for its offices, representative spaces and guest accommodation.
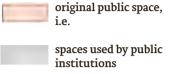


The property return enabled the Church to expand its facilities and to annex the large part of a park, which had been used before the collapse of communism by surrounding schools and faculties: Primary school, Normal school, Naval highschool, Faculty of natural sciences and mathematics, Faculty of chemical technology – only one relatively small part was used by The Seminary and Theological Faculty.



After the return the largest part of the playground – now fenced – belongs exclusively to The Seminary and Theological Faculty and is used at the rate of 40 seminarists per 10.000 square meters.



The visualization of these urban – respectively socio-political – transformations is based on three elements: two types of space, an original public space and an ecclesiastic space that in the given relation – mutually excluding opposition – actually denotes private space; the third element is the line of expansion of this ecclesiastic/private space.

original public space, i.e.

spaces used by public institutions

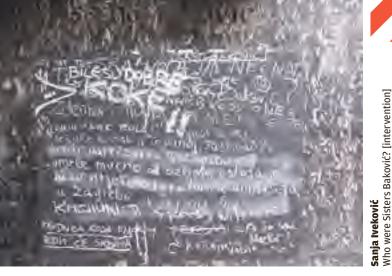church, i.e.

spaces used exclusively by the church

line of expansion of church property

This clearly evokes the way liberal political theory deals with the phenomenon of desecularization. It too uses similar conceptual tool – a dividing line between "private" and "public" – and interprets the process of desecularization in terms of an expansion of what we can provisionally call "private cause". Concretely religious communities increasingly insist on using religious arguments in public debates. They goal is to influence political decisions and so reshape the state in terms of their own interests, or better, in the interest of their religious beliefs. According to the classical liberal theory this would jeopardize neutral – secular – character of the state, which is the political precondition of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence of citizens. Rawls in his *Political Liberalism* from 1993 still draws a sharp distinction between private and public reasons. Religious questions like the one of which god we ought to worship counts as a private matter. However, Rawls revised this argument later and included what he calls "proviso", which allows for the expression of religious arguments in public debates – so long as they can be sooner or later translated into the language of public reason.[06]

This implies that the difference between "private" and "public" cannot be conceived of in terms of a clear-cut and stable boundary. Moreover, we can



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**Sanja Iveković**
Who were Sisters Baković? [intervention]



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**Sanja Iveković**
Who were Sisters Baković? [intervention]

**Boris Buden**
*God is back in town*

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

**11**

think of this difference as being itself a sort of space – the space of translation. Whereas Rawls forces only religious citizens to translate their religiously based moral convictions into secular moral terms, for Habermas is the translation requirement a cooperative task in which both sides must participate. For him "public" and "private" are mutually translatable. However, he cuts the public space in two parts divided by what he calls "institutional threshold", a threshold between an informal public sphere and the public sphere of parliaments, courts of justice, ministries, public administrations, etc. For Habermas translation is required only on this threshold. One part of public space, the so-called informal public, must stay open for private reasons, that is, in principle contaminated with "private".

A similar dissolution of a clearcut boundary between "private" and "public" – this time against the background of the capitalist market – can be found in another diagram of *platforma*'s project:
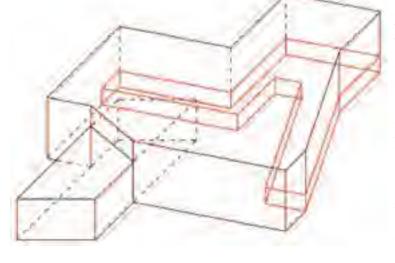
3. This is a peculiar mixture of ecclesiastic and secular, commercial facilities or more precisely the merging of the space of religious belief with business space, in short with the market. On their own property the Church has namely incorporated commercial activities.

Here is the example of the Franciscan monastery of our Lady of Health and the shopping mall "Monestery":



Here the visualization of the transformation operates again with two types of spaces, one ecclesiastic, for which we are supposed to think of as "private", and another that comprises retail facilities within the church complex. The relation between these two spaces is different from the cases mentioned above. Here the ecclesiastic space doesn't expand at the expense of public space. On the contrary, the space of commercial activities that is in the end a space of private business (but as a shopping mall it is also a form of public space) occupies the space of religious belief. The red line here actually represents the line of expansion of private business, in other words, of capitalist economy.

In fact Croatian Catholic Church owing to its properties, annual income and investments has become recently one of the leading entrepreneurs in the country. Already at the end of 2005 it was ranked among the five richest business groups in Croatia. This phenomenon has also become increasingly visible in the urban space. The authors of this analysis, the architects of *platforma 9.81,* argue that the basic interface of church as institution with a city life gets more and more commercial character.

On the other side, growing political and economical power of Church hasn't been accompanied with a growing number of true believers. At the end of the building campaign the new churches

were left empty or unfinished.

After having realized this, the church authorities started to build churches, which are from the very beginning planned and designed to include commercial or business facilities or to be rented for such activities.

This simply means that even the Church itself doesn't anticipate the existence of an authentic and exclusive space of belief. In short, even the professional believers don't believe any more in a pure belief. This is probably the most important feature of the reawakened religious belief in postcommunism – it reappears only in its hybridized form, that is to say, irrevocably merged with other spheres and contents of social life.

But precisely this fact makes today the classical secular critique of religion that is based on a clear differentiation between two spheres of social life, public and ecclesiastic/private.

The question is now: does this distinction still make sense today? Why is Fine Art Academy public but church offices and its representative spaces private? Why is Naval highschool or Faculty of natural sciences and mathematics public but Theological Faculty private? Of course from architectural perspective the distinction seems quite simple: public space is the one where one can freely move in and stay without being excluded, like streets or parks that are typical public spaces. This also includes buildings that are open to the public, that is to say, freely accessible and that are mostly state property, or as it was the case in former Yugoslavia, the so-called social property. Clearly a fenced space of seminary and theological faculty is not open to the public. But the space of schools, universities and even libraries, are they today more open to the public. Education too has become on all of its levels a matter of private business, especially after the neo-liberal turn in economy and radical changes of all sorts of social life that this new form of late capitalism has initiated? In fact an overall privatization has long ago opened its road to success and secured its ideological hegemony and decisive support of political power it enjoys today all over the globe. Why then not to think of institutionalized religion, or as in

our example, of Roman Catholic Church in Croatia, as simply trying to catch up with this development? It is already an institution of today's ideological hegemony and enjoys almost the unconditional support of political power. Moreover, it is already publicly approved as "one of the richest business groups in Croatia", respectively "one of the leading entrepreneurs in the country". Why then to draw this red line within its buildings supposed to differentiate an ecclesiastic from a commercial space and claim an "unnatural" infiltration of an alien space of private business into a space of allegedly pure belief? A shopping mall is undoubtedly a retail facility build and owned by private business – although it is at the same time a sort of public space – but is the space of religious belief something essentially different?

We must obviously stop ascribing an essential quality to the religious belief. Consequently there is no space – neither of private nor of public character – that originally belongs to, emanates from or authentically surrounds religious belief as such. This means that we can also think of this space in terms of its socioeconomic meaning. A church or a monastery could be also perceived as a site of productive labour or more precisely – and more adequately in the world whose material reproduction is increasingly based on the post-fordist mode of production – as a site of affective or immaterial labour. A pastoral care is nothing more than a "service", like health care, child care, or, why not, like education, transportation, entertainment, etc. What characterizes these and similar activities is the central role played by knowledge, communication, information and affect.

It is from this angle that we must reconsider the classical secularist critique of religion that entirely relies on the doctrine of "separate spheres" from the nineteenth century. At least due to the feminist research the very assumption of stable boundaries be-

tween public and private has become obsolete. It is for this reason that the visual tools of this secularist critique of the post-communist religious renaissance and its social consequences rather obscure than clarify this phenomenon. Typically for the bourgeois critique of religion and its ideological function they make us blind for its economic meaning – not in terms of an economic sphere understood as the material base of a religious superstructure but in terms of a historic change in the mode of production that has put in question the very idea of economy as a separate sphere of social reproduction.

If an institution of religious belief is publicly already recognized as a business group, a capitalist entrepreneur, it should also be critically reflected as such. In other words, one should never judge church by its religious cover. Yet such a critique still awaits its visual tools. ■

> "If an institution of religious belief is publicly already recognized as a business group, a capitalist entrepreneur, it should also be critically reflected as such

01  See Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in der Öffentlichkeit. Kognitive Voraussetzungen für den 'öffentlichen Vernunftgebrauch' religiöser und säkularer Bürger", in: J. Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005, S. 119-155. Here, p. 119.

02  Peter L. Berger, (ed.) *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, Ethics and Public Policy Center : Washington, 1999, p. 15.

03  Jürgen habermas, *Glauben und Wissen*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001, p. 13.

04  The whole research project is called *Superprivate.*

05  This necessarily implies that the process of the post-communist transition has an ambiguous character and must be reconsidered in terms of its regressive tendencies. In short, it cannot be simply identified with a progressive linear development from totalitarianism to liberal democracy, as it is usually the case.

06  See John Rawls, "The idea of public reason revisited", The University of Chicago Law Review, 64(3), 765-807.

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**12**

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

Stefan Nowotny
*Filtered inclusion / Postsocietalism in the neoliberal ages*

# Filtered inclusion
# Postsocietalism in the neoliberal ages

STEFAN NOWOTNY

When we speak about the relations between neoliberalism and postsocialist societies, we are obviously dealing with two different categories, both of which require some investigation. The main argument I will try to develop in the following will focus on one of these categories, namely "neoliberalism". For precisely this reason, though, I want to first speak about the second category, that is "postsocialist societies". What is it that we have the habit to call "postsocialist societies"? The answer is temptingly simple: postsocialist societies are societies that have experienced what we are equally used to call "really existing socialism". However, I have the impression that there are at least three problems inherent in this kind of qualification. Let me briefly try to sketch out these three problems:

First, and this is a conceptual argument, the term "postsocialist", as it is most frequently used, implies that it is precisely the past of one or the other "really existing socialism" that confronts both the societies that have experienced it and the societies that didn't experience it with the particular phenomenon of either being a postsocialist society or having to deal with such societies. Thus the use of the category confuses the conceptual value of the political term "socialism" with the – past – appearance of the allegedly "real" historical manifestation of this value. It is quite improbable, though, that those who (still?) believe in the value of socialism will ever accept this kind of confusion. For they can be just as critical about "really existing socialism" as their opponents, without however identifying "socialism" with "really existing socialism". They may even go as far as maintaining that so-called "really existing socialism" was in fact no socialism at all, but rather a "capitalism pure and simple."[01] For Gáspár Miklós Tamás for example, from whom I adopt this latter expression, "really existing socialism" was nothing else than

a specific form of capitalism which was based on the state apparatus rather than on markets in order to leave behind the precapitalistic, feudal elements characteristic for the countries where "socialist" revolutions actually took place. According to Tamás, the "reality" of socialism itself was sort of postponed in this process as the existing conditions of access to the means of production (following the principle of "private ownership") were not thoroughly revolutionized, but instead confided to a new political elite ideologically legitimating and maintaining their interregnum between "presocialism" and "real socialism". It is quite obvious that the term "postsocialism" does not make sense in such a perspective, since keeping to the political-conceptual value of "socialism" here generates a different kind of historical perception, namely that "socialism", instead of being realized and then overcome (or defeated), somehow got stuck inbetween its concrete historical preconditions and the very condition of its own realization.

Secondly, the term "postsocialist societies" usually refers to societies in Eastern (Central Eastern, South Eastern) Europe and thus tends to geographically fix the realities of both "socialism" and "postsocialism". But why shouldn't we relate the question of "postsocialist societies" to countries like China or Vietnam? Or, in a different sense, to Cambodia? Or, again in a different sense, to Ethopia or Mosambique? Or to places like Syria or Libya, or to the transformation of Palestinian political organisations in different countries? Or even to Western European societies, where the term "postsocialism" could be used to indicate for instance a number of transformations concerning both leftist political thought and forms of leftist political organization? In each of these contexts, the term "socialism" would certainly have to be treated in a different way, and the same goes for "postsocialism". To give just two examples, the politi-

cal construction of an interregnum ideologically legitimated by the perspective of a future "real socialism" does not apply to a country like Syria in the same sense as to the Soviet Union. And it each case where a self-proclaimed socialist regime actually came into power, we would have to lead a quite different discussion about the question to what extent it was a revolution and to what extent it was a coup d'etat that brought about the change. But what, then, is it that connects a single term like "socialism" with such a variety of political contexts?

The third problem is perhaps more connected to the conceptual element "society" than to the element "postsocialist" in the term "postsocialist society" – even though it might be useful to not forget about the close proximity between the terms "society" and "socialism". Once again I will address it in the form of some questions, namely: Whom do we consider to be the members of "postsocialist societies"? Croates? Serbs? Bosnians? Russians? Lithuanians? Estonians? Or rather former Yougoslaves? Or former citizens of the Soviet Union? But what about Roma, for instance in Slovakia or in Romania? And what about Roma from Romania, who now live for example in Naples or other Italian cities and find themselves exposed to racist attacks (just as they have been exposed to racism in "socialist" Romania and still are exposed to racism in "postsocialist" Romania)? What I am trying to suggest by raising these questions is that when we refer to societies whose members supposedly share a specific historic experience, we risk to retrospectively construct a "social bond" which defines who is part – and in what sense – of these societies. (I am saying this as someone who has spent most of his life as "a member of the Austrian society", a society in which so many people still have difficulties to recognize the postfascist *and* post-Nazi character of this society, and in which so many people still seem to find it

unimaginable to consider Jewish experiences to be Austrian experiences). So what we equally have to keep in mind is the more or less subtle interrelations between the retrospective and prospective, retroactive and proactive contructions of social bonds and both the terms "society" and "socialism".

It is not my intention here to utter some painstaking critique of the notion of postsocialism – even less so, as, in many respects, I would strongly consider myself to be in a learning position when it comes to "postsocialist societies". What I do indeed want to suggest, though, is that what we (coming from both "postsocialist" and "non-postsocialist" societies) probably have to share is more than just a common – albeit maybe incongruent – experience with neoliberalism in the sense of "neoliberal reforms", and that the term "postsocialism" is perhaps not particularly helpful in this respect. When I am saying "more", I don't mean to say "more than (just) neoliberalism", but rather "more about neoliberalism": we have to share experiences that are not limited to the implementation or contestation of neoliberal reforms within this or that society, but that develop a sense for how neoliberalism has not only *entered* the plane of social and political affairs, but indeed *redefines* this plane.

What kind of experiences am I talking about? In my view, they strongly relate to the three problems linked with the term "postsocialism" that I have addressed above. One part of these experiences is that neoliberal doctrines usually present themselves as carriers of a *universalist* principle, to be applied onto different particular situations. In that sense, the denial of universalist claims linked with socialism goes along with a similar denial of universalist claims linked with social democracy, the idea of the welfare state, self-management, etc.; that is, neoliberal doctrines "particularize" conflicting universalist ideas or reinterpret them as "particular situations" related to

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**Dalibor Martinis**
Zagreb Social (Bird) Housing Project
[installation]

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Zagreb Social (Bird) Housing Project
[installation]

Stefan Nowotny
*Filtered inclusion / Postsocietalism in the neoliberal ages*

**OPERATION:CITY 2008**
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

**13**

a specific past, onto which reforms have to be adjusted. Another part of these experiences is that neoliberal doctrines usually present themselves as carriers of a *global* principle, that is, as the answer to the transformations that societies have to undergo in the age of "globalization" in order to be properly inscribed into the "world order". They thus block or at least develop a strong impact on alternative visions of global relations, and maybe even a term that appears at first glance as neutral as the term "postsocialism" could in this sense considered to be a neoliberal term. Finally, a third part of these experiences is that neoliberal doctrines usually do not only, in the wake of 1989, present themselves as carriers of a postsocialist principle par excellence, but indeed as carriers of what I will call a *postsocietal* principle.

It is this third principle, the principle of postsocietalism, that my further reflections will dwell on. But let me first state that in my view the three principles that I have just outlined could also provide a better understanding of the reasons why neoliberal doctrines tend to perfectly go along with various discourses on "culture" and "cultural" relations, or indeed with the culturalization of social, economic and political issues. We could perhaps even say that culturalistic discourses *allow* neoliberal doctrines to present themselves in the described way: to the extent that they draw upon a more or less empty, or at least very vaguely defined, universalism (for instance the oblique universalism of "culture matters", to pick up a well-known formula by Samuel Huntington) in order to particularize each and every historical-political situation (sometimes with the telling exception of one's own situation); but equally to the extent that they pretend to offer a principle of global understanding, and that they pretend to offer a postsocietal

principle of conceiving human conditions and human relations.

As far as the specific neoliberal versions of postsocietalism are concerned, we may first think of the initial "laboratories" for the implementation of neoliberal "reforms", namely of states in the South American *cono sur* such as Argentina or especially Chile in the 1970ies. Here again, we frequently encounter an explanatory pattern referring to "socialism", not yet in terms of "postsocialism" but in those of "antisocialism", when it comes to explicating the correlation between neoliberal agendas and the extensive political violence exerted by the military juntas in these countries. However, the sociologist Peter Imbusch has proposed an explanation that goes beyond the sometimes perhaps overstrained Cold War perspective, when he stated that in view of strong forms of leftist opposition (by trade unions, political parties, students, etc.) it was regarded necessary "to tailor a new socioeconomic basis"[02] in order to efficiently launch neoliberal economic policies. And indeed, the destruction of societal structures, and not only of individuals, can be seen as one of the major effects of the dictatorship in times of the neoliberal "miracle of Chile" (Milton Friedman).

