Monu
magazine on urbanism

Imagining the Subsidized Landscape

Is a Bathtub Still a Bathtub on Mars?

The Paid Urbanism Project

After Growth

Urban Distortion

and more...

PAID URBANISM

The socio-geographic effects of subsidies and government spending

01 June 2004
Our experience of urban life today exists as it does because we have a complex system of subsidies interacting with our urban geography. Taxes, once extracted from the market economy cycle back to the masses as paid urbanism. Used wisely or not, spread fairly or unfairly, this money is probably one of the strongest forces animating our urban conditions today. The places we live in today are in many ways shaped by government spending - Subsidized Landscapes. Since the ‘90s, big enthusiasm about total privatization has subsided. Nowadays, everybody realizes that there is a need to keep certain things in the hand of public administration. Redistribution of enormous revenue is a commonly accepted means of keeping civil democratic societies working. Government intervention, taxing and spending are the terms we use to describe this state. Caught in an enormous network of redistribution that pervades everything and everybody, the power and influence of these processes rarely makes itself visible; we are never fully aware. A Kafkaesque web of bureaucracies constantly recreates and resuscitates our urban landscapes. Drifting through cities with their thousands of invisible dependencies and relationships, no one person can exactly define what keeps everything alive. Everything seems to be vibrant, but somewhere down the line, there are crosscutting streams and flows of decisions and administration behind it. It has been paid for. The multitudinous products of paid urbanism are hard to identify or define, but lie hidden behind every stone of the city. The effects of paid urbanism on urban settings cannot be overemphasized - without paid urbanism, cities as we know them would not exist.

This first issue shines a number of spotlights into the thicket of subsidies and paid urbanism. What do networks of subsidies look like in fields like housing and farming in the US and what are their consequences for cities? What are the aesthetic impacts and absurdities of paid urbanism in places as different as Chicago, Coney Island (NYC) and Thuringen (eastern Germany). We feature projects that rethink the networks of paid urbanism and essays that reflect on the interwoven history of subventions and urbanism.

The editors wish to thank all the contributors for their faith and effort they showed by submitting their work for this first issue. We would also like to thank the Urban Architectural Studies at the University of Kassel/Prof. Wolfgang Schulze for supporting and publishing the printed version of this issue.
The vanishing of the middle class is a well-documented phenomenon. Across Europe and North America, as income distribution becomes increasingly lop-sided and greater extremes of poverty and wealth are created, the notion of what was once considered ‘normal’ will be emptied of meaning and this will have a significant impact on societies—one registering well beyond political, social and economic contexts. The ‘hollowing out’ of the middle class will ultimately change and challenge the way cities are created, it will alter the ideals and the powers behind urbanism that shape the aesthetics of our cities in profound ways.

For the last few decades the middle class has been the driving force behind urban innovation. More than any other, this urban group has both the financial resources and the sheer power of numbers to effectively transform desire into urban reality. Many of the most obvious components of our cities—Row houses, apartment buildings and sports facilities, to name but a few—are in large measure a response to the existence of the middle class. These components have been enabled by the solid, middle class sensibilities of order and uniformity that we often take for granted.

This is particularly true of the Suburbs, the most important novelty on the urban landscape in the last century and a decidedly middle class invention. The middle class symbolizes modest urban values, values that seem hopelessly anti-utopian and run counter to the megalomaniac concepts of cities proposed by great architects like LeCorbusier or Hilbersheimer. But in reality the middle class is comprised of some of the boldest urban utopists ever, individuals who have been realizing their utopias for decades. Much less dogmatic and more successful than any imagined utopia, with their power, influence and sheer numbers the middle class has shaped the urban landscapes we inhabit today.

What specific impact has the middle class had on urbanism? Is it aware of its power, or of its rapidly approaching demise? And will urbanism evolve or devolve once the terrain currently occupied by the middle class is less a reality than a mere statistical concept? As landscapes are redrawn and the middle class collapses in on itself, what species of urbanism will be created in its absence. And are we prepared for what’s to come?

The second issue of Monu invites projects, articles, interviews and photographs that address the topic of middle class urbanism. Works on other topics are welcome as well. Our second issue will be released in winter of 2004/05. For more information contact: monu@herzlungenmaschine.de
Levittown, with 17,400 houses built over 4,000 acres, was made possible by cheap mortgage financing for homebuyers provided by the US government's Federal Housing Authority, Veteran's Administration, and Federal National Mortgage Corporation.

Completed in 1955 by the New York City Housing Authority, the Van Dyck Houses received federal subsidies for construction, and, eventually, for operation. Current residents pay 30% of their income in rent and are required to comply with a lengthy list of requirements.

The federal Officer Next Door programs offer mortgages, with $100 down, to police officers and teachers to move into repossessed designated "revitalization" areas.

A view of the Subsidized Landscape
***featuring a wide variety of subsidized structures***
Co-Op City is the largest development produced by New York State's Mitchell-Lama program, a mid-century subsidy for middle-class housing. Built over a former amusement park, it consists of 35 towers with interspersed townhouses.

The developers of One Columbus Place on Manhattan's Upper West Side received US$150 million of tax-free mortgage financing in exchange for making 20% of the 729 units available to low- and middle-income tenants. The remainder of the units will be priced at market rates.

"Do the Door and Teacher a favor if he ever comes into the embassy, and let him have his poor low-interest loan payments, to show that we are willing to take care of our men in good and bad times. Let him rest assured that the Government will not neglect to give him homes located in the heart of the city..." so he can make a decent living."

For the first few years of the new millennium, the Peltz Mansion was the most expensive home on the US housing market. With an asking price of US$75 million, any buyer would be able to deduct $1 million of mortgage interest annually from her federal income taxes.
Imagining the Subsidized Landscape

By CUP

In the fall of 2003, the Center for Urban Participation (CUP) produced an exhibition entitled Urban Renewal: The City without a Ghetto. The exhibit sought to re-open the debate on urban renewal and slum clearance in the US, and to ask whether this period of urban planning had been justly evaluated, or if it had in fact passed at all.

Public housing, in the iconic form of the high-rise brick tower, is immediately and instantly interpretable to mainstream Americans as the

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Figure C. The rubber sheet between public and private
An idealized conception of the relation between public and private spheres holds that they are separated by a strict division: government functions do (or should) not overlap, intersect, or unduly affect goings-on in the private market. However, all private transactions necessarily take place within a set of rules and conditions laid down by the state, rules and conditions that, in a democracy, are theoretically open to public control. Such an idealization of the public-private relationship stands in the way of open and inclusive debates about how a finite sum of public dollars should be used to facilitate the construction of our ideal living environments.

This series of geometrical sketches reimagines the rigid division between public and private as a rubber sheet. Like Einstein’s theory describing how mass distorts the fabric of spacetime, these sketches attempt to visualize how the actions in the public sphere strategically shape the landscape on which all private transactions play out.

For example, the Federal National Mortgage Corporation, usually known as Fannie Mae, was chartered by the US Congress to provide necessary credit in the home mortgage market. Even though Fannie Mae is a private, for-profit organization, the widespread perception that it is backed by the US Treasury draws private investment towards the mortgage market and away from other possible investments. Experts may disagree about whether this constitutes a subsidy, but there is no question that it represents a calculated distortion of the private market by public authority. In the economic context, “distortion” is a word usually reserved for undesirable effects; since Fannie Mae enjoys wide support, it is usually called an “incentive.”

architectural symbol of failed social policy and urban distress – “the projects.” To reexamine this condemning link between project and policy, our exhibition included a video installation addressing the current state of public housing in New York City. We wanted to present the full and ongoing life of these buildings that are more often treated as ominous symbols than actual places to live.

This decision immediately presented a new problem; we worried that a sustained focus on public housing would only reinforce public housing’s image as federal intervention personified. To many, public housing is casually thought of as the only form of subsidized housing – an icon of architectural symbol of failed social policy and urban distress – “the projects.” To reexamine this condemning link between project and policy, our exhibition included a video installation addressing the current state of public housing in New York City. We wanted to present the full and ongoing life of these buildings that are more often treated as ominous symbols than actual places to live.

To contextualize public housing within this much larger picture of government subsidization we produced The Subsidized Landscape, a model of a fictional stretch of New York State. To operate the Subsidized Landscape, viewers choose the subsidy they wish to examine, push the corresponding button, and watch 1,000 LEDs animate the streams of money, administration, and non-cash assets as they flow between public agencies, quasi-governmental organizations, private companies, and the New York State developments they help to produce. The model presents fourteen different programs and details their administrative process (Figures B and D).

To most Americans, “subsidization” has acquired a negative coloration; it implies a relationship of dependency, bordering on impropriety. To hear verglichen mit den Bruttogesamtausgaben. Dies trifft auch zu wenn es um die architektonischen Auswirkungen im Städtebau geht.


Für die Amerikaner hat das Wort „Subventionierung“ einen faden Beigeschmack bekommen: Es steht für die Beziehung von Abhängigkeit an der Grenze zur Betrug. Ein hoch subventioniertes Projekt hören, ist ein Projekt, das nach Korruption, Vetternwirtschaft oder, je nach Ansicht auch nach primitivem Liberalismus stinkt.

of a highly subsidized project is to hear of a project that stinks of corruption, government favor, or, depending on who you talk to, softheaded liberalism.

It is in that context that leftists have taken the leap along with the right. Rather than debate the appropriateness of subsidization to achieve social goals, the left has worked for a retrenchment of public subsidy along a different axis, calling for the demise of subsidies for corporations and real estate developers. “Corporate welfare” and “developer subsidies” are now catchphrases of the municipal left.

It follows that one of the key debates in the retrenchment of develop
Figure D. The Subsidized Landscape

CUP constructed this interactive diorama to demonstrate the concept of the Subsidized Landscape in an exhibition entitled Urban Renewal: The City without a Ghetto. The diorama illustrates fourteen subsidy programs in New York City. Twenty public, quasi-public, and private actors are represented by ovoid bulges. When a user presses a button on the control panel, LEDs animate the money, authority, and non-cash assets – the “funding stream” – that flow between actors that result in urban development.

While this version remains a prototype, CUP hopes to further develop technologies for visualizing the Subsidized Landscape. When residents have a clear conception of the government’s role in shaping their environment, they can better take an active role in shaping their government.

ment subsidies in the US surrounds the definition of the term “subsidy.” Are tax exemptions subsidies or merely incentives? Must a subsidy be monetary or can it take the form of fixed assets (land or buildings) or public perceptions (official government support)?

For example, the Mortgage Interest Deduction allows homeowners to deduct up to US$1 million of interest they pay on their home mortgages from their federal taxes. The total amount of money lost to the federal
government through this program is annually between US$50 billion and US$60 billion, nearly twice the annual budget of the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. Although this subsidy is technically universal – available to anyone who pays mortgage interest – the 5.65% of taxpayers with incomes above $100,000 receive 50% of the US$50 to 60 billion. This means that middle-income and lower-income families actually subsidize private payments on home loans for which the interest alone approaches US$1,000,000.

5,65% der Steuerzahler mit einem Einkommen von über $100.000 50% der US$ 50 bis US$ 60 Milliarden. Dies wiederum bedeutet, dass Familien mit mittlerem und niedrigem Einkommen tatsächlich die privaten Abschlagzahlungen für Häuser miteinzählen, deren Zinsen sich allein auf fast US$ 1000.000 belaufen.

Wenn man dieses Geld als Teil der subventionierten Landschaft sieht, dann ändert dies das Gesamtbild

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**Figure A. The Two Tiers of Postwar US Government Housing Assistance**

FHA Loans

Subsidies support ownership only
Historically required to be in “stable” (white) neighborhoods
No income limits
No requirements on construction materials or design

Public Housing

Subsidies support rental only
Historically sited in poor urban areas
Tenant must fall within income limits
Strict requirements for construction materials and design
Considering this uncaptured money as a part of the subsidized landscape dramatically alters the overall picture of housing subsidy in the US. Adding programs like deductions for property taxes, capital gains tax, and the government sponsorship of the housing mortgage system brings the picture closer to reality. The great majority of federal housing resources support middle and upper income housing. Only 20% of federal resources devoted to housing go to direct housing subsidies for the poor. The enlarged context of the landscape reveals how inadequately the red-brick towers of public housing represent “subsidy.”

