OPERATION: CITY 2008

THE NEOLIBERAL FRONTLINE: URBAN STRUGGLES IN POST-SOCIALIST SOCIETIES


CONFERENCE NEWSLETTER
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 conjuring 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 - the region whose proverbially assumed lack and deficiency makes any positive 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 visible, in as much as the broadest possible scope of the signifying range of the term “neoliberalism” at some point implores into meaninglessness?

We are assuming that this is the case and that convergence of neoliberalism and Eastern Europe entered 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 modernism 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 privatization 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 modernity 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, today the city-operationality and operativity as open, collective processes of reflecting, decision-making and acting as opposed to random interventionism of expert driven elitist 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 mir-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.

IMPRESSUM

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PHOTO STREAM

KINO MOSOR

DANS PRIKAZUJE
OPERACIJA GRAD
SANJAK RASISI SUDJELOVATI

PHOTO BY M. HNATKOVA
The operationality taken as norm asks for responsible and consequential, efficient and measured behaviour, but calls for ludic, ignorant and stubborn action. Consequential, efficient and norm asks for responsible and privatisation and gentrification. A real political solidarity against cuts through professions, life-operations stand it transversally. Taken as a norm or “transversally,” 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 welfare-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 functioning the market brings surplus profits, based in the great extent on the extraordi-ner development of the informa-
tion technologies that have con-}

Creating a real political solidarity against privatisation and gentrification
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 breeding ground for the expansion of ancillary production: producer services concentrated in command and control posts in the financial economy and new urban forms are marked by extreme bifurcations of wealth and poverty. It is as if the global social economy comprises a plethora of containerized states within which float a number of smaller containers. Globalization brings about a dramatic change in the kinds of social and economic relations and activities contained on these containers, a re-sorting of activities, and an increased porosity of the national containers, such that turbulence in the wider global sea is something quite different. By the 1980s, all national boundaries are being suspended, and the economic shifts from production to finance and back to production are far more rapid than ever. This, in turn, pollinated the increasingly global welfare state. New urban forms are marked by extreme bifurcations of wealth and poverty. It is as if the global social economy comprises a plethora of containerized states within which float a number of smaller containers.

In the context of a new globalism, we are experiencing the emergence of a new urbanism.

In her skillfully synthetic account (1992, 1998, 2000), Saskia Sassen offers a benchmark argument about the importance of local place in the new globalization. Place, she insists, is central to the circulation of people and capital that constitutes 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 the Keynesian city of ad
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The territorialization of systems have been downscaled and destructuring as part of a metropolitan scale again comes to and 1980s but national context, in the 1970s just in the waves of deindustrialization of working-class and minor-

Social and economic restructuring is simultaneously the restructuring of spatial scale, in so far the fixation of abstract labor crystallizes the contours of social power who is empowered and who contained, who wins and who loosesinity the physical landscapes (Brenner 1998; Smith and Dennis 1987; Swyngedouw 1997).

Neoliberal urbanism is an inte-
graphic expansion of cities out-

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 in the urban system: formerly in decreasingly moved away from the liberal urban policies that dominated the central decades of the twentieth century in the advanced capitalist economies. In the US, the President Ford refused to bail out New York City, amidst a deep fiscal crisis (immortalized in the famous Daily News headline: Word to City: Drop Dead), fol-
dowed by the failure of President Carterís attempt at urban plan in 1978, gave the first intimation of a national economic incapacity deeply dislocated from and independent of its cities. The wholesale demise of big metropolitan notions of the 20th century are increasingly the platforms of reinvention between the dramatically intenseî and been absorbed into the avatars of abstraction, there is a fundament-

However, if we step back one level of abstraction, there is a funda-

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identity. No one seriously argues that the twenty-first century will see a return to a world of city-states about it will be a recurrence of urban political prerogative vis-à-vis regions and nation-states. Finally, the redenomination of the scale of the urban is terms of social production rather than reproduction in new ways diminishes the importance of social reproduction in the pursuit of urban life. Quite the opposite: struggles over social reproduction take on heightened significance precisely because of the dismantling of state responsibilities. However, social reproduction in this area is matched by heightened state activism in terms of social control.

In summary, no one argues there will be an irrevocable rift between state and society. As a claim, not an isolated event, and the emergence of state and social reproduction in state forms and practices is not difficult to comprehend in the context of the receding of global and local geographies. According to Swyngedouw (1997:18), the substitution of market discipline for that of a state is not without a price: 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 networks permeate the means of social reproduction, providing alternative norms of social practice, alternative possibilities of resistance.

In summary, no one argues 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 leaves other places, others. 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 global. 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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Challenging the neoliberal city

Neoliberal 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 per cent points. In the United States, the corporate income tax was then 52 per cent, and so the government at the federal level was a major player in every enterprise. In Yugoslavia, the central government was taking barely 1 per cent of the profits of the worker co-operatives.

-Milton Friedman, 1984, p. 16

I begin with this obscurity from one of the archetypal modern neoliberal authors, Milton Friedman, both to try to legitimate myselvas a scholar of American cities, to indicate a group that is prima facie interested in post-socialist transition, but also, more seriously to emphasize the lack of geographical difference within the neoliberal world view. We can see then, as with many of his ideological brethren, there was not much of a difference between the existence 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 or any other reform, had to be considered in terms of the politics of freedom. It scarcely matters whether these forms occur in Yugoslavia or in the United States or in any of the neoliberal worldwide, all forms of collectivization are a road to serfdom, to borrow Hayek’s 1944 famous title.

On the one hand, such a ridiculous premise that all forms of collectivization can be treated the same might be seen by progressive scholars with a certain flippancy, however, I do think it is possible to dispel this notion with some real research and activism. But the fact that we are compelled to address a conference to lament the rise of the global neoliberalism and contemplate ways of reversing it suggests, if nothing else, 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 strategic positions that could be reinforced by progressive scholars in the battle against neoliberalism. The list is necessarily partial, starting point in a conversation, more than a definitive end point.

Contesting neoliberalism

Let me start with a clarification that may not go over 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 claim that social and social research 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 strategic positions that could be reinforced by progressive scholars in the battle against neoliberalism. The list is necessarily partial, starting point in a conversation, more than a definitive end point.
ty provided by progressive econo-
mists and the progressive press. But 
that is far from enough. The 
very institutions that Friedman 
and his ilk reviled labo-
unions, progressive state poli-
cies, socialism, cooperatives were 
themselves the result of years of 
struggle by affected parties. 
Scholars were a part of many 
of these stories, but they too 
buried potential and electoral ac-
tions 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 don’t pretend to have 
all of the answers, but I do think 
that recognizing anything to do with 
ideas rather than something that 
can simply be explained away 
with a single study-sis. 