However, we do not need to turn our eyes to particularly violent forms of interference into societal structures in order to grasp the negation of the societal that is linked with neoliberalism. There is indeed a sort of locus classicus for this negation, which can be found in an interview that Margaret Thatcher gave in October 1987. It reads:

"I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand 'I have a problem, it is the Government's job to cope with it!' or 'I have a problem, I will go and get a grant to cope with it!', 'I am homeless, the Gov-

ernment must house me!', and so they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first."[03]

According to a common analysis of this pronouncement, what becomes manifest in Thatcher's negation of "society" as such is specifically the political will to cancel the "class contract" that had been an important principle of social appeasement policies in the post-World War II history of the United Kingdom.[04] However, one can ask oneself if Thatcher's denunciation does not in fact touch upon issues of a wider historical range. In order to approach this question let me first point to the easygoing way in which Thatcher seems to identify "government" and "society": people are addressing the government, she says, because they want it to solve this or that problem that they encounter; and now Thatcher operates a remarkable shift as, in order to demonstrate the problem with all these requests, she does not say "but there is no government", but rather arrives at saying "but there is no such thing as society" (which she repeats later on in the interview). How is this shift performed? Of course I have left out an important link in Thatcher's argument, namely that in-between she states that, precisely by addressing the government in the described way, people "are casting their problems on society." So let me do justice to Margaret Thatcher: *her* point of view is of course that it is not herself who identifies government and society; it is the way in which people are *wrongly* addressing the government which identifies government and society. Why? Because there is no society, and so, consequently, there is no possibility of an identification of government and society.

It's the government, stupid, Thatcher implicitly says, but people don't seem to really understand what a government is (or should be). Now there has been much talk about neoliberal redefinitions of the tasks and functions of a government (linked with keywords such as the "slender state"), which of course correspond with an impor-

tant implication of Thatcher's statement. I don't want to follow this line of analysis here, however. For when one tries to do justice to Margaret Thatcher, one should probably at least clarify what kind of justice it is that is actually at stake within the conflict in question. In order to do so, I will neither assume the position of a legal opponent nor the position of a judge, because I neither want to quasi-metaphysically assert that there is indeed "such a thing as society" (which would be the logical counterpart to Thatcher's quasi-metaphysical denial of such an assertion), nor do I claim to have the authority to decide upon this dispute. I will rather try to adopt the position of, let's say, a critical journalist or analyst, who tries to understand what a given conflict is all about and how it could ever emerge.

This might require, though, a specific attention towards what we can call a "history of the present". It is precisely this formula, first coined by Michel Foucault, that the French sociologist Robert Castel has used to describe his historical account of what is well-known as the "social question." In his book *Les métamorphoses de la question sociale*,[05] Castel tries to understand current processes that are discussed under such names as "precarization" against the background of the transformations that European societies have undergone in the 18th and 19th centuries. According to him, this era was not only marked by the industrial revolution, but also by a corresponding and "equally important juridical revolution,"[06] which consisted in the implementation of a free access to the labour market (replacing for instance the guild system) and in the contractualization of (wage) labour relations. However, as the structure of free labour contracts soon turned out to be fragile in that it specifically brang about developments of massive pauperization, it gave rise to a so-

cial politics whose main challenge was to cushion the effects of the new labour system. This is in short where Castel locates the historical emergence of the "social question" and, in a way, of "society" as we know it:

"The 'social question' is a fundamental aporia, in which a society experiences the enigma of its cohesion and seeks to conjure the risk of its fracture. It constitutes a challenge, which tests and calls into question the capacity of a society (of that which, in political terms, is called a nation) to exist as a collectivity linked by relations of mutual dependency."[07]

From this angle, it is quite useless to argue about the existence or non-existence of "such a thing" as society – precisely because "society" is not (and has never been) a "thing", but rather the experience of its own aporia or its own enigma. And *as* an experience it is at the same time historically shaped, it is a *historical form*, and this concerns not only the specific multiplicity of singular experiences, but also the forms in which they are shared (or in which such sharing is blocked) and in which they are publicly and politically represented. I do not want to state, of course, that there is no need to assume a sort of primordial "sociality" in order to conceive of the specific configuration that bears the name "society" (even the "postsocietal" Margaret Thatcher assumes such a sociality, and simultanously reduces it to families). But what is social is not necessarily societal. Whereas the first notion allows to envisage relationality as such, the second one refers to a representable totality of social relations, even though the aporia addressed by Castel may always and inevitably remain inscribed in this representation.

As far as the political form of such representation is concerned, I think that Castel is quite rightfully evoking the name "nation",

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**14**

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

Stefan Nowotny
*Filtered inclusion / Postsocietalism in the neoliberal ages*

although I would for various reasons prefer the name "nation state". What his analysis offers, however, is something other than the, let's say, nationalist explanations of what a nation state is. It is not necessarily related to myths of heros and poets, nor to the narratives of a "national culture" or those which presume to document an "original national language" somewhere in the mists of history. It is not even related to the strange Enlightenment myth of an original "social contract" supposed to constitute the threshold between a "state of nature" and a state of sociality, civility, politicality. However, it indeed urges us to think of a contractual condition of modern societies, but in very concrete terms: the terms of contractual labour relations bringing about the specific aporia which is constitutive for such an enigma as "society", to the extent that they are at once providing (more or less) free access to the labour market and challenging a "society's" *political* capability to be inclusive in a double sense – in terms of including individual labour power in the nation state's productivity and in terms of including individuals into a legal constitution of that nation state by granting them civic and social rights, or indeed civic rights *as* social rights.

Now the neoliberal withdrawal from the "government's" task of meeting the challenge of inclusion in the second sense, as implied in the quoted statement of Margaret Thatcher's, can be analyzed as a falling apart of these two functions of inclusion, which is certainly linked with the fact that nation states can no longer be easily identified with stable territories of economic productivity. Castel, whose account tends to focus on the – albeit enigmatic – centre of societies, or rather, on the question of their possible "cohesion," sociologically registers this falling apart mainly by referring to what he calls the "supernumeraries" or the "disaffiliated,"[08] that is to those who are no longer provided with civic rights *as* social rights or whose status as citizens no longer guarantees them social security. And when doing so, I think



PHOTO BY **Ruta**

that Castel is rightfully avoiding the term "exclusion", pointing, among other arguments, to the juridical dimension of this term.[09] Nevertheless the growing "zone of insecurity" described by Castel can equally implicate exclusion in a strict juridical sense, as becomes evident when we consider the situations of migrants without papers, that is, without access to civic rights, whose inclusion into labour markets allows for, as the French sociologist Emmanuel Terray[10] has called it, "delocalizations on the spot," that is, profit-maximizing strategies which are precisely enabled by a presence of the (legally) absent, and hence by

the falling apart of economic and political inclusion.

I would like to refer to this phenomenon by proposing the term "filtered inclusion". Of course both the devices of inclusion into a generalized labour market and into "the nation" have known their specific filters, establishing gradations of working capacity and incapacity to work, of qualification and non-qualification, of sameness and otherness, etc. Again the legacies of these filters can be clearly traced in current debates on migration policies especially in Western Europe: there is not one, but in fact two hegemonic positions in these debates, one referring to the filtering of immigration according to criteria of "qualification" (with a view to the "de-

mands" of domestic labour markets), and the other one referring to the filtering of immigration according to criteria which check the immigrants' disposition to linguistic and "cultural" assimilation (which of course is mostly called "integration"). But what we are increasingly facing today, I think, is in fact not so much the predominance of one or the other filtering mechanism, but rather that it is precisely the falling apart of the two planes of inclusion that allows to arrange them in a way which in itself constitutes a filter. Thus the nation state is less and less functioning as the political form of the representation of a "society", nor does it offer any longer the horizon of an "equality" or, at least, "social security", and this neither to the people that it does not even try to represent nor to the people whom it still pretends to represent.

The new filtering mechanisms ermerging in this process cannot any longer be properly conceived of along the divisive line of inclusion/exclusion, which also implies that crucial devices linked with the nation state, as we historically know it, alter their function. This can be observed in what Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson[11] have called a "proliferation of borders", specifically operated through the temporalization of border regimes in order to exert a more capillary control over transnational mobility, but also for instance in the proliferation of labour contracts that we particularly observe in countries like France. Let me conclude this essay by quoting a sentence from the article by Mezzadra and Neilson which also sheds a glance to the perspective of a political action contesting these processes:

"Corollary to this is the system of differential inclusion, which far from constituting the political through exclusion involves a selective process of inclusion that suggests that any totalization of the political is contingent and subject to processes of contestation."[12]

Maybe this is one of the perspectives that we should share, from postsocialist societies or not, finding ourselves in a world of postsocietalism. ■

01 Cf. Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "A Capitalism Pure and Simple", www.grundrisse.net/grundrisse22/aCapitalismPurAndSimple.htm (last consulted on Oct 28, 2008).

02 P. Imbusch, "Die Gewalt von Militärdiktaturen in Südamerika", in: Thomas Fischer / Michael Krennerich (eds.), *Politische Gewalt in Lateinamerika*, Frankfurt/Main: Vervuert 2000, p. 35–59, here: p. 54 (quotes from other than English texts are translated by myself, unless otherwise indicated).

03 Cf. www.margaretthatcher.org/speeches/displaydocument.asp?docid=106689 (last consulted on Oct 28, 2008); the interview was originally published on Oct 31, 1997, under the title "Aids, education and the year 2000!" in the magazine *Woman's Own*.

04 Cf. for example Hans-Christoph Schröder, "Die Geschichte Englands. Ein Überblick", in: Hans Kastendiek / Karl Rohe / Angelika Volle (eds.), *Großbritannien. Geschichte – Politik – Wirtschaft – Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt/Main and New York: Campus ²1999, p. 15–69, here: p. 56.

05 R. Castel, *Les métamorphoses de la question sociale. Une chronique du salariat*, Paris: Fayard 1995; quotes will refer to the German edition *Die Metamorphosen der sozialen Frage. Eine Chronik der Lohnarbeit*, trans. Andreas Pfeuffer, Constance: UVK 2000.

06 Ibid., p. 29.

07 Ibid., p. 17.

08 Cf. esp. the last chapters in Castel's book, which treat of "The New Social Question".

09 Cf. esp. R. Castel, "Die Fallstricke des Exklusionsbegriffs", trans. Gustav Roßler, in: Heinz Bude / Andreas Willisch (eds.), Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 2008, p. 69–86.

10 Cf. E. Terray, "Le travail des étrangers en situation irrégulière ou la délocalisation sur place", in: Etienne Balibar / Monique Chemillier-Gendreau / Jacqueline Costa-Lascoux / Emmanuel Terray, *Sans-papiers: l'archaïsme fatal*, Paris: La Découverte 1999, p. 9–34.

11 Cf. S. Mezzadra / B. Neilson, "Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor", in: *transversal*, 06/2008, "Borders, Nations, Translation", http://eipcp.net/transversal/0608/mezzadraneilson/en (last consulted on Oct 28, 2008).

12 Ibid.

❝ Neoliberal doctrines present themselves as of a *postsocietal* principle



PHOTO BY **Marjan Crtalić**

**Siniša Labrović**
Undergraduate Education [workshop]



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**Siniša Labrović**
Undergraduate Education [workshop]

Boyan Manchev
*Few preliminary notes concerning the neutralisation of the city by a contemporary Sofia* flâneur

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

# 15

# BOYAN MANCHEV

# Few preliminary notes concerning the neutralisation of the city
## by a contemporary Sofia *flâneur*

ra that replaces the aura of the past: the divine sacred is ousted. The new sacredness isn't transcendent, it is immanent, it is here and now. Or, more precisely, it is trans-immanent, it is the transcendent in the immanent. This contemporary trans-immanence constructs its ethereal, sacred body, the body of the trans-immanent presence. The body of the inorganic fetish.

Think of the images from the screens, from the magazines and the billboards: they encircle their sacred transcendence above the profane organics of the city. Like Manet's 'idol' *Olympia* ('*Olympia* is a scandal, an idol', writes Valéry), they are indifferent, entirely absorbed by their synthetic flesh. In fact, those appealing advertising bodies aren't appealing for or against anything; their link with any referential plane is broken. But their power is precisely the effect of this break. The inorganic fetish is indifferent to the profane crowds milling down below.

\* \* \*

Let me remind the already famous infamous statement of Patrick Le Lay, the director of the French TV channel TF 1: "Our programmes aim at making the brain more accessible (...) What we sell to Coca Cola is the time when the human brain is accessible."[01] In the same year 2004, at a public debate organised by the project Visual Seminar in Sofia, the media theorist Georgi Lozanov compared the visual environment of the contemporary city with a media, with a television in some sense. Regardless of whether I agree or not, I cannot but admit that both statements are insightful with regard to the radical and in a sense

The inorganic is a rupture in the decaying tissue of the mortal. It does not decompose, it is resistant. It is infinite. The inorganic is the new transcendence of modernity. The inorganic – the artificial, the plastic, the synthetic object, virtual reality, cosmetics, plastic surgery, digital cameras, electronic music, biotechnologies, cloning, the images of advertising, of the poster and the billboard, the face and body on the screen, they all possess a new au-

" It seems unproductive to approach the ongoing transformation of the cities without relating it to the current processes of fundamental political transformation, or crisis

susbtantial transformation of the urban space that we are witnessing today. It seems that their insight is especially poignant if we project them onto each other and as a result we get the statement "The urban space nowadays is turning into (or tends to turn into) a space that tries to ensure a (total?) accessibility to the 'brains?) of its inhabitants".

I will use this hypothetic statement as a point of departure for a critical analysis with which I would try to shed some light on the radical transformation in question, affecting the structure of the public space in general and therefore the space of the city. Let me describe it in advance as a transformation of the public space in a *new media space*, in a giant media screen.

The *new media space* provides (or masks) the public space as availability, as availablity that could be appropriated or absorbed, in other words as a private space – a space which is subjected to the control of the priviliged private access. The *new media space* apparently presents itself as a materialisation and localisation of the global public space. Thus, the *new media space* reduces public space to superficial, accessible, neutral, efficient and reactive surface. The *new media space* could be decsribed as a super-eroticised surface offering 'pure' access to the neutral sexuality of the inorganic.[02] Unlike the deterministic and finite framework of the organic, the inorganic is endlessly reversible and in this sense it is essentially superficial.

*New media space* supposes an immediate access to the target: the distance is condensed as much as possible between the initial impulse and the final effect, it is reduced to a point-instant. One may even say that the constitutive horizon of the new media space is the absolute accessibility. It is a surface of the infinite spreading of efficiency. Accesibility takes the place of contact (as though replacing also

" Is there a possibility for a new form of collective sensible experience to emerge in the time of the neutralisation of the city?

its always obstructed tactileness). What is being called today "virtual" does not mean at any rate "immaterial"; is in fact a totalised and ontologically neutral sensitive thing. If the *new media space* is a super-eroticised surface, this points before all a to its super-reactivity and efficiency: touching this surface brings about an instant effect, a non-explosive, 'nonclassical' but a sinusoidal orgasm. The neutral and inorganic space of pure sexuality means achieving maximum effect after a minimal contact confirming Benjamin's argument that "in comparison to the inorganic, the potential of the organic as an instrument is very limited".

\* \* \*

The billboard is a media screen that irradiates us.

The highway type of billboards that has invaded the urban space of Sofia is not only a monstrous contamination. It is also an embryo – or rather, a symptom – of the giant screen of *superflat architecture*.

Apparently, the biggest screen in the world - *Viva Vision*, longer than five football pitches, appeared on Fremont Street in Las Vegas on 15 June 2004. But is Las Vegas a city at all? It seems to me that a more appropriate example would be the *Qfront* project, part of which is the largest open air screen in Japan. The project is carried out in 1999 in Tokyo, one of the world's most 'mediatized' cities. *Qfront* is located at the exit of the Shibuya station, an instersection of five major railway and metro lines, and where 500, 000 people and 90, 000 cars pass by every day. *Qfront* is in fact the home of the central *Tsutaya* shop that sells CDs, DVDs, video games, manga, books, etc. Designed as a 'shopping centre dissemi-

nating information', *Qfront* is simultaneously an interior and exterior media space symptomatic of what Igarashi Taro calls superflat urbanism. The enormous central screen called Q's eye (23.5m high and 19m wide) shows clips, commercials and messages to the unceasing flow of people underneath. Does it also count on *consciousness free for access* like the TV screen? And is it accidental that the screen is called *eye*?

We do not watch the inorganic fetish. It watches us.

\* \* \*

The transformation of the urban space of the city Sofia should be conceived of than not so much as a 'deviation' with regard to the archetypal ideal model of the city, but as subordinate to the *logic of the symptom*. The deviation of the city space of Sofia allows the symptom to appear in a pure form: the transformation of the city space in a neutral new media space. The manifestation of the symptom allows reflecting on the complex structure of this transformation in whose basis lies the paradoxical double bind of the organic and the inorganic, of the sacred fetish and its organic 'waste', its radical otherness in which, simultaneously, it sprouts. ■

01  Announced by the France Press news agency (AFP) on 9 July 2004, commented on by *Libération* (10-11/07/04): "Patrick Le Lay: the brainwasher" ["Patrick Le Lay, décerveleur "].

02  In Mario Perniola's book *The sex-appeal of the inorganic* the Benjaminian figure of the "sex-appeal of the inorganic" is generalized as an intensive designation of the transformed condition of human existence today. See Mario Perniola. *Il Sex appeal dell'inorganico*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1994.

PHOTO BY **Marijan Crtalić**

**Siniša Labrović**
Undergraduate Education [workshop]



PHOTO BY **Marijan Crtalić**

**Siniša Labrović**
Undergraduate Education [workshop]

ZAGREB, 04. 12. — 07. 12. 2008.
COMMUNITY CENTER MOSOR, ZVONIMIROVA 63

→ *The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies* aims to reflect on transformations of cities, urban landscapes and urban governance in Croatian and other post-socialist societies in the Eastern Europe at a moment of urgency when the development of cities in those societies increasingly comes under pressure of neoliberal policies and economic overexploitation of space.

CONFERENCE TEAM: Petar Milat (coordinator), Tomislav Medak, Leonardo Kovačević, Marko Sančanin

02. 12. — 07. 12.
COMMUNITY CENTER MOSOR, ZVONIMIROVA 63

### How the City Builds the City

[documentary exhibition on urbanism]

→ The exhibition compares the socialism's and the current approach toward urban planning to understand better their qualities and negative aspects.

AUTHORS: Luciano Basauri, Dafne Berc, Marko Sančanin

22. 11. — 07. 12. 2008.

### If You Encounter them on the Streets, Join In

[artistic interventions in public space]

→ This series of interventions is determined by the necessity to radically redefine urban cohabitation as well as the belief that cohabitation is a sine-qua-non of the city.

