

# Ethics, Aesthetics and Contemporary Urbanism

Tom Nielsen

In a model<sup>1</sup> outlining the relation between contemporary urbanism and ethics, German philosopher Gernot Böhme uses the idea of a necessary distinction between ethics and aesthetics that Søren Kierkegaard introduced in his *Enten-Eller (Either/Or)* (1994 [1843]).<sup>2</sup>

Böhme points to the fact that the clear differentiation between the ethical and the aesthetical way of life that Kierkegaard promoted, is evidently in contrast to the dominant trend in contemporary philosophy. Today most ethics “presents itself as ethics of the good life” (Böhme 2001: 1). This is an ethics based on aesthetics, which eradicates the Kantian distinction between the two that Kierkegaard radicalised in his philosophy.

This is, Böhme claims, a consequence of ongoing modernization, and the related developments in economics, culture, and technology. The life led today by people living in the expanding urban regions of the world is very different from the life led by the bourgeoisie inside the fortifications of 19<sup>th</sup> century Copenhagen, which made out the horizon and context for Kierkegaard’s work. In the developed welfare-societies an abundance of mass-produced consumer products,

an abundance of communication possibilities, and a labour market demanding flexibility and adaptability makes the temporary, and in Kierkegaard’s definition, shallow aesthetic choice the only one possible in most life situations. Even in the dimensions of life that Kierkegaard identifies as the ones related most directly to the ethical, namely professional life, and marriage.

This development has resulted in a culture where the aestheticisation of life and its physical surroundings becomes meaningful in itself and replaces the meaning that the earnest and personally binding attitude could ascribe to the world. Böhme understands the current situation like this:

We live in the consumer society, we live in the event society, and that is why the adequate form of life is the aesthetic one. [...] After the satisfaction of elementary needs, at least we in the west today have entered into a phase of capitalism which one should sensibly call ‘aesthetic economy’. It is given the epithet ‘aesthetic’ because the differentiating value, which is produced during this capitalistic phase, is the staging-value. While, ac-

According to Marx, the utility value of a product equals its usefulness for certain purposes, and the exchange value equals its saleability on the market, the staging value, however, is something else, sort of a product of both: The product gets its value from the contribution it makes to the staging and raising of life. The staging-value has its origins in product aesthetics, i.e. in the special shape, which the product is given, exceeding its utility, in order to make it attractive in trade context. Special about the staging value is that the aesthetic outfit keeps its value in life context: Here it serves as outfit for life itself. (Böhme 2003: 4)

In the philosophical discourses developed in the 1960's as part of what has later been known as post-modernism, the aesthetic was given priority as opposed to Kierkegaard's prioritising of the ethical and religious. It became clear that the particularity in an aesthetic perception of the world could be used as a philosophical stronghold from which 'modernity' and its Kantian inspired claims of universalism could be attacked. It was seen as a way of establishing a critical position from which the problems related to universalism could be discussed critically. This has been labelled a new kind of 'aesthet/hics'.<sup>3</sup>

The merging of aesthetics and ethics that has occurred not only in philosophy but also in social theory relates, as Böhme sees it, to developments in architecture and urbanism. The 'good life' has become the comfortable and intense life, and the 'good city' has become the city that stages the shopping and events that are the keys to achieving the good life (Böhme 2003).

Post-modern discussions of the shift in theory, from a clear distinction between ethics and aesthetics to a fusion between the two, can be traced back to the shift in existential philosophy from Kierkegaard to Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche proposes, with his 'aesthetics of self-creation' that we do not understand the 'ethicist' and the 'aesthete' as stages of life separated by an absolute choice, but rather as aspects of life united through individuals striving towards defining themselves as the central point of reference in the world. In a popular understanding this is described as Nietzsche's idea of 'creating one's life as a work of art'.<sup>4</sup>

This idea has been a major inspiration for many post-modern theorists, the most influential probably being the French philosopher Michel Foucault and the American 'New Pragmatist' Richard Rorty. In Rorty's thinking, the ideas of Nietzsche are related to the continuing renegotiation of the premise of life within shifting contexts, and the resulting particularism that is the given premise for the post-modern individual. The only fact that post-modern man can relate to is the contingency of life, the absence of clearly defined permanent meaning, and the absence of unquestionable goals. Each life follows its own unique trajectory that can be radically altered from one moment to another, as a consequence of either 'internal' or 'external' circumstances that could not possibly have been foreseen. Rorty's idea of the complete lack of continuity and possibility of the earnest and engaging choice is precisely what Kierkegaard understood as characterising the aesthetic way of life.

Gernot Böhme thus points to a close relation between contemporary urban development, and the shift he identifies from a universalistic modern ethics to a particularistic post-modern aesthet/hics. This is a model that in itself seems to be related to the Nietzschean idea of shifting eras dominated by either Apollonian or Dionysian thought. Understood within this logic of Böhme, it is a shift from the Apollonian modernist principles of urban planning that dominated a major part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the pluralistic post-modern urbanism that has dominated the last 30 years. A shift from ideals, order, principles and an almost Kierkegaardian ethical earnestness in an attempt to deal with questions of urban development and the modernisation of society – this seems to be the attitude Böhme finds more attractive, to the contemporary hedonism, aestheticism and eclecticism of the post-modern approach. A shift from the large new urban neighbourhoods elaborated over Corbusian studies of geometry and the 'play of architectural volumes in the light' and Cartesian grids dealing with 'the social' through zoning,<sup>5</sup> to elaborated urban stage-designs functioning and conceptualised as a backdrop for the collective consumption of culture, lifestyle-products and for the celebration of 'publicness', 'collectiveness'

or just spare time.

Twentieth century urbanism in such a perspective is understood as something that has changed from a modern attitude based on the separation of ethics and aesthetics in a way that made urban planning a discipline well suited to incorporate both ethical and aesthetic considerations, to a post- or late-modern attitude in which the reflection of the economically stimulated aesthetisation process and the philosophical promotion of an aesthetic/hics, makes a differentiation impossible.

This is a very crude generalisation that does not seem to fit very well with the actual development within urban theory and practices of urbanism that has taken place in the 'postmodern' period.

The argument and theoretical idea of a direct relation between post-modern ethics and post-modern urbanism presented by Böhme in the paper "Ethics or Aesthetics in Architecture" make an excellent starting point for a discussion of the relation between ethics, aesthetics and contemporary urban development which is the objective of this article.

This article seeks to expand and nuance the discussion by differentiating the notion of 'post-modern urbanism'. In doing this it questions whether urban development and ethics is directly interrelated in the way Böhme has suggested, and accordingly proposes a different way of understanding the relation between the ethical, the aesthetic and urbanism.

### **Welfare states, welfare cities and the ethical critique**

The development of urban and planning theory must be seen in relation to the critique that was raised in the 1960's against the welfare state systems and the new cities planned according to modernist principles that played an important role in establishing these welfare states.

The Danish, as well as the other Scandinavian and European welfare states were established in the period following WWII, and were built on a political ideology inspired by the 'utilitarian' philosophical principle of striving for "the greatest possible happiness to the largest amount of people" (Bentham). The egalitarian

welfare state policy was being formulated as a response to the international economic crisis of the 1930's that had resulted in mass-unemployment and a set of related problems. Welfare state politics tried to implement a social safety system, equal rights to education and a democratisation of industrial production (Christiansen 1996: 7), as a means of creating stable affluent societies. A politics of redistribution based on a moral vision of equality and justice.

Central to the implementation of the welfare state vision was an economic policy inspired by the economist J.M. Keynes' ideas of a state-regulated capitalism. This economical theory was developed by Keynes as a reaction to the more or less unregulated market economy that had led to the international economic crisis around 1930. Keynes pointed to the fact that by promoting public spending and controlling interest rates, taxes and the surplus or deficit of the state budget through an economical policy, states would be able to both stimulate and control economic developments and avoid bankruptcies and mass unemployment. As a consequence of this kind of policy, the Danish state engaged in the construction of a modern industrial society, which could increase the earnings of the country, as well as a large administrative sector with well-paid employees that could buy and consume the products produced by the industry. As a part of this operation, it was necessary to construct new production facilities, new administrative buildings, new housing for the former rural population who had come to the cities to work in the new industries, just as it was necessary to construct institutions that could take care of the children and elderly of the families who were now engaged in full-time work in the new welfare state. Thus the establishment of the welfare states resulted, from the 1950's and onward, in new 'welfare cities'. This process accelerated from the beginning of the 1960's with a booming economy in Western Europe, until the beginning of the 1970's where a new international period of recession started due to the so-called oil-crisis. This shift marked the transition from what we now commonly understand as Fordism/Keynesianism, to Post-Fordism or a Global Knowledge Based Economy (Jessop 2003). But this shift can also

be seen, as I will discuss below, as part of the shift from universalism to particularism, from a politics directed towards more abstract principles of welfare and equal rights for all, to a politics focused on the right of the individual to pursue and realise his or her personally defined version of 'the good life'. And this reorientation had important consequences for the way urban planning was perceived.

