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INTRODUCTION

Neoliberal ideology has irreversibly changed our world. Hardly anybody acquainted with the term *neoliberalism* would try to deny this. But what do we mean *exactly* when we talk about neoliberalism? Or, who are the neoliberals?

Neoliberalism seems to exist like a phantom: everybody fears it, hates it, and talks about it, but nobody is brave enough to identify him- or herself with it. Neoliberalism is considered responsible for nearly everything that is going wrong in economics, politics, and social life—and the actual economic crisis, caused by a ruthless “casino capitalism,”^[1] seems to confirm this objection. But it is nearly impossible to find political parties or even just individual people who declare themselves to be neoliberal. Of course, one will find many of them in the United States, though there they won’t claim to be *neoliberals* but simply *capitalists* or *conservatives*, since in the States the term *liberal* is commonly used for social democrats. In Europe, the term *neoliberalism* is, with very few exceptions, only used in a pejorative way. It is a word to characterize the Other and almost never the self. This raises the question as to whether the discourse of neoliberalism serves as a kind of conspiracy theory for leftist intellectuals, comparable to the role of freemasonry for the petit bourgeois of the far right.

But nothing is more erroneous than that. We know where the ideology of neoliberalism comes from; we know its representatives and executors, beginning with some Austrian and American economists

[1] Susan Strange, *Casino Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986).

like Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich August von Hayek, Gary S. Becker, Theodore W. Schultz, and Milton Friedman, and some politicians like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. But how are we then to explain the unease that befalls us today when we try to confine the meaning of the term neoliberalism and use it in a more precise way than it has been used in the common empty laments?

The difficulty seems to lie in the fact that neoliberalism has meanwhile become the indisputable discourse of our era—something spread all around us and consequently difficult to localize and define. Since the nineteen-nineties, all mainstream media, all political parties, including the Social Democrats and the Green Party, have been doing the neoliberal job. Like a big sponge, neoliberalism has absorbed all leftist emancipatory tendencies toward freedom, autonomy, and self-determination, and all critique of governmental suppression and paternalism formulated in the sixties, fusing them with neoconservative ideas of a *free* (but in fact highly protected) market, low taxes (for companies), and no boundaries (for the free flux of goods, capital, and manpower). In the end, it has diffused into all Western and also into most of the Eastern societies, parties, minds, and economic and political systems. We live in it like a fish does in water. And despite its bad image, we must confess: all of us are neoliberals.

While acknowledging the difficulties of providing an exact definition, what we can do is at least try to sketch some anchor points for approaching neoliberalism. Marxist critics like David Harvey have defined it as a technique of the “restoration of class power” to increase the uneven distribution of capital and power.^[2] Beyond that, neoliberalism should be understood as an all-encompassing *Weltanschauung*. As Michel Foucault^[3] and others^[4] have pointed out, the very essence of neoliberalism (and also its difference to classical liberalism) can be found in its total pretension. Up to the nineteen-fifties, neoliberal thought was limited to the field of economics. But in the sixties, neoliberal economists started to expand their interests and to apply the laws of the free market to all fields of science and to social life. The market became the measure of all things, a natural fact not to be challenged, comparable to the eternal laws of Darwin’s evolution theory. According to neoliberal theory, all kinds of social interaction can be explained by economic reason. The most extreme view in this respect was advanced by the Chicagoan economists Gary S. Becker and Theodore W. Schultz with their theory of *human capital*, which also regards

[2] David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), pp. 7–68.

[3] See Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 216–19.

[4] Herbert Schui and Stephanie Blankenburg, *Neoliberalismus: Theorie, Gegner*, Praxis (Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, 2002), p. 79.

FROM LIQUID SPACE TO SOLID BODIES

Architecture between Neoliberalism and Control Society

On Form and Content: Architecture with/against Politics?

Traditionally, architecture has been characterized by solidity, structure, and tectonics, that is, by the abstract logic and visual appearance of carry and load. Therefore, we can recognize the metaphor of architecture, the architectonic, or similar terms such as structure or system—in various fields ranging from philosophy, music, and biology to social and political studies—as synonymous with order, logic, organization, and construction. Hence, the suspicion of Jacques Derrida that architecture would be one of the last shelters of metaphysics has its merit.^[1] With the advent of the modern project in architecture, however, a new aesthetic questioned the former notion of architectural solidity. With an interest in elevated, hovering volumes and mobile elements, thereby suppressing traditional materiality in favor of the new possibilities of thin constructions and large spans, many modern architectural designs employed abstracted elements (line, plane, volume), breaking up the traditional boxed spaces in order to enable a transition between inside and out. Structure obtained new meaning as architects, influenced by *Zeitgeist* theories, looked into function, machine aesthetics, and new technologies as a translation of industrial society and enlightenment rationalism, but also as means for shaping a new society. Even if the relationship between modern architecture and politics

[1] Jacques Derrida, "Point de Folie: Maintenant l'architecture," in Bernard Tschumi, *La Case Vide: La Villete, 1985* (London: Architectural Association, 1986).

is unstable—ranging from bourgeois aestheticism and apolitical technocracy to social-democratic reform and revolutionary stances (in both fascist and communist *couleur*)—the utopian aspect of transforming society with design was widely accepted.

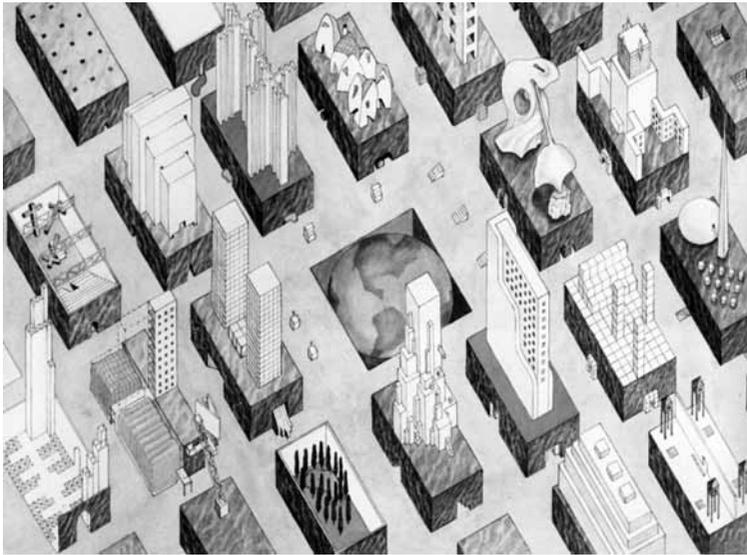
Exactly this compliance of modern architecture (and more so: urbanism) with vanguard politics has been under the attack since the nineteen-sixties, with critics claiming the futility, if not arrogance, of architects in thinking that they could change society. The formal break with the modernist aesthetics of abstraction, reduction, and functional industrial design has been presented as *liberation* from the design orthodoxies of a so-called elitist, academic, and hegemonic modernism. Questioning the modern collective narratives of *progress*, *new man*, and *new society*, the protagonists of what later would be called *postmodernism* proposed individualism, pluralism, consumerism, aestheticism, irony, and identity politics with historical, pop, and vernacular references. In addition, many ushered environmental, social, and behavioral concerns, while, last but not least, some raised a severe neo-Marxist, structuralist, and poststructuralist critique of modernity and its visual representation in the built environment. If postmodern architects seem(ed) to be obsessed with the question of meaning in architecture—ranging from images, ornament, history, context, and typology to semiotics or syntactics—there was an intentional distancing from politics. Even outspoken political architects such as Aldo Rossi (a member of the Partito Comunista Italiano, Italy's communist party) famously stated the following in his inaugural lecture at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH) in 1972, in reaction to the student protests of 1968: "The instruments of the architect are pencil, ruler and compass." And the neo-Marxist architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri announced the end of the modern utopian project and argued—under the circumstances of advanced capitalism—for a separation of criticism from design practice.

Yet, is it possible to disconnect architecture from political implications and social contents, or shall we think of the willful disassociation, apolitical idleness, and ironic distancing of the postmodern stance as a hidden political project? Several authors such as Fredric Jameson,^[2] David Harvey,^[3] and, more recently, Reinhold Martin^[4] have argued for the latter, that postmodernism in its various incarnations (from neo-historicism, contextualism, typology, regionalism, and playful figurativeness to high-tech, neo-modern, and deconstruction) is the cultural symptom or the representation of neoliberal capitalism.

[2] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

[3] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990).

[4] Reinhold Martin, *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, again* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).



(5) Madelon Vriesendorp, *The City of the Captive Globe*, 1972
 Source: Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 142