In the late 90s of studying neo-
oliberalism in North American cit-
es, it has struck me that progres-
sive scholars have already script-
ed a convincing narrative that ties 
the movement to the usual sus-
pect(s). For instance, the IMF and the worldbank, and right-wing think tanks 
in Washington such as the Cato 
Institute. Though I do not want to 
diminish these narratives in any way, I 
would like to suggest that for 
other neoliberalisms political success 
do not come from a fair comparison 
with other alternatives, as those 
whom I was channeling 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 
otherwise traditional political 
views. 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 over-
states their actual population 
count. (Wilcox and Larsen, 2004). 
Often, though not always, the 
architecture of these political orga-
nizations have been mobilized to 
 promote neoliberal ends. 

This is interesting at least to the 
extent that religion has been used 
historically to justify very non-
neoliberal ideals like eli-
 terian theology (Beaumont, 2008; 
Jamieson and Willa, 2009). 

To explain what I mean, I have sum-
marized the contents of three 
separate research projects in 
in which I am currently engaged, 
and organized them into three 
strategies for challenging neoliberal-
ism. 

Decoupling neoliberalism 

Neoliberalism, in my view, owes 
much of its current power to 
it endogenized ability to use 
other movements and ideologies 
as political cover. If neoliberal-
ism, as an abstraction of prin-
ciples, was placed on a ballot, it 
would rarely receive majority 
support. However, if it is an idea, 
it is coupled or connect-
ed to a different logic that 
have its own legitimacy the terms 
of such a political decision be-
more confusing. I think that 
it is important that progres-
sive scholars work to decouple 
neoliberalism from the various 
movements it promotes use to 
confuse, distort, and legitimate 
it manifestations. By deecou-
ple, 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 evan-
gelical Christianity in the United States. 

Evangelical Christians are an 
enormously powerful voting block in 
the United States, with esti-
mates as high as 41 percent of the 
adult population (Kaiser, 2007). 
Though there is no singular 
agenda of the evangelical community 
that is rooted in faith. This is dif-
cult to challenge in a rational 
manor, but it is worth decou-
pling from neoliberalism, as the 
former is able to absolve legitimacy 
from the invocation of freedom. 
Progressive scholars thus need 
not only to point out the obvious 
contradictions of religion but to 
delve deeper to challenge the 
sources of legitimacy that gives neoliberalism 
some of its power. One decou-
pled from movements that give it 
political cover or legitimacy, 
it becomes more successfully contested in its 
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[...] 

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.

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” 

[...]

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.
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 state, to more subtle jabs that local government should destablize until such assumption of neoliberalism. It is framed as the ‘solution’ to many of the problems that have been caused by neoliberalism. Their thought is that the power of institutions can make an impact by decoupling ratings agencies and neoliberalism. They are down the language of nature. They impose a language to criticize the shadow economy of doing business. But above all, progressive scholars are to be neoliberal, but rather to suggest that the political ethos has changed in a variety of ways—from the left newspapers like the New York Times, and right-wing newspapers like the Wall Street Journal, Cana-
dian papers like the Globe and Mail, and American ones like the Washington Times. Differences in approach certainly exist, but all of these newspapers were care-
lessly building their journalism on the premise that government policies were not nearly enough by progressive economists and what the left might have to offer. The interesting element of this series of events is not just that the power of institutions has increased during the last thirty years, but also that it has hap-
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pecs...
God is back in town

Boris Buden
God is back in town

by 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 conflicts, 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 Church.d.o.o. (Church Ltd.). It is dedicated to the role the Croatian Catholic Church has 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 revolution 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: it more precisely implies and articulates a political conflict. For what is actually happening is a crisis of Habermas, 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.

In fact, Habermas addresses a common impression that we have been witnessing recently a worldwide renunciation 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 renaisssance of religious beliefs, or at least the crisis of modern secularism. Naturally the so-called religious fundamentalism is generally false.02

There are few reasons why 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. 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 de-secularization, 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 can be simply ignored if we are going to seriously reflect on transformations in urban space? Probably, it is precisely this economical 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, or as it is called, privatization, a key concept of the process of post-communist transition.

The architects from platforma 9.81 focused on the situation in Zagreb, originating in the former communist societies, 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.03 Habermas calls this new historical condition “public secular”. In a post-secular society “we must adjust ourselves to the consistency (Farbenteilung) of religious communities in a continually secularizing environment.”04

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

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

![Monastery at Dobri Square](image)

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](image)

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.

![After the return the largest part of the playground - now fenced - belongs exclusively to The Seminary and Theological Faculty](image)

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

During the socialist period in the building were accommodated few faculties of the Split university, city library and the Art academy.

The visualization of these urban – respectively socio-political – transformations is based on three 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.

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

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

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.

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
think of this difference as being itself a sort of space - the space of translation. Whereas Rawls forces only religious citizens to transmute 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 "institutial threshold", a threshold between an informal public sphere and the public space 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 clear-cut boundary between "private" and "public" - this time against the background of the capitalist market - can be found in another diagram of performer's project: 3. This is a peculiar mixture of ecclesiastical and secular, commercial, social and political values or more precisely the merging of the religious belief with business space, in short with the market. On their own property the Church has named incorporate commercial activities. Here is the example of the Franciscan monastery of our Lady of Health and the shopping mall "Monastery".