The vision of a planned Danish welfare state resulted in a large planning administration as part of the big public bureaucracy that the Keynesian economic policy initiated. Within the scope of the welfare policy and its ideological goals, it became necessary to regulate and control urban growth. The first Urban Regulation Act, which gave sufficient authority to central planners to become an efficient tool, was passed in 1949.

This Urban Regulation Act was characteristic of early welfare-policy in that its purpose was to limit the most disadvantageous consequences of market forces (Skovsgaard 1981: 35). Urban planning within the welfare state was intended to be a political tool to regulate what was seen within the vision of the welfare state as the potential conflict between public and private economic interests.

But along with the first visible results of this welfare policy and the modernist urban planning, positions critical towards the ideas of modernist planning were formulated. The critique pointed to a basic paradox within the logic of welfare-planning: the complex of laws that had been formulated to protect people from being made the slaves of large unopposed conglomerations of power and capital, and to secure that the resources available to society were used for the benefit of the largest possible part of the people living within it, seemed to result in the deprivation of the right of the same people to choose for themselves. The critique revealed that societal planning balances between increasing and decreasing personal freedom, and certain critics argued for a sharp, nearly Kierkegaardian either/or distinction: welfare or freedom.<sup>6</sup>

### **Liberalist critique**

Most of the critique of planning and the welfare state system has been based on the liberalist tradition, and

it developed and increased from the 1970's and forward when Neo-liberalism was being formulated as an alternative to utilitarianism, the social-democratic equalitarian welfare ideology, and Keynesian economic policy.

Inspired by the ideas of Austrian economist and philosopher F.A. v. Hayek from the 1940's and John Rawls' A Theory of Justice (1971) people like philosopher Robert Nozick and economist Milton Friedman produced very influential ethical and economic arguments against utilitarianism and Keynesianism. The utopia of Nozick, called 'the minimal-state' (Nozick 1974), became a direct inspiration for political reforms and the attempts to 'dismantle' the welfare systems that were seen in the 1980's. These reforms were most dramatically introduced in the US and UK with the Reagan and Thatcher governments, but they were seen as a tendency in many other countries including Denmark. Neo-liberalist reforms seek to reduce state intervention as much as possible and to secure only very basic rights for its inhabitants.

This idea is related to a social-Darwinist belief in the market as a 'natural' self-regulating system that is able to give all individuals the greatest possibility of a free and satisfying life, because they are directly and fully responsible for all aspects of it.

Central to neo-liberalism is the lack of belief in the possibility of planning a just society within the framework of a large nation-state.

Hayek was convinced, as opposed to Keynes with whom he discussed this in the 1930's, that order would spontaneously occur in a social system where actors only had a partial, fragmented and changing knowledge of others and their plans (Juul Foss 1992: 185). Keynes on the other hand argued that it was exactly the lack of knowledge about the entire system, and the limited perspective of the investors and actors on the economic market, that resulted in recessions. According to Keynes the state had to secure a minimum of investments, whereas Hayek insisted that the market would regulate itself in a satisfying manner, and that centralised knowledge of the whole system Keynes proposed was impossible to acquire.

## System and life-world

The critique of large scale urban and societal planning that welfare politics resulted in was not only based on liberalist arguments. The new focus on the individual and its 'life-chances' was also caused by another kind of argument based on sociology and what was understood as the political left.

In this 'critical tradition' the work of Jürgen Habermas and his model of society as a system following separate rationalities, respectively belonging to what he called system and life-world and containing an implicit critique of western capitalistic welfare states, became important. Even though the theme of system and life-world was first made explicit in *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns* (1981), they can be found already in his *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* from 1962. Here Habermas introduced the idea that political parties, large commercial cooperations and other public and private institutions 're-feudalised' the democratic public sphere. The welfare system was not seen by Habermas as something securing democracy, but rather as something that was opposed to the life-world and the meaning, identity and solidarity that the individual 'finds' there.<sup>7</sup>

This problem occurred when welfare politics started to interfere directly in the lives of the citizens instead of only intervening in the mechanisms of the free market to protect the weak (Juul 2002: 54). As the liberalist critique has indicated, this expansion is something that lies implicit in the Keynesian model for growth.

The sociological critique was not restricted to a critique of the size and growth of welfare states. Others criticized welfare state policy for being too restricted in its focus on economic policy and redistribution. Finnish sociologist Erik Allardt's research on the 'level of welfare' of the Scandinavian countries, published in *Att Ha, Att älska, Att Vara – om välfärd i Norden* (1975) (*Having, Loving, Being – Nordic Welfare*) is a significant and influential example of this. Allardt pointed to the fact that welfare politics, based as it is on ethical considerations of what happiness and 'a good life' is and what the needs of people are, through the entire period of building the welfare states had been focused only on material issues (Allardt 1975: 7–8). Allardt's

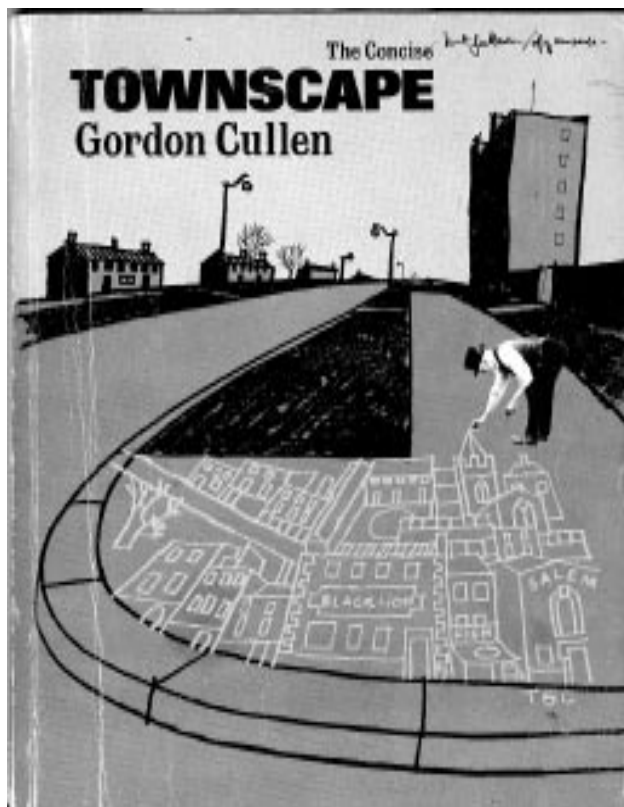
critique of redistribution policy and its focus on material issues were implicit rather than explicit – his book was a result of a research project. But by focusing on aspects like 'quality of life' and 'personal relations', he promoted the idea that welfare politics could not only be concerned with economic redistribution because personal welfare was just as dependent on the feeling of belonging to a place and a social group, and by questions of identity. The slogan-like title of Allardt's book: *Having, Loving, Being* is a good illustration of the new direction in welfare-politics from the early 1970's and on. Main issues of concern were still redistribution, but in addition the life of the individual within the system, and its possibilities of realising a life on premises based on individual needs.

The difference between the liberalist and the 'sociological' approach was obviously that the liberalists argued for a limitation of welfare-politics, whereas the more socialistic and sociological approach sought to expand the notion of welfare and thereby also the range of welfare-politics.

The similarity between the two approaches, on the other hand, is the focus on the particular individual. In general, the focus had shifted from the universalistic demands for equality and justice linked to modern rationality and the nation states, to issues concerning the 'life-world' and 'the good life'.

## The 'Good' City and the Paradigm of Identity

The aestheticisation of life and the colonization and transformation of culture by system-rationality to being focused on consumption and becoming a backdrop for the realisation of individual life-projects, have within the field of architecture and urbanism resulted in what could be called a 'paradigm of identity'. Identity-related issues have become central and a measure for every project and every decision no matter the size. Anything from the shopping habits of a particular individual, over the restructuring of companies, to gigantic urban development-projects is approached first and foremost from the notion of identity. Even nations will change or go to war to enhance, defend or adjust their 'image' and the notion of identity related to it.



The cover illustration of Gordon Cullen's *The Concise Townscape* indicates the central themes of the critique of modernist planning. The old man drawing the memory of the dense pre-WWII urban core, on the empty sidewalks of the open modernist neighbourhood he has been 'transplanted' to.

This tendency has resulted in the staging of cities to correspond to a strong and highly profiled identity, often manifested through a piece of art or architecture.<sup>8</sup>

The focus on urban identity and cities as identity-constituting physical contexts for the personal construction of identity of its inhabitants, is a result of the critique of the welfare policy and in particular the planning of welfare cities from the modernist planning principles that arose from the beginning of the 1960's. Living in, and using the new welfare cities with their new more or less (due to programmatic zoning) homogeneous quarters without historical precedence, quickly began to appear as a problem for the inhabitants that had moved there from villages or dense and old quarters of the pre-modern city. This fact, later recorded and

documented in numerous research projects such as Allardt's, began already from around 1960 to place historic urban centres and traditional urban architecture as the most important issue in the theoretical discussions of urban development.

