

São Paulo, 4-6 November 2013



# 'Track Changes'

*Cimson*  
ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS

Het Nieuwe  
Instituut



Kingdom of the Netherlands

In November 2013 The New Institute and Crimson Architectural Historians organized a series of public meetings during the X Bienal de Arquitetura de São Paulo called 'Track Changes'. A generation of architects and urbanists, who are connected through a common attitude, were invited to meet in an arena built especially for the occasion. Whether working in the *favelas* of South America, the slums of India or in the crumbling housing estates of Europe, this generation has replaced the large-scale top down masterplan and the iconic hypermodern building with a participative, temporary and flexible bottom-up approach.

What does this global convergence of design attitudes mean? Are we really seeing an international shift that explains the shared values of our generation? Or is the consensus about participation and bottom-up just a fashion? And secondly: Is the acupuncture approach working? Or is it just creating short-lived dreams of a better world that are quickly appropriated by the very forces of commercialism and top-down power which they are supposed to replace?

In open discussions an international group of architects, city planners, economists, historians and critics explored their common ground, but not without defining their differences clearly. Projects and experiences from all over the world were shared, with a focus on three themes:

- **We the People**, on the democratic value of master plans, particularly the new one formulated for São Paulo;
- **What's Your Crisis?**, on how economic and political crises and dramatic social changes are forcing architects to reevaluate their way of working;
- **Bottom-Up Is Not Enough**, on if and how bottom-up projects can exceed their small scale.

The presentations and debates were surprising for several reasons, the main one being that despite sometimes extreme differences in the context in which the architects and planners were working, common ground was reached so quickly and easily. From both sides of the spectrum – the public planners of Newark and São Paulo and the architect-activists in Chile, Rotterdam, São Paulo and Mumbai – the need was clear to make the connection between the top and the bottom, the bureaucracy and the activist, the representative democracy and the neighborhood participation, institutional investors and crowdfunding, the master plan and facts on the ground. This consensus is not merely polite, it also presents policy makers, developers, activists and designers with real methodological and strategic challenges. Integrating these two modes, scales, rhythms, of working with each other turns out to be difficult and even controversial. Too often for example, temporary interventions in urban space are deployed as a way of smoothing over exploitative real estate and gentrification projects, creating a mask of sensitivity and participation for ruthless redevelopment.

Despite the difficulties and dangers, the meeting of the two levels of urban projects – the ‘bottom’ and the ‘top’, is crucial for the future of our cities, our communities and for the profession of the urban designer, on that the participants absolutely agreed. This means a huge give and take from both sides. Public planning needs to be much more sensitive to the experiences, the facts on the ground, the real streetwise results of local projects. Instead of trying to fit them in - or purge them from – preconceived large scale schemes for the city, the small projects should be used as the experiments that can be turned into new *modi operandi* applicable through out the city. Instead of using temporary projects as place makers for the ‘real’ project, public planners and institutional developers should allow the temporary to grow up, to become long term, to deepen its roots and become definitive. And from the other side of the spectrum, the unavoidable myopia of the small scale, activist driven

project with its tight knit but limited community reach, needs to be find new and broader constituencies. Instead of simply ignoring the large but often atrophied structures of public policy and planning - social housing, the public infrastructure, masterplanning and zoning – the activists and bottom-up architects' next challenge is to win them back, to colonize them, *to change the system from within*.

If there was a conclusion to the meeting of minds in São Paulo, it is that the challenges of the twenty first century city can only be met if the 'bottom up' crowd turns its creativity and resourcefulness towards the still impressive engine room of public policy and large scale planning, while the institutional developers and municipal planners start to recognize the enormous value and fast innovations of the developments on the ground. Perhaps the merger of these two philosophies of urban intervention might produce a new paradigm for planning and designing in cities, rich and poor, large and small, north and south.

# Track Changes<sup>1</sup>

Crimson Architectural Historians 9/19/13 2:31 PM

What is the basis for the traveling circus of architects and urbanists that tours the world's Biennales, conferences and Universities? Is it the same disconnected collection of international traveling architects meeting again and again? Are the biennales just a kind of an extension of the transfer halls and departure lounges the architects travel through, and the presentations as ephemeral or generic as the airport's adds and art? Or is there still a common cause that is reflected in the conversation and recognizable in the presentations?<sup>1</sup> Does it make sense for Dutch architects to come to Brazil and talk with Brazilians, Nigerians, Germans and Americans about design techniques, strategy, politics and aesthetics?<sup>1 2</sup>

The reason we are sending you this draft text, is that we are organizing precisely such a meeting, with you as guests, at the São Paulo Architecture Biennale. The text is an attempt to connect the Dutch experience in the wake of the financial crisis that has hit the architectural profession particularly hard, with a more global experience of the past decade. The attempt

Carlos Teixeira 10/17/13 2:48 PM

**Comment: -1-** I read the Track Changes text and really liked it, as I told you. And although I've tried, I couldn't find any gap or place where I could edit or comment it. I mean, it seems to be a "ready", not an "in process" text. Obviously this is not a critique; I simply found it unnecessary to insert additional information.

URBZ 10/13/13 5:30 PM

**Comment: -1-** One of the new purposes of the this X Biental is to start a discussion about the role of the architect in society.

URBZ 10/13/13 5:29 PM

**Comment: -2-** We believe that we are now living on a transition moment, where architecture students and young architects are reflecting beyond the worship of "starchitects", becoming more and more aware of our true responsibility within society.

Damon Rich 10/28/13 1:26 PM

**Changed: -1-** What is the oath of duty made by the traveling ragtag militia of architects and urbanists, the discipline claimed by sophisticated people in US-based planning and development industries, that liberates the world's Biennales, conferences and Universities? Is it the same well-connected collection of international traveling architects meeting again and again? Are the biennales just a kind of an extension of the transfer halls and departure lounges the architects occupy, and the presentations as ephemeral or generic as the Occupy Wall Street? is there still a common cause reflected in the conversation and recognizable in the presentations? For whom does it make sense to bring Dutch architects to Brazil to "exchange" with Brazilians, Nigerians, Germans and Americans about design techniques, strategy, politics and aesthetics? Or at least about the good bars, clubs, and architectural tourist attractions?

runs the risk of being forced, absurd even, because it tries to connect a financial crisis in one of the richest countries in the world, with political crises on the streets of Brazil and Turkey, and then proceeds to connect this to global trends in architectural and urban design.<sup>2</sup>

This text needs a peer review, if ever one was needed. And you are our peers. We invite you to not hold back - we didn't either - and to comment on the text using Track Changes. We will honor every single remark, every addition, every subtraction, until in the end the text itself will be either the expression of our deep divides or of our common cause. Please take some time and have your way with our draft text. We see it as the beginning of a series of completely honest and vulnerable, aggressive and passionate conversations about architecture, economy, politics and the city. We will kick off with the meeting 'Track Changes', in São Paulo, 4-6 November 2013.

Damon Rich 10/28/13 1:31 PM

**Changed: -2-** The reason we are sending you this draft text, is that we are organizing precisely such a meeting, with you as guests, at the São Paulo Architecture Biennale. I heard about that. The text is an attempt to connect the financial crisis to the architectural profession, as a global experience. The attempt runs the risk of being forced by the angry masses. oh no that's absurd, right?because it tries to connect a financial crisis in one of the richest countries in the world directly to the political crises, or at least witty observers of of political crises on the streets of Brazil and Turkey, if everything goes well, the events, chit-chat, pageantry, and business card exchange will help connect people who might have reason to push for global reform in architectural and urban design.

**1**  
**Dutch** **2** architecture's current position is defined by crisis. **1** Financial crisis has paralyzed the construction industry **2**, leaving hundreds of architects unemployed and almost silencing investment in design. An institutional crisis **3** has also struck: parties who used to play their roles as principals, policy makers and platforms for design are now shedding their responsibilities, delegating them to others, privatizing or, because of mergers and cutbacks can hardly play any role at all. Finally, there is a political crisis that manifests itself in the crumbling credibility of both national and local representatives and administrators—while it was precisely this credibility that was the basis for the legitimacy of public construction and providing projects for designers. **1 1 3 3 3**

At the same time, there is an increasing awareness that we are no longer dealing with a (temporary) crisis, but with an entirely new situation. **2 4** At the macroeconomic level, it is conceivable that economic and demographic growth will cease

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 7:50 PM  
**Inserted: -1-** Can a Brazilian architect and a Dutch office learn from each other?