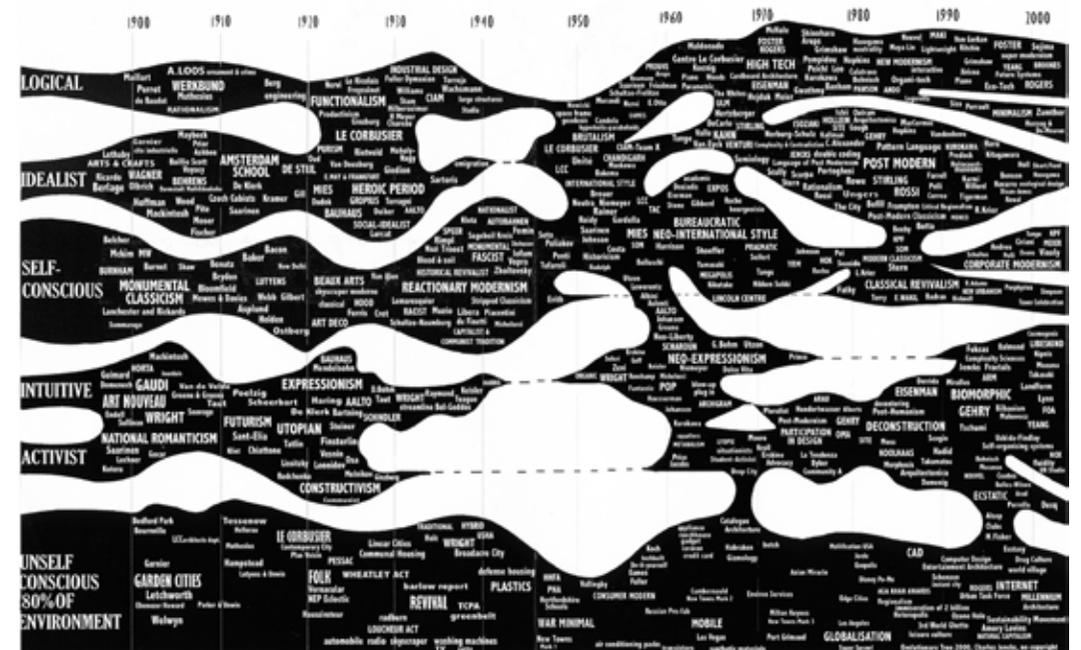
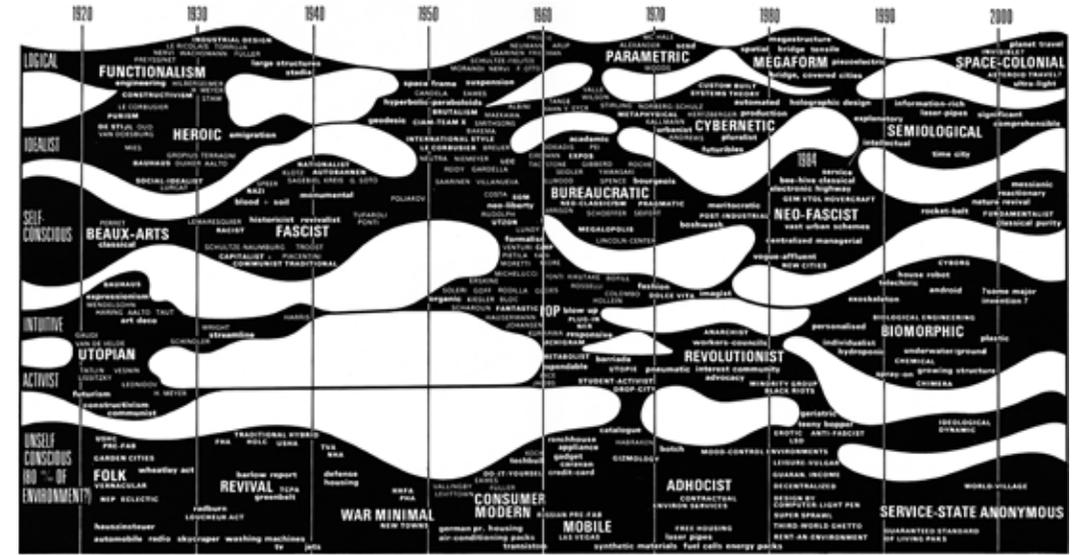
(6) Charles Jencks, *Evolutionary Tree to the Year 2000*
 Source: idem, *Architecture 2000: Predictions and Methods* (London: Studio Vista, 1971), p. 46-7

(7) Charles Jencks, *Evolutionary Tree 20th Century Architecture*
 Source: idem, *Architecture 2000: Predictions and Methods* (London: Wiley, 2000), p. 4-5

on infrastructure. In the appendix of *Delirious New York*, Koolhaas already presents an idealized architectural representation of neoliberal society and global economy: *The City of the Captive Globe* (→5), of which he writes: “It is the capital of Ego, where science, art, poetry and forms of madness compete under ideal conditions to invent, destroy and restore the world of phenomenal Reality. Each Science or Mania has its own plot. . . . The changes in this ideological skyline will be rapid and continuous: a rich spectacle of ethical joy, moral fever or intellectual masturbation.”^[16]

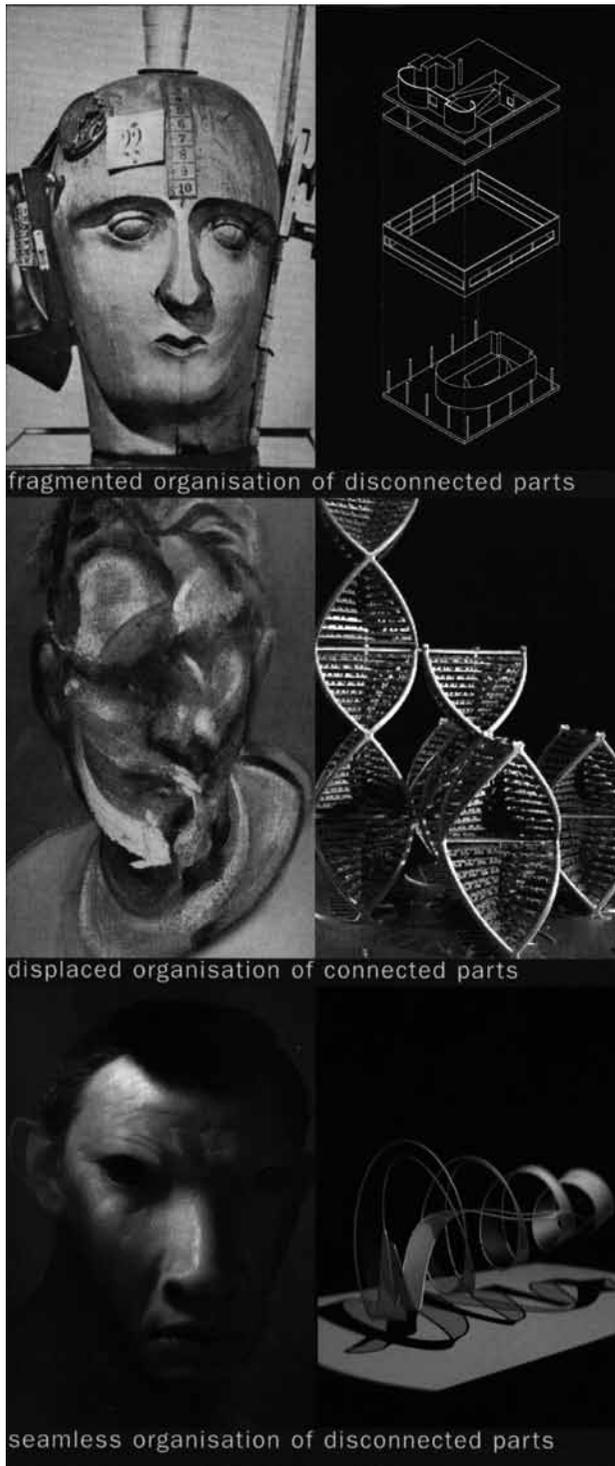
Like the speculative evolutionary pool of architectural styles drawn by Charles Jencks in 1971 (and revised in 2001) (→6,→7), Koolhaas offers a free choice of ideological, formal, and social constructs represented by the multiplicity of design attitudes. Each of those might be radical in its own stand, yet as an ensemble they turn into samples, into available lifestyles on the market (note: “compete” in the quote), where, by the very means of their massing, they annihilate each other in their transformative, utopian power. And again, like Jencks, the most important feature of this concept model often goes unrecognized: the line around the evolutionary tree, or rather, the frame of grid and base. The line allows only for a recombination of the existing styles and prevents new *species* from arising, while the grid is potentially endless, therefore the choice of *radical* alternatives, which are orderly stowed like the umpteen different toothpastes in the supermarket that evoke freedom of choice for the consumer, while any true alternative—revolutionary practice instead of evolutionary recombination of the always

[16] Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, p. 294.



same—has been prohibited. Maybe it is no coincidence after all that *Delirious New York* was published in 1978—in chronological proximity to Margaret Thatcher, Deng Xiaoping’s opening of China, and the presidency of Ronald Reagan?^[17]

[17] See Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, p. 1.



(11) UNStudio (Ben van Berkel),
Diagram
Source: Ben van Berkel and Caroline Bos, *Techniques, Move vol. 2* (Amsterdam: UN Studio, 1999), p. 85



(12) Daniel Libeskind and David Childs, *One World Trade Center* New York, rendering, 2012
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Deconstructivist formal tendencies are still in high fashion, though often updated to parametric design and landscape urbanism (a flow that undermines the borders between animate and inanimate materials). However, there is an oppositional trend toward a rematerialization of the delineation of space: articulated thresholds, the growing complexity and thickness of envelopes, and an increased focus on structure demonstrate a general hardening of surfaces, a petrification of architectural borders. There are two potential reasons for this: security and sustainability. The first has to do with post-9/11 trauma: architecture is under attack. The drama around the rebuilding of Ground Zero, where the sign of a victorious America envisioned by Libeskind as the Free-

FRAMING THE POSSIBLE

Cybernetic Neoliberalism and the Architecture of Immaterial Labor

Occasionally, architecture frames the emergence of a new collective.^[1] In this rare instance, architecture introduces a rhythm to the environment. It might become part of an emancipatory process altering the existing social order. In general terms, architecture supplies an organization of space that constructs possibilities of how to engage with one another; simultaneously, it allows for the insulation of the individual. Yet architecture is amalgamated with what constitutes society. The practice of space production is directly related to and dependent on economic and political discourse, as well as technical advancements. It mirrors and reflects ideas and concepts of how to cope, govern, and design our world by contributing different and yet sometimes unprecedented organizations and framings of space.

For the contemporary practice of space production in Western industrial societies, the nineteen-sixties represent a significant moment—marking the transition from a Fordist mode of predominantly material production toward a post-Fordist labor paradigm in which “immaterial labour”^[2] was to become the dominant form of value production. This restructuring process of society was accompanied by the introduction of the thought model of cybernetics and its technical advancement of calculating machines and automats. In these years, cybernetics

[1] The research for this text was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): P 22447-G21. The material has mostly been taken from my recently published book, *Architektur immaterieller Arbeit* (Vienna: Turia und Kant, 2012).

[2] Maurizio Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labour,” <http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriellalabour3.htm> (accessed April 2013).