Appreciation of the urban qualities of historic cities evolved along with the prospects of the total realization of a new, planned society and the modernistic urban utopia. The opposition against the 'insensitive' modernist approach with its idea of a historical as well as physical 'tabula rasa' as the ideal point of departure for new projects had several origins. There was, apart from the critique from liberalists and social theoreticians already mentioned, the critique from artists like the Situationists (Jorn 1947, Sadler 1999), and the internal critique from architects and planners, for instance the Team X group. In continuation of the Team X-group and their call for the 're-contextualisation' of modernism, and their interest in primitive and pre-modern urban forms, ideals developed that were directly opposed to the modernist ones of the Athens Charter. Several different approaches within this anti-modernist movement can be characterized by their common interest and foundation in an analysis of the relevance of pre-modern urban forms for post-modern urban life.

What was later to be understood as the post-modern approach perceived the city as an aesthetic artefact that held cultural and historic memory, and focused on "The Presence of the Past"<sup>9</sup>: the consolidation and expansion of the centred pre-modernist European city by the export and reproduction of 'meaning' and cultural heritage into the newly built urban 'periphery'. Aldo Rossi's Italian version of an architectural and urban structuralism based on studies of historic typologies (Rossi 1982[1966]), and Leon and Rob Krier's neo-traditional urban projects (Krier 1993/ Economakis 1992) became the most influential architectural strategies in the movement away from modernist ideals. These strategies were inspired by theoretical studies like Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* (1960), Gordon Cullen's *The Concise Townscape* (1983[1961]), and Jane Jacobs *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). These books described cities as organisms that integrated and mixed high and low, large and small, by or-



Seaside, Florida. Plan by DPZ (1980 - )

ganising houses around a continuous sequence of 'public' space in the shape of streets, squares and parks.

The re-production of a dense, integrated and centred city in the counter-modern urban projects was as a strategy to resist what was seen as the growing erosion of stability and meaning that the process of modernization resulted in. The idealisation of the early- or pre-modern cities resulted in the notion of 'the good city' being synonymous with this kind of urban form.<sup>10</sup> 'The good city' was an integrated (not

zoned) dense urban unit filled with 'public' space, and with a strong local feeling of community tied to the clearly profiled identity of either the whole city, or the neighbourhood. The idea that urban form had a decisive influence on social relations was promoted in particular by Jane Jacobs, who claimed that sense of community and belonging was a central aspect of urbanism that had been completely abandoned by the modernists in their struggle for freedom and independence from history and traditional social forms:

Le Corbusier's Utopia was a condition of what he called maximum individual liberty, by which he seems to have meant not liberty to do anything much, but liberty from ordinary responsibility. In his Radiant City nobody, presumably, was going to have to be his brother's keeper any more. Nobody was going to have to struggle with plans of his own. Nobody was going to be tied down. (Jacobs 1961: 22)

For Lynch and Cullen the question of identity was more related to orientation and the possibility of finding places and points of reference. They relate this to historic architectural monuments, and the questions of urban identity, legibility and liveability in their arguments are tied up with notions of memory, tradition and history. This theoretical work made in the beginning of the 1960's marked the beginning and the breakthrough for a 'paradigm of identity'.

Currently the New Urbanism is the primary representative for this attitude towards urban development. New Urbanism is a movement that can be seen as the modernism-critical counter piece to CIAM, as it is promoted with spokespersons and a Charter (Lecesse, McCormick 2000). This movement, dedicated to resist 'sprawlication' and suburbanisation, and to promote and build cities the way they looked before WW2,<sup>11</sup> has absorbed several of the architects of 'The Presence of the Past' exhibition, as well as some of the urban theorists discussing the role of history in the 1970's and 80's. The cities Seaside and Celebration in Florida, as well as Poundbury in England are the showpieces for New Urbanism.

With New Urbanism questions regarding the problem of identity have been radicalised. In these cities a very strict formal code is used to control the way the houses and the city look. As much as possible is being specified and designed by architects familiar with vocabulary of classical architecture. This makes the cities look remarkably orderly and homogeneous, and results in a logo-like image. The reason for such a highly profiled physical framework for identification is that cultural heritage and classical architecture are seen as an important and as a necessary 'anchor-point' for people living in a highly modernised society. Architecture is seen as a stabilising factor that has to be very visible and

recognizable (Ellefsen 1997).

## Recognition

The theoretical foundation for this idea of urbanism is as dependent on contemporary theories of recognition, communitarianism and identity-politics, as it is of the post-modern urban theory from the 1960's.

The so-called 'ethics of recognition' has played a central role in philosophical and social theoretical discussions in the last several years. It can be understood as a late development of the particularistic post-modern ethics, but in a form distancing itself from the liberalist tradition.<sup>12</sup>

The recognition in question is the recognition of the particular individual's cultural context and background, and ethics of recognition departs from Hegel's idea that one of the things individuals are striving for is recognition from their peers. In line with other post-modern theory, ethics of recognition is based on a particularistic understanding of culture and subjectivity. The idea is that people risk having their feeling of personal identity and integrity damaged if their particular virtues are not recognized. The consequence of such damage is that 'the good life' becomes impossible to achieve. In this line of thought the recognition of a particular individual, has to take place on the basis of an understanding and recognition of this individual's cultural context.

During the course of the 1990's, theories like these led to what has been called 'identity-politics', which again has been linked to discussions of neighbourhood, identity of place, local culture within urban theory, politics and planning.

In his understanding of contemporary ethics and urbanism as basically aesthetic and concerned only about 'the good life,' Gernot Böhme does not distinguish this approach from the Nietzschean inspired post-modern ethics. But there is a difference, even if particularism and concern about the good life is a common interest. Within ethics of recognition there is an idealisation of the culturally specific and outstanding, just as the local or the authentic is seen as something that has to be protected against the globalization and entropy of modernization (Lash, Featherstone





2001:6–7). As opposed to that, the liberalistic approach focuses on the liberating potentials of the same processes, and the possibilities of the individual to define an identity independent of their history, cultural context or any tradition or heritage.

### 'Almost all right'

Less than 10 years after the publication of the books by Jacobs, Lynch and Cullen, American architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown along with colleagues and students from Yale, engaged in studies of Las Vegas (1968) and Levittown (1970). When the ideas generated from these studies were published in 1972 (Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour 1994 [1972]) they became the first theoretical approach to urban theory that related positively to the built results of post WWII modernization and expansion of urban areas in the capitalist part of the world. As opposed to the studies of Jacobs, Lynch and Cullen, the object of interest was not the historic quarters of the city threatened by development, but rather, the urban areas and buildings that represented the chaos and erosion of meaning feared so much by most leading architects and urba-

nists at the time.

Venturi and Scott Brown were interested in urban areas that as a direct result of Fordism made up the physical framework for the life of the new mass-consuming middle classes produced by a Keynesianistic economic policy. These cities were not the result of a modernist vision of a new urban society, nor were they being constructed after careful consideration of the relation between built form, history, personal identity and the possibility of achieving a good life. On the contrary, their origin had to be found in opportunistic developers and their desire to create profit on the new and ever expanding markets of the western capitalist world. The objects of study chosen by Venturi and Scott Brown were the new enormous areas of mass-produced detached houses and the traditional American main streets transformed to be used by people driving in cars (with Levittown and The Las Vegas Strip being the ultimate examples). These types of urban areas made up the kind of city in which the majority of Americans lived in the 1960's.

The studies pointed to the fact that while architects and theorists were discussing the quality of historical

cities or how to transform abstract architectural ideas into built form, this kind of urban substance had evolved everywhere. And the authors argued, that this kind of urbanism was created directly for individuals, in their new incarnation as consuming and identity-constructing consumers. These trivial and heterogeneous urban areas that most architects would hate, were according to Venturi and Scott Brown, 'almost all right' (Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour 1994: 6), not only aesthetically, but also ethically because they reflected the preferences of the people living within them. And they felt it was necessary, to make the same architects Jane Jacobs rebuked just 10 years earlier for not remembering the qualities of the historic urban areas, aware of this.