**FAT** 10/22/13 11:38 PM  
**Comment: -1-** Some comments from a UK perspective – i.e. the situation's even worse.

**23 SUL** 9/29/13 11:11 PM  
**Comment: -3-** That's what drives the Brazilian State: a permanent state of emergency, of crisis. Lack of planning stimulates insane public spending on questionable priorities. Architecture projects are simple keys for the releasing of federal funds.

**FAILED ARCHITECTURE** 11/2/13 2:18 PM  
**Comment: -1-** It is not so much the credibility of the political representatives that is crumbling, but the credibility of any powerful public undertaking, among which collective attempts to shape the spaces of our cities.

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 4:08 PM  
**Comment: -1-** Add to that the rise of populist politics... they really see the idea of subsidizing culture as a left wing idea. Slashing the cultural subsidies and forcing a major reorganization was part of the agenda of populists such as Geert Wilders' right hand Martin Bosma (see also his book 'De schijn-elite van de valsemunters') but of course also Pim Fortuyn. On a side note: it has always fascinated me that Pim Fortuyn never said anything about architecture, except that he thought pig-flats were an excellent idea...

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 6:49 PM  
**Deleted: -2-** Dutch

**23 SUL** 10/1/13 8:35 AM  
**Comment: -1-** Brazilian architecture's current position is defined by rush. Political deadlines and budgetary schedules determine architectural language. Marketing and image commands the clients decisions and architecture becomes plain service delivery.

**23 SUL** 10/1/13 8:36 AM  
**Comment: -2-** In Brazil there is booming real estate activity. Cities become targets for developers with no commitment to the urban tissue at large. Wide transformation of urban landscape is taking place in most Brazilian cities. Infrastructure construction schedules are way behind economy demands.

**URBZ** 10/13/13 5:33 PM  
**Comment: -3-** The status CRISES has had a huge impact economically and socially on many groups of people and specifically a number of good architecture offices; however it has also given the opportunity for new multidisciplinary collectives to arise and work in a more rapid, efficient and collaborative manner on our urban deficiencies. It could be said that one of the major propulsions of this crises is due to the disrespect and careless attention to the matter of construction and how its administration has also been neglected, for this business has once been an important economic field in many european countries for over ten years!

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 6:49 PM  
**Changed: -3-** Architecture's current position is defined by crisis. A financial, institutional and political crisis almost silencing investment in design, struck parties who used to play their roles as policy platforms and finally, there is a crisis in the credibility of representatives providing projects for designers.

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 1:39 PM  
**Comment: -3-** What kinds of collective expenditures and legitimations for them are being offered during low legitimacy periods?

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 4:16 PM  
**Comment: -2-** In the book Shifts that I wrote together with Hans Ibelings, we have argued that the crisis actually started with the ballooning bubble from 2004 onwards. In that sense you could say the we are already in crisis voor one decade...

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 1:39 PM  
**Comment: -4-** That is, if we need to sell this as a break and not just bad news as usual.

completely for the coming decades, which means that the construction economy will lose its traditional base in rising land prices and property values.<sup>2 2 3 5</sup> For developers and governments this means a drastic reduction in the number of construction projects.<sup>6</sup> For the construction industry in general, it will mean that they will no longer be seen as an economic engine and will (and in fact, already has) cost them their central position in political and economic policy-making.<sup>4</sup> For design, this implies a radical change in attitude that has traditionally focused on quantitative growth and development; designers will no longer be able to rely on traditional clients to realize their projects.<sup>5</sup>  
<sup>4 7</sup>

At the institutional level we also see changes that go beyond crisis cuts or mergers. The traditional arrangements between governments, semi-public and cultural institutions—which together ensured the centrality of architecture—have been broken or at the very least, minimized.<sup>4 8</sup> Everything from research and publication subsidies to the strength

**FAT** 10/22/13 11:36 PM  
**Comment: -2-** Is this true? For instance, in the UK land prices and property speculation continue to be one of the few engines of economic activity, albeit favouring an ever smaller number of people, an ever larger number of which are from outside the UK. Scarcity (of buildable land, of finance for small or individual developers etc.) generates capital.

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 4:24 PM  
**Comment: -3-** During the bubble, house prices were rising so rapidly that houses were sometimes earning more money than the people living in them!

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 1:42 PM  
**Comment: -6-** [Insert: global comparative info on public and private sector construction]

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 6:51 PM  
**Changed: -4-** At the same time, there is an increasing awareness that we are no longer dealing with a (temporary) crisis, but with a new situation. For design, this implies a radical change in attitude that has traditionally focused on quantitative growth; designers will no longer be able to rely on clients to realize their projects.

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 1:49 PM  
**Comment: -8-** Remind me again of where and when this was so nice? I will mention that, named in honor of FDR's Works Progress Administration, there is a heroic park group in Newark, Weequahic Park Association, famous for the red bouncy track they advocated and created that runs around the lake right next to the highway, looping back around near the international airport and largest seaport on the US east coast.

**FAILED ARCHITECTURE** 11/2/13 2:18 PM  
**Comment: -2-** It is important to realize that 'ceasing economic and demographic growth' is very much a European condition, which is not present in countries like Brazil, Turkey, China etc.

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 1:40 PM  
**Comment: -5-** Club for Growth, is that you?

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 4:25 PM  
**Comment: -4-** Interesting here is also that real estate was also used as a leverage for investing in even more real estate. So the projected future value of owned real estate was used to get funds for investments in even more real estate! That's how for instance the Dutch developer TCN, founded by architect Rudy Stroink, went bankrupt... The untangling of all these complex financial construction is simply taking years... we sometimes forget that behind all the buildings we have build over the last years, there is a virtual financial and contractual structure that was build... imagine the enormous complexity of paperwork and financial intricacies that shapes this world...

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 2:54 PM  
**Comment: -7-** My fear is less Robinson Crusoe, designers alone on an island using our wits and innovation to keep doing what we love, than business as usual for a good time longer. What's that Zizek zinger about how today it's easier to imagine the end of the universe than the end of capitalism? Or maybe it was Jameson.

**23 SUL** 9/29/13 11:11 PM  
**Comment: -4-** In Brazil, except for a few isolated organizations, this kind of arrangements are still waiting to be established. Research in architectural field is kept within academic debate.

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 4:19 PM  
**Comment: -5-** Traditional clients already don't exist any more in the Netherlands since the mid nineties! Another argument we put forward in the book Shifts, is that in the West, we are at the end of a long arch of modernization or better: the end of the era of industrialization. The liberalization of the real estate markets in Europe started in the late 80's and in the Netherlands created a 'capitalization' or liquidation of a large amount of money that had been built up in publicly owned real estate (housing coops, the Bouwfonds) since the end of WW2. As the government sought to privatize and then capitalize on all these public funds and services, architecture was needed as a way to give shape to the new models of financing and restructuring that where the result... Perhaps that was why we build all these public institutions for architecture and urbanism? To help steer all this new cash into the right channels... and perhaps that's why the programmatic, pragmatic Dutch approach to architecture was so popular: it was the perfect way to create new business-models for urban development and a beautiful new way to reinvent real estate investments alongside urban development....



and autonomy of housing associations has been repealed or removed. The real significance of this is that architecture is no longer seen as a natural presence in policy<sup>4 9</sup> but as one of the private or sectoral interests in what is now called 'the creative economy'.<sup>6 5</sup> Spatial design is no longer a medium through which to achieve public goals, but rather one of the private players that must search in the marketplace for support and assignments.<sup>5</sup> This will substantially alter her position and agenda for decades to come.<sup>3 6 10</sup>

Finally, there is the political 'crisis'<sup>11</sup>, behind which hides a fundamental political transformation with great importance for architecture and planning. The traditional hierarchy of empire, province, town—each with its own policy issues and alternating political parties, each supplying a portion of the directors, as well as the administrative and institutional framework that went with it—has lost much of its support. First, it lost to legislation from Brussels, then to other local interests and finally to a general lack of trust in politics.<sup>3</sup> The development

URBZ 10/11/13 6:42 AM  
Formatted: -4- Underline

POWERHOUSE 10/20/13 4:29 PM  
Comment: -6- In the Netherlands: yes. In Denmark however, they have just discovered the power of architecture as ally: hence BIG's rise and in its slipstream a whole bunch of young offices aka Danish Wave.

23 SUL 9/29/13 12:57 PM  
Comment: -5- More and more we need spatial design. It's our greatest challenge: to create a steady presence on political public & private agendas in order to disseminate design & planning culture as an essential element in the current debate about our present and future society.

