DESIGN FOR THE POST NEO LIBERAL CITY

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Visual Statement
by Manuel Raeder, Berlin

How does the neoliberal city look? How is it changing in the present systemic crisis? How to design an alternative city?

Cities have become the key arenas of a primarily market-driven globalization process. They are widely regarded as something "non-plannable", which can be observed but only barely influenced, let alone designed. Following this per spective social conflict and protest are replaced with techniques that promote unanimity and consensus. Particularly in the urban context, this leads to a post-political situation, in which spaces of democratic engagement are swallowed up.

"Design for the Post-Neoliberal City" invites international researchers and practitioners from a range of disciplines to critically investigate the neoliberal city's production of urban spaces and its impact on everyday life. Particular attention will be paid to the question how the current global economic crisis serves to accelerate or modify these tendencies. In conclusion, discussion will turn to how the crisis of neoliberal ideology may simultaneously be an opportunity to imagine urban concepts which exceed the primacy of the economic manoeuvres.

From being strategic places for the implementation of neoliberal policy, cities may possibly become a new political arena for experiments in democracy— and in return require a new design. But designers continue to hold back with criticism and proposals. Yet the time has come, to redefine the role of design in a social city — and to take action. "Design for the Post-Neoliberal City" will posit the basic principles and points of departure of a search for an alternative urban design practice, beyond the practices and ideology of crisis-ridden, late-capitalist urbanism. For it is precisely in the field of design, which has hitherto taken only a cautious approach to urban issues, that one finds unexplored potential for an intentional (re-) design of space.

A new design for the city is urgently needed: for, by its very nature, a city cannot be anything but designed. It is socially produced.

Participants

Ruedi Baur (Paris/Zurich)
Bavo (Rotterdam/Brussels)
Elisabeth Blum (Zurich)
Tom Holert (Vienna/Berlin)
Bernd Kniess (Hamburg/Cologne)
Margit Mayer (Berlin)
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Visual Statements

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RUEDI BAUR (PARIS/ZURICH)
International Style, Global City Branding or Design for a Site

A city can be read through the evolution of its representational systems, by an analysis of the interface between the liberal symbolic manipulation systems and the different forms of representations of the city. What is the place of the citizen in each configuration? What is the specificity of a territorial identity? What is the connection between the present signs on site and the representation of this place elsewhere?

BAVO (ROTTERDAM/BRUSSELS)
Variations on the Neoliberal City

Before even beginning to imagine the design of a post-neoliberal city, it is of crucial importance to understand the way in which the current neoliberal system reproduces itself despite all of its now all too apparent shortcomings. According to common understanding, the neoliberal city concentrating all investment into growth sectors, perversely humanizing all of its disastrous side-effects. Although this might be theoretically true, I will argue that this image of neoliberalism too easily ends up in pleas for social concessions that only further deepen the grip of neo-liberal thinking and action. In the Netherlands for instance, the year-long ecological struggle against the capitalist exploitation of the environment has resulted today in a spatial planning model that closely combines highly speculative real estate projects with ecological and social development. The erection of luxury estates in protected green areas, as well as the privatization of huge chunks of these areas, are propagated today as a more accurate means to safeguard the natural landscape and open it up to the public. The fundamental idea here is not that of the compromise—in this case, between economic and ecological agendas—but the win-win. In my statement I will further explain this variation of the neoliberal city in detail; a model that resembles more the structure of the Möbius ring in which one smoothly moves from real estate speculation to social development and back.

ELISABETH BLUM (ZURICH)
Informal Practices Within and After the Neoliberal City

What is informal? What is informality? It's an economy of survival. At the same time it has become "the power potentials of the so called powerless". Informal housing practices are an overwhelming worldwide visual phenomenon in big cities; informal labour is often invisible. Informal practices are not anachronistic, to quote Saskia Sassen, "they are part of the advanced urban economy!" There are at least four arguments for informality besides the well known growth of the urbanization process: Informal practices gain ground with a partly "virtual planning" policy, as well as with a radically increasing refusal of solidarity in urban societies. They gain ground with an inadequate legislation, consequentially shrinking chances to self-organise secure forms of existence. Facing the

fact that—for good reasons—informality will not disappear, the question is: How do we define criteria for the quality of living in an inclusive city? How do we design bridges between the formal and the informal city?

TOM HOLERT (VIENNA/BERLIN)
A State of Undesignability?