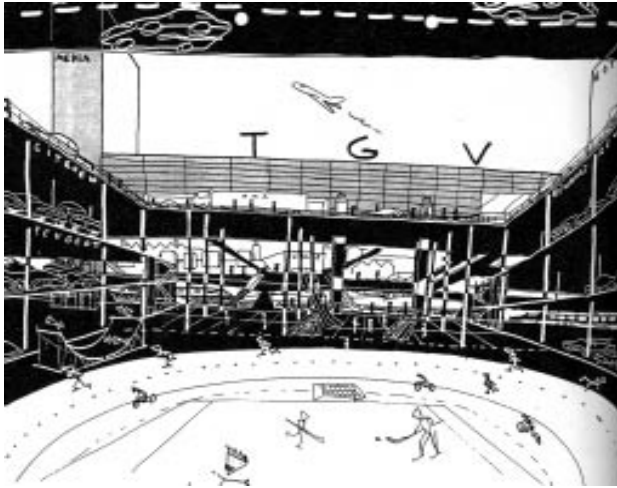
Learning from Las Vegas and *The Death and Life of the Great American Cities* both represent what could be called the post-modern interest in urban form that was a result of the activities of its users, and not some planned vision for how and where these activities should take place. Cities that 'naturally' emerged as the framework for human activity, and that had a popular appeal. But the difference in focus and the conclusions also mark two poles in the discussion about urban form and urban development in the last 40 years. Both books depart from a critical attitude towards modern architecture and urban planning, based on criticism of its lack of interest in the life lived by 'ordinary' people which as they argued resulted in alienating abstraction and 'de-contextualisation'.<sup>13</sup> Both books wanted to formulate a basis for an architecture and urbanism that directly departed from the needs of people, no matter how ordinary or un-heroic they might be. (The needs resulting in Las Vegas for example are not very heroic). But where Jacobs focuses on 19<sup>th</sup> century metropolitan cities where pedestrian activity and close social relations take place within dense urban quarters, Venturi and Scott Brown shows how the city of the car and the consumer has to be seen as urban form that directly reflects the preferred life of people in the 1960's.

Where Jacobs was interested in the heterogeneity to be found within the overall homogeneous historic city, Venturi and Scott Brown focused on the heterogen-

eity and the aesthetic and social potential of structurally heterogeneous widespread urban areas resulting from rampant post-war growth, and the mass-production of everything from washing powder, to cars, houses, and entire neighbourhoods. Where Jacobs and the other protagonists of 'the good city' argued in favour of a structural heterogeneity within the neighbourhood (with a 'natural' mixture of shops, housing, industry and institutions), the cities that Venturi and Scott Brown studied were characterised by a structural heterogeneity on the scale of the city (resulting from the development of entire neighbourhoods at one time e.g. the casinos of Las Vegas or the Levittowns of homogeneous housing), and a heterogeneity expressed on a very small scale by the individual decorations of the similar mass produced 'sheds' (Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour 1994: 87–163)

The heterogeneity characterising the urban areas that Venturi and Scott Brown described, was claimed years later by the American philosopher Fredric Jameson to be a premise for all urban development. Jameson argued that the focus on identity and difference resulted in the city developing as a series of closed enclaves only orientated against their own centre (Jameson 1991). That which Jameson labels 'the post-modern city' is a result of, on the one hand, the modernist attempts to make rational and healthy cities by zoning them functionally and on the other hand the attempt by 'the paradigm of identity' to create cities consisting of numerous different urban enclaves integrated within an urban totality subdued to one single identity and overall logic.

Jameson claims that urbanity has become a reality on a global scale. An inescapable totality that cannot be overlooked or understood from any single point of observation, and which does not allow any building to stand out, exactly because every building tries to stand out by having a clear identity-giving design, or by being radically different and distanced from the other. According to Jameson, it is no longer possible, as it was for the first modern buildings and urban areas, to stand out as something radically new and different against something pre-modern and homogeneous in the post-modern city. Any addition or restructuring of



the contemporary post-modern city is doomed to be just another part in an increasingly formless totality – an urban field of differences and enclaves (Nielsen 2001). The quest for difference through form leads to formlessness, and this is what makes cities post-modern instead of modern.

Furthermore, Jameson in 1991 points to the work of the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas as an architect that is consciously working with this relation between the urban enclave and the highly differentiated but also on an overall scale homogeneous urban context. Unlike poststructuralist architects like Peter Eisenman or Daniel Libeskind who were considered leading theorists and practitioners at the time, Koolhaas is aware that heterogeneity and meaning-constructing difference in the formless post-modern city cannot be the result of a 'design'. Koolhaas points to the fact that heterogeneity and difference in this context of formlessness cannot be designed. On the contrary, it occurs as results of the meeting and clash between the different interests and logics (economical, logistical, infrastructural, political) that determine urban development – interests and logics reasoned 'outside' the aesthetical field.<sup>14</sup>

### **The liberal city?**

The approach of Rem Koolhaas is quite different than the one found with the practices of the 'paradigm of

identity'. The basic ideas about the urbanism and urban architecture of Koolhaas were formed during his analysis from the 1970's of Manhattan and its architecture as architectural containers of urban program (Koolhaas 1994 [1978]). The New York skyscraper was a distinctly urban typology basically reasoned not by aesthetical ideas, but as a result of an external 'pressure' created by the Manhattan grid-system, the density of the city and the resulting high land values, the need for every building within this 'culture of congestion' to be able to contain a number of different and exchangeable activities, and the need for the building to have a symbolic value. The Manhattan skyscraper as a typology manages all of this at the same time. Koolhaas is interested in the kind of differentiation and hetero-



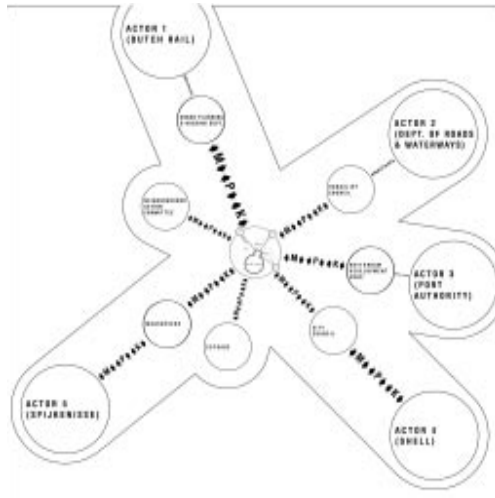


geneity in form and space created by the organisation and interlacing of the 'inhuman' logic of forces and demands formulated outside of the aesthetic domain. In Koolhaas' practice, the market, politics, culture and technology are seen and diagrammed as 'irresistible' forces 'shaping' the urban. He thinks that it is through the understanding and orchestration of these forces that the architect along with others can participate in determining how the city and the urban spaces look and work. This is quite different from the idea of modernist social engineering in which it was believed that planners could arrange the physical so that the social worked in a certain way, and also different from the idea of 'the good city' where the aesthetic – a certain kind of architecture and typology – was believed to determine that the right mixture between classes, races and professions occurred.

The idea within the work and theory of Koolhaas is basically that the creation of the urban and urban identity is seen as a continuous process, just as the process of personal self-creation taking place within it. This is an idea very different from the one of the 'paradigm of identity' that sees a stable urban identity based on well-known types as something necessary for the self-realisation of the individual.

In 1995 Koolhaas doomed the attempts of re-establishing the centred and 'meaningful' city that the early criticism of modernism and the architects working within the logic of the 'paradigm of identity' attempted. In his essay 'The Generic City' (Koolhaas 1994b) Koolhaas claimed that the pursuit of historically based identity as a means to resist the global process of de-differentiation and levelling of difference, is an impossible project that is undermining itself. Koolhaas points to the fact that the reproduction, exploitation and 'spreading out' of every piece of 'authentic' and 'local' architecture and urban environment will result in its final disappearance, because there will never be enough of it.<sup>15</sup>

Koolhaas' approach became the basis of an alternative to the 'paradigm of identity', not least because it was followed by a stream of analyses of urban growth and transformation under the premises characterized as the process of 'globalization'. Since the mid-1990's Koolhaas and others focused on the state of the generic that urban development and the pursuit of identity resulted in, and how the traditional idea of urban planning had become obsolete because it had to deal with dynamics and interests that the planning tools left over after modernist urban planning were in no way able to control.



The WIMBY!-project is an international building exhibition curated by CRIMSON – architectural historians (2001–2010), and another example of the 'Paradigm of Almost All Right'. The first figure shows what CRIMSON calls an 'Organogram': a map of the different actors that determines the development of the city. The other figure shows the PilotPlant by NL architects: a 'radical' project which integrates new educational facilities and a public space in a new landmark building by the highway. (Illustrations by CRIMSON and NL architects).

These issues are being confronted in the recent studies that Koolhaas has conducted with groups of Harvard-students.<sup>16</sup> These studies describe the results of urban developments under radically different circumstances. For instance, the boom of investment that was the result of establishing Special Economic Zones in China, within which more or less unregulated market capitalism could evolve resulted in (Koolhaas et. al. 2001), or the anarchy and absence of planning that Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, with more than 15 million inhabitants evolves under (Koolhaas et. al. 2000). These urban regions are characterised by, unlike for instance the Danish welfare cities, not being regulated by a hierarchical system of planning that has laws, regulating authorities and formulated plans for every area and on every scale.

The Koolhaas study group sees these urban regions as results of cultural evolutions that have developed 'naturally' within the overall framework of the political and economical premises. The studies reveal refined and sensitive mechanisms, which create order and coherence on separate micro-levels within these 'Darwinist' systems, and show their social, aesthetic and poetic potential. This is in a way the same dispersed urban fields of enclaves that Jameson described as the post-

modern city, but with the important difference that the Koolhaas studies argue that each enclave is highly dependant on its surroundings and oriented towards absorbing and adjusting to transformations within the network it is a part of.

