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inura
International Network for
Urban Research and Action

Bulletin 13
December 1997



25-PAGE EXTRA:
EXCLUSIVELY IN THIS ISSUE

PANEL DISCUSSION
"HORIZONS OF POSSIBLE URBAN
WORLDS" (Transcript)

featuring: Saskia Sassen (New York)
David Harvey (Baltimore)
Margit Mayer (Berlin)
Glenn Jenkins (Exodus Collective)
Peti Buchel (Gilde van Werkgebouwen)
Roger Keil (Green Work Alliance)
Alessandra Romano (Forte Prenestino)
Fred Robinson (Durham)

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Membership form (for non-members)

Dear friends, le voilà, INURA Bulletin numero 13

We are exhausted but happy after this year's conference.

"Possible Urban Worlds", the 7th annual INURA conference, was a great success. About 200 participants from many trades and corners around the world followed INURA's invitation to hear and talk about progressive urban theory and action. We would like to thank all of you who helped to make this a wonderful and unforgettable event.

This Bulletin is a tribute to the conference. Maria Kunz - who has left us in the meantime - transcribed the grand finale of the conference: **Horizons of Possible Urban Worlds**. As an exclusive feature we enclose the slightly shortened final panel discussion, the summit talk with Saskia Sassen, David Harvey, Margit Mayer, Glenn Jenkins, Peti Buchel, Roger Kell, and Alessandra Romano, superbly orchestrated by Fred Robinson. To give you a more complete picture of the full three days we let four reviews speak of the entire conference.

Finally, we've compiled the detailed conference program as it really happened, i.e. including all short-notice changes. We hope that with these three pieces we can convey some of the spirit and the contents of Possible Urban Worlds, to participants as well as to non-participants*.

For those interested in the full contents, we are going to publish the book "Possible Urban Worlds - A Conference Reader" with almost all of this year's contributions plus some extras. In this Bulletin we give you the full list of contents, subject to last-minute changes. The approximate price will be SFR 40.- for about 300 pages, including fotos and graphics. The book will be published in spring 1998.

Please order the book with the enclosed form.

After the conference, about 40 INURA members took part in the retreat in the Naturfreundehaus Tscherwald, high above Lake Walensee, near the village of Amden. Followed by some beers and table tennis we picked up INURA matters. Next year, we will finally leap across the pond, to Toronto! For the first time INURA will meet in America and for the first time in September (12 - 20). We are very much looking

forward to stretching our tentacles out towards North and South American, perhaps even to some Pacific Rim associates.

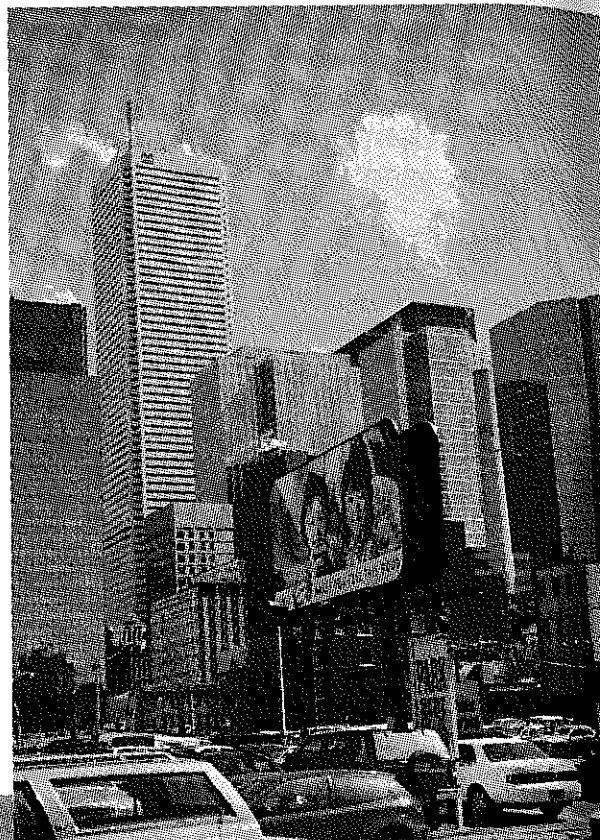
Before passing the itinerant INURA office on to Toronto, there are only a few organizational matters left to mention:

Enclosed in this Bulletin, members will find the up-dated INURA-Member List. Please give us immediate notice about any errors and omissions (e.g. email numbers). If you like to keep in touch on the net, visit our web-site <http://www.geo.umnw.ethz.ch/human/inura.html> and - for more information about next year's conference and any other INURA business - subscribe to the new listserver of INURA Toronto: **LISTSERV@YORKU.CA**

!! Please remember to pay your membership fee 1998!!
Wishing you a pleasant and happy winter and hoping to see you in Canada's Indian summer '98

Richard Wolff, INURA Zurich

* Conference manuals as given to participants, including abstracts of contributions and workshops and urban safaris are available on request from INURA Zurich.



Pre-Announcement for the

8th Annual INURA Conference 1998

– Diversity-DiverCity –

Toronto, Canada

September 12-20, 1998

Panel discussions, workshops, and urban tours
will be organized on

- Spaces of Production/Reproduction
- Immigrants and Aboriginals
- Urban Ecology

There will be an additional focus on regional governance.

**We welcome the world to our beautiful
New City of Toronto and to York University !!!**

Further information in INURA Bulletin 14

(out in February/March 98)

or email Roger Keil: rkeil@yorku.ca and Gene Desfor
desfor@yorku.ca

"Horizons of Possible Urban Worlds"

June 18, 1997

Transcribed and slightly shortened by Maria Kunz and Richard Wolff,
recorded by Esther Meier, Radio LoRa



Final Panel Discussion with Saskia Sassen, Peti Buchel, Roger Keil, Margit Mayer, David Harvey, Glenn Jenkins, Philipp Klaus on violin

Fred Robinson:

This panel discussion comes at the end of the INURA Conference and will pick up the themes we have been looking at over the last three days.

I would like to summarize some of the issues we have discussed.

The title of the conference is "Possible Urban Worlds". We have explored some possibilities, we have been looking at all kinds of responses to contemporary life and the difficulties of contemporary urban life, and we have heard a very wide range of responses, very rich and varied responses to the various kinds of problems and issues people are coping with.

Some of those are very pragmatic responses, some quite powerfully utopian. I suppose all of them are characterized by being positive and proactive responses to a whole range of situations. We have looked at many different types of initiative, mostly at the local scale, very varied, some to do with housing, some to do with reaching out to marginalized groups of people, some to do with culture, cultural initiatives, some to do with planning strategies, and so on. We have also seen a wide range of not just types of initiatives, but also many different approaches, some of which perhaps stressed their separateness, their movement away from the horror of urban life, in a way, and some of which are to do with perhaps more direct engagement with it. So there are different approaches we have looked at, we have tried to make sense of, and then there are also organizational structures and models as well. We have had some discussions about the different levels of organization, the most appropriate levels for certain kinds of strategy. That has been quite a rich and interesting discussion that we've had in various places and ways over the course of the last three days. The way you do things, whether on a very local level or the regional, city-wide level, or on the national or supranational level, those are the kind of issues we've played around with and have certainly not resolved. Perhaps a further thing has to do with a whole set of questions and thoughts about making connections. INURA itself is about making connections. This is something that we've been committed to over the last seven years. We've picked up a lot of what has to do with the importance of networking between, particularly local, initiatives. One has the sense of not just the richness and the diversity at the grassroots, but also perhaps the sense of a movement, a movement waiting to happen, connections often waiting to be made. I was particularly impressed by one phrase I heard over the course of the conference, which was the need, I think it was Saskia who came up with this, to establish places where the powerless can become visible. Indeed, power and visibility, I think, are both central questions which continue to concern us and have concerned the INURA network right from the start. I would like it if, in this discussion, we moved towards distilling some sort of lessons or generalities from the massive detail and the great variety of things we've heard of, so far. I would like us to look again and make sense of the balance between global influences and local influences, global strategies and local strategies and all the things in-between. Many of us were trained to be geographers at one time or another, which of course is an excuse to be almost anything to almost anybody, but many of us are used to playing about with that sort of sense of scale, which I think is quite interesting, both in relation to influences where things are coming from within systems, but also in

relation to the kinds of strategies and how we – whoever “we” is – might influence and at what level.

The final area I would like to keep alive in the debate, wherever else we might go, is something about the whole issue of social exclusion. This seems to me to be an essential theme. I know it's Euro-speak this “social exclusion”, but I use this term for want of anything better at the moment. This term contains a set of relationships, difficulties, issues, and perhaps within that a whole series of opportunities and related strategies around it. Social exclusion seems to me to be of central concern to all of us in thinking about the nature of initiatives and what's possible. So we've had lots of local examples, we'll hear, no doubt, in the course of this evening, further anecdotes from the local. Let me ask the panel members to introduce themselves and say a little about what they got from the conference, so far.

Alessandra Romano:

I live in Rome, in the squatted place I tried to present this morning (Forte Prenestino). I've been there practically since the beginning. I decided to participate in this conference because I thought it could be interesting to have a confrontation with practical experiences, struggles, innovative experiences, and an attempt towards a theoretical analysis of that. I decided to come here for me personally, but also for my place, because in a way every kind of connection to Rome is important. Rome is a bit far from the rest of Europe, in a physical and also in other senses. We don't like to be so separated from the rest of Europe, and we're interested in establishing connections.

Saskia Sassen:

I'm Saskia Sassen. I'm mostly in New York. I need to come to meetings like these where I get to hear you talk. I was extremely interested in the focus this year on direct action groups. There aren't books written about you, in ten years there might be. So I think of these kinds of gatherings as necessary encounters, certainly for people like myself.

Peti Buchel:

I'm Peti Buchel, from the Amsterdam Industrial Building Guild. I represent 18 squatted industrial buildings in the harbor of Amsterdam. It was all very exciting here. What I found most exciting about it, is what I heard about the identity of the city as an international airport. Every modern city looks exactly the same, but what happens under the surface is a plenitude of all kinds of small, positive initiatives, and they are all here, from Rome, from Luton etc. It's great, it's fantastic.

Roger Keil:

My name is Roger Keil. I'm from Toronto where I'm at the faculty for environmental studies. I've been with INURA from the beginning, and this has certainly been the most exciting of our conferences, and it's still going on. Having been part of this over the past few years, I'm actually quite proud of what the people here have achieved in organizing this, that we've got that far, from a small conference in a mountain cottage in Salecina a few years ago to something like this with actually some significant public participation. So this is my personal voyage to this place, but I also want to make one more substantial remark: When you read the newspapers and you see the national news, there is a lot of talk about globalization and the way globalization is being described to us is, most of the time, as if it were one coherent big process which equalizes all of us and makes us all alike and makes us victims of this process. I think we have established, over the past couple of days, that this is not so and that there are lots of differences, still, and on the other hand there is lots of unity and solidarity among those who allegedly have become victimized by globalization. Those people who are proposing globalization as one way of solving capitalism's problems should not be so sure that this will go on without resistance.