The endpoint of this line of argument is not the end of subsidy as we know it, but, instead, a revision of the subsidized landscape that may help us to think about how a finite sum of public dollars should be used to facilitate the construction of our ideal living environments.

After all, the ideal of homeownership, made possible only through government loans and the construction of a state-devised mortgage finance system, has become a key aspect of American life. And yet, it is public housing that continues to symbolize government intervention, while high-system, has become a key aspect of American life. And yet, it is public government loans and the construction of a state-devised mortgage finance system brings the picture closer to reality. The great majority of federal housing resources support middle and upper income housing. Only 20% of federal resources devoted to housing go to direct housing subsidies for the poor. The enlarged context of the landscape reveals how inadequately the red-brick towers of public housing represent “subsidy.”

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After all, the ideal of homeownership, made possible only through government loans and the construction of a state-devised mortgage finance system, has become a key aspect of American life. And yet, it is public housing that continues to symbolize government intervention, while highways and suburbs have been taken for granted as nearly natural occurrences. Much like the disparate fates of Social Security and “welfare”, housing subsidies have developed along separate and unequal tracks, highly segregated by income and race. One track leads to homeownership for Whites, the other to substandard rental housing for Blacks; one is naturalized, the other stigmatized.

This presents a didactic terrain – two separate and unequal planes (Figure A). Our model of the Subsidized Landscape, presenting the flow of money through agencies and the private sector, presents another.

How else can we visualize this landscape? Beyond quantitative questions – how much money does each program get, how many people receive what amount of subsidization and for how long – there are other substantive issues.

The diversity and complexity of the many government-created housing finance schemes such as Low Income Housing Tax Credits or Fannie Mae beg for effective educational representations. How can we visualize the relationship between public and private? How can we visualize the degree of accountability or freedom that each program demands of its owners, developers, and residents? Or the relationship of financial incentives between tenants, investors, developers, and builders?

CUP is a nonprofit design and education organization based in New York City. The authors of this project are Damon Rich and Rosten Woo. Both live in New York City. For more information on CUP or to book an appearance of the Subsidized Landscape, visit our website at www.anothercupdevelopment.org.
Richard J. Daley’s Chicago Civic Center and the Modernist Urban Landscape  

By Emily Pugh

In the 1950s and 60s, as former city-dwellers began to settle in America’s growing suburban communities, the cities they left behind were faced with the same problems of infrastructural upkeep as before, but without a tax base to support these activities. In Chicago, this problem was compounded by the exodus of the business community, which began to build outside of downtown leaving the city center empty and in decay. What saved the city’s downtown area from total neglect, however, was the construction projects initiated by Chicago’s mayor, Richard J. Daley, in the 1960s. Daley used political influence and city money to facilitate the construction of several modernist, high rise structures in the city’s downtown “Loop” district, including the Chicago Civic Center, thereby bringing commerce back into the city and taxes back into its coffers. Daley effectively used public monies to fuel personal ambition and in doing so irrevocably changed the urban landscape of Chicago’s Loop. Gone were steel-and-glass high rises, high rises free of heavy masonry and glass, low rise brick buildings, facing an empty downtown. Public plazas, subsidized by city money. The Chicago Civic Center and its construction provide a way to examine this transition in the American urban landscape, revealing the tension between the forces behind the construction of these buildings and the populist ideology the Modernist style was meant to represent.

When he was first elected mayor in 1955, Richard J. Daley undertook as one of his first projects the construction of a Civic Center for Chicago. The project’s realization had been a goal of all of the city’s mayors since the idea was first articulated in the 1909 Burnham Plan. However, rather than put the building south of downtown as the 1909 plan proposed, Daley wanted to locate the building inside the Loop in the Central Business District (CBD), across the street from City Hall. (1) This choice was in part informed by Daley’s desire to revitalize the aging city center, wherein no significant building projects had been completed since 1934. Not only did Daley feel that the Loop would benefit from a new construction, but the building itself was needed for the unprecedented backlog of court cases was glutting the municipal courts.

Perhaps not surprisingly, however, Daley had other, less admirable motives in building the Civic Center when

Als sich in den 50er und 60er Jahren Stadtbewohner in den wachsenden Vorstädten Amerikas niederließen, hatten die verlassenen Städte, dieselben Probleme damit, ihre Infrastruktur zu behalten, nur dass sie jetzt auch noch die Steuereinnahmen dazu fehlten. In Chicago wurde dieses Problem durch die Errichtung eines Gebäudes in der Loop verstärkt, das außerhalb der Innenstadt ein neues Zentrum baute und damit das eigentliche Stadtzentrum leer und verwaist zurückließ. Es ist den Bauszenen, die durch Chicagos Bürgermeister Richard J. Daley in den 60er Jahren ins Leben gerufen wurden, zu erkennen, was die Stadt nicht vollkommen vernachlässigt wurde. Daley nutzte seinen politischen Einfluss und das Geld der Stadt, um den Bau etlicher moderner, hoher Gebäude im „Loop“ Bezirk der Innenstadt zu realisieren. Zu dieser Zeit entstand das Chicago Civic Center, das den Handel zurück in die Stadt und damit die Steuern zurück in die Kasse brachte. Daley nutzte öffentliche Gelder effektiv zum persönlichen Anreiz und veränderte so unwiderruflich die Landschaft in Chicagos Loop. Die verworrenen Bauten aus dem 19. Jahrhundert, die für Freizeit- und Unterhaltungseinrichtungen zur Verfügung gestanden hatten, mussten hoch hinaus, Fahr- und Glasbauten weichen, vor denen große öffentliche Plätze entstanden. All dies wurde durch öffentliche Flächen finanziert, die direkt den Bürgermeister profitierten. Das Chicago Civic Center und seine Konstruktion bieten eine Möglichkeit, die Spannung zu offenbaren, die zwischen dem Bürgermeister und der Stadtlandschaft zu untersuchen und die Spannung zu offenbaren, die zwischen dem Bürogebäude und der populistischen Ideologie der Modernen besteht.


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and where he did. As the city’s more affluent citizens moved to the suburbs leaving only poorer citizens to pay taxes, Daley increasingly lacked a tax revenue base with which to run his city. Building in the Loop was a way to combat this drain on city funds. Chicago’s city government was, of course, run by a city council made up of the representatives, called aldermen, of these wards. Downtown is the “First Ward,” and as a result receives monies culled from the taxpayers of this ward directly. Any growth outside of the First Ward, however, benefits the alderman who runs that ward, rather than the city’s mayor. Seeing the high rents garnered by large buildings like the Inland Steel Building (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1958) and the Brunswick Building (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, 1965), Daley saw the benefit of constructing the Civic Center in the First Ward, rent- ing out some its office space.(2)

Finally, by building the Civic Center downtown, Daley hoped to send a message to the city’s major corporations: he was not abandoning the downtown area nor should they. To provide further incentive, Daley made sure the city’s largest banks and architecture firms were involved in planning for Chicago’s Loop. (3) In the case of the Civic Center project, while C.F. Murphy Associates was the lead architect, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill and Loeb, Schlossman and Bennett were also tangentially involved. To make it appear as though there were many companies vying to work on the Civic Center project and engaging in capitalist competition, Daley formed the Public Building Commission (PBC) and Central Area Committee (CAC), putting himself in charge of both. (4) Using these allegedly independent groups, Daley was able enact his own policies and to squelch competing development plans while appearing to conduct things in an open, democratic manner. (5) The PBC and CAC, comprised of representatives from Chicago’s largest corporations, provided the obfuscation Daley needed to keep the public from knowing that, in reality, he controlled almost every aspect of the financing and building, not only of the Civic Center, but virtually all of the city’s development. Daley was successful at both fooling the public and in keeping development where he wanted it. C.F. Murphy Associates’ First National Bank Building (1968), for example, was originally supposed to be built in the suburbs but, with the help and encouragement of Daley’s legislative legere- main, was built in the Loop. Daley handpicked the architects and firms who would work on his building and the resulting collaboration hastened at times resulted in minor confusion over who actually designed it. The principal architect was in fact Jacques Brownson of C.F. Murphy Associates, but the building can be thought to represent the vision of Daley himself as much as it is Brownson’s. The Civic Center was, after all, part of a larger vision of the “modern” Chicago that is arguably Daley’s most important contribution to the city. In their biography of Daley entitled American Pharaoh, Adam Cohen and Elizabeth Taylor claim that, out of all of Daley’s accomplishments during his twenty- year tenure as Chicago’s mayor, it was his architectural contributions to the city that were his most “lasting legacy.” In addition to the Civic Center and Federal Center, the Sears Tower, O’Hare International Airport and the University of Illinois at Chicago campus were all begun or completed under Daley.(6)

In considering why Daley would choose a Modernist style for his building, one need only think of Chicago’s lauded place in architectural history. The city was, after all, home to such innovators as Louis Sullivan and Daniel Burnham and is often credited, somewhat erroneously, as the birthplace of the skyscraper. The twentieth century had seen the arrival of Mies van der Rohe and his innova


tive work at the IIT campus and on Lake Shore Drive. His then-recent work on the Chicago’s Federal building complex would have made Modernism Daley’s obvious stylistic choice. Finding an architect who could execute Miesian styles would not have been hard. Representatives from all the major architectural firms in Chicago, including Jacques Brownson. Moreover, Brownson’s firm, C.F. Murphy Associates, was a favorite of Daley’s, as he shared ethnic heritage with the firm’s Irish chief architect, Charles Murphy.

Upon its completion the Civic Center was indeed hailed as a heroic continuation of the Chicago School of architecture. It was called “an American idea,” and its monumental, although the architect did not “happen to be involved in the design at all.” (7) It was seen as exemplifying all that was great about the Modernist tradition, with its “uncluttered spaciousness” and the cohesive “singularity” of the design. (8) It was described as “exquisite,” admired for “the clarity and precision of its detail and its form” and was compared favorably to the “discipline and restraint” of Michelangelo’s Campidoglio. (9) Hans Weese, a local architect, called its scale “heroic,” referring to its unprecedented 87-foot bays and 18-foot story height, built to accommodate large court-rooms and elevated judges’ benches. Other critics were also impressed by the building’s large scale, calling the bays “enormous” and the plaza “vast.” (10) Upon its completion, the Civic Center was the tallest building in Chicago, though the First National Bank Building soon superseded it. (11) “How much should government show,” muses Weese in his critique of the building, “Perhaps it is best kept underground, or like an iceberg, with only the vital public parts showing.” Rejecting this idea, however, as lacking both “in taste and/or intrigue,” Weese prefers the “visibility” of the Civic Center, which he says, “does more than house computers or government employees. It serves the public directly; its visibility can be justified.” (12) Others commented on the visibility of the structure as well, commenting on how the singularity of the building’s design was carried over into its “symbolic function and its location.” (13) The building is indeed singularly visible, set off as it is by the white, largely empty plaza that highlights the building’s scale and stature. Architectural critics saw a connection between the building’s large scale and the city itself, seeing one as synonymous with the other. The building’s “raw, muscular, mercantilistic strength” was equated with that of the city itself, contributing to the overall effect of the city as one “clear, sharp, lucid and bursting with an open-faced power.” (14)

While some critics were bothered by the “vast, hard, open space” of the plaza, concerned it was too large and exposed to be comfortable in the harsh Chicago weather, most were content to equate the Civic Center’s Modernist form with a Modernist ideology. (15) The plaza, for example, was viewed as humanizing public space and the building itself understood to be an expression of the “transparency” and openness of the democratic government it housed. By the 1960s, in fact, the Modernist style, previously associated with political radicalism, would have course also supported this wider acceptance of the style given the city’s place in Modernist architectural history. It is revealing, in this respect, that it was political critics who were viewed Daley’s buildings


Während sich einige Kritiker an dem „schlüsselbegrifflichen, harten, sichtbaren“ des Platzes störten und monierten, dass er zu groß und dementsprechend zu sehr dem Rest der Stadt in Chicago ausgewachsen sei, gaben sie die meisten damit zufrieden, die moderne Form des Civic Centers mit der Ideologie der Moderne gleich- zusetzen. Der Platz wurde als „öffentlicher Raum für Menschen gesehen, während das Gebäude ein Ausdruck für die „symbolische Wirkung“ und öffentliche, aber arbeitenden demokratischen Regierung sein sollte“. In den 60er Jahren wurde die „skepsis“ des „heroischen“ und „radikalen“ Moder- nismus assoziiert, tatsächlich von der US-Regierung ang
as an expression of his political ambitions, not of a socially progressive ideology.