Within the understanding of the neo-liberalist Friedrich Hayek, urban systems like these would probably be ideal, or at least the best possible alternatives to the state-regulated (or in Hayek's words: rational constructivist welfare-cities). At least they seem in part to verify Hayek's theories that the most competitive and flexible societies are the ones that are not planned, but only regulated on a very general level by principles of basic rights. The Chinese cities and Lagos can be described as 'knowledge networks' as Hayek understood these that collect and distribute the largest possible amount of knowledge, experience and competence within the given premises – a respectively booming and collapsed economy.

### 'The Paradigm of Almost All Right'

In relation to the Harvard studies and the attempts to describe the contemporary urban condition, Koolhaas claims that urbanism in the 1990's is stuck either in the recumbent contemplation of the post-modern city's

formlessness, or the celebration of the city as principle through attempts to revive urbanism the way it looked before the modernist breakthrough in planning and architecture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Koolhaas et al. 2001).

This is not quite true, because it was exactly into this void that Koolhaas and a generation of architects stepped in the 1990's, and thereby formulated an alternative to the 'paradigm of identity'.<sup>17</sup> This alternative can be labelled 'the paradigm of almost all right'. As an alternative to both the traditional modernist urban planning methods, as well as the models for the revival of 'the good city' the embracing of the possibilities that advanced modernity and the market has for architecture and urbanism, can be seen as a continuation of the 'almost all right' attitude of Venturi and Scott Brown.

Questions about 'identity' and the integration and creation of 'difference' are important just as they are within 'the paradigm of identity'. What is discussed in the recent projects is how and on which levels these questions have to be addressed. The projects of 'the paradigm of almost all right' can be characterised by four themes that all show important differences between this and 'the paradigm of identity' in the way they relate to the central questions of identity, difference, and the post-modern city:

1. Urban heterogeneity is not dependent on the presence of identity-creating elements on every scale, the way that it is understood within 'the paradigm of identity'.
2. The regional and the global scale, in a 'globalised' context are as important to relate to as the local.
3. Architecture and urbanism should not be considered autonomous aesthetic practices but rather as parts of an 'ecological' system with economy, politics, demands for accessibility, change, and so on as determining factors.
4. Architecture and new urban neighbourhoods cannot work as stable points of reference in a culture under continuous transformation, but rather have to work as radical cultural experiments that at the same time express and accommodate this change.

The basic attitude within 'the paradigm of almost all

right' is an acceptance of instability and the radical heterogeneity in the cities of multicultural society, where – as Jameson and others have showed – there is no formal or identity-based unity. It is cities and societies that consist of interminable amounts of people based in enormous amounts of different cultures, with each individual attached to, and connected with others of their kind – potentially all over the world. These are cities and societies that are made up of people that seek and identify with some kind of original, authentic culture, but also of people who abandon the culture they have inherited and seek opportunities to create their 'own' cultural context in order to control the premises for how they are understood, as the Nietzsche-inspired post-modern philosophy described it. The architecture and urbanism of 'the paradigm of almost all right' relates to this situation as it has been presented and discussed in the numerous publications on this kind of contemporary architecture in recent years.<sup>18</sup>

What obviously makes up a central point for a criticism of this approach is that by declining from trying to change anything radically, one radically blurs the line that separates sheer opportunism from a relevant urbanist praxis, revealing and exploiting the current state of things to the benefit of either a vaguely defined public, or individuals with certain interests.

### **The third way and the reformation of the welfare cities**

The end of the cold war came to mean a widespread identification between capitalism and market-economy and the democratic political systems that it had been 'living with' in the so-called 'western world' since WWII. The market was seen as something 'true' that reflected, if not a utopia or an ideal, then at least the beliefs, preferences and interests of 'the people'. In this situation market-regulated competition was associated with the idea of democracy and the highest ideals of freedom for the individual (Fukuyama 1989, Rasmussen 1993).

Within this post-cold-war-climate the so-called 'third way' politics evolved and developed. The 'third way' is in principle a pragmatic, post-ideological approach to politics which has no ideology as foundation and no utopias as goal, because ideologies and utopias – such



VINEX-housing in a 'radical' version by MVRDV. Hageneiland, The Hague, NL (1998-2002)



Jakriborg near Lund in Sweden is a Scandinavian example of the 'new old' cities currently being constructed

as the strikes and conflicts in the 1970's and 80's had showed – can paralyse economy and thus become a hindrance for the creation of stability and economical growth, which are given priority.

'Third way' politics and its new form of 'social-liberalism' has been the most used model for the renewal of the welfare state model that since the beginning of the 1970's has been in a state of permanent crisis.

This is the political situation that has defined the conditions for the development of urbanism and architecture since the beginning of the 1990's. Within this development, the situation in the Netherlands is especially interesting, because there the renewed political agenda and the changes in the way the welfare state is administered have had a profound influence on urban development and the production of architecture.<sup>19</sup>

What has been understood and promoted (to a large degree by institutions sponsored by the Dutch government) as the special Dutch architecture has since the mid-1990's dominated journals and books about contemporary architecture and urbanism internationally. The new Koolhaas-inspired generation of architects that creatively reinvented urbanism according to the new global situation and the premises set by what Koolhaas labelled 'The Regime of €€\$'<sup>20</sup> were admired by their colleagues outside the Netherlands (Speaks 2002). Within a few years, new strategies for handling

the continuous growth of urban areas, new hybrid urban building types and urban landscapes that could meet the increasing demands for collective space made by large numbers of creative consumers of leisure, and housing for the 'new ways of living' of the 'liberal ironicists' in search of a new personal identity, were developed (Ibelings 2000, Lootsma 2000).

The political and economical situation in the Netherlands turned out to be ideal for the development of the radical experiments that characterise 'the paradigm of almost all right' within architecture and planning. They were radical experiments, but it is important to notice, that they were not radical in the way of actually questioning the existing political framework, the power of the large economical actors, or the development of a globally oriented network society. This approach has been labelled 'Fresh Conservatism', by critic Roemer van Toorn (van Toorn 1997).

One of the central premises has been the liberalised Dutch housing market. The so-called VINEX-program was a direct result of the adaptation of the classical welfare policy under the 'third way' government. The ambition was housing for all, and the construction of 1 million new homes over a 20-year period. The means to fulfil this ambition was to free the housing-organisations from their debts on the condition that they, in the future, would operate without subsidies and on

market conditions.

The VINEX-programme and general building boom in the Netherlands gave made work for a lot of architects who, through for example their unconventional and 'fresh' approach to the renewal of architectural language, developed a distinct modern and radical identity. This made the houses saleable on the difference- and identity-consuming liberalised market, and served the promotion of The Netherlands as a progressive, reformed welfare society – the Dutch miracle (Speaks 2002: 66).

But interestingly, it was not only the architecture of 'the paradigm of almost all right' that worked well within the new welfare-society model. The architecture and urbanism of 'the paradigm of identity' proved to work at least as well on the liberalised housing market; maybe even better than in the 1970's and 80's where the public planning system and the subsidised housing cooperation, even when their goal was defined as 'the good city', did not succeed in realising it.

The characteristic images of new dense and coherent cities based on pre-modern typologies that filled the architectural journals in the 1970's and 80's, returned in the 90's as actual built environments. Not only as New Urbanism-cities in the US, but also in the large European urbanised regions, where historical neighbourhoods and houses were sold to critical consumers wanting characteristic homes and strong aesthetic individual statements for the money they invested. In the Netherlands, as one of the most developed of the 'new welfare-societies' this is particularly evident. Cities like Brandevort by Helmond, Haverleij by s'Hertogenbosch, and others (Kähler 2002/ Raith, van Gool 2002) have been constructed at the same time as new urban areas that were results of the ideas related to what has here been labelled 'the paradigm of almost all right', like for instance Leidsche Rijn by Utrecht or Hageneiland by The Hague.

### **From 'universitas' to 'societas'**

It is obvious that the welfare city has changed dramatically since its post WWII birth, the result of the marriage between utilitarian welfare state politics and the modernist ideals of planning and architecture. From

being conceived and constructed as a city for everybody, a designed and planned whole where different activities took place in different but integrated parts that relating to an overall plan, it has mutated into being a city where the individual (the strongest 2/3 at least), can pursue the life they desire in the different environments required. A city where the individual is given the opportunity to 'express themselves' by furnishing their own 'personal' part of the city according to their own aesthetic preferences that, importantly, do not have to be modern and do not have to fit into the aesthetic of the overall scheme, but can be very different.

The development in political rhetoric and ideals that also urbanists have to relate to, not only in places like the Netherlands, but also in Denmark, show a shift from the 'classic' welfare state ideals of the inclusion of everyone and thereby also a levelling out of differences, to ideals of the liberation of everyone to pursue their own projects.

This is in line with the ideas within the philosophy of recognition and identity-politics that has argued that we now live in multi-cultural societies, where not only immigrants have a culture different from the majority, and where no culture should have the right to dominance and censorship traditionally claimed by the majority. All people must be seen as individuals and must be recognised for their particular virtues and capacities, and everybody must be able to claim the rights that their special situation may require.