Margit Mayer:

I'm Margit Mayer. I teach politics at the Free University Berlin. I work on social movements and also on urban politics. I go to a lot of conferences on social movements, but rarely do I have the opportunity to meet the so-called “objects” (audience laughs) of social movement researchers, because they are rarely present at the conferences of social movement researchers. Obviously, our conference showed that it's not very easy to combine academic agendas with the interest and needs of the actors in social movements, but I was thrilled that such a conference could be held and, even though it was only a selection of all the various movements that are active out there, it was fascinating, especially because it was an international selection of movements, we have Dutch, British, Canadian, Italian, Swiss, and German movements cutting across an interesting variety of activities. That has been a fascinating event.

David Harvey:

I'm David Harvey, an academic (audience laughs), generally therefore described as useless (audience laughs), but he (points at Glenn Jenkins) is helping me out a lot, and I think that says everything about the tone of this conference. It's been great. The only other comment I'd make: You know, before INURA came along, I used to think the only thing you would

find in Zurich were bankers and bourgeois, but I have now found out that there is even resistance, and if there is resistance here, my God, you should be able to find it anywhere. It's a delight to be in an environment of this kind, in a city of this kind, talking the kind of language that we're talking. I think it's been a wonderful experience for me, and I'm very grateful to INURA for setting it on.

Glenn Jenkins:

My name is Glenn Jenkins. I'm an object (audience laughs). I'm speaking on behalf of the Exodus Collective, there are another six members of the collective in the audience. When you come from the other end of this equation, of the INURA equation, when you come from the end of the activities, the activities we take part in because we must, because it has to do with our lives, it creates our lives, when you occupy buildings in front of you that you see laying wasted and you have nowhere to go, if it be to dance, to sleep, or to live, it is not as a result of any academic research that we are aware of this, it's through our life, when you come here and you find that there are not only similar projects, but sort of an international support for an international awareness or an international recognition of the type of thing that you do, it gives you a tremendous feeling of confidence that it's right, because you didn't come about it through books, but the books say that it's all right, if you know what I mean (laughs). It gives you, it gives us a tremendous feeling of assurances and confidence. I think that is a tribute to INURA. Go on INURA! Bui, bui.

Fred Robinson

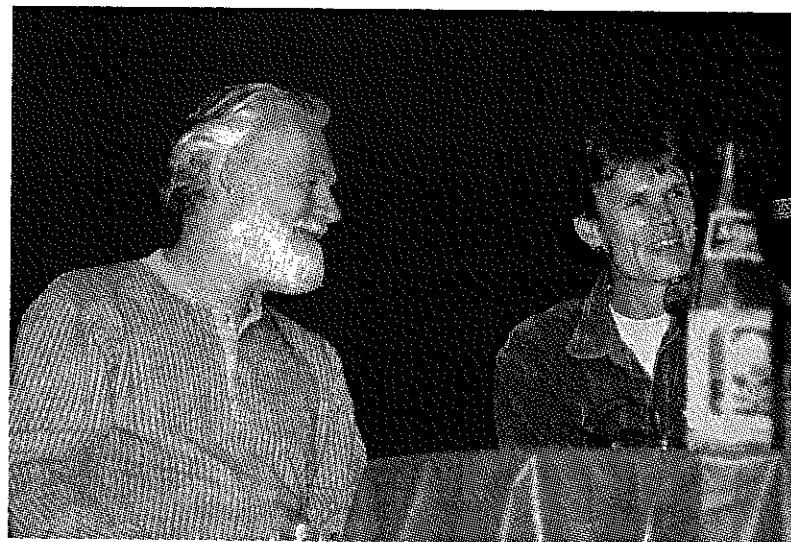
Thank you very much, team. Well, they have it, some of the finest minds in the world. Before your very eyes, those minds waiting to be picked by you, to raise whatever issues, questions you would like to raise with them. A wealth of analytical experience and a wealth of lived experience as well. I would like to, therefore, really give you the opportunity to engage with them.

Nancy, Exodus:

Do we agree then that direct action works and that it is effective? As little groups doing the little things that we do, even though they might make some impact, still globally they will never, since there is such a powerful force stopping us, how can the intellectuals help us get through the legal system maybe, to find loopholes, so that we can be supported and enable us to do more action? Because we are ready to put ourselves on the line.

Saskia Sassen:

Yes. Direct action works, but I do think that today is a time for a politics of enormous diversity. There was a time when broad-front politics worked better than it works today. There may have been a time when direct action had more of an impact, because it was sort of center-staged. There were times in the last few decades when direct action was connected to performance art. It was a whole conglomerate of its own. But I do think that we need direct action. We also need different types of politics. One of the things that strikes me is that the challenge is not how do we create a broad front and how do we homogenize, but how do we



Final Panel Discussion with David Harvey and Glenn Jenkins

agglutinate such a diversity of politics. As I said earlier, Amsterdam¹ was important on Sunday, Monday and on Tuesday, because it brought many direct action groups and many different kinds of politics together. It made them visible to each other, it made them visible to the top, it made them visible to the media. I do think that this question of powerlessness is a real fact among a lot of these kinds of politics. What are the instruments we have available? One of them is to agglutinate, and I say agglutinate because I am really trying to think of a term that would not suggest homogenize, create broad fronts, create alliances, but that has some sort

¹ March in Amsterdam during the Euro-Summit, June 1997

of an impact while maintaining all this specificity, I mean sticking together without losing your specificity, without having to agree on all strategies. I do think that there are these different stages, some that start in very individualized, particular, invisible projects. To come back to your question if direct action works: Yes it does, but I don't think it is enough. But we need it, because it takes a certain kind of courage.

Alessandra Romano:

I believe in direct action, because sometimes it is the only way you can know if something works or not. We could have spent years thinking about squatted places, but people just took action, and then after we noticed that it really worked. I think the important thing is just to be a bit clever in doing things, to think a bit before and not just go and do all kinds of stupid things. Don't repeat mistakes, because a lot of times people just repeat the same kind of things that did not work, without ideas how to change them.

Fred Robinson:

I'm reminded of that phrase which says we must not just do the right thing, but do things right. We can learn about a process as well as being committed to what we are trying to do. I must also signal that this will be one of those conferences where you can go back and say: "I heard the word 'agglutinate' there first" (audience laughs). It's a great new concept, and no doubt, people, academics will make a good living out of "agglutination" for the next ten years.

David Harvey:

One of the themes of the conference has been proactive, direct action. But I think that something that has to be recognized is that most proactive, direct action originates with a reaction to something. So when you say: "Is it successful?" you haven't brought capitalism down yet (laughs), but what you did was to react. I mean, just to take your example, you reacted to a condition of structural unemployment and you reacted to a condition of commercialization of culture. Out of those reactions you produced something that was positive. It was turning what was a mere action into something positive. I think all of the groups here began with reacting to something. The difficulty then comes of being proactive, not simply in the sense of constructing an alternative to what you are reacting against, but then seeing how your proactive activities can link with the proactive activities of many others. We got a big problem here. I was hit about two weeks ago when I read the following piece of data in the International Labor Organization annual report on world

employment. They pointed out that the 358 richest people in the world, the billionaires club, own in wealth and have in income the equivalent of 45% of the world's poorest population. 358 people have assets and incomes which are equivalent to the assets and incomes of something like 2.3 billion people. Now, we've been promised that free market capitalism would deliver the goods. Well, it's delivering the goods to some people (laughs). What brings us together is the clear recognition that it is not delivering the goods to a lot of people. Therefore, the proactive at some point or another, it seems to me, has to both be continuous with what it is reacting to, because that is what you're doing and that is what you're about, but then somehow or another the function of conferences of this kind is to start to say: Well, how can some of these proactive, direct actions start to gain a broader purchase on the more general problem, which is the obscenity of that figure I just quoted to you.

Roger Keil:

At one of the first INURA meetings Mark Saunders created the term "something-is-happeningism". That is something that I wouldn't support: direct action deteriorating to something-is-happeningism. Not just in principle would I think that isn't a good idea but also in practical terms, because what I have learned from the kinds of struggles that I have observed as an academic and I have been involved in as an academic, and from the kinds of things people like you do, particularly your group (points to Glenn Jenkins of Exodus), is that you did need a lot of stamina, you need a lot of power and energy, and you need to sustain a certain level of activity over quite a long period of time, in order for that direct action to be successful. You can do little operations and set little fires somewhere, but somebody needs to make sure that the fires keep burning. In order for the fire to keep burning you need something like theory, you need something that makes the connections and helps you explain things. In the olden days, that used to be called raising consciousness from false consciousness. I don't know what one would call it today, but I think we have to learn to develop some theoretical connections and to build this type of learning into our direct actions and struggle. I think that INURA has proven one thing as an organization, which is that we have been able to sustain this tension and dialectics among that small but growing group of people.

Tony Gosling:

I would like to ask the panel: Are we part, do you think, of a global civil rights movement against the pressures of globalization? I mean INURA by "we".

Peti Buchel:

We are the world, we are the people. I think, of course in a very small way, we are. Direct action, what we are supposed to be doing, is very important, because we are doing something, we are giving people a sense of worth. I think that is the most important thing. I think globalization, as they call it, of the industries, of commerce, but also of governments, and I'm talking of course of the EU, NAFTA etc., takes away the feeling of worth from the people who are at the bottom of society. As I said before, we have to start on a small scale, we have to start somewhere, but if some of the people who are at the bottom of society feel power and feel that they are worth something and become strong, it will affect other people. They will hear about it somehow, and that way we will grow. But I also think that everybody has to do it in his or her own way. We can't dictate or say: "Our way is good, you should do it exactly like we do, and you'll be successful." What we do here in Europe might be interesting, but the same thing counts for people in Africa or Asia. Many people in Africa have no self-esteem any more, because of civil strife, economy etc. They also have to develop this feeling of self-esteem, and they have to find it in their own way. I think we can only help in a very minor way.

Saskia Sassen:

I want to make two very brief comments on the two questions. The question "Are we part of some version of a global civil rights movement?", I'd rephrase it just a bit, and here is the beginning of an answer. It's a complicated subject. When I look at the world today, I see three types of normativities at work: One is the one embedded in the national state, the welfare state, supposedly the well-being of the citizens, the project of the state, always an imperfect project; the second one is the one of the global capital market, new liberal policies, IMF conditionality. Countries, in order to have good, sound economic policy, have to follow certain precepts, and we know what it is, anti-inflation, even if it kills jobs etc. The third: The narrowest way to describe it is the international human rights regime, but I do think that one of the things the normativity of the human rights regime signals is the centrality of the body of the individual as a site for rights. I think this is in some ways operative in some direct action movements. There is something that unites us, though we may have different names for it. Perhaps global civil rights movement is one way of naming it, perhaps international human rights regime is by now too technical a term, because it is also a technical term. But there is some kind of normativity that I see embedded in many different types of struggles, and there is not necessarily a shared name for this, and that might be fine that there isn't a shared name, but I do think that you are

pointing to something that is a reality. As all realities, it is partial and in movement. I do think that there is something like that and that a lot of the politics that might unite very different groups, like in our workshop today we had people disagreeing with each other on what the purposes of political action are, which I think is fine, but there is some version of civil rights or human rights normativity that is something that binds us. Now again, as in my answer to direct action, it is important, it isn't enough. I really liked your statement. Again, when I look at the world, and I always say "when I", because I am positioned in a particular way, what I see as one of the ironies of today is some sort of triangulation. Yes, a strong global economic system, which, I have said many times, for me materializes in very particular structures, places etc., a loosening of power by national states and an ascending of subnational entities or cross-boarder entities that do not encompass all national territories. There is a real, if you want, disfiguring, some would say, refiguring. I would say, of national territory. That means that the local does assume a presence. Again, somebody in Italy, Tomas Maldonado, came up with a very interesting phrase for me, he said: "la coscienza municipale", we see today an ascendance of a municipal conscience. This is not necessarily all good, by the way, but there is something about the local in the context of globalization, that the language of globalization does not necessarily present as such, but that is happening.