Here the visualization of the transformation operates again with two types spaces, one eclesiastical, for which we are supposed to think of as "private", and another that comprises retail fac-

ilities within the church com-

plex. The relation between these two spaces is different from the cases mentioned above. Here the eclesiastic space doesn’t expand at the expense of public space. On the contrary, the space of commercial activities is that 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, 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 bar-

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Filtered inclusion
Postsocialism in the neoliberal ages

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”? It is what that we have to the habit to call “postsocialist societies”. 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 a “socio-economic” phenomenon of either being experienced and it the societies that didn’t experience it with the par-ticular phenomenon of either being postsocialist societies or having to deal with such societies. Thus the use of the category confers onto the term “socialism” with the – appearance of the Al-leged “dichotomy” of the political term “socialism” with the political term “socialism” with the – appearance of the Al-leged “dichotomy” of the political term “socialism” with the political term “socialism” with the – appearance of the Al-leged “dichotomy” of the political term “socialism” with the political term “socialism” with the – appearance of the Al-leged “dichotomy” of the political term “socialism” with the political term “socialism” with the – appearance of the Al-leged “dichotomy” of the political term “socialism” with the political term “socialism” with the – appearance of the Al-leged “dichotomy” of the political term “socialism” with the political term “socialism” with the – appearance of the Al-leged “dichotomy” of the political term “socialism” with the political term “socialism” with the – appearance of the Al-leged “dichotomy” of the political term “socialism” with the political term “socialism” with the – appearance of the Al-leged “dichotomy” of the political term “socialism” with the political term “socialism” with the – appearance of the Al-leged “dichotomy” of the political term “socialism” with the political term “socialism” with the – appearance of the Al-
a specific past, onto which re-
form have to be adjusted. Anoth-
er part of these experiences is that neoliberal doctrines just
present themselves as carriers of a global principle, that is, as the
answer to the transformations that societies have to undergo in the
time of “globalization” in order to be properly incorporated into the
“world order”. They thus block or at least develop a strong impact
on alternative visions of global re-
lations, and maybe even a term
that appears at first glance as neu-
tral 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,
really as carriers of a postsocialist principle par excel-
sence, but indeed as carriers of
principle of conceiving human
conditions and human relations.
As far as the specific neoliberal
version of this principle is con-
cerned, we may first think of the initial “laboratories” for the
implementation of neoliberal “re-
form”, namely the military juntas in the
South American como sur such as
Argentina or especially Chile in
the (second and third) again we fre-
cently encounter an explanatory
pattern referring to “social-
ism” but in those of “antiso-
cialism”, when it comes to expli-
cating the correlation between neoliberal agendas and the exten-
sive political violence exerted by
the military junta in these coun-
dies. However, the sociologist
Peter Imbusch has proposed an ex-
planation that goes beyond the
sometimes perhaps vio-
Gold War perspective, when he
stated that in view of strong
definitions of leftist opposition (by
trade unions, political parties,
students, etc.) it was regarded neces-
sarily to “tailor a new socio-
ism” (wage) labour relations. However,
we do not need to turn
frequently into particular vio-
forms of interference into so-
cial structures in order to grasp
the negation of the societal that
is linked with neoliberalism. There
is indeed a sort of locus
clavicularis for this negation, which
becomes manifest in Thatcher’s
statement. I don’t want to follow
this line of analysis here, howev-
er. For when one tries to do jus-
tice to Margaret Thatcher, one
should probably at least clarify
what kind of justice it is that
actually at stake within the con-
lict in question. In order to do so,
I will rather try to unveil the juridical
of a legal opponent nor the posi-
tion of a judge, because I neither
want to quasi-autonomically as-
sert that there is indeed “such a
thing as society” (which would be
the logical counterpart to Thatch-
ner’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
crime is all about and how it
could ever emerge.
This might require, though, a
special attention towards what
we can call a “history of the
present”. It is precisely this for-
malisation process that, accord-
ing to him, this era was not only
transformations that European
societies have undergone in the
19th and 20th centuries. Accord-
ing to him, this era was not only
marked by the industrial revolu-
tion, but also by a corresponding
and “equality” of industrial juridical
revolution, which consisted in the
implementation of a free ac-
cess to the labour market (replac-
ing for instance the guild system)
in the contractualization of
(wage) labour relations. However,
as the structure of free ac-
labor contracts soon turned out to be
fragile in that it specifically bring
about developments of mass-
ification, it gave rise to a so-
A photo of a building with a sign that reads “The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies”

Stefan Nowotny
Filtered inclusion / Postsocialism in the neoliberal age

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?

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 of social and political affairs. It is the
"social question" as a collectivity that
keeps up an important link in
the experience of its own
exigence. And as an ex-
ersary situation, it is at the same time
historically shaped, it is a
historical form, and this concerns not only
equal experiences, but also
different experiences, the forms
in which they are shared (or in which such sharing is
achieved) that are publicly and politically
important. I do not want to state
of course, that there is no need to as-
sume a sort of primordial “sociali-
ty” in order to conceive of the
equality it bears the name “society”
(even the “postsocialist”). Margaret Thatcher
assumes such a sociality, and si-
multaneously reduces it to fa-
milities). But what is social is not nec-
ecessarily societal. Whereas the first
notion allows to envisage sociality
as such, the second one
refers to a representative totality of
social relations, even though
the aporiae addressed by Castel
may always and inevitably re-
main inscribed in this
representation.

As far as the political form of
such representation is concerned, I
think that Castel is quite right-
evoking the name “nation”,

The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies

PHOTO BY
Danijel Baserminji

Siniša Labrović

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

Marijan Crtalić

The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies
Although I would for various reasons prefer the name “nation state”. What his analysis offers, however, is something quite different than the, let’s say, nationalist explanations of what a nation state is. It is not necessarily related to myths of heroes 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 labor relationships brought about by 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 and civic rights. Those who are no longer provided with civic rights and social rights as-deeds civic rights and social security, and this neither to the people whom it does not even try to represent nor to the nation state whose status as citizens no longer guarantees them social security. And when doing so, I think that Castel is rightfully avoiding the term “exclusion”, pointing, among other arguments, to the juridical dimension of this term. 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 has called it, “decolonialization 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/exclusion 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 “demands” 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 for us are increasingly facing today, I think, is in fact not so much the predominance of one of the other filtering mechanisms, but rather that it is precisely the falling apart of the two planes of inclusion/exclusion 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.

Now the neoliberal withdrawal of the “state’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 territorialities or with the nation state as we historically know it, alter their function. This can be observed in what Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson 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 fasting from constituting the ground through exclusion involves a selective process of inclusion that suggests that any totalization of the political is contingent and subject to processes of contestation.”

Maybe this is one of the perspectives that we should share, from postsocialist societies or not, finding ourselves in a world of postsocialism.
Few preliminary notes concerning the neutralisation of the city by a contemporary Sofia flâneur

It seems unproductive to approach the ongoing transformation of the cities without relating it to the current processes of fundamental political transformation, or crisis 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 TF1: “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 substantial 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 ‘brain’ users.” I will use this hypothetical statement as a point of departure for a new neutralisation of the city space.

I will use the case of the visualisation of the public space which triggers 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 availability that could be appropriated or absorbed, in other words as a private space – a space which is subjected to the control of the privileged 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 of the new media space could be described as a super-eroticised surface offering ‘pure’ access to the ‘brains’ of its inhabitants.”02 Unlike the inorganic, the new media space is a non-explosive, ‘non-naturalistic’ and as a result we get the state-

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 superficial architecture.