Damon Rich 10/28/13 1:53 PM  
Comment: -11- in the heart of the Low Lands

FAT 10/22/13 11:39 PM  
Comment: -3- Plus corporate interests?

Damon Rich 10/28/13 1:51 PM  
Inserted: -9- which might have never actually happened except for Daniel Patrick Moynihan when he was supporting Reaganomics,

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 6:56 PM  
Changed: -5- At the institutional level we also see changes. Everything from research and publication subsidies to the strength and autonomy of housing associations has been repealed or removed. Architecture is no longer seen in policy, but as one of the private or sectoral interests in what is now called 'the creative economy'.

FAILED ARCHITECTURE 11/2/13 2:18 PM  
Comment: -3- Architecture is not everywhere being limited to a private sector undertaking, instead of being an public entity open for discussion. In particular Brazil has many recent examples of large scale public urban restructuring and new participatory urban initiatives.

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 6:56 PM  
Deleted: -6- Spatial design is no longer a medium through which to achieve public goals, but rather one of the private players that must search in the marketplace for support and assignments. This will substantially alter her position and agenda for decades to come.

Damon Rich 10/28/13 1:52 PM  
Comment: -10- In other words, more of the same: learning to live with capitalism. Maybe even how democracy can push back against its excesses. But maybe that's a bad idea.

we now see is that the government increasingly delegates choices and tasks to a hybrid 'outside world' of local governments, social organizations and market parties, under the common denominator of 'society'. However, little distinction is made between social foundations and associations within reach of the civilian, democratically-elected governments or commercial institutions such as developers, insurance companies or housing associations.<sup>6 7</sup> While there is clearly an urge to localism, democratization and socialization<sup>4</sup>, this also produces a chaotic situation in which the citizen's control over his own habitat is not quite resolved, and he is in fact caught in the unpredictable margins between European legislation, a national political vacuum and local impotence. Within this currently unpredictable situation, a new political legitimacy must rise in the coming decades, one which will be very different than that of the Dutch 'decentralized unitary state' of the last 150 years.<sup>5 7 8</sup>

23 SUL 10/1/13 8:39 AM

**Comment: -6-** Isn't it another manifestation of the neoliberal state, where no one is responsible for anything? Markets put their "invisible" hands on strategic areas which should be kept away from strictly private interest. Education, housing and transportation should be in the hands of the state or at least suprapartidary public/private agencies.

FAILED ARCHITECTURE 11/2/13 2:18 PM

**Comment: -4-** There is definitely a need for more localism, democratization and socialization, but there are not many institutional actors in the 'hybrid outside world/society' working on these issues. Some marginal projects might be.

FAILED ARCHITECTURE 11/2/13 2:18 PM

**Comment: -5-** The article seems to presuppose we are in 'limbo', an in-between moment. Are we really? Isn't this the new condition we will have to deal with for a long time?

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 6:57 PM

**Deleted: -7-** Finally, there is the political 'crisis', behind which hides a fundamental political transformation with great importance for architecture and planning. The traditional hierarchy of empire, province, town—each with its own policy issues and alternating political parties, each supplying a portion of the directors, as well as the administrative and institutional framework that went with it—has lost much of its support. First, it lost to legislation from Brussels, then to other local interests and finally to a general lack of trust in politics.<sup>3</sup> The development we now see is that the government increasingly delegates choices and tasks to a hybrid 'outside world' of local governments, social organizations and market parties, under the common denominator of 'society'. However, little distinction is made between social foundations and associations within reach of the civilian, democratically-elected governments or commercial institutions such as developers, insurance companies or housing associations.

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 6:57 PM

**Changed: -8-** While there is clearly an urge to localism, democratization and socialization, this also produces a chaotic situation in which the citizen's control over his own habitat is not quite resolved. Within this currently unpredictable situation, a new political legitimacy must rise in the coming decades.

POWERHOUSE 10/20/13 4:34 PM

**Comment: -7-** Indeed! But its quite interesting to see that countries around us have actually found ways to do this, ironically by learning from NL! For example: Belgium with its fresh system of Open Calls for architects, where the Flemish Buildingmaster coordinates a wave of architectural innovation and progressive regionalism. And how about Danmark?! But talking about policy-making and responsibilities: did you know that the Danish have one of the worlds biggest architecture and urbanism funds? It's called Realdania. It was formed out of the communal investment fund for social housing for municipalities created after the war. As it was conservatively kept under civil servants for decades, it built up large reserves. In the Netherlands we had exactly the same system. Here it was called 'Bouwfonds der Nederlandse gemeenten'. In the nineties both the Danish and the Dutch governmental funds were bulking with cash and property. Then both countries made different choices: the Dutch decided to privatize this fund. It led to a huge amount of corruption and the biggest case of real-estate fraud in the history of the Netherlands. Basically, the fund was robbed empty. It was one of the important forces behind the huge real estate crisis. In Danmark, the fund was not privatized but modernized and kept semi public. It is now called Realdania and its the financial driving force behind the current 'Danish Wave'. So yes: in the Netherlands we now suffer from a lack of political leadership and vision; but perhaps that's only because the previous vision included the liberalization of the Bouwfonds, the Vinex policy etc... so maybe politicians are afraid to be contaminated by the dirty stench real-estate policy-making has acquired? Perhaps we haven't looked ourselves in the eyes enough?

**12** There are different ways of responding to this triple crisis / transformation **1** of the system. The reactions can be roughly divided into three groups. There is a sectoral trend that tries to defend and rescue their supporters' position, assuming that post-crisis economic figures will be strong enough to ensure future growth. We see this in municipalities like Rotterdam, where the local government continues to facilitate and even co-develop large-scale retail and office projects to get a 'post-crisis' step ahead of other cities. **8** We also see it in the construction industry's lobby, where lobbyists demand priority in the economic policies of the government on the assumption that the construction sector will again be able to play a central role 'after the crisis'. Second, there is a globalizing trend. This assumes that the Netherlands' and Europe's economic growth, (and therefore also assignments for designers) is decreasing and will remain low for the time being. At the same time, it assumes that economic growth in countries outside of the EU is still high and is actually rising. **9** The same applies to the slowness

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 1:56 PM

**Comment: -12-** Now we're getting into some deep Dutch territoire:

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 4:44 PM

**Comment: -8-** Yes, this is quite interesting... also in relation to Amsterdam that is also steadily going ahead and has the only steady real estate market in NL...

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 4:45 PM

**Comment: -9-** Rightly so. Look at Turkey, Indonesia but also Germany... there are a lot of places in the world where urban growth is very acute.

**CRIT** 10/14/13 4:49 PM

**Comment: -1-** Financial, Institutional and Political contexts have always been transforming and historically every one of these shifts produces a particular kind of practice. Also, within the same timeframe, different contexts respond in different ways. For instance, In India, different cities work themselves out differently in the wake of financial, institutional or political changes - While Delhi reproduces the conditions of mass protests that seem to characterize today's politics; Mumbai, in very similar conditions has responded very differently. It is because the urban latencies of these cities are very different. It would therefore not be very useful to think in large generalizing terms.

and difficulty of decision-making and social resistance to new large-scale projects. Some expect to circumvent these 'local' obstructions by focusing on foreign markets. This holds true especially for large engineering companies, consultants, large architecture firms and more footloose young architects who perpetuate this trend by looking abroad rather than adapt their practice to the existing environment.<sup>9</sup> Particularly in Asia, they can sustain their growth longer than in Europe or the Netherlands because of the strong centralized governmental frameworks and a natural acceptance of major projects and design consultancy.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, there is a group of architects, entrepreneurs and activists who are trying to relate to the current system and shape their practices accordingly<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>11</sup>. They convert the absence of large jobs into an argument for the realization of tiny, quick and inexpensive projects, often in existing buildings, areas that have fallen into disuse or structures that are flagged for demolition. Instead of looking for support from institutional clients, they create their

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 7:17 PM

**Changed: -9-** There are ways of responding to this triple crisis / transformation of the system. There is a globalizing trend. This assumes economic growth in countries outside of the EU. This holds true especially for large more footloose young architects who perpetuate this trend by adapting their practice.

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 7:17 PM

**Deleted: -10-** Particularly in Asia, they can sustain their growth longer than in Europe or the Netherlands because of the strong centralized governmental frameworks and a natural acceptance of major projects and design consultancy.