COORDINATOR: Sonja Soldo
CURATORS: Olga Majcen Linn, Sunčica Ostojić, Sonja Soldo, Vesna Vuković
ASSISTANT: Ivo Poparić

WEDNESDAY, 03. 12.,
COMMUNITY CENTER MOSOR, ZVONIMIROVA 63

### European Cultural Policy and the Intependent Cultural Scene of the Western Balkan Region

[panel discussion]

→ The aim of this panel discussion is to inform Western Balkan independent cultural organizations, as well as general public, about the position of culture in the EU and it's future perspectives.

SPEAKERS: Daphne Tepper (Culture Action Europe - EFAH, Bruxelles), Nevenka Koprivšek (Bunker and Stara Elektrarna, Ljubljana), Ivet Ćurlin (WHW — What, how and whom, Zagreb), Lovro Rumiha (BADco., Zagreb)
MODERATOR: Emina Višnić

## Thursday, December 4

20:00 → 21:00
KEYNOTE 1:
### Neil Smith

21:00 → 23:00
### Opening Party
[with Pytzek]

## Friday, December 5

11:00 → 12:00
PANEL 1:
### Scales of Neo-liberalism

→ At the intersection of disciplines such as critical social theory, political economy and radical geography neoliberalism has become an umbrella-concept: too pervasive and - at the same time - too imprecise to describe heterogenous processes. In recent years extensive methodological care has been given to identifying different scales of neoliberal interventions (be they local, national, regional or global), which evidently has made the description of contemporary capitalism even more complex. This panel will highlight those developments, but also ask about the normative implications of such considerations.

PANELISTS: Jochen Becker, Jason Hackworth, Brian Holmes, Neil Smith
MODERATOR: Petar Milat

12:00 → 13:00
KEYNOTE 2:
### Jason Hackworth

13:15 → 14:15
PANEL 2:
### Neo-liberalism at the Test of Post-socialist Societies

→ The particular path that Eastern European societies have taken since the demise of real-socialist regimes has been reflected upon in many divergent manners, but it seemed for a while that the debate was dominated by a mixture of liberal-democratic institutional approach and an inflection of the postcolonial theory. Critical intellectual voices have described this tendencies as a culturalist pacification of political action, stressing those inassimilable traits making Eastern Europe an object not to be easily put into a given interpretative frame. Of particular interest for this panel will be the convergence of the above-mentioned culturalization and the neoliberal interventions, as well implications of Eastern European experiences for neoliberal interpretative frame.

PANELISTS: Boris Buden, Artemy Magun, Boyan Manchev, Stefan Nowotny
MODERATOR: Leonardo Kovačević

14:15 → 16:00
### Break

16:00 → 17:15
PANEL 3:
### Urban Struggles and Public Imagination

→ What are the historical trajectories resistance to post-fordist capitalism is part of, and how this new militancy fits into a larger historical narrative of contestation? In what sense globalization in general and transitional processes in emerging regions, in particular, have displaced the dominant forms of popular struggle? Are urban life and its antagonisms still the privileged domain to question and transform societies?

PANELISTS: Daniel Chavez, Gal Kirn, Gerald Raunig, Paul Stubbs

17:30 → 18:45
PANEL 4:
### Neo-liberal Governmentality and Urban Development

→ The panel will try to distinguish quality planning from mediocre development, and understand better the difference between efficient and inefficient governance behind the execution of the current models of urban policies. Evident co-existance of the masterplan structure and development strategies will serve as a starting point for the discussion.

PANELISTS: Luciano Basauri, Keller Easterling, Miran Gajšek, Vedran Mimica

19:00 → 20:00
KEYNOTE 3:
### Boris Buden

20:00 → 21:00
KEYNOTE 4:
### Keller Easterling

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

**17**

# PROGRAMME

## Saturday, December 6

**11:00 → 12:00**
KEYNOTE 5:
### Ines Weizman

**12:00 → 14:15**
PANEL 5:
### Dissenting Architectural Practices

→ The session brings together practitioners and theoreticians from South-East European region. Individuals, informal initiatives, non-governmental and other associations will present urban phenomena in the region through their projects. Second part will deal with a possibility of new architectural practice as a form of resistance that fits neither into the common repertoire of architectural tools nor familiar activist tactics.

PRESENTERS: Dafne Berc, Ana Đokić / Marc Neelen, Emil Jurcan, Florina Jerliu, Dinko Peračić, Armina Pilav, Tanja Rajić, Dubravka Sekulić
DISCUSSION: Srđan Jovanović Weiss, Ivan Kucina, Arjen Oosterman, Andrej Prelovšek, Kai Vöckler
MODERATOR: Marko Sančanin

**14:15 → 16:00**
### Break

**16:00 → 17:15**
PANEL 6:
### Semantics of Emerging Capitalisation

→ Recent history of urban transformations in post-socialist societies has brought into existence new spatial imageries and development typologies with their respective social expressions call for critical consideration and new languages for understanding. In the focus here will be the semantics of this new phenomenal world.

PANELISTS: Sabine Bitter / Helmut Weber, Maroje Mrduljaš, Mirko Petrić, Ani Vaseva

**17:30 → 18:45**
PANEL 7:
### Struggles against Capital Unlimited

→ Encroachments of capital on regulatory constraints, public property, social equality take many forms: privatizations of public space, gentrifications, deregulations, sanitations... The panel will look beyond particular cases and bring insights into mechanisms at work. But most of all it will look into the lessons learned from contestations - a pedagogy of the street teaching us a thing or two about spatial justice and strategies that could address and overturn those developments.

PANELISTS: Teodor Celakoski, Blaž Križnik, Doina Petrescu, Dimitry Vorobyev
MODERATOR: Tomislav Medak

**19:00 → 20:00**
KEYNOTE 6:
### Brian Holmes

**20:00 → 21:00**
KEYNOTE 7:
### Edi Rama

## Sunday, December 7

**12:00 → 14:15**
### Meetings / Workshops

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**03. 12. AT 18:00**
COMMUNITY CENTER MOSOR, ZVONIMIROVA 63, ZAGREB
### Implosion of the Left, Politics of Culture and Social Experimentation

[round table]

→ The round table will debate the past and present state of the left in the region, reflect on the political role of civil and socio-cultural activism therein, touch upon questions of culturalization of politics and politics of culture, look back on collective actions and authentic political incursions.

SPEAKERS: Boris Bakal (Zagreb), Boris Buden (Berlin/Zagreb), Jasenka Kodrnja (Zagreb), Aldo Milohnić (Ljubljana), Branimir Stojanović (Belgrade), Miha Zadnikar (Ljubljana), Igor Toshevski (Skopje)
MODERATOR: Tomislav Medak (Zagreb)

**25. 11. AT 19:15**
COMMUNITY CENTER MOSOR, ZVONIMIROVA 63
### Public Space Between Cars and Pedestrians: the Case of Kvaternikov Square in Zagreb

[round table]
SPEAKERS: Niko Gamulin, Damir Fabijanić, Žarko Puhovski, Gordana Vnuk, Vera Petrinjak-Šimek, Teodor Celakoski
MODERATOR: Zrinka Vrabec Mojzeš

**26. 11. AT 19:00**
COMMUNITY CENTER MOSOR, ZVONIMIROVA 63
### Why don't you adress the Mayor?

[workshop of cultural confrontation]

→ Based on Augusto Boal's theatrical method this workshop and performance have sought to enable the participants and the public to reflect upon everyday injusticies, making the behaviour of local city-government palpable.

COORDINATORS: Nataša Govedić, Vilim Matula

**04. 12. AT 13:00**
COMMUNITY CENTER MOSOR, ZVONIMIROVA 63
### National Forum for Space: Space and Sustainable Development

[round table]

**16. 12. AT 20:00**
LITERARY CLUB BOOKSA, MARTIĆEVA 14D
### Life in the Neoliberal Reality

[discussion]

**18**

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

Artemy Magun
*Ideas towards the postsocialist left.*

# ARTEMY MAGUN

# Ideas towards the postsocialist Left

In Russia, the left, in the traditional Western terms, has been all but endemic in the 1990s, because the libertarian or liberal opposition to the Soviet regime understood itself (although only since 1992) as the "right-wing" (because they believed in the advantages of capitalism, and this position corresponded, in their minds, over their emancipatory ideas), and the name of the "left" was reserved with the "Communist party of the Russian Federation", the heir to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union - which has been relatively popular (with some of those who suffered from the reforms) and has consistently defended, until now, a classical social-conservative program (with a touch of chauvinism and clericalism). There was virtually no left, in the traditional sense of the word (which is defined by the form of the political position, not by the socialist content, which is often shared by conservatives and liberals), with the exception of small groups of soviet non-orthodox Marxists (B. Kagarlitsky, A. Buzgalin, Al. Tarasov, and the like). Only starting in the years 2000, when the "right-wing", conservative ideology of the ruling regime was becoming obvious and even self-reflected, and when the post-soviet intelligentsia gradually understood the global ideological debate, that there started appearing small, mostly youth organizations with what is often called "the internationalist left" agenda. "Chto delat" was one of such groups. It inherited a tradition of the 1990s, where philosophers interested in contemporary Us and French theory actively collaborated with contemporary artists. This gave to philosophers and critics possibilities of alternative self-expression and public activism, and provided the contemporary artists with the discursive legitimation which is the sine qua non of this fluid genre. In the case of Chto Delat, an additional factor was the international career orientation of most group members, their education, which taught them that both the boldest contemporary art and the radical philosophy of the genre Benjamin - Adorno - Derrida - Deleuze are normally associated with the left political agenda, the more radical, the more radical is the intellectual radicalism. Moreover, the avant-gardist art and literary expression, for which most of group members have a preference, also connected, for them, to a radical political position, for an act and gesture going beyond the art's frame. The case of Russia, where this connection has been for most part not read, was both felt as a confusion to be settled, and as an interesting symptom, which denuded the hidden conservative elements of the new theory, and the need of a new synthetic theoretical work, which would integrate the experience of the post-socialist art and thought, by interpreting it in a utopian or emancipatory way.

Indeed, the interpretations of Deleuze and Baudrillard (the favorites) in Russia in the 1990s were usually apolitical, in the best case, pro-capitalist, or even fascist, in the worst. Thus, the critical theory of Baudrillard is often understood the criticism of the contemporary Western culture as a whole, with its social movements, feminism, public sphere, etc., while Deleuze and Benjamin were read in the liberal way (end of ideologies and political struggles, praise of anonymous masses watching TV), and Deleuze's discourse of machines of war is sometimes used as an apology of violence. The links of the repressive rationalist order criticized by the contemporary philosophy (which is predominantly anarchist) with capitalism have not been seen at all, because capitalist modernization was perceived as a force that would oust the old Soviet nomenclatura and introduce the Western standards of social life. Therefore, our insistence on the Marxist criticism and utopian thinking has been largely perceived by intellectuals and especially artists as either repressive moralism or a new weird PR strategy.

However, in the years 2000 things partly changed, in the sense that the happy coexistence of capitalism with authoritarianism has become obvious, and so has the need and value of active public resistance in the face of the cynical use of arbitrary power by the state. Thus, the leftist position received somewhat more attention, and a part of liberals started moving toward a revolutionary, predominantly democratic program and allied themselves with the small leftist groups (the "Other Russia" and the "March of the discontent"). However, they still remain a marginal force. It is more or less clear from the polls and from the recent events that if the social tensions growing in the country explode, then the majority of the protesters would take an extreme nationalist position. Indeed, conservatism is now the hegemonic ideology, and not the low-educated classes which would be the obvious candidates for revolt would know how to avoid its grip. Moreover, the criticism of globalization and of the US policy is naturally interpreted in the sense of Russian nationalism: Putin is joined here by many intellectuals. Thus, the task of socialist education by the left seems immense, and even the task of converting the elites seems distant enough.

This condition, between liberalism and nationalism, seems rather typical for the left in the post-socialist countries, particularly in the former Yougoslavia (if not for all semi-periphery countries).

However, its existence makes sense, and it provides a perspective genuinely different from the mainstream Western left. I'll speak of Russia, but suspect that this can be applied to other countries, too. First, the Russian left can rely on a serious national tradition of left-wing thought, political practice, and art. This is even expressed in the title of the group "Chto Delat". This was a radical emancipatory tradition, even though it should be criticized for the tendencies that would later bring the revolution to failure. Thus, we *should* speak to the nationalists, and agree on the need of organic and deeply grounded culture - however, the organic culture for Russia is precisely revolutionary, utopian, and "alterglobalist" - being always involved in the global affairs from a haf-outsider point of view.

Second, the Russian left cannot ignore the Soviet "socialist" experience. Although it is generally agreed that the Soviet Union was a right-wing bureaucratic empire, and not an incorporation of the left-wing program, nevertheless it was a society *sui generis* which did have some communist traits, although precisely not in the official sense, and in spite of it. Thus, the total *alienation* of people from property and power led, paradoxically, to a possibility of genuine solidarity, etc. The Western left, which is tightly connected to liberalism, usually understands socialism and communism as a regime of joint property, of the re-approproation of the world, of the general friendliness and sense of civility. In this sense, socialism is close to be achieved in the developed countries of Europe. But for a radical alternative, this kind of society lacks negativity, lacks a sense of habituation to the Other, which has been partly achieved in the Soviet society, in its opposition to the State. Finally, because Russia lived through intense revolutionary times, and now lives through the time of authoritarian despotism, the position of the left is sharply different from the West where there have been no revolutions since 1968, and people are not expecting major change, are taking the current social conditions and biopolitical measures (such as the new smoking regulations) for granted. The revolution appears in a relaxed way, such as Negri and Hardt's exodus of the multitude. In Russia, on the contrary, we are living in a rift zone of the developed imperial capitalism, and the mixed political economies of the peripheries. The tension is great, and the power, a mixture of modernizing force and traditionalist conservatism, behaves cynically and ruthlessly. Thus, the political stance of the left can not easily remain moderate, or vaguely anarchist. The situation, to be changed, requires a strong leadership, strong and top-bottom effort of the mobilizing enlightenment of the people, who are being de-enlightened by the state and capital, and a vision of an alternative. All of this is an anathema to your average French or American leftist who is still in 1968 and is most afraid of dictatorship and of organization. Thus, agreeing in principle, we disagree on the subjective position the leftist position takes. Thus, a new political and ideological synthesis is needed, and the Chto Delat is gradually trying to bring it forward. ∎

> ❝ The political stance of the left can not easily remain moderate, or vaguely anarchist. The situation, to be changed, requires a strong leadership, strong and top-bottom effort of the mobilizing enlightenment of the people, who are being de-enlightened by the state and capital, and a vision of an alternative



PHOTO BY **Emina Višnić**

**Marko Pašalić**
tgtt zg '08 (Transitional Gossiping Tourist Tour
Zagreb '08) [sightseeing]



PHOTO BY **Emina Višnić**

**Marko Pašalić**
tgtt zg '08 (Transitional Gossiping Tourist Tour
Zagreb '08) [sightseeing]

**Keller Easterling**
*The wrong story*

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

**19**

# The wrong story

**KELLER EASTERLING**

narratives. If they inspire incredulity, perhaps it is because their instrumentality and logic are simply underexplored. Many such phantom turning points and fulcrums are not easily taxonomized or moralized by the left or the right. Yet however invisible to our political orthodoxies, they may be the real cause of shifts in sentiment, changes in economic fortune, an escalation or suspension of violence, or a swift epidemic of change. While not sanctioned by a recognized form of polity, these events reside in a more extensive parallel polity with fickle or unexpressed logics.

For instance:

The politically conservative and seemingly immovable "red states" in the US, have suddenly and quickly shifted their economies. Although they are supporters of big-oil politicians, they grow ethanol. Their megachurches sign the Kyoto protocol, and their oil pirates have begun to steal old cooking oil from US fast-food restaurants to fuel cars.

Running counter to the automobile and aeronautic research conducted and deployed in the major superpowers, post–World War II Japan pursued high-speed trains and now lends that technology to countries in the Middle East, the epicenter of oil. Transportation rivals like airlines and trains that used to be pitted against each other in a war of obsolescence and replacement are now absorbing and mimicking each other.

While the US gun and tobacco lobbies might seem equally matched in power, it is quite easy to buy a gun one day and kill someone the next while it is now impossible to smoke a cigarette after dinner in a restaurant.

Contrary to all the avowed necessities of the US Department of Defense, interrogators like Deuce Martinez in US offsite prisons extract more information with long empathetic conversation than with coercive aggression.[01]

Surely architecture should be considered within a list of things that are not supposed to happen. We have even developed a fatigue for expressing incredulity at the booms of building in China and the Middle East. We are often ready with another swaggering tale of hyperbolic building in Dubai, Qatar, Kuwait, Chongqing, Astana, or Moscow. Architecture is accustomed to telling itself that it is not invited to weigh in on official policy and so cannot bear any real responsibility for it. But within the parameters of the wrong story, the less official political field seems more vast and consequential.

Indeed, most of what happens in the world might be considered to be part of the wrong story—the things that are not supposed to happen.

## The wrong story

Since we often expect political stories to follow familiar epic or tragic plot lines, seemingly unlikely political events excite feelings of resourcefulness. They constitute outlying evidence and category leftovers—the butterflies that do not get pinned to the board because they do not reinforce expectations. These "wrong stories" exceed prevailing logics or conventional wisdom and reset our accustomed

## The right story

Despite the exhaustion of our proper political narratives, we often continue to cling to the right stories rather than learn from the wrong ones. On February 15, 2003, the metropolitan world marched in the streets against another unspeakably wrong story: the Iraq War. For the grand strategists of neo-realpolitik, the Bush presidency was going to be the right story, the one and only epic historical story. Yet Bush, costumed in clanking armor, was not supposed to be getting his lines wrong. And for the opposition, an epidemic of dissent was not supposed to fail...but it did. A supposedly representative government did not operate like the participatory democracy that it wished to offer to the newly "liberated" Iraq. Clearly there were other political stories at work here. Yet in the aftermath of the spectacular failures of crude, primitive belligerence in the Bush administration, the left and the right reinforce their own symmetrical opposition and strengthen their official core positions.