The billboard is a media screen that could be appropriated or absorbed into) a space that is subjected to the control of the privileged private access. The new media space provides (or masks) the public space as availability, as availability that could be appropriated or absorbed, in other words as a private space – a space which is subjected to the control of the privileged 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 of the new media space. The billboard is a massive surface offering ‘pure’ access to the ‘brains’ of its inhabitants,“02

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

The transformation of the urban space of the city Sofia should be conceived of than not much 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 Presse news agency (AP) on 6 July 2004, commented on by Libération (10-11/07/04). “Patrick Le Lay: the brainwasher”? “[Patrick Le Lay, the brainwashers”.

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

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4
20:00 → 21:00 KEYNOTE 1: Neil Smith
21:00 → 23:00 Opening Party [with Pytzek]

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5
12:00 → 12:00 PANEL 1: Scales of Neo-liberalism
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 infliction 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 Berc, Marko Sančanin, Svenja Kühn, Gerald Raunig, Paul Stubbs
MODERATOR: Leonardo Kovačević

14:15 → 16:00 KEYNOTE 3: Stefan Nowotny

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
MODERATOR: Leonardo Kovačević

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2008
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 towards urban planning to understand better their qualities and negative aspects.

ARTISTS: Lucia Basauri, Daife Beć, Marko Sančanin


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: Olja Majčin Linn, Sunčica Ostojić, Sonja Soldo, Vesna Vuković
ASSISTANT: Ivo Popović

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2008
COMMUNITY CENTER MOSOR, ZVONIMIROVA 63

European Cultural Policy and the Independent 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: Dajana Popovic (Culture Action Europe - BEFA, Brussels), Nevenka Koprivšek (Bunker and Stars Električna, Ljubljana), Ivor Curlin (WHW — What, how and whom, Zagreb), Lovro Rumiha (WHW — What, how and whom, Zagreb), Marko Dženić (WHW — What, how and whom, Zagreb)
MODERATOR: Emina Višnić

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

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2008
COMMUNITY CENTER MOSOR, ZVONIMIROVA 63

20:00 → 21:00 KEYNOTE 5: Neil Smith
20:00 → 21:00 KEYNOTE 6: Keller Easterling
PROGRAMME

Saturday, December 6

12:00 → 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 practices 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 Jerlin, Dinko Peračić, Armina Pilavic, Tanja Rajić, Dubravka Sekulić

DISCUSSION: Srdjan 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 Mrdjuljaš, 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 contentions - 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 Golaksnki, Blaz Kriznik, Doina Petrescu, Dimitry Vorobyev

MODERATOR: Tomislav Medak

Sunday, December 7

12:00 → 14:15
Meetings / Workshops

25. 11. at 19:15
PANEL 8:
Public Space Between Cars and Pedestrians: the Case of Kvaternikov Square in Zagreb

[round table]

speakers: Niko Gamulin, Damir Fabijanić, Žarko Puhovski, Gordana Vink, Vera Perenjakt-Šmajs, Teodor Golaksnki

MODERATOR: Zrinka Vrabec Mojzeš

26. 11. at 19:00
PANEL 9:
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: Natala Govedić, Vilim Matula

04. 12. at 13:00
PANEL 10:
National Forum for Space: Space and Sustainable Development

[round table]

16. 12. at 20:00
KEYNOTE 7:
Edi Rama
Ideas towards the postsocialist Left

often shared by conservatives and liberals, with the exception of small groups of soviet non-orthodox Marxists (Regan, A. Burgalín, Al. Tarasov, and the like). Only starting in the years 1990s, the philosophical meaning of the concept of post-socialism, conservative ideology of the ruling regime was becoming obvious and even self-reflected, and when the post-socialist intelligentsia gradually understood the global ideological debate, that the stance of the post-socialist art youth organizations with what is often called “the internationalist left” agenda became one of such groups. It inherited traditions of the 1990s, where philosophers interested in contemporary social and genetic 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 both the boldest contemporary art and the radical philosophy of the genre Benjamin–Adorno–Derrida–Deleuze frame. They are normally associated with the left political agenda, the more radical, the more radical is the interrelation between the two. 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 most far not read, was both felt as a condition to be settled, and as an interesting system, which desends the hidden conservative elements of the new theory, and the need of a new synthetic theoretical work, which would integrate the experience of art and thought, by interpreting it in a utopian or emancipatory way. Indeed, the interpretations of Deleuze and Baudrillard (the famous) 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 reading 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 a apology, atavism. The links of the repressive rationalist order criticized by the contemporary philosophy (which is predominant anarchy) with capitalism have not been seen at all, because capitalist modernization was perceived as a force that would out the old Soviet nomenclatura and introduce the Western standards of social life. Therefore, our existence on the Marxist criticism and utopian thinking has been largely perceived by intellectuals and cynical or even repressive moralism or a new weird PR strategy.

However, in the years 2000s things partly changed, in the sense that the happy coexistence of capitalism with authoritarian-ideology, predominantly democratic, and nationalism, seems rather typical for the left in the rather typical for the left in the countries. The ten- tion by the left seems immense, and even the task of converting the elite seems distant enough. This condition, between liberal- 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 practices and 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 revolu- tionary, utopian, and “alter-globalist” - being always involved in the global affairs from a has outsider point of view. Second, the Russian left cannot ignore the Soviet socialist ex- perience. 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 allowed some degree of choice, although precisely not in the offi- cial 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 liberal- usualism, usually understands so- cialism and communism as a re- gion of pure living in, of the re- appropiation of the world, of the general friendliness and sense of civility. In this sense, socialism is close to be achieved in the devel- oped countries of Europe. But for a radical alternative, this kind of living, as an interesting symptom, a sense of habituation to the Other, which has been partly achieved in the political and ideological synthesis, and not an incorporation of the left-wing program, nevertheless it was a society sui generis which allowed some degree of choice, although precisely not in the offi- cial sense, and in spite of it. 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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 liberal-usualism, usually understands socialism and communism as a re- gion of pure living in, of the re- approp
The wrong story

Since we often expect political stories to follow familiar epic or tragic plot lines, seemingly unlikely political events excite feelings of resource-failure. They constitute outlying events that are not supposed to happen. 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 at Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib are told that torture is effective, and the right toielding zone on the order that it is now impossible to smoke a cigarette after dinner in a restaurant. Yet, by shifting customary habits of mind that force 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 frame-work—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 known that our row but a very well rehearsed habit of mind that has organized most of our classic political thought and established epistem-ic 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 resist each other for total revolution. Anything less would constitute col-lusion. Righteousness intensifies each combative disposition.