The press at the time seems to have been fully cognizant of Daley’s role in the city government, although its extent would not be fully realized until the 1968 Democratic convention. In a 1966 profile of the mayor, the New York Times Magazine described him in terms equivalent to the Civic Center as a “aquat, broad-shouldered, ruddy-faced man” whose success was largely due to the fact that he “wields absolute control over the city of Chicago.”(17) He was frequently dubbed “the last of the big city bosses,” a man who held the city papers in his pockets as well as the power to influence the United States President. Though nominally a Democrat, Daley’s politics were generally conservative and while he backed civil rights laws, he made no effort to enforce them.(19) After visiting the city in August of 1966, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. declared that he had found more hatred in Chicago than in Mississippi.(20) Daley’s building programs were characterized as public relations efforts that quieted critics and “delighted architectural photographers.”(21) Just as the Civic Center was equated with Chicago itself, so was Daley equated with Chicago, his supporters proudly claiming, “Daley is Chicago.”(22)

This disconnect between Mayor Daley’s ambitions and the Civic Center’s Modernist results in a curious irony: the political and economic scheming that Daley worked so hard to conceal during the planning and construction of the Chicago Civic Center are made manifest by the structure itself. This sudden revelation of that which was previously concealed can be understood in regard to Anthony Vidler’s term “the architectural uncanny,” described in his book of the same name. As Vidler states, “the political...cannot be so easily eliminated from cultural practice, and it is precisely the point at which it reërupts with the very formal techniques of its repression that it takes on the characteristics of the uncanny.”(23)

In fact, though 65% of the Civic Center site is given over to public space, the plaza is the type of “empty space” that Vidler describes as “appropriated or created by urbanism,” a spatial expression of the “estrangement” of the modern condition.(24) This is a different plaza than the one that fronts, for example, Mies van der Rohe’s Seagram’s Building, not only because of its size with regard to the building, but because of its context. Unlike in New York where space is a limited resource, in Chicago the plains provide an endless expanse on which to build. This means that, while the downtown area was somewhat dense, there were no canyonesque corridors that necessitated spatial relief. Even if the plaza was considered welcome space, its relationship with the building makes it a somewhat uncomfortable one. In the Civic Center’s plaza one faces-off with the single, black monolith of the building, and when one is reminded that to create the plaza Daley demolished an entire block of housing, entertainment facilities, and restaurants, one realizes how empty and vast the plaza must have seemed to those who were familiar with the block in its previous form.(25)

The “estrangement” experienced in the large plaza of the Civic Center is reinforced by the large scale of the building and its extremely large bays, and heightened further by the over-scaled, figuative sculpture by Picasso, placed there in 1966. The size of the building and sculpture enhance the feeling not only of estrangement but also of being passively perceived. In 1968 Pocket Plaza is naturally tiny next to the huge black building. The sense of disempowerment and disengagement experienced outside the building is continued inside as well, in its windowless, gridded courtrooms featuring the large, elevated judges’ benches.
The glass of the Civic Center is darkly tinted and offers little visual access to the inside of the building. Those inside the building are given the privilege of a concealed position from which to watch those outside the building and, because so much of the building’s site is given to the plaza, they are likely looking at pedestrians below. The focus of the structure is on its external appearance, rather than the experience of being inside the building. Its exterior was commented on by contemporary critics, who spoke of the building in sculptural terms of “mass and volume,” tending not to discuss its functional aspects. (26) If interior shots of the building are included in these articles they often show large, windowless courtrooms wherein the building’s external grid is vigorously present.

Later developments of the 1960s, most notably those surrounding the 1968 Democratic National Convention, would reveal Daley’s political power as too brutal and far-reaching to ignore. In a 1985 article assessing the newly-built State of Illinois Center by Helmut Jahn, Paul Gapp’s comments on the Civic Center reveal the surprise and understanding of the Civic Center than in the critiques of the 1960s: “The Daley Civic Center is probably the most brutishly powerful International Style skyscraper in the United States – a monolithic, brooding building that seems to stand guard over the Loop like a gargantuan armored knight.” (27) Now that the political machinations that built the Civic Center had been fully revealed, it seems its uncanniness had been laid bare as well.

Today, downtown Chicago bears the legacy of the government-subsidized building programs initiated by Mayor Daley. The Loop remains a testament to the post-war popularity of the Modernist idiom in the United States as well as the embrace of the style by federal and municipal urban planners; but the city’s downtown is also a testament to the power held by its former mayor. It is this power which is ironically revealed just where Daley took pains to conceal it most: the Civic Center. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the building was renamed in 1976 and is today known as the Daley Civic Center.

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Heute zeigt die Innenstadt von Chicago noch das Erbe der durch die Regierung gestützten Projektneubauten der 60er Jahre, die von Bürgermeister Daley initiiert wurden. Der Loop bleibt sowohl das Testament der Nachkriegspopulärität als auch der Moderne in den USA als auch das Verständnis des Stils der Stadtplaner. Die Stadt ist aber auch das Testament der Macht eines früheren Bürgermeisters. Es ist diese Macht, die sich immer wieder gezeigt hat, wie Daley die Menschen auf das Civic Center zog. Es überrascht wahrscheinlich nicht, dass das Gebäude 1976 einen neuen Namen bekam und heute Daley Civic Center heißt.
Is a Bathtub Still a Bathtub on Mars?  

By William Alatrste

What happens when a thing—a book, a camera, or in this case a roller coaster—is stripped of its function, when the correspondence between what a thing is and what it does is shattered? What then does it become? The works of Goethe languishing on a shelf for years are just so many feet of leather; a camera gathering dust on a desk is a nothing more than a paperweight; and a dilapidated roller coaster sitting right in the middle of prime real estate becomes not only an eyesore, but worse, a stumbling block to progress—progress in this case being tied to profit, to urban renewal. Is this what was going through the minds of the politicians and urban planners who tore down the Thunderbolt in order to make way for, of all things, a parking garage?

The Coney Island Thunderbolt rose up from the ground like the memory of something fabulous, a dark, decaying vision of rust and wood and vine. Just a few hundred meters from the ocean, it was that point where history flared visibly into the present. Standing poised between two worlds, its existence was simultaneous; its appearance contradictory, challenging. It was a ruin that had somehow escaped all the furious building and breaking and rebuilding of Coney Island over the years. It sat there stark, unmoved, inhabiting the space around it fully, making no demands other than to be considered on its own merits, either as a decaying structure or perhaps as found sculpture. Its permanence was taken for granted (and why should I or anyone else have given the matter a second thought—it had been there, sturdy as a planet, for decades). Sturdy yet forever on the verge of collapse, in the end its very solidness proved its undoing. While it lived (and here I mean while it gave shape and substance to the landscape) it bewildered even the most hardened eye. “Here I am,” it announced. “Make of me what you will.” Until the day it was ravaged—by time, not progress—it remained a gorgeous sepulcher to Brooklyn’s seaside past.

I came to it the way we sometimes come to knowledge: by default. I had been busy photographing the other Coney Island, the one of Ferris wheels and water rides, and was searching for a way to visually describe its character. The challenge I had to overcome (one which many photographers experience), was having to work from the outside in, was being peripheral to a specific world while trying to reveal something essential, even intimate, about it—and doing so without lapsing into a kind of voyeurism that’s decorative and often betrays meaning.

I often saw the Thunderbolt from a distance, the way one looks upon a field of cows from a passing train and thinks not of cows but of shapes against a background. That is, without passion, and with little awareness as to what the shapes might mean. It was simply there, holding fast in a world of change, shielding nothing from its viewer, shedding history. Perhaps I failed to notice it at first because my eye was preoccupied with other matters; perhaps I was impatient, or unwilling to let things yield up gradually to sight; or maybe I was too busy trying to force vision rather than letting it evolve naturally. But then something marvelous happened: one afternoon, while trying to break myself of the old, habitual ways of approaching a subject, to free my eye from the tyranny of spending too much time looking at things without really seeing them, I turned away from the bumper cars and water rides, turned my back on the familiar, and was confronted with a reality of a different order. Once hovering at the extreme edge of vision, the Thunderbolt had suddenly become central to sight.

To some, it might have appeared a plague spot on the landscape. To others like myself, the Thunderbolt seemed to blossom forth from history like Botticelli’s Venus. And yes, it might have been antiquated, anachronistic, a petrified, hulking mass. But it wasn’t, it couldn’t possibly have been unnecessary, or useless. Like so many other monuments, it pointed to the past; it supplied perspective, was a
reference to a forgotten world—-and in doing so was a temporary stay against all
the flux and flow, all the confusion of modern life. It was also, in a word, beautiful.
Who could have known, who could have imagined, that its fate would be decided
by emperors of air.

And so, three and a half years after tearing down the Thunderbolt, what has
become of this space? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. No grand schemes were ever
realized. No developer has stepped in to make things new again. It’s just a land-
scape of weeds, a growing emptiness, a hole in the heart of vision. And now, faced
with the almighty minus of this experience, I ask myself what has been gained,
what lost? Perhaps I’m just being naive. I’d like to believe that the Coney Island
Thunderbolt came down for a reason, a damn good reason, and not just because
it had outlived its usefulness to a community, or had ceased being the thing it
was supposed to be. But in a society consumed by the demons and demands of urbanization, a society which shows little tolerance for the past, the fact is, the Thunderbolt—all Thunderbolts—are living on borrowed time, and all will no doubt be annihilated by the need to tear down history to build something more practical over its bones. But when I see what’s happened here, I can’t help asking myself a very basic question: isn’t the desire to fill space with something practical, a baseball field for instance (off to the left) or that most suburban appendage—the parking lot—itself a form of blindness? Hopefully these photographs are a partial answer. In a world overrun with progress, they describe a condition of loss—literal loss as well as death of the imagination.

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SpaMania

unemployed but clean

By Kai Jonas

The State of Thuringia, a part of former East-Germany, has roughly 300 km (180 miles) in diameter. Within this state a citizen can reach at least one Spa, in most cases even select from two, within a half an hour drive. One is lead to believe that the Thuringians, without being in Rome, “do as the Romans do”. In other words, one could get the impression they are avid visitors of Spas, pools, and saunas. In fact, they are sportive, but they are a rather traditional, type of German in being stolid. In addition, the Spas are way below their break even. Today, one can count at least 20 Spas and “Fun-Pools”, among them the critically acclaimed “Toskana-Therme” in Bad Sulza and there are more to come. The rationale behind this inflation of wellness is simple yet striking. In the 1990ies, the European Union offered large sums of subsidies to build the facilities. Plus, up to date the State of Thuringia has pitched in roughly €60 million (approx. $ 75 million) over the last ten years. Once the pool is full of water, and the inauguration ceremony is over, the economic risk is transferred to the local community. Thus at least a minimum of jobs are guaranteed, because no mayor of any town of ten thousand and an unemployment rate of up to 17% dares to close the deficit generating Spa. Besides that he has probably already closed standard indoor pool beforehand.