This development that can be understood positively within both neo-liberal and communitarian lines of thought and can be understood as a shift from 'universitas' to 'societas', or fit into this context, from welfare state to welfare society. As opposed to a 'universitas', a 'societas' cannot define life-goals for its members, but it allows anybody to pursue an indefinite number of life-goals. A 'societas' can, more than anything else, be defined as an open 'community' (Christensen/Jepesen 1990: 16–17).

The consensus-seeking policy of 'third way' social-liberalism can be seen as a practical way of dealing with the political problems inevitably produced by this shift from a state of equal human beings, to a society of



different individuals. A welfare society is destined to be haunted by innumerable disputes between different individuals and groups over their rights. The so called NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard) is a symptom of this, and an example that issues regarding urban territory, the question about the identity or 'image' of certain urban enclaves in a 'societas' take on great importance.

The negotiation model – also known as the Polder model due to its Dutch inheritance – is a tool invented as part of consensus politics for avoiding those kinds of disputes that, like conflicts based on ideological differences, can prevent the continuous development and growth of society. The basic principle of the negotiation model is that different groups and actors related to a certain project through representatives engage in negotiations behind closed doors. In this forum all interests, scepticism and possible disagreements can be presented and discussed, but the group negotiating has to come up with a realisable agreement that hereafter cannot be discussed.

This model has turned out to be efficient in 'getting the work done', but clearly also implies a democratic problem. Obviously because it is difficult to control what is going on behind closed doors, and problematic in terms of bringing further discussion to a halt, but not least of all because the particularly difficult political problems where it is simply not possible to negotiate a 'solution' must be left un-confronted.

As a consequence of this, it was no surprise that the Netherlands became the place where the first significant political opposition against 'third way' politics and the consensus-model was being formulated. Pim Fortuyn made a political career for himself by revealing the impotence of the 'purple' coalition in confronting central political issues like security- and immigration policy.

### **Conclusion: Ethics, Aesthetics and Urban Development** Convergence

Urban theory has since the beginning of the 1960's been focused on issues regarding how architecture and planning can depart directly from the desires of individuals to become physical spaces that can work as a reference for identification, and how to mobilise the desires of these individuals as a foundation for shaping



The mutation of the 'Garden City'. From its original state (Letchworth by Unwin and Parker, 1903); into 'Heimat-village' in Nazi-Germany (Heinkel factory, Oranienburg, by Herbert Rimpl, 1936); social democratic welfare-state housing (Denmark, DAL's typehuskontor, 1961); and finally corporate neo-traditional Disney-town (Celebration, by Robert Stern 1996).

the physical environment. As Gernot Böhme maintains, the critique of modernism within architecture and urbanism has been developed around the concern of building for the individual (Böhme 2003).

As described above, this post-modern urbanism has been defined around two primary ideas: 'the paradigm of identity' with its roots in the theories about the superiority of the pre- and early modern city, and 'the paradigm of almost all right' rooted in the theories of 'the ugly and the ordinary' by Venturi and Scott Brown, and the interest in the building and urban environments that develop as a reflex of the market and its reading, and of stimulation of individual desire.

With the increasing entrustment of urban development to the private initiative and the tendency to a more populist housing and planning-policy – as a result of the adjustment of welfare-politics to a new global order of capitalism – the dominance of the two paradigms is set to continue and expand. The identity- and difference-seeking models of post-modern urbanism work as integrated parts of an economy based on the unregulated competition of an open market, and they seem to work best under the most liberalist political conditions, as opposed to the modernist models of urban planning that depended on enormous public investments as well as a coherent long-term public policy. This goes for both the refined use of the pre-modern urban typology to create attractive shopping environments and housing districts, and for the radical architectural and technological experiments with new ways of living, and new facilities for the leisure consumers of contemporary society.

This development opposed by Gernot Böhme and others can be understood as populist, in the way it seeks "the mobilisation of people as individuals and not as parts of a social-economical category" (Vanstiphout



'Pig City', project by MVRDV (2001)

2002: 47).

The development seen under the 'third way' politics in the Netherlands and in other places during the 1990's reveals the result of the transformation processes taking place since the beginning of the 1960's. The process that began with the criticism of the universalistic idea of a welfare state and the attempt to reach justice through equality, can now be understood as a development from a welfare state to a welfare society where the dominant idea is that justice can only be achieved (if ever) if the point of reference is the particular individual and their need for recognition and for self-creation. These ideas of particularity and recognition that originated as a part of the criticism of universalistic ethics, egalitarian welfare-state politics and modernist urban planning respectively, has blended with commercial market strategies and the political strategies of contemporary social-liberal democracies.

In this situation it has turned out that the majority of people are much more conservative than avant-garde theorists and architects have often expected. In the



Tom Nielsen, architect, PhD  
The Aarhus School of Architecture  
Tom.Nielsen@a-aarhus.dk

political context, nationalism and conservatism have proven to be successful political issues to promote. The commercial development has, as Böhme also stressed, turned its focus on 'authentic' environments like the old urban centres of the European cities. They have become competitive in a contest with the 'generic' modernist shopping malls, and have therefore been transformed into a new generation of malls. The 'good' 'pre-welfare' city touches the popular mind and can be used as backdrop for selling both political issues and consumer products to a majority of the individuals of the welfare society. The decision to reconstruct the baroque castle in the centre of Berlin is a spectacular example of this (Sewing 2002: 26), but the phenomenon is seen also in Denmark, for example with the many projects all over the country for the reconstruction and revitalisation of historic urban centres and the ban on constructing exurban shopping centres is a part of this policy at national level. This kind of policy can be understood within the logic of 'the paradigm of identity'.

#### An ethical urbanism?

The ongoing repetition and displacement of any significant cultural phenomenon, and the continuous cannibalisation by the market of both new and old ideas, are basic premises for both criticism and for the ideas related to the formulation of specific plans for urban development. Just as the individual living within the aestheticised culture must constantly be prepared to adjust to a new reality and undertake the search for a new personal identity in order to be recognised as a unique and authentic person, architects, planners and critics, also have to continuously reposition and reinvent their vocabulary if they want their work to be

recognised and make a difference. Any model for explanation or specific action will always lose its meaning and impetus when repeated in many different contexts. Regarding urbanism this can be seen in the way both modernist and modernist-critical models have been harnessed for almost any political or ideological project during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The garden city model by Ebenezer Howard and the idea of combining the best of the city with the best of the countryside and avoiding the rest was originally conceived as a village-like environment with good infrastructural connections to a larger urban centre. But during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this model was realised as modernist housing districts with large apartment buildings, as large areas of mass-produced detached houses for the middle-classes built immediately adjacent to the historic urban cores, as low-dense housing enclaves, as model for 're-decorating' and re-vitalising the large modernist housing areas as villages, and most recently for New Urbanism housing enclaves in classical style.<sup>21</sup>

The principles of a 'good' city that Jane Jacobs developed in the 1960's have since their formulation been used as the basis for the construction of exclusive housing-ghettos for rich Americans under the same label of New Urbanism, for a highly successful 'revitalisation' of the (by Jacobs and her followers) much despised shopping malls for the middle classes.

And finally, the radical aesthetic experiments formulated within the framework of consensus politics, can be used for the propaganda against exactly this political system, as Pim Fortuyn demonstrated by the use of a project for 'Pig Cities' by Dutch 'radical' architects MVRDV in his populist political programme.<sup>22</sup>

The different attempts to redefine the modernist project and to a greater extent, base planning on a particularistic individual-based ethic focused either on questions about identification and recognition, or on the democratic and liberating potential of the market seem to be converging.

'The good city' has developed into historic stage sets around contemporary life, as a result of its competitiveness on the market. But these 'authentic', 'whole' urban enclaves of housing or leisure are highly depen-

dant upon infrastructure and generic buildings for production and storage other places in the urban region.

'The liberal city' of the individual, that in a way, as Frederic Jameson argued, is also the radicalised modern city, and the aesthetic discourses formulated in direct response to the globalisation processes and the dominance of economic logic, also seem, to a large extent, to be a city that is made up of the same well-known and popular building types as 'the good city'.

The pragmatic and liberal attitude to urban development also results in heterogeneous cities of neo-traditional areas mixed with infrastructure and more modern and 'rational' building structures.

The autopilot that Rem Koolhaas in the essay "Whatever happened to Urbanism" (Koolhaas 1994a: 961–62) suggested was steering the city and thereby ridiculing all attempts by planners to control it, seems to be firmly locked on a trajectory leading the cities to a point of total redemption of the popular event-city that is the result of the collaborative rationality of public/private partnerships and the reading of the soul of the people through the stock-indexes.

Contemporary urban development suggests that any ideological content and any ethical consideration can be combined with any urbanist model. That makes the idea of an ethical – or un-ethical for that matter – urbanism problematic. The same can be said for the possibility of architects deciding and differentiating between the ethical and the aesthetical in the way Gernot Böhme calls for.