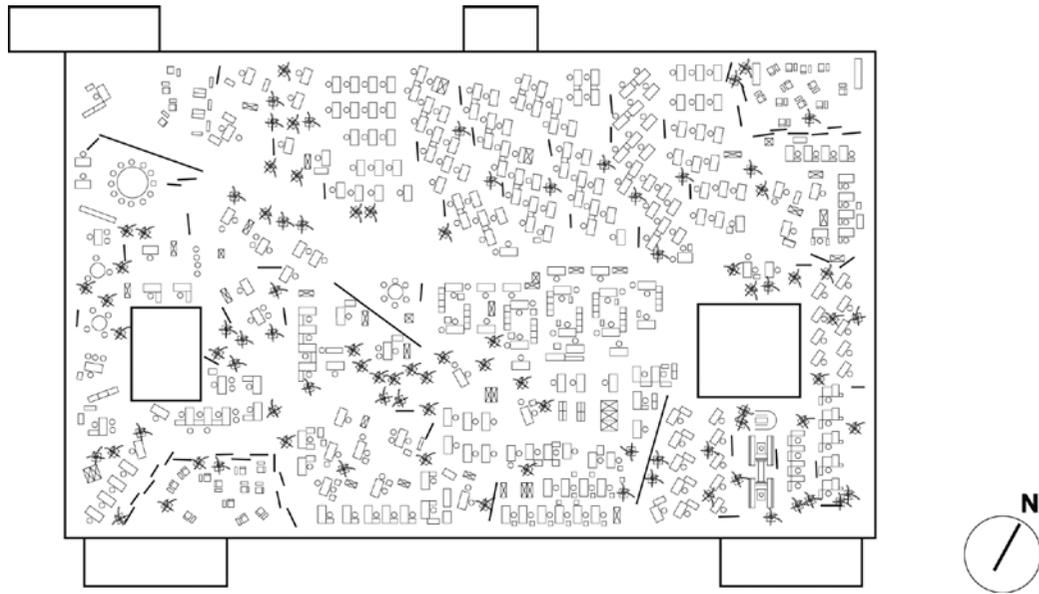
became highly popular across the academic disciplines and was celebrated in lifestyle magazines. It ultimately fostered the utopia of *the end of labor* and its pragmatic implementation: *the leisure society*.

The transition from a Fordist mode of production toward the ever more dominant form of post-Fordism was coupled with an intensification of the economy and its driving discourse and logic, namely: neoliberalism. In fact, neoliberalism reached a new level with the introduction of cybernetics, as stressed, for instance, by Donna Haraway in her cyborg manifesto: “Michael Foucault’s biopolitics is a flaccid premonition of cyborg politics.”^[3] But also anarchist thinkers, like the Tiqqun collective, have aptly pointed out how the new thought model of cybernetics actually heightened and strengthened not only the mode of exploitation but the very (neoliberal) ideology of contemporary capitalism. In other words: the nineteen-sixties and early seventies witnessed a renewed and radicalized idea of how to govern society.

On a concrete and mundane level, this means that approaches to living and working irrevocably changed during the nineteen-sixties. Work time and spare time started to merge, and the actual job became indistinguishable from education and vocational training. Yet these alterations of the capitalist paradigm were of course not limited to the social, political, and economic spheres alone; they also powerfully affected architecture and the built environment. The impact of new modes and means of production on the urban fabric led to the emergence of new and unprecedented spatial figurations. Architects and spatial theorists have noted and described these changes in manifold ways since the sixties; never, however, through the concept of labor. Aside from an increasingly vivid critical discourse in the social sciences, cultural theory, gender studies, and even management studies, popular debate around post-Fordist workplaces and their neoliberal constitution has been framed not by the complex of labor, but by its opposite: leisure, housing, and—on an urban scale—the identitarian politics of corporations and cities.

In the following, I will discuss paradigmatic European projects that occurred more or less simultaneously in the nineteen-sixties. The examples explicate spatially the transition from a Fordist labor paradigm to a post-Fordist mode of production: from a clearly marked space toward a global infrastructure; from a space ordered by a disciplinary form of hierarchy to a generic space containing a networked society with a flat organizational hierarchy; from the passive “organization man” in the office toward the creative and active “entrepreneurial”

[3] Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 149–81, esp. pp. 149–50.

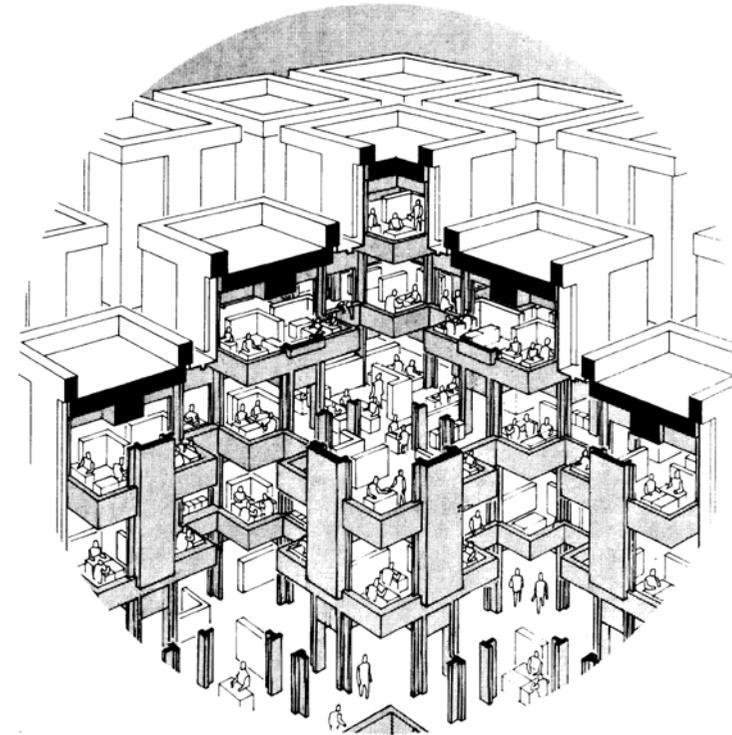


(2) Layout of the Bürolandschaft Buch und Ton, Bertelsmann, Gütersloh, 1959–61, reconstruction by Andreas Rumpfhuber

less, a strict and meticulous order reigned. The space was arranged through a network-like organization of what would ideally be a completely transparent information flow between all actors—be they human or nonhuman—placed in small teams within the space. The relational dependency of the actors in the network of information flows ensured a system that achieved the best possible performance; an arrangement that focused on company profits and whose design was unified, measurable, and verifiable. It was designed as a sealed-in mechanism that is highly flexible in its interior. At the same time, Buch und Ton was only a relay for a much wider and much more expansive space of the similar cybernetically organized Bertelsmann mail-order business. This network-like expansion, which already covered the whole of Germany in the early nineteen-sixties, worked through its continuous feedback loops, permanently optimizing the production-distribution-consumption process.

Spatial *Entgrenzung*: Work Spilling Out into the City

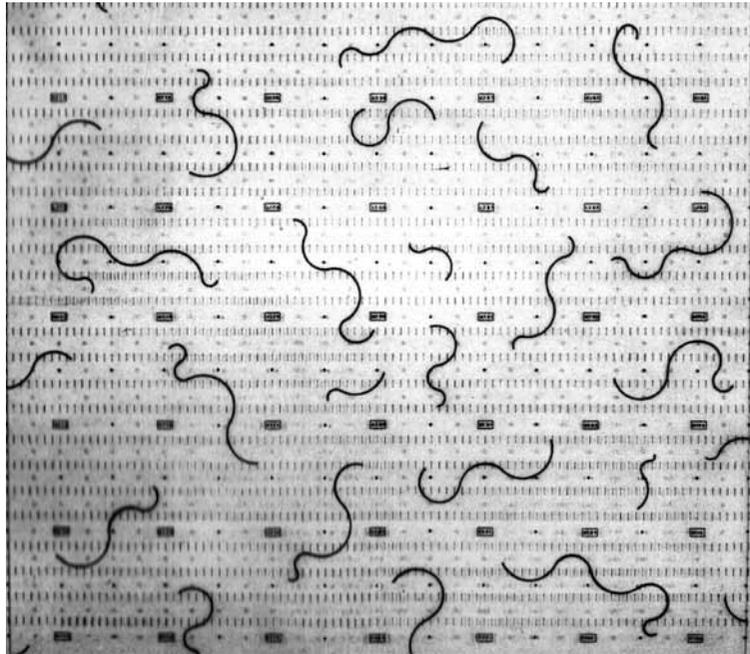
After 1959, the office landscape soon extended its conceptual hold far beyond the controlled office space itself. About ten years later, the Dutch Architect Herman Hertzberger implemented a similar concept in his office building *Centraal Beheer* (1969–71) in Apeldoorn (→3). His structurally open and porous megastructure was the explicit architectural antithesis to office landscaping. Hertzberger's anti-Bürolandschaft followed a similar form to the organizational pattern of office landscaping and its spatial explication, but it arrived at a strikingly



(3) Herman Hertzberger, *Centraal Beheer*, Apeldoorn, 1969–71, axonometry

different, three-dimensional spatial solution. Managerially speaking, it was no longer the single instance (the individual human laborer or the machine) but a team of about four members that constituted the smallest spatial and organizational entity for the corporation. In the smallest possible space, a socially ordered group of four organized and introduced a rhythm into the vast open space of *Centraal Beheer*. Hertzberger conceived of small stackable units, so-called islands, allowing for a multitude of administrative work situations: the single or group work space; the conference room; the café; the restaurant; and also spaces for informal meetings in between. The formerly horizontal and homogenous space of the office landscape was now established by islands stacked three-dimensionally.

Conceptually speaking, Hertzberger's architecture is like the generic space of the Bürolandschaft: an utterly neutral container that functions as infrastructure, and which allows the user to actively adapt the architecture to any use (→4). With his concept of polyvalency, however, Hertzberger delineated a flexible, somehow emancipated spatial structure that constantly adapts itself to new uses, new problems, and new programs. Polyvalency begins with the assumption that a perfect solution never exists. Since a problem that requires a solu-



(7) Archizoom Associati, Conceptual drawing of No-Stop City, 1969

by the Italian architects' group Archizoom Associati (→7). From 1969, the young Italian architects and designers produced a series of drawings and collages of an infinite space that would gain rhythm only through infrastructural elements and whose different functions would be homogeneously integrated into the network. Without contradiction, both production and consumption followed the same logic and the same ideology of coding. The factory and the supermarket became exemplary models of the future city: they were imagined as the potentially boundless and holistic urban structure. As Pier Vittorio Aureli has argued,^[16] No-Stop City was the direct realization of Mario Tronti's idea of the factory of society. To Archizoom Associati, the city stopped being a place. The metropolis became a condition for the circulation of consumer products; the city converged with an all-encompassing capitalist market as Archizoom themselves argued: "In fact, no reality exists any longer outside the system itself: . . . The city no longer 'represents' the system, but becomes the system itself, programmed and isotropic, and within it the various functions are contained homogeneously, without contradictions. Production and Consumption possess one and the same ideology, which is that of Programming."^[17]

[16] Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture within and against Capitalism* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008).