The generic Spa-type is using some sort of hot water spring, being more or less good for your health and in many cases offers wellness hotels in the vicinity, too. There are one or two curvy pools, bubble baths, a Sauna & recreation areas with industrial ceilings. All this is usually decorated with 30 percent faux and 70 percent real plants, with the Baywatch team being recruited from not very healthy looking locals. All is catered more towards the elderly, with no room for kids or a normal adult who is interested in swimming more than two breast strokes (no free-style, please!).

The so-called “Fun-Pool” doesn’t look much different. Just add two slides, one being high speed and the other a family-type, more teenagers and families with children, more faux and less real plants, a within facility ice-cream & pizza parlor and you’re all set. If you swim, it is at your own risk, most likely you are going to be jumped on by an overweight pubescent.

In general, regular fees start at €8 per person for two hours, not including food or drinks, a tan or towel rental – in case you forgot to
bring your own, as always...
In most cases the new pools are somewhat outside of the town, to allow for a spacious setting and enough parking spaces. At the same time, the old pool in town is closed and vacant, with at least two failed investment concepts to its records and none in view. It's so easy to generate another nasty spot in town.

Government officials heavily defend the Spa and Fun-Program as a cornerstone for the tourism development and quality of urban life. This clearly holds true for certain gems in water landscape of Thuringia. The New York Times has rated the “Toskana Therme” as one of the Top-Five Spas in the World. Indeed its concept is intriguing. Having been part of the EXPO 2000 program, the Spa offers a unique underwater “liquid sound” system. The salty water lets you float, just dip in and listen to ambient beats or Bach's Goldberg Variations. You get addicted easily. On full-moon nights the Spa is open until midnight, and special concerts are offered underwater. This is innovative wellness at its best and the queues at the entrance (the Spa only allows a max number of visitors at time to ensure collision-free floating) are proof for the success. On the other hand the “GalaxSea” in the thriving local metropolis of Jena with 693 guests per day is way short of the necessary daily 1000 needed for being the desired economic success. Naturally, it situated less than have an hour drive away from the other Spa. This year, in rising fees (3€ for 1h; just the pool and if you want to use the sauna it’s an additional 3€ more) the city officials hope to reach the net gain zone. A nice side effect would be cutting down the €2.2 million (approx. $2.75 million) of subsidies the city has to pitch in every year.

In theory, the idea to both generate jobs and tourism attractions sounds fine and easy, and obviously was comparatively cheap with all the European Union money. But in practice it has many downsides. Indoor pools for sports and training have been closed for the sake of the new “Fun Pools” or are left in horrible conditions. Old inner city facilities form new dead spots in already beaten towns. And the new “Fun-Pools” pose a heavy burden on the battered funding schemes of the cities. Clearly, the former East of Germany was in desperate need for development after 1989, but 15 years later the mistakes of the early West German colonial times become obvious, especially, since they are still being carried out. EU money did not create a land of milk and honey where the thermal waters float, but a burden on community funds hence restricting possibilities for future development. And what about the Thuringian swimmers? The sportive Thuringians miss their good old lap-pool.

Dr. Kai J. Jonas is a social psychologist at the University of Jena. He loves to chill and swim and is constantly on the look-out for the optimal Spa.
A Strategy Outline By Thomas Soehl and Bernd Upmeyer

There is a growing disappointment with the shape of urban life in many cities. An increasing disparity between our image of the city and its reality characterizes this dilemma. While the beloved central areas of most inner cities become economically obsolete we still wish to see them active and bustling.

Today’s urban landscapes are dispersed, the center – periphery relationship has fundamentally changed: there no longer is one center containing a perfect mix of housing, working and shopping. Instead we have urban regions in which functions are increasingly allocated to logics other than centrality. The economic supremacy of city centers is diminishing rapidly. However, we never fell out of love with the traditional structure of towns. A bustling city center symbolizes to us true, good urban life. People occupying and using the public areas of a city means economic viability to us (they are presumably shopping or at least going to restaurants) and even more importantly it signifies the very core of civic life, the democratic interacting of all classes and professions in the public realm.

So even though in reality we live in beautiful outskirts that provide everything except a ‘real’ urban experience the craving for the traditional dense and ‘urban’ life is ever increasing. Enjoying the reality of a non urban environment and at the same time dreaming of a better more intense urban life a short walk away is one of the most cherished past times of the contemporary (sub-)urban dweller. It is similar to living by the sea. Living by the ocean is not so desirable because we go to the beach every day, (in reality most people go to the beach only a couple of times a year) but because we want to have the option of going to the beach. And in the same sense enjoying an urban inner city like is not something we want to do every day but it should be there nevertheless – so that we have to option. The difference between the ocean and the city however is – and this is where the problem arises - that the ocean is there no matter what – if people go look at it or not, while a city is only urban if people use it, if they go there and work there and shop and so on… While the ocean is there for free the city costs money.

Mayors and City Councils try to fulfill the wishes of their citizens. Make the paradox happen. Over and over they try to recreate a vibrant urban image of the central city areas.

Revitalization is the magic word. And revitalization generally means investment in the physical city in one-way or the other. Public infrastructure projects are the most well known strategy. Creating parks and nice public spaces are the obvious solutions and their limitations are as obvious. In times where almost every city has

severe fiscal problems and has to cut social services, the construction and maintenance of sophisticated cityscape seems hardly a justifiable revitalization strategy. Private sector investment is the other big hope for a city to keep up an urban image. Investment by the private sector in the central city is supposed not only to renew an existing physical city but supposed to bring about urban life as well. However central locations are often times not sufficiently attractive anymore in order to draw significant private investment. In the competition for private investment with it's own surroundings the central city almost always looses. Luring developers with subsidies, tax breaks or zoning relaxation are standard practices of almost every city.

Both strategies however fail in one major aspect: They often do not create an urban atmosphere. On the contrary, the effect of the billions of taxpayer dollar subsidies is often anti urban. Tax breaks and subsidies to corporations create antiseptic office parks, plazas or atriums – life- and senseless urban design at best. And even the well-meaned parks and public places more often than not seem pathetic because they lack people. Similarly the location of public administration, ministries, court houses, backoffices and the like has no significant urban consequences we believe.

Urban life however is not just a mere aesthetic consideration; it has a clear economic impact. A bustling urban life attracts more real urban life and real economic activity. Everyone knows that a well-frequented restaurant attracts even more people. The same is true for neighborhoods; a restaurant/dining neighborhood that is popular attracts even more people. We argue that this principle holds true for whole cities – a popular vibrant city attracts more urban life. In short what makes a location really attractive for business is busyness. And nothing signals busyness like busy streets.

Building more and nicer streets, buildings or creating useless jobs however does not produce urban life. In the opposite; it seems a logical that if the supply for urban actors (=people using the city) remains constant and one increases the amount of attractive urban space by building more parks and nice streets etc. that then the intensity and quality of urban life decreases. East German cities that had elaborate government subsidized makeovers after the German reunification experiences exactly that phenomenon. While millions were spent on renovating and beautifying the inner cities there was a virtual exodus of urban life in these places. If anything can be learnt from the work of the situationists and their contemporaries, then the lesson that urbanism has not so much to do with fancy streets, parks, office buildings or jobs but everything with people.

If urbanity is related to the amount of people in a public space, then The Paid Urbanism Project is the last hope to make [Europe's] ailing inner cities urban again. The Paid Urbanism Project proposes a radical shift in public investment. Instead of investing taxpayer dollars in questionable economic subsidies or city beautification programs we propose to create the job of the paid urban flaneur. Instead of investing money anymore in city hardware, like beautiful new benches, astonishing road surfaces and awesome streetlights, the city pays people performing in public space.

A major goal of public spending in cities should be the creation of a vibrant urban atmosphere. A vibrant urban atmosphere leads to prosperity and prosperity attracts more prosperity. Unconsciously many cities are already practicing clumsy variants of Paid Urbanism: WEP (Work Experience Programs) or their German Counterpart ABM send out unemployed citizens on subsidized salaries to perform work —often in the public realm. The pity is that these people mostly have to perform rather unproductive tasks, often in humiliat-


Wenn Stadterneuerung im Zusammenhang mit der Zahl von Menschen an öffentlichen Plätzen steht, dann ist das „Paid Urbanism Project“ der Vereinigung der Kulturwissenschaftler Europas leidende Innenstädte wieder zu Städten zu machen.

The Paid Urbanism Project proposes a professional tool to realize the obsession with urban life. The urban ideal can exist no matter what the reality – the obsession for urbanism will be fulfilled—at least for now. Using the tools of the “Paid Urbanism” strategy a city can not only create urban life from the ground up it can also shape existing urbanism into a desired form. We distinguish between free urbanism—caused by unpaid people, and paid urbanism—produced with euros/dollars. So for example investing in some paid urbanism can augment a sparse shrinking urban life of a city. This could happen in certain locations; to enhance the urban life of a central restaurant district for example and thus to attract more ‘real’ guests or at a certain time; to create a busy rush hour once in a while to give the citizens the feeling of a strong economy. The Paid Urbanism strategy provides tools to control the intensity of urban life at any time in any place.

The Paid Urbanism Strategy is a first exploration of the possibilities: We propose to develop a tool kit that can be used to design urban life. A city can create any desired kind of urban life at any time. A fake shopping buzz or rush-hour or a park full of people strolling around chatting. Urban design is then about assigning activities to paid urban actors (drifting, shopping, eating, chatting, rushing…), their movement (standing, walking directed, meandering….) and grouping behavior (alone, in pairs or bigger groups) and the like. More experienced actors could be allowed to improvise and so on. The goal is to create a pleasant and vibrant urban atmosphere. In elections or referenda the citizens can voice their preferences for which kind of urban atmosphere they would like to see in their city, a busy inner city or rather a laid back Mediterranean urban life. The details and exact schedules will be developed by the new urban planning departments, which finally can make a real contribution to the quality of urban life.

The authors are the editors of Monu. Thomas Söhl is an Urban Planner/Political Scientist living in New York City. Bernd Upmeyer works as an Architect in Rotterdam and teaches at University of Kassel.
rushing 120min alone meandering area c

chatting 30min group of 2 straight area ab

shopping 15 min group of 3 circulating area abc

drifting 60min group of 4 pointy area bc

shopping 60min group of 5 crossing area c
FREE URBANISM

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday
The urban activity can be shaped in different intensities. On the top of the unpaid FREE URBANISM crowds can be produced with allocating up to 2000 people/ha in the streets as PAID URBANISM. Cities can determine the amount of people, the locations and the time of urban activities.
Sunday 11:00 a.m
FREE URBANISM
100 people/ha in a, b and c
(1 Person/100m2)
cost for the city: 0,00 $
Thursday 13:00 h

FREE URBANISM (a) + LOW LEVEL PAID URBANISM (b, c)

- a: 300 people/ha (1 Person/33m²)
- b: 600 people/ha (1 Person/17m²)
- c: 180 people/ha (1 Person/56m²)

Cost for the city for 1 hour fake lunchbreak: 2600,00 $
Monday 9:00 a.m

FREE URBANISM ( ) + HIGH LEVEL PAID URBANISM ( $ )

a: 2000 people/ha (1 Person/5m2)
b: 400 people/ha (1 Person/25m2)
c: 800 people/ha (1 Person/13m2)

cost for the city for 1 hour
fake rushhour: 10,000.00 $
Urban Money Beats Global Money - Some considerations about distances and values

By Hans-Henning von Winning

For thousands of years cooperation within cities and within networks of cities guaranteed cultural, social and economical progress. Of course, this was powered by local investment – either public or at least publicly subsidized. Nowadays apparently some ideas tend to deny this for the future: Instead they rely on a larger national or global scale, responsibility, economy and politics. They rather rely on free market public or corporate investment. We should consider some facts that may reveal these strategies as imperial and unproductive. And we should think about how to regain productivity through nearness.

Cities: stage, experience and memory of trust and confidence

The citizens of Marseilles have been cultivating cooperation for two and a half thousand years. This cooperation included all aspects of human existence: knowledge and religion, growth and decline, production and destruction, loving and betraying, tyranny and democracy. It has been watched, suffered, and stored in their common memory to feed the trust and confidence necessary for successful future cooperation. The economic aspect of future cooperation – money – depends on trust and confidence. There is no better base for money than urban cohesion. And there is no better, or maybe even, no other base for politics than cities – “politics” is Greek and means “Cities’ Affairs”!