The appeal for a 'new ethics' of contemporary critics<sup>23</sup> seems to be no more than a theoretical exercise impossible to translate into specific action and projects. An ethical urbanism can only be created retroactively by theory.

## Notes

1. The model was presented at the "Architecture, Aesth/Ethics, and Religion" symposium at the University of Trondheim, May 2001 and has later been published in two halves in respectively: Frankfurter Rundschau and Neue Züricher Zeitung: "Fangball spielen mit dem ganzen Dasein? Ethik oder Ästhetik – eine Erinnerung an

Sören Kierkegaard gegen den heutigen Zeitgeist". In: FR 30.7.2002, 20, and "Wird Architektur zur Bühnenbildnerie? Aspekte von Ethik und Ästhetik in der Baukunst". In: NZZ 25./26.1.03, S. 53.

2. Kierkegaard's theory on the stages of life included three universal stages that the individual can inhabit. One can be religious, an ethicist or an aesthete. The religious and the ethical stages are the highest because they are based on earnest and inner personal experience, whereas the aesthetic way of life is related to 'the world of the outside'. The ethicist acts and chooses responsibly and earnestly between what is good and bad, whereas the choices of the aesthete always depend on the particular situation – of what is pleasant right now. The choices of the aesthete can always be made over when something new and attractive appears (Lübcke 1998: 236–241).
3. "Modernity then construed the opposition of the two disciplines differently, namely as being one of two equi-ponderant spheres which were to be kept separated. Autonomy, the modern watchword of aesthetics, originally meant keeping aesthetics free of ethical stipulations. Conversely, aesthetic viewpoints have had no role to play for modern ethics since Kant. But the traditional model of an ethical preponderation over the aesthetic and the modern model of an autonomous neutrality between the two spheres have been disburdened in the last few years by a new attentiveness to entanglements between the ethical and the aesthetic. [...] Generally we are today recognizing that the different realms and disciplines – as opposed to the way imagined by the modern differentiation theorem and separation precept – are determined by entanglement. This requires the transition from a separative to an entangled form of thought. [...] The neologism 'aesthet/hics' – formed by the contraction of 'aesthetics' and 'ethics' – is meant to designate those parts of aesthetics which in themselves contain ethical elements." Welsch 1997: 60–61.
4. Peter Thielst writes about this: "Any person, any life is a work that we ourselves are seeking and creating from a motive of becoming self-identical, and at the same time make a mark on our life that makes a difference and that shows that we not only are capable of dealing with ourselves but also with life and existence." (Thielst 2001: 280)
5. I am referring to CIAM-modernism, and the ideas in the Athens Charter, which was dominated by the designed urban visions of the architect Le Corbusier.
6. This either/or distinction was made by one of the sharpest critics of the Danish welfare-state in the 1960's, literate Johan Fjord-Jensen: "The conflict and the problem consists in the fact that every improvement, every welfare benefit is achieved at the expense of a loss of indepen-

dence, by the deprivation of freedom. In a radicalised and a little unjust formulation one could say that the choice is between the welfare and the freedom of the individual. Even more radicalised one could state that this choice has already been made, because planning would not be planning if freedom had not been prioritised lower than welfare." (Fjord Jensen 1965: 17, translated form Danish by TN)

7. "When Habermas speaks of a colonization of the life-world, it is to be understood literally as a limitation of the citizen's prospect of mastering his or her own life. The colonization is seen in the way 'imperatives' from the governing media power and money subdue ever greater parts of normal everyday life. The life-world has become an object for state administration, as it is significantly seen in the integration and 'legalization' of vital aspects of life such as family and education into the state apparatus. Schools and universities works as the superior authority that administers chances of life and job-possibilities. Culture (primarily understood as spare time activities) is increasingly integrated in, and shaped by, market economic interests. As an inseparable part of the intended function of relief, the system acts back on the life-world as a strain." (Dehs 2001: 20, translated form Danish by TN)
8. The Guggenheim-Bilbao project from the 1990's is the standard illustration for this.
9. 'The Presence of the Past' was the theme of the 1st International Architecture Exhibition in Venice, held in 1980. This exhibition represented the 'breakthrough' for what has later been understood as 'postmodern urbanism'. The exhibition showed the work of architects that involved references to historic architecture in their attempts to develop alternatives to modernism. See (Portoghesi 1980)
10. In the introduction to his later book 'Good City Form' (1981), Kevin Lynch claims that "Anyone knows what a good city is. The only serious question is how to achieve it." (Lynch 1985 [1981]: 2)
11. The Charter of New Urbanism states: "We stand for the restoration of existing urban centres and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighbourhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy. We advocate the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following principles: neighbourhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice." (Leccese, McCormick 2000: v-vi)
12. The two most influential philosophers of 'recognition' have been Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth (successor of Jürgen Habermas as professor at Institut für Sozialforschung at the Goethe University in Frankfurt). Departing from Hegel's notion of recognition, Axel Honneth has worked with the question of the identity-creation of the contemporary individual. Charles Taylor works from the same basic idea. His essay *Multiculturalism: The Politics of Recognition* (1992) broadly popularised the idea of recognition. Taylor is also reckoned to be one of the communitarian philosophers along with Michael Walzer, Michael Sandel and Alasdair MacIntyre.
13. Modernism was obviously also interested in humans, but as an abstract ideal. The ideal of 'Man' as principle resulted in scientific analyses of spatial needs that were assumed to result in 'human' architecture and cities, when transformed into built form. Le Corbusier's invention and extensive use of 'The Modulor', a system based on the measures of an ideal human, exemplifies this.
14. Jameson describes his understanding of this: "But the originality of Koolhaas (as theoretician and architect alike) is that his work does not simply glorify differentiation in the conventional pluralist ideological way: rather he insists on the relationship between this randomness and freedom and the presence of some rigid, inhuman, nondifferential form that enables the differentiation of what goes on around it [...]. Thus the free spaces are enabled by the rigidity of the framework. It is almost a political paradigm in the sense that the combination of formal requirements of a certain order without content permits all kinds of forms of freedom or disorder within the interstices." (Jameson/Speaks: 33)
15. Koolhaas says: "To the extent that identity is derived from physical substance, from the historical, form context, from the real, we somehow can't imagine that anything contemporary – made by us – contributes to it. But the fact that human growth is exponential implies that the past will at some point become too 'small' to be inhabited and shared by those alive. We ourselves exhaust it. [...] Identity conceived as this form of sharing the past is a losing proposition: not only is there – in a stable model of continuous population expansion – proportionally less and less to share, but history also has an individual half-life – as it is more abused, it becomes less significant – to the point where its diminishing hand-outs become insulting. This thinning is exacerbated by the constantly increasing mass of tourists, an avalanche that, in a perpetual quest for 'character', grinds successful identities down to meaningless dust. Identity is like a mou-

- setrap in which more and more mice have to share the original bait, and which, on closer inspection, may have been empty for centuries." (Koolhaas 1994b: 1248)
16. As a part of The Harvard Design School Project on the City conducted by Koolhaas and running since 1996.
  17. This was architects and practices like MVRDV, West 8, Xaveer de Geyter, Raoul Bunschoten, Stan Allen, CRIMSON, ONE Architecture, The Periferique group, and others.
  18. See for instance: Koolhaas, et.al 1995 /Maas, van Rijs, Koek, 1998/ Kuper, 1997/Ibelings 2000.
  19. The so called 'purple' government, a coalition of the neo-liberals (WD), the labour-party (PvdA) and liberal left (D66) ruling The Netherlands between 1994–2002 has been one of the most exemplary 'third-way' political systems of the period. The Dutch merging of liberalistic and social-democratic politics into a social-liberalist blend is directly comparable to the third-way politics of Tony Blair's New Labour, and the renewed politics of German SPD and Gerhard Schröder. The current Danish liberal government (2001–) is also leading a social-liberalistic policy.
  20. 'The Regime of ¥€\$' is a notion describing the premises for urbanism in a globalised world based on a market-regulated flexible and open distribution of knowledge, money and products: "Through our work, it has become apparent that we now live in a completely different condition. Providing some kind of trademark for this change is an acronym formed from the three major currencies of the world – the yen, the euro, and the dollar – which together spell the word ¥€\$. It is important to realise that we no longer operate in a state of absolute confidence but that we are labouring under the regime of ¥€\$. My contributions to the Any conferences over the past couple of years have been to try to identify what the consequences of this ¥€\$ are for the urban condition on the one hand, and on the other, for architecture itself." (Koolhaas 2001: 184).
  21. See Crimson: "Utopia Now" (<http://www.crimsonweb.org/projecten/utopia/utopiabook2.swf>).
  22. 'Pig Cities' was a project that proposed the construction of 'Pig Cities': 40-storey tall building for the production of meat, placed in the new industrial zone of the Maasvlakte as a proposal to reuse farmland, to rationalize production and to improve conditions for the animals. It is

said that Pim Fortuyn's promotion of this project was a decisive reason for his assassination by an environmental activist, May 2000 (Brandlhuber/Kuhnert/Schindler 2002: 20).