Margit Mayer:

There are obviously some iron laws of movement development that my praised fellow colleagues have discovered, such as institutionalization and so on, where a lot of movements, in the course of their development, have lost track of their original goal. But I don't think it is very helpful to us to look at these general, abstract laws governing the development of social movements. What seems to me much more helpful is an analysis of the concrete situation in which the movements and action groups find themselves today. During the conference, we were not only talking a lot about the last 27 years, but we also in many ways represented the last 27 years. I squatted my first house 27 years ago. 1971 was a crucial year in many respects, but let me just describe what Frankfurt looked like in '71: The neighborhood near the central business district was being disinvested. We saved those beautiful, turn-of-the-century villas, which the city had wanted to tear down, by squatting them. It was in the context of a large, post 68-movement. We used direct action and all the strategies that were appropriate in that context. Today, there are also actions in the down towns of global cities, such as Frankfurt. We heard about the "Inner City Action Week" which responds to a totally different situation than the

relative boom period we had then. Back then, the squatting movement, housing movement, and student movement were cooperating with Turkish immigrants who were squatting these buildings with us and who had jobs. It was a very different situation from today when the purpose of the struggle around the city is to scandalize and prevent the kinds of evictions, displacements, and marginalizations of certain social groups that are no longer wanted in the inner city because, after we saved those lovely houses the whole picture turned around, and the cities have been turned into citadels of luxury and wealth. It is the built environment where this is now taking place. A whole lifestyle comes with it with a lot of repression secured for a certain group of people. Much larger numbers of people than in the early seventies are now pushed out of that model. I would like to argue that we are less concerned with general questions like: Does direct action make sense or not? Are we part of a movement against global...

— (new tape) —

no longer as unified and prosperous as they were in a way, but they are fragmented in many ways, poorer in many ways and have different forms of access in other ways. We need to take account and stock of this situation, in order to figure out how we can, today, make a difference.

Peti Buchel:

I want to say one more thing about direct action. This afternoon in the workshop, I was rather shocked to hear about Wagenburgen. They have no infrastructure, they have no toilets, they have no water, and they have no electricity - and they exist. They exist with nothing. They have no infrastructure, just so they can be erased at any moment: "Right, out they are!" (laughs) I think if any direct action is necessary at this point, maybe from the point of INURA, we should get infrastructure to Wagenburgen now and fast.

Roger Keil:

There are two kinds of dangers I see in the current debate on globalization. One is painting globalization as a kind of demon that wipes us all out. The other danger is the opposite: not to take it seriously. I think through several papers given by the invited speakers and from the experience given by the people of the action groups, we have a better map now, to understand what we can possibly ask for and how we can get there. We can navigate better. That's certainly what I will take away from here.

Geraint Ellis:

Over the next couple of days we will all be going back to destinations all

over the world. What do the members of the panel think is the one single thing we can do on our return, to make possible urban worlds even more possible?

David Harvey:

I can't tell you what to do. I don't know where you live, I don't know what your situation is and the issues that are immediately preoccupying you. All I can say is one of the themes that has been very important to me in this conference is the following: We're always being told that capitalism is a sort of social economic system, and the market in particular is a very



Saskia Sassen at Panel The City as Contested Terrain

efficient way to allocate resources, that it is also rational in how those resources get allocated, and we are given the argument that Adam Smith made two centuries ago, which says that individual greed, when it is monitored through the market, leads to a kind of world which is better for everybody. One of the things that struck me a lot in the presentations in this conference, is the immense waste that this system is generating. It's wasting resources, it's wasting land, it's creating wastelands where there were none before, it's wasting talents. This is one of the most inefficient, irrational systems that you could imagine. One of the things that has happened ideologically is that we've often accepted the notion that somehow or another they have understood what rationality and

efficiency is all about and that therefore our only form of reaction to them is to say: "I'm going to be irrational and do crazy things." It seems to me that one of the things I would want to work on when I get back is to try to say: "This system is so irrational, it is so inefficient that what we have to do is to define some alternative notion of rationality and efficiency", and say: "We can make a society that works for everyone." So that's what I'm going to try to do, I'll try to write a think-piece about that and try to get it in the press. So that's what I'm going to do, because you know I'm an academic, and that's all I know how to do.

Participant, NN:

I've got a very simple question: Which world would you wish? I mean, in which case would this INURA conference not be necessary anymore?

David Harvey:

I hope that doesn't happen, because I actually enjoy these congresses (audience laughs).

Glenn Jenkins:

When we try to contrast what we do with what other people do, I see the movement as cutting all the way across this table, it's a movement of positive people, it's a movement of people who care about each other rather than caring about money first, it doesn't matter if you got a little bit of it or a lot of it, it's just about what you value. One of the positive things that I'll be taking home to think about is that when we make criticisms of power structures, as people who are deemed to be anarchists, it's not so much that we don't feel there needs to be some sort of organizational structure, like time to make sure the bus gets there etc., no problem with that.

Something relevant we have raised is that, for example, if a person works for a nuclear power station, and that person is the manager, what does he work there for? Does he work there for himself or does he work for the benefit of the whole of the common good? If he works there for himself and he gets a piece of paper on which it says: "Nuclear power is highly dangerous", if he works there for himself he's got an incentive to sort of look around and put it in his back pocket because his job is in danger. But if he's interested and his drive and reason for being there is the whole, the common good, he's going to take that piece of paper straight to the people and say: "Look, this is dangerous what we're doing." I know this sounds like a pretty flippant point, but the point lying underneath it is that it depends on what you do, it's not so much the structure that is wrong, it's that a lot of people within the structure are

doing things for themselves, for the kingdom, the power, and the glory of it. Something I'll be taking home from the discussions we've had is that in these possible future urban worlds we should maybe look at peoples' motivations for what they do, just as much as at what they are actually doing.

Margit Mayer:

I will take issue with what David Harvey had suggested about the inefficiency of the system being such a discovery and so much in need of unveiling and of attack. My sense is that they know that their system is inefficient, that's nothing new. They are in it because it is extremely profitable for them, not because it's efficient for anybody. The problem therefore for me is not to now go home and write about how inefficient it is, I rather worry about the strategies I see them taking, because they are aware that it is inefficient and that this problem poses certain dangers, even for the cohesion and the continuous functioning of the system. We have the president of the United States encouraging a big summit on volunteerism, because there are a lot of problems with the poverty population in the United States that is totally dropping by the wayside, which that efficient system is not taking care of, so they are trying to stimulate the self-activity of volunteer community organizations, to take care of all of those problems, which the efficient market system is not taking care of. They are not doing so because of their generous hearts, but rather because if they don't, there is the threat of the cohesion of the city breaking apart.

The question I would like to ask is whether the groups present here and many other similar groups concerned with and active around the employment problems and housing problems of those people who are not being taken care of by the mechanisms of the market, whether we aren't mending the problems that would otherwise threaten the stability and cohesion of the system which allows it to continue to function?

Carolien Feldbrugge:

What strikes me right now and what strikes me all the time is that most people talk about "the system", but who said there was just one system? It looks like everybody has become a patient in society. The market system does not provide for billions of people. Now, we're sitting here with some action groups or practical groups, and it shows that so many people think: "Well, the system, whatever system we are living in, does not work for me, so I work for myself." That shows that the system doesn't cover the roots of people, of the soil, of the buildings. The system has a responsibility on another level, on several abstract levels, but down

on the earth you have to manage your own surrounding. The evidence are all the action groups present here. What do you say to: "People are patients of the system nowadays"?

Christian Schmid:

This provokes me to give an answer. You said we have to make it on our own. Here, we are talking about possible urban worlds and not about islands in an urban world, which makes a difference. What I learned from this conference, and I think this is quite important, is that there are many initiatives, many projects, and many action groups working. But what are the effects of these action groups on the society? Society means, today as before, that people have something to do with each other. If we want to have a different society, it means that we have to respect one old-fashioned principle, which is the principal of solidarity, and this also means mutual help. So, my fear is that the situation we have today leads to a situation in which a whole range of small islands struggle alone against the world, in a way. What I learned from this conference is that the only way to get out of this is not only to meet each other, but to connect these different projects, and also to connect these projects to society. The projects should regain something I have the impression many of them are going to loose, and that is exactly this old-fashioned word "solidarity".

Saskia Sassen:

I would like to make a couple of comments: One is on your image of "patients". I think that we are seeing an enormous amount of passivity, especially, let's say, in the middle classes. I also sense that we're just at the beginning of a new era, and we're detecting signs of this, in the sense that, up till now, for the living middle classes the project of national states over the 30 years has coincided with the project of bettering the middle classes. That has ended. That began to end in the United States, always in the vanguard in these matters, in the mid, late seventies. It becomes clearly also something that is ending in Europe by the late eighties, UK earlier too. One question is whether this constitutes a sufficiently destabilizing event in the life of the living middle classes, to shock them out of this condition of being patients – I sort of liked your image, actually – or of being so passive. Who knows, maybe France, no matter what the outcomes are of the election, but France is an interesting case, people voted in a certain direction.

I have a political map in my head, but like Harvey I'm an academic, and I don't know how far it goes. I repeat very quickly some of the things I said this morning: first, a network of cities as strategic places for the

valorization of global capital, get away from the image of this diffuse global market where we can't put our teeth in. We can put our teeth in it. Second, the amount of organizational apparatus, which means materiality to this power. There are vulnerabilities, but it will take homework, to understand what they are. It took homework for global capital, to get where they are. They had, of course, the resources to employ battalions of brilliant legal experts, battalions of brilliant accounting experts, battalions of brilliant financiers etc., but it took work. It will take work for us as well, but this is not a monster that floats in a condition of hypermobility. It is hypermobile, but it is implanted. In a network of strategic places there is a possibility for organizing. I want to emphasize again, this is just part of an animal, because we're all dealing with national economies, regional economies, local economies that have their own ways, their own machineries to produce inequality, to disempower. Third, there is an enormous concern with keeping this machinery going at the top – I'm talking just about the top now – a concern with keeping order, with creating standards, with making the thing work. Those who are in it at the top know that it isn't just a market, there is much more to it, there is anxiety. You hear more and more in global corporate elite circles, and there are several of them, a concern with the limits of the market, their terms, we may also have used them, but this is coming from there. You also hear the notion of: "Jesus, we need government, because government represents a machinery for creating order and legitimating a certain type of order, because the government has very important legitimating functions.