No doubt occidental, cultural, and economic success was also based on extreme individualism. But in fact, individualism was only successful when cooperating in independent cities: Of course, Germany’s “Freie Reichsstadt,” like Ulm or Regensburg, had fiscal sovereignty, refused draft of soldiers from central governments, printed its own money, and was very successful in cultivating global relations. And, of course, they built highly efficient urban networks: Around the Ionian coast in ancient Greece, along the medieval Baltic Hanseatic cities, in Northern Italy’s Renaissance, and at the nodes of Europe’s modern railway system.

But this only included a very small minority of the population. So the rise of broad emancipation in developed countries did not destroy people’s 90% rural cultural background or their deep mistrust and fear in neighbors too close – which would mean cities (not to mention the harmful constraints of 19th century’s urbanization forced by industrialization for half of the world’s population). This fear is one of the factors that strongly fed and still feeds dreams of technical tricks to enable people to get together without getting together: private automobiles and electronic telecommunication.

The global consequence is settlements in low-density sprawl, partly as an attempt to urbanize, partly as an attitude of de-urbanization. The loss of urbanity produces a high dependence on a giant energy supply. It is associated with strong central imperial governments, strong and colonizing central currencies and money markets. It fosters and professes the uniqueness of private yield, and in the long-run destroys political and democratic structures. And it cannibalizes and vandalizes the still existing cities. But remember: even the vandals in the people’s migration period did not kill Marseilles, but only marked an episode in the city’s history. So vandalistic destruction of urbanity by the private automobile will be nothing but an atavistic episode. Most countries, empires and political systems come and go, but cities often remain constant for much longer periods.

No private money without public money

Private money and public money have some common qualities: For example, both are usually managed by large cooperations like companies or states. The
bigger these are, the more likely it is that they turn bureaucratic and inefficient. Both private and public money is susceptible to legal or illegal corruption and fraud. And don’t think, that shareholders of the third generation are more rational or economically efficient than voters!

But even beyond that there are fundamental differences between the two: Public money is determined by (democratic) governments (“one man, one vote”), whereas private money is a bit less democratic (“one share, one vote”). Public money is very old, because the average population is old – minus the non-voters under 18 years old. However private money is much older: most owners are heirs between 60 and 85, the majority of them female. Public money sometimes aims at non-monetary or at least very long-term returns. Unlike in the realm of private profit making, in the public sector parasitism is usually not rewarded, thanks to public surveillance and accountability. Furthermore, all investment and revenue that is bound to a certain place, cannot be moved away and thus is under a territorial monopoly, in some way is public in the sense that ultimately it is dependent upon territorial political decisions, even if private money or subsidies may be involved. And finally, whereas private money tends to accumulate in a few hands, public money shares usually have a slightly better chance to be distributed according to social criteria: basic social security cannot be private.

Public subsidies connected with political influence are necessarily found in infrastructure for transportation and energy, in institutions of culture and education like schools and opera houses, in social activities like welfare and pensions, and of course, in the common human capital and consciousness of a city accumulated in centuries. In that sense, the amount of public assets, especially urban capital stock probably exceeds the amount of private capital stock.

And furthermore, without the existence of governments, no money would be able to keep its value. Money value needs law, police and jurisdiction. It needs education, rules and continuity. And it probably also needs some financial policy instruments in order to keep confidence in money in short term crises, even if it is trustworthy in the long run.

So public spending, public investment, public subsidies and public wealth are the most important preconditions for private spending, private investment, private subsidies and private wealth. There is no private money without public money; there is no money without trust and confidence; no trust and confidence without politics; and there is no politics without cities.

Local money return for global transportation subsidies Other than public spending in justice or culture, science or fun, there is a special effect of subsidies put into transportation systems. Transportation systems connect locations, so people can undertake activities further away. This can mean that they bring new opportunities back, but it also can mean that they prefer to leave their place to find a better one rather than to improve it locally. Whoever is able to transfer persons, goods, energy, information or values to somewhere else also may be able to build supralocal coalitions or supranational empires, and thus for a while to play around with, and disempower, local and urban authorities. Mankind’s history is full of examples: Moses took his people somewhere else to the Promised Land crossing the Red Sea by a technique very close to religion. Genghis Khan in Europe as well as Pizarro in South America were successful using centuries of cavalry training. The British always had the faster ships. And today’s “globalization” depends on the military-based, publicly financed development of digital telecommunications and jet aircraft systems. All these have never developed any private economic enterprise and investment rationale. Rather they all resemble state religions.

Right now, communities all over the world progressively lose their self-confidence in their urban capacities of being close together. They try hard to be part of the global empire, eager to earn the title of a so-called “global city”. For this purpose the governments feed their citizens’ money into giant transportation systems. These subsidies, that pay for up to 80% of the systems’ expenses are accounted for as taxes, insurances, or environmental damage. Users do not notice that they are transportation costs, so everybody believes in amazing technical progress and overwhelmingly low cost of transportation. And transportation is used more often for longer distances with more expensive and inefficient systems than it would be if...

… yes, but where is the right measure of transportation?

Some rational parts of free market economic science may lead to an answer.
For existing transportation systems simply try to get the highest profit you can get in the market: you will get the highest prices from road pricing in congestion hours and areas. Lonely country roads will not be that profitable. And decisions about new investment are bound to a money return that especially covers construction and social and environmental costs, but also real estate prices as well as depreciation and interest according to money market, the latter usually turning out to be more venture capital than government backed.

Public money sunk in transportation systems is not a subsidy in the sense that it is forgotten the moment it is spent - like a subsidy for medical aid after an earthquake or on an archeological research project of some importance for historical science. Transportation systems are material investments, which should have a direct money return for the owners. And the owners, of course, are not the aircraft or rail companies, the car drivers or the road construction industries. The owners are the governments of territories; states, provinces, counties. And finally, the only real important owners, are the urban communities, whose citizens have been paying the investment by their taxes and who are source and aim of all transportation.

The solution suggested is to free the transportation economy from socialist unaccounted government spending, from a state religion, and turn it into a material good, that may be produced and distributed according to the rational parts of market economy, but is still owned and managed by territorial governments, who get the profit out of their investment for whatever purpose they want to spend it.

Alliances for competing urban currencies
This leads to another technique to cover distances, to transport values: money itself. We all know that money connects goods balancing differences of values in a market of prices. Money also connects times, balanced by a sophisticated market of inflation and interest. But there is no balancing system for money connecting distances, for close or distant money. Fed and ECB backed by law watch the Dollar and Euro as the one and only Dollar or Euro to be the same throughout their territory. Here is the religion again: in German, the word for currency is “Währung”, etymologically somewhere between “Truth” and “Eternity”. And as in the beginning of the ten commandments, the most crucial law is: “thou shalt not have any other currencies beside me.”

In fact, trust and confidence in the local community is far greater than that in distant people. People from your own city, for decades and centuries organized in local companies, political parties, corporations, families, can be judged or evaluated, trusted or mistrusted more predictably. Distant people are known much less, access is much more difficult, information, commitments, loans, credits, and maybe even prosecution are much more uncertain. Distances always need an additional risk supplement. In money terms, the statement is: close money is much more valuable than distant money. There is no reason why it should be stipulated by law that the advantages of near business should cover the risks and losses of distant business.

Probably the relationship between money and distance is even more complicated. Also the connections between locations via car, train, airplane, high voltage lines or the internet are much more complicated than mere distance. But at the moment, we are sure that there are differences, and we should not pretend there are none. We should stop flat rates, lump sums and subsidized distances. We should make all cost, damage and benefit of distance transparent and make prices for distance according to cost and demand. Let the users of distance decide which distance and which tool they want to buy and for what price. We are pretty sure that this will not kill useful globalization. But it will take away some of its glamour and threat. We will decide by ourselves in which case distance is better than nearness. Some global will turn continental; some continental will turn national; some national will turn provincial or regional; some regional will turn local; and some suburban will turn urban.

So let’s introduce urban money, secured by the confidence in a big city. Let’s introduce urban network money, secured by the confidence in alliances of cities. Let’s introduce three, four, many currencies. And let them compete in a free market of confidence.

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After Growth, a proactive manifesto

By CASE < For Ezra, Constant, Osger, August and the century they will inhabit >

Depictions of paradise ultimately reflect our most basic fears. For more than two centuries architects have been occupied with an all-consuming utopian project in the face of overwhelming crisis, consistently grappling with the terrifying implications of uncontrolled growth of human populations. But after centuries of uninterrupted expansion, the developed world now faces, for the first time since the Black Plague, the prospect of certain population decline. In spite of this simple fact, architecture stands firm in its allegiance to a crisis, which never fully arrived. All of our methods and tools remain geared to answer an all-consuming appetite for space. As of yet decline, regress and shrinkage have hardly made their entry into our vocabulary. Relieved from the specter of unfettered growth, we have yet to come face to face with the implications of the reverse, a future in which vast reservoirs of open territory must be reclaimed by fewer and fewer people.

In 2030 only 15% of the worlds population will live in the developed* world, of that 15% one third will be over 65 years of age... At the current birthrate of 1.5 the population of the EU* will diminish by 88 million

UN world report 2002, excerpts

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Im Jahr 2030 werden nur 15% der Weltbevölkerung im den Industriestaaten leben, von diesen 15% wird ein Drittel über 65 sein...... Ausgehend von der momentanen Geburtenrate von 1,5 wird die Bevölkerung der EU um 88 Millionen zurückgehen.

UN Weltbericht 2002, Auszüge

Die erste utopische Ära 1779-1972

Das unkontrollierte Wachstum der Bevölkerung verläuft im geometrischen Verhältnis. Der Lebensunterhalt steigt nur im arithmetischen Verhältnis. Ein sehr geringes Zahlenverständnis reicht schon aus, um zu zeigen, dass die erste Kraft im Vergleich zur zweiten sehr viel größer ist. Robert Malthus, Aufsatz über das Bevölkerungssprinzip, 1798


Malthus Vorhersagen basieren auf ganz einfachen Folgerungen, die er aus den in gar nicht so ferner
As population increases...

...so does the scale of utopian projects to ultimately encompass and hopefully salvage...

...the entire globe.
Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio. A slight acquaintance with numbers will show the immensity of the first power in comparison of the second.

Robert Malthus, Essay on the principle of population, 1798

The first utopian era 1779-1972

In his famous “Essay on the Principle of Population” of 1798, Thomas Malthus expresses, as a political economist, his concern regarding the decline of living conditions in nineteenth century England. He predicts the inability of food production to keep pace with stark rises in population and lays the foundation for a theoretical model of a world inevitably headed for global conflict and starvation.

Malthus’ predictions are based on simple extrapolations of existing population trends into the not so distant future, but in the centuries to follow those extrapolations prove highly prophetic. With the industrial revolution in its earliest and most raw state, the world is at the brink of a population explosion. At the time of his essay, the world population numbers about 900 million people and is about to begin its steep upward climb to the 6 billion it is presently. During the century that follows, continual crop failures and food shortages claim thousands of lives throughout Europe, particularly in England, Scotland, and France. The potato famine decimates the population in Ireland. By the close of the 19th century, catastrophic famines have broken out in India, China and Brazil, resulting in over fifty million deaths.

Continuous famine and social unrest over a period of two centuries insure the unquestioned predominance of Malthus’ theory. In 1972 it culminates in a major study commissioned by the Club of Rome, published in book form as “Limits to Growth”. It is the first research to make serious use of computer-generated models to simulate the consequences of a rapidly expanding global population. The simple exponential growth diagram of 1798 is transformed into a complex combination of data fields including industrial and food output, availability of resources and long-term effects of pollution. Essentially, the prognosis remains the same: impending disaster in the face of unchanged human behavior. This time, however, disaster is described as immanent. Neither market forces, as capitalists argue, nor technological innovation, as communists believe, are capable of mitigating the crisis to come. In fact, the study reflects a growing public sentiment that technical development is clearing the path to worldwide environmental catastrophe.