For the activist, for instance, the right story is, by most accounts, resistance. Resistance assumes an oppositional framework—an organizational disposition of symmetrical competitive

entrenchment. One must fight for the right, choose up sides, declare principles, and decide who is not sympathetic. It is a very narrow but a very well-rehearsed habit of mind that has organized most of our classic political thought and established epistemic frameworks for huge bodies of knowledge. The right story is often an epic, tragic, totalizing narrative in which global forces naturally part into symmetrical dueling forces that must conquer the other for total revolution. Anything less would constitute collusion. Righteousness intensifies such combative dispositions. Even those theories that admit to complicities and mixtures somehow still drift toward epic heraldry and the theme music of enemies and innocents. In contemporary theories of empire, multitude or total war, monistic and binary structures prevail to organize information. The grand strategies of the left and the right thus even share a structural resemblance. Moreover, the this-kills-that habit of mind that often organizes historical events and political phenomena in terms of successive rather than coexistent and recurring events remains in place. The epistemes of wars and revolution that have organized so much of history remain intact. The pyrotechnics of combative struggles perhaps even camouflage other forms of violence in the world. Even when an argument only assumes this structure, structure by default becomes content and medium message, shaping thought and providing the comforting sensation of being right.

Some forms of activism must declare their name and allegiance as resistance. Yet, by maintaining customary habits of mind that bracket out contradictory evidence, resistance is often left marching against an illusive or non-existent enemy and curing its failures with another purification ritual. So much knowledge has been and will continue to be arranged within the epistemes of

war and resistance at the battleground or barricade. Still, how much could one know about the world after consistently marching in that direction? Wars and conflicts press themselves into our view. Yet telling are those moments when the templates and narratives of war seem to lack information. (Bush was very helpful in this regard.) Our exhausted forms of tragic or combative narratives lead us again into regular wars aimed at the wrong violence, where the chemistry of righteous mimicry and competition only has the power to further escalate tensions.

When the world is divided into symmetrical warring camps, other false oppositions and category mistakes appear. The architecture of global relations is not, of course, arranged as a series of symmetrical face-offs or head-to-head battlegrounds. Far from being a world with sides and causes, there is ample evidence of overlapping networks of influence and allegiance. For instance, theories that pit state against non-state or national against non-national/transnational forces probably create a false opposition that skews theory. In what Stephen Krasner has called "hypocritical sovereignty," state and non-state actors in an ancient, mutually sustaining partnership, relies on the lubrication of transnational proxies, doubles and camouflages to reinforce the power of the state. Moreover, the overt oppositions of war are often national pageants to cover for a wide array of non-state activities that like to remain duplicitous, under the radar, and outside of political jurisdictions.

The notion that there is a proper forthright realm of political negotiation (the right story) usually acts as the perfect camouflage for parallel political activity (the wrong story.) It is often a mistake to cling to recursive logics and disregard caprice—the subterfuge, hoax, and hyperbole that actually rules the world. Power escapes. Becoming the category mistake to absolute logics or zero sum games, it wriggles out to take shelter in another ruse or join other moving targets. For every forthright gesture there is a duplicitous one. It is not so hard to be right. Many people come disguised as right. It may even be incorrect to be right, es-

> ❝ Architecture, as extrastatecraft, finds itself in an unexpectedly consequential position, manipulating codes of passage and points of leverage in the thickening back channels of spatial infrastructures around the world



PHOTO BY **Emina Višnić**

**Marko Pašalić**
tgtt zg '08 (Transitional Gossiping Tourist Tour
Zagreb '08) [sightseeing]



PHOTO BY **Emina Višnić**

**Škart and 3 embroiderers**
(Lenka Zelenović, Brigita Medo, Mirjana Boksan)
As it is – My Cooks [street action]

# 20

**OPERATION:CITY 2008**
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

**Keller Easterling**
*The wrong story*

pecially when one is absolutely right. *Perhaps our own expectations of proper techniques and territories for political work supply some of activism's most significant constraints.* Wandering away from monisms, binaries, oppositional stances, and purification rituals, what extended repertoire of activism might one acquire from the wrong stories?

## Dissensus

*… I would rather talk about dissensus than resistance….*
—Jacques Rancière, *Artforum International*

*Most of the political life of subordinate groups is to be found neither in overt collective defiance of powerholders nor in complete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast territory between these two polar opposites.*
—James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*

The phantom narrative or the non-story constitutes a kind of extrastatecraft. Here is a vast pasture of nonconforming material expanding beyond our own restrictive endgames. *Extrastatecraft* may not conform to political orthodoxies or recognized economic logics, and it remains extrinsic to and in excess of proper political channels. Multiple forces, assembling and shape-shifting, replace the fantasy Goliath of monolithic capital or corporate culture with even more insidious moving targets.

In addition to direct, head-to-head political action, this research looks for political instrumentality in indirect techniques or aesthetic regimes that may, after Jacques Rancière and others, generate *dissensus* rather than resistance. Jacques Rancière's, *The Politics of Aesthetics* or Nicholas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* both return evidence of aesthetic *practices* with political power. These practices do not exist in a nominative or symbolic register, nor are they confined within a fixed framework of meaning or connoisseurship. They reside in an active, relational register. Their power relies on complex cocktails of affective and subtextual messages.

In this realm of dissensus one finds an extended repertoire of

trouble making and leverage that often includes, ironically, not the opposition of tense resistance and competition, but rather gifts, compliance, aesthetic appeals, nuanced dispositions, misdirection/distraction, meaninglessness, comedy, unreasonable innovation and spatial contagions.

## The Panda or Gift

One powerful technique of leverage is the gift or the "Panda." In 2005, China offered to Taiwan two pandas named TuanTuan and YuanYuan, names which when translated mean "unity." The Panda is typically designed to be the offer you can't refuse. It is a steamroller of sweetness and kindness. It is the means of controlling and leveraging others while appearing to be chirpy and sweet. Architecture and urbanism, inextricably bound up with the irrational desires and competitive urges embodied by symbolic capital, is often a Panda. Yet it is often one bestowed with more capitulations than countering demands.

Architecture and urbanism in the form of architectourism, retail, entertainment, or resort development are often delivered in conjunction with the blue-jeans-and-Coke fiction linking global markets with a desire for participatory democracy. Architects agonize over whether or not to participate in this transfer seemingly limited by a repertoire of choices that only includes collusion or refusal. The Panda is a reminder of the ever-present possibility of leverage. It offers as a technique the excessively soft and cute, but arm-twisting, handshake.

## Compliance

*…let's all run very slowly!*
— Milan Kundera, *The Joke*

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James C. Scott draws attention to a portion of Milan Kundera's *The Joke* in which the prisoners in the story are challenged to a relay race against the camp guards. The prisoners decide to run very slowly against the sprinting guards, while wildly cheering each other on. Their compliance brings them together in an act of defiance that does not diminish or tax their energies with competition and fighting. Exaggerated compliance can dis-

arm and deliver independence from authority. Like the Panda, it might also make a supposed authority beholden to the obedient servant.[02]

The architect's typical sycophantic behavior to a client might be transposed to an exaggerated compliance that displays its own artful power. When the Danish/Belgian architect team, PLOT (now BIG and JDS Architects) designed the VM houses in 2002, they included a portrait of the developer as an entry mural. BIG similarly designed an airport hotel and conference center in Stockholm the windows of which create portraits of Crown Princess Victoria, Princess Madeleine and Prince Carl-Philipe (completion date 2010). When the mayor of Copenhagen, Ritt Bjerregaard pledged to produce five thousand affordable apartments, BIG, in mock obedience, instantly delivered a design for all five thousand apartments (the Kloverkarréen project).[03] The project stands as an insistent reminder of the original promise.

## Rumor/Gossip

James C. Scott also identifies gossip and rumor as one of the chief forms of aggression among the powerless. While rumor is a favorite in any micro-salon, it is also a practical technique of markets and governments. Hoax and spin are the raw material of politics. The hoax that attempted to demonstrate that global warming was a hoax successfully helped to delay political support for green policies. Yet two can play at this game. Design is, in a sense, hoax. It vividly anticipates and materializes cultural projections with tools used in many forms of persuasion. The utopian and visionary can sometimes bring with them the deadening reconciliation of consensus. The less resolute but rumored news might be more contagious as part of a confidence game to popularize and capitalize change.

## Disposition

The *disposition* stored in the logic, arrangement, and chemistry of global spaces and networks can be manipulated for activist motives. For instance, we easily

assess behaviors and arrangements of power implied by an arborescent, hierarchical network or a hub-and-spoke organization. We understand the resilience or weakness of a computer network organized in a parallel rather than a serial arrangement. One might learn from Gregory Bateson, who described behavior in terms of the architecture of group interactions or aggregations. Bateson identified symmetrical alignments that escalated violence and competition, like the binaries that arrange our thought into argumentative forms of combat. He also identified those asymmetrical or complementary organizations in which the roles of dominance and submission were clear. Finally he identified reciprocal organizations in which multiple relationships were interwoven and interbalanced to the degree that they did not necessarily produce any violent precipitant. One might also learn from Erving Goffman who discussed the dispositions coalescing from the myriad texts and subtexts that any individual or group present.

The spatial chemistry of patency, redundancy, hierarchy, recursion, or resilience may be the vehicle of or recipe for aggression, submission, exclusion, or duplicity. Cities and nations possess a disposition reliant on the physical chemistries of their infrastructures as well as the multiple messages of their naturally duplicitous sovereignties. Cities like Jerusalem that have fostered a symmetrical standoff have an organizational disposition very different from that of more cosmopolitan cities sponsoring many cultural adjacencies, minor aggressions, and circumstantial desires to distract from violence. When placed in crisis, the serial arrangement of a high-rise skyscraper like the World Trade Center exhibited a very different disposition from that of the Pentagon, a building with multiple, parallel points of entry as well as overlap between networks of practices and operations. These often-invisible attributes themselves constitute a relational polity and might be deployed to douse aggressions or intensify dissensus.

## Comedy

Comedy has long been an activist's secret weapon. Rather than arousing competitive entrenchment, the comedian distracts, diffuses, and disarms. Humor topples accustomed constructs while also lifting up a mask to honestly expose the trick. Comedy unravels the rigidity and danger that accompanies both concentrations of power as well as the resistance that opposes that power. Architecture culture has not been terribly successful in the comedic register. It is not the art form to which one would go to be tutored in the production of uncontrollable hilarity. The counter culture demonstrations and lampoons of Ant Farm or Archigram perhaps register more significantly as models than do postmodern mannered ironies. Erandi De Silva's Logopelago satirizes *The World*—Dubai's familiar island formation—by creating similar island formations in the shape of logos. Yet this humor is perhaps not as disarming as that of the *The World* itself, a hyperbolic development that, in a sense, creates its own critique. Francoise Roche's *DustyRelief/B_mu* intensifies its power by expanding into a relational, active register. The building was designed for Bangkok, Thailand in 2002, to electrostatically attract dust from the surrounding polluted air.[04] The building's continual obliging willingness to clean its surroundings coupled with its slow miniscule advances towards becoming a gigantic and adorably flocked fuzz ball is actively comic in visual, temporal, and cognitive registers. Its critique of pollution as something reified in an attempted remedy could not be more explicit. It fosters sympathetic resourcefulness with its own enthusiasm, while also associating the desire for cleaner air with hapless self-deprecation rather than rigid piety and belt-tightening.

## Misdirection/ Distraction

Mes enfants, *you mustn't go at things head-on, you are too weak; take it from me and take it on an angle…Play dead, play the sleeping dog.*
— Balzac, *Les Paysans*

Activism cast as resistance typically goes toe to toe with an oppressing power, identifying itself

> **"** Architecture should be considered within a list of things that are not supposed to happen



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**Škart and 3 embroiderers**
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As it is – My Cooks [street action]



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*The wrong story*

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

**21**

and pointing to an overlooked truth. Yet the success of circuitous and indirect action is a longstanding tactic of conflict and war from Sun Tzu to Machiavelli. In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri discuss a number of techniques of political craft, including the refusal of characters like Herman Melville's Bartelby or J. M. Coetzee's Michael K., paying particular attention to Michael K. as a gardener whose constant movement is mimetic of the vines he wishes to be tending. This serpentine disposition eases the dangerous stakes embodied in defiant refusal and enhances his chances of success.[05] Perhaps Melville's *Confidence Man* replaces Bartelby in this discussion, offering multiple stories and laundered identities to garner power and confuse authority. The architect and urbanist often attempt to go directly to the source of an urban problem and cure it. The practice is suffused with language about "mending" and bridging with shape, arrangement, and geometry as if these things yielded primary effects on the complex circumstances of urbanity. The discipline is under-rehearsed in remote interventions and indirect or systemic effects that potentially provide powerful inversions if understood in a relational register. When London makes a simple choice to contain development within a bounded area, it generates a number of indirect and ramifying effects. In any of the architect's multiple negotiations, correlative thinking on programmatic, cultural, financial systems potentially generates indirect adjustments or lures the project down paths that are motivated by alternative political goals. Characterized in terms of disposition, misdirection or distraction, like comedy, is often precisely the thing that breaks the deadlock of symmetrical face-offs and downshifts towards a more reciprocal, open architecture of relationship.

## Meaninglessness/Irrationality

*Global society is a rationalized world, but not exactly what one could call a rational one.*
— John W. Meyer: Gili S. Drori, and Hokyu Hwang, *Globalization and Organization: World Society and Organizational Change*

Related to the notion of misdirection might be that of meaninglessness and irrationality. The other gardener that might be considered in this cast of potential models is Chauncey Gardiner from Jerzy Kosinski's *Being There.* He is at once comedian, confidence man and beautiful soul whose meaningless statements about the growth of the garden or the inevitability of the seasons allow him to circulate with the US president and other leaders of national prominence. Meaninglessness and a deliberate lack of association with the recognized dogma of political camps generates political instrumentality. John W. Meyer's studies of organizations join those of Bateson, Goffman, Bourriaud, and Rancière in exploring affective behaviors and actorhood in culture. Organizations of every kind determine collective protocols that attempt to predictably profit, govern, or otherwise maintain power. Typically these organizations find rationalizing formulas galvanizing, but they must also develop techniques for overlooking evidence that contradicts these formulations. They must find ways of "decoupling" errant events from controlling logics. Attempting to remain isometric and intact, these rationalizing formulas can also engender nonsensical beliefs to which the group is blindly obedient. For instance, irrational aspirations and fictions routinely drive the advent of infrastructure networks as carriers of symbolic capital for nations and industries. The US highway system, designed around false logics of traffic volume and speed, can maintain an irrational hold on transportation spending. Most of the world's space-making organizations optimize formulas, programs, and temporal occupations in this way, while also quantifying shifting desires in an experience economy.

If the rationalized structure is the best vessel for irrational content, there is significant political instrumentality in nonsensical messages and sentiments. Many seemingly monolithic and impenetrable organizations trade on ephemeral desire. When a totali-

tarian regime embraces the messages of tourist fantasies, retail scripts, or spiritualized golf communities, the powers of meaninglessness are at work. Nonsense lubricates situations that might otherwise be alert to divisive points of view or adherence to the orthodoxies that have created conflict. This common fuzziness in control organizations are potentially the soft and fertile territory of activism.

## Piracy

*The intellectual as buccaneer – not a bad dream.*
—Peter Sloterdijk: *Critique of Cynical Reason*

Self-serving desires typically motivate piracy, whether the pirate is a common criminal or an adjunct agent of the state. Piracy can support the control of self-referential organizations, and it can itself operate with self-referential control. Yet piracy is also often the organization that finds some selfish percentage in operating *between* organizations, playing with the mismatch of their respective logics. Productive piracy might then constitute those moves that release and mix more information than they hoard or deny. Perhaps there is a bit of piracy in the misdirection and trickery necessary to persuade a company like Wal-Mart to promote green policies. For instance, Wal-Mart has decided that daylighting more effectively sells products or that selling compact fluorescent light bulbs will put them on the right side of risk management predictions concerning global warming.[06] The pirate knows how to cheat the cheater; for selfish reasons, they motivate others to do things for selfish reasons. Far from being defeated or agitated by the behemoth, the pirate is figuring how his moves will be amplified by the size of the company just as the classic pirate of the nineteenth century determined how many men would like to drink rum during an embargo. Whatever the motives, sneaky and enterprising bargains may not measure their

productivity in moral terms—on a determination of what is good—but on whether it has released and enriched the flow of information or broken the bonds of the information lockdown that constitutes destructive control.

## Unreasonable Innovation

Perhaps one of the most successful techniques of the pirate is innovation. Inventors and entrepreneurs are often considered to be unreasonable, just as practical and theoretical are often considered to be opposing concepts. The entrepreneur will be most successful if his innovations theorize a different more practical solution—if they renovate what is considered to be practical. They are so practical that they understand and anticipate the successes of untheorized events—the stories that are not supposed to happen. They often find fertile territory in an inversion. Social entrepreneurs like Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank and inventor of micro-credit, ironically expanded capital by means of poverty. Despite their proximity to large investments that determine the political and environmental disposition of global space, architects are often not trained to organize their practice entrepreneurially, with more power to leverage their own projects towards their own political goals.

## Contagions

Entrepreneurs understand the power of multipliers—how to play market networks with the viral dissemination of both objects and aesthetic regimes. More than just a customer base for sales or a management style, multipliers build the network environment within which companies reside and the global populations with which they communicate. A multiplier is a contagion or germ in the market that compounds exponentially. The arts now more readily experiment with networked practices, performance, and relational aesthetics rather than exclusively tutoring an appreciation of the singularly-authored object. Architecture is composed of repeatable components and recipes; the profession is structured to support singular creations as enclosures or plans. Assemblies usually organized by others (for example, the con-

struction industry) are also potentially under the purview of an activist architect who understands their power of these component populations to alter localized or globally disseminated environments. New objects of practice and entrepreneurialism, redefined in a relational register, reflect the network's ability to amplify structural shifts or smaller moves.