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 7:18 PM

**Deleted: -11-** Finally, there is a group of architects, entrepreneurs and activists who are trying to relate to the current system and shape their practices accordingly.

CRIT 10/14/13 4:51 PM

**Comment: -2-** The manner in which CRIT has articulated the nature of crises has been quite different. Our focus has been on urban conditions. It has been about methods, positions and (disciplinary) boundaries. We found that conventional methods, positions and disciplines seemed inadequate in engaging with urban conditions. The methods employed in understanding cities have been too coherent, while cities are (by their very nature) not; positions have been too stable, while the contexts have actually been shifting; disciplinary boundaries have been extremely rigid, while it is becoming impossible to think of urban contexts through the idea of boundaries. It is the incoherence of the city, shifting contexts and unbounded imaginations that have largely shaped our practice. We try to tactically move between being architects, artists, mobilisers, consultants, academics, environmentalists and other things.

own assignments<sup>13</sup> and rather than build for an abstract group of 'end users', these architects design and build a direct relationship with the user<sup>12</sup>— often small, close-knit groups of like-minded people of which they are often already members.<sup>13</sup> Politically, this group takes a critical stance against the official policy, and uses projects as a way to denounce the inefficiency, technocracy and abstraction of official projects and the official policy set. Participation, direct democracy, crowdsourcing and crowdfunding play a central role in their activities. Through these means, this group actually creates a political, institutional and economic framework for its design intentions from the inside out, albeit at a limited scale.<sup>6 5 14</sup>

However, at the economic, institutional and political levels, the methods of this group often produce ambiguous results.<sup>4 14</sup> Early on,<sup>15</sup> this way of working was 'discovered' by institutional investors, developers and<sup>16</sup> corporations as a way of place-making for temporary, participatory projects that both softened the conflict with existing users and

Damon Rich 10/28/13 1:57 PM ✓ ✕

**Changed: -13-** Instead of looking for support from institutional clients, they find assignments among the political agendas woven through a place.

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 8:12 PM ✓ ✕

**Changed: -12-** The absence of jobs convert into an argument for the realization of tiny, quick and inexpensive projects, often in areas that have fallen into disuse. These architects create their own assignments and rather than build for an abstract group of 'end users', they design and build a direct relationship with the user.

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 8:12 PM ✓ ✕

**Deleted: -13-** —often small, close-knit groups of like-minded people of which they are often already members.

URBZ 10/13/13 10:43 PM ✓ ✕

**Comment: -5-** The "real" city if considered and seen as the product of decisions; the home and scene for the contemporary architect, where projects together with politics and collective will, all transform as potentials for the reorganization of the space. Also known as microplanning: a method of working and intervening on mappings that are interpretative of the urban reality. Prepare and reinterpret the urban space. New conexions and strategic webs were process similar to the "bottom up", which has the intention to change places with new architectonic operations.

FAILED ARCHITECTURE 11/2/13 2:18 PM ✓ ✕

**Comment: -6-** The outline of the three main responses to the crises by the spatial professions (preparing for a recovering economy, focus on foreign markets, focus on small scale/temporary) is correct but very European/Dutch-focused. The situation is very different in, for example, Brazil. They still experience economic growth, won't have to design for demographic shrinkage, but instead are confronted with major challenges regarding housing large parts of the population still living in substandard 'favela' conditions.

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 7:21 PM ✓ ✕

**Deleted: -14-** Through these means, this group actually creates a political, institutional and economic framework for its design intentions from the inside out, albeit at a limited scale.

FAT 10/22/13 11:41 PM ✓ ✕

**Comment: -4-** Particularly in relation to the economy of their own activities – i.e. young architects often work on these projects for little or no financial reward as a 'step-up' on the ladder, thus accepting a principle of creative and cultural work as having less financial value than other activities. Not to mention participating in an economy of precarious employment with little or no frameworks for protecting labour from exploitation.

Damon Rich 10/28/13 2:00 PM ✓ ✕

**Changed: -14-** However, at the economic, institutional and political levels, the methods of this group often fail to produce results.

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 8:16 PM ✓ ✕

**Deleted: -15-** Early on,

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 8:17 PM ✓ ✕

**Deleted: -16-** institutional investors, developers and

simultaneously made the newly developing areas attractive for new users.<sup>7</sup> Conflict often arises between the agenda of the architects and activists who actually wanted to change something, (to deepen, widen and lengthen their position) and those clients and institutional partners who simply want to use them as short, acupunctural marketing tools.<sup>15</sup> Despite their difference of opinions, both sides voluntarily enter into this conflict because of the potential for effective implementation.<sup>17</sup> Aside from the designers and activists who deliberately and strategically implement these projects, aware of the inherent tension and ambiguity, there is also an actual industry emerging of temporality, pop-up, participatory planning and crowdsourcing which is used by and for the institutional parties directly, without any ambition to achieve a greater strategic goal.<sup>10 18 16</sup>

In spite of, or perhaps because of, the ambiguous position of such projects and practices—between confrontation and compromise—this is currently the only category that is a real alternative to the

**FAILED ARCHITECTURE** 11/2/13 2:18 PM ✓ ✕

**Comment: -7-** Indeed, almost always these kind of projects have paved the way for gentrification, carried out by others.

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 2:05 PM ✓ ✕

**Comment: -15-** Maybe it wasn't a coincidence that this got hot during a period of government retrenchment. Good will spurting all over town. Better yet, when the tendency is curated, let's say at the US pavilion Spontaneous Interventions in Venice, it's almost like they go out of their way to deny that such action might belong to a program, party, or deliberate institution-building process. Spontaneous! Intervention! Not Organized Communities in Action! or, as one story puts the original meaning of CRIP: Community Revolution in Progress.

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 8:17 PM ✓ ✕

**Changed: -17-** Conflict often arises between the agenda of the architects/activists who actually wanted to change something and institutional partners who simply want to use them as marketing tools. Despite their difference of opinions, both sides voluntarily enter into this conflict because of the potential for effective implementation.

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 8:17 PM ✓ ✕

**Deleted: -18-** Aside from the designers and activists who deliberately and strategically implement these projects, aware of the inherent tension and ambiguity, there is also an actual industry emerging of temporality, pop-up, participatory planning and crowdsourcing which is used by and for the institutional parties directly, without any ambition to achieve a greater strategic goal.

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 2:06 PM ✓ ✕

**Comment: -16-** It's up to us to make sure that any tactical urbanism be operated by advocacy planning, choosing sides and building coalitions. Design for organizing.

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 4:50 PM ✓ ✕

**Comment: -10-** Hmm. Here it is a bit sketchy. Let's not forget that many other industries have operated like this over the past decades: product designers for example. Look at the work of Bert-Jan Pot for instance. Sometimes he works for commercial furniture producers, sometimes he makes his own products that he just enjoys putting into the world.

In a way what you are describing is a relatively normal market situation. Perhaps the period in which architects and urban planners in the Netherlands were working outside of the market was a real exceptional case. Perhaps the market independent, largely state-sponsored, role that architects and urban planners had was an exception that had to do only with the urgency of the 'wederopbouw' or post-WW2 period of urban regeneration. Perhaps that's also where it went wrong: that we have started to believe too much in the need for our independence? Or maybe worse: that we as Dutch architecture scene started to believe too much in our own brilliance? Were we really that good? As Rem Koolhaas wrote in Hunch magazine in 2001 on Superdutch: "What is the agenda of Dutchness? The Dutch have done nothing to deserve the 'super'. Dutch architecture is still funny, still colorful, still cheap, still modern, still frivolous. But nothing more. We suffer seriously from being imprisoned in this situation. We suffer from this complete absence of criticism; we suffer from the inability of the critics to point out what we are doing, to indicate what we are not doing, to propose what we should be doing. We need critics as partners, not as allies... or worse, salesmen."

status quo, however fragmented and uncertain it may be.<sup>8</sup> There are, in fact, new economic, political and institutional design tools being developed in conjunction and, it is assumed, these new tools are not intended to restore the world of 2008, but rather to explore a new situation where economic growth, centralized corporate governance, and an obvious institutional anchoring of architecture no longer exists.<sup>7 19 17</sup>

It is therefore important to pose certain questions to this movement of architects, activists, research firms and entrepreneurs about their relationships, ambitions, relevance and future value. Can they manage to escape from the inward-looking, “hipster”-like connotation with which they are associated?<sup>20</sup> Can they manage to keep their position and projects clear while working with institutional investors, who often have conflicting agendas?<sup>11</sup> Will they be able to scale-up and broaden this way of working so that a serious alternative to the current system of spatial politics and construction can arise? Do these agencies have

**FAILED ARCHITECTURE** 11/2/13 2:18 PM

**Comment: -8-** It's the only already-existing alternative, but is it therefore also the only real alternative? What other alternative practices of space making can we possibly imagine?

