

## Urban Spaces

Chair: Douglass St.-Christian

### **Contested Space in the Generic City: Tactics for a Reflective Urbanism**

**- Nancy M. Clark (Associate Professor, Architecture, University of Florida)**

The contemporary city is rapidly transforming into an ever increasing territory of homogeneity, neutrality, and themed experiences. According to Koolhaas, the shifting meaning of the urban condition, caused in large part by globalization, has the potential to simultaneously – and exponentially – *deplete* the architectural imagination and *enrich* the architectural imagination. My paper will explore this dilemma by examining recent realignments underway in the culture of planning brought about through various acts of resistance and appropriation specifically intended to undermine the momentum of the Generic City and its ultimate effect of “flattening out” culture and place. While even the most minimal and fleeting of efforts deserves recognition, my presentation will focus on projects that have achieved a sphere of influence beyond the “marginal” and have moved from the strictly event-based intervention to process-based works which may provide insight into how one can rethink ways of making public space connected to context and community, frame or identify new possible sites for urban activities, and highlight potential methodologies to employ for “waiting land” sites already or soon to be identified for urban regeneration. The case study projects have been chosen from a broad range of disciplines and are organized around three basic themes: forms of social urban repair, anamnesis, and interiority. A close investigation of these various works of urban theorists, planners, artists, architects and sociologists will reveal latent operational tools, spatial models and speculative theories for renewing influence on our built environment while underscoring both the potential and the problematic of current development techniques in the contemporary city.

### **Rethinking Resistance through Complicity**

**- Lara Schrijver (Assistant professor, Architecture, TU Delft)**

When discussing ‘resistance’, the 1960s always seem to be hovering in the back of our minds. The time has become a paragon of idealism and resistance against the (capitalist and conservative) establishment. This perception contains a kernel of truth, which has slowly been embellished to reach epic proportions. The recurring presence of the 1960s surely has something to do with the optimism of the time, with the conviction that enough resistance, passive or active, would transform the world. At the same time, the myth has raised the status of a resistant ‘counterculture’ to an end in itself.

In this paper I argue that the very framework of ‘resistance’ versus ‘affirmation’ is outdated. There is an implication of morality in the neo-Marxist understanding of resistance, which has coloured the perception of contemporary forms of resistance. The very vocabulary needs to be reassessed if we still wish to maintain the revolutionary potential of ‘resistance’ in late capitalist society.

To be effective, contemporary resistance must by necessity engage itself with the structure it hopes to transform. Therefore, the discourse and practice of architecture offers a site to explore this ‘embedded’ resistance: it can resist and engage not despite, but because of its complicity with the various structures of power and capital. The best contemporary practices in architecture simultaneously organize the everyday environment, propose alternative possibilities, and acknowledge their potential failure. This form of resistance goes hand in hand with an affirmative position and with critical engagement. It is not an oppositional stance, but a slippery position, entwined with the status quo.

One of the key issues this paper will address is: can a closer look at some contemporary architectural practices reveal modes of resistance that challenge both our notions of how resistance works, and the very underpinnings of ‘resistance’ and ‘affirmation’ as a conceptual framework?

### **Peripatetic Unbound: Walking, Writing, and Resistance, from the Wanderer to the *Fugueur*.**

**- Miriam Love (Theory and Criticism, UWO)**

From the solitary Romantic wanderer, who reconnects with “Nature,” to the nineteenth-century flâneur, who both engages and critiques a consumer society, to the Situationists’ errant walks, which sought to map and stir up the city’s “zones,” its cultural and class divisions, to Michel de Certeau’s walker, who, through his everyday use and routes, re-appropriates and undermines the city as a mapped and fixed place, walking has been variously figured as a form of resistance. This paper sketches out a tradition of walking—and the figure of walking—as resistance, with a particular focus on the writer Iain Sinclair’s London walks. Exploring the possibilities of Psychogeography and drifting—two Situationist practices—Sinclair narrates his walks through post-Thatcherite London, a city whose stories and possibilities are being eclipsed by the propaganda and ideology of “Best Value.” In his *London Orbital*, Sinclair suggests that his walking is not that of a flâneur, but rather of what he terms a *fugueur*; this suggests that his walks are merely escapes, a flight from the quotidian and from “the illusionism of the spin doctors, media operators and salaried liars” (120). Sinclair’s narrated walks, however, are more like musical fugues than direct flights; his compositions stitch together and overlap various voices and walkers. Thus, these stories offer new points of departure, both for Sinclair’s narrative itself, and for thinking through ways that a new form or figure of walking-as-resistance might emerge. Indeed, Sinclair’s walker not only re-iterates and re-imagines well-trod themes – of errancy, reverie, critical distance – but also offers ways of re-thinking the inter-workings of past, present, and future, and the possibilities of everyday life.

### **The Tactical Acts of *Gecekondu* (Squatter) Dwellers vis-à-vis the Strategic Realm: The Contingency Embedded in the Social Spatialization of a *Gecekondu* Neighborhood in Ankara.**

**- Neslihan Demirtas (Instructor, Faculty of Communication, Izmir University of Economics)**

This paper aims to expose an alternative local historical reading of the formation of a *gecekondu* space as a response to modernist consideration of *gecekondu* development in Turkey. The social construction of neighborhood space, which occurs at the level of social imaginary and representations as well as at the level of real interventions in the form of social practices producing a built environment, is narrated by means of insider perspectives and using qualitative techniques. In this reading, it will be made explicit that the dynamics and patterns by which the modernist, strategic interventions in local space and tactical acts of the migrants in producing their locality are closely interconnected. This interconnectedness not only sheds light to the weaknesses of the strategic practice of imposing a modernist space but also the tactical acts of migrants utilizing the loopholes in the strategic realm. The ethnic identities constitute the main means by which the migrants employ certain tactics with regard to strategic policy acts and to other groups in the neighborhood. Spontaneity as the defining and intrinsic quality of *gecekondu* settlements is mainly embedded in the diverse local agencies that lead to spatial contingencies. These contingencies divert the course of strategic attempts to impose a space from top to down. Within the context of the intertwined nature of tactic and strategy, *gecekondu* settlements will be discussed as a by-product of the sum of modernist strategic acts more than as unintended consequences of urban development.