

Symposium 2005

Symbolic Constructions of the City

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Abstracts



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Abstracts in alphabetical order:

Bernd Belina

**'Dangerous Places' –
from their Symbolic Construction
to the Social Processes that produce, and use them**

Institut für Geographie,
Universität Potsdam

'Dangerous places' – from their symbolic construction to the social processes that produce, and use them
Spaces are socially produced, and so are their symbolic meanings. What has become something of a theoretical truism was itself produced by thinkers such as Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey out of the real world struggles around 1970. Beginning in the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, the 'production (or now: construction) of space' was increasingly de-socialized and de-materialized by re-abstracting space from the social in a number of theoretical endeavors. With this implicit return to spatial fetishism, concrete power relations, relations of re-/production, of exploitation, gender, race and so forth were and are often re-naturalized. I want to use the case of the production of 'dangerous places' to argue for a re-materialization of theories of the production of space and their symbolic meanings and a 'social re-turn' after the 'cultural turn'.

Regina Bittner

Die Stadt ausstellen, die ausgestellte Stadt

Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau

Die Musealisierung der Innenstädte ist schon seit Jahren ein gängiger Begriff zur Beschreibung des Strukturwandels des Städtischen. Bis zur Jahrtausendwende spielte in den urbanistischen Debatten die neue Rolle von Kultur und Ökonomie bei der Revitalisierung der Innenstädte eine entscheidende Rolle. Städte werden heute ausgestellt, und das bezieht sich nicht nur auf die Obsession, mit der historische Gebäude rekonstruiert werden, auch zeitgenössische Stadtentwicklungsprojekte folgen in ihrer Anordnung eher den Mustern eines Kuratierens von Ausstellungen. Der ausgestellten Stadt kann man sich am ehesten über die Relation zwischen Stadt und Museum nähern. Während im traditionellen Zugang zur Stadt der Vormoderne diese Unterscheidung obsolet war, weil die Stadt selbst als Speichermedium galt, hat sich mit der Moderne erst das Museum als Prototyp herausgebildet. Wenn wir heute von einer Musealisierung der Innenstädte reden, steckt dahinter vielleicht die Vermutung, die Unterscheidung zwischen Stadt und Museum ist erneut hinfällig geworden? Folgen Städte nun den Mustern der Anordnung des Museums des 19. Jahrhunderts - als still gestellte Räume? Museen waren schließlich Ordnungsräume, um dem Chaos der großen Städte Muster der Erklärung und Interpretation entgegenzusetzen. Das Ordnungsproblem hat sich mit der raum-zeitlichen Entkopplung von Ort und Raum in der postindustriellen Stadt nicht erledigt. Vielmehr gewinnt man den Eindruck, die neuen hyperkodierten statischen Räume der musealisierten Innenstädte reiben sich permanent an der Inhomogenität neuer transnationaler Ort-Raum Relationen, die eher in den Metaphern von Netzen, wandernden Räumen, flexiblen Landschaften zu verstehen sind.

Lieferte das Museum in der Moderne noch den letzten Ordnungsrahmen als stillgestellter Raum, so tut dies heute die Stadt? Das wiederhergestellte barocke Stadtzentrum in Dresden ist ein interessantes Beispiel: ausgewählte Spolien der Geschichte sind symbolische Markierungen, Räume erhalten dabei ein kulturell erlebbares Attribut, das Bewohnern deutlich macht, wer wie diese Räume nutzen darf. Sie prägen insofern nicht nur die formende Wahrnehmung der Stadt sondern auch die spezifische Architektur sozialer Beziehungen.

Ausgehend von einem knappen historischen Exkurs zum Verhältnis zwischen Stadt und Museum diskutiert der Beitrag den Neuzuschnitt dieser Relation in der Postmoderne- der touristische Blick gewinnt bei der Konstruktion der Stadt als Museum einen besonderen Stellenwert. Der heutige Umbau von Städten als symbolisch bedeutungsvolle Räume hat jedoch nur noch wenig gemein mit dem postmodernen Spiel historischer Versatzstücke. Gegenstand des Beitrages ist insofern das Spannungsverhältnis zwischen symbolisch aufgeladenem Museums-Stadt-Raum und einer ausdruckslosen Stadtlandschaft, deren logischer Zusammenhang sich nicht mehr erschließt.