Architecture may contribute many wrong stories and untheorized events to relieve default forms of oppositional activism and extend a field of operation beyond the sanctioned (and even sheltering) political territory of borders, battlegrounds, and barricades. If icons of piety, collusion, or competition often escalate tensions, might alternative design ingenuities distract from them? Might we look past the symmetrical face-offs of resistance with their classic political pedigree to a dissensus that is less self-congratulatory, less automatically oppositional, but more effective (and sneakier)? Indeed having long absented itself from official political channels as a way to avoid responsibility, architecture, as extrastatecraft, finds itself in an unexpectedly consequential position, manipulating codes of passage and points of leverage in the thickening back channels of spatial infrastructures around the world. ■

01 Scott Shane, "Inside a 9/11 Mastermind's Interrogation," New York Times, June 22, 2008, A1.

02 James C. Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990),139-40; Milan Kundera, The Joke (New York: Harper, 1992), 94–97.

03 www.plot.dk; www.big.dk

04 http://www.new-territories.com/roche2002bis.htm

05 Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. Empire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 203--204.

06 Among the many references to this revelation: http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/light/conserve/sustainability/studies/cv5_ss.htm; http://www.savethebulbs.org/retail.html; http://www.majorskylights.com/school/walmart.php

"Resistance is often left marching against an illusive or non-existent enemy and curing its failures with another purification ritual



PHOTO BY **Emina Višnjić**

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**22**

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

Ines Weizman
*The destruction of participation*
*... and of housing in Leipzig-Grünau*

**INES WEIZMAN**

# The destruction of participation
## ... and of housing in Leipzig-Grünau

being extended and no new tenancy agreements were allowed. Residents were looking for hints about the vague future of the building in every new measure, every new service personnel, gardeners, unrecognized visitors, especially men in suits. Following the fate of other buildings in the neighbourhood, it dawns on them with disbelief that their homes might be the next to be removed. For the residents this eventuality was described as implausible as these buildings were in fully functioning condition and apartments in Leipzig-Grünau were still in demand especially the 2-bedroom types, and especially in the area around *Seffnerstreet* which is so close to the lake. Neighbouring housing associations even have waiting lists for new tenants. Not only the residents but also the many shop-owners of the block and the staff of the medical centre caught the fear spreading like a contagious disease. Will they have enough customers to function? The future seems insecure and the question of whether it would be 'worth' investing in oneself, one's family and one's business has its impact on people's everyday decision making. Flats were emptying out simply out of the fear of demolition.

### Announcements

In October 2006, speculations and fears became facts. The housing association *Baugenossenschaft Leipzig* announced the impending demolition of the housing slab *Seffnerstreet* 1 to 19. The owner argued that since 45 percent of the flats were standing empty the housing block was economically nonviable. What follows is a tragic and seemingly inescapable routine. Grünau, once one of the biggest and most successful (in terms of demand and quality of life) housing projects of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and a privileged site of living for almost 90.000 inhabitants has since the mid 1990s entered a continuous process of demographic decline: today only 47.000 inhabitants have remained.[01]

But all hope was not lost with the publishing of the demolition announcement. Residents, retailers, service providers and the staff of the medical centre organised the collection of signatures against the demolition plans. The action, called: '*Stadtumbau. So Nicht!*' (City regeneration. Not like This!) demanded the revision of the state policy that awarded subsidies for housing demolition. They also called for revisions to the 2000 "City Development Plan for large-scale housing estates (Großsiedlungen)"[02] based on the 'Pakt der Vernunft' (the pact of reason), which allowed the six largest housing companies to "consolidate" the housing market in Leipzig, by removing 8,000 flats from the market, most of them in Grünau.[03] In principle, the signatories demanded at least the right to know which homes would be destroyed and when.

It was not the first time that residents collected signatures to stop the demolitions. In 2003, 2500 people protested against the demolition of the 11-floor slab *Brackestreet* 36 – 46 (Fig. 1), located parallel to the block on *Seffnerstreet*. Because of the convenient service and shopping facilities on the ground floor residents had considered the building as a central place for their neighbourhood. This was also the reason why the city development plan in 2000 had specifically advised on upgrading this urban centre. But despite the plan, the numerous protests and a last-minute offer to buy from another housing association, the state subsidy that supports the demolition of empty buildings with 70 Euros per square metre of apartment destroyed could not be beaten. In 2005 the building was evacuated and cranes and bulldozers removed its parts, creating a large empty plot of earth on which

today some ugly weeds have begun to grow.

This time, 3500 signatures were collected and submitted to the planning department of the mayor of the city of Leipzig. In addition, post-cards of protest were sent to the Ministry of Interior of Saxony and the Sächsische Aufbaubank, a bank which provided the mortgage deal to the housing association. In response, in February 2007, the municipal officials of the city of Leipzig, including the mayor responsible for city regeneration and development, invited the public to a discussion about an updated planning strategy, the so-called *Entwicklungsstrategie 2020*.

### Engaging the public

The meeting room in the leisure centre *Völkerfreundschaft* in Leipzig-Grünau was over-crowded. Residents were curious to hear more details about the *Entwicklungsstrategie 2020*, which held information about the future of their homes. The well-dressed hosts began the meeting with a question that is a standard animation technique in children theatres: "Who here is from Grünau?" Angry "boo" from the audience. The presenters tried to gain ground. They began to lament the general process of demographic decline in Leipzig-Grünau, where according to their statistics – contrary to the whole of Leipzig – the demand was continuously decreasing. Prompt questions about how the diagrams of a further declining population are calculated or about the difference between the term *Stadtumbau* (urban regeneration) that the municipality is continuously using, and the probably more truthful term 'demolition' unsettled the presenters. According to the new plan in housing complex 7 and 8, they continued,

7.000 flats have to be demolished. Because according to the prognosis, in the favourable case-scenario, in 2020 only 40,000 inhabitants will have remained, while in the unfavourable case only 32,000 will be living here. A bitterly amused and angry murmur in the audience signaled the public mistrust in these demographic prophecies. Rather, people suspected that housing associations in collaboration with the city planning offices followed a particular planning strategy that aimed to encourage people to move out so that they would be forced to move into the newly refurbished 19th century houses near the city centre (which also stand empty, but despite the renovated condition cannot offer the same conveniences as Grünau). Individual voices of anger were rising, especially when a power-point presentation threw the new strategic map on the wall. Now, projected at this scale, the low resolution of the lines, the rushed red shadings marking the demolition of buildings and mistakes in the annotation of the plan were revealed to a public which knew every stone and every flowerbed in this area. Some houses were even wrongly marked 'already demolished', or 'to be demolished'. The apologies of the hosts were swallowed in the tumult in the auditorium.

The evening ended with the presentation of a series of red lines encircling the area around the houses *Seffnerstreet 1 to 19*, *Brackestrasse 24-34, 41-55* and *Ländlerstrasse 2-14*, marking the demolition of almost 1.000 apartments.[04] Within this sea of impending devastation the history of the large estate in Leipzig-Grünau would be recreated.

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In the post World War II period, most major European and North American cities experimented with the idea of new towns – modernist satellite cities mostly built of rows of housing blocks. The reasons varied from massive housing shortage, to the strategic requirements of a population dispersal that has become

### Rumours

**L**eipzig-Grünau, Spring 2006. In the housing slab *Seffnerstreet* 1 to 19, rumours were spreading that their homes were earmarked for demolition. For a while already, services of cleaning and general maintenance of the building had become irregular, tenancies for the 544 apartments in this building were not

> **"** For the GDR as much as for the rest of the Eastern Block, the new cities, and large-scale city extensions of the mid 1970s were no longer directly the products of necessity but also offered a chance to fulfil an ideological promise.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

**Ines Weizman**
*The destruction of participation
... and of housing in Leipzig-Grünau*

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

**23**

part of the security doctrine of the emerging nuclear age. For the GDR as much as for the rest of the Eastern Block, the new cities, and large-scale city extensions of the mid 1970s were no longer directly the products of necessity but also offered a chance to fulfil an ideological promise. Far from the banal, grey and depressing stigma attached to them at present, some of these housing projects, particularly the one for Leipzig-Grünau represented one of the most enthusiastic experiments to realize societal utopias. And they were largely received this way in the eyes of the public that sought and sometimes even competed to inhabit them.

## The history of Leipzig-Grünau

At the VIII Party Congress in July 1971, the government of the GDR decreed that the housing shortage was the core concern of the state's social policies and that every household should be provided with a well-equipped modern apartment before 1990. This decree also gave the impetus for the gigantic housing estate of Grünau, located on the western edge of the city of Leipzig. In June 1976, three years after the competition for it was launched, and a long phase of detailed planning, the foundation stone for over 35,000 apartments was laid. To help organise the logistics of the construction process, and to help impose a coherence and identity on this massive housing scheme, the project was initially subdivided into eight so-called 'housing complexes' that were connected by three pedestrian boulevards stretching from north to south. In these 'inner' structures, architects and planners sought to create intimate, quiet and rather small-scale spaces (Fig. 2). This enabled education and recreation centres to be built amidst lawns and green spaces. Space was demarcated in such a way that fences, walls and other physical boundaries were rendered unnecessary. Instead, boundaries were defined by the position and form of each architectural object in relation to its neighbour. This style of urban development made the area particularly attractive to young families whose children had most to gain from the traffic-free network of schools, kindergartens and playgrounds that

made up this green environment.

When the project began, the WBS-70 prefabricated panel series which formed its structural basis had been in use for only four years. This posed a considerable challenge for the architects who were attempting to construct an entire 'city' almost exclusively from prefabricated elements. Nearby, a whole factory was built with the sole purpose of supplying construction materials to the huge estate. As stipulated by the urban building 'kit' developed for the WBS-70 series, all prefabricated building elements were manufactured for particular functions, such as supermarkets, services, shops, schools, youth clubs, kindergartens and gyms. The apartment blocks themselves consisted of a limited variety of 5, 8 and 11 storey, mid-size tenements, as well as 16-storey tower blocks of the '*Erfurt*' type (PH 16). The logistics and the pace of construction were determined by the building technology. There were about seven assembly lines *(Taktstrassen)* for housing construction and a further two for public and education buildings, manned by almost 5,000 workers. About 12,400 housing units were completed between 1976 and 1980, but between 1981 and 1985, with improved technologies and increased pressures from the Party to keep to the targets of the five-year plan, the number of new flats ready for occupancy almost doubled to about 21,400.[05]

In November 1977, just a year after construction began, the first families moved into their new homes. About 60% of the flats were offered to workers' families, while the majority of the remainder were shared between families with several children and young couples. The need for housing was so urgent that moving vans arrived literally as construction vehicles departed. When people moved in, neither the interior decoration of their homes nor their surroundings had been properly completed. Wherever the industrial assembly tracks and cranes could not reach, or construction budgets were suddenly cut, people were asked to step in to provide what the planned economy could not pro-

vide. In the evenings, at weekends and on collective work assignment days – so-called *subotniks* (Russian for Saturday) – residents laboured to 'complete' their new homes (Fig. 3). This process was of course extremely labour-extensive and slow. For years, inhabitants lived in the middle of a construction site. Walking around the newly–built housing estates was only possible with rubber boots. However, despite the hardships, people acquiring flats in Leipzig-Grünau felt privileged to have been given such comfortable flats with heating, hot water and modern conveniences, and the expectation that their neighbourhood would one day be situated in the midst of greenery and gardens reinforced people's sense of identification with the new environment. Residents 'customising' their neighbourhoods by arranging the vegetation, playgrounds, street furniture, or loggias as they wished, described a form of participation that fostered public and private sentiments. Inhabitants both improved their private spaces and since the work necessitated collaborative effort it bonded those residents participating in the program, fostering feelings of local pride and encouraged residents to care for their communities.[06]

However, before mistakenly drawing an ideal, or nostalgic image of the practice of 'public involvement', it is important here to differentiate the concept of participation meant here from the rather 'conventional' meaning of participation as a form of hands-on practice that is combined with people's emotional attachment to a project, or home. In the context of 'real-existing' state-socialism, the term 'participation' relates also to rather ambiguous realities. On the one hand, residents participated in the completion of the construction work because they were driven by what could now be understood as conservative perhaps even (petit) bourgeois ideals of privacy, in a way where each cared for their own 'back-yard' – obviously, a concept which communist ideology officially detested. On the other hand, individual participation in the finishing up of state projects, much like the forced participation in party ceremonies and parades, which many liked to avoid but felt guilty

about, meant often no more than an improvised method of completing the work,, or beautification of a plan, whose general principles were dictated by party officials from the top-down. (Some of the protagonists of novels by Brigitte Reimann, or Irmtraud Morgner come to mind.) Indeed, 'persons in charge' of a 'house community', mostly allied to the *Volkssolidarität* (official welfare society) had frequently to 'encourage' residents who for reasons of laziness, ideological refusal, or simple snobbery of anything that smacked of 'collective action' refrained from participating in the *subotniks,* In socialist societies as in other political systems, this raises the problem of free choice in the call for 'participation', which probably always relates to some form of hardship, peoples' spare time and personal investment. This situation becomes even more precarious in the recent discussion by sociologist and urban critic, Christine Hannemann who recently warned about the neo-liberal calculation in the use of the concept of 'social capital' (of which the concept of public participation and volunteer engagement is a part), as a remedy for urban development. "*The concept of 'social capital", she writes: "is thus misused as a way of anchoring a new notion of society and managing the social costs effected by it. Many critical studies have shown that state assistance programs tend to destroy rather than build up local civic networks because of their principally top-down structure.*"[07] As it will be shown in the following, in Leipzig-Grünau, the dilemma of this situation is even more complicated: because residents who are still living in this estate, and who have already a stake in the success and development of their estates would be willing, to some degree, to participate and invest themselves (possibly in similar social networks to those instigated at the time of the GDR) in the main-

tenance and upgrading of their immediate neighbourhood, have lost both the cultural-political and the physical 'territory' in which their contribution would make sense. They have become the unwilling victims of the housing demolitions.

In the mid 1990s, the inner state migration between the cities of the east where work was precarious and the more economically solid cities of the west, became visible in increasingly abandoned buildings. In 2004, according to the latest study, every fifth flat in Leipzig-Grünau stood empty.[08] Hence, the city-allied housing association that owned most of the housing stock in Leipzig-Grünau opted for a major demolition scheme, focusing primarily on tower blocks. Out of Leipzig-Grünau's twenty blocks, only five remained by the end of 2004.[09] The housing association argued that they suffered from maintenance and management problems. It is true that the basic architectural form of a tower has an inherent weakness and depends for its success on high-density, balanced occupancy in a relatively small area. We understand here how sensitive an urban balance is and how apparently small transformations can produce dramatic effects. It only takes a few families to move out of a tower block or apartment block and the whole system of unpaid housekeepers, voluntary social workers, routines of neighbourly exchange, collective work assignments and human communication comes crashing down. Once the sense of belonging is undermined, the estate can be fatally damaged. The demolition of these towers are more than regrettable as they would have been ideal for residences for senior or disabled persons, because of their interior plan, the fact that there were lifts and because of their location. Currently (in 2007) the majority of buildings in Leipzig-Grünau are being costly renovated to

> **"** Grünau, once one of the biggest and most successful housing projects of the German Democratic Republic and a privileged site of living for almost 90.000 inhabitants has since the mid 1990s entered a continuous process of demographic decline: today only 47.000 inhabitants have remained

> **"** Stadtumbau.
> So nicht!



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

**24** OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

Ines Weizman
*The destruction of participation
... and of housing in Leipzig-Grünau*

adapt to the new groups of interest for such flats.

This development appears indeed very odd in view of the investments made for upgrading and renovating buildings and green spaces in Leipzig-Grünau, particularly in the late 1990s. Between 1997 and 1999, with the *Planspiel Leipzig-Grünau*, the government had funded a larger initiative that aimed at bringing residents and urban planners together in a variety of projects and activities. In hundreds of public meetings, workshops, photo competitions and children's projects, managed by the *Forum Leipzig-Grünau*, residents showed their interest in participating in the future of the estate. In 1999, a small publication documented the activities of the forum. Yet before the brochure was ready to be collected, the public had already realised that real decisions were being made elsewhere and people lost confidence in the existence of a reliable urban plan for the future of Grünau. Still today a few hundred copies of this documentation are available to the public for free. For no apparent reason, problem housing blocks were left standing, while others, in a good location and state of repair, were suddenly demolished (Fig. 4). The truth was that although a great deal of money had been invested (often in the wrong place, in retrospect), the municipal authorities (responsible for an urban planning strategy), the housing companies that owned buildings in Grünau and their respective credit institutions could not agree on a common plan for the future. The reason for this financial calculation has its origin in the GDR, or more precisely in the contract for the reunification of Germany.

### Old debts

The housing companies in Leipzig Grünau, as in most of the gargantuan housing projects of the GDR built since the 1970s, are burdened with 'old debts'. According to the contract of the reunification in 1990, the individual housing associations, which were formerly subordinated to the GDR planning economy and its budgeting, inherited their former 'debts' from the Staatsbank of the GDR which had once offered 'long-term loans' for the construction of housing estates.

> **❝** What has been lost here is thus not only an idea of community participation, but the very idea of political citizenship – a promise raised by the reunification and democratisation, a promise broken.

What in the old state was considered a simple matter of accounting, the urban sociologist Matthias Bernt explains, became a huge problem when the Staatsbank was privatised.[10] The housing associations had not only to start their 'business' with gigantic debts, but also private business banks, most of them directed by western financiers, now owned lending-agreements which allowed them to have a role in the management of the housing companies and hence in their commitment to 'urban planning'. According to Bernt's analysis, it is often international credit institutions that assess the viability of mortgage agreements for banks. Having housing stocks in East Germany in the portfolio (especially in view of the news about the vacancies and demolitions) does not give a good image of the banks' financial credibility and liability for their mortgages.[11] Therefore credit institutions aim to withdraw from their credit arrangements with the highly indebted housing companies. In view of this situation, residents and engaged planners perceive projects that call for image campaigns and creative ideas for living in 'those' estates, such as the generously funded 'Shrinking Cities' project (2004) as problematic, if not misplaced.