The government is part of the story, different governments in different ways. Third world countries are forced to accept IMF conditionality. The state is part of it, so how do we find the strategic sites where we, because we have access to our states, to our own national states, we as citizens in different countries, how do we find the particular locations in our national states, which can become arenas for political practice, where we, going through our national states, can achieve something that has to do with this transnational animal. In this map, that still leaves protected arenas of a privatized new global order, it is going to take other kinds of actions (laughs). Wild ideas come to my mind: the notion that the global corporate elite meets once a year in Davos, where "The Magic Mountain" by Thomas Mann was written, and for entertainment they trot in prime ministers, presidents, central bankers, stock brokers. Now, what kind of a setting is this, for God's sakes? Anyhow, there are enormous sites for action potentially, but, boy, it is going to take a different kind of political map. We need a combination of extremely specialized, among other things, focuses of activity. Like the

environmental, certain aspects of the environment, judiciary struggles around certain legal questions that are happening, and one that combines specialized focus with the transnational space for activity. Globalization, as instituted by global capital, has created transnational geographies for their activities. Well, can we step into them? When I look at NAFTA, you know NAFTA created a lot of organizing energy in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, one of the things I said, NAFTA is not some vague regulatory framework, NAFTA is also a set of very concrete sites. In Mexico, in the United States, in Canada, I emphasize also, it's not only that, where action is possible by global capital, yes, but perhaps also by us. But again, we have to invent, we have to think. So, direct action yes



The youngest participant, Leon

and all kinds of other things. The courts are sites for struggles, factories are sites, all kinds of things, so it's a big collective project.

Roger Keil:

I would like to briefly build on that and come back to Christian's point, which was the question of solidarity but also the question of an urban strategy. Urban worlds, rather than local worlds. I couldn't agree more that the world economy exists in strategic sites. Many of us, actually a lot of us who are here live in such sites. We live in these places, we know these places, we struggle in these places. The problem, though, that I see

coming out of Christian's question is that 10 years ago, 15 years ago, before the nineties came around, we had a certain idea in Frankfurt in 1971 of how we could get to power. At least, if we had a demonstration in the street of 10'000 people, we knew it would be noticed. If we smashed some windows of banks, we knew we would be noticed. If we got one person, one green representative into the city government, we knew we had one voice, we could be heard. Through the seventies and eighties in German cities, hundreds of cities went red/green, social democratic and green. People developed rational reform strategies. In the United States you have progressive cities, Santa Monica, Burlington, Vermont, places like that. You had mayors like mayor Dinkins, mayors like Washington in Chicago, you even had somebody like mayor Tom Bradley in Los Angeles, who could be counted among those, who pursued rational strategies on an urban level and modernized these urban managements, in a way that they brought in people of color in the United States into positions of power. In German cities, you had weird long-haired people with sandals, like Tom Königs in Frankfurt, making decisions on the budget in the richest city of one of the richest countries in the world. There was an idea there that we could move somewhere where we could apply our strategies. Our very first meetings of SAU and Urbi et Orbi, the action groups that we have been involved in, were carried by that spirit of possible reform in these cities, on an urban level, metropolitan strategies.

There is something I have seen happening in Toronto over the past years, which is maybe only the last half a year: On the one hand, there has been this immense explosion of citizens' action on a metropolitan level. People, in a referendum on March 3rd of 1997, 12 weeks ago, voting 70% against the amalgamation of their six cities into one city, an immense outpouring of support for a grassroots movement, which started in a church with Monday night meetings, meeting Monday after Monday, in the midst of winter snow storms, an incredible movement, an incredible outpouring. The streets were yellow with posters and signs of protest. On the other hand, at the same time, the entire waterfront of Toronto has been completely rethought and redesigned by some of the city's most powerful place entrepreneurs, together with some of the most powerful investors, particularly from Hong Kong. There has been a process of developing a new development on the waterfront in Toronto, which parallels only perhaps the Potsdamer-Platz in Berlin in size. This entire process has gone on without any intervention by the urbanist critical public. Zillions of dollars have been pored into zillions of tons of concrete without any public participation, and at the same time we've been taking the streets of the city. That is something which is completely inexplicable

to me at this point.

I think there is a split between civil society and global economy, to a certain degree, which goes back to the question of the global citizens' right. There are certain rights that are given to us right now, and others have been taken away from us. The question of what we can ask for and where we can apply our urbanist strategies, is a very central one to me.

Saskia Sassen:

I have worked very hard in New York city to get some levels of awareness. I must say there have been a few things that gratify me. Recently, there was a big plan to develop a very valuable site called Columbus Circle. The plan originally formulated was to give significant tax breaks to the developers who would do that. Mayor Giuliani, finally illuminated (laughs) by certain analysis - our mayor Giuliani is quite a character, by the way, he's republican, he's not a democrat - said: "No, we're not going to give you a tax break of 50 million dollars, if you want to develop that site, you're going to have to do something for the privilege of developing that site, which is to build low income housing in another area of the city. In my experience, I have tried to work on different levels with New York city government, every now and then we've had these minor little victories. Now, frankly, in terms of my political map, this doesn't get us very far.

Peti Buchel:

I would like to say something about the harbor in Toronto. The development in the harbor of Toronto is very interesting for Amsterdam. I am very interested in what he just said about nobody reacting to the development of this harbor. This has to do with the politics in Amsterdam and harbor developments. From the beginning, the city of Amsterdam has been extremely interested in two harbors outside the city for their own harbor development: Toronto and Baltimore. We have been bombarded by the city, by every party, the green party, all the left wing parties on how fantastic the development was in Toronto. We have been trying to get politicians interested in our ideas on harbor development in Amsterdam, small scale harbor developments that create work and living places, cultural and mixed places, which are brought back to the city in the harbor. We have been trying to convince them. We have been talking to politicians about that. First, we invited politicians from the green party I vote for. The only response was: "Money! Money! This is about money. What you offer has no value in money, and we need money. Keep your ambitions low, we have high ambitions. We want a very commercial development here." So, we went to other parties, we

asked all parties what they thought about it. Every party we spoke to gave the same answer, no matter which color they had, it was so frustrating. We really had the feeling at the end: Fuck the politics, they're just not interested

in the common citizen anymore. What are we going to do? We are all alone, we are going to fight all on our own and won't have anything to do with politics anymore, unless we really need them, to convince them of something. In Amsterdam, it is the case that the socialist have been in power for just an incredibly long time, together with the green party or the communists, that they are so powerful they don't give a shit. That's what I feel about what the citizens think.

Now, I want to tell a story about 1969, the year of student revolution in Amsterdam. That year, the students occupied the Martin House, which was the seat of the university, the top of the university. They wanted democracy on a low level, on a student level within the university. The dean of the university said: "Why? You have parliamentary democracy, that's all you need." This is the level of difference between down below and up there. It has nothing to do with each other anymore. What our action group wants is that a certain level of this democracy, of this responsibility is given back to the ordinary citizen. Let them decide what happens in their neighborhood, let them decide without the intervention of the city, except of course the law. The law has to be respected, I think. I'm a squatter, I don't always respect the law. But to a certain extent, keep a few rules. When somebody is killed in the street, don't murder the killer.

Dave Featherstone:

I would like to go back to the march in Amsterdam. I had that sense on that march that it was a presence, but there was something disempowering about that presence, from the point of view that one felt that even if the government had actually decided to sit down and invite a delegation to come to them and to talk to them, one had that sense that there would never have been a delegation from it that would have had any legitimacy to speak on behalf of those people. That's not necessarily a bad thing in terms of representation, but it's just how to get something to go from being a presence to articulating something.

Roger Keil:

These kinds of things don't just happen out of the clear blue sky. They are well prepared by hundreds of organizations that have been waiting for these moments. Most of the struggles that suddenly occur have been prepared by hundreds of thousands of people in long ebbs of social struggle. This didn't happen out of nowhere, so people had a program,

had an organization, and if they had been asked to help decide they would have been prepared to do so. I totally agree with you, it's a difficult step from presence to articulation and to having an agenda and a program. But, what I am saying is that, in order to have presence, people have to work a long time. My experience from my research in Los Angeles is that one of the problems that has happened there is that the Latino working-classes and the African American working-classes, and the women, and all kinds of people Saskia has been talking about, have not only been treated like victims for a long, long time and treated like people who don't have a voice and treated as if they were just cheap labor and were too afraid to get together to found unions. Also, what has been disregarded is the high degree of organization in these communities. The kinds of organizations David talked about on the first day, the IAF Industrial Area Foundation organizations, have been around for a long time in the United States, they have been around for a long time in these cities, organizing these people, but not in a visible kind of a way. When their presence was felt, it was already the result of hundreds and hundreds of meetings in churches and community halls that created this presence. This is a politically created presence. It doesn't just happen naturally. The globalization process and the marginalization process are not natural occurrences. In order to have presence, you have to make it be felt, in order to make it be felt, you have to work for it. This goes back to the question of direct action. It's a long process, it's a process that needs to be sustained by theory building and a lot of patience and a lot of pain.

Dave Featherstone:

What's very important is stressing how to link direct action with the battle of ideas. That's, perhaps, what crucially I felt was missing at the march in Amsterdam. It was a very old style march. I think it could have been a lot more creative if it had been perhaps done in different ways.

Stefan Kipfer:

I would say the presence of every-day-resistance is everywhere, not just in alternative projects, but in a lot of TV commercials, in a lot of what goes for normal culture. It's filled with every day resistance, in a work place, in every day, stuff that we don't normally recognize as political action.

— (new tape) —

What kind of theory, what do we need to make some of the connections that we need to make? What are some of the things we need to do, to think about the similarities and differences that we've heard about in this conference? What do we need to build solidarity? What do we need to

take back home, to work on the basis of what we've heard in this conference? Do we need theory for this? If yes, what kind of theory, and even more important for me, do we need an urban theory, to engage in all those projects of making connections?

