

Monu

magazine on urbanism

Scrap and Build

EX Gas Stations

A Guide to Visiting Cities

How Suburbs Destroy
Democracy

No Slush

and more...

DENIED URBANISM

forgotten, excluded and repressed forms of urban life

#04

soft urban structure - Mixed low-rise residential areas - Smooth accesses - urban zones - normal predicaments of human divinity - suburban civilizations - corrosive effects on democratic life - spatial patterns of social life - neglected developments and missed potentials - Fake Items - Chinese Counterfeit Bombs

UNIKASSEL
VERSITÄT

This issue of Monu is the biggest yet – in many ways. We received an unprecedented number of contributions reflected in a denser layout and a nevertheless new page-count record. The readership of Monu-especially the online version seems to be growing fast and on all continents and regions of the world. A lot of good news for a magazine that started out as an experimental project.

From **TOKYO** to **LOCKHART TEXAS**, from suburbs and informal settlements to the biggest representational buildings in capital cities, from **HELSINKI** to **JERUSALEM**, this issue offers a dazzling journey around the world to forms and episodes of urban life that have one thing in common: they lead a precarious existence, in our perceptions and in recognition of what is viable ‘urban’ life or - more drastically - are actually threatened in their existence. It is not only le Corbusiers famous “the eyes that cannot see” or don’t want to see, but sometimes also that which the eyes do not want to see (any longer). However as many of the contributions in this issue show clearly most of the time both of those symptoms of denying urbanism are happening simultaneously and are faces of the same coin.

And the blindness and ignorance seems to be global and escapes narrow definitions of political ideology and even the categories of benevolent planners. Preservation of buildings and the neglect of destruction does not necessarily protect urban life – quite the opposite as **Yoshiharu Tsukamoto** and **Jorge Almazán** suggest in their article about **TOKYO**. More dramatically, historic preservation or reconstruction can also be a strategy to rewrite the history of a place, as if to erase the traces of another population as is happening in **LIFTA-ISRAEL**.

Size does not matter for the concept of denied urbanism – at least looking at the contributions. A small informal settlement on the fringes of the inner city of **COLOGNE** can be subject to the same mix of willful ignorance and the desire to create a clean city just as the **Palast der Republik in BERLIN**– the biggest representational building of the former GDR.

More often than not there are many sides from which one can see the denial. On the one hand **Suburbia** – the denying of urban life has profound negative consequences for democracy as **Michael Thompson** argues. On the other hand **Michael Nelson** sees potential in home owner associations as a particular form of governance that is massively emerging in suburban contexts and that is widely ignored at least among the mainstream planning community.

Again there is no easy answer to these dilemmas. At the very least these issues warrant a careful look and some discussion and this issue we hope at least makes a small contribution to that effect.

We wish to thank all the people who made this issue possible. First of all those who contributed to this magazine, unfortunately in some cases we could not publish their contributions. Also many thanks go to our copy-editing volunteers, Yvonne Hung and William Alatraste, the staff at the University of Kassel that support the printed edition of our magazine and everybody that contributed ideas and thoughts.

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Call for submissions for Monu#5

Brutal Urbanism - violence and upheaval in the city

Baron Haussmann in Paris in the 1860's, Robert Moses in New York in the 1930's to 50's, uncountable urban renewal programs across the US and Europe in the 1960's and 70's, rampant development and speculation in China since the 1990's ... The list is long of brutal urbanism - the creation of urban fabric knit with the violent destruction of everything that stands in it's way. Urbanism with a meat-ax.

But ignorance and brutalism are not the exclusive domain of those who draw the plans. Police brutality and violent riots - protests and blockades - bicyclists killed in traffic and cars burning, whether they assume a place in the media spotlight, phenomena like these create the counter-identity of urban- to the false tranquility of rural or exurban life.

The threat of violence and upheaval (real or imagined) whether in the act of building or enlivening the built, are elements of the excitement of urban life in many ways. Think about pre-Disney Times Square swallowing up tourists, drug peddlers and ad men alike. The sense of risk and upheaval amongst the entangled masses of orange-clad citizens in Kiev.

We invite serious thinking, wild speculation, balanced propositions and impassioned arguments about the topic BRUTAL URBANISM for our next issue of Monu. This issue will be published in the summer of 2006. Submissions should be submitted as early as possible preferably before mid-June 2006.

For questions and comments please write us at
editors@monu.org

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