The rise and fall of Utopia

The period between Malthus’ essay and the findings of the Club of Rome coincides with an intense period of utopian thinking in architecture and urbanism. Extreme upward trends in global population characterize this period coupled with the effects of the industrial revolution fuel a seemingly endless rise in urban populations. At the outset of the 19th century deteriorating conditions within overcrowded industrial cities inspire both disciplines to search for a ‘final solution’ to housing an ever-growing urban proletariat. The search continues to dominate architectural and urbanistic thinking well into the 20th century. A short survey of utopian plans beginning with Ledoux’s Royal Saltworks of Chaux de Fonds, built in 1779 and ending with Buckminster Fuller’s World Game Project (1965-1975) fits neatly in the crux of Malthus’ exponential growth curve. In fact, one could argue, that utopian work in earnest begins at the crisis point of the curve. Invariably, utopian plans present a set of prototypical solutions to tackle, with one mightily blow, the same holy trinity of population growth, rapid urbanization and mass housing.

1930 Hilbersheimer states: “Like every discipline, architecture too, is confronted with pressing needs to define its fundamental principles and the means at its disposition. The exactness of the definition requires formal clarity and imposes order on chaos in the most concrete way”.

As world population increases, so does the scale of utopian projects.


Utopie


Die Weltbevölkerung steigt in demselben Maße wie die Anzahl utopischer Projekte. „Ledoux’s Salt Factory at Chaux de Fonds“ von 1779 beherbergt 500 Arbeitnehmer, die Einwohnerzahlen eines kleinen Dorfes auf die Dimensionen von Städten von derartiger Größe entsprechen. „Garden City“ bietet Platz für 32.000 Bewohner (in seinem Buch „To-Morrow, A Peaceful Path to Real Reform“ macht er einen Vorschlag, den gesamten Staat, das „Landesreseck von Wachstum, schnell der Verstaatlichung der Massenwohnungen zu bewähren. Im Jahr 1930 behauptete Hilbersheimer: „Wie jede Disziplin wird auch die Architektur in den nächsten Jahren dringenden Bedürfnis konfrontiert, die grundlegenden Prozesse im Bauwesen und die zur Verhinderung gesellschaftlicher Außenseiter zu definieren. Die Genauigkeit dieser Definition braucht formale Klarheit und ist der konkreteste Weg, Ordnung in das Chaos zu bringen.“

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Ein Viertel Jahrhundert später macht Buckminster Fuller genau diesen Vorschlag. Er beschreibt bereits 1981 die Welt als „spacehip earth“, als ein unabhän- giger ökologisch-symbiotisches System, in dem die architektonische Utopie an ihre Grenzen gehen, den Erdball...
Ledoux’s Salt Factory at Chaux de Fonds of 1779 accommodates 500 workers, the size of a small village in a rural landscape. Ebenezer Howard’s garden city offers place for 32,000 inhabitants. (In a 1902 reprint of his book: “To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform”, he includes a proposal which demonstrates how to link the garden city to a larger system of what he called Social Cities, containing up to 500,000 inhabitants.) Le Corbusier’s 1925 Plan for a City is intended for 3,000,000 inhabitants. It is described as a replacement for Paris, but in fact, can be located anywhere. One can wonder whether correcting urban blight in Paris provides a convenient excuse for inventing a prototype for the new city, a utopia to be implemented on a global scale.

A quarter of a century later Richard Buckminster Fuller proposes exactly that. Already in 1951 he describes the world as “a spaceship earth”, an interdependent ecological system in which the architectural utopia would be stretched to its limits, encompassing the globe, declaring all of us “astronauts”. What such a world would be like, he describes in 1977: “From the inside there will be uninterrupted contact with the external world. The sun and the moon will shine in the landscape, and the sky will be completely visible, but the unpleasant effects of climate, heat, dust, bugs, glare, etc. will be modulated by the skin to provide a Garden of Eden interior”.

Fuller can be viewed as one of the last true utopian thinkers. There is no clearer evidence of his unwavering belief in technological progress and innovation than the diagram: “The shrinking of planet earth”. The diagram shows the terrifying curve of a world population explosion. In the same time that Fuller produces his diagram, the Club of Rome applies computer modeling to conjure visions of a world heading for disaster. Fuller, in one of his last projects: “The World Game”, utilizes computer simulations to allow players to strategize solutions to global problems, perfectly matching human needs with available resources.

It can be argued that Brasilia is the biggest, most complete utopian project ever built. (Not long ago Costa and Niemeyer, two of its creators, both in their nineties, could be followed live on TV arguing how to finish their masterpiece.) History, it seems, draws an inverse relationship between ambition and prospects for realization: the more totalizing and all-encompassing the scope of the utopian proposal, the smaller the fragments that are actually built. Where Ledoux could boast half of his factory town completed, the realizations of Buckminster Fuller are limited to a few fragile prototypes. Not long after the phantasmagoric projections of Superstudio and Archigram are to remain entirely theoretical.

It is hardly surprising that the sixties bring about the last great movements to put forward models/blueprints for the organization of (future) urban life with conviction. It is a period which witnesses a final surge in population growth, not likely to be repeated in the foreseeable future. The end of this decade brings to a close a long period of uninterrupted demographic escala- lation, which went hand in hand with attempts to model an ideal society – of which the welfare state was probably the last. After the 1960s architectural thinking becomes increasingly reflective and strangely modest in its ambition to create a better world. Its manifestoes increasingly take the form of case studies, which value the existing over wholly conceived blueprints of a better future (The reconstruction of the European City, Delirious New York, etc.) Former team X members now undertake extensive travels to Africa. Others, more radical than the authors of revisionist manifestoes, choose to abandon traditional practice altogether in favor of direct political action. In retrospect, the extreme phantasmagoria of sixties movements like Superstudio and Archigram marks the implosion of utopia upon itself.

1972

1972 is the year that the conclusions of the Club of Rome are published; it is also the year in which the World Trade Center in New York is completed and the Concorde makes its first trans-Atlantic flight. (We know what happened to both…) In spite of the launch of these two triumphant icons of modernity, 1972 also gives birth to two events that mark the first cracks in modernity’s untainted image of progress. The first is the demolition of the Pruitt Igoe housing estate in St Louis, USA. Its’ by now seminal
The End of Growth

In 1976 Fred Hirsch, a British economist, writes “Social Limits to Growth”. He refutes errors in the then new “Club of Rome” report, which suggests that Western civilization is pushing the physical limits of growth because of scarce resources, increasing pollution and unfettered population growth. Hirsch suggests the world is splitting in two: An ‘undeveloped’ world (the south) more or less fulfilling the predications of the Club of Rome, and a ‘developed world’ (the north) heading in the opposite direction. The south is characterized by stark rises in population coupled with a migration to the city. In the north, the rise in population all but comes to a halt, and increased personal wealth causes reverse migration of the middleclass away from the city. Today Hirsch’s analysis has largely proven true. By enlarge Western cities have reached a standstill in terms of population growth. (Many of the old industrial centers are actually shrinking.) Exploding urban centers in the less developed world boast numbers of inhabitants two to three times greater than those of London and New York. Inside the European Union policies are quickly being re-directed in answer to plummeting birth rates and impeding population shrinkage. Western Europe faces the prospect of an ever-increasing reservoir of space with no economic activity to claim it. Agriculture and heavy industry, the primary and secondary economic sectors, and the biggest consumers of land, have long relocated to the undeveloped world. To feed the current population, a surface of roughly seven times the surface of Western Europe is required. Much the same goes for the production of our energy and the manufacturing of our goods.

The more Europe’s economy ‘develops’, the less it revolves around catering to primary needs. Instead, we provide services, exchange information, do business… It is a strange concurrence that the more abstract the activity, the more we reduce it to an issue of style. In the case of Venturi, population growth and mass housing are eliminated as subjects for consideration in favor of ‘mass culture’ (Las Vegas is much less a habitat than it is a leisure industry). In the case of Jencks the elimination is literal… through the use of dynamite!

bessere Zukunft in der Hand zu halten. Sie bieten jedoch auch kaum Ersatz. Das Konzept der Stadt als monumentale, vorhersehbare Bebauung war auf die Fähigkeit der Welt reduziert. Im Fall von Venturi werden Bevölkerungswachstum und „masse housing“ gegen Massenkultur ausgetauscht. (Las Vegas, man könnte sagen, käme als Lebensraum als Lebensraum.) Im Fall von Jencks geschieht die Vernichtung buchstäblich… durch den Gebrauch von Dynamit.

Das Ende des Wachstums


The Dutch Case

After World War II, techniques of centralized spatial planning quickly gain ground in answer to severe housing shortages across the European continent. As a discipline, planning begins to dominate architectural thinking, as it alone determines where growth will be accommodated and where it must be thwarted and, therefore, repulsed. As the country which boasts the highest per capita number of professional planners, both government and privately employed, the Netherlands provides an extreme example of attempts to rationalize the unpredictable forces of population growth by developing instruments to strictly control and regulate land-use.

Five historical planning nota’s spanning from 1960 through the 1980’s illustrate the combined efforts of various government statistic and planning departments to determine with extreme precision the limits and boundaries of new development.

The first two of these “nota’s” appear in 1960 and 1966 respectively. These two linked documents attempt to confront head-on the critical housing shortage and large-scale migration from the country to the city. All statistical prognoses point to a population of 20 million by the year 2000, a startling conclusion given there were only 9.5 million residents at the conclusion of the Second World War. The proposed solution is “bundled de-concentration”, an even development of infrastructure throughout the country to support economic development in the regions outside the four main cities. The new proposed road system, for example, establishes a dispersed network of highways with five times the existing traffic capacity. Until the nineteen seventies the problem of efficiently producing housing in large quantities remains planning’s primary focus. But after the seventies another important theme gains ground: the management and negotiation of ever-greater claims upon

The ‘fifth planning nota’ made available 7000 ha for 210,000 new homes. This is the least amount of new ground set aside per dwelling by any of the five planning nota’s.
Agricultural land constitutes 58% of unbuilt area. 50% of this total: 1,000,000 ha will lose its purpose within ten years time.

Agricultural subsidies in the Netherlands are currently 1100 million euros per year. 70% of the beneficiaries will bankrupt within 5 years.
to thwart this ‘asymmetry in growth’, by attaching new settlements to existing cities and by determining a large percentage of the country as off-limits for building development. The third nota can be read as the antithesis of the first two nota’s preceding it: Haunted by the American dream, where increasing wealth finds immediate gratification in the form of uncontrolled sprawl, the ‘Reconstruction of the city’ becomes an increasing political priority, reflected in enormous public investments in ‘urban renewal’. This shift of focus coincides with a fundamental shift in the view of the countryside. Whereas in the fifties and sixties it is viewed as a resource, a reserve for future populations, from the 1970’s it starts to be understood as a natural asset: an area to remain untouched.

Policies of confinement After 1970 the housing policies of the welfare state, with their regular quotas of annual housing productions are replaced by policies, which effectively bring residential development outside existing cities to a standstill. Within the fourth nota and fourth nota extra space for new development is only to be found almost entirely in or near existing cities. These limitations attempt to reserve a maximum of open space for agriculture and recreation, while limiting the expansion of commuting distances. (Despite this intention travel distances between work and home, for example, increase dramatically). Investment in infrastructure is also concentrated with the aim of connecting major urban centers. The “land-quote” is the overwhelming factor contributing to housing inflation, making up more than 40% of the total price for a freestanding home. Planning policies, which sharply curtail the availability of building ground, insure that escalating ground premiums will continue to hopelessly outpace gains in disposable income. The ministry of VROM estimates, that in answer to true market demand, new houses in the Netherlands will have to be at least twice the size of those currently in production. The final surge of the market economy in the last two decades of the 20th century steadily erodes the credibility of planning policies. In a fully liberalized economy, where one expects wealth to translate into more generous living conditions, policies frustrating this tendency by imposing spatial limits can do little more than fuel perpetual dissap-
pointment. In spite of our greater wealth, we increasingly find our most primary needs – like the one to own ones home – beyond our reach. In the Netherlands in 1970 a single-family house goes for an average rent of fl 160 per month, about 15% of the average family’s income. In 2000 a house not all different (technical innovation seems to have a habit of passing architecture by) lands first time buyers with a monthly mortgage of 1200 Euro: equaling almost a third of their income.