David Harvey:

There is a lot of direct action which is being taken by the right wing. One of the things it does seem to me that we haven't really mentioned is a certain communality of values, a certain communality of respect, which was also mentioned, a certain politics which, for lack of a better word, I have to call a form of class politics, because it's about trying to find forms of solidarity between all of those people who for a variety of reasons have been marginalized by their situation in society and trying to build some kind of movement of betterment, rather than protection of privilege, because there is plenty of direct action going on in terms of protection of privilege. I don't think we should make the assumption that just because it's direct action it's good, because a lot of it is terrible. In my own city, the rich folk are very good at it (laughs). The problem is that they've got enough time and enough resources to organize it. Actually most of the employed population of the city at the lower end of the income scale are working 60 hours a week, are totally exhausted, and don't have the resources to mobilize around it. There is a sort of problem, it is a communality of values and a common sense of who it is and what it is that we're trying to deal with. It's sort of tacit, it seems to me, in the INURA program, but it sometimes seems to me we're not quite explicit enough about the nature of the values, the nature of the - it's not a theory we're talking about here, it's really about the nature of what our project is. What would be a possible city for us? Presumably, it would be one in which we could all enjoy Exodus rave parties, if we cared to, at the same time as we could do many of the other things that, you know, living in a world with different social relations and alternatives. It does seem to me that we need to be a little bit more specific about those communalities, because otherwise we'll get into this very abstract notion that any direct action is OK, and that includes the Neofascists and includes anybody. At that point you can say: "No, that's not what my direct action is about." That's not what we're talking about, what we're talking about is a broad communality of purpose. I think sometimes we're a little afraid to try to spell it out too much, because then we'll get into an argument: What do you mean by values, what do I mean by values? Well, we might have some sort of differences, so we might get into an argument, so we sort of tend to back off and leave it alone. It seems to me, there is a common sense of incredible social injustice that

exists in society, and it has to be rectified, and something has to be done, attention has to be paid to all of the wastes, attention has to be paid to the ways discrimination is operating. In a way, we could if we really wanted to, maybe this is what INURA should do next time, is try to pin down: What are the values, if you like, which could form the basis of solidarity amongst a vaster array of different people doing different things in different places? I don't think the idea of communality of values says we all have to do the same thing, or we all have to behave the same way. I think we have to think about a broad alliance of interests along these lines and maybe spell them out a little bit more explicitly. I think we waltz around this one a little bit, because we maybe don't want to get into too big an argument with each other. It does seem to me we've acquired enough friendliness that we should be able to say these things and say: "OK, I think you're wrong, let's have a little argument" and then say: "All right, let's find the communality in all of us." (audience applauds)

Margit Mayer:

It's not just the rich and the fascists that also engage in direct action and social movements, but also nice, middle-class-based neighborhood. For example in Berlin, when one of the Wagenburgen that had emerged in the center of town where the wall used to be, was cleaned out, an attempt was made by the city to place it in Spandau, a district at the edge of the city, but the people there organized, demonstrated, and signed petitions, and mobilized in a very effective way, because they didn't want to have that "scum" and the problems of the city in their own backyard. Even though the social movements in every city have really come to cover quite a wide spectrum, my answer to the question of what we should do when we go home really has to do with reaching out and checking out your own city and all the movements and groups that are active there. It has been very stimulating, I'm sure, to hear about internationally active other groups, but your work happens in your city. You will have to find coalition partners right there.

To conclude with a contribution that a theorist could make: Alberto Melucci, who worked with different kinds of movements active in Milan over a couple of years, observed two scientific words that are very important to understand the dynamic of these kinds of movements: latency and visibility. He observed the movement through different phases, a phase of latency, when their activity was more submerged and not so visible in the press or the media or even to the general public, which didn't mean that they were dormant, they were working hard in the ways that Roger was describing, working on consciousness raising and doing all the various kinds that you are engaged in. But only under certain

conditions triggered by certain events that are not always under our control, this latent network of submerged activity would turn into visible action that would suddenly then reach much larger circles of people. In order for that to happen, though, you have to know who your potential coalition partners in your respective city are, so you can prepare for such conditions.

Fred Robinson:

I'm delighted to see we're moving towards some points, some gathering together, as we move towards the end of this session. Could we take just one more question, please, from Louanne?

It's awful being me, because, of course being British, I'm programmed to start shaking at half past ten, which is when the pubs used to shut (audience laughs). But no doubt, this is not a problem for the panel.

Louanne Tranchell:

In this conference, the obvious thing of meeting and mixing with such a range of people is one of the most powerful witnesses that you get. Being in this building (Rote Fabrik) has been an extra, because it suggests not just the fact that direct action won it, but that it has been managed for many years. As we walk about it, there are many jobs taking place inside it. There is much opportunity to have any sort of relationship, any sort of discussion. It seems, in fact, to really embody the worthwhile aspects of struggle. It is on a very small level. It is a small island, but it must be part of a continent. The real thing that people in this room are probably capable of is recording all these small struggles. David Harvey spoke of waste. I, at my age, am very conscious of a waste of effort. So frequently, so many people's effort is wasted, because it isn't recorded well, because it doesn't become the theme of photographs or of some sort of record which will last and which can then be added to the next people's effort. The opportunity for anybody at all to choose a theme for their researches, for their produce whatever they're going to produce, if they can reflect this possible world that we have talked about, and if they can also record it and make sure that the nature of the values that we've been discussing and promoting together and which emanate from a building and a community like this, we need to turn it around, because those people who wish to see it are actually greedy, and they will notice things. It's the double thing of the fact that we can add on to each others experience by recording things. We can also tempt them to change or tempt the next generation to change their ways. There is a poet in England called Adrian Mitchell. We've had some discussions about what is "we" and what is "they". Adrian Mitchell takes it that "we" are elephants, and

we drink milk. "They" are flies, and they drink acid. They put their feet on the table, and they ask for another slice of elephant meat. Now, we must remember that it takes a lot of elephants to move in a direction, and we must keep our shoulder there. But it also requires that we have the courage and tenacity of elephants, to record what we do (audience applauds).

Fred Robinson:

On that happy note, I would like to bring this session to an end. On behalf of myself and the panel, I would like to wish you all joy and struggle (audience laughs). On behalf of you and myself, I would like to warmly thank the panel who have been absolutely super, terrifically entertaining, and remarkably interesting, even this late in the conference. Thank you (audience applauds).

Workshop 3. Building Local Places in a Global World



Workshop 5. Global Restructuring and Urban Development

Panel: Local Economy, Solidarity, and Environmental Justice with Karen, Amber, Fred Robinson, Roger Keil, Glenn, Nancy, Bouncer, Johnny B., David Harvey



INURA at Lunch

Conclusion of Workshops with Ute Lehrer, Roger Keil, Alain Gafner, Barbara Loevinger Rahder, Gene Desfor, Arie van Wijngaarden, Richard Wolff standing"



INURA Dinner

The Definite Program
"as it really happened"

7th International INURA Conference
"Possible Urban Worlds"

June 16-18, 1997, Zurich, Switzerland

Monday, June 16, 1997 Morning

Conference Opening

Dieter Steiner, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), Zurich

Probing the Frontiers of Possible Urban Worlds

David Harvey, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore

Monday, June 16, 1997 Afternoon

Urban Safaris

Safari I: "Projects in a Contested Terrain Up-Market and Low-Budget Worlds in Living, Labor, and Leisure"

Guides: Umberto Blumati, Andreas Schneider (INURA Zurich)

Contributions: Benedikt Loderer (Main Station), Eva Kirchhofer (Wohlgroth), Maria Mehr (Travelling Gypsy Culture Center), Sabine Ziegler (KraftWerk 1)

Safari II: "Local Places - Communal, Cooperative, and Selfmanaged Housing Projects"

Guides: Jan Capol (Historian, Journalist), Andreas Hofer (INURA Zurich)

Groups, Projects, and Sites: New Stock Exchange, Selnau Communal Housing, Hellmutstrasse Cooperative Housing, Erismannhof, Karthago, Brahmschhof, Steinfels-Areal, KraftWerk 1 Housing and Workspace Projects.

Safari III: "Resistance in City and Suburbia"

Guides: Hansruedi Hitz, Philipp Klaus, Richard Wolff (INURA Zurich)

Speakers of the visited organizations:

Lilo König and Rolf Zopfi (augen auf, human rights organization), Ralph Baenziger (architect of Eurogate), David Häne (Neue Idee Opfikon, local opposition)

Safari IV: "The Production of Urban Space in Zurich-North and Zurich-West"

Guide: Christian Schmid (INURA Zurich), Urs Meier (planner, Zürcher Planungsgruppe Glattal), Andreas Wirz (architect, Konzeptgruppe Städtebau, KraftWerk 1)

Monday, June 16, 1997 Evening

INURA Dinner and 4 Voices and a Tuba

Tuesday, June 17, 1997 Morning

Local Economy, Solidarity, and Environmental Justice

Fred Robinson, University of Durham

Introduction, Chair

David Harvey, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore

"Globalization and the Working Body"

Roger Keil, Green Work Alliance, Toronto

"Making a Difference - Making Green Work"

Exodus Collective, Luton

"Fighting for the Homeless and for Freedom"

Video: "Exodus from Babylon" (Spectacle TV)

Tuesday, June 17, 1997 Afternoon

Networking the Territory

Louanne Tranchell, The Emerald, London

Introduction, Chair:

Video: "Port in a Storm" (Merseyside Dock-Workers)

Video: "Unleashing the Potential" (Marilyn Taylor for Joseph Rowntree Foundation)

Raffaele Paloscia, Anna Lisa Pecoriello, Iacopo Zetti, Quartiere 4, Florence

"Participation and Planning in Today's Town: Observations on the Area Laboratories in the Florentine Suburbs"

Tony Gosling, Dave Featherstone, *The Land Is Ours*, Oxford
"Leading by Example: Ownership and Attitudes to Land"

Building Local Places in a Global World

Arie van Wijngaarden, Housing Department Amsterdam
Introduction, Chair: "The Fringe of the Housing Market"

Margit Mayer, Free University Berlin
"The Changing Scope of Action in Urban Politics:
New Opportunities for Local Initiatives and Movements"

Peti Buchel, Carolien Feldbrugge, Bert Hogervorst, Annie Wright,
Gilde van Werkgebouwen, Amsterdam
"The Turning Tide"

Renate Berg, Wagenburgen, Berlin,
"Islands in a Coded Public Space"

Wednesday, June 18, 1997 Morning

The City as Contested Terrain

Ute Lehrer, UCLA, Los Angeles
"Is There Still Room for a Public Space? - Global Cities
and the Privatization of the Public Realm"
Introduction, Chair

Saskia Sassen, Columbia University, New York
"The Global City: Strategic Site/New Frontier"

Marvi Maggio, University of Turin
"The Fight for Sociality and Communication: Urban Movements
in Italy (1970-97) Facing the Issue of Public Space"

Alessandra Romano, Yvonne Fioramonti, Centro Sociale Forte Prenestino, Rome
"Italian Centri Sociali: The Forte Prenestino Experience"

Christian Schmid, INURA Zurich
"The Dialectics of Urbanization in Zurich:
Headquarter Economy and Urban Social Movements"

Wednesday, June 18, 1997 Afternoon

Workshops

1. Local Economy, Solidarity, and Environmental Justice

Discussant: Fred Robinson

Contributors: David Harvey, *Exodus* (Glenn, Bouncer, Matthi, Jonny B.),
Green Work Alliance (Roger Keil)

Special Presentations:

Stefan Kipfer, Toronto

"Between Authoritarian Populism and Global City Formation"

KraftWerk 1, Zurich (Andreas Wirz, Sabine Ziegler):

"KraftWerk 1 - a Housing, Working, and Leisure Project in the Kreis 5"

2. Networking the Territory

Discussant: Louanne Tranchell

Contributors: Gian Carlo Paba, *The Land Is Ours* (Tony Gosling),
Quartiere 4 (Iacopo Zetti)

Special Presentations:

Ecopolis, Milano (Monica Vercesi)

"The Town Plan of Villasanta: A Case of Community Planning"

Barbara Rahder, Toronto

"Women Plan Toronto: Grassroots Participation in Re-Shaping
the City"

Anna Lisa Pecoriello, Florence

"Quartiere 4"

3. Building Local Places in a Global World

Discussant: Arie van Wijngaarden

Contributors: Margit Mayer, Wagenburgen (Renate Berg), Gilde van Werkgebouwen
(Bert Hogervorst), *Exodus* (Karen, Nancy, Amber)

Special Presentation:

Oliver Standke, Berlin

"Local Agenda 21 Berlin: From Government to Governance?"