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 empires, the right story, the one and only epic, is always and everywhere necessary.

Architecture, as extraterritorial and “wrong” stories exceed the butterflies that do not get evidence and category leftovers—fulness. They constitute outlying events that are not supposed to happen. 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.

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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 empires, the right story, the one and only epic, is always and everywhere necessary.
Architecture should be considered within a list of things that are not supposed to happen...
Embodied in defiant refusal and personal sacrifice, characters like Herman Melville’s Captain Ahab in “Moby Dick” or Michael K. in “Disgrace” pay particular attention to Michael K. as a garden whose constant movement is mimetic of the vines he wishes to tend. This serpentine disposition eases the dangerous stakes embodied in defiant refusal and enhances his chances of success.13

Perseverance might seem like a simple concept, but it potentially provides powerful inventions if understood in a relational register. When London makes a simple choice to contain development within a bounded area, it gets a chance to do it in direct and ramifying effects. In any of the architect’s multiple negotiations, correlative thinking on patterns and potential invents systems that potentially generate indirect adjustments or lures the project design paths that are motivated by alternative political goals. Characterized in terms of dissipative systems or indirect action, like comedy, is often precisely the thing that breaks the deadlock of symmetrical face-off and downshifting towards a more reciprocal, open architecture of relationship.

Related to the notion of misdirection might be that of meaninglessness and irrationality. The other garden that might be considered in this cast of potential models is Chauncey Gardiner from “Dr. Strangelove.” In Chauncey Gardiner, the inscrutable, incognito, and confident 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 his highest levels 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 Berson, Goffman, Bourriaud, and Rancièr in exploring affective behaviors and archontocratic 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 new routines for overlooking evidence that contradicts these formulations. They must find ways of “de-centering” into a once uncontrollable, counter-attacking logics. Attempting to retain isometric and intact, these rationalizing formulas can also engender nonsensical beliefs to which the group is blindly obedient. They are also the irrational aspirations and fictions routinely driven the advent of infrastructure networks as carriers of symbolic value and power and confuse authority. The laundered identities to garner power and confuse authority. The laundered identities to garner power and confuse authority. The laundered identities to garner power and confuse authority. The laundered identities to garner power and confuse authority.

Resistance is often left marching against an illusive or non-existent enemy and curing its failures with another purification ritual productivity in moral terms—on a determination of what is good—and on whether it has released and enriched capital by means of liberation 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 innovation optimizes a different more practical solution—if they renovate what is primary effects on the reality of the seasons alleviates the conflict. This common fuzziness of political camps generates political instrumentality. Social entrepreneurs like Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank and inventor of micro-credit, economically 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 entrepreneurial, with more power to leverage their own projects towards their own political goals.

Contagions

Entrepreneurs understand the power of small numbers—how play market networks with the viral dissemination of both objects and aesthetic regimes. They are not just a customer base for sales but the machine 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 extraneous and esoteric, is an unexpected consequential position, manipulating codes of passage points of leverage in the thickening back channels of spatial infrastructures around the world.

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

Keller Easterling
The wrong story

Emina Višnjić
The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies
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 number of families living in every new measure, every new service personnel, gardeners, unrecognized visitors, especially men in suits. Following the fate of other buildings in the neighborhood, it dawned 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 shopowners 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 ‘worth’ investing in oneself, one’s family and one’s business has its... 

The evening ended with the announcement that the so-called ‘Entwicklungsstrategie 2020’ (Urban development strategy, the so-called ‘Entwicklungsstrategie 2020’) would be presented at the meeting. Residents were curious 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 Brackestrasse 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 neighborhood. 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 supported the demolition of empty buildings with 70 Euros per square metre of apartment destroyed could not be beaten. In 2005 the building was demolished and a large empty plot of earth on which Rumours ... and of housing in Leipzig-Grünau

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 fulfill an ideological promise.

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part of the security doctrine of the emerging nuclear age. For the GDR as much as for the rest of Eastern Europe, the new 1970s, and large-scale city extensions of the mid 1970s were no longer directly the products of necessity but also offered a chance to exploit an ideological promise. 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 early and enthusiastic experiment 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

In November 1977, just a year after completion, the first families moved into their new homes. About 60% of the flats were offered for families with several children and young couples. The need for housing was so urgent that moving vans arrived literally as construction vehicles. When people creased pressures from the Party to keep to the targets of the five-year plan, the fact that there were lifts would have been ideal for residents. Out of Leipzig-Grünau’s twenty blocks, only five were devoted to tower blocks. In the context of ‘real-existing socialism’, the term ‘Prora- tient‘ (type PF 16) was most common. It is important here to differentiate the concept of participation meant here from the one we often talk about in the context of participation as a form of hands-on practice that is combined with the attachment to a project, or home. In the context of ‘existing’ participation relates also to rather amorphous 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 detest ed. 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 neatness by Brigitte Reimann, or Imkraud Mortger come to mind.) Indeed, work, or beautification of a plan, whose general principles were dictated by party officials from the top-down. (Some of the protagonists of neatness by Brigitte Reimann, or Imkraud Mortger come to mind.) Indeed, work, or beautification of a plan, whose general principles were dictated by party officials from the top-down. (Some of the protagonists of neatness by Brigitte Reimann, or Imkraud Mortger come to mind.) Indeed, work, or beautification of a plan, whose general principles were dictated by party officials from the top-down.

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has been lost here is thus not only an idea of community participation, but the very idea of political citizenship – a promise broken.