Deadlock In the ‘free’ market, planning’s cultivation of density, though still very much a ruling principle, increasingly loose its credibility as a collective sacrifice for a better future. More and more it aids and abets mechanisms to maximize profit. This paradigm shift has created a wholesale ideological confusion in which many of the old planning doctrines continue to be practiced, but often unwittingly serve ulterior motives contrary to their original intentions. Planning, the one time roadmap to steady, uninterrupted progress is caught in a purposeless loop. Today, ironically, it is precisely the Dutch (socialist?) planning policies that, in promoting the scarce use of land, (the compact city, density, city contour policy etc…), have caused greater wealth not to translate in better living conditions. In the Netherlands the price of the average freestanding home is for more than 40% determined by is the price of the land it is built upon. In the Netherlands the primary consequence of centralized planning policies has been exorbitant ground price inflation (increases of 300 percent over the past ten years). Scarcity of ground has resulted in a virtual deadlock of new development. New housing settlements, which are developed within or adjacent to heavily built-up areas, are subjected to a maximum of lengthy procedures and regulations. The shortfall of new housing construction is steadily increasing (approx. 150,000 too few houses in 2002).

In the early nineties a premature announcement of allowed building locations triggers a run on the designated farmland. The result is land speculation by building consortia not seen since the early days of the industrial revolution. The individual homes, that are eventually built, go for 1.5 to 2 times the price they were intended. The rise of new home prices is so out of pace with wage increases that a vast majority of first time home-buyers is effectively priced out of the market. The disastrous impact of such policies are even more poignant if one considers the fact that in the next ten years a total of 3000 km2 of farmland in the Netherlands will become redundant. In the decade to follow, another 7000 km2 will have lost its purpose. Combined, this 10000 km2 equals 30% of the nation’s territory. The introduction of the ‘ecological network’ on this land is a key government priority but the financial resources for its implementation are wholly lacking. Ground price inflation has all but halted land acquisition to complete the system nature areas making up this network. Since its initialization in 1993, only 40% of target areas, consisting mainly of agricultural land, have been purchased.

Toward a Second Utopian Era Many of architecture’s instinctive reflexes can be attributed to a utopian tradition carried over from the last century. Yet, paradoxically, the most central problem driving this tradition: the future of the city is now entirely left un-addressed. Where architecture once spoke loud and clear, it now remains mute. Where the utopists from last century tried to break with: a city haunted by density, concentration, congestion, dominated by the primacy of a center… From Leonidov’s Magnitogorsk to Le Corbusier’s Ville Radieuse, the age of the machine was in fact the apothecosis of the romantic ideal: Rousseau’s

‘man at one with nature’ finds its physical counterpart in the utopian visions of the city as an inhabited landscape. Outward spiraling growth and ever expanding numbers prevented, or at least temporally postponed the city’s dissolution – the real dream of our utopian predecessors. We dream about restoring the city to its former glory, precisely at a moment when its driving force: growth; is no longer with us. It is no coincidence that the only utopia realized at a massive scale: Ebeneezer Howard’s Garden City, is the one most openly dealing with city flight. The Garden city is the city’s antithesis. It is derived from a careful extrapolation of a self-perpetuating process of de-urbanization of Britain’s industrial cities at the time. (Already in the early part of the 19th century projects based on very similar ideas were extensively being realized without any overt theory or manifesto to support them. Howard analyzed the components of such developments and turned the parts into useful tools to house hundreds of thousand inhabitants, to spatially organize services and industry and to connect all this in a system of roads and train lines.) One could consider the garden city as ‘utopification’ of reality, or, as Howard claimed himself, the transformation of something real into a diagram: “to understand in retrospective its logic and power”. The Garden City is a utopia by default. Today it is omnipresent: realized at such a scale that it is now considered a threat to the environment, it exists as a suburban extension of existing towns, or as endless sprawl, without center, fluid, elusive, the city dissolved… It can be argued that the city in the classical sense is the product of a discrepancy: a growing population not paralleled by correlating increases in wealth (Precisely the principle of Malthus’ theory). The city is the product of a stage of poverty. In the absence of the means to acquire more living space, density and concentration (the city’s main features) serve as guiding principles. As soon as the discrepancy is undone – either through increasing wealth or through a halt to population growth (or both) – the city’s raison d’être is eliminated. What we are witnessing today is a process of unraveling: the city is imploding before our very eyes, but our unconditional love for it prevents us from recognition – let alone coming to terms. As of yet we remain un-enlightened. In our belief in the city we have come to worship an overblown mirage. Facing an uncertain future mankind seeks to anchor its values by insisting on the familiarity of an outlived model. Only the most brutal historical survey will expose the city for what it really is: a temporary solution, a passing phase in the evolution of human settlement. One cannot help but wonder as to the impact of a general relaxation of our land-use policies, a momentary lapse. But no sooner can we conjure the void that it is filled with a catastrophic vision of sprawl. Can we write a different screenplay? Can we imagine a city freed from the dictates of concentration and density, yet fundamentally at peace with the qualities we attribute to the landscape? Can we imagine an urban substance so thin and waning at once capitalizing upon the vacant land and – provided it comes in densities (barring most) remains the only credible substance to fill the void. It can at least stand in retrospective its logic and power”. The Garden City is a utopia yet we remain un-enlightened. In our belief in the city we have come to realize, the city’s dissolution – the real dream of our utopian predecessors. We dream about restoring the city to its former glory, precisely at a moment when its driving force: growth; is no longer with us. It is no coincidence that the only utopia realized at a massive scale: Ebeneezer Howard’s Garden City, is the one most openly dealing with city flight.
Urban Distortion

How Farm Subsidies Fail America’s Cities

By Shireen A. Barday and Damon W. Root

Farm subsidies shortchange America’s cities—a frequently overlooked effect of America’s largest corporate welfare program. While it is well established that subsidies disadvantage small farmers and have encouraged the virtual elimination of African American farmers, subsidies have also inflated the national cost of living and raised the price of providing social services in America’s largest cities. Not only have urban taxpayers been compelled to finance failed agricultural policies, they have not received anything approximating a fair share of goods and services to offset the tremendous fallout costs of subsidy programs.

Brooklyn’s Agribusiness

The January 2004 closing of the 11-acre Domino Sugar plant in Brooklyn, New York is a first-rate example of how farm subsidies have failed America’s cities. Barely three years into owning the plant, Florida Crystals Inc. closed Domino Sugar in Brooklyn, eliminating 250 largely middle-income manufacturing jobs. These positions provided a major source of employment for African American and Latino New Yorkers. Once the land is razed and developed for residential use, the owners stand to reap millions of dollars in profit. For New Yorkers, the closure could not have come at a worse time: the city is presently struggling to recover from an economic downturn and is experiencing record levels of unemployment. More shocking still, farm subsidy dollars funded this closure.

The plant was owned by two of America’s largest subsidy recipients, the Fanjul brothers, often referred to as America’s “Sugar Kings” because of their multi-million dollar subsidy deal. In fact, they receive $125 million annually in direct subsidies—approximately half for their American sugar operations and half for their operations in the Dominican Republic. Because the price of sugar is fixed artificially high, the brothers are assured minimum profits for the sugar they produce. This leaves the Fanjuls, as well as similar agribusiness owners, no incentive to maintain jobs in American cities when land becomes more valuable than labor—a testament to the strength of the farm lobby in the United States.

Foundations of Farm Subsidies

The Domino Sugar plant in Brooklyn is not an isolated example. The elimination of farmers and agricultural labor as the result of federal farm programs in the United States is a trend as old as the subsidy program itself. New Deal agricultural policies, enacted during the 1930s to combat the Great Depression, inaugurated this more than half-century of illogical and harmful farm subsidies. In this model, subsidies are dispersed based on the type of crop that is grown, instead of on the basis of income or poverty. As farmers plant more of a targeted crop, they receive larger subsidies. Not surprisingly, large farms and agribusiness, which have both more acres of farmland and greater overall output than small family farms, receive the largest subsidies.

In an attempt to raise sagging prices and combat over-production of American crops, large farmers and agribusiness—many of whom benefited from the multi-million dollar subsidy deal—have been assured minimum profits for the sugar they produce. This leaves the Fanjuls, as well as similar agribusiness owners, no incentive to maintain jobs in American cities when land becomes more valuable than labor—a testament to the strength of the farm lobby in the United States.

American cities are not the only recipients of this artificial supply and demand. The government incentivizes the cultivation of crops that have a large market share, such as sugarcane, by providing subsidies to large farms and agribusiness. These subsidies artificially inflate the national cost of living and raise the price of providing social services in America’s largest cities. Urban taxpayers have been compelled to finance failed agricultural policies, but they have not received anything approximating a fair share of goods and services to offset the tremendous fallout costs of subsidy programs.

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New Deal agricultural policies, enacted during the 1930s to combat the Great Depression, inaugurated this more than half-century of illogical and harmful farm subsidies. In this model, subsidies are dispersed based on the type of crop that is grown, instead of on the basis of income or poverty. As farmers plant more of a targeted crop, they receive larger subsidies. Not surprisingly, large farms and agribusiness, which have both more acres of farmland and greater overall output than small family farms, receive the largest subsidies.

In an attempt to raise sagging prices and combat over-production of American crops, large farmers and agribusiness—many of whom benefited from the multi-million dollar subsidy deal—have been assured minimum profits for the sugar they produce. This leaves the Fanjuls, as well as similar agribusiness owners, no incentive to maintain jobs in American cities when land becomes more valuable than labor—a testament to the strength of the farm lobby in the United States.
tion, the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 (AAA) authorized the secretary of agriculture to restrict farm output and purchase surplus production. (1) Of course, this sort of legislation necessarily rewards poor economic decisions (over-production) by removing negative consequences (low prices), and provides little incentive for farmers to either reduce their output or put surpluses to more efficient use. This is key to understanding the economic failure of farm subsidies. In practice, reduced farm acreage meant that white farm owners were paid to slaughter livestock, leave crops to rot on the vine, and let their land sit idle, often resulting in the eviction of sharecroppers and tenant farmers, many of whom were African-American. “All accounts of the impact of the [AAA] on African Americans,” writes Steve Valocchi in the journal Social Problems, “agree that it caused grave hardship and was the chief source of downward mobility for African-Americans in the South.” (2) Historian Jim Powell reports that reduced farm acreage resulted in the plummeting of sharecroppers’ estimated annual cash income to $216 in 1933 from $735 in 1929. (3)

Farm subsidies have had the added effect of reducing the total number of American farmers, particular African-American farmers, while encouraging the replacement of landed farmers with tenant farmers. Take the case of peanuts, a crop historically common to black farmers. In 1949 the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) required that all peanut farmers obtain a federal license, a move that priced many black peanut farmers out of the market. Cato Institute policy analyst James Bovard reports that by 1995 two-thirds of peanut license-holders did not actually farm. Instead, they rented out their licenses to tenant farmers who did the work. Consumers, however, were left to pick up the tremendous cost associated with restricting access to this market: the General Accounting Office (GAO) estimated in 1995 that consumers spent an extra $513 million a year due to federal peanut rules. (4)

Furthermore, chronic discrimination by the USDA with regard to loan access and subsidies for black farmers has translated into the virtual elimination of African-American farmers: 80% of the $4 billion available annually for loans is disbursed to white farmers, according to the USDA. (5) The result: African-American farmers, who numbered nearly one million in 1920, currently account for less than one-percent or approximately 18,000 of the nation’s total farmers, and that number is dropping faster than that of their white counterparts. (6)

By displacing African-American sharecroppers and tenant farmers and by discriminating against African Americans in terms of loan access, farm subsidies have encouraged widespread African American poverty and joblessness in the South. This dire economic situation in turn helped inspire extensive black migration to Northern cities, further adding to welfare and social service costs for these areas.