There exist of course a few rare and notable examples of architects' creativity in dealing with these buildings. The architecture office of Lacaton Vasalle in France proposed a radical scheme, based on the wrapping of a whole tower bloc with generous cantilevered decks of outside space. The office *Zimmermann+Partner Architekten* transformed in Cottbus 11-story blocks built in the WBS 70 system into so-called 'Town Villas' of only 2 or 3 floors. Muck Petzet's office also achieved an exemplary city planning in Leinefelde combining demolition with conversions for new uses. These achievements are of course well intended, and architecturally interesting, but do not, and most likely could not address the real cause of

the problem which originate in the state subsidy programs noted above.

Since 1993 with the Old Debts Assistance Acts, the government attempted to avoid the collapse of housing associations by taking over some of the costs which, because of the vacancies, had no chance of being recovered. This subsidy proved to be 'a bottomless pit' around which several practices of abuse and misuse developed. In 2001 the law was amended again to allow debts to be reduced if housing was taken off the market. Additionally about 70 Euros per demolished square meter of apartment was promised. The devastating impact of this law, ignorant of democratic planning and free-market strategies, cannot yet be estimated. This government subsidy saved many housing estates from bankruptcy and even allowed others an 'extra income', but the 'market distortion' caused by the subsidy made the work of urban planners seeking to involve the public in consultations largely superfluous.[12]

### Conclusion

Population migration is a complex social process: hiding behind the 'invisible hand of the market' are the all too visible influences of cultural politics and issues related to identity and meaning, which all have an impact on urban form. However, as I have tried to show, the 'abandonment' of Leipzig-Grünau cannot be blamed solely on the economic collapse of the former East Germany, nor on the accentuation of social structures and divisions which encouraged migration to the western half of Germany or to suburbia. To a large degree, it was also the fault of the new authorities together with the financial institutions, that were unwilling or unable to understand the concepts and values which characterised the organisation of the urban and the architectural fabric. The often random and short-sighted demolitions undermined the housing estates' cohesiveness,

which in turn helped to dilute the residents' sense of pride, privilege and identity. It seems almost as though population 'shrinking' was part of a plan to re-appropriate the city by erasing the 'unfamiliar' fabric of a competing ideology. Therefore, in order to make a critique operative, it is important here to study how this process is played out, what form it takes and how the configuration and coherence of the urban fabric is affected by a complicated sequence of chain reactions which degrade the attractiveness of the area to such a degree that the demolition appears as the only possible solution. It is all too obvious that the support of seemingly invisible 'all powerful and unavoidable' economic processes makes residents' participation in determining the fate of their urban environment seem futile and redundant. The political and economic storm unleashed by this process frustrates the political agency of the citizen. What has been lost here is thus not only an idea of community participation, but the very idea of political citizenship – a promise raised by the reunification and democratisation, a promise broken.

### Afterword

In June 2007, the department for city development in Leipzig invited Grünau-residents for a second meeting to present the revision of the *Entwicklungsstrategie 2020*. Again, the meeting started with an affront to public participation. No handouts or maps were made available before the meeting, so that guests could only follow the new plans through the projected power-point presentation. It took two more weeks after the meeting before the plan went online and became available to the public. Again, the second draft reconfirmed the demolition of the housing blocks *Seffnerstreet 1 to 19*, *Brackestrasse 24-34, 41-55* and *Kändlerstrasse 2-14* by 2008. The plan has still to be finalized in the municipality. However, it is most likely that the residents of the affected buildings, the retailers and staff of the medical centre will not wait for the final version, but will find it wiser to move to another part of town. The housing companies already provide an excellent service to help in moving homes. ■

01 In 2005 about 1,3 million apartments were standing empty in East Germany.

02 The 'Stadtentwicklungsplan Wohnungsbau und Stadterneuerung – Teilplan Großsiedlungen: Zielplan Grünau' was developed in the year 2000 with a short-term perspective of three years.

03 The 'pact of reason' was a complicated agreement made in 2000 between the city development office in the municipality of Leipzig, the housing association as well as their respective banks on the buildings that will be demolished in Leipzig in the near future. The idea was to create the process of demolition and renovation as reflected and just as possible.

04 Ironically, as a response to the collection of signatures the city had prepared a (demolition-) plan for the next two years, while the initial promise of the plan, that is a vision for the year 2020, remains still in question.

05 1986: 271

06 FLIERL 1984: 190-196

07 HANNEMANN. 2006: 486

08 2005: 4

09 Commenting on the destruction of the tower blocks at the northern entrance to Leipzig-Grünau, Hans-Dietrich Wellner, once leading architect and planner of Leipzig-Grünau, bemoans the demolition of the towers thus: '*I ask myself who is doing the city planning? Good, functional housing complexes are blown up. This is devastating in my view. This has nothing to do with planning. This area has been intentionally ignored.*' , my transcription and translation, Hans-Dietrich Wellner, in interview, July 2004

10 BERNT, 2006:592-596

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

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Fig. 4

Doina Petrescu
*How to reclaim the common?*

OPERATION:CITY 2008
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ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

**25**

# DOINA PETRESCU

# How to reclaim the common?

### The destruction of public property

Cities in Eastern Europe faced spectacular transformations during the last decade. We have witnessed there, more than in other parts of the world, a dramatic devaluation of the idea of 'common' and 'public' and a violent destruction of the existing public property. If during the socialist regime, the social crisis was mainly related to the lack of individual freedom, during the transition period[01] the crisis is more that of the public, the collective and the common.

In Romania, the devaluation of the notion of 'public' has started during the years of the communist regime. During this regime, public property was continually violated and abused and ordinary citizens have lost trust in a state governed by a corrupted unique party. That state was not anymore a guarantor of their public rights.; for the party apparatchiks, public property meant a property they can dispose of at their wish by means of power and without accounts to give; for ordinary citizen, public property did not mean anymore 'common property' 'the property of all' (as stated by the Marxist doctrine), but 'nobody's property'. In the socialist Romania, everyone was used to subvert or steal from the public property: workers were steeling goods and technical equipment from the factories, peasants were stealing products from the state own agro-industrial complexes or the agricultural cooperatives, commercial workers were stealing the merchandise they were supposed to sell, intellectuals were stealing time and cognitive values from their institutions, etc... The public property was subversively doubled by a stealth property, which recycled and traded what was subtracted from the public property. In a society whose rules were opaque end perverted,

notions like that of 'citizen' or 'civic rights' were empty of meaning. They were abstract notions in the Party discourse but not in reality.

It is in this context that the destruction of public property has been accomplished with the political changes and the transition to market economy. After 1990, important parts of public property including the main economic agencies (ie. factories, land, resources, transport, energy and communication infrastructure) were privatised.[02] Numerous public properties were retroceeded by low to the former private owners that were dispossessed of in the first years of the communist regime: buildings, lands, forests, etc...

Parallely, most of the social housing estates that were publicly own were sold for symbolic amounts to their occupants in order to release public responsibility over buildings in bad conditions. In 18 years time, 70 percents of the state economy was privatised in Romania, from which only 18% involved the transfer of shares in companies to citizens, as part of the so called Mass Privatisation. These shares were quickly sold further by the poor citizen who needed survival money. They became neither public nor private owners anymore.

### The destruction of community

The destruction of public property has been paralleled by the destruction of the idea of community, at all levels. In the communist regime belonging to 'the community' was compulsory, and for this reason, as a counter reaction, the notion of 'community' was implicitly subverted and devalued. Also, in the last years of the communist regime, all forms of community were alienated by the paranoiac obsession of being surveyed and denunciated for the smallest protest expression or comment against the regime. People were struggling for survival, and all social and professional relations were dominated by this preoccupation. The only form of community which prospered during this period was the family and the close circle of friends which

was the only space one felt socially and psychologically safe.[03] This micro scaled community was a community of resilience and survival.

### The destruction of the city

In addition,and unlike other socialist countries, in Romania the sense of publicness and community has been consciously and programmatically destroyed by Ceausescu's dictatorial regime. Parts of cities, including historic centres and important monuments, were erased to leave place to megalomaniac constructions or mass housing estates (ie. it was the case with Bucharest) and villages were destroyed by 'systematic planning'. In Ceausescu's totalitarian regime, the top down decision making in the planning process emanated directly from the Conducator himself, which made very difficult any type of contest.[04] In the socialist regimes, there was no veritable tradition of civic disobedience. The passive, obedient position was part of the normality.

With few exceptions, most of the Romanians became used during the communist totalitarian regime with being careless about their cities, with the abuse of civic rights and the non respect of low. They internalised the fact that the city has no value and no memory to preserve. The violent process of privatisation of the common property during the transition period of the 1990s went almost without reaction and was encouraged by all different governments that were in power. Parks, rivers, streets were privatised as a result of the retroceeding of former private properties to their original owners or through new spellings and transactions with the new developers.

The transition state and its different governments did not develop the city anymore – no public building was constructed in the last 15 years and no social

housing estate. The public budget was maigre and continued to be abused and badly managed by the different governments.

In a country where frustration has been accumulated over years, acquisition, possession and consumption became the new imperatives. Everybody's dream is today to have a prosperous household, to posses a flat in a private development or an individual house in a city healthy suburb. The sense of ownership has became exclusively private.

### Reclaiming a new collective subjectivity

What will happen with the derelict neighbourhoods made out of prefabricated units that were never renovated since their construction? What will happen with their poor inhabitants who have acquired their flats for symbolic amounts and became now unemployed and without means to renovate and maintain them? What are the rights of these 'property owners'? How do they face the future – the economic crisis, the energy restrictions, the shortage of resources, the climate change? How these atomised city dwellers could ever become engaged citizen? How could they become interested in defending collective and common property if there is none left? How could they still do something about a city which was never taken care of? How will these cities look like when the privatization process is completed?

What will happen with the green space in the city which is constantly under threat to be privatised and transformed into shopping Malls or gated estates? What will happen with the public squares which are more and more occupied by private businesses ?[05] What will happen with the cultural centres and the youth houses, which were empty during the socialist regime and are now transformed into bars and night clubs?

How to engage people in a struggle they never had? How to deal with their long term passivi-

> ❝ If during the socialist regime, the social crisis was mainly related to the lack of individual freedom, during the transition period the crisis is more that of the public, the collective and the common

> ❝ The transition state and its different governments did not develop the city anymore – no public building was constructed in the last 15 years and no social housing estate

**Nemanja Cvijanović** [action/video]

**Nemanja Cvijanović** [action/video]

**26**

**OPERATION:CITY 2008**
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

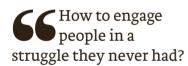**Sabine Bitter & Helmut Weber**
**(Urban Subjects US)**

ty and frustration and how to reconstruct their desire and motivation to act?

Reclaiming the city should start with reclaiming a new collective subjectivity.

We need to contribute to the reconstruction of collective subjects, initiate cultures of cooperation and collective use, create moments of collective enunciation... A starting point could be the networks of resilience that were functioning during the communist regime: the activation of friendship relations and neighbourhood solidarities, the occupations of interstices and derelict estates for urban agriculture and alternative production, culture and education, the collective renovation of social housing estates, the claiming back of the streets and squares for parties and demonstrations. We need to learn how to be, to think and to do together in our cities... We need to reconstruct the common again (and again), in numerous attempts, in many ways, in time, in movement.

As Toni Negri has stated "the production of subjectivity is not an act of innovation, or a flash of genius, it is an accumulation, a sedimentation that is, however, always in movement; it is the construction of the common by constituting collectivities'[06]. ■

> **How to engage people in a struggle they never had?**

01 "Transition" is the keyword in talking about the radical transformation of the political and economic structures in the former socialists countries of Eastern Europe over the last 18 years. This period of post-communist transition is an experience which is neither yet completely defined theoretically or politically, nor indeed predictable from a sociological point of view. A part of these contries , including Romania, managed to accomplish two of the major aspects of the transition: the transition to a market economy and the transition to Europe, basically the inclusion in the European Union.

02 With small differences, this privatisation was encouraged by all political parties for different reasons: first, this was the condition imposed by the international institutions for the EU integration and second, all political parties which have participated in the transition governments were composed by recycled former apparatchiks and representatives of the political and economic oligarchy of the socialist times ( ie. government representatives, factory directors, ministry functionaries, political police and military leaders,) who were interested in privatisation because they were at that time in the best position to privately acquire public properties: they were those having access to information, having the money and the connections for, etc...

03 The family as social unit got reinforced and became the social activator in the regime of transition. Private property was restructured around family, and the social and economic familial networks were reinforced. If there is a type of community surviving in the period of transition', this is one reorganised around family interests and conducting somehow to a regressive type of sociality, regulated by and limited to family relationships.

04 In the case of the destruction of the historic center of Bucharest some protests were organised by the order of architects but were very soon silenced. As students in Bucharest in the 80s, we have found our own form of protest, documenting loss and memory of demolished areas, exhibiting images of destruction, engaging in different forms of dissidence)

05 For example, in Iasi, a 350000 inhabitants city in the North East of the country, a business center will be developed on the location of a historic park by the owner of the main Mall in the city. In Rm Vilcea, a 100000 inhabitants city, a shoping centre has been built on the location of a central park and a mega store on the civic square.

06 Antonio Negri, Constantin Petcou, Doina Petrescu, Anne Querrien, What makes a biopolitical space? A discussion with Toni Negri, in *Eurozine* 2008 (http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2008-01-21-negri-en.html)

**SABINE HELMUT**
**BITTER & WEBER**

R ecent works like *"We Declare": Spaces of Housing,* Vancouver, collaborative projects like *Vancouver Flying University,* or *Differentiated Neighborhoods of New Belgrade* engage with specific moments and logics of the global-urban change as they take shape in cities, architecture, neighborhoods and everyday life.

Processes of appropriation and reterritorialisation of public, institutional, or private spaces -- as well as the loss and reclamation of commonly shared spaces -- call for a critical visual reworking of the processes which produce space as well as scopic regimes and ideologies of representation. In Henri Lefèbvre´s words: "The 'real' sociological object in this case is the image and - above all - ideology."

Within the framework of the project *Differentiated Neighborhoods of New Belgrade* (2005 - 2008) we came across with a text from Lefebvre he submitted as part of a proposal with French architects Serge Renaudie and Pierre Guilbaud for the International Competition for the New Belgrade Urban Structure Improvement in 1986. In his urban vision for Novi Beograde Lefebvre emphasizes the processes and potentials of self-organisation of the people of any urban territory to counter the failed concepts of urban planning from above. Yet, Lefebvre viewed Novi Beograde and Yugoslavia as having a particular position in what he has elsewhere called "the urban revolution." As Lefebvre states, "Be-

cause of self-management, a place is sketched between the citizen and the citadin, and Yugoslavia is today (1986) perhaps one of the rare countries to be able to pose the problem of a New Urban."

In works such as "The Nonaligned World", "NEW, Novi Beograd 1948 – 1986 - 2006" and "Where Neither The Public Nor The Intimate Find Their Place" we draw upon Henri Lefebvre's notions of "autogestion", "Right To The City" and his critique of the state form, to address the semantic changes of "self-management" and "community(neighborhood)" in the production of urban space. In particular, we became interested in the imperatives of self-organisation and self-management that migrate into neighborhoods via neoliberalism versus the possibilities of forms of self-organisation that emerge "from below". Neoliberal policies, regulations, and pressures are pulled down, so to speak, by local and national institutions and governments, but they meet resistance and reshaping as they are applied or wedged into neighborhoods and urban territories.

Within this, perhaps a new understanding and mobilization of "autogestion" (in Lefebvre's terms, a collectively organized mode of self-management)

actualizes the question of how claims to citizenship and to the right to the city produce new forms and understandings of the relationship of the state and citizens and is driving the production of urban space as the neoliberal moment begins to weaken. ■

> **Lefebvre viewed Novi Beograde and Yugoslavia as having a particular position in what he has elsewhere called "the urban revolution"**



PHOTO BY **Emina Višnjić**

**Nemanja Cvijanović**
Applause! [action/video]



PHOTO BY **Emina Višnjić**

**Nemanja Cvijanović**
Applause! [action/video]

Thomas Campbell & Dmitry Vorobyev
*Urban planning in contemporary Petersburg: Renovation, population, resistance*

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**27**

# Urban planning in contemporary Petersburg:
# Renovation, population, resistance

**DMITRY**
**THOMAS**
**CAMPBELL & VOROBYEV**

### Renovation

A quick sketch of contemporary Petersburg reveals a strange picture. The magnificent ex-capital of the Russian Empire—a city teeming with palaces, elegant residential buildings, picturesque embankments, stately squares, and breathtaking panoramas; a city celebrated for three hundred years by writers and artists; a city whose entire center is a UNESCO World Heritage site—is now covered over with bandages (façades under "restoration") and pockmarks (the foundation pits of future building sites). Its inhabitants are forced to scurry through a network of makeshift sidewalks along building site fences, and more often than not their gaze is greeted not by architectural splendor, but by demolished buildings.

What is happening in Petersburg? Why is Petersburg—perhaps the only megalopolis in Europe whose entire historic center has been preserved, an enormous "zoo" where specimens from the entire history of European architecture roam freely—now being subjected to ruination, castration, and "renovation"? How is it that billions of dollars are invested in large-scale projects at the same time that the city has visibly become more polluted and unlivable?

This is not the only paradox. The city promotes itself as a place whose primary cultural capital is its magnificent past; since the Yeltsin era it has been called Russia's "cultural capital," and this semi-official status is based in large part on its astounding architectural heritage. Nevertheless, this glorious past-in-the-present is ignored, replaced by the images of future projects—superhighways, bridges, tunnels, skyscrapers, and commercial residential developments. Aside from famous brands, the products most advertised on the city's numerous billboards are new residential complexes and skyscrapers. However, these projects contradict "the past" because their realization requires the destruction of the city's historic image. The implantation of high-rise buildings within the city center destroys the city's historic panoramas—its embankments and boulevards with their long, clear sight lines (also under UNESCO protection). When they pre-sell apartments in these future apartment blocks, realtors peddle the splendid view of the historic city owners will have from their windows. Yet they blithely ignore the fact that such high-rises will irreversibly erase the city's historic look. Thus, the conversion of financial capital into cultural capital (magnificent views) leads to the destruction of "the cultural capital" (Petersburg) and thus the deflation of this selfsame, highly leveraged cultural capital.