What in the old state was considered a simple matter of account- ing, the urban sociologist Matthias as Bernt explains, became a huge problem when the Staatsbank was privatised. The housing socialists did not only see their assets with gigantic debts, but also private business banks; most of them directed by western financiers, now owned lending agreements which included more than the promise of combined demolition and renovation. In 2001 the law was amended again to allow debts to be renewed if a housing association was about to withdraw from their credit arrangements with the bank. The result 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 put forward the idea to call for projects that can image, and creative ideas for living in ‘those estates, such as the general plan, muck Petzet’s projects (2004) as problematic, if not misplaced. There exists of course a rare few and notable examples of architect’s activity in dealing with these buildings. Frits van der Vecht of the office of Lacatia Vassalle in France proposed a radical scheme, based on the wrapping of a whole tower block with hundreds of car-sized decks of outside space. The office, Zimmermann-Partner Architekten transformed in Cottbus 23-story buildings block in the WBS 70 system into so-called ‘Town Villas’ on only 2 or 3 floors. Muck Petzet’s office also achieved an exemplary city planning in Leinefelder combining demolition with conversion for new uses. These achievements are of course well extend- ed, 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 covered. This subsidy proved to be a ‘bottomless pit’ around which several debates of reality and mine developed. In 2001 the law was amended again to allow debts to be renewed if ‘housing was off the market. Additionally about 70 Euros per demolished square meter of apartment was promised. The devastating impact of this law, ignorant of democrat- ic planning and free-market strat- egies, cannot yet be estimated. This government subsidy saved many housing estates from bank- ruptcy and even allowed others an ‘extra income’, but the ‘market distortion’ caused by the subsidy made the work of urban planners seem almost superfluous. 12

Conclusion

Population migration is a com- plex 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 ur- ban form. However, as I have tried to explain, the question is why 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 west of Germany or to the suburbs. To a large degree, it was also the fault of the new authori- ties together with the financial institutions, that were unwilling or unable to understand the con- cepts and values which character- ized the organisation of these dan and the architectural fabric. The often random and short-lived 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 community participation was part of a plan to re-appropri- ate the city by erasing the ‘unfa- miliar’ fabric of a competing ide- ology. Therefore, in order to make a critique operative, it is impor- tant here to study how this proc- ess is played out, what form it takes and how the configuration and coherence of the urban fabric is affected by a complicated se- quence 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 ob- vious that the support of seem- ingly invincible ‘all lines through unavoidable’ economic processes makes residents’ participation in determining the fate of the ban environment seem futile and redundant. The political and eco- nomic 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 citi- zenship – a promise raised by the reunification and democratisation, a promise broken.

Afterword

In 2007, the department for city development in Leipzig invited Grünau residents for a second meeting to present the re- vision of the Entwicklungsstrategie 2020. Again, the meeting started with an affable public par- ticipation. No handouts or maps were made available before the meeting, so that guests could only follow the发育 project from the projected power-point pres- entation. It took two more weeks to meet the new promise of the reorganized architectural and planner of Leipzig-Grünau, Hans-Dietrich Wellner, in an interview, July 2004

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In 2005 about 1.3 million apartments were standing empty in East Germa- ny. 11 Ibid.

In 2006, 466.

The ‘pact of reason’ was a complica- ted agreement made in 2000 be- tween 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 pretext of demolition and renovation as reflected and just as possible. 10

Dramatically, as a response to the collec- tion of signatures the city had propo- sed 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. 9

Population migration is a com- plex 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 explain, the question is why 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 west of Germany or to the suburbs. 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 characterized the organization of these dan and the architectural fabric. The often random and short-lived 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 community participation was part of a plan to re-appropri- ate the city by erasing the ‘unfa- miliar’ fabric of a competing ide- ology. Therefore, in order to make a critique operative, it is impor- tant here to study how this proc- ess is played out, what form it takes and how the configuration and coherence of the urban fabric is affected by a complicated se- quence 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 ob- vious that the support of seem- ingly invincible ‘all lines through unavoidable’ economic processes makes residents’ participation in determining the fate of the ban environment seem futile and redundant. The political and eco- nomic 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 citi- zenship – a promise raised by the reunification and democratisation, a promise broken.
How to reclaim the common?

Doina Petrescu

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 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 citizens, 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 stealing back technical equipment from the factories, peasants were stealing woods from the state-owned industrial complexes or the agricultural cooperatives, commercial centres and important monuments were privatized... Numerous public properties were sold away to the lowly private owners that were dispossessed of in the socialist regime: buildings, lands, forests, etc...

Parallely, most of the social housing estates that were publicly owned were sold for symbolic amounts to their occupants in order to release public responsibilities over buildings in bad conditions. In 15 years time, 70 per cent of the state estate was privatized in Romania, from which only 18% was 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 citizens 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 paranoid obsession of being surveyed and denunciacted 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 social- ly and psychologically safe. 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 totalitarian regime. Parts of cities, including historic centres and important monuments, were erased to leave place to megalomaniac constructions or mass housing estates (i.e. 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. 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 public property. The city became neither public nor private 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 new imperatives. Everybody’s dream is to-day to have a prosperous house- hold, to possess a flat in a private development or an individual house in a city healthy suburb. The sense of ownership has be- come 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 will ever become en- gaged citizen? How could they be interested in defending collective and common properties 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 priv- atised and transformed into shopping Malls or gated estates? What will happen with the public squares which are more and more occupied by private businesses? What will happen with the cul- tural centres and the youth houses that 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.
ty and frustration and how to re-
construct their desire and moti-
vation to act? 
Reclaiming the city should start with reclaiming a new col-
collective subjectivity.
We need to contribute to the recon-
struction of collective sub-
jects, initiate cultures of coopera-
tion and collective use, create 
moments of collective enuncia-
tion... A starting point could be 
the networks of resilience that
were functioning during the com-
unist regime: the activation of 
friendship relations and neigh-
bourhood solidarities, the occupa-
tions of intenstices and derelict 
estates for urban agriculture and 
alternative production, culture 
and education, the collective ren-
ovation of social housing estates, 
the claiming back of the streets 
and squares for parties and dem-
onstrations. We need to learn 
how to be, to think and to do-
gether in our cities... We need to
reconstruct the common again 
(and again), in numerous at-
tempts, in many ways, in time, in
movements.

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”.

1. “Transition” is the keyword in tal-
kling about the radical transformation of the political and economic struc-
tures 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 theo-
retically or politically, nor indeed 
predictable from a sociological point
of view: A part of these countries, in-
cluding Romania, managed to accom-
plish two of the major aspects of the 
transition: the transition to a market
economy and the transition to Euro-
pe, basically the inclusion in the Eu-
ropean Union.

2. With small differences, this privatisa-
tion 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 politi-
cal parties which have participated in 
the transition governments were 
composed by recycled former appa-
ratchiks and representatives of the 
political and economic oligarchy of 
the socialist times (ie. government 
representatives, factory directors,
ministry functionaries, political po-
lices and military leaders,) who were 
interested in privatization because they 
were at that time in the host po-
terior to privately acquire public
property: they were those having 
access to information, having 
the money and the connections for, etc...