Jens Dangschat

**'Place Making' and 'Spacing' -
Two At-Odds-Concepts for Appropriations of Public Space?**

Institut der Soziologie für Raumplanung und Architektur,
Technische Universität Wien

"Appropriation" has different meanings – ranging from allocation to annexation. This broad range of meanings of this term exactly describes the 'real range' between the positions of town planners and sitting tenants. While the first predominantly are thinking of design and equipment of places, based on rough statistical data (place making – P. Healey), the latter are following their perceptions of socio-spatial settings, which they are constructing at specific points in the time and space continua (spacing – M. Löw).

The contribution is aimed both to describe the results of a study, which was trying to bridge the top-down-bottom-up-gap and to outline a macro-meso-micro scheme for the idea to integrate social groups of different cultural background (social milieu) in a system of public space.

Martina Löw

**Globalisation, Space
and the Cultural Character of Cities**

Institut für Soziologie,
Technische Universität Darmstadt

For some years now, academe has been devoting a great deal of attention to the phenomenon of space. Spatial constitution processes have been observed on all scalable levels: in establishing territorially bounded nation states, multiplying the experience of reality through electronic networks, and in everyday struggles for position in the neighbourhood, the home, etc. It has become an academic self-evidence that space can only inadequately be conceptualized as a material or earth-bound base for social processes. This could recommend the theoretical strategy of considering space as a performative act, which brings both social production practices and bodily deployment into focus. The action theoretical perspective allows the constitution of space to be understood as taking place in perception and thus through physical, bodily processes. Not things alone are perceived but also relations between objects. This talk develops a space theoretical concept according to which space is constituted through acts as the outcome of synthesis and positioning practices. I will speak about the question, how we can use and understand space as a scientific term under conditions of globalisations by linking these ideas to child education and city development.

Margrete Fredriksen

Transnational Space and Youth in Oslo

Center for Development Studies,
University of Bergen

Based upon a fieldwork in Oslo in 2003 among youth in diverse community settings I will discuss how their artistic and political activities derive from and energize to specific translocal processes. Through artistic and political activities the youth negotiate cultural claims about localities of various scales, and in the presentation I will discuss how these negotiations draw upon their globalized biographies and life world perspectives and are related to transnational communicational developments; globally broadcasted news and events - such as the Iraqi war, long distance solidarities and inspirations from the Zapatista movement and social imaginaries disrupting dominating ideologies of scale. I will argue that their artistic and political activities are attempts to conjunct and disjoin various scale making projects in order to restructure the premises for societal integration.

Renate Ruhne

**The Spatio-Social Control
of Prostitution as a Gender Issue**

Institut für Soziologie,
Technische Universität Darmstadt

The lecture focusses on the specific organisation and '(re)production' of the field of prostitution by strategies of social control. Using the city of Frankfurt as an example there will be shown that common measures of (spatio-social) control, which were established to contain a social problem, at the same time 'produce' the field as spatio-materially and symbolically separated from 'normal' every day live. As a devaluated 'space of other' the field of prostitution is intertwined with the (re)production of social orders, in particular of gender-orders.

Irmbert Schenck

**Futurismus, Großstadt- und Industriefilm
Zur Ambivalenz dokumentarischer Großstadtdarstellungen**

Fachbereich Kulturwissenschaften,
Universität Bremen

Ausgehend von dem Gemeinplatz, dass sich Kino und Großstadt in einer auf-fälligen Synchronizität entwickeln, befasst sich der Beitrag mit der ideologi-schen Ambivalenz dokumentarischer Großstadtdarstellungen in radikalen ki-nemato-graphischen Modernisierungsprojekten. In neun Mini-Exkursen werden unterschiedliche Beispiele betrachtet – Langs Metropolis, Ruttmanns Berlin, die Sinfonie der Großstadt, der italienische Futurismus, Ruttmanns italieni-scher Langspielfilm Acciaio und seine Großstadtdarstellungen in Kulturfilmen des III. Reichs.

Ernst Seidl

**Raumtypen der Stadt als Ausdruck
der 'Ideologisierung' der Metropole?**

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Universität Tübingen

Der Vortrag möchte der verbreiteten und auch im Exposé des Symposions zwischen den Zeilen lesbaren Ansicht wider-sprechen, wonach sich axialsymmetrische Anlagen öffentlicher Räume scheinbar eindeutig mit „Herrschaftsideologien“ vereinen lassen. Vielmehr soll gezeigt werden, in welchen Ausprägungen von gebauten Herrschafts-strukturen sich durchaus auch von einer Darstellung der modernen Demokratie spre-chen lässt.

Dabei ist es von höchstem Interesse zu beobachten, dass sich die axialsymmetri-schen Grundprinzipien dieser Pla-nungen nahezu ungebrochen durch die politischen Epochen und Systeme sowie durch die Geschichte der Moderne hinweg bis zur Ge-genwart fortsetzen.