4. The City as Contested Terrain

Discussant: Ute Lehrer

Contributors: Saskia Sassen, Centro Sociale Forte Prenestino Roma (Alessandra Romano, Yvonne Fioramonti), Christian Schmid, Marvi Maggio

Special Presentations:

Innenstadt-Aktion Berlin (Britta Grell, Jens Sambale, Dominik Veith)

"Inner!City!Aktion - Crowd Control, Interdictory Space
and the Fight for Sociospatial Justice"

plus Video presentation: "Action Week Against Exclusion", Berlin 1997

5. Global Restructuring and Urban Development

Discussant: Gene Desfor

Special Presentations:

Jussi Jauhainen, Turku "Our Turku - Turku Citizen Movement:
Public Participation in Planning and the Development Process"

Angela Stienen, Berne

"Exploring Medellín - Globalization and New Urban Dynamics"

Beatriz García Peralta, Mexico City

"Housing Politics in Mexico, 1988-1995"

Raffaele Paloscia, Florence

"The La Habana-Ecopolis Project: Urban Regeneration and Community"

6. Digital Cities

Discussants: Andreas Hofer and Andreas Schneider

Special Presentations:

Patrice Riemens, Amsterdam

"Amsterdam Digital City Project - A Theoretical Discussion
of the Possibilities and Constraints of the Concept of a
Networked (or "Virtual") Participative Urban Environment"

Architectural Space Laboratory ETH, Zurich (Maia Engeli)

"The Trace Installation"

Conclusion of Workshops

Wednesday, June 18, 1997 Evening

Panel Discussion: Horizons of Possible Urban Worlds

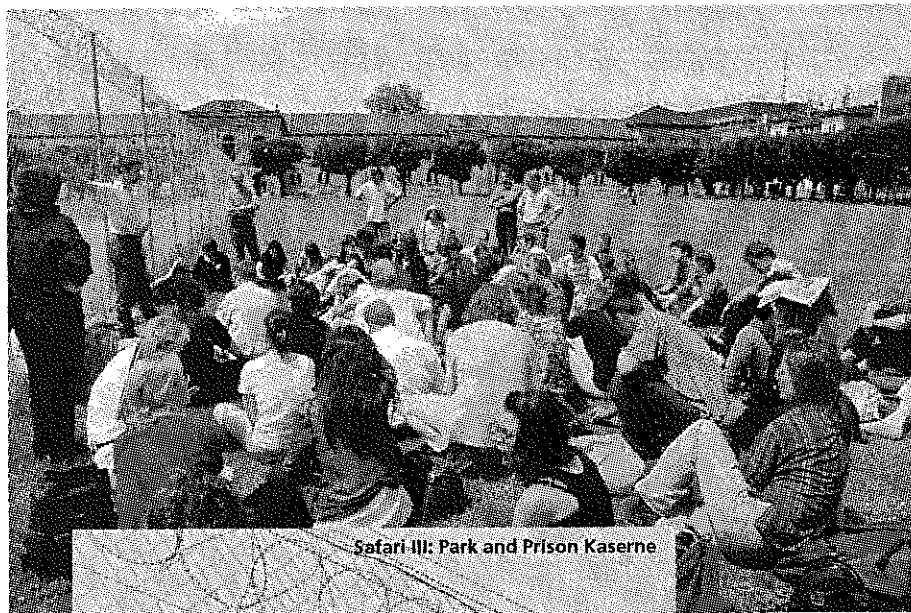
Chair: Fred Robinson

Saskia Sassen, David Harvey, Margit Mayer,

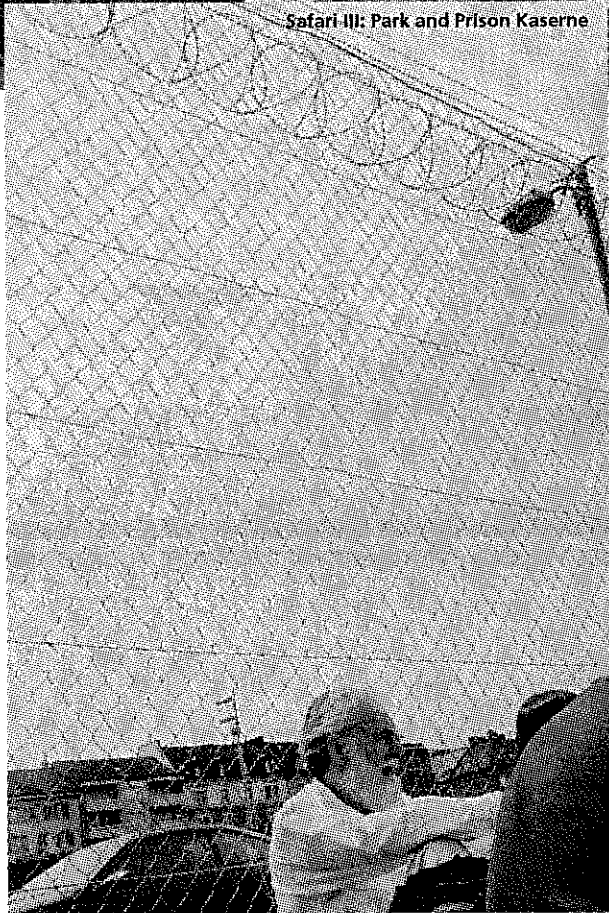
Glenn Jenkins (Exodus), Peti Buchel (Gilde van Werkgebouwen),

Roger Keil (Green Work Alliance and representing INURA),

Alessandra Romano (Forte Prenestino)



Safari III: Park and Prison Kaserne

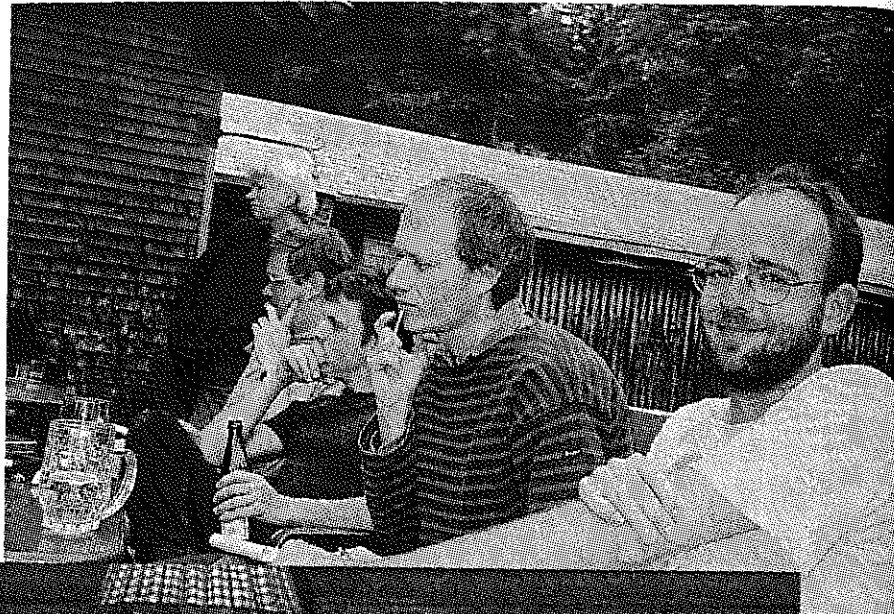


Retreat: Exodus of INURA



Retreat: The Naturfreundehaus Tscherwald near Amden

Retreat: Thinking in the sun, Peti, Arie, Michi, Hansruedi, Stefan



Retreat: The women



Retreat: The men



Retreat: INURA culture, Philipp Klaus

Reviews, Critiques, Newspaper Articles

Four reviews of the conference by:

Martina Schretzenmayr (for DISP Journal)

Andreas Schneider and Richard Wolff (for Geoagenda)

Barbara Rahder (for International Journal for Urban
and Regional Research)

Geraint Ellis

Review in DISP 130/1997 (Zurich)

"7. INURA Konferenz in Zürich"

Martina Schretzenmayr

Vom 16. bis 18. Juni fand in Zürich unter dem Thema "Possible Urban Worlds" die 7. Internationale INURA- (International Network for Urban Research and Action) Konferenz statt. An der Konferenz nahmen über 160 Personen aus Deutschland, Italien, der Schweiz, England, Finnland, Kanada, Südafrika und Mexiko teil. Die Teilnehmer aus Wissenschaft und Praxis setzten sich mit Fragen der Stadtentwicklung in Zeiten der Globalisierung sowie der sozialen Polarisierung auseinander. Namentlich wurden neue Lösungen für drängende Fragen wie Langzeitarbeitslosigkeit, Industriebrachen oder soziale Segregation in Zeiten allgemeiner Restrukturierung vorgestellt. Dabei zeigte sich, dass verschiedene sich aus der Stadtbevölkerung rekrutierende Aktionsgruppen erfolgversprechende Antworten auf aktuelle städtische Probleme haben. Abgerundet und in Zusammenhang gestellt wurden die Praxisbeispiele durch Beiträge aus dem Wissenschaftsbereich. Auch ein Ausblick auf die digitale Stadt wurde gegeben.

Als wesentliches Ergebnis der Veranstaltung zeigte sich, daß insbesondere in Ländern mit großen sozialen Segregationproblemen innerhalb der gesellschaftlichen Randgruppen Aktivitäten entstanden sind, welche hohes stadtentwicklungspolitisches Potential haben und deren Bedeutung weit über den zugrundeliegenden Fallbeispielcharakter der betreffenden Aktionen hinaus reicht. Als besonders gelungen hat sich auch die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Theorie und Praxis im Vorfeld der Veranstaltung sowie während der Kongressdurchführung erwiesen. Die Veröffentlichung eines Tagungsbandes ist für Ende 1997 vorgesehen.

Review in Geoagenda (Berne) (forthcoming)

"POSSIBLE URBAN WORLDS"

7. INURA Konferenz, 16.-18. Juni 1997, Zürich

Andreas Schneider and Richard Wolff

Vom 16. bis 18. Juni 97 fand in Zürich zum Thema "Possible Urban Worlds" die 7. Internationale INURA- (International Network for Urban Research and Action) Konferenz statt.