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 7:30 PM

**Deleted: -19-** In spite of, or perhaps because of, the ambiguous position of such projects and practices—between confrontation and compromise—this is currently the only category that is a real alternative to the status quo, however fragmented and uncertain it may be. There are, in fact, new economic, political and institutional design tools being developed in conjunction and, it is assumed, these new tools are not intended to restore the world of 2008, but rather to explore a new situation where economic growth, centralized corporate governance, and an obvious institutional anchoring of architecture no longer exists.

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 2:08 PM

**Changed: -17-** There are, in fact, new economic, political and institutional design tools being developed in conjunction and, it is assumed, these new tools are not intended to restore the world of 2008, but rather to explore a new situation where economic growth, corporate governance, and the institutional anchoring of architecture continue their transformation. We may not be doing responsible design, but at least we are trying to understand to whom design responds so we can get better at working the system.

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 7:35 PM

**Deleted: -20-** Can they manage to escape from the inward-looking, “hipster”-like connotation with which they are associated?

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 5:09 PM

**Comment: -11-** Conflicting with what? And why would they be conflicting? Wasn't there a whole generation of architects in the past that was totally capable of designing with the restraints of the market while at the same time creating powerful and architecturally interesting buildings? See the works of Maaskant, Wim Quist... I guess you could also make a case that the early post-war architects were actually very inclusive thinkers?

23 SUL 10/1/13 8:58 AM

**Comment: -7-** We agree with most of the definitions introduced in these paragraphs. This situation described here seems to be taking place everywhere. It's a trend. It is a scale of architecture close to the Performance scale, aiming at the body, as if some kind of “live architecture” could exist. We also believe that this kind of effort has a really positive effect, which is to bring people together, awakening their sensibilities and perception of space through a subtle disturbance in regular order. This performatic aspect is probably a very pleasant and rewarding work philosophy for a young architect, for its “effect” on an “audience” is immediate. Again, we believe this is positive. We think, as you do, that this kind of practice has more to do with a specific discussion about the value of a single event (or process) than with comprehensive spatial politics for the rearrangement of territory or in the construction of a landscape identity in developing countries' cities. This kind of action - pop-up - belongs to emotions and ephemeral symbolic value. Even though it is an exciting new field of practice for architects, for it to have true impact on the current system could take ages. In this sense, we have no reason to assume that this practice is as a “real alternative to the status quo”. Actually, it is one of its most symptomatic manifestations: it's risky, it focuses on short term goals, it works on the symbolic, it deals with informality, it belongs to the so called Creative Economy - it is a “new market”. Even so, we see a fresh energy coming from these committed architects/artists/designers/communities. They operate in relative freedom and have the chance to choose what kind of issue they want to address, unlike traditional service delivery offices. That said, we have to point out that, beyond all the hype that goes together with the ephemeral pop up DIY architecture, we unfortunately (fortunately?) still have to manage lasting, physical constructions. We, young architecture firms, need to debate about clear directions on how to design and govern our cities, on how to shape our environment according to contemporary and future needs and sensibilities. Beyond trends and glamour, we work for the benefit of the anthills.

the right tools, knowledge, networks and aims to engage the margins and complexity that result from the many transformations the Dutch establishment is<sup>21</sup> now experiencing? In other words, is it conceivable that the experiments and incidents that this generation of projects and practice brings forth might produce a new modus operandi for architecture and planning as a public, collective enterprise; just as happened sixty years ago with the pre-war modernist experiments that led to the institutionalization of modern design in the post-war period?

5 9 22

The association with post-war modernism leads directly to the question of whether the current generation of activist / bottom-up/ participatory architects is part of an international 'movement', insofar as circumstances outside the Netherlands and Europe from which it springs (and reacts to) are relevant and how they face similar challenges. At first glance, we can answer this question with a definite yes.<sup>23</sup> From Detroit<sup>18</sup> to São Paulo,

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 7:38 PM

**Deleted: -21-** the Dutch establishment is

**FAT** 10/22/13 11:44 PM

**Comment: -5-** Not without the development of a wider political consciousness – see below.

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 7:42 PM

**Deleted: -23-** The association with post-war modernism leads directly to the question of whether the current generation of activist / bottom-up / participatory architects is part of an international 'movement', insofar as circumstances outside the Netherlands and Europe from which it springs (and reacts to) are relevant and how they face similar challenges. At first glance, we can answer this question with a definite yes.

**FAILED ARCHITECTURE** 11/2/13 2:18 PM

**Comment: -9-** This 'new way of working' has so far a poor track record of offering any forms of democratization, it has often paved the way for uncompromising market developments or attempts to scale up almost always made market forces dominating the project. So it didn't actually challenge the status quo in any way nor did it provide any alternative so far. It has always operated in the vacuums created by market developments (crisis!), and it has always been shaped by it. Therefore, with the rapid privatization of the spaces of the city still ongoing, it is not very likely these kind of projects will become a dominant force in organizing the city. A serious deepening of the current crisis, including market forces retreating on a large scale, might offer more substantial and long term physical and social space for these kinds of projects to sustain themselves. However, a sudden rise in commercial demand for these kinds of projects (urban farming goes mainstream, young professionals really only want to live in self-built collective housing projects) might also solidify the importance of 'this new way of working'.

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 7:38 PM

**Changed: -22-** Is it conceivable that the experiments and incidents that this generation brings forth might produce a new modus operandi for architecture and planning?

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 3:37 PM

**Comment: -18-** (where the planning team for Detroit Future City, a Vanilla suburban philanthropy-sponsored "planned shrinkage" proposal for the Chocolate City reacted to widespread upset at the controlled setting offered for resident dialogue by building a "roaming table" out of reclaimed hardwood that would wander the 142-square-mile metropolis scavenging for public comment: [http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2011/12/the\\_roaming\\_table\\_detroit\\_work.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2011/12/the_roaming_table_detroit_work.html))



Amsterdam to Shenzhen, we see the same trend of temporality, pop-up, politically-engaged, DIY architecture popping up at Biennials and architecture events.<sup>10 19</sup> At the same time, we also see a growing interest in 'real life' projects and practice (carried out with minimal resources, for marginal users, in the margins of the city, and imbued with a political or at least collective agenda)<sup>24</sup> developing within architecture education and publications.<sup>12</sup>

In many places around the world, we see a growing tension between this conception of architecture as an authentic, politicized, and actually avant garde movement and as a fashionable phenomenon, incorporated by the market and institutions. From the barrios and favelas of South America, the townships of South Africa and the hutongs and Urban Villages of China, projects and architects are rising. Their political stance is unmistakable, but even these prototypes are producing a new type of 'starchitect'.<sup>8 13 6 20</sup>

**FAILED ARCHITECTURE** 11/2/13 2:18 PM

**Comment: -10-** It is important to note that especially in the Global South these kind of projects are often just foreign interventions, with no connection to the local context (painted favela..)

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 2:18 PM

**Changed: -19-** From Detroit to São Paulo, Amsterdam to Shenzhen, we see the same devices of temporality, pop-up, politically-engaged, DIY architecture popping up like Romantic paintings at Biennials and architecture events.

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 7:44 PM

**Deleted: -24-** (carried out with minimal resources, for marginal users, in the margins of the city, and imbued with a political or at least collective agenda)

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 5:51 PM

**Comment: -12-** Yes and paradoxically it is the Ivy League schools that are leading the way...

**23 SUL** 10/1/13 4:54 PM

**Comment: -8-** It certainly will create a rich and comprehensive collection of methods, processes and built work. But the architectural ethos will never run separately from societal ethos. So we want to experiment. But who (state? corporations?) will run the risk of managing growing scales of demands at experimental level? And, taking a step further in the critique, do we want to assume precariousness as a modus operandi? The main reality of informality is, in the Brazilian experience, related to poverty. It's aesthetic value must never be separated from the social context that generates it. Informality and precariousness are not "inspirational" to us. We look at all this "informality" appraisal buzz that has been going around in the early 2000's in the developed countries as an edgy conceptual cage in which "creative workers" are implicated in the cultural promotion of a new age of human exploitation. What has to be strengthened and stimulated are not only project methodology and social responsibility per se, but the political insertion (or reinsertion) of architectural (plus design & planning) thinking into the menu of the decision makers.