[17] Archizoom, "NO-STOP CITY, Residential Parking, Climatic Universal System," in *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations 1956–76*, eds. Martin van Schaik and Otakar Mácel (München et al.: Prestel, 2005), pp. 154–73.

The description of No-Stop City is reminiscent of an idealized model of office landscape that, ten years before, had already incorporated all of its outside areas conceptually. Its interior would not be a representation but would actually consist of information flow. Analogous to this, the urban space in the drawings of No-Stop City became a coded isotropic and worldwide system that no longer had any representational function. Thus, in principle, the contemporary city in the nineteen-sixties existed only through infrastructure. The city was dealt with as if it were an interior space: a kind of extended office landscape where furniture is arranged according to whatever situations occur. The economic planning that actually organizes the whole society to become productive eliminates the former conflict between the public and the private. In conclusion: in such a frictionless space, people can become self-empowered. They can extend the responsibility that they have gained through the new cybernetic work organization to a spectrum of other domains: housing, leisure time, governance of society. In doing so, they free us all from bourgeois society.

Conclusion

It would be naïve to see these examples of an architecture of immaterial labor—the vast planes of No-Stop City or the open scaffold of Fun Palace; Centraal Beheer's polyvalent megastructure or the flat, non-hierarchical interior of the office landscape; and Hollein's pneumatic bubble—as truly neutral and facilitative of any imaginable function and form. The possibility of these spaces is densely connected with their architectural framing, their infrastructure: with the technical and organizational underlying formation organizing the background. Ultimately, the spontaneous self-organization, self-administration, and self-exploitation of society is an illusion, and this is particularly true for the societies whose organization and functioning are highly technicized (and whose architecture is accordingly conceived in terms of infrastructure). Organization, administration, and exploitation are necessarily conditioned through the projects' infrastructural framing, their spatial organization. In this sense, architecture establishes intervals and rhythms in a territory: it constructs the framing of possibilities.

IN THE SEARCH OF EFFICACY

Debate and Experimentation after May '68

In the nineteen-seventies, architecture embarked on a process of retreat from its earlier ambitions to directly affect society. This retreat was generated by several factors, one of which was the pessimistic conclusion reached by many architects and architectural critics, namely, that architecture is subservient to society, to politics, and to dominant ideology and is unable to realize projects that diverge from the contemporary status quo. The emergence of architectural autonomy as a safe haven for architecture in the discourse of the *Tendenza* and of Peter Eisenman was therefore very different from “the autonomy of the political” identified a little earlier by figures such as Mario Tronti and the Workerist movement in Italy: for Tronti and his allies, the autonomy of the political was embodied in the empowerment of politics in the Keynesian era of strong centralized governments—an era in which economics was subordinated to society and politics.^[1] In archi-

[1] See Peter Eisenman, “Autonomy and the Avant-Garde,” in *Autonomy and Ideology: Positioning an Avant-Garde in America*, ed. Somol, R. (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997), pp. 68–79; Peter Eisenman, “Mis-readings,” *Houses of Cards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 168–86; Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* [1966], trans. D. Ghirardo and J. Ockman (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1991); Massimo Scolari, “The New Architecture and the Avant-Garde” [1973], in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, ed. K.M. Hays (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 126–45; Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture within and against Capitalism* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), p. 32; Mario Tronti, “The Strategy of Refusal,” in *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, eds. Sylvere Lotringer and Christian Marazzi (New York; Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), pp. 28–35.

ture, the idea of autonomy increasingly dictated the interest of the discipline in its own products, processes, and methodologies, often in the complete absence of a social, economic, or political context.^[2] Curiously, the perception of architecture as completely determined by society took hold precisely in a period in which many scholars abandoned monodirectional ideas about the shaping of society. Louis Althusser argued that ideological state apparatuses, belonging to society’s superstructure, took an active part in shaping society^[3]; Michel Foucault described how power infiltrates all aspects of society^[4]; many neo-Marxists focused on issues of consciousness and culture as determining factors that supplemented society’s infrastructure.^[5] Consequently, while the understanding of the diverse factors and forces that shape society was widening, in architectural circles it was narrowing. The perception of architecture as a practice subjugated by society was not limited to advocates of neoliberalism who wished to confine practices to professional know-how. The Marxist architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri wrote, paraphrasing Engels, that “just as it is not possible to found a Political Economy based on class, so one cannot ‘anticipate’ a class architecture (an architecture for ‘a liberated society’); what is possible is the introduction of class criticism into architecture. Nothing beyond this, from a strict—but sectarian and partial—Marxist point of view.”^[6] Charles Jencks, in turn, argued that architecture is necessarily subservient to society, that modernism was never “progressive” as some had believed.^[7]

Manfredo Tafuri was greatly influenced by the work of his peers, the philosopher Massimo Cacciari and the political scientist Mario Tronti. It can be argued that a certain perception of society, which can be identified in Tafuri’s work, was borrowed from Cacciari and Tronti. The theory in question identified the manner in which a specific model of organization of production, such as the assembly line, was reproduced in all levels of society, including the structural base and the superstructure, the city and architecture. In such a worldview, the

[2] See Tahl Kaminer, *Architecture, Crisis and Resuscitation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 87–113.

[3] Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (1970; repr., New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), pp. 85–126.

[4] See, among others, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (London: Allen Lane, 1979); Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester, 1980); Barry Hindess, *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault* (1996; repr., Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 96–136.

[5] See, for example, Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

[6] Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and Histories of Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), p. xv.

[7] Charles Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1973), pp. 29–94.

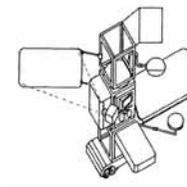


(3) Bernard Tschumi, A poster from the *Advertisements for Architecture* series, 1976–77
 Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects

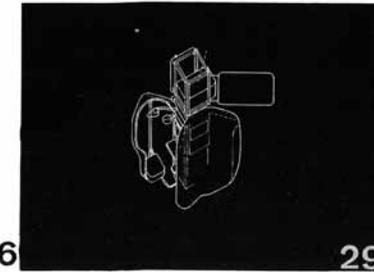
students—demanded spontaneity, freedom, and creativity. Therefore, the “activities” outlined in *Do-It-Yourself-City* must be understood as an attempt to infuse into the city—via architecture—the social and cultural *content* that the barren, rigid, and repetitive modernist city did not offer, including temporal and ephemeral aspects. While many of the radical architecture groups of the period were content with the creation of ephemeral inflatables as a means of inserting spontaneity, diversity, and temporality into architecture and the city, Tschumi and Montés moved a step further by developing a series of small architectural objects meant to facilitate specific activities, which, in turn, suggest self-realization in a sense that the reified and monotonous urban environment of the nineteen-sixties did not (→4).

The young Bernard Tschumi searched for the “environmental trigger”—a means for architectural efficacy. He concluded that knowledge of the built environment and not building “can contribute to polarising urban conflicts and inducing radical change.”^[16] But, in the early seventies, Tschumi discovered via poststructuralism the work of the her-

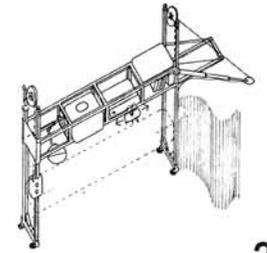
[16] Bernard Tschumi, “The Environmental Trigger,” in *A Continuing Experiment: Learning and Teaching at the Architectural Association*, ed. James Gowan (London: Architectural Press, 1975), p. 93



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(4) Bernard Tschumi and Fernando Montés, *Do-It-Yourself-City*, 1969/70, Plates 26, 27 and 29: small-scale mobile urban interventions.
 Courtesy of Bernard Tschumi Architects

etic surrealist Georges Bataille.^[17] The writings of Bataille offered the Swiss architect the possibility of developing his interest in radical acts that emphasized *transgression*, which could circumvent the need for *proof* of societal efficacy. The series of posters *Advertisements for Architecture* perfectly highlights the transition in Tschumi’s thought: the rot, excrement, and decay found in the *Villa Savoye*, the subject of one of the “advertisements,” comfortably fit Bataille’s interest in the obscene and excluded. However, not all traces of radical sociology are absent in the advertisement series. The advert that depicts someone falling—or, rather, being thrown—out of a window (→3) includes the caption: “Architecture is defined by the actions it witnesses as much as by the enclosure of its walls. Murder in the Street differs from Murder in the Cathedral in the same way as love in the street differs from the Street of Love. Radically.”^[18]

What this poster suggests is that architecture is neither the built object, nor the Cartesian space enclosed by the walls, ceiling, and floor, but that architecture also includes the specific occurrences taking place there. This presents an extreme expansion of the architectural field and reflects Lefebvre’s understanding of social practice as a determining factor of space. However, the roles of the building’s architect and the architectural design in initiating the event in question remain opaque.

Nanterre

The events of May ‘68 in Paris began not in Paris proper, but on the new university campus in Nanterre, in the vicinity of La Défense. The campus, designed by the architecture studio Chauliat, was a typical example of late-modernist functionalism, with spatial segregation enhancing social segregation, functional zoning of living, working, and leisure areas, and separation of living quarters between men and women. Lefebvre was a professor at Nanterre at the time and observed the students’ remonstrations and the manner in which they spread from

[17] Martin, “Transpositions,” pp. 26–28.

[18] Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts* (London: Academy Editions, 1994), pp. XX.

NEOLIBERALISM AND THE CRISIS OF THE PROJECT... IN ARCHITECTURE AND BEYOND

A Utopia without a Utopian Project

The crisis of neoliberalism has revealed another, much deeper and more concerning one: the crisis of (any) alternative project. One might go even further and say that the neoliberal era—including its current *zombie-phase*^[1]—is marked by the overall crisis of the very category of the project: be it a social, political, economic, cultural, technological, urban, or architectural one. The persistence of anti-neoliberal protests is not proof against, but rather itself an indication of, the aforementioned crisis, for as a form of political engagement, protests serve primarily to discredit the current regime and less to articulate an alternative. Without a unifying horizon—the *project* of a possible alternative world accompanied by a plausible theory of transformation toward it—protests can, at best, achieve the alleviation of the contested political practices and, at worst, provoke forthright repression and means of coercion.