The Balance of Payments Since the 1930s, the social service costs to cities has skyrocketed as a direct result of failed subsidy programs. (7) Most notably, despite a decrease in the number of farmers, the amount of subsidies continues to rise, while federal spending on social services has not correspondingly increased—a trend that particularly harms urban economies. Urban residents, then, are disadvantaged not simply because their tax dollars are routed to agribusinesses, but also because there is no equivalent bailout in goods and services. Predictably, states with three of the five largest cities in the country (Los Angeles, California; New York City, New York; Chicago, Illinois) paid the largest state shares of the federal tax burden (more than $500 billion combined). Although two of these states, California and Illinois, receive farm subsidies, their share of goods and services from the federal government still place them among the ten states with the lowest ratios of spending-to-tax ($0.77 and $0.76 for each dollar they send to the federal government), while states like Iowa and Nebraska receive an average of $1.21 for each tax dollar. The situation for New York City and other similar urban areas is even worse; New York State overall receives $0.85 for every tax dollar, Bei dem Versuch, die sinkenden Preise zu steigern und Überproduktion zu verhindern wurden 1933 der Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) verabschiedet, der es dem Landwirtschaftsminister ermöglichte, den Ausstoß der Farmen zu beschränken und die Überproduktion zu verkaufen. Natürlich begünstigt eine solche Gesetzgebung notwendigerweise solche wirtschaftlichen Entscheidungen (Überproduktion), indem die negativen Konsequenzen (niedrige Preise) einfach beseitigt werden und damit den dann Amort gegeben wird, Ihren Ausstoß entweder zu reduzieren oder den Überfluss effizient zu neuern. So ist der Gebrauch von staatlichen Zusammenbruch der Farmsubventionen zu verstehen. Praktisch bedeutete weniger Farmland, dass weiße Farmbesitzer dafür bezahlt wurden, dass sie ihr Vieh schlachteten, ihren Wein am Stock verrotten ließen und ihr Land brach liegen ließen. Dies wiederum führte dazu, dass Pächter und Farmarbeiter, von denen viele Afroamerikaner waren, gekündigten wurden. „Alle Berichte über die Auswirkungen des (AAA) auf Afroamerikaner“, schrieb Steve Valocchi in der Zeitschrift Social Problems, „stimmen in dem Punkt überein, dass es schwere Verursacht und die Mobilität der Afroamerikaner stark eingeschränkt hat. Der Historiker Jim Powell berichtet darüber, dass das reduzierte Farmland von Pächter-Reparaturen in den Einkommen der Pächter verursacht hat. Er sank von 735 Dollar 1929 auf 216 Dollar 1933. Des Weiteren hatten die Farmsubventionen die Auswirkung, dass die Gesamtauszahl ausländischer Farmern, insbesondere die in Besitz von Afroamerikanern, sehr stark reduzierten wurde, während Großgrundbesitzer mit ihren Mietern mehr Geld ausgeben konnten als bei der Gesetzgebung von Erdnussverordnungen zusätzliche 513 Milliarden Dollar pro Jahr ausgegeben haben. Außerdem hat die staatliche Diskriminierung des Landwirtschaftsministeriums in Bezug auf Kredite und Subventionen für afroamerikanische Farmer dafür gesorgt, dass es praktisch keine mehr gibt: 80 % der jährlich verfügbaren 4 Millionen Dollar Kredite werden von weißer Farmer ausgegeben. Das Ergebnis: Die Zahl der afroamerikanischen Farmer, die sich nicht auf den Markt zurückziehen und ihre Landwirtschaft aufgeben, beläuft sich heute nur noch auf weniger als ein Prozent oder etwa 18.000 der nationa- alen Gesamtzahl – und diese Zahl sinkt weiter dramatisch als die der weißen Farmer. Durch die Vertreibung der afroamerikanischer Pächter und Arbeiter und die Diskriminierung gegen Afroamerikaner was die Verfolgung von Krediten und Farmsubventionen an sich, die zu einer Verbreitung der ungleichen Verhältnisse für Afroamerikanern weitverbreiteten Armut und Arbeitslosigkeit im Südosten. Diese schwere wirtschaftliche Situation verursachte eine außerordentliche Abwendung Schwarzer in die Städte des Nordens und demzufolge höhere Wohlfahrts- und Sozialkosten für diese Gebiete
but New York City receives only $0.63. (8)

On top of the structural imbalance of payments, farm subsidy programs artificially inflate the cost of urban life. For example, the Agricultural Act of 1949 established federal price supports that required the government to purchase dairy products when the price fell too low. In other words, the government would act as a “buyer of last resort” to prop up the price of milk. In reality, this law eliminated any incentive for dairy farmers to decrease production or to put surpluses to more efficient use. Thus, taxpayers have been forced to pay twice for dairy products, first at the checkout counter in the form of inflated prices and then again when their tax dollars absorb the surplus. Where farm subsidies ensure base minimum prices for goods such as milk, the cost of subsidizing these products through food stamps, for example, is proportionately higher. And in cities, where the cost of groceries is already higher than other parts of the country, the impact is correspondingly greater. (9)

Lack of Accountability

The shroud of secrecy surrounding subsidy recipients imposes a third-tier cost to cities and stands in stark contrast to the strict accountability mechanisms introduced to police welfare recipients—the majority of whom live in America’s large urban areas. (10) Particular measures to track child support payments or to eliminate welfare or food stamp fraud include the introduction of new eligibility verification standards and databases designed to ensure that single parents, primarily single mothers, are actively seeking payments from non-custodial parents. In fact, as a condition for receiving state block grant welfare funding, states are required to prove that they have been actively enforcing child support payments, the primary cost of which is not borne by the federal government.

Enhanced fraud-prevention measures have been praised by many of the same elected officials who have balked at the introduction of similar measures to track farm subsidies. For example, Representative Larry Combest (R-Texas), now Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture, praised new accountability measures in the food stamp program for “help[ing] the federal government cut down on waste and abuse of the system.” (11) Two years later, however, he actively fought such measures for subsidies, and even introduced an amendment to ban the disclosure of conservation subsidy recipients. Although Representative Combest’s amendment was defeated and the 2002 farm bill does contain provisions for tracking of subsidies, fraud enforcement prevention measures remain sparse. So while a state’s refusal to track child support payments allows the federal government to withhold state block grants for welfare, the 2002 Farm Bill does not eliminate subsidies to those states or businesses that fail to disclose recipient lists. Even federal oversight has not been able to ensure that the limited measures present in the 2002 Farm Bill are enforced: in 2003, the Payments Limitation Commission found that the USDA had not made a “meaningful commitment to implementing section 1614 of the 2002 Act, which requires the tracking of benefits provided directly or indirectly to individuals and entities.” (12)

Rice subsidies, in particular, have been notoriously difficult trace beyond the umbrella co-operatives who receive and distribute the funds to individual farmers. The lack of accountability for farm subsidies compared to the emphasis on child support collection for welfare recipients, is especially notable in light of the marked differences in the scope of the payments: the average annualized child support payment in the United States in 2002 was $5,044, while the average rice subsidy payment was $30,760. Thus not only does the lack of fraud prevention for subsidy recipients do a disservice to all American taxpayers, it specifically disadvantages urban residents who pick up the tab for the inefficiencies of the farm subsidy system and are then compelled to subsidize accountability measures for means-tested programs.

Conclusion

Even with the addition of strict accountability measures, the subsidy system would still suffer from fatal flaws. Without hundreds of millions of dollars of waste, the system still...
raises the price of staples and disincentivizes farm diversification; it encourages excess and cripples small farms. The solution to the current problem is not another government intervention but rather the outright elimination of this brand of corporate welfare altogether. The transformation of American agriculture into a system of cartels cannot be undone by further subsidies. By inflating the price of food and other goods, subsidy programs are especially harmful to urban economies with higher costs of living, even when the subsidy system is not producing large-scale joblessness and poverty. The elimination of the subsidy system is fundamentally a fair share issue for American cities: until the federal government rectifies its haphazard subsidy spending, cities will continue to suffer from an enormous competitive disadvantage.

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1 For a close look at the failures of many New Deal economic policies and their negative impact on African Americans and other poor groups, see Jim Powell, FDR’s Folly: How Roosevelt and His New Deal Prolonged the Great Depression, New York: Crown Forum, 2003, pp. 129-140.
3 Powell, FDR’s Folly, p. 135.
4 Bovard, James, “The 1995 Farm Follies,” Regulation, volume 18, number 3.
6 USDA Agricultural Economics and Land Ownership Survey (AELOS). AELOS also indicated that black owners of agricultural land are more likely to rent it (primarily to white farmers) than to farm the land themselves, partially the result of an aging of the black farmer population. However, black owners of agricultural land are losing their land at higher than average rates, and white farmers still comprise 96% of owners of agricultural land in the United States. Black owners of agricultural land hold 2% of total private farmland and control just 3% of its value.
7 African-American migration from the rural South to northern cities was particularly acute in the 1930s through the 1950s. USDA policies thus led to a direct increase in social service costs for these urban areas, and helped to foster a cycle of poverty for affected families. The effects of these policies still visible today.
8 New York City Council, Division of Finance. This imbalance is fueled by: i) concentrations of wealth within New York City, and ii) a comparative lack of defense industry spending. Other urban centers nationally meeting these two conditions also shoulder an unfair tax burden.
9 Moody, J. Scott and David K. Hoffman. “Federal Income Taxes and the Cost of Living,” Tax Foundation, November 2003. For example, in Chicago, it costs a dual-income couple without dependents $101,312 to purchase a median standard of living, but in Manhattan, this figure jumps to $159,621.
The second issue of Monu invites projects, articles, interviews and photographs that address the topic of middle class urbanism. Works on other topics are welcome as well. Our second issue will be released in winter of 2004/05. The deadline for submissions is end of October 2004. For more information contact: monu@herzlungenmaschine.de www.herzlungenmaschine.de www.monu.org
Call for submissions for Monu 2.0  Middle Class Urbanism

The vanishing of the middle class is a well-documented phenomenon. Across Europe and North America, as income distribution becomes increasingly lopsided and greater extremes of poverty and wealth are created, the notion of what was once considered ‘normal’ will be emptied of meaning and this will have a significant impact on societies—one registering well beyond political, social and economic contexts. The ‘hollowing out’ of the middle class will ultimately change and challenge the way cities are created, it will alter the ideals and the powers behind urbanism that shape the aesthetics of our cities in profound ways.

For the last few decades the middle class has been the driving force behind urban innovation. More than any other, this urban group has both the financial resources and the sheer power of numbers to effectively transform desire into urban reality. Many of the most obvious components of our cities--Row houses, apartment buildings and sports facilities, to name but a few—are in large measure a response to the existence of the middle class. These components have been enabled by the solid, middle class sensibilities of order and uniformity that we often take for granted. This is particularly true of the Suburbs, the most important novelty on the urban landscape in the last century and a decidedly middle class invention.

The middle class symbolizes modest urban values, values that seem hopelessly anti-utopian and run counter to the megalomaniac concepts of cities proposed by great architects like LeCorbusier or Hilbersheimer. But in reality the middle class is comprised of some of the boldest urban utopists ever, individuals who have been realizing their utopias for decades. Much less dogmatic and more successful than any imagined utopia, with their power, influence and sheer numbers the middle class has shaped the urban landscapes we inhabit today.

What specific impact has the middle class had on urbanism? Is it aware of its power, or of its rapidly approaching demise? And will urbanism evolve or devolve once the terrain currently occupied by the middle class is less a reality than a mere statistical concept? As landscapes are redrawn and the middle class collapses in on itself, what species of urbanism will be created in its absence. And are we prepared for what’s to come?

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