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 5:15 PM

**Comment: -13-** Haha indeed... See also Urban Think Tank being invited by Bill Clinton and Iwan Baan speaking about informal housing at TED...

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 2:19 PM

**Comment: -20-** Although some of those people are okay. Definitely not all of them.

**URBZ** 10/13/13 10:51 PM

**Comment: -6-** An example of this was the exhibition promoted by MOMA, NY – Small Scale Big Scale in 2011, which exposed simple, sensitive, responsible and objective projects of intervention. This was one of the most visited exhibitions in the history of the museum.

Unquestionably, the 'crisis' is a phenomenon that the entire world has felt and described, and thus serves as a backdrop for the new generation of architects. The financial crisis and subsequent period of economic recession are obviously global events.<sup>21</sup> However, it is a general phenomenon that manifests itself in very different intensities, and in waves that break over various parts of the world.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the financial crisis and its impact on the American construction and design world was rapidly executed, but now begins to soften.<sup>23</sup> That same crisis started relatively slowly in the Netherlands, but has lasted longer and created an extremely inert construction and design landscape. In countries such as Portugal, Spain, Greece and Ireland we see that crisis and recession has a dramatic effect on citizens and architects, and actually leads to visible and tangible results within the city.<sup>25</sup> Outside Europe, we see countries like Brazil and China, whose economies grew enormously during our worst years, but who are now starting to show signs of recession. This in turn has an effect on our economy in general and on the prospects of emigrated or

Damon Rich 10/28/13 2:21 PM ✓ ✕

**Comment: -21-** It is strange that this experience has led to more rickety installations in public space than collaborative work to develop our Regulatory Imagination and dreams of systemic reform to push more democracy into the built environment, AKA the Actually Existing Fun Palace.

Damon Rich 10/28/13 2:23 PM ✓ ✕

**Changed: -22-** Maybe one reason is that it is a general phenomenon that manifests itself in very different intensities for rich and poor, white and black, and that there is no widely felt pressing need in these professions to deal with it. After all, it is very nice to visit a favela in the morning for a building workshop and then fly the private jet to surfing spots with waves that break over various parts of the world.

Damon Rich 10/28/13 2:25 PM ✓ ✕

**Inserted: -23-** , at least in the aggregate statistics if not in stigmatized localities once called "inner cities," although post-so-called Urban Renaissance, that's a confusing label

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 8:22 PM ✓ ✕

**Deleted: -25-** The financial crisis and subsequent period of economic recession are obviously global events. However, it is a general phenomenon that manifests itself in very different intensities, and in waves that break over various parts of the world. Thus, the financial crisis and its impact on the American construction and design world was rapidly executed, but now begins to soften. That same crisis started relatively slowly in the Netherlands, but has lasted longer and created an extremely inert construction and design landscape. In countries such as Portugal, Spain, Greece and Ireland we see that crisis and recession has a dramatic effect on citizens and architects, and actually leads to visible and tangible results within the city.

architects working abroad in particular.<sup>26</sup> It is possible to draw a wave representing the global economic climate and then to indicate the position of different countries on it. Such a diagram would illustrate when different groups of designers could learn from their predecessors about absorbing the effects of a crisis and / or recession. The question is, of course, whether they (can) learn from each other. {Can a Brazilian architect learn something from a Dutch office.} 9 14 7 27

A complicating factor could be that precisely the institutional level and politics are so different than in Europe that such a transfer of ideas and knowledge would become difficult.<sup>15</sup> Still, we can recognize shared themes that span more differences than the economy, at least in terms of intensity and meaning. Sometimes they even go in opposite directions.<sup>28</sup> At an institutional level in the Netherlands and many other European countries,<sup>29</sup> we see governments increasingly withdrawing from architecture and spatial design, while in several South American countries governments are moving

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 7:47 PM  
**Deleted: -26-** This in turn has an effect on our economy in general and on the prospects of emigrated or architects working abroad in particular.

**URBZ** 10/13/13 7:11 PM  
**Comment: -7-** Of course it is always possible to learn a lot but we can't forget that Brasil grows and enriches in a rapid pace, however the social inequality is still a major issue. An issue that hasn't always been the object of interest or study of professionals of different areas. The formal city grows around 1% each year; whereas the informal city grows seven times! It is not possible for the situation of favelas and informal settlements to be neglected and ignored! 3.000.000 people live in the informal settlements in SP and these places today are no longer strange bodies separated from the formal city. They are an expressive and constitutive part of the contemporary city.

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 7:50 PM  
**Moved: -27-** Can a Brazilian architect learn something from a Dutch office.

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 5:25 PM  
**Comment: -15-** Good point: operational knowledge differs greatly per country...

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 7:52 PM  
**Deleted: -29-** in the Netherlands and many other European countries,

**23 SUL** 10/1/13 5:21 PM  
**Comment: -9-** Even though that question stands out as a fundamental to our future ambitions as a discussion group, it seems to us that this is not exactly the most provoking question. The answer to that is quite self-evident: we always learn from the Other. Dutch architecture's conceptual thinking and technical excellence could/should bring real impact on pragmatic down-to-earth stripped down Brazilian contemporary production. The main question, for us, is: can we really work together? This text points to a rather gloomy global scenario, due to economic factors in Europe. Brazilian industry has shrunk to a pre-1950's level. Since the "money wave" seems to be fading here as well, our scenario is just as gloomy as yours! So, to what level of commitment should this exchange be fixed? Is it in the ideas level? What would happen - we must never discard this hypothesis - if the "money wave" returns to Europe? Will there be any lasting interest in learning from precariousness? Or is, once again, "learning from precariousness" just a euphemism from contemporary management to externalize the risks and not take full responsibility for the consequences of its decisions? To work together we shall find a mutual understanding of the historical processes "behind" each culture, so that our standpoints can be clearly distinguished from each other.

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 7:52 PM  
**Deleted: -28-** A complicating factor could be that precisely the institutional level and politics are so different than in Europe that such a transfer of ideas and knowledge would become difficult.<sup>15</sup> Still, we can recognize shared themes that span more differences than the economy, at least in terms of intensity and meaning. Sometimes they even go in opposite directions.

**POWERHOUSE** 10/20/13 5:18 PM  
**Comment: -14-** Here there are three additional global trends that are interesting to incorporate (see also our book Shifts):

1. The massive generational 'babyboomer' shift that is happening right now, which has large consequences in EU and USA... it is often overlooked how massive this generation and its cultural/political/institutional influence has been (from the pil to viagra, from the ford mustang to the toyota prius, from the club-of-rome to the third-way and from 'bouwen voor de buurt' to 'de vastgoed fraude'...).
2. The rise of globalization and the internet which creates a totally different platform for cultural exchange.
3. The slowing down of cultural innovation and the end of the avant-garde: it can be argued that we are on a sort of cultural plateau since there have been no real new innovations in the music industry, the movie industry etc... The argument is that the amount of architectural innovation was greater inbetween 1970 and 1990 than between 1990 and 2010...and that we have ended up in a moment in time where we simply reshuffle, remix, revamp and reconfigure different parts of innovative practices from the last 100 years. As a kind of big retro age...

in precisely the opposite direction. Examples from Curitiba, Medellín, Caracas and São Paulo show how governments and **30** public institutions are making increasing use of proper design and public planning to achieve socio-economic goals. **8 24**

But **9** at an institutional level **31** throughout South America, Asia and Russia, the collective meaning of architecture is also put under extreme pressure by the extensive mixing of state intervention and commercial real estate interests, leaving little opportunity for communities, citizens or civil society to play an active role. **10** In many of the countries Dutch architects have emigrated to with great optimism, spatial planning, architecture and even public space are totally insensitive to social influence and largely ignored in the public debate.

However, this brings us to the third level: that of politics itself. **32** 2013 has been called 'the year of the protest'. The political crisis seems to roll like a wave across the world, often with a direct or indirect link to the physical environment. From the protests against the construction on Gezi Park

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 8:25 PM

**Deleted: -30-** governments and

**URBZ** 10/13/13 6:55 AM

**Deleted: -9-** But

**URBZ** 10/13/13 5:41 PM

**Comment: -10-** Talking specifically about São Paulo that today is a metropolis with major urban structural problems, specially due to its size and careless management. The lack of quality in public spaces, however, with no doubt, has lead the city and a big group of people to become culturally and artistically organized to receive and host creative interventions in collective spaces. With the aim to rediscuss the social, political and architectural practices and the dialectics of public and private spaces. Fortunately the good side of the status CRISES has given the opportunity for new multidisciplinary collectives to arise and work in a more rapid, efficient and collaborative manner on our urban deficiencies.