In order to understand (and hopefully overcome) this particular situation in which we seem to be trapped, it is necessary to take a look at its genesis. The crisis of *grand projects* started in the nineteen-sixties with rising skepticism toward the achievements of all three mutually intertwined *super projects* of the era: modernism, technoscience,

[1] I refer here to the description of the contemporary state of neoliberalism as elaborated in Neil Brenner, Jamie Peck, and Nik Theodore, *Civic City Cahier 4: Afterlives of Neoliberalism* (London: Bedford Press, 2011).

and socialism. Modernism—as the cultural meta project—was questioned because of its tendency toward standardization, functionalism, mass production, and the resulting loss of individuality. Technoscience—as the technological meta project—was accused of causing global ecological crisis. Socialism (including any form of macroeconomic *plannism*)—as the political meta project—was criticized because of its alleged association with authoritarianism, repression, and the lack of the system's capacity for spontaneous regeneration. This intellectual climate reached its peak at the onset of neoliberalism—in the years preceding and following the fall of Berlin Wall. At that time, being critical of “utopian projects” became an indispensable component of the global intellectual common sense.

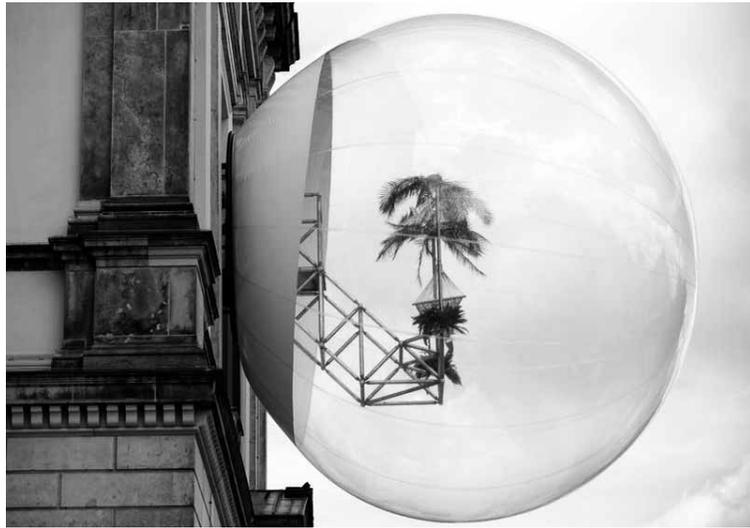
Neoliberal ideology has never provided a new, comprehensive political-economic project that could be understood as an alternative to the preceding ones—it rather consciously renounced such ambitions. The ideological fathers of what later was to be called neoliberalism belonged to the most vehement critics of the very idea that social systems can and should be “planned.” Their free-market mantra was explicitly directed against utopianism, plannism, and regulation.^[2] They denounced all attempts at constructing a “better world” as potentially disastrous and totalitarian reveries, and instead of elaborating the theoretical foundations of an *alternative* social system, they merely proposed a set of reforms which would supposedly make the *existing* system more “efficient” and capable of spontaneous self-regulation.^[3]

For sure, the critics of neoliberal ideology have rightly pointed out that neoliberalism itself is a utopia in the sense that its idealized vision of the free market (which would supposedly foster endless growth and democratization) is highly unrealistic.^[4] This might sound at odds with the aforementioned anti-utopian bias of the neoliberal ideology. In order to clarify this seeming contradiction, we need to take a closer look at the very concept of utopianism that has been attributed to neoliberalism by its opponents. In the critical interpretations describing neoliberalism as a utopia in its own right, the meaning of the term

[2] A version of anti-utopian, “anti-regulatory,” and pragmatist attitude was adopted by all initial proponents of the neoliberal economic doctrine. See in particular Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (1949; repr., Auburn: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1998) and Friedrich von Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[3] On neoliberalism as a prolonged state of de-regulative transition (rather than a stable phase of capitalist development), see also Brenner, Peck, and Theodore, *Afterlives of Neoliberalism*.

[4] Criticism of the utopian aspect of the economic reasoning behind contemporary forms of governance was already formulated by Foucault in his reflections on *governmentality*. See Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).



(2) Haus-Rucker-Co, *Oasis Nr. 7*, 1972, Kassel, documenta 5
 Source: Friedrich von Borries, *Klimakapseln: Überlebensbedingungen in der Katastrophe* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), p. 138

society, which lives encapsulated in the protective capsules needed for providing a habitable life after the ecological catastrophe.^[16] In the manner of Superstudio's *Twelve Cautionary Tales for Christmas*, Friedrich von Borries captures the alarming tendencies of the present and extrapolates them into an imaginary future. Thus, even though the form of the utopian project is used, its direction is reversed—instead of being a project for the future, utopia becomes a critical reflection on the present, losing in this way its *projective* character and becoming a primarily *reflexive* tool. But if the oppositional utopian project ceases to be a *project* itself (inasmuch as the latter is understood as a *positive* proposal for the future), what does that mean for the oppositional architectural and political practice? Is there another way of thinking the project? Or could the alternative to the neoliberal (non-) project itself be a *non-project*—that is, a strategy that deliberately rejects providing a comprehensive projection of an alternative urban, social, political, cultural, and/or technological formation? In approaching the latter question, let us have a look at the opposite way of dealing with the contemporary crisis of projective thinking.

Dissolution of Spatial Form (or the Project without a Project)

If at the one pole of contemporary architecture's responses to the neoliberal crisis of *projectivity* we find a peculiar comeback of the macro-utopianism of spatial form (stamped by the magic word *sus-*

[16] For another interpretation of Borries's book *Klimakapseln* in the context of contemporary utopianism, see Mara-Daria Cojocaru, *Die Geschichte von der guten Stadt: Politische Philosophie zwischen urbaner Selbstverständigung und Utopie* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012), pp. 218–37.

tainability), then the opposite pole is marked by the process-based, distributed, micro-scale design practices that include miniaturization, fluidization, and temporalization of spatial form to a larger or smaller extent. Within these strategies, the form has mostly been subordinated to the process of its creation and transformation—sometimes up to the point where it has all but dissolved. In this context, we could rightly speak of the disappearance of the architectural project (as we knew it). It would be misleading to put all design paradigms concerned with spatial practices and processes (rather than forms) under the same umbrella, since they include such different approaches, including experiments concerning the retreat of the author from the design process; parametric design; development of open-ended sociospatial scenarios; flexible strategies in urban design as a critique of top-down master planning; participatory design; ephemeral and mobile architectures, et cetera. However, it would go beyond the scope of this article to analyze each of them separately and to reflect on their specific relation to the neoliberal ideology. Since the initial point of my considerations was the question of (missing) alternatives to neoliberalism, the following analysis will be limited to those process-based design strategies that have been either deliberately developed or retroactively interpreted as critical of neoliberalism.

In his recent publication *Distributed Agency, Design's Potentiality*,^[17] art historian Tom Holert has offered a short theory of architectural and artistic engagement that can be seen as a manifesto proclaiming modest, embedded, collective, and strategic design practices instead of the grand-scale, visionary, autonomous, and static projects associated with modernist utopianism.^[18] The central argument of the booklet brings about a new notion of the designer as a practitioner involved in a set of distributed micro-practices. These, according to Holert, could contribute to a gradual transgression of the operational patterns of neoliberal capitalism through the ongoing work of recycling, re-composing, and recoding the given reality. Symptomatically, Holert consciously avoids describing any exemplary *projects*, because his theory proposes a deliberate anonymization and moderation of the design practice up to the point where *designer* becomes the name of an attitude, rather than of a specific profession. A similar argument has been made by Peter Mörtenböck and Helge Mooshammer. In *Netzwerk Kultur: Die Kunst der Verbindung in einer globalisierten Welt*,^[19] the two authors reflect on architectural/artistic practices that

[17] Tom Holert, *Civic City Cahier 3: Distributed Agency, Design's Potentiality* (London: Bedford Press, 2011).

[18] For a detailed analysis of Holert's argument, see my review entitled "A Strong Argument for a Weak Theory (of Design)," *GAM* 09 (2013), pp. 212–5.

[19] Peter Mörtenböck and Helge Mooshammer, *Netzwerk Kultur: Die Kunst der Verbindung in einer globalisierten Welt* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010).

NEOLIBERALISM AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CRITIQUE

For the past fifty years or so, a critical attitude toward society has been the hallmark of the *progressive* architect. In architecture today, it is the very possibility of being critical that stands at the center of debate, fueled by such question as: What is the agenda on which we should base our criticism? Is there still a public tolerance toward criticism? In the world of art and architecture, *criticality* seems to have become no more than a marketing tool: a term that has long since lost its edge, its ability to be painful.^[1] Critique seems to belong to an old world, where there was still a division between the political left and right; where there was an enemy to fight against and a system to oppose. Also outside of the world of architecture, the demand for a convincing critique of society fueled by a vision of a better world constitutes one of the most difficult challenges of our neoliberal age. This led the Dutch philosopher Frank Ankersmit to state that we live in a world without alternatives, that we are caught in the politics of the inevitable.^[2] In Ankersmit's view, it is symptomatic that the financial crisis is discussed exclusively in terms of a possible solution and not in terms of its causes. Such a discussion would directly put forward the question as to an alternative, and thus make clear that there is no

[1] On this theme, see, for example, Sven Lütticken, *Geheime Publiciteit: Essays over hedendaagse kunst* (Rotterdam: NAI Uitgevers, 2005).

[2] Frank Ankersmit, "Zonder ideologische strijd over de kredietcrisis zijn bezuinigingen voldongen feiten—we berusten in de politiek van het onvermijdelijke," *NRC Handelsblad*, May 14, 2011.

longer an ideological space to formulate such an alternative. Thinking about a better world seems to have vanished into oblivion together with the political ideologies, whether from the right or from the left. Nowadays, according to Ankersmit, we are told that we have only one choice and that the light will otherwise be extinguished. So much for democracy and free choice. It appears that Herbert Marcuse was right after all, when in the nineteen-sixties he stated that bourgeois capitalism blackmails us with the choice between total disaster or the acceptance of the system.^[3]

In architecture, the idealist delirium of the nineteen-sixties and seventies is over and has been exchanged for a much more pragmatic attitude. In this respect, it is telling that the role of theory is diminishing within the discipline. Buildings today are no longer erected by the logic of meaning and metaphor, as the translation of *theory* into *practice*. In the nineteen-eighties, for example, the philosophical concept of deconstructivism influenced the experimental work of architects like Coop Himmelb(l)au, Eric Owen Moss, and Daniel Libeskind. Today, in the majority of cases, architectural developments occur without a reflective philosophical context. Buildings now constitute a *performance*: they may be marked by such elements as technological innovation and environmental achievement, but they are no longer inspired by theory. Buildings today may look spectacular, but they no longer carry any reflexive, let alone critical, charge.