Gegen 200 StadtforscherInnen und VertreterInnen von Aktionsgruppen aus ganz Europa und Amerika setzten sich mit Stadtentwicklung in Zeiten der Globalisierung auseinander. Dabei zeigte sich, dass verschiedene sich aus der Stadtbevölkerung rekrutierende Aktionsgruppen Erfolg versprechende Antworten auf aktuelle städtische Probleme haben. Namentlich wurden neue Lösungen für die drängenden Fragen wie Langzeitarbeitslosigkeit, Industriebrachen oder soziale Segregation vorgestellt. Die WissenschaftlerInnen wiederum verstanden es, diese Einzelaktionen in ein grösseres Umfeld der Stadtentwicklung einzubetten und Parallelen aufzuzeigen. Insgesamt entstand so ein genaueres Bild darüber, was in den heutigen Städten abläuft und auf welche Art die Stadtentwicklung durch und für die Bevölkerung beeinflusst werden kann. Das Teilnehmerfeld umfasste die weltbekannte Wissenschaftlerin ebenso wie den einfachen Arbeitslosen.

Wie viel die Globalisierung mit Interessen der Wirtschaft und wie wenig sie mit Anliegen der Bevölkerung zu tun hat, darauf wies David Harvey in einem brillianten Einführungsvortrag hin. Vier parallele, halbtägige Stadtsafaris durch Zürich befassten sich mit dem Kreis 5, Wohnprojekten, Stadtentwicklungspolitik sowie Umnutzungsgebieten. Lokale Wirtschaft, Ökologie, Raum und Gesellschaftspolitik waren die Themen am Dienstag. In drei Sessionen stellten verschiedene Aktionsgruppen ihre Projekte und die ForscherInnen ihre jeweiligen Analysen vor, was lebendige und kreative Diskussionen auslöste. Mit einer vierten Session zur Stadtkultur wurden die urbanen Fragestellungen am Mittwochvormittag abgerundet. Die nachmittäglichen Workshops dienten der Vertiefung der vier Sessionen. Ergänzt wurden sie durch Workshops zu lateinamerikanischen und skandinavischen Fallbeispielen sowie zu digitalen Städten. Die zusammenfassende Abschlussitzung zeigte, dass eine der wichtigsten Ansätze künftiger Stadtentwicklung im respektvollen Umgang mit den Potentialen der verschiedenen Bevölkerungsgruppen liegt.

Unter dem Titel "Horizons of Possible Urban Worlds" diskutierten am abschliessenden Podium Saskia Sassen (New York), Margit Mayer (Berlin), David Harvey (Baltimore), Glenn Jenkins (Exodus Collective, Luton GB), Roger Keil (Green Work Alliance, Toronto), Alessandra Romano (Forte Prenestino, Rom) und Peti Buchel (Gilde van Werkgebouwen, Amsterdam) den Einfluss und die Zukunftsperspektiven von Aktionsgruppen in der künftigen Entwicklung der Städte. Dabei wurde unter anderem der Ansatz der Konferenz, den unmittelbaren Austausch zwischen Theorie und Praxis zu fördern, sehr begrüsst. Die Ideologie der Marktwirtschaft als effizienteste Art der optimalen Allokation wurde angesichts der immensen Verschleuderung an menschlichem, kulturellem und ökologischem Potential in Zweifel gezogen. Auch wurde die These aufgeworfen, dass die Vielzahl pro-aktiver Aktionsgruppen durchaus Ansätze eines Gegenmodells für eine ökologisch, wirtschaftlich und sozial nachhaltigere Gesellschaft bieten. Ein Sprecher fasste dies schliesslich kurz und treffend zusammen mit der Forderung nach "more respect".

Als wesentliches Ergebnis der Veranstaltung zeigte sich, dass engagierte Gruppen aus unterschiedlichsten lokalen Zusammenhängen heraus neuartige Aktivitäten entwickelt haben, welche hohes stadtentwicklungspolitisches Potential haben und deren Bedeutung weit über den zugrundeliegenden Fallbeispielcharakter der betreffenden Aktionen hinaus reicht. Als besonders gelungen hat sich auch die Zusammenarbeit zwischen Theorie und Praxis im Vorfeld der Veranstaltung sowie während der Kongressdurchführung erwiesen.

Review in the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (March 1998, slightly revised)

Possible Urban Worlds & Dilemmas of Discourse:

A Conference Report

International Network for Urban Research and Action (INURA)

by Barbara Loevinger Rahder

Linking urban social and environmental movements with research and theoretical analyses to create Possible Urban Worlds was the theme of the INURA (International Network for Urban Research and Action) Conference held from June 16 to 18, 1997 in Zurich, Switzerland. For the last seven years INURA has brought together urban theorists and researchers with urban action groups from across Europe and North America. This year approximately 200 participants shared their ideas and experiences, debated professional and political strategies for change, and together examined the possibilities of creating more equitable, democratic, and ecologically sustainable communities and cities amidst the pressures of capitalist globalization.

The conference theme was introduced by David Harvey in a talk entitled *Probing the Frontiers of Possible Urban Worlds*. Harvey called for a new politics that links together different discourses on globalization and the body. Globalization, he argued, is a depolitized term that implies the hegemony of global markets as an inevitable force. He suggested that Marx's term "imperialist colonialism" is still relevant and more revealing of the processes of global working class formation. What is new, he argued, since Marx's day, is financial de-regulation, decreasing transportation costs, new information technologies, and a global working class, fragmented by culture and gender. He added that the discourse on class needs to be linked to the discourse on gender and the body, that labour processes, as well as reproductive rights, are issues of body, its use and abuse. He illustrated this point with a discussion of the struggle for a living wage among office cleaners in Baltimore, Maryland. It was this tying together of theory and practice, however, rather than issues of class and gender - or the discourses on globalization and body politics - that became the dominant theme in the discussions that followed. A gender analysis, or indeed any significant dialogue on issues of gender, was almost completely absent.

Four topics that were explored in depth through a series of panel

discussions and smaller workshops were 1) Local Economy, Solidarity and Environmental Justice; 2) Networking the Territory; 3) Building Local Places in a Global World; and 4) The City as Contested Terrain.

In the Local Economy, Solidarity and Environmental Justice panel, activists and academics highlighted ways of resisting what David Harvey referred to as "market Stalinism," i.e. the pressure to be innovative, individualistic, and profitable. Squatters from the Exodus Collective, for example, illustrated how unemployment can be productive without being profitable. Glenn Jenkins, the spokesperson for the Exodus Collective, recounted the history of the collective which he described as including the long-term unemployed, unemployable, and marginalized. The group originally organized 'raves' for youth in Luton, a deindustrializing city North of London, but now provides housing and meaningful (unpaid) work for about forty people who have squatted a farm and a former hospital. Roger Keil, from York University, spoke about the Green Work Alliance's goal of making work meaningful and ecological, and also raised questions about the problematic of academics doing activist work. It was the tension between these two perspectives - that of the squatter-activist and that of the academic-activist - that made the conference most interesting. Keil was perhaps the first to flag this issue, but it came up again and again throughout the conference.

Networking the Territory focused on building social movements by linking local activists together. Louanne Tranchell, a Hammersmith City Councillor, emphasized the importance of networking as a means of being more inclusive of women, immigrants, and other marginalized groups. Tony Gosling's description of the British network of ecological squatters called The Land Is Ours was an interesting case in point. After providing a brief history of the land question in Great Britain, he described Wandsworth Eco-Village, a formerly derelict site squatted by The Land Is Ours. Wandsworth residents built their own homes using ecological technologies and techniques, such as compost toilets, solar panels, and recycled building materials. A newsletter provides information and links together similar squatter settlements throughout Britain (<http://www.tlio.demon.co.uk/good.htm>). The question of whether this growing movement addresses issues of gender equity or meets the needs of immigrants, however, was not asked or answered.

In Building Local Places in a Global World, Margit Mayer raised the thorny issue of whether self-help and squatters movements resist and challenge, or actually acquiesce in the capitalist economic agenda. She

highlighted the increasing polarization of the economy and flexible production, urban policies aimed at private capital accumulation, governance replacing government, the subordination of social needs to the capitalist economic agenda, the repression of marginalized groups, and the convergence of interests among self-help groups. It was this last point which most clearly connected Mayer's talk to the panellists that followed. In housing, for example, squatters use sweat equity to create work and homes for themselves. At the same time, this can be seen as voluntary labour by the unemployed who are providing housing for the homeless. As such, self-help fits well within the neo-liberal agenda by freeing the state of its responsibility to assist those the market has excluded. Mayer raised this issue, and concluded that local actors will ultimately determine the direction and impact of these types of initiatives.

Renate Berg, representing Wagenburgen, and Bert Hogervorst and Carolien Feldbrugge, speaking for the Gilde van Werkgebouwen, described their respective squatter organizations in Berlin and Amsterdam. Wagenburgen involves eleven sites of people living in wagons, trucks, and other vehicles in and around Berlin. This group is struggling with a lack of sanitary facilities and increasing government repression. (INURA Zurich addressed a letter of support to the Senate of Berlin). Gilde van Werkgebouwen has eighteen squatter sites in abandoned warehouses surrounding the port of Amsterdam. Many of these squatters are artists who make productive use of these large abandoned urban spaces. These two groups illustrated the tensions noted by Mayer. While Wagenburgen is fighting to get some moderate concessions from the state in the form of basic sanitation and liberalized parking regulations, members of the Gilde tended to characterize government assistance as interference. Clearly, conditions and outcomes vary in terms of the agency of local activists and the local state.

In the City as Contested Terrain, Ute Lehrer discussed public space in global cities as contested terrain, emphasizing the difference between physical, social and symbolic public space. Saskia Sassen linked concepts of the global city – as the intermediary world where the global economic system takes place – to the strategic presence of social action groups in these cities, and their potential to build a new political movement which challenges this system.

Christian Schmid, Marvi Maggio (Universita di Torino), and Alessandra Romano (Forte Prenestino, Roma) presented examples of the

way youth groups have challenged the forces of global capitalism in cities. Schmid analyzed the history of Rote Fabrik, the alternative cultural centre in Zurich – where much of the INURA conference took place. Maggio talked about the Italian youth movement of 1977 and its subsequent repression. Romano explained that centro sociale or social centre in Italy means a squatted place with activities organized by spontaneous groups of youth, and recounted the somewhat troubled eleven-year history of the Centro Sociale Forte Prenestino. As Schmid noted, these examples demonstrate that cities are not just a product of hegemonic global forces, but are the result of complex and contradictory forces, ie. contested terrain. It is through an analysis of these local forces, however contradictory, that urban theorists hope to contribute to the struggle for social and environmental justice.

"Horizons of Possible Urban Worlds", the closing panel, raised some of the most difficult questions posed at the conference. The panellists included urban theorists David Harvey, Roger Keil, Margit Mayer, Saskia Sassen, and three members of action groups – Peti Buchel, Alessandra Romano, and Glenn Jenkins. Here the tensions between theory and practice, between abstract analyses and grassroots activism, emerged most clearly as a dilemma of discourse. At issue, at least in part, was how we communicate with one another – how clearly we express ourselves, how carefully we listen to each other, and how boldly or tentatively we begin to make sense of our very different vantage points on our urban worlds.

The problem of discourse was not so much a problem of language, though this no doubt added to some of the difficulties. At one point, a German planning student took me aside to ask me to explain the difference between the terms space, place, location, and territory. If someone specializing in the field could not make sense of our words, then our discussions were clearly exclusionary, even if unintentionally so. What I enjoyed, nonetheless, was participants' willingness to struggle with the words in order to make sense of what each other was saying. Few appeared to disengage – instead participants became increasingly vocal, even insistent, that we make ourselves understandable to one another, that our debates be substantive rather than semantic.