**URBZ** 10/13/13 6:51 AM

**Comment: -8-** One example of these works was a proposed event in 2012 by the Prefeitura (municipality) of São Paulo, lead by the architect Beth França and the italian architect Stefano Boeri and 9 multidisciplinary collectives of around the world, promoting discussion on the theme of informal cities: debates, workshop, exhibits and small interventions with students and professionals took place in nine favelas of the city. The problem is that most of the city is in private hands and corporate business with low quality of urban, construction and also aesthetic aspects.

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 8:27 PM

**Deleted: -31-** at an institutional level

**SUPERSUDACA** 9/27/13 7:55 PM

**Deleted: -32-** However, this brings us to the third level: that of politics itself.

**Damon Rich** 10/28/13 2:26 PM

**Changed: -24-** Examples from Curitiba, Medellín, Caracas and São Paulo show how governments and public institutions are making increasing use of "internationally recognized" design and public planning to achieve socio-economic goals.

in Taksim Square, Istanbul, to the protests against the increasingly expensive public facilities in the context of mega projects like the World Cup in Brazil, to the riots in the modernist residential areas of Stockholm,<sup>33</sup> there is an epidemic of exploding public frustration and large-scale projects are often the symbol of an autocratic, insensitive, ineffective government. In Sweden's case, the riots highlighted the fact that the government has allowed immigrants to become isolated in remote mega-structures where no native-born Swede dares to tread, and where daily life is more heavily affected by diminishing welfare benefits.<sup>34</sup> Even the Arab Spring of 2011 now appears to be back in Tahrir Square in Cairo, where the population called for the resignation of a corrupt and violent new government by occupying a public square; protestors even created an environment to support a months-long protest, complete with amenities such as doctors, libraries, restaurants and sleeping areas. It is also clear that the western Occupy movement exhibits a tendency to unify these events, and while Occupy is anti-capitalist and slightly anarchic, the movements

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 7:56 PM

**Deleted: -33-** to the riots in the modernist residential areas of Stockholm,

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 7:57 PM

**Changed: -34-** There is an epidemic of exploding public frustration and large-scale projects are often the symbol of an autocratic, insensitive, ineffective government. In Sweden's case, riots highlighted the fact that the government has allowed immigrants to become isolated in remote mega-structures where no native-born Swede dares to tread.

in the Arab states and Malaysia are actually fighting for an open market, the right to entrepreneurship and fair democratic government. For the most part, the riots in Sweden, London and Paris lacked a political agenda, while the protests in Brazil and Istanbul can be seen as the revolt of an intellectual middle class, and thus lie somewhere between the Arab Spring and the Occupy movement. Despite their differences, however, we can see the many protests and riots as part of a global phenomenon of political crisis, and we see the clear emergence of a global language and methodology of protest.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the themes of democracy, local self-determination, civic society, bottom-up, participatory and temporarily autonomous places of protest and community have become a shared international phenomenon. Tahrir Square, Syntagma Square in Athens and Gezi Park have become part of us all, and now form a spatial-political international reference. But the most important lesson from half a decade of protests in the wake of the financial and political crises, is that democracy, civic society and participation can no longer in a culturally relativistic

Damon Rich 10/28/13 2:43 PM ✓ ✕

**Changed: -25-** Despite their differences, however, we can see the many protests and riots as part of a global phenomenon of political crisis, not that we need a crisis to justify what we're saying, we think, and we see the clear emergence of a global language and methodology of protest growing from past languages and methods, like when communists write newspapers for global subscribers.

manner be put down as Western obsessions, with no meaning in the east or south—an argument often used by Western architects with major projects in autocratic countries in Asia or the Middle East. The political crisis and the resulting transformation to a new system is also a theme that we share, nuanced, of course, by totally different intensities and historical backgrounds. **10 11 16 11 35 26**

The hypothesis of our project in São Paulo, then, is that there is reason enough for a group of architects of a certain philosophy to connect with their counterparts in Brazil and throughout the world<sup>3</sup>, coming together for the Biennale.<sup>12</sup> We are inspired by post-war modernism, when modernist architects from the pre-war avant-garde margin suddenly found themselves<sup>27</sup> at the center of institutions and their shared language as modernist architects was used to talk about the future of their profession in a truly international way. We are especially inspired by the young generation of that movement in the 1950s, a group of designers frustrated by the tendency towards bureaucracy and technocracy of

23 SUL 10/1/13 5:09 PM

**Comment: -10-** Different motivations, same media: social networks, twitter, etc. We can put aside the specific context of the uprisals, but we cannot ignore social media, which appears to be some kind of urban international community between their 20's and 30's. Free spaces for public gathering, in São Paulo, are sparse. Here, youth is seeking for places to belong, places that they can relate to and identify with. People want space. They began to understand that the city should belong to them, because that's were they live. Life is more than just work and consumerism. We need places for slowing down, for time spending, for hanging around, everything. We shall wait and see if these protests will evolve into effective policy making with direct impact on living standards in urban environments.

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 8:01 PM

**Deleted: -35-** Despite their differences, however, we can see the many protests and riots as part of a global phenomenon of political crisis, and we see the clear emergence of a global language and methodology of protest. In addition, the themes of democracy, local self-determination, civic society, bottom-up, participatory and temporarily autonomous places of protest and community have become a shared international phenomenon. Tahrir Square, Syntagma Square in Athens and Gezi Park have become part of us all, and now form a spatial-political international reference. But the most important lesson from half a decade of protests in the wake of the financial and political crises, is that democracy, civic society and participation can no longer in a culturally relativistic manner be put down as Western obsessions, with no meaning in the east or south—an argument often used by Western architects with major projects in autocratic countries in Asia or the Middle East. The political crisis and the resulting transformation to a new system is also a theme that we share, nuanced, of course, by totally different intensities and historical backgrounds.

Damon Rich 10/28/13 2:46 PM

**Inserted: -27-** , Borg-like,

FAILED ARCHITECTURE 11/2/13 2:18 PM

**Comment: -11-** It is important to realize that all different forms of protests in different countries (London riots, Tahrir in Cairo, occupy Wall Street, no-fifa in Brazil) are responses to acts of neoliberal restructuring, although with very different ways of articulating them and with different class compositions. It is not true that Tahrir demanded an "open market", as it was rooted in long labour struggles against more free trade damaging local industries. It is also not true that the Paris or London riots were a-political or that they originated because people were living in a specific architectural typology. Besides, this cycle of protests is not new, but started just after the demise of the previous cycle, also known as the alter globalization movement (which was much bigger). Finally, it is very dangerous to argue that only after these protests the non-Western world has shown their appetite for some democracy. It has been the West after all, that structurally undermined developments towards democracy around the world through a wide range of among others militaristic, political and economic interventions.

URBZ 10/13/13 5:53 PM

**Comment: -11-** Architects should never have played the game of WAR - World Map Attack Strategy - as its buildings in the world were full markings within a territory, forgetting completely the social, economic and cultural informations of each place. Contemporary cities can and should be considered all the same? We are living today a global release of "below the character" unconsciously.

Damon Rich 10/28/13 2:46 PM

**Changed: -26-** The political conflict and the ongoing transformation of the system is also a theme that we share, nuanced, of course, by totally different intensities and historical backgrounds. That's what I meant by Actually Existing Fun Palace.

URBZ 10/13/13 6:01 PM

**Comment: -12-** (taking advantage of the new model of architectural projects presentation at this X Arch Biennale of SP)

POWERHOUSE 10/20/13 5:29 PM

**Comment: -16-** On the above I would add that a large facilitator behind all these protests is the internet! I think that the power of the internet, especially the hand-held-iPhone and the social-network version of it is super powerful in its connective value. It really has put a totally new structure behind the protests and has allowed them to be guided by the 'swarm'. This is really powerful stuff hence the sky-rocketing value of companies like Google and Facebook. These internet networks also totally replace old power structures such as architectural publications etc. So both the large scale project is under attack from the public through internet, it is also the role of the critic that is not used to being part of the swarm... did you notice that none of the occupy movements produced any real leaders? Did you notice that all of these protests are about spatial planning and politics and that yet not a single starchitect has associated themselves with any of these protests? Neither has any of the young offices managed to piggy-back on this huge momentum and defined a new public position with/du/e/thanks to it. How weird is that?!