The city's public spaces—its squares, gardens, and parks—are being rabidly privatized. Over the past ten years, many historic parks have been ringed and dotted with so-called elite housing projects. Thus, municipal lands that were once the common property of Petersburg's citizens are privatized by a tiny group of extremely wealthy individuals. In the jargon of the city administration, this is known as "adaptation to contemporary uses." City authorities are united in their promotion of the thesis that "progress" is necessary, that the city must be transformed via large-scale projects in which, in many cases, they themselves or their associates have substantial financial stakes. The administration's urban planning motto says it all: "Development through preservation, preservation through development."

In practice, this form of "modernization" means that historic buildings and "lacunae" in the city center, as well as "empty spaces" and squares in the outlying areas, are rapidly replaced by new structures. This new construction introduces a host of problems: increased density of the built environment; overloading of infrastructure; disappearance of green spaces; marked "dissonance" with the historic milieu, especially because of the emphasis on high-rise construction; and overemphasis on commercial uses. In the city's outlying bedroom communities, mega malls replace historic produce markets and the conveniently located shops that were the hallmark of late-era Soviet planning.

### Population

Many critics consider Petersburg's urban planning practices catastrophic; they often speak of a housing and architectural crisis. What does this crisis look like? We see it in often-hazardous infill construction, the destruction of squares, the lowering of environmental standards, the collapse of social infrastructure (lack of schools, kindergartens, public clinics, and recreation areas), gridlocked roads, and the disappearance of the city's historic views.

If the situation is catastrophic, why is the city's population of five million people so passive? The population's "escapist" stance has to do with the fact that it has no experience of life in a more humane urban environment: it doesn't notice the chaos, pollution, and visual impoverishment engendered by current policies; moreover, it has no sense of what alternative development trajectories society and state might pursue together. This passive population becomes the object of official state "care": the authorities construct an urban matrix meant to incubate a stunted civil society—semi-law-abiding and poorly informed, but ultimately passive.

To squelch social conflict and "normalize" the situation, the authorities prefer to hush up problems rather than solve them, and they actively pursue a rhetoric-heavy populist politics. More importantly, they impede public involvement in decision-making via new legislation that alters procedures for public hearings and limits access to information.

During the last year, significant resources have been spent to generate a positive media image of urban planning policy. The governor's office has made a series of programmatic statements cataloguing its achievements and denying problems. In particular, the authorities have worked hard to create a negative image of the opposition. The city's budding protest movement is marginalized (*there are very few protesters; the majority of citizens support administration policy*); stigmatized (*protesters have been paid off by Moscow politicians, spinmeisters, and rival construction companies; their demands are meant to destabilize society*); and declared a band of incompetent, mendacious provocateurs. This propaganda campaign ensures that many Petersburgers believe that the administration is pursuing the right policies, and that they view personal involvement in urban politics as both senseless and dirty.

### Resistance

Urban social movements are the most massive, rooted movements in the world today. In Petersburg, however, these movements are represented by several hundred activists, many of them from short-lived NIMBY protest groups. A few environmental groups have made urban planning part of their agenda: their work includes the defense of squares and parks, as well as policy and legislative lobbying. Oppositional micro-parties and other political movements have also made the defense of the city a significant part of their programs.

The rhetoric of these activists has four aspects. It is prohibitory (*Stop infill construction! Save our buildings!*); alarmist (*Wake up, people: Our city is being destroyed!*); political (*Governor Matvienko, it is time for you to resign!*), and declarative (*This is our city!*). The overall platform of these movements is conservative: they hope to halt the transformation of the cityscape and expose the shortcomings of the administration's modernization project.

Despite the weakness of the urban movements, urban planning has become the hot political topic in Petersburg. A tense dialogue is underway between various interest groups, and the tone

**Nemanja Cvijanović**
Applause! [action/video]

**Nemanja Cvijanović**
Applause! [action/video]

**28**

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

**Brian Holmes**
*Mega-gentrification*
*Limits of an urban paradigm*

# Mega-gentrification
# Limits of an urban paradigm

**BRIAN HOLMES**

of this discussion is set by the clash between activists and the administration. Social and political movements, as well as the journalist, architecture, and legal communities, have now focused their energies on the debate over the city's future. Socio-political conflict as such has shifted to the planning front, and it is along this front that new class fault lines are revealed. It is telling that most protest actions and media scandals in recent years have been linked to issues of new building construction.

Although the urban movements are short on alternative proposals for the city's development, and the political context is complicated, there are positive processes as well. For example, activists are now engaged in the production of their own knowledge, primarily by supplying alternative professional expertise and statistical information. In the last two or three years, the movements have begun the process of professionalization. Local activists are learning how to use GIS (geographic information systems). They have begun to map changes in the cityscape, mobilize dozens of volunteers to monitor the urban environment, commission impact statements on new building projects, and study law codes and legislation. They have thus begun to participate as near-equals in the formation of planning policy and upset the state's monopoly on the production of objective statistics and analysis. They are now able not only to dispute official viewpoints, but also to speak the same language as the administration and appeal to a shared legislative framework.

Our prognosis is that if the state's monopoly on information production is really threatened, then there is a chance that decisions on urban planning in Petersburg will be opened up to public participation. If the movements can show that their interpretation of what has happened to the city in recent years is correct, and then take the next step—the formulation of an alternative, humane development plan presented in a professional language and buttressed by statistics, maps, and real-life projects—then state and society will be forced to assimilate this new vision. But if this professionalization falters and the public becomes even less involved in grassroots activism, the administration will be left to go it alone in its "care" of the population, doing this the only way it knows how: by serving the interests of capital, not the interests of its citizens. ■

*The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city.*
— David Harvey

**W**hat is the city for? The response of neoliberal urbanism has been extraordinarily coherent: the city is a living and breathing machine for maximizing the return on investment. The frenetic gentrification of attractive city neighborhoods over the course of the last decade and the dramatically swelling real-estate bubbles that came in its wake have provided the most obvious illustration of this primary rule. Behind the urban scenes, the transnationalization of municipal bond offers has been widely used to raise capital for the infrastructure of the real-estate boom, opening up lucrative financial markets and reconfiguring the links between municipal and national governance in the process. These two major trends have both been subordinate to a third phenomenon, the grand prize of neoliberal urbanism: the installation of postmodern production facilities, whether the big league of global corporate headquarters and associated services, or the smaller but still highly profitable gemstones of credit-based luxury consumption (shopping centers, tourist districts, franchised boutiques). In a breathtaking press toward total makeover, the face of cities across the world has been changed since the early 1980s, not only to fit an aesthetic norm, as is widely conjectured, but above all in accordance with an underlying toolkit, a unified set of productive and regulatory procedures. The result of the three interrelated transformations can be termed mega-gentrification: an entirely new, globally connected urban realm responding to the needs and desires of increasingly homogeneous world elites.

This pattern is increasingly well known, and I will sketch out its features in more concrete detail below. What has not yet been formulated is the question that appears on the horizon of the current credit crisis and the prolonged recession or depression that is almost sure to follow. Yet this question is the only thing that really matters today, it is the crux of our present moment. Is neoliberal urbanism a destiny? Or can a combination of local inhabitants' movements, national regulation and a broad transnational analysis of prevailing trends act together to counter the most damaging processes that are currently at work? While entire sectors of the corporate elites slide into bankruptcy and the state comes back in with a vengeance, can contesting social forces reclaim a right to the city?

Such sweeping questions were not on anyone's agenda back in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the word gentrification first came to designate the home-improvement efforts of a few hip entrepreneurs who could be alternatively mocked or flattered by connotations of finer lifestyles and a vague aura of "Merry Olde England." But the neoliberal version of urban renewal no longer matches this quaint image of forty years ago. With his analysis of three distinct phases in the gentrification process, the geographer Neil Smith has clearly demonstrated the successive increases in scale, to the point where today, in the phase of "generalized gentrification," the installation of major cultural facilities designed as investment magnets is carried out under integrated municipal and state-government plans for the valorization of urban property on world markets.[01] Commercial investment in such "regenerated" zones is inevitably dominated by transnational franchises with the ability to raise initial capital, apply precut management schemes, provide flawless logistical support and unveil instantly recognizable brand-name decors. In European cities formerly marked by a specific national or regional character, the appearance of fully standardized consumption environments in the 1990s came as something of a shock, underscoring the new status of real-estate speculation as a prime terrain of both private and public finance. Elsewhere, however, the very word gentrification seems to collapse beneath the magnitude of urban renewal programs: in countries like China, for example, what is typically at stake is not the beautification of existing streets, parks and housing stock, but instead, the razing of entire districts and the construction of high-rise, high-rent towers in their place. The old notion of an aristocratic "landed gentry" living off the rent of rural property has gained new currency in all these different cases, as lucky owners around the world have been able to sell off their massively inflated homes and apartments for handsome retirements, or better yet, refinance their mortgages on the fly, so as to generate precious liquidities for investment on the surging stock-markets. The masters of the regenerated inner city are indeed a new gentry, flush with the returns on their exclusive titles to nobility: the ownership deeds granting them a stake in the global boom of urban centrality.

What then of the city as a collective project, which alone makes this kind of individual jackpot possible? Jason Hackworth has shown how cities in the USA, then increasingly around the world, have had recourse to only three bond-rating agencies in order to make their municipal bonds attractive as a secure, blue-chip investment for pension funds and other large portfolio administrators.[02] The key transformation of the 1980s and 1990s, in Hackworth's analysis of the American data, is the relative eclipse of local banks as major buyers on the bond markets and the corresponding rise of institutional investors without any detailed knowledge of the urban environment. Under these conditions, the role of the nationally Recognized Statistical Rating Organizations – Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch – is to provide authoritative guarantees of future profitability, absolving fund managers from any possible accusation of undue risk-taking. Indeed, binding regulation pro-

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PHOTO BY **Emina Višnjić**

**Lina Rica**
Greetings from the Future [action]

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OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

**29**

hibits many pension funds from acquiring any but the highest-ranked securities. The advantages for distant institutional investors of such close surveillance of urban development projects were irresistible. With the volume of investment rising globally and capital pouring into municipal bond markets from sources as far away as Saudi Arabia or China, the rating agencies came to reign supreme over infrastructural planning, not only in the US but throughout the world. To facilitate the management of budgets, projects are often spun off into specially chartered "districts" (airport district, sewage district, etc.) which may also be configured as private-public partnerships. In addition to the standardized development pattern that this process imposes, what results above all is a loss of democratic oversight as increasingly large tracts of urban land are managed according to the dictates of the ratings agencies, and in some cases handed over to quasi-non-governmental organizations, or "quangos" as they are called in Great Britain. The double negation of "quasi" and "non" says a lot about how much can be hidden in this process. The juridical basis of public space falls into the legal gap between public and private.

What drives cities toward this opaque but highly orchestrated process of total makeover? The big prize, as Saskia Sassen pointed out almost two decades ago, is the status of "global city," or command and control center of the world economy.[03] The key attributes here are full integration to global financial flows, top-quality information and transportation infrastructure, and "world class" real-estate markets and cultural amenities making the city attractive for the most qualified corporate personnel. While it is obvious that only a few cities can ever obtain this position (Sassen herself focused only on New York, London and Tokyo), still enormous sums are spent by competing metropolises all over the world in hopes of moving up the ranks of global integration. In the historically dominant financial capitals and among the serious new contenders such as Shanghai, Sydney, Sao Paulo, Brussels or Istanbul, what one witnesses is the wholesale retooling of parts of

the city for a new kind of cosmopolitan citizen, fantastically wealthy, exceedingly well informed and uniquely demanding in matters of infrastructure, entertainment and security. The territory of this new "landed gentry" is vigilantly guarded by men in corporate uniforms with nightsticks and radios and guns, yet it cannot be reduced to the supremely valuable urban districts in which the owners physically live – for through freeways, heliports, airlines, fiber-optic cables and satellite communications systems, their territory extends to the mega-scale of the global network.

Interestingly, it is among the lesser wannabes of global citydom that we find the single most influential model for everyday gentrification in Europe, namely Barcelona, which does not even figure on the list of sixty leading cities recently compiled by the American magazine *Foreign Policy*.[04] Nonetheless, the global reach of the Catalan metropolis has been prodigious. Flagship urban development projects such as the Olympics, or more recently, the Universal Forum of Cultures, lavish provision of tourist facilities and conference centers, careful attention to the restoration or redesign of streets, façades and urban furnishings, deliberate encouragement of the tertiary sectors of the urban economy and last but not least, liberal spending on local cultural events, has served to create civic pride, political consensus, skyrocketing real-estate values and multiple incitements to spending and investment from the outside. Using this integrated approach, Barcelona has not only refreshed and refurbished its decaying neighborhoods – and driven away much of the exotic urban fauna that gave it a literary reputation in the 1930s-60s – but it has also become a veritable model, a full-fledged European equivalent to San Francisco as seen by the American "creative-city" booster Richard Florida. In 1999, in an unprecedented gesture, the Royal Institute of British Architects awarded

its Gold Medal not to an individual but to the entire metropolis of Barcelona; while at the same time, an Urban Task Force under the leadership of Sir Richard Rogers drafted plans for what would essentially be the "Barcelonization" of ten British cities.[05] Today the architects and planners of the Catalan capital are able to sell the city's collectively generated urban expertise far beyond its borders or ring roads. When crumbling capitals like Budapest or Buenos Aires suddenly find themselves graced with beautifully restored historical districts and entire streets filled with brand-new theme restaurants – along with bond-issues in the works for exclusive infrastructures, an incongruous "lifestyle" rhetoric on the lips of city officials and grand aspirations for hosting cultural events – the influence of the Barcelona model is never very distant. Through strategic professional networking the "mega" scale is attained among the minor leagues, by extension rather than concentration.

The outstanding question, however, concerns the future of both these speculatively driven models, at a time when the major attribute of the global city – finance capital – and the major source of funding for the gentrification of second-rank provincial cities – abundant credit from outside – have both run straight into their fundamental contradiction: namely, the inability of exploited workers and overstretched consumers to go on holding the spinning ball of golden dreams up in the air. Today we face the largest financial crisis in a century, already well on its way to becoming a crisis of the real economy in the realms of industry and trade, but also a political crisis on the streets and in the voting booths where the pressure of rapidly rising unemployment is making itself powerfully evident. Mega-gentrification has at last met its limits, and a sophisticated urban development paradigm built up over the course of three decades now stands on the verge of collapse. For community groups

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fighting the gentrification of their neighborhoods, or the installation of cultural and consumption facilities whose first effect will be to erase their culture and displace their consumption to big-box wastelands, this sudden halt to the speculative boom will come as a relief, or even as a saving grace. But for everyone with a long-term interest in ecologically sustainable development, in the sharing of urban centrality with the periphery, in the production of participatory culture rather than paying entertainment, and in the democratically chosen transformation of lifestyles in full respect of those who would rather stay the same – in short, for everyone vitally interested in the grassroots exercise of the right to the city – the current crisis opens other possibilities and poses other, perhaps thornier questions.

How to find anything but a respite in a global construction downswing which could easily be as transient as those of innumerable recessions past? How to begin undoing the reflexes and reformulating the expertise accumulated over three decades of neoliberal management? How to spread an awareness of the subtle iniquities of neoliberal urbanism, at a time when far more pressing issues and varieties of political rhetoric are likely to come to the fore? How to insure that public works projects, if they are carried out, do not merely reiterate the same illusory priorities as the credit-sponsored projects which preceded them? And above all, how to continue resisting the imposition of municipally mandated real-estate schemes which, like everything in society, do not ever really die but instead go into a kind of living paralysis, an automated repetition whose only guarantee of continuity is the refusal of any input from the outside world? These and many other issues arising from the current crisis are far more than any single local group or social movement could ever resolve on their own.

As David Harvey notes, the right to the city is "a common rather than an individual right, since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization."[06] As such it demands common efforts, across local, national and even continental boundaries. And though every significant struggle happens in one single place, with one single constellation of forces, still it is high time to establish links from city to ity, from country to country, from region to region – and to begin building a common grassroots paradigm of alternative urbanism, where issues of spatial justice are always granted their full weight, whatever the scales of decision. ◼

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02 Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City: Governance, Ideology and Development in American Urbanism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

03 Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton University Press, 1991).

04 A.T. Kearney, Inc. and The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, "The 2008 Global Cities Index," in *Foreign Policy* (November-December 2008). Barcelona does, however, figure in a specifically cultural category at the bottom of the ranking established by P.J. Taylor, "Leading World Cities: Empirical Evaluations of Urban Nodes in Multiple Networks," in *Urban Studies* 42/9 (2005).

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**Lina Rica**
Greetings from the Future [action]



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**30**

OPERATION:CITY 2008
*The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*
ZAGREB, 04. 12. → 07. 12. 2008.

Who is who

# WHO IS WHO

**Jochen Becker** works as critic, project teacher and cultural producer. He is founding member of BüroBert, co-editor of *Copyshop – Kunstpraxis & politische Öffentlichkeit* (Edition ID-Archiv, 1993), *geld.beat.synthetik – Abwerten (bio)technologischer Annahmen* (Edition ID-Archiv, 1996) *Baustop.randstadt,- #1* (Hg. NGBK Berlin, 1999) and published *BIGNES?* on recent urban development as well as *Metropolen* (2001), *Space//Troubles* (2003), *Hier Entsteht* (2004), *Self Service City: Istanbul* (2004), *City of COOP: Buenos Aires/ Rio de Janeiro* (2004), *Kabul/Teheran 1979ff* (2006), *Architektur auf Zeit* (2006) and *Verhandlungssache Mexiko Stadt* (2008) together with Stephan Lanz. 2008 establishing of the metroZones/media book series with upcoming titles *Made in Nollywood*, *EuroMaps* and *Roaming Around*.

**Dafne Berc / Luciano Basauri** work together since 2001. In 2007 they co-founded Analog, an international architectural network dealing with design, research and academic activities, aiming to depict crossovers between design and urban matters. **Luciano** received M Arch. from the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam and Architect degree from the Faculty of Architecture, Universidad Central de Chile in Santiago, where he held a two-year Assistant Professorship. Worked as a project controller for Plava Laguna Hotel Holding, Poreč and as a designer with several architectural practices in Zagreb, Amsterdam and Santiago. **Dafne** is a PhD candidate at the Universitat Politécnica de Catalunya in Barcelona. Received M Arch. from the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam and Architect degree from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb, where she taught urban planning studio and lectured for four years. Worked as designer for Atelier Hržić in Zagreb and Urban XPRNZ in Amsterdam and as researcher/designer for Project for Public Spaces, Inc. in NY.