The public image of Johannesburg is marked by a disconcerting array of contradictions. From being condemned as one of the world's most "dangerous" places to being hailed as the symbol of a thriving modern Africa, from descriptions of a gloomy archipelago of enclosures (townships, gated communities) to celebrations of cosmopolitan vibrancy and adventurous cultural production, the "elusive metropolis" (Sarah Nuttall/Achille Mbembe) is both the embodiment of neo-liberalism's excesses and the environment of movements beyond an urbanity of post-apartheid political economies of deregulation and securitization. The talk will address some of the issues entailed by the juxtaposition (and co-existence) of Johannesburg's ambition to be a "global city" and the seemingly countervailing discourse of the city as a problem to be solved. Under such conditions "design" as the signifier of action aimed at improvement becomes loaded with expectations from procuring "crime prevention" to constituting new ways of thinking and performing the metropolis. However, considering the tensions between dystopic representations of Johannesburg in recent movies such as District 9 and the actual re-imagineering of the city in the wake of the 2010 World Cup the question may be asked if the intertwined urban politics of control and renewal doesn't awake the very idea of a certain state of undesignability.

BERND KNIESS (HAMBURG/COLOGNE)
Enabling Design

Cities change. Constantly. Compared to the mostly unregulated and large-scale urbanization processes occurring globally, the development of western European cities is subject to an apparently gapless system of planning and regulation. However, their appearance is formed by a multitude of forces that are not bound to any overriding urbanistic concept. The inconsistency of today's urban metamorphoses demands new modes of design and planning. It requires designers to break out into a new, multiple perspective, which would embrace the complex web of forces and the diversity of everyday tactics, including them in the practice of design and thereby making tactical acts "strategic". Developing a new understanding of Enabling Design allows neither for political neutrality, nor for an attitude of l'art pour l'art. The context is obvious: the welfare-state planning policy of guaranteeing a good (if minimal) standard of living is eroding. So is the postmodern, corporate suburbanism of perfectly planned, discrete developments, with its emphasis on the profit margins of private investors. There is no money left for grand gestures of urbanity. The coffers of both private and public development agencies are empty. In the context of (socially) sustainable urban development, planners and architects cannot afford to have a complacent attitude of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it". Instead, we need a new focus on a qualitative examination of how to use resources sparingly, in order to

create the most for the least—how to recognize, activate, and use, but also to empower, available urban resources.

MARGIT MAYER (BERLIN)
Social Movements in the (Post-)Neoliberal City

The contribution looks at some contemporary movements that are contesting neoliberal urban development by invoking the "right to the city", a motto originally coined by Henri Lefebvre in the 1960s. It contrasts these new movements to those of previous phases of post-war political-economic development, thus establishing a set of correspondences between consecutive urban regimes and shifting forms of contestation. This framework helps to identify the novelty of progressive movements within the (post)neoliberal city—as well as to explore the scope of meanings attached to their demand for the "right to the city", which has become such a defining feature of current urban struggles not just in the Euro-American core, but around the world. The contribution also discusses the implications of the current economic crisis for the right to the city movements, and ends with some speculations about what these movements might imply for designing the (post)neoliberal city.

ERIK SWYNGEDOUW (MANCHESTER)
The City as a Space of Disagreement – The Design of Dissensus!

This century will be, much more than the previous one, the century of the city; cities that no longer have an outside, a border. Ironically, of course, while the city is alive and thriving (at least in some of its spaces), the polis, conceived in the traditional Greek sense of the site of public political encounter and negotiation, the spacing of (often radical) dissent, disagreement and dissensus, the space where political subjectivization literally takes place, seems moribund. This figure of the Post-Political City will be leitmotiv of this. We shall develop the argument in four steps. The first part recovers the notion of the political and of the political polis from the debris of contemporary obsessions with governing, management, and urban polic(y)ing. In the second section, the depoliticised condition of the late capitalist urban will be explored, arguing that the urban frame has been thoroughly, and perhaps fatally, infested by an ordering that is thoroughly post-political and post-democratic. In the third part, we maintain that this post-political consensual police order must, of necessity, lead to an ultra-politics of violent disavowal, radical closure and, ultimately, to the tyrannies of violence and of foreclosure of any real spaces of engagement. However, the incoherencies of the contemporary urban ordering, the excess and the gaps that are left in the interstices of the post-political urban order permits thinking through if not materially widening and occupying genuine political urban spaces. This will be the theme of the final section. While the city as polis may be dead, spaces of political engagement occur within the cracks, in-between the meshes and the strange inter-locations that shape places that contest the police order. It is here that utopias as concrete political interventions germinate.

