

Monu

magazine on urbanism

Imagining the
Subsidized
Landscape

Is a Bathtub Still a
Bathtub on Mars?

The Paid Urbanism
Project

After Growth

Urban Distortion
and more...



PAID URBANISM

The socio - geographic effects of subsidies
and government spending

01 June 2004

rubber sheets between public and privat - exodus of the business community - stripping of function
- generic Spa-types - strategy outlines - free markets - apotheosis of the romantic - sufferings from
fatal flaws - lowdensity paradises, ...

Our experience of urban life today exists as it does because we have a complex system of subsidies interacting with our urban geography. Taxes, once extracted from the market economy cycle back to the masses as paid urbanism. Used wisely or not, spread fairly or unfairly, this money is probably one of the strongest forces animating our urban conditions today. The places we live in today are in many ways shaped by government spending - Subsidized Landscapes. Since the '90s, big enthusiasm about total privatization has subsided. Nowadays, everybody realizes that there is a need to keep certain things in the hand of public administration. Redistribution of enormous revenue is a commonly accepted means of keeping civil democratic societies working. Government intervention, taxing and spending are the terms we use to describe this state. Caught in an enormous network of redistribution that pervades everything and everybody, the power and influence of these processes rarely makes itself visible; we are never fully aware. A Kafkaesque web of bureaucracies constantly recreates and resuscitates our urban landscapes. Drifting through cities with their thousands of invisible dependencies and relationships, no one person can exactly define what keeps everything alive. Everything seems to be vibrant, but somewhere down the line, there are crosscutting streams and flows of decisions and administration behind it. It has been paid for. The multitudinous products of paid urbanism are hard to identify or define, but lie hidden behind every stone of the city. The effects of paid urbanism on urban settings cannot be overemphasized - without paid urbanism, cities as we know them would not exist.

This first issue shines a number of spotlights into the thicket of subsidies and paid urbanism. What do networks of subsidies look like in fields like housing and farming in the US and what are their consequences for cities? What are the aesthetic impacts and absurdities of paid urbanism in places as different as Chicago, Coney Island (NYC) and Thuringen (eastern Germany). We feature projects that rethink the networks of paid urbanism and essays that reflect on the interwoven history of subventions and urbanism.

The editors wish to thank all the contributors for their faith and effort they showed by submitting their work for this first issue. We would also like to thank the Urban Architectural Studies at the University of Kassel/ Prof. Wolfgang Schulze for supporting and publishing the printed version of this issue.

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Call for submissions for Monu 2.0 Middle Class Urbanism

The vanishing of the middle class is a well-documented phenomenon.

Across Europe and North America, as income distribution becomes increasingly lop-sided and greater extremes of poverty and wealth are created, the notion of what was once considered 'normal'

will be emptied of meaning and this will have a significant impact on societies—one registering well beyond political, social and economic contexts. The 'hollowing out' of the middle class will ultimately change and challenge the way cities are created, it will alter the ideals and the powers behind urbanism that shape the aesthetics of our cities in profound ways.

For the last few decades the middle class has been the driving force behind urban innovation. More than any other, this urban group has both the financial resources and the sheer power of numbers to effectively transform desire into urban reality. Many of the most obvious components of our cities—Row houses, apartment buildings and sports facilities, to name but a few—are in large measure a response to the existence of the middle class. These components have been enabled by the solid, middle class sensibilities of order and uniformity that we often take for granted. This is particularly true of the Suburbs, the most important novelty on the urban landscape in the last century and a decidedly middle class invention. The middle class symbolizes modest urban values, values that seem hopelessly anti-utopian and run counter to the megalomaniac concepts of cities proposed by great architects like LeCorbusier or Hilbersheimer. But in reality the middle class is comprised of some of the boldest urban utopists ever, individuals who have been realizing their utopias for decades. Much less dogmatic and more successful than any imagined utopia, with their power, influence and sheer numbers the middle class has shaped the urban landscapes we inhabit today.

What specific impact has the middle class had on urbanism? Is it aware of its power, or of its rapidly approaching demise? And will urbanism evolve or devolve once the terrain currently occupied by the middle class is less a reality than a mere statistical concept? As landscapes are redrawn and the middle class collapses in on itself, what species of urbanism will be created in its absence. And are we prepared for what's to come?

The second issue of Monu invites projects, articles, interviews and photographs that address the topic of middle class urbanism. Works on other topics are welcome as well. Our second issue will be released in winter of 2004/05. **The deadline for submissions is end of October 2004.** For more information contact: monu@herzlungenmaschine.de