

ESA-PARIS WORKSHOP

Paris, 2009
Teddy Cruz

Radicalizing The Local: Post Bubble Urban Strategies

Workshop Overview

The changing of geo-political boundaries across continents, the unprecedented shifting of socio-cultural demographics produced by the ongoing explosion of urbanization across the world and the current economic crisis –everywhere–generate new conditions that call into question traditional methods of artistic and architectural intervention in the city. These intensified geo-economic and political dynamics begin to foreground once more the tensions between the formal and the informal, the top down totalizing institutions of land use and development at the scale of the metropolitan and bottom up agencies of social activism at the scale of the neighborhood.

The complexity of these social, political and economic forces continues to generate global and local zones of conflict, where the drama of these collisions is magnified, transforming the territory, the city and the neighborhood as sites of contestation where different conditions of power are inscribed, at odds with one another. It is ultimately in the contemporary city where the current politics and economics of privatization and control, labor and immigration are manifested physically, dividing it between enclaves of mega wealth and sectors of marginality. This workshop will look at *conflict* as an operational device to transform architectural intervention.

Seminar Focus

Above all, these multiple forces of division at play across the globe and in the contemporary city are producing a crisis of both housing affordability and social and public infrastructure. The main challenge in our time, primarily when the paradigm of private property has become unsustainable in conditions of poverty, is the need to re-think existing conditions of ownership (Re-defining affordability by amplifying the value of social participation: More than ‘owning’ units, dwellers, in collaboration with community based, non-profit agencies, can also co-own the economic and social infrastructure around them). At a time when the formal economic and political institutions that have been producing the official large, hyper development in many contemporary cities have come to a stand still, it is important to re-evaluate the role of architects in re-thinking the institutions of urban development. At this juncture of economic crisis, can architects, in addition to designing buildings, also participate in designing political and economic process?

This workshop will primarily engage the micro scale of the neighborhood, transforming it into the urban laboratory of the 21st century. The micro urbanisms that are emerging within small communities across the city, in the form of non-conforming spatial and entrepreneurial practices, are defining a different idea of density and land use, setting forth a counter form of urban and economic development that thrives on social encounter, collaboration and exchange. New economies and social institutions will emerge from within communities. Can architects rethink political and economic systems in the context of these conditions? Can architects design collaboration and participation across agencies and institutions, re-negotiating the relationship between the top-down and bottom-up? Can conflict itself become an operational device to redefine practices of intervention in the city? Can we redefine the meaning of globalization by radicalizing the local? By reflecting over many of these questions, we can reopen the potential of the metropolitan as the site for a new brand of social realism and artistic experimentation and reevaluate the re-definition of the relationship between architectural form, political process and the economic sustainability.

Workshop Organization

The participants of the workshop will divide in groups of 4. The members of each group will, together, construct a visual narrative made of texts and diagrams that will illustrate their findings / positions, across the following 5 points of research – which are included here simply as a way of illustrating the intentions of the workshop. (Acknowledging the short time we have to develop this work, we will discuss this information further at the beginning of the workshop as well as the logistics involved).

1.Geographies of Conflict (Global)

Diagrams identifying continental zones of friction:

Construct a visual narrative that can illustrate your reading on a variety of issues that define particular zones of conflict across the European continent. This can include issues of immigration, security zones, borders (physical and administrative), areas of wealth and poverty, main centers of corporate power and the rings of service communities that surround them, corridors of strong economic flow and enclaves of economic stagnation, metropolitan expansion and shrinkage, and so on...

2.Critical Thresholds (Local)

Diagrams and texts identifying zones of conflict in Paris:

Use Paris and its edges to identify friction-zones that might reproduce the same dynamics found at the continental scales. Zones where immigrants concentrate, 'high-end' enclaves of wealth and hyper development and zones of poverty and under-representation, large-scale infrastructure and small communities, internal borders within the fabric of the city (produced either by physical discrepancies

and odd juxtapositions or by socio-economic inequalities), centers of top down, large manufacturing, requiring the 'importation of labor and sectors of bottom up entrepreneurial practices generated by particular communities of practice, and so on...

3. Measuring the Neighborhood: Economic Capital Vs. Social Capital

Diagrams and texts identifying the main political and economic informalities produced by the different social and cultural agencies and institutions at play in the neighborhood:

Each group will select a zone of conflict, a particular neighborhood where some of the socio-economic and political dynamics, observed at the scale of the continent at the city, are dramatized. These selected neighborhoods (one per group) will be the site of investigation. Each group will 'map' the socio-political and economic infrastructure found within the neighborhood. By this I mean the variety of social service agencies, art and culture collaborative groups, micro entrepreneurial projects (political and economic informalities), the variety of coalitions of activism on the ground (including particular characters –people-leading specific projects), Non profit organizations at work within this environments, producing particular social organization, and so on...

In essence: a RELATIONAL SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC MAP illustrating much of the non-conforming / informal, micro / bottom up economic and political dynamics.

Other issues:

Political jurisdiction

Land use regulation

Other stake holders / political bodies

4. Designing Political and Economic Process

Diagrams mapping alternative policy and economic frameworks:

With these diagrams and texts... that 'measure' these 'off the radar,' invisible social capital/ dynamics... each group will alter / modify / augment/ redistribute/ reorganize some of these resources and efforts (on the ground), proposing a series of new relations, collaborations and 'alliances' across agencies and institutions to generate alternative policy frameworks and forms of economic development (alternative to the normative pro-forma recipes of both private developer driven or subsidized housing)... as well as new social and economic support systems that can generate new typologies of housing and public infrastructure at the scale of the neighborhood.

5. Counter Spatial Tactics of Development

Diagrams and texts suggesting how these alternative modes of sociability and economic sustainability can be supported by particular formal and organizational configurations, in terms of housing and public infrastructure in the neighborhood.

Suggested Bibliography

Nicolas Bourriaud, "Relational Form," from *Relational Aesthetics* (1998)
<http://www-dev.dxarts.washington.edu/coupe/dxarts531/reading/relationalaesthetics.pdf>

Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* #110 (Fall 2004) (ER)

Benjamin Bertram, "New Reflections on the 'Revolutionary' Politics of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe," *Boundary 2*, 22.3 (Autumn 1995)

Martin Morris, "The Paradigm Shift to Communication and the Eclipse of the Object," *South Atlantic Quarterly* vol. 96, no.4 (Fall 1997) (ER)

Grant Kester, "Dialogical Aesthetics" *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (University of California Press, 2004) (ER)

Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Inoperative Community" *The Inoperative Community* (University of Minnesota Press) (ER)

Alberto Melucci, "Conflicts of Culture" and "Collective Action and Discourse," *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) (ER)

Jacques Ranciere, "The Rationality of Disagreement," *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999) (ER)

Jacques Ranciere, "The Politics of Aesthetics" (<http://theater.kein.org/node/99>)

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2000), Section 3.4 "Postmodernization, or The Informatization of Production" (pp.280-303) and Section 4.3, "The Multitude Against Empire," (pp.393-413) (<http://www.angelfire.com/cantina/negri/>)

OTHER TITLES (not in bibliographic format)

Perry Anderson, "Spectrum"

Paolo Virno, "A Grammar of the Multitude"

Jacques Ranciere, "A Short Voyage to the Land of People"

David Harvey, "Spaces of Global Capital: Towards a Theory of Uneven Capital"