3. The family as social unit got rein-
forced and became the social activa-
tor in the regime of transition. 
Private property was restructured
around family, and the social and 
economic familial networks were rein-
forced. If there is a type of communi-
family interests and conducting
so to a regressive type of so-
ciality, regulated by and limited to family relationships.

4. In the case of the destruction of the 
historic center of Bucharest some pro-
tests were organised by the order of
architects but were very soon si-
noced. 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, engag-
ing in different forms of disobedience

5. For example, in last, a 350000 inhab-
anten 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 Rim Vilcon, a 100000 in-
habitan city, a shopping centre has 
been built on the location of a central
park and a mega store on the civic 
square.

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

Lefebvre viewed Novi Beograd and 
Yugoslavia as having a particu-
lar position in what he has else-
where called “the urban revolu-
tion.” As Lefebvre states, “Be-
cause of self-management, a place
is sketched between the citizen
and the citadin, and Yugoslavia is
one of the rare countries to be able to 
pose the problem of a New Urban.”

In works such as “The Nona-
liged World,” “NEW, Novi Be-
ograd 1948 – 1986 - 2006” and
“Where Neither The Public Nor
The Intimate Find Their Place” we 
draw upon Henri Lefebvre’s no-
tions of “autogestion”, “Right To
The City” and his critique of the state
form, to address the semantic 
tics of “self-management” and
“community/neighbourhood” in
the production of urban space.
In particular, we became interest-
ed in the imperatives of self-or-
ganisation and self-management that 
ignite into neighborhoods via
neoliberalism versus the pos-
sibilities of forms of self-organiza-
tion that emerge “from below”. 
Neoliberal policies, regulations, 
and pressures are pulled down, so
also speak, by local and national in-
nstitutions and governments, but
they meet resistance and reshap-
ing as they are applied or wedged
into neighborhoods and urban
territories.
Within this, perhaps a new un-
derstanding and mobilization of
“autogestion” (in Lefebvre’s terms, a collectively organized mode of self-management) 
actualizes the question of how
calls to citizenship and to the right
to the city produce new
forms and understandings of the relationship of the state and citi-
izens and is driving the produc-
tion of urban space as the neoli-

deral moment begins to weaken.
Urban planning in contemporary Petersburg: Renovation, population, resistance

Renovation

A quick sketch of contemporary Petersburg reveals many pictures. The magnificent ex-capital of the Russian Empire—a city teeming with palaces, squares, and breathtaking panoramas; a city celebrated for its magnificent past; a city whose entire center is a UNESCO World Heritage site—is now covered over with bandages (façades under “restoration”) and postcards (the façade is put there in anticipation 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 demolitions.

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

This is not the only paradox. The city promotes itself as a place whose primary cultural capital is its status as a city of culture (Yeltsin era) and the “cultural capital,” and this semi-official status is based in large part on its stunning 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 panorama—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-rise developments will literally erase the city’s historic look. Thus, the conversion of financial capital into real estate, the deconstruction of cultural capital. The city’s public spaces—its squares, gardens, and parks—are being rapidly 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 such high-sounding 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 “lacroies” 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; overload 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, megamalls replace historic produce markets and the conveniently located shops that were once the hallmark of late-1950s Soviet planning.

Population

Many critics consider Petersburg’s urban planning practices catastrophic; they often speak of a “catastrophe in progress.” Yet 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 passive? The population’s “escapist posture” 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 urban 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 and state. The administration policy is prohibitory, and declarative; it is time for you to resign!, and declarative (This is our city!). The overall defense 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.

Applause! [action/video]
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

What 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 has been the primary trend of the last decade and the dramatically swelling real-estate bubbles that came in its wake have provided the most obvious illustration of this point. At a glance, behind the tabloid scenes, the transnationalization of municipal bond offers has been widely utilized 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 professionalization, 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 make-over, the face of cities across the world has been changed since the early 1980s, not only to fit an aesthetic norm, as is widely conjetured, but also to anticipate a new order of consumption environments 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 alternately mocked or flattered by the literary critics. 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 a worldwide scale. Commercial investment in such “regenerated” zones is inevitably dominated by transnational franchises with the ability to raise initial capital, apply prepack management schemes, provide flawless logistical support and establish 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 became as something of a shock, underscoring the new status of urban 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 bastardization of existing streets, parks and housing stock, but instead, the razing of entire districts and the construction of high-rise, high-sent towers in their place. Yet the old notion of an aristocratic “landed gentry” living off the rents 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 turned to only three bond-rating agencies in order to make their bidding appear secure, blue-chip investment for pension funds and other large portfolio administrators. “The relative ephemerality of the 1980s and 1990s, in Hackworth’s analysis of the American data, is the relative ephemerality of major buyers on the bond market 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-
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.

As David Harvey notes, the right to the city as a commons rather than an individual right, since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. 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 city, from country to 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.

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?

Dafne Berc / Luciano Basauri work together since 2001. In 2007 they co-founded Analog, an international architecture and art 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 Rot- terdam and Architect degree from the Faculty of Architecture, Uni- versidad Central de Chile in Santiago, where he held a two-year As- sociate Professor position. Worked as a project controller for Flava Laguna Hotel Holding, Ponte and as a de- signer and architect for cultural practices in Zagreb, Amsterdam and current head of a candidate at the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya in Barcelona. Re- ceived M Arch. from the Berlage Insti- tute in Rotterdam and Architect degree from the Faculty of Archi- tecture, University of Zagreb, where she taught urban planning studio and lectured for four years. Worked as designer for Atelier Hitric in Zagreb and Urban XRKZ in Amsterdam and as researcher/designer for Project for Public Spaces, Inc. in NY.


Boris Buderen studied philosophy in Zag- reb and cultural studies at HU Berlin. In the summer of 2004 he edited the magazine ArtKiz, Zagreb. His essays and articles cover topics of philosophy, politics, cultural and art criticism. Among his translati- ons into Croatian are two books of Sigmund Freud. Buderen is the au- thor of Baradžand (1996-1997), Kapitali Kolidogvor (Beograd, 2001) and Der Schacht von Berlin (Berlin, 2004).

Jason Hackworth is an architect, urba- nist, and writer. He is the Associate Professor of Architecture at the Ya- que University School of Architec- ture. His latest book, Enduring Inno- vence: Global Architecture and Its Politi- cal Masquerade (2005), research- es familiar spatial products that have landed in difficult or hyperbo- lic political situations around the world. He has recently completed two research installations on the Web: “Wildcards: A Game of Or- gan” and “Highline: Plotting NYC.” His work has been exhibited at the Quema Museum, the Archi- tecture League, the Municipal Arts Society, and the Wexner Center.