NIK THEODORE (CHICAGO)
False Utopias: Crises of (Late) Neoliberal Urbanism

In the wake of the 2008–09 global financial crisis, commentators from across the political spectrum repudiated the ideologies and practices of free market capitalism, or "neoliberalism," calling instead for renewed forms of state intervention to restrain market forces. The neoliberal era has been characterized by a series of systemic shocks, such as the debt defaults in Latin America in the 1980s and the Asian financial crisis of the 1990s. These earlier economic trials demonstrated the remarkable capacity of the neo-liberal project to manage (and even adapt through) geoeconomic crises of its own making—and its ability to restore market rule in the aftermath of crisis. But the 2008–09 financial collapse was perhaps different, striking as it did in the heartland of financialized capitalism and global economic power. An audacious "crisis of crisis management," the financial collapse was widely interpreted as discrediting the neoliberal project and its false utopia of market rule, though it remains to be seen whether the death of neoliberalism has in fact been greatly exaggerated. This raises the question: will late-neoliberal regulatory reforms and modes of crisis management usher in a truly post-neoliberal political settlement, or will the neoliberal project continue to stagger forward in the form of a leaner and meaner politics of austerity, a politics that fails to fundamentally disrupt prevailing neoliberalized regulatory settlements and sociospatial relations? And finally, how can a rejuvenated "civic city" emerge from within the interstices of the fractured, polarized urban spaces of late neoliberalism?

Ruedi Baur, designer, born in 1956 in Paris, spent his childhood in France, and went on to train as a graphic designer with Michael Baviera in Switzerland, obtaining his diploma in graphic design in 1979 at the Schule für Gestaltung in Zurich. Having created the BBV studio in Lyon in 1983, in 1989 he cofounded the interdisciplinary network Intégral Concept and has since directed the Intégral Ruedi Baur studios in Paris, Zurich, and Berlin. He has taught on a regular basis since 1987. From 1989 to 1996 he coordinated the design department at the École des beaux-arts in Lyon. In 1995 he was appointed a lecturer at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig, running its education board from 1997 to 2000. In 2004 he created the Design2context Institute at the Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, which he has since directed with Stefanie-Vera Kockot and Clemens Bellut. He also teaches at the École des arts décoratifs in Paris, as well as regularly in China at the Luxun Academy in Shenjang and the Central Academy of Arts (Cafa) in Beijing, and at the Percé international school, linked with the University of Laval in Quebec, which awarded him an honorary doctorate in 2007. A member of the Alliance Graphique Internationale (AGI) since 1992, he participates in many workshops and judging panels, gives regular lectures, and his works are published in various countries and presented at various exhibitions.

Bavo is an independent research office set up in 2002 by Gideon Boie and Matthias Pauwels and it is based in Brussels and Rotterdam. Both Boie and Pauwels studied architecture and philosophy. Research subjects from recent years include architectural surplus-value, the case of imbedded activism, the doctrine of the creative city and the inter- and intra-regional competition within EU spatial policies. Recent publications include "*Cultural Activism Today. The Art of Over-identification*" (Episode Publishers, 2007) and "*Urban Politics Now. Re-imagining Democracy in the Neoliberal City*" (NAi Publishers, 2007).

Elisabeth Blum, architect, author and lecturer at Zurich University of the Arts, has researched the urbanization of informal settlements in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, as well as the contradictions of "investment urbanism" in Dubai. Her recent research focuses on questions of atmospheric perception in architecture and urban environments, supported by her interests stemming from urban politics and perspectives within the opposition of today's urbanism and the "right to the city". She is author of "*Schöne neue Stadt. Wie der Sicherheitsdiskurs die urbane Welt diszipliniert*" (Birkhäuser 2003), "*Wem gehört die Stadt? Armut und Obdachlosigkeit in der Metropolen*" (Lenos 1996), "*Le Corbusiers Wege. Wie das Zauberwerk in Gang gesetzt wird*" (Birkhäuser 1988), and co-editor of "*Dubai. Stadt aus dem Nichts*" (Birkhäuser 2009), "*FavelaMetropolis. Berichte und Projekte aus Rio de Janeiro und São Paulo*" (Birkhäuser 2004).