CRIT 10/14/13 4:52 PM

**Comment: -3-** The strength of this emerging practice we believe is that it is multi-headed and hydra-like; incoherent and fragmented; agile and tactical. There is a conceptual contradiction in the aspiration to form a grand alliance of these practices, or thinking of these practices in a conceptually integrated manner, or aiming to neatly categorize these practices or even respond like Team X. Nevertheless it is important to talk to each other and exchange notes as these practices traverse different physical and conceptual geographies; they seek inspiration from other practices and their audience is located in different places. The geography of work for these practices has changed. It is perhaps for this reason that academics and practitioners travel so much. However, it is also important to set the terms of these exchanges so as to maintain the autonomy of each of these practices and not force them into a category.

the reconstruction, who wanted to inject the original idealism and humanism of pre-war modernism into the massive building projects of the postwar period: Team X. Like Team X,<sup>36</sup> we want to start with a group of architects from completely different backgrounds, but who share a certain attitude towards their work at a fundamental level as well as a number of political and social standpoints regarding democratization, participation, economics and politics. Just like the famous meetings of Team X,<sup>37</sup> we want this group of basically like-minded professionals to collaborate with each other on profound and sensitive projects representing broader challenges at the political, economic, social or institutional levels, but simultaneously addressing local elaborations.<sup>6 13 28</sup> Others are then invited to respond here as critically as possible, with the idea that we are dealing with a shared understanding and a shared ambition.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, we assume a shared<sup>39</sup> moment in the development of these practices, namely that they have behind them several years of successful individual projects, which have now also been able to prove their use

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 8:02 PM

**Deleted: -36-** We are inspired by post-war modernism, when modernist architects from the pre-war avant-garde margin suddenly found themselves at the center of institutions and their shared language as modernist architects was used to talk about the future of their profession in a truly international way. We are especially inspired by the young generation of that movement in the 1950s, a group of designers frustrated by the tendency towards bureaucracy and technocracy of the reconstruction, who wanted to inject the original idealism and humanism of pre-war modernism into the massive building projects of the postwar period: Team X. Like Team X,

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 8:03 PM

**Deleted: -37-** Just like the famous meetings of Team X,

FAT 10/22/13 11:47 PM

**Comment: -6-** A possible historic difference is that Team X were (I speculate) broadly aligned with the post-war political consensus of social democracy and thus could relatively easily regard the state as a benign patron. The current generation are alienated from the current neo-liberal political consensus and thus significant political shifts are required in order for them to realize their architectural ideas. Whether this is through engagement with current political forms of representation or alternative modes of assembly (or a combination), the issue is not simply architectural although architectural ideas may be intrinsic to a meaningful alternative.

URBZ 10/13/13 6:13 PM

**Comment: -13-** Believing that any considerable positive transformation in the public space, like a simple border space transformed into urban garden, today can be considered architecture. We can consider the urban studies and architecture not only as disciplines for the production of territories and objects to inhabit, but also as the art of the collective transformation of city and society, through both tangible and intangible actions. In a wide perspective, architecture can be defined as "articulate space", where cultural and social life can arise. If architecture is understood as a discipline capable of reacting on urban patterns, and if we concentrate on the space as the key element to work on, specific urban spaces can reveal themselves from the initiative of social production of space.

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 8:32 PM

**Deleted: -39-** shared

Damon Rich 10/28/13 2:47 PM

**Comment: -28-** Sounds great as long as you don't make us fill out those simple-minded grids.

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 8:31 PM

**Changed: -38-** We want this group of basically like-minded professionals to collaborate with each other on profound and sensitive projects representing broader challenges, but simultaneously addressing local elaborations. Others are then invited to respond here as critically, with the idea that we are dealing with a shared understanding and ambition.



in the real world, but that they now stand before the next threshold: how can this way of working really affect daily practice, policies, and the physical environment? How can this generation make the transition from the avant garde to the center, from the exception to the standard, from the elite to the society?<sup>7 1</sup> Can they, in this way, learn from each other?<sup>11 8 17</sup>

29 14 18 40

FAT 10/22/13 11:50 PM

**Comment: -7-** See above but, in a sense, they can't very easily under present conditions. Sorry to be so negative.

FAT 10/22/13 11:54 PM

**Comment: -8-** Yes. (Thank goodness, a positive answer).

Damon Rich 10/28/13 2:52 PM

**Comment: -29-** Let's reimagine reimagining, calm our excitement for Agency-of-the-Idea and Action-at-a-Distance, dissolve the opposition of Architecture and Buildings, until we are building a world rooted in organized communities and their struggles over the fact that you can't have your own built environment. An expanded aesthetics of self-determination beyond resilience, so that (public) desire drives (urban) design.

SUPERSUDACA 9/27/13 8:07 PM

**Comment: -40-** At first glance, we can answer this question with a definite yes

ZUS 11/4/13 8:16 PM

**Comment: -1-** This implies that these new practices should or want to move to the next stage. It is possible that these practices stay subversive, but that they become larger in number. This could mean more divers entrepreneurial practices coexist, from left to right, from bottom to top. It does need a more versatile governance that can actually deal with this diversity and therefore has vision on how to steer a more evolutionary planning process. So as much as architect will change, governments will have to adapt these new circumstances. The apparent gap between center and the avant garde could be reconsidered and flipped inside out.

POWERHOUSE 10/20/13 6:00 PM

**Comment: -17-** We need to seriously discuss wether we would not need to broaden our scope to include designers/thinkers/artists outside of our field? Because: can the architect really be the leading central figure the modernist movement made us believe he could be? Was the modernist movement maybe an anomaly from the position of the profession from all the centuries before? Maybe we are not as central to solving the worlds problem as we would like to think? And if we believe we are, how come so little people treat us that way?

URBZ 10/13/13 6:18 PM

**Comment: -14-** SHARE INFORMATIONS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION. THESE ARE THE BASIS OF A GOOD AND NEW MODEL OF WORK.

POWERHOUSE 10/20/13 6:03 PM

**Comment: -18-** And finally: are we then Team Y? Or team Z? Or do we start all over as the A Team?

23 SUL 10/1/13 5:18 PM

**Comment: -11-** We much appreciate this last paragraph. It is stimulating to be part of this ambitious and urgent discussion. We believe we have a lot to contribute, since in our 7 year independent practice we have been dealing with the raw and wild realities of architecture making in Brazil. We have worked with a wide range of public spheres in the pursuit of a true engagement in the process of constructing our urban environment. We deal with transports and educational facilities in our everyday practice. We see ourselves as a collectively owned office with public interest. We believe in this long and windy road. We believe in collaboration.

"How do we think this way of working would really affect daily practice, policies, and the physical environment"? Through intense architecture debate (meaning: everyone is author); through political engagement (that means organization as a class of professionals focused on proposals not just on rights); through fierce defense of architecture's human-oriented ethos. We believe we live in a world where there's no space for nostalgia. We have learned a lot from Team X experience. A unique event in architectural history. The idea of a Utopia of the Present is exciting. If we may add to this concept, isn't what we need a dive into the fundamentals of the profession today? Yes, architecture, but what is architecture today? And who's society? What is the social value of the Built? How to architecturally deal with society's behavior changes in this information-flooded context that we all live in? Our construction standards: how do they respond to real-time demands? What is Present when there's Real Time? We think that there's a philosophical challenge now, that threatens to exclude architecture from the main collective discussions on the future. Quoting Paul Virilio, time has beaten space. In a world of flows & fluxes why build?

## Participants

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**Francisco Barros**, architect/urbanist, University of São Paulo (BR)

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**Fernando Botton**, Urbz (BR)

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**Rupali Gupte & Prasad Shetty**, CRIT (IND)

**Charles Holland**, FAT (UK)

**Kazuo Nakano**, dir. Urban Development of São Paulo (BR)

**Ana Luiza Nobre**, curator of the X Bienal de Arquitetura de São Paulo (BR)

**Michelle Provoost**, Crimson Architectural Historians (NL)

**Wagner Reheby**, Urban Think Tank (BR)

**Damon Rich**, City of Newark (USA)

**Nanne de Ru**, Powerhouse Company (NL)

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**Het Nieuwe Instituut** (Guus Beumer, Alma Ploeger, Floor Van Spaendonck)

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