**Sabine Bitter / Helmut Weber** (Urban Subjects US) – since 1993 Vienna and Vancouver based artists Sabine Bitter and Helmut Weber have worked on projects addressing cities, architecture, and the politics of representation and of space. Since 2004 member of the cultural collective Urban Subjects US (Bitter/ Derksen/ Weber). More at: www.lot.at.

**Boris Buden** studied philosophy in Zagreb and cultural studies at HU Berlin. In the 90s he was editor in the magazine Arkzin, Zagreb. His essays and articles cover topics of philosophy, politics, cultural and art criticism. Among his translations into Croatian are two books of Sigmund Freud. Buden is the author of *Barikade*, (Zagreb, 1996/1997), *Kaptolski Kolodvor* (Beograd, 2001), and *Der Schacht von Babel* (Berlin, 2004).

**Thomas Campbell** is a translator, researcher, and writer living in Saint Petersburg. He is also a member of the Chto Delat workgroup platform (www.chtodelat.org) and a founding member of the Petersburg Video Archive (PVA).

**Teodor Celakoski** is program coordinator of the Multimedia Institute in Zagreb, Croatia. He initiated numerous projects and several program-based culture cooperation platforms such Clubture (Croatian network of independent cultural organizations) or Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000. He is currently leading the citizen initiative "The Right to the City" established with the goal to contest devastations of public spaces, dispossession of citizens and failed urban development policies in Zagreb.

**Daniel Chavez** is a Uruguayan anthropologist specialising in Latin American politics and urban social and political movements. He joined TNI in 2001 as co-ordinator of the Energy Project, looking at democratic and participatory alternatives to electricity privatisation in the Global South. Before moving to Europe he had worked for almost a decade for the United Federation of Mutual-Aid Housing Cooperatives (FUCVAM). Daniel currently co-ordinates the New TNI Politics Programme, in co-operation with Hilary Wainwright. He has authored and edited a number of books, including most recently *The New Latin American Left: Utopia Reborn?*, with Patrick Barrett and Cesar Rodriguez Garavito (Grupo Editorial Norma, 2005) and *The Left in the City: Participatory Local Governments in Latin America* with Benjamin Goldfrank (LAB, 2001). He holds a Phd in the Politics of Development from the Institute of Social Studies (ISS, The Hague).

**Branka Čurčić** is a member of kuda.org, New Media Center from Novi Sad (www.kuda.org). She is one of its program editors, focusing on critical approaches towards new media culture, new technologies, new cultural relations, contemporary artistic practices and social realm. She also collaborates with the transform project of the European Institute of Progresive Cultural Policies (EIPCP) in Vienna.

**Ana Džokić / Marc Neelen** [STEALTH.unlimited] – **STEALTH.unlimited** (set up in 2000 by Ana and Marc) is a practice based between Rotterdam and Belgrade in which over the years we have collaborated with Milica Topalovic, Ivan Kucina and Mario Campanella. STEALTH often uses participatory or knowledge creation mode based on the shifting perspectives of crossovers fields – visual culture, urban research, spatial intervention, cultural activism. Ana (1970, Belgrade, Serbia, formerly Yugoslavia) graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade (1998) and completed postgraduate studies at the Berlage Institute, Amsterdam/Rotterdam (2000). Marc (1970, Heerlen, The Netherlands) graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, Delft University of Technology (1997).

**Keller Easterling** is an architect, urbanist, and writer. She's Associate Professor of Architecture at the Yale University School of Architecture. Her latest book, *Enduring Innocence: Global Architecture and Its Political Masquerades* (2005), researches familiar spatial products that have landed in difficult or hyperbolic political situations around the world. She has recently completed two research installations on the Web: "Wildcards: A Game of Orgman" and "Highline: Plotting NYC." Her work has been exhibited at the Queens Museum, the Architectural League, the Municipal Arts Society, and the Wexner Center.

**Miran Gajšek** is Slovenian urban planner. Former head of Department of Urban Planning of the City of Celje and currently head of Department of Urban Planning of the City of Ljubljana.

**Jason Hackworth** is an associate professor of geography and urban planning at the University of Toronto. He writes about the various ways that neoliberal ideas shape policy and development outcomes in North American cities. This has included work on urban form, social housing, municipal finance, and gentrification. His recent book, *The Neoliberal City* (Ithaca, 2007), is a thoroughgoing analysis of neoliberal mechanisms in urban development and governance. He is currently writing a book on the role played by the Religious Right in promoting neoliberalism in the United States.

**Brian Holmes** is a theorist, writer and translator. He's a regular contributor to Nettime, Springerin, Brumaria and Multitudes, and is the author of the books *Hieroglyphs of the Future* (Zagreb, 2002) and *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms* (New York, 2008). In recent years, Holmes has been co-organizing a series of seminars with the New York based collective 16 Beaver Group under the title Continental Drift, working on the issues of geopolitics and geopoetics. The next installment of the seminar will take place on November 27-30 in Zagreb.

**Florina Jerliu** is a lecturer at the University of Prishtina and has proven her skills and commitment in the process of post-war urban development of Kosovo towns. She was engaged in drafting development strategies, socio-economic prospects, and was lately managing the studies on urban qualification/illegal buildings trend in the post-war Prishtina, a project of the Archis Intervention Network (Prishtina/ Berlin/ Amsterdam). She is currently engaged by the Prishtina Mayor in a capacity of his Advisor for Urban Development and Management.

**Srdjan Jovanović Weiss** teaches geopolitical seminars and architectural design at the University of Pennsylvania and is a PhD candidate in architectural research at Goldsmiths College in London with a dissertation on Balkanization as a contemporary spatial practice. He is the founder of the NAO (Normal Architecture Office) as well as a co-founder of the School of Missing Studies and co-initiator of Lost Highway Expedition. Weiss recent book "Almost Architecture", published by Merz&Solitude Stuttgart explores the roles of architecture vis-à-vis democratic processes, abrupt political changes and disappearance of Communist ideology. He lives and works in NY and Basel.

**Emil Jurcan** received in 2007 his degree in architecture from the Faculty of Architecture in Ljubljana. He took part in the work of Temp collective, which in 2005 and 2006 undertook several reclamation actions of abandoned spaces in Ljubljana. He participated in the symposium on Self-organization within the BITEF festival in Belgrade in 2006. Since 2006 he's a member of "Pula Group" and coordinator of "Katarina" initiative, which is dealing with the transformation of abandoned military sites in Pula. The initiative resulted in an architectural workshop, publication and exhibition. He lectured at architectural schools in Zagreb, Ljubljana, Instanbul and San Sebastian. With the Pula Group he took part in the Biennal of Young Artist from Europe and Mediterranean in 2008 in Bari. In 2006 he coauthored the exhibition "Italian Modern Achitecture in Pula, 1930-1940" and in 2008 he authored the exhibition "Planning Pula".

**Gal Kirn** completed his PhD at ZRC SAZU (Comparative studies of ideas and cultures) in Ljubljana, he is currently researcher at the Jan van Eyck Academy, member of the Workers' Punk University, political activist and Editor-in-chief of journal *Agregat*.

**Blaž Križnik** – after obtaining a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture from the University of Ljubljana, he continued his studies at the Academy of Architecture in Rotterdam, where he spent two years as a researcher. He has finished his PhD degree in sociology of everyday life at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. He has collaborated with the Institute of Advanced Architecture of Catalonia, Korea Foundation and Seoul Development Institute. Blaž is one of the founders of the Ljubljana-based Institute for Policies of Space [www.ipop.si].



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Who is who

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31

**Ivan Kucina** is an architect, assistant professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, member of the Board of the Association of Belgrade Architects, member of the School of Missing Studies network, initiator of many research projects, exhibitions and workshops dedicated to informal processes od transforming Belgrade urban system and formal processes reforming existing institutions.

**Artemy Magun** lives in Saint-Petersburg, teaches political philosophy at the European University at Saint-Petersburg and Smolny Institute of Arts and Sciences. He is an active member of the group "Chto Delat," co-editor and regular contributor of the homonymous newspaper. His main work is dedicated to a philosophical analysis of non-classical political concepts (revolution and empire). He also authored many articles on Russian and international politics, on contemporary Russian poetry, and other matters.

**Boyan Manchev** is philosopher and cultural theorist, living in Paris and Sofia. As Director of program and Vice-President of the Collège international de philosophie in Paris and Associate Professor at the New University of Bulgaria, he is working in the field of aesthetics and political philosophy. His work is often in dialogue or collaboration with contemporary artists. Manchev has lectured and published widely in Bulgarian, French, English, German, Italian and Russian. Some of his books and essays include: *The Unimaginable: Essays in philosophy of the Image* (NBU, 2003) ; "Der Totale Körper der Lust", in Boris Groys, Anne von der Heiden, Peter Weibel, eds. *Zurück aus der Zukunft* (Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005); *The Body-Metamorphosis* (Altera, 2007), "NOISE: l'organologie désorganisée", *Multitudes*, 28, 2007; "Résistance de la danse", Entretien avec Gérard Mayen, *Mouvement*, 47, april-juin 2008; *La métamorphose et l'instant* (forthcoming, La Phocide, 2008).

**Vedran Mimica** is Director of Berlage Institute. Educated as an architect, he was a lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Zagreb and a postgraduate researcher at the Delft University of Technology prior to joining the Berlage Institute. An active writer on architecture and architectural education, in 2007 he coauthored *Contemporary Croatian Architecture: Testing Reality* and contributed to the volume *Project Zagreb: Transition as Condition, Strategy, Practice.* He is also the author of *Notes on Children, Environment and Architecture.* He recently completed Croatian Archipelago New Lighthouses. Focusing on the future of tourism development along the Croatian coastline, this two-year research project investigated processes to

better integrate the natural landscape and local culture into a content witnessing accelerated pressure by global economic forces. He led the curatorial team for the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam 2007.

**Maroje Mrduljaš** is an architect and critic based in Zagreb. He extensively writes about architecture, product and graphic desing and visual arts, and has edited various publiacions related to fields of architecture and design. His major publication to date is the book *Contemporary Croatian Architecture – Testing Reality.* He is managing editor of Oris magazine and has curated and designed several exhibitions. He has lectured in Croatia and internationally. He works at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb and is independent expert of the EU Mies van der Rohe Prize.

**Stefan Nowotny** is a philosopher who lives in Vienna: since 2005 he has been mainly working within the framework of the eipcp – European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (projects transform & translate); 2004/05 lecturer at the University of Lüneburg (Kulturwissenschaften); 2001–2003 Visiting Fellow at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve (Centre de philosophie du droit). He has published numerous essays on philosophical and political topics, co-edited several anthologies, and translated a number of texts from both French and English into German; recent publications: *Instituierende Praxen. Bruchlinien der Institutionskritik,* w/ Gerald Raunig; (Vienna, 2008), *Übersetzung: Das Versprechen eines Begriffs,* w/ Boris Buden; (Vienna, 2008).

**Arjen Oosterman** is editor in chief of VOLUME magazine. As architectural historian and critic he writes articles, edits books, contributes to exhibitions, gives lectures and teaches at several schools of architecture. He was a jury member of design competitions and awards and contributed to a television documentary on Dudok.

**Zoran Pantelić** is an artist, producer, educator and researcher. He is a co-founder of the new media group kuda.org, based in Novi Sad. He received his MA in sculpture from the Academy of Art in Novi Sad. In 1993 with three others, he founded apsolutno association which focused on interdisciplinary art and social projects.

**Dinko Peračić** received MA from the Institute of Advanced Architecture of Catalonia (IAAC) and Architecture and urban planning degree from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb. He's founding member of Platforma 9,81 and partner in ARP architectural studio. He's active in the Split Architects' Association, where he's vice-president, and Croatian Architects' Association. Focused on projects

for culture, urban planning and tourism. Lives and works in Split.

**Doina Petrescu** is architect, researcher and activist, reader in architecture at the University of Sheffield and founder member of *atelier d'architecture autogérée*, Paris. She has edited *Altering Practices: Feminist Politics and Poetics of Space* (Routledge, 2007) and co-edited *Urban Act: a user guide for alternative practice* (aaa-peprav, 2007) and *Architecture and Participation* (Routledge, 2006).

**Mirko Petrić** is a Lecturer in the Department of Visual Communication Design, Arts Academy, University of Split. His research is in the fields of semiotics and media theory.

**Armina Pilav** (Sarajevo/Venice) graduated in architecture. Last few years she's been doing a research related to abandoned spaces in Sarajevo, relations they can create, different images of the city or possible future transformations in social, architectural and urban contexts. She participated in several architectural/art workshops and projects, including: research project "Decolonising Architecture" in West Bank, directed by London/Bethlehem Architectural Studio Sandi Hilal, Alessandro Petti, Eyal Weizman; co-curation of the Workshop Immagino for conversion of "Ex Factory of Gravel" in Savona; curation of ongoing Sarajevo-based project UNDER RE:CYCLING, working to open abandoned spaces for actions or experiments created by different local groups: NGOs and individuals.

**Andrej Prelovšek** is Ljubljana based architect, urban planner and publicist. Along with running his own practice Panprostor, throughout the years he has worked on drafting urban development policies and regulations, and has participated in the work of governmental and independent professional bodies. In 2005 he initiated Ljubljana Urban Planning Council and Maribor Urban Planning Council – independent expert bodies monitoring irregularities in urban planning and advising local authorities. Since 2007 he's been member of the Council for Urban Development and Renovation of the City of Ljubljana and member of Urban Planning Council of Škofja loka. He has contributed to professional periodicals and since 2008 runs his own blog Urblogos (www.panprostor.si/urblogos).

**Tanja Rajić** is member of EXPEDITIO, a non-government and non-profit association from Kotor/Montenegro which mission is encouraging sustainable space developmant as well as enhancing urban and rural areas in Montenegro and region, through activity in the fields of architecture, urban planning, town planning, environmental protection, and public advocacy. [www.expeditio.org]

**Edi Rama** is a painter and sculptor, publicist and politician. He's former Albanian Minister of Culture and present Mayor of Tirana and the President of the Albanian Socialist Party. Recently he was awarded the World Mayor of 2004 in an international internet competition organized by the CityMayors think tank.

**Gerald Raunig** is philosopher and art theoretician, living in Vienna; works at the eipcp (European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies), Vienna; co-ordinator of the transnational research projects *republicart* (http://republicart.net) and *transform* (http://transform.eipcp.net); university lecturer at the Institute for Philosophy, University of Klagenfurt/A; (co-)editor of two series of books at Turia+Kant, Vienna: "republicart. Kunst und Öffentlichkeit" and "es kommt darauf an. Texte zur Theorie der politischen Praxis"; member of the editorial board of the multilingual webjournal *transversal* (http://transversal.eipcp.net) and the Austrian journal for radical democratic cultural politics, *Kulturrisse* (http://www.igkultur.at/kulturrisse). Recent books: *Art and Revolution. Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century* (Semiotext(e)/MIT Press, 2007); *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice. Reinventing Institutional Critique*, Ed., with Gene Ray (mayflybooks, 2008); *A Thousand Machines* (Semiotext(e)/MIT Press 2009).

**Dubravka Sekulić** is an architect with specific interest in informal architecture and the transformation of public domain in processes of transition. She was a volunteer teaching assistant at the Faculty of Architecture, Belgrade University (2003-2008) and assistant to the curator of Serbian pavilion on the 11th Venice Biennale. In 2004 she was one of the founders of the temporary cultural centre "smartcity" in the defunct printing factory "Bigz". With Ivan Kucina she works on a long term project of archiving Belgrade informal architecture. As a fellow of the Akademie Schloss Solitude she is currently working on a book about department stores in former Yugoslavia.

**Neil Smith** is professor of anthropology and geography at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. His interests in social theory include political economy and marxism and lie behind his theoretical work on uneven development and politics of public space. From the global to the local scales, he argues, our spatial worlds are constructed and reconstructed as expressions of social relations and especially as expressions of capitalist social relations.

**Paul Stubbs [Institute of Economics, Zagreb]** has worked as a Social

Worker and as a Lecturer in Social Work in the UK, with a particular focus on Child Care Politics and Practice, Anti-Racist Social Work, and Community Development. Since 1993, his main research, consultancy, and activism has concentrated on the post-Yugoslav countries, with publications on Social Policy and Social Development; Children's Rights; Peace Building; Civil Society; and Computer-mediated Communication. His most recent work looks at the role of International Non-State Actors and Transnational Advice Regimes in the Making of Social Policy.

**Ana Vaseva** is Bulgarian theatre director, playwright and theorist. She is also publishing widely and collaborates with the TV cultural magazine "The Library". Her last performance "Svidirgailov", based on Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment" premiered in November 2008 at SFUMATO theatre, Sofia. Her recent video "Points of calmness" (2008) deals with the transformation of urban space.

**Dmitry Vorobyev** is a sociologist at the Centre for Independent Social Research, Saint Petersburg. He is also an activist in the Living City movement (www.save-spb.ru) and other grassroots urban ecology groups.

**Kai Vöckler** is an urbanist and publicist based in Berlin. He has published widely on urban topic, has been guest curator at European cultural insititutions over the past several years, and worked on projects with architects and urban planners. Vöckler is co-founder of Archis Interventions, a non-governmental organization that has worked together with local initiatives since 2005 to solve urban development problems in post-conflict areas. Archis Interventions is currently active in Prishtina, Mostar, Kabul and Beirut. Vöckler is programme manager for South Eastern Europe and is currently assemblying a network of urban initiatives in collaboration with Srdjan Jovanović Weiss.

**Ines Weizman** is an architect and critic. She is directing the MA Cities, Design and Urban Cultures at London Metropolitan University. She lectured at the Architectural Association, Berlage Institute and Goldsmiths university. After a long period of study of Soviet style urbanism in the former Eastern Bloc, she is currently researching architect dissidents during the last decades of the Cold War.



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