Daniel Chavez is a Uruguayan archae- nologist specialising in Latin Ame- rican politics and urban and environmental political movements. He joined DNI in 2001 as co-editor of the Energy Project, looking at demo- cratic 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 Program, in co-operation with Hilary Wainwright. He has authored and edited a number of books, including: City of God in the Global South. In 2001, he received a PhD in the Politics of Development from the Institute of Social Studies (ISS, The Hague).

Branica Ćurčić 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 politics, new technologies, new cultural relations, contempo- rary art practices and social re- alism. She also collaborates with the transform project of the European Institute of Progressive Cul- tures (EIPC) in Vienna.

Ana Đalošić / Marc Neelen (STEALTH. unplugged!): STEALTH.unlimited! (set up in 2000 by Ana and Marc) is a practice based between Rotter- dam and Belgrade in which over the years we have collaborated with Milica Dolepavlović, Ivan Kucina and Marija Dones. STEALTH often uses participatory in knowledge creation mode based on the shifting perspectives of crossovers fields – visual culture, urban re- search, spatial intervention, cul- tural activism. Ana (1970, Bel- grade, 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 Nether- lands) graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, Delft University of Technology (1997).

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Miran Gajšek is a Slovenian urban plan- ner, 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 pro- fessor of geography and urban plan- ning 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 forms in the New Latin American Left: Utopia Redux?, with Patrick Barrer and Cesar Ro- driguez Garvito (Grupo Editorial Norma, 2005) and The Left in the Ci- ty: Participatory Local Governments in Latin America with Benjamin Goldfrank (Lupus). He is the founder of the NAO (Normal Architectural Office) as well as a co-organizer of “Karma’s Initiative”, which is dealing with the transfor- mation of abandoned military sites in the United States. He is currently an artist in residence at the University of Toronto.

Brian Holmes is a theorist, writer and translator. He is a regular contribu- tor to Nettime, St transfusion, Brona- ria and Multitudes, and is the au- thor of the books Highline: Plotting the Future (Zagreb, 2002) and Unleas- hing the Collective Phantoms (New York, 2004). In recent years Holmes has been organizing a series of seminars with the New York based collective 18 Beavor Group under the title Continental Draft, working on the issues of geo- politics and geopolitics. The next installment will take place on November 27-30 in Zagreb.

Florenc Jelínková is a lecturer at the Uni- versity of Príbram. She is a co-founder of the project Príbram Intervention Network (Príbram/ Berlin/Amsterdam). She is cu- rrently engaged by the Frithiana Mayor in a capacity of his Advisor for Urban Development and Mana-

Rudja Jovanović Weiss teaches geo- political seminars and architectu- ral design at the University of Pe- municchia and is a PhD candidate in architectural research at Gold- smith 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-organizer of the City of Kosovo/Architectural Office and co-initiator of Lost Hig- hway Expedition. Weiss recent book “Almost Architecture”, pu- blished by Mězer/Solitude Stutt- gart explores the roles of architec- ture vis-à-vis democratic proces- ses, abrupt political changes and disappearances of Communist ide- ology. He lives and works in NY and Zagreb.

Emil Juzar received in 2007 his de- gree in architecture from the Fac- ulty of Architecture in Ljubljana. He took part in the work of Temp collective, which in 2005 and 2006 undertook several reclamation ac- tions of abandoned spaces in Ljubljana. He participated in the symposium on self-organisation within the BITEF festival in Bel- grade in 2006. Since 2006 he is a member of “Pula Group” and coor- dinator of “Karina’s Initiative”, which is dealing with the transfor- mation of abandoned military sites in Pula. The Pula Group took part in the Biennial of Young Artists from Europe and Mediterranean in 2006 in Bari. In 2006 he coauthored the exhibitions “Italian Modern Architecture: New Architectures” and in 2008 he authored the exhi- bition “Planning Pula”.

Gal Kirn completed his PhD at KCR BUZZ (Comparative studies of ide- as and cultures) in Ljubljana, he is currently researcher at the Ian van Eyck, Academy of the Workers’ Punk University, political activity and in-chief of journal Aregat.

Bláž Krizajić - after obtaining a Bach- elor’s Degree in Architecture from the University of Ljubljana, he con- tinued his studies at the Academy of Architecture in Zagreb, where he spent two years as a re- searcher. He finished his PhD degree in sociology of everyday life at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana. He has col- laborated with the Institute of Ad- vanced Architecture of Catalonia, Korea Foundation and Seoul De- velopment Institute. He is a part of the founders of the Ljubljana- based Institute for Policies of Space (www.ipop.si).

STEPHEN LANCE is an architect, urba- nist, and writer. He is the Associate Professor of Architecture at the Ya- que University School of Architec- ture. His latest book, Enduring Inno- vence: Global Architecture and Its Politi- cal Masquerade (2005), research- es familiar spatial products that have landed in difficult or hyperbo- lic political situations around the world. He has recently completed two research installations on the Web: “Wildcards: A Game of Or- gan” and “Highline: Plotting NYC.” His work has been exhibited at the Quema Museum, the Archi- tecture League, the Municipal Arts Society, and the Wexner Center.

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Ivan Kucina is an architect, assistant professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, member of the Board of the Association of Serbian Architects, and member of the School of Missing Stud- ies. He is a member of many re- search projects, exhibitions and workshops dedicated to informal processes of transforming Belgra- de urban system and formal pro- cesses of reforming existing institu- tions.

Artur Munz is the director of Belgrade Architects, a group of architects and urban planners. He is an active member of the group “Chino Delaf”, co-editor and regular con- tributor of the homonymous newspaper. His main work is dedi- cated to a philosophical analysis of non-classical political concepts (revolution and empire). He also authored a book on Russian and international politics, on con- temporary Russian poetry, and on other matters.

Boris Manchev is a writer, art historian, and cultural theorist, who, as an architect, teaches political philosophy. His work is often in dialogue or collaboration with other artists and scholars. Manchev has published and co-authored books in English, German, Italian, and Russian. Some of his works include: The Unimaginable: Essays in philosophy of the Image (2010), The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-socialist Societies (2017). Boris Manchev is Ljubljana based, and currently works in France as editor in chief of the architectural magazine “The Library”.

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Ivan Kucina

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Peter Radulovic

Jelena Zenkovic

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focuses on interdisciplinary art

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Dolores Gomez is an architect and

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