Architecture thus seems to be shifting away from a long-held tradition in which experimental avant-garde buildings were always also an intellectual provocation.^[4] At the same time, *criticism* and *criticality* are buzzwords that appear in many texts on art and architecture. They are as widely used as they are undefined.^[5] Are they to be regarded as sad souvenirs from a world that has long since passed by? The uncertainty about architecture's critical function seems to mark the most recent age in architecture.

At the same time, as I will highlight in this article, the current debate is also a phase in a longer development that extends over a century. Moreover, as already indicated above, the discussion about critique not only takes place in architectural circles but rather concerns society at large. During the entire twentieth century, discontent and uncertainty about the role of critique led to dispute and debate. However, as I will argue here, there was a moment when the debate about critique became particularly intense. This was when different attempts

[3] Ibid.

[4] Scott Johnson, "Once Theory to Practice, Now Practice to Theory?" *Harvard Design Magazine* 33 (Fall–Winter 2010–11), pp. 5–10.

[5] Sven Lütticken, writes: "There are more critics than ever before, but the Tate Gallery and the Gagosian—and most glossy art magazines—are just as poorly interested in art as a critical project as Time Warner or Time." Lütticken, *Geheime Publiciteit*, p. 5. Translation by the author.

EDUCATION, CONSUMPTION, REPRODUCTION

Three Cautionary Tales

Once upon a time, the neoliberal city was a fiction: in the nineteen-sixties, at the dawn of the knowledge economy, architects put forward projects that imagined a future beyond the Fordist paradigm—and the changed role that architecture would play in it. While at the time these fictions seemed to be simple provocations, today they have become nothing less than the reality we live in. The works of Cedric Price, Archizoom, and Superstudio^[1] seem to forecast the evolution of education, consumption, and reproduction in the age of post-Fordist, neoliberal capitalism: while education finds itself at the center of the productive system, consumption becomes a social, almost political activity, and reproduction is no longer a private issue, but rather the object of statistics and economic strategy.

Over the past few years, the collective Labour City Architecture—of which Pier Vittorio Aureli and I are part—has conducted a series of studio research studies that have investigated the state of the contemporary city at the Berlage Institute, BIArch Barcelona, and the Architectural Association in London. Our theoretical premises are rooted

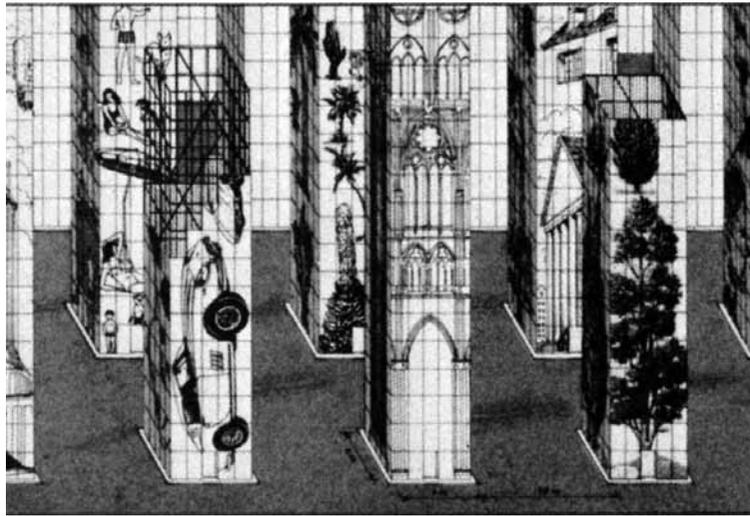
[1] Pier Vittorio Aureli discussed the political implications of the work of Cedric Price and, respectively, Archizoom in “Labor and Architecture: Revisiting Cedric Price’s Potteries Thinkbelt,” *Log 23* (Fall 2011), and *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture within and against Capitalism* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008). Superstudio’s cautionary tales are the focus of my own essay “Talking in Parables: Superstudio’s Narratives,” *Le Journal Spéciale Z 2* (Summer 2011), pp. 126–43.

in the assumptions put forward by these “cautionary tales” of the sixties (to borrow Superstudio’s term): namely, that in the post-Fordist city the real object of production is no longer material goods, but rather subjectivity.^[2] Subjectivity is the complex of cultural constructs, ideas, desires, and fears that shape the way people live their lives in a given historical period. Subjectivity is collective and shared; it does not refer directly to the individuals, but it does influence the way individuals perceive themselves and their environment.

The quality that sets biopower apart from traditional sovereign power is its focus on the mastering of the *bios*, the life of the subject. This fact distinguishes the architecture of mature capitalism from that of a past in which it was still chiefly a tool of representation. The projects developed by Labour City Architecture all start from the very idea of the production of subjectivity. As such, they are conscious exasperations of the biopolitical, managerial paradigm; as the cautionary tales of the sixties, they set out to further the production of subjectivity in such a blunt manner as to put into crisis the supposedly “functional” character of architecture. The strategic attempt here is to look for an architecture that renounces the pretense of solving problems and healing its dystopian condition, one that instead seeks to expose or stage this condition in all its extreme, even absurd consequences—consequences that reveal how no action, no building, no project can merely be functional but is rather always an index of a political decision. However, the actual work of our collective is very much focused on the condition of the contemporary city, where those cautionary tales seem to have become true. The issues put forward in the scenarios of the sixties have become the hallmarks of the post-Fordist, neoliberal city: the transformation of higher education into a form of industry, the collapsing of the difference between production and consumption, the transformation of architecture into an apparatus for the reproduction of suitable subjects. Universities that are factories (and vice versa), shopping malls that are places to live and work 24/7, and agglomerations of living units without social life are clearly the main ingredients of the contemporary city.

In this context, I would like to discuss the studio work that Pier Vittorio and I conducted on the city of Athens at the Berlage Institute together with Platon Issaias and Elia Zenghelis in 2011. Athens is an exemplary case of neoliberal urbanization: expanded with a series of master plans that legalized spontaneous development rather than actively steering it, Athens is a monument to *laissez-faire*—a key place reflecting the

[2] As far as the present inquiry is concerned, key texts on the subject shaped by this shifted productive context are Christian Marazzi, *Capital and Affects: The Politics of the Language Economy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011) and Franco Berardi, *The Soul at Work* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009).



(9) Superstudio, *The City of Splendid Houses*, 1971
 Source: Superstudio, "Twelve Cautionary Tales for Christmas. Premonitions of the Mystical Rebirth of Urbanism," *Architectural Design* XLI, 12 (December 1971), p. 742

Superstudio relate, in a deadpan tone, life conditions that are an extrapolation of our current reality. Up to this point, their operation has been one of absolute realism—but by singling out one aspect in each of the twelve cities, they produce a symbolic overload, with a strategy that aims at recuperating a dignity of human life from the managerial character architecture has assumed in an advanced capitalistic society. Superstudio's subjects are all reduced to "bare life,"^[14] although the managerial mechanisms vary: a strict seclusion of individuals who cannot communicate ("2000-Ton City"), the possibility of living all fantasies through a simulation game ("Barnum City"), the transformation of the inhabitants into robots ("City of Order"). If there is an apparent exception to this flattening of subjectivity, it is the "City of Splendid Houses" (→9). In the "City of Splendid Houses" the aesthetic will of the individuals becomes the most fundamental character; while all of the buildings have the same floor plan, the inhabitants can decorate the façades to their taste, resulting in a magnificent competition of creativity. While the "City of Splendid Houses" is easily readable as a critique of consumer society, beyond the surface lies the same tale of control and genericness that informs the other cities: "all the citizens work in the city's factories," since the apparent aesthetic vitality is purely a stimulus for the production system that keeps the economy of the city afloat. Even if the apparatus varies, the citizens of all the cities have been stripped of any chance to lead a conscious life. Superstudio refuse to

[14] A notion developed by Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).



(10) Yuichi Watanabe, *Wall*, 2011
 Source: Labour City Architecture, *Athens, Towards a Common Architectural Language*. Berlage Institute Project Report, 2011

(11) Ji-Hyun Woo, *Cloister*, 2011
 Source: Labour City Architecture, *Athens, Towards a Common Architectural Language*. Berlage Institute Project Report, 2011

further a history of "blood, sweat, and tears"^[15] in which architecture has been reduced to a managerial tool. They refuse traditional design and introduce a project through words; a project aimed at restating an architecture that is still able to deal with the experiential and the ritual sides of human life; a project that is ultimately a form of rebellion against reification. In all of the twelve tales, Superstudio explore extreme scenarios where the house, as the place of the reproduction of the population, becomes a political problem before a functional one. And the house is definitely the locus where the subjectivity of the citizens is shaped; in contemporary Athens, as in a possible thirteenth tale, the families are pigeonholed in apartments that share only a poorly lit service core. The interaction between neighbors is, in principle, minimal, and the city blocks lack both public space and private shared courtyards that could improve the livability of the dense central neighborhoods. The whole city is composed of monad apartments and streets, with no in-betweens and few possibilities for sharing. To challenge this condition, we propose an archetype that could be inserted to densify incomplete, fragmented blocks. This typology is based on a blank wall toward the street (→10). If traditional polykatoikias are made of many non-load-bearing walls that subdivide apartments into purpose-specific cells, the Wall proposes just one single wall the circles the block, leaving the interior of the houses completely free. The wall is open on the ground floor to allow for pub-

[15] The full subtitle of the Cautionary Tales is: "SUPERSTUDIO evoke twelve visions of ideal cities, the supreme achievement of twenty thousand years of civilization, blood, sweat and tears; the final haven of Man in possession of Truth, free from contradiction, equivocation and indecision; totally and for ever replete with his own PERFECTION." Superstudio, "Twelve Cautionary Tales for Christmas," p. 737.

ARCHITECTURAL ASYMMETRIES

Three propositions about the added architectural value in the design of single-family homes in the nineteenth-century belt of Antwerp under the Land and Buildings Policy executed by the Autonomous Municipal Company for Real Estate and City Projects Antwerp (Ag Vespa)

Introduction

Questions about the existence of neoliberal architecture are generally answered by analyzing the role of emblematic architectural projects in major and highly speculative urban developments. However, admitting any direct relationship between architectural design and neoliberalism is in most cases carefully avoided. This paper argues that such hesitation results from self-protective resistance on the part of the architectural discipline. The evacuation of neoliberalism from the design field levels the path for an either opportunistic or idealistic attitude among architects. Opportunists will act as if architectural beauty were something that is indifferent to neoliberal machinations from above, while idealists immediately enter the arena of utopian speculation. In both cases, the architectural object is easily unplugged from its neoliberal other and thus detached from its production, distribution, and consumption.