23. See Gernot Böhme (2001), Fuksas (2000), Kwinter (1999), Lootsma (2002) and van Toorn (lecture 'Lost in Paradise/ Fresh Conservatism, AAA, 13.02.2003)

## References

- Allardt, Erik (1975) *Att Ha, Att Älska, Att Vara – om välfärd i Norden*, Lund: Argos Förlag
- Brandlhuber, A., N. Kuhnert, & S., Schindler (2002) „Die Versuchung des Populismus“, *Arch+*, Vol. 35, No.162, p. 20–25
- Böhme, Gernot (2001) "Ethics or Aesthetics in Architecture", paper presented at "Architecture, Aesth/Ethics, and Religion" symposium at the University of Trondheim, May 2001. To be published in 2004 in Bergmann, S. (ed.), *Architecture, Aesth/Ethics and Religion*, Frankfurt am Main: Verlag für interkulturelle Kommunikation (IKO).
- Christensen, Søren & Morten Haugaard Jeppesen (1990) "Richard Rortys pragmatisme – fra hermeneutisk konversation til romantisk innovation", *Slagmark*, No. 16, p. 5–19.
- Christiansen, Niels Finne (1996) "Velfærdsstaten – et socialdemokratisk projekt?", *Social Kritik* Vol. 8., No. 44, 4–9
- Cullen, Gordon (1983 [1961]) *The Concise Townscape*, London: The Architectural Press.
- Dehs, Jørgen (2001) "Jürgen Habermas – Rekonstruktion af fornuftspotentialet i det moderne samfund", arbejdsrapport Forskerskolen, Århus: Arkitektskolen i Aarhus.
- Economakis, Richard (ed.) (1992) *Leon Krier – Architecture & Urban Design 1967–1992*, London: Academy Editions.
- Ellefsen, Karl Otto (1997) "Tilbake til framtida? – The New Urbanism", *Byggekunst* No. 3, 13– 15.
- Fjord Jensen, Johan (1965) "Planlægningens dilemma – Velfærd eller frihed", *Louisiana Revy* Vol. 5, No. 3, 14–18.

- Fuksas, Massimiliano (2000) "Less Aesthetics More Ethics", in *Less Aesthetics More Ethics*, biennalekatalog, Venezia: La Biennale di Venezia.
- Fukuyama, Francis (1989) "The End of History?", *The National Interest*, (<http://www.wku.edu/~sullib/history.htm>)
- Habermas, Jürgen (1974 [1962]) *Borgerlig offentlighet – Henimot en teori om det borgerlige samfunn*, Oslo: Fremad
- Habermas, Jürgen (1981) *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Band 1+2), Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag,
- Ibelings, Hans (ed.) (2000) *The Artificial Landscape*, Rotterdam: NAI Publishers.
- Jacobs, Jane (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York: Random House.
- Jameson, Fredric & Michael Speaks (1992) "Envelopes and Enclaves: The Space of Post-Civil Society", *Assemblage*, No 17, p. 30–37.
- Jameson, Fredric (1991) "Demographies of the Anonymous", in Davidson C. (ed.) *ANYone*, New York: Rizzoli, p. 47–61.
- Jessop, Bob (2003) "Recent Societal and Urban Change: Principles of Periodization and their Application to the Current Period", in *Urban Mutations*, Albertsen, N., Hemmersam, P., Nielsen, T. (ed), Aarhus: Arkitekt-skolens forlag.
- Jorn, Asger (1947) "Menneskeboliger eller Tankekonstruktioner i beton", *Arkitekten Ugehæfte*, Vol. XLIX, NO. 16–17, p. 61–68.
- Juul Foss, Nicolai (1992) "Friedrich Hayek", in Juul Foss, N., Kurrild-Klitgaard, P. (ed) *Etik, marked og stat. Liberalismen fra Locke til Nozick*, København: Handelshøjskolens Forlag, p.180–201.
- Juul, Søren (2002) *Modernitet, velfærd og solidaritet – En undersøgelse af danskernes moralske forpligtelser*, København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Kierkegaard, Søren (1994[1843]) *Enten – Eller*, København: Gyldendal.
- Koolhaas, Rem (et.al) (1995) *S, M, L, XL*, Rotterdam: 010 Publishers.
- Koolhaas, Rem (1994 [1978]) *Delirious New York – A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, Rotterdam: 010 Publishers.
- Koolhaas, Rem (1994a) "What Ever Happened to Urbanism?", in Koolhaas, R. (et.al) 1995, p. 956–971.
- Koolhaas, Rem (1994b) "The Generic City", in Koolhaas, R (et.al) 1995, 1238–1264.
- Koolhaas, Rem (2001) "The Regime of ¥€\$", in Davidson, C. (ed.) *Anything*, Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press with Anyone Corporation, p. 180–188.
- Koolhaas, Rem (et. al.) (2000) "Lagos", in Lavalou, A. (ed.), *Mutations*, Barcelona: ACTAR, p. 650–720.
- Koolhaas, Rem (et. al.) (2001) *Great Leap Forward*, Köln: Taschen.
- Krier, Rob (1993) *Rob Krier – Architecture and Urban Design*, Architectural Monographs No 30, London: Academy Editions.
- Kuper, Marijke (ed.) (1997) *Nine + One*, Rotterdam: NAI publishers.
- Kwinter, Sanford (1999) "La Trahision des Clercs", *Arch+*, No. 146, p. 84–86.
- Kähler, Gert (2002) "Holland goes Hollywood", *Arch+*, Vol. 35, No. 162, p. 74–75.
- Lash, Scott & Mike Featherstone (2001) "Recognition and Difference – Politics, Identity, Multiculture", *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 18, No. 2–3, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishers, p. 1–19.
- Lavalou, A. (ed.) (2000) *Mutations*, Barcelona: ACTAR.
- Leccese, Michael & Kathleen McCormick (ed.) (2000) *Charter of the New Urbanism*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Lootsma, Bart (2002) "Marktpopulismus in der niederländischen Architektur", *Arch+*, Vol. 35, No.162, p. 58–63.
- Lootsma, Bart (2000) *Superdutch – New Architecture in the Netherlands*, London: Thames and Hudson.
- Lootsma, Bart (1999) "Eine Entgegnung auf Sanford Kwinter", *Arch+*, nr. 146, p. 87–88.
- Lübcke, Poul (ed.) (1998 [1983]) *Politikens filosofi leksikon*, København: Politikens Forlag.
- Lynch, Kevin (1960) *The Image of the City*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Lynch, Kevin (1985 [1981]) *Good City Form*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Maas, W., J. van Rijs, & R. Koek (1998) *FARMAX – Excursions on Density*, 010 Publishers, Rotterdam.
- Nielsen, Tom (2001) *Formløs – den moderne bys*

- overskudslandskaber, Aarhus: Arkitekt skolens forlag.
- Nozick, Robert (1974) *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Portoghesi, Paolo (1980) "The End of Prohibitionism", *The Presence of the Past*, Edizioni 'La Biennale di Venezia', Venedig p. 9–13.
- Raith, F.B. & Rob van Gool (2002) "Planungsstrategien nach dem Poldermodell", *Arch+*, Vol. 35, No 162, p. 68–73.
- Rasmussen, Anders Fogh (1993) *Fra socialstat til minimalstat – En liberal strategi*, København: Samleren.
- Rawls, John (1971) *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Rossi, Aldo (1982 [1966]) *The Architecture of the City*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Rudofsky, Bernard (1965) *Architecture without Architects*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- Sadler, Simon (1999) *The Situationist City*, Cambridge, MIT Press.
- Sewing, Walter (2002) "No more Learning from Las Vegas", *Arch+*, Vol. 35, No.162, p. 26–29.
- Skovsgaard, Carl-Johan (1981) *Byudvikling – Politik og Administration*, København: Samfundsvidenskabeligt Forlag.
- Speaks, Michael (2002) „Niederländisch™“, *Arch+*, No 162, p. 64–67.
- Thielst, Peter (2001) *Det sande, det gode og det skønne*, Frederiksberg: Det lille forlag.
- van Toorn, Roemer (1997) "Fresh Conservatism. Landscapes of normality", <http://www.xs4all.nl/%7ervvtoorn/fresh.html>.
- van Toorn, Roemer (2002) "Lost in paradise", *Architecture Yearbook, 2001–2002*, (Hoogewoning, A., Volland, P., Wortmann, A., van Toorn, R.) ed., Nai Publishers, Rotterdam.
- Vanstiphout, Wouter (2002) "Crimson und Lila", *Arch+*, Vol. 35, No.162, p. 44–49.
- Venturi, Robert, Denise Scott Brown, Steve Izenour (1994 [1972]) *Learning from Las Vegas*, Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Welsch, Wolfgang (1997) *Undoing Aesthetics*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishers.
- <http://www.crimsonweb.org>  
<http://www.guggenheim-bilbao.es/ingles/historia/historia.htm>  
<http://www.seasidefl.com/>  
<http://www.celebrationfl.com/>