



Lecture by Prof. Erik Swyngedouw:

“Exit Polis: Musings on the Post-Political and Post-Democratic City”

Center for Metropolitan Studies, June 16, 2009, 6-8 pm

Prof. Erik Swyngedouw is an internationally highly repudiated geographer, professor at the University of Manchester, and currently fellow at the Institute for Regional Planning and Structural Planning (IRS) Erkner. The Center for Metropolitan Studies and the IRS are delighted to host a lecture by Prof. Swyngedouw, in which he will discuss the problems of governance and democracy in modern cities. For more details, please see the abstract below.

The lecture will take place on Tuesday, June 16, 2009, from 6-8 pm at the Center for Metropolitan Studies (CMS), TU Berlin, Ernst-Reuter-Platz 7, TEL 3-0, in Berlin.
More information: www.metropolitanstudies.de

Prof. Swyngedouw can be found on his website:
<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/research/Erik.swyngedouw/research>

Abstract

“There is a shift from the model of the polis founded on a centre, that is, a public centre or agora, to a new metropolitan spatialisation that is certainly invested in a process of de-politicisation, which results in a strange zone where it is impossible to decide what is private and what is public” (Agamben 2006).

The city offers a privileged scale for dissecting the social body; for rummaging through the innards of our most intimate fantasies, desires, and fears; for excavating the signs of the city's political condition. As the ancient Greek polis was for Aristotle and Plato the experimental site for the performance of civic and political life, the contemporary city also holds for us the key to unlocking the contours of the present political constellation.

It is indeed unmistakably so that the city has undergone radical change over the past two decades or so, most dramatically in its modes of urban governing and polic(y)ing. I shall argue that, while the city is alive and thriving at least in some of its spaces, the polis, conceived in the idealized Greek sense as the site for public political encounter and democratic negotiation, the spacing of (often radical) dissent, and disagreement, and the place where political subjectivation emerges and literally takes place, seems moribund. In other words, the 'political' is retreating while social space is increasingly colonized by policies (or policing). The suturing of social space by consensual managerial policies and the evacuation of the properly political (democratic) dimension from the urban – what will be defined as the post-political condition – constitutes what I would define as the ZERO-ground of politics. The lecture's leitmotiv will indeed be the figure of a de-politicized Post-Political and Post-Democratic city.