In retrospect, I think the most interesting debates centred around issues of our own respective roles in creating progressive alternatives to the current capitalist agenda. The squatter groups challenged the academics by asking how theories of globalization add to our

understanding of local action or to the development of strategies for social change? Grassroots activists questioned the value of abstract theorizing, particularly when it was presented in terms incomprehensible to so many of the conference participants. The academics' discourse appeared irrelevant to their lives and movements which are so clearly focused on the here and now. I think this is a critical challenge that academics must take up and address systematically.

From the academics' perspective, local action groups appear to act out of basic beliefs in fundamental human and ecological rights, eg. that abandoned buildings and derelict lands should be used in a productive, collective, and environmentally-sensitive manner. In other words, new forms of social organization, including new collective living and working arrangements, develop spontaneously as privatization throws off those who don't fit (or choose not to fit) within the rigid norms of the global capitalist economy.

Moreover, academics sometimes expressed frustration with the squatters' apparent belief that squatting or otherwise withdrawing from the mainstream is the only right answer to the question of what is to be done. There was a perception that local activists tend to ignore the broader social, political, and economic context in which their struggles take place, and that they do so at their own peril. The fear is that ignorance of this larger context might allow the global forces of capitalism to quash or co-opt their movements. The hope is that with an adequate analysis of global dynamics, local strategies can be tailored to effectively resist the destruction of emergent social forms that make life and work more meaningful, equitable, and sustainable.

It is clear that local activism is not without pitfalls and internal contradictions. Sometimes our actions are no more than annoyances to the powers that be. Sometimes our efforts to meet the needs of youth, the homeless, and the unemployed actually assist the neo-liberal agenda by relieving government of the responsibility to address social issues. Sometimes when we make use of abandoned spaces, we challenge hegemonic notions of private property, capital accumulation, and the corporatization of urban space. Most likely we are doing all of these things at once. I see this as part of the ongoing struggle to make sense of the world, and to make a liveable place for everyone within it.

Review

Possible Urban Worlds, INURA Conference: ZURICH, June 1997

Geraint Ellis

INURA (International Network for Urban Research and Action) was established in 1991 to bring together people involved in grassroots urban activism with researchers from universities and local government. The network has met every year at a different European location to share experiences in community and environmental campaigning and explore common themes of urban research. This year's conference represented a new milestone, being a much more high profile event on a larger scale than the usual meetings and open to the public for the first time. Between June 16- 18 more than 150 delegates gathered in Zurich to listen to some of the world's finest urban theorists, share experiences of recent struggles and gather new ideas on how to develop a sustainable and socially just future for urban areas.

The conference title "Possible Urban Worlds" was taken from the last chapter of David Harvey's 1996 book "Justice, Nature and The Geography of Difference" in which he explores the issue of social and environmental justice, particularly in how localised campaigns can be interpreted as reactions to broader patterns of capital restructuring. It was Harvey himself who made the first major contribution to the conference, giving a lucid description of what he saw as the paradox that while Marxian theory has become less fashionable, the ability of such analysis to expose the nature of economic and environmental inequality has become more potent. While most academic standpoints are self ascribed as being consequent to a paradigm, whether post- modernist, post-colonialist or post-structuralist, Harvey boldly described himself as a pre-socialist. Rather than reflecting on past intellectual ages, he anticipates a future condition built on the type of urban development projects discussed during the INURA conference.

In a talk carefully geared to the mixed audience of academics and activists, Harvey highlighted the value of taking a Marxist perspective by uniting two key discursive regimes of recent years - globalism and the politics of the body. He pointed out that the discourse of globalism was begun by American Express as a campaign to establish a universal credit card and as it swept through the financial world and into academic circles,

it was used to justify the futility of localised struggles of the work place. According to Harvey, this was exactly the same trend highlighted by Marx in the Communist Manifesto, the only difference being that during the 19th century it was called "colonialism" and now is referred to by the depoliticised and "inevitable" term of globalism. A similar theme was taken in his discussion of the politics of the body, recently popularised by the writings of Foucault, but which Harvey interprets as essentially an extension of Marx's work on the working day and primitive communism. Harvey pointed out that the notion of the body is one of the most basic concepts and as such has been resilient to further deconstruction. In scale it sits at the opposite end of the spectrum to the macro-concept of globalisation. Both these notions are reflected in a simple act like buying a pair of sports shoes, a product of the global economy, having been made in the sweat shops of Asia and made within such poor working conditions that were actively destroying the bodies of the labourers who manufactured them. One of the clear messages from Harvey's talk was that you could not discuss the concepts of globalisation on the one hand and the politics of the body on the other - they are both intertwined and the most comprehensive medium of interpreting such a relationship was the enduring analyses offered by Marx.

In taking the overall theme of the conference and moving from theory to activism, Harvey went on to discuss his own involvement with BUILD, a Baltimore-based "Living Wage Campaign". This has sought to challenge the local symptoms of globalisation by ensuring that an adequate wage (rather than just "minimal") is paid by those institutions which could not claim to be footloose and threaten to relocate to areas of cheaper labour, such as municipal authorities and their sub-contractors. Despite being undermined by Workfare which has offered subsidised labour to the private sector (a taste of things to come in the UK?), BUILD has spread to 26 US cities, with many premises now sporting plaques stating "This is a Living Wage Building".

The theme of globalisation was the focus of another academic contribution, from Saskia Sassen of Columbia University, New York. Sassen highlighted the fact that we now live in a world where private organisations, rather than nation states, are the key agencies in the global economic system. This is underlined by the fact that 60-80% of all international trade now takes place internally between the major international corporations. The domination of commerce over nations is further reflected in increasing trends of privatisation and new forms of governance. Yet despite such trends the concentrations of state power,

cities, remain one of the key foundations for the management and servicing of the global economy, being the sites of the valorisation of capital. In her opinion 30-40 global cities (and the institutions therein) make up the one of the most important structures for the global economy. It is these global cities which Sassen sees as the new frontier, where post-colonialism meets the presence of the powerless and where a proverbial spanner can be chucked in the works. You could say it was time to think global but act municipal.

The theme of local struggle was further explored by Margit Mayer of the Kennedy Institute, Berlin, who focused on the changing scope of action in urban politics in a way which has clear manifestations in the recent trends of UK urban policy. She highlighted a number of contradictions in the evolving nature of local politics, on the one hand there has been an erosion of the local welfare state and increasingly repressive stances against the socially excluded, but, on the other, an opening of the urban political system (the shift from "government" to "governance") allowing non-governmental stakeholders, including private companies and community groups to participate in the provision of services such as housing and local economic development. While she conceptualised these trends as attempts by the local elites to adapt to an increasing global world, she made the point that they could also bring new opportunities for empowerment.

These three were perhaps the headlining acts, but the INURA conference included a huge range of contributions ranging from the esoteric to the blatant populist. Speakers were represented from Los Angeles (Ute Lehrer on "Is there still room for a Public Space?") to Florence (Giancarlo Paba et al on new planning participation techniques in Italy) and to the home turf of Zurich (Christian Schmid on the dialectics of urbanisation). These were all from the academic spectrum of the floor, but were effectively complemented by a pride of contributions from groups directly involved in environmental and community campaigns from Europe and North America. The conference provided an almost limitless supply of models for how and why people could change the face of their city ranging from the Green Work Alliance of Toronto, the Wagenburgen of Berlin and the IJ Building Guild, a network of artists who have occupied waterfront buildings in Amsterdam.

Members of the Exodus Collective from the UK proved an inspiration to all through their outlook and optimism in the face of massive and uncalled for hostility from the local establishment. Exodus was started

in 1992 by a small band of people from Luton who were disillusioned by the local pub scene and wanted to put on their own parties in disused warehouses and quarries. Since that humble beginning, it has grown into a vibrant community, having renovated a derelict plot of land into a community farm and an empty hospital into homes for 33 people. They still hold parties which sometimes attract 10,000 people and now want to establish a community and arts centre in an abandoned warehouse on the edge of Luton. In doing this they have had major confrontations with both the police and the council and this is the subject of a film by Spectacle TV, also shown at the conference (broadcast on Channel Four in mid-August '97). A similar experience was told by representatives from the Forte Prenestino on the outskirts of Rome. The Forte is a 13 hectare community centre, originally occupied as a squat and now a self-financing community centre having meeting rooms, green spaces and hosting cultural and music events with audiences of up to 10,000. To further emphasise this type of development, part of the meeting was held at the Rote Fabrik, a formerly derelict silk factory on the edge of Zurich's lake which was squatted in the 1980s and now acts as a community resource for kindergartens, studios, workshops, a restaurant and a wide range of cultural, social and political events. Who said that urban regeneration couldn't be fun?

During the main plenary session and smaller workshops of this three day event, those present were exposed to an exhausting 26 talks, 4 video contributions and two inspiring musical recitals - one from the weeping Romany violin of Zurich's Philipp Klaus and an emotional rendition of the Diggers anthem, "The World Turned Upside Down" from David Featherstone of the UK's The Land is Ours. The meeting was also interspersed by a number of "Urban Safaris", or field trips, through the wilds of Zurich. This provided a number of bizarre and startling experiences, including meeting the eccentric architect of Zurich's most ambitious urban development project, Eurogate, which he has been designing for 30 years, but with a twinkle in his eye, would rather talk about his time behind the barricades in Paris '68. Also encountered was the suburban environmental group which became so electorally popular, it had to advertise for councillors to take up the seats it won. There were obvious contrasts with the UK, such as how the police repression of the drug users of Needle Park could become the focus of local community action or how in a city with the wealth of Zurich, the examples of low income neighbourhoods and inner city deprivation could resemble a British affluent suburb. But then, everything is relative.

When INURA was begun in 1991 it was a reaction to the apparent divide between academia and activism and was founded on 10 principles stressing a commitment to sustainability, equality, ethnic diversity and local empowerment in urban areas. It is now a network of 120 individuals and organisations, forming a unique forum for exchanging information and learning from campaigns throughout the world. The 1997 meeting has been a milestone in the development of the network, but has remained just as inspirational, emphasising again that any successful urban regeneration initiative has got to be fun.

Possible Urban Worlds - the Reader of the 7th INURA Conference 1997

With this provisional list of contents we would like to give a first impression of what our book will look like. It will be published approximately in April '98. It will cost around 40 Sfr. You can already order a copy with the form enclosed in this bulletin.

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Bibliography

Miscellaneous

Other Conferences:

*International Sociological Association
14th World Congress of Sociology*
26 July - 1 August, 1998
Montreal

*City and Culture
Urban Sustainability and Cultural Processes*
13 - 17 May, 1998
Stockholm - Cultural Capital of Europe 98

Announcement

*The European Urban Research Association - An International
Network of Urban Scholars (EURA) was founded
September 18/19 in Brussel.*
EURA are based in Bristol at the Faculty of the Built Environment,
University of the West of England.
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