The following paper is an initial, albeit incomplete, stepping stone toward the ambition of identifying neoliberalism in specific aspects of architectural production, such as practice, form, scale, material, et cetera. The production of architecture under the Land and Buildings Policy in Antwerp provides a test case for sketching a direct and complex interlinkage between architecture and neoliberalism. The design of the single-family homes in the so-called *nineteenth-century belt* of the City of Antwerp exhibits the commodification of architecture, the struggle for added architectural value, and the function of everyday architecture in city marketing. The search for neoliberal (and anti-neoliberal) architecture must start from these classic capitalist logics.

Object

The much-discussed architectural production under the Land and Buildings Policy by Ag Vespa, an acronym for the autonomous municipal company for real estate and city projects in Antwerp, is a prime example of urban regeneration in Belgium. In Antwerp's nineteenth-century urban cluster, the autonomous municipal company Ag Vespa has purchased a substantial number of dilapidated dwellings and free parcels of land in recent years to remarket them as desirable urban homes suitable for young families. The hope and the expectation is that this *pinpricking* will revive parts of the city currently plagued by negative social situations.

Over the past years, the Land and Buildings Policy has yielded more than one hundred single-family homes acclaimed by professional and mainstream publications for their "architectural intelligence."^[1] A fundamental factor is the participation of architects identified by representative bodies in the professional sector as young, highly promising talent. The objective is for dilapidated dwellings and free parcels of land—at a disadvantage in the housing market because of their troublesome physical location—to come up with innovative design solutions. Another reason for choosing young architects is their rapid employability because of their enthusiasm and idealism.

Although the production of one hundred single-family homes is modest in absolute terms, it is nevertheless unique in the context of Belgium's traditionally liberal policy. Housing production is considered a private matter with government involvement confined to regulatory matters, except for the very limited activity in social housing. The administrative passiveness is usually compensated for by launching compulsive sensitization campaigns targeted at private builders and constructing prestigious model projects in the government real-estate portfolio. Ag Vespa personifies the Antwerp city government's entrepreneurial approach to doing something about the architectural quality of the everyday living environment.

The City of Antwerp has broken with tradition in housing policy without impairing the liberal tradition of the housing market in Belgium. The autonomous municipal company is used by the City as a vehicle to correct malfunctions in the housing market—not by imposing external regulations to the market, but, ironically, by playing its very own game (i.e. the game of the market). A market operation is set up within which a revolving fund is being used to produce and distribute architecturally valuable single-family homes. The strategic, and above all recognizable, model housing projects are developed in a cost-covering

[1] Herman Boumans, ed., *Vooruitgangsrapport AgVespa 2011: realisaties in vastgoed en stadsprojecten* (Antwerp: Ag Vespa, 2012).

NEOLIBERAL LIAISONS

Interactions between Architecture and Fashion in the Age of Creative Industries

In 2006, Nigel Coates asserted that “architecture could learn more from clothing.”^[1] Arising from the observation of John Galliano’s work on one of the plans for a building by Branson Coates Architecture, this statement was published in *Architextiles AD*, edited by Mark Garcia, coinciding with the homonymous research project developed at the Royal College of Art, London.^[2] The special issue confirmed that, decades after Frei Otto’s pioneering work with lightweight tensile and membrane structures, the equation formed by architecture and textiles was becoming a relevant matter of practice and theorization, from the basis of a demand of flexibility, adaptation, and responsiveness in construction. Within this context, digital design technologies and advanced computing in textile engineering have implemented what Lars Spuybroek called the “textile way of thinking”^[3]; an unexpected evolution of Gottfried Semper’s *Bekleidungstheorie* (Theory of Dressing) through the transfer of tectonic properties to fabrics that seems to have relocated new fields of encounters between architecture and dress.^[4]

- [1] Nigel Coates, “Skin/Weave/Pattern,” in “Architextiles,” ed. Mark Garcia, special issue, *Architectural Design* 76, no. 6 (November–December 2006), p. 48.
- [2] This program, led by Mark Garcia and Anne Toomey, basically explored the potential of the direct collaboration between architects and textile designers through the development of large-scale interventions.
- [3] See Maria Ludovica Tramontin, “Textile Tectonics: An Interview with Lars Spuybroek,” in “Architextiles,” pp. 52–59.
- [4] In 1988, Günther Feuerstein already coined the term “archi-tex-ture” to designate the use of fabric and textile manufacturing processes in building, pointing out that this was an essential fact that would confirm an obvious relationship between architecture and dress. See Günther Feuerstein, “Editorial,” in “Architextur/Architexture,” special issue, *Daidalos* 29 (September 15, 1988), p. 17.

Coincidentally, two exhibitions in 2006 highlighted the interest in this connection. The Center for Architecture in New York inaugurated the year with *The Fashion of Architecture: CONSTRUCTING the Architecture of Fashion*. Months later, the itinerant exhibition *Skin + Bones: Parallel Practices in Fashion and Architecture* opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), bringing together a wide range of contemporary names from both fields in an exploration of common places through material, conceptual, technical, and formal nexus—some of them, like wrapping or pleating, directly related to that “textile way of thinking.” As these curatorial approaches showed, the examination of the relationship between architecture and clothing has strongly reemerged, however, it is scrutinized from different points of view that are inevitably imbued again by reflection on the most controversial but crucial vertex of these interwoven dimensions: fashion.^[5]

This primarily social form has always been conversing with other design and artistic languages, with inspiration and collaboration as principal mediums of a search for cultural and creative recognition. Since the late nineteenth century, some of the dialogues were born from permeable grounds like avant-garde movements, as well as from a spirit of rejection against contemporary trends and the rise of industrialization in clothing production (e.g., artistic dress reform). However, the current cross-disciplinary frame of postindustrialism has allowed fashion to finally find a real effective means with which to restructure these relationships without contradicting the essence of its system, showing more than before to what extent its creative and conceptual influence could affect the nature of other languages. Within this framework, the current interactions between fashion and architecture represent a brand renewal of a phenomenon that is achieving increasing and complex amplitude.

The conjunction of the notable expansion of fashion retail, the technological advances in architectural design, and the increasing use of fabrics and clothing rhetoric in construction are articulating common concerns for both fields as creative sectors. Thus, it is necessary to analyze

- [5] A growing number of exhibitions alongside academic research programs have continued with this exploration. Nevertheless, the precedents dated back to 1982, when the Massachusetts Institute of Technology showcased *Intimate Architecture: Contemporary Clothing Design*. Several studies of the dialogues that architecture had historically established with fashion proliferated during the nineties. The group of seminars held at the Princeton University School of Architecture was remarkable, finally joined together by Deborah Fausch and Paulette Singley within their extraordinary reader. See Deborah Fausch et al., eds., *Architecture: In Fashion* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994). In parallel, Mark Wigley analyzed how, despite its spirit of rejection, modern architecture depended on fashion for its own definition. See Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995). It was for good reason that these reviews coincided with the well-deserved establishment of Fashion Studies in academics.



(6) Lucy Orta, *Refuge Wear Installation*, Le Cité de Refuge, Salvation Army, Paris, 1995
Source: <http://www.studio-orta.com>

On the contrary, the textile logic applied to fashion stores could adopt an inverse meaning when it serves to metonymic representations of a brand's products: what should be flexible and portable becomes firm and static. This is what has happened in the model case of Louis Vuitton and the unequivocal architectural encoding of its identity. Jun Aoki's work for some of Vuitton's most distinctive stores plays, through different effects, with the envelopes in order to dress the building with iconic patterns of the French luxury label, as would be the case with the aforementioned architectural designs by Kumiko Inui for Dior. One of the first examples of this visual strategy is its Louis Vuitton building in Nagoya (1999), where a double skin reproduces a well-studied moiré effect with the repetition of the patterns on which the firm based the *Monogram and Damier Canvas* series (→7).^[27] The architectural design provides, through the solidity of the building, a code of stability for fashion consumption that symbolically nullifies the temporality of the products, giving a principle of eternity to the label. Even more, the typology of the stores is reconfigured to achieve a consistent loyalty not only to the brand but to the commodity that is represented by the same building, establishing clever relations of analogy that produce wise turns and conceptual revisions of Semper's Theory of Dressing.

(7) Jun Aoki, *Louis Vuitton Boutique*, Nagoya, Tokyo, 1999
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/colbwt-archi/2911078631/>

(8) Takashi Murakami, *temporal façade for Louis Vuitton Store*, New York, 2008–09
Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/myclovesnyc/3103001963/sizes/l/in/photostream/>

[27] The building can be seen as a truthful image of the interior spaces. This would turn a radical embodiment of the mechanisms of fashion into that paradigm of the operation of the code noticed by Jean Baudrillard. See Xavier Puig Peñalosa, *La crisis de la representación en la era postmoderna: el caso de Jean Baudrillard* (Quito: Abya-Yala, 2000).

The Clothing Experience

Entering these iconic landmark buildings fosters a feeling of being fashionable, thus accomplishing the symbolic experience of being dressed with them. After all, as Wigley states on behalf of Semper's theories, buildings "are worn rather than simply occupied."^[28] As a convergent experience, Karen A. Frank would raise the question: "Is it not possible that 'wearing' the building, even as a one-time, can stimulate similar feelings?"^[29] Upon entering, the store acquires its realization as an artifact and, at last, as a material commodity, allowing a type of "pre-consumption" from the fetish involvement in spaces focused not on Charles Baudelaire's *flâneur* but on the new "interactive citizen-consumers" that the creative industries address.^[30] Once there, these boutiques would slightly commit us to certain transformations of our appearance, persuading the potential customer to recreate one's self-image in order to satisfy the necessity of being "on the guest list" in terms of consumerism.^[31] Even the interiors could critically exceed playing with fashion promises of renewal and fulfillment, as happens at the *commercial panopticon* that Kramdesign has disposed at the Prada flagship store in New York (Rem Koolhaas, 2001). A technological environment deploys screens showing models at the catwalk, alongside images of the customers that are recorded and privately shown by the mirrors inside the dressing rooms.^[32]



[28] Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, p. 12.
[29] Karen A. Frank, "Yes, We Wear Buildings," in "Fashion + Architecture," ed. Helen Castle, special issue, *AD Architectural Design* 70 no. 6 (2000), p. 96.
[30] Hartley, *Creative Industries*, p. 5.
[31] Angela McRobbie, "Clubs to Companies," in *ibid.*, p. 381.
[32] For an extended analysis, see Bradley Quinn, *The Fashion of Architecture* (London: Berg Publishers, 2003), pp. 19–21. This strategy has been repeated at other stores like Dior in Omotesando.