Es soll damit die immer wieder von neuem zu beobachtende Konstruktion eines zu-meist hauptstädtischen – das heißt metropolitenen? – Topos verdeutlicht werden, der die Perspektive des öffentlichen Raums bildet sowie den Fokus der kollektiven Wahrnehmung steuert und nicht zuletzt politisch und sozial funktionalisiert. Festzu-stellen ist daher vielmehr, dass es sich bei der symmetrisch angelegten Axial-Perspektive des öffentlichen Raums um das wirkungsmächtigste ästhetische Nobili-tierungsmittel handelt, das besonders dann zum Einsatz kommt, wenn es darum geht, die höchsten oder idealen Referenzwerte und auch Mythen einer Gemeinschaft im öffentlichen Raum, meist dem der Metropole, zu repräsentieren.

Rob Shields

Place Myths – Place Images

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n place myths and images provide insights into the spatialization of cities but only in terms of their position within a wider topology of other cities. A place by itself and its images out of context of other places and images methodolo-gically rules out significant and counter-intuitive insights. The meaning of places is as dependent on what does not happen in them, as much as on the activities they host - on absence as much as presence. This argument will be developed to include other immaterialities and absent presences. Unlike the materiality of cities, or even their probable development, the intangible aspects of cities cannot be assayed because they include not only finite sets of abstract ideas, representations - in short symbolic constructions: they include emergent, liminal virtualities. These are poorly captured in most approaches to cities. Just as it has become important for national policy, terror and activist politics, this category, virtualities, will increasingly affect regional and municipal politics and everyday life in cities. Appearances count if myths are real.

Manuel Tironi

***Going for Culture: The 'Guggenheim Effect',
Bohemian Landscapes, and the Limits of Creativity***

Department of Urbanism and Regional Planning,
Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya

Going for Culture: the „Guggenheim effect“, bohemian landscapes and the limits of creativity

Drawing on the case of Bilbao and its „Guggenheim effect“, this paper explores the consistency of the ‚creative economy‘ hypothesis, the latest urban regeneration sociotechnical ideology. To this end, I analyze the geography and evolution of Bilbao’s bohemian sector, its relation with the opening of the museum and its significance to the regional economy. My results suggest that the Guggenheim Museum has importantly contributed to the enhancement of Bilbao’s bohemia, which in turn is positively related with the regional economy. However, they also indicate three tensions of the ‚creative city‘ discourse when applied to the Basque Country: metropolitanism vs. regionalism, cultural consumption vs. cultural production and cultural thematization vs. flexible nationalism.

Ulrich Ufer

***Public Space in 17th Century Amsterdam
Appropriations, Exclusions and Confusions***

École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales

There was an anonymous sphere in Amsterdam in the 17th century. Understanding its constitution and complementary relation with both private and public spheres is a helpful step to analyse means of appropriation of public spaces, such as the social distinction through financial and cultural capital.

Milena Yakimova

***City Space as Made up by Recognition of Identities.
About Sofia Populace between the two World Wars***

Department of Sociology,
Sofia University

Let me begin with the assumption that the social space of the city, the dynamic space of tangible coexistence of social heterogeneity, if it is to be stable, should also function as a certain sort of unity, community, or organization. And in order to appear like that, the mere administering of social space does not suffice. It is essential that the diverse elements of the social heterogeneity should be somehow identified with the whole. But in the city space, social inequality appears in a rather uninterrupted way. And it is precisely this immediate visibility of inequality, that does not allow elements to identify directly with the whole. I need some acceptable and preserving my dignity way of grasping my own unequal position. It is only then, when I become a part of the whole and when the whole is stable in its dynamics.

That is why this paper is about the categories of identity in Sofia during periods of sharp social transformations, about the categories of mutual recognition (or of denial of recognition) of social groups, which mutually modified their social experience in the very acts of giving or denying each other recognition. And it was markedly that process, which modified the city-scape as a spatial arrangement and as a moral order.

The paper is focusing on the post-war period of Sofia, and especially on 20-s, when the newly accumulated social experience needed to be peacefully reorganized; years, when the city crowds were born, comprising now extremely heterogeneous, and moreover, fragmented social elements. How did that new experience of inequality turn the categories of identity? The general lines of that shift were the lines of redistribution of the social prestige. Generally those lines depended on the ability of the distinguished groups to give to the commonality resources for a positive self-relation. The positive self-relation of the commonality was the mediator of the recognition for the distinguished groups. This interplay was neither symmetric, nor missing violence. But it was the way the story went and it is still a good key to read socially the physical appearance of Sofia in those days.