Tom Holert is an art historian and critic who occasionally slips into the role of cultural producer. Having studied in Hamburg and Paris, he received his Ph.D. in art history at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University at Frankfurt/Main. A former editor of *Texte zur Kunst* and *Spex*, he currently teaches and conducts research at the Institute for Art Theory and Cultural Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Among his books are "*Imagineering. Visuelle Kultur und Politik der Sichtbarkeit*" (König 2000, ed.), "*Entsichert. Krieg als Massenkultur im 21. Jahrhundert*" (Kiepenheuer & Witsch 2006, co-authored with Mark Terkessidis), "*Fliehkraft. Gesellschaft in Bewegung – von Migranten und Touristen*" (Kiepenheuer & Witsch 2006, co-authored with Mark Terkessidis), "*Marc Camille Chaimowicz. Celebration? Realife*" (MIT Press 2007), "*Regieren im Bildraum*" (B-Books 2008). A book-length study on the visual history of experimental psychology and pedagogy ("*The Diagnostic Modern*") is in preparation.

Bernd Kniess is architect and urban planner. He lives and works in Hamburg and Cologne. Trained as landscape gardener he studied architecture and urban design in Darmstadt and Berlin. He runs his office since 1995, is the cofounder of b&k+, since 2001 bernd kniess architecture urban planning. Since 1997 he has held various teaching positions, including a visiting professorship for "Planning Methodology and Design" at the University of Wuppertal from 2003–2005. In 2008 he took a professorship for Urban Design at the HafenCity University in Hamburg, where he is currently the director of the new master programme Urban Design and the Research platform "University of the Neighborhood". His work focuses on the "diagrammatic" of the contemporary city. The cross-disciplinary research created within that work aims at a relational mode of planning and its transposition into a critical design praxis. He has been a member of the North-rhinewestfalia Academy of Science and Arts since 2009.

Margit Mayer teaches comparative and North American politics at the Freie Universität Berlin. Her research focuses on comparative politics, urban and social politics and social movements. She has published on various aspects of contemporary urban politics, urban theory, and (welfare) state restructuring, much of it in comparative perspective. Currently she is coediting a book on neoliberalizing cities and contestation, as well as writing a monograph on urban social movements and the state (Blackwell). She serves on the board of the Transatlantic Graduate Program "Berlin–NewYork" as editorial board member of *The International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* and as Trustee of the Foundation for Urban and Regional Studies. Currently, she serves on the Editorial Committee of the book series "*Studies in Urban and Social Change*" (Blackwell) and on the editorial advisory board of *Mobilization* and of *Il Dubbio*. She is co-author of: "*Nonprofits in the Transformation of Employment Policies*" (Westfälisches Dampfboot 2004), co-editor of "*Urban Movements in a Globalising World*" (Routledge 2000) and of "*Politics in European Cities*" (Birkhäuser 1993).

Erik Swyngedouw is Professor of Geography at Manchester University. He was professor of Geography at Oxford University and Fellow of St. Peter's College until 2006. He holds a Ph.D. in Geography and Environmental Engineering from the Johns Hopkins University and Masters in Urban Planning and in Agricultural Engineering from the University of Leuven, Belgium. He has held visiting professorships at the Universities of Seville, Spain, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, the University of Washington, Seattle, and York University, Toronto. His research interests include political-ecology, urban governance, democracy and political power, water and water resources, the political-economy of capitalist societies, urban social and political struggles, the dynamics of urban and regional change, and the politics of globalisation. He has published over fifty papers on these themes. Recent books include "*Urbanising Globalisation*" (co-edited, Oxford University Press 2003), "*Social Power and the Urbanization of Water – Flows of Power*" (Oxford University Press 2004) and "*In the Nature of Cities*" (co-edited, Routledge 2006).

Nik Theodore is Associate Professor in the Department of Urban Planning and Policy, and Director of the Center for Urban Economic Development, University of Illinois at Chicago. He is also an Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the School of Environment & Development at Manchester University. His research agenda is focused on problems of socioeconomic inequality arising from the restructuring of urban economies. Grounded in community development practice, his research seeks to combine data collection and analysis, policy assessment and evaluation, and theory-building to illuminate the complex (and often contradictory) processes that give rise to economic hardship in urban communities. He co-edited "*Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*" (with Neil Brenner, Blackwell 2002), and his recent articles include "*Mobilizing Policy: Models, Methods and Mutations*" (in: Geoforum 2010, with Jamie Peck), "*After Neoliberalization?*" (in: Globalizations 2010, with Brenner and Peck) and "*Variegated Neoliberalization: Geographies, Modalities, Pathways and the Urban Condition*" (in: Global Networks 2010, with Brenner and Peck).