WHITE AS THE COLOR OF NEOLIBERALISM

When John Ruskin, in 1851, wrote his famous essay “On the Nature of Gothic,” he devoted it to explaining what “proper” neo-Gothic architecture should and does look like.^[1] Because Ruskin’s analysis was overshadowed by the Industrial Revolution, mechanical reproduction, and its consequences for craftsmanship—and was thus all but impartial—he came up with a theory that linked the characters of an architectural style to certain essential characters of its builders: “savageness, love of change and nature, disturbed imagination, obstinacy, and generosity.” These were the traits without which, asserted Ruskin, no true Gothic Style was possible, be there pointed arcs, tracery, gabled roofs, or not.

Our attempt today—as implied by the question titling this book—to describe the architecture of neoliberalism seems more difficult to me. Whereas Ruskin had the romanticized ideal of the free, medieval northern craftsmen, to whom he attributed the Gothic style, we have an obscure mixture of multinational, migrating, and oscillating consumers, developers, designers, and workforce; supposedly free, yet enslaved by their very own acts of consumption, their desires and needs. The idea that the workers of today, or even the architects, have a substantial influence on the *architectural style of neoliberalism* seems, realistically spoken, far-fetched.

[1] John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (1886; repr., New York: Cosimo Classics, 2010), p. 154.

Of course, if *neoliberal architecture* is defined as the architectural production of the age of neoliberalism, which, according to David Harvey, began roughly 1978,^[2] there should be something to analyze. Since cathedrals are no longer en vogue, one might arguably decide for airports, train stations, and other transitory buildings to be the essential typology for the age of globalization—and end up with a description like the sufficiently known ones, given by Rem Koolhaas in his famous text “Junkspace”^[3] or by Marc Augé in his book *Non-Places*.^[4] Instead, I would like to limit my theory-building to a single aspect of architecture and take a phenomenological approach to querying its significance, context, and possible meanings: the usage of the color *white*. White, as a color in Western architecture, has had a certain role (at least) since the beginning of classicism, where it marked the historical and cultural distance between classical antiquity and its representation as a remote yet ideal paradigm for society and architecture. In 1764, the founder of German archaeological science, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, wrote in his canonical publication on the subject, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*: “Since white is the color that reflects the most rays of light, and thus is most easily perceived, a beautiful body will be all the more beautiful the whiter it is.”^[5] Apparently even Winckelmann knew about traces of color on antique works of art, yet he dismissed the custom of painting marble and stone as a “barbarian exception.” According to archaeologist Vinzenz Brinkmann, his followers kept up this stance for a long time, even though more and more evidence of color was found. One of Winckelmann’s most influential followers and a major protagonist of the classicist project in the arts, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, was well aware of the problems of representing classical antiquity as a guideline for modern society, and he was also aware of the fact that most of what his age (and ours) saw in antiquity was probably a projection—yet a very welcome one. “Only from afar, only separated from all that is common, only as bygone shall antiquity appear to us.”^[6]

[2] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 1.

[3] Rem Koolhaas, “Junkspace,” ed. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe et al., *October* 100 (Spring 2002), pp. 175–90.

[4] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London et al.: Verso, 1995).

[5] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of the Art of Antiquity*, translation by Harry Francis Mallgrave (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006), p. 195.

[6] My translation of “Nur aus der Ferne, nur von allem Gemeinen getrennt, nur als vergangen muß das Altertum uns erscheinen” from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Winckelmann und sein Jahrhundert,” in *Hamburger Ausgabe*, vol. 12 (München: C.H. Beck, 2008), p. 109; compare also: Jürgen Jacobs, “Athen in Weimar: Zu Goethes und Winckelmanns Klassizismus,” in *Dass gepflegt werde der feste Buchstab*, ed. Lothar Bluhm (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2001), p. 109.



(3) Example of a classicist church: Robert Mills, Bethesda Presbyterian Church, 1822, Camden, South Carolina
© Public domain, Library of Congress

Another aspect of Puritan ideology, the “Enfield Sermon,”^[13] shows another principle of governance. It established the idea that God, at any arbitrary moment in time, may punish an individual, even if they were abiding the rules at that particular moment; and that a sin may not only be punished on the spot, but also later. This put the believers in a constant state of fear—which, as a governing principle, remains very deeply rooted in the United States of today.

[13] The legendary “Enfield Sermon” (1741) by the Puritan preacher Jonathan Edwards was part of the *Great Awakening*, which was a mass reevangelization of large parts of rather secular population groups by various traveling preachers. In order to become a mass-compatible religion, Puritanism had to *soften* in certain ways, but it also became—as opposed to its originally congregational nature—a tool of governance.

To summarize, among the Puritans and similar religious streams, purity and the related rituals serve as an ordering principle to establish a social order within the community. White may serve, on the one hand, as a symbol of purity and, on the other, as a symbol for an order based on the absence of sin (as in purism) and on the unreachable distance of an abstract ideal (as in classicism).

White is the color of both abstraction and projection. At the same time, white surfaces require—and signify—high levels of maintenance, often ritualistic in nature (such as the periodic whitewashing of plain houses), and control (usually prevention of [ab]use by those unauthorized or excluded).

Iconoclasm

In a section of their book *Multitude*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that after the year 726, during the reign of Emperor Leon III, when icons were forbidden and had to be destroyed, this iconoclasm became part of the power structure of the Byzantine Empire.^[14] The absence of imagery in churches was, according to Hardt and Negri, supposed to prevent any *direct* contact between the people and their religious longings, but to have those religious needs be dependent and concentrated on the clergy and thus on the state. If this argument is valid, and we assume that image consumption is a need for today’s information junkies, it means that the absence of images in any space must have a similar effect as the suppression of sexual desires and religious images within religious communities, such as, for instance, in the case of the Puritans. Thus, *white*, or the absence of images, becomes a symbol for the presence of an *invisible* system of order; it could even symbolize the replacement of a visible system of order with an invisible, internalized one. This could help to explain the fetishization of whiteness in certain work and leisure environments—they function as modern monasteries. For example, in advertisements for the wellness industry, white is used as a symbol for ritualistic purification but also as a pointer to the (omni)presence of a powerful yet invisible system of order, based on a willfully imposed ritual governed by the subject itself (!), which fosters calmness within the rushed world of information overload.

In Christian semiology, white—as the absence of objects and images—thus always points to the existence of an invisible, powerful, and internalized system of order; a metaphor for the omnipresence of God and the Holy Spirit, as well as for the exclusiveness of deity in Semitic religions.

[14] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York et al.: Penguin, 2005) p. 324 ff.

BAUKULTURINDUSTRIE—A POLEMIC

Clever enough, the title of this publication doesn't state "there is" but asks "is there" architecture that could be labeled "neoliberal." Adding a political category—or one of political economy—to architecture is always problematic. In answering the question as to whether there was *socialist architecture*, it is not legal to put Stalinist megalomania, the white cubes of the Bauhaus modernists—most of them leftists or even communists—the pseudo-capitalist high-rises in China, and the philistrous *Hausbau* construction in the former German Democratic Republic into the same pot, together with the community buildings of Red Vienna. All of them were built under (quasi) socialist regimes, but to immediately label their architecture *socialist* would suggest that there are political features inscribed into form. It is most doubtful that there is a formal uttering that makes an architecture *fascist* or *communist*, *capitalist* or *socialist*, *conservative* or *liberal*. It is most naïve to think glass automatically expresses democracy, whereas a thick wall of stone stands for repressive systems. Hence, there can be no talk about *the* neoliberal architecture (at least as far as architecture is conceived in terms of form). The text at hand is an effort to prove this thesis.

In questioning what the architectural equivalent of neoliberalism would be, isn't the first thing that comes to mind the CI architecture of transnational companies? That of great financial institutes? The pseudo-avant-garde of second generation blobmasters who claim *parametricism* was the New International Style? Vast malls and shopping centers which demonstrate that shopping is the most important

cultural expression of today? Would it be architecture not affordable for underdogs but only for global(ized) elites?

Superficially, one might say that *neoliberal architecture* is the one that results from globalization, that is, market friendly and easy to identify. However, what I shall try to show here is that the debate must take place at a different level, empowered by the recourse of political science. This article seeks to contribute to a renewed discourse about architecture and politics.

Architecture as a Political Act

The common discussions about architecture as art—as the production of space, as the material representation of social space, as the container of atmosphere, as the major principle of order in the arts, as technical engineering plus decoration, or (most prominently among contemporary architects) as design of images and surfaces—all neglect that architecture (not first of all, but to a large extent) is a political act. It is undisputedly always an act of mediation and confrontation. The decision of building, the decision of designing, even the decision of drawing the first line is a political act. The further you come in designing or even building, the more involved in politics you get. When you are designing a single-family house, it is a contribution to the debate of how the sprawl is the result of too many single-family houses, not mentioning that even here there is certain political interaction between the members of the family. The larger your project gets, the more you turn from designer to politician, playing the role of mediator between the most different groups of people.

Hence, architectural theory—if understood as the theory of circumstances in the production of architecture—must turn toward political theory when facing a political question like the relation to neoliberalism. Architecture and politics are both instruments of organizing and structuring society, so it is legal to assume a close relation. In other words: if architecture represents a device for the organization of social life, architectural theory is likewise a vehicle for the exploration and explanation of living environments, and hence has always been a political and social theory of community.

In the following, a particular aspect of the relation of architecture and politics will be presented. It is not about political architecture, nor does it concern the architecture in which political action takes place, such as parliaments, embassies, party headquarters, and so on, nor the architecture of the great financial companies or the corporate design of global players. These are the major topics in the general discourse of architecture and politics, which in my opinion neglect a certain side aspect that must be mentioned. It is the aspect of *architectural politics*, shifting the focus away from buildings and rather toward institutions and networks, where discourse is produced and conducted

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