

NEW URBANITY IN METROPOLITAN REGIONS Introduction to the following articles

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The classical understanding of “urbanity” is guided by the notion of the European City, the hallmarks of which have been summarised by WALTER SIEBEL (2004, 18) as: “the presence of history in the everyday life of city-dwellers; the city constantly perceived as a utopian promise of both economic and political emancipation; the city as the special setting for an urban life style; the image of a European townscape handed down through time; and finally, its regulatory function within the social state”. Since the Middle Ages these features have found tangible expression in the townscape in the form of town halls, market places and churches which form the core of a physically compact and multifunctional centre. These features are currently undergoing change within the context of socio-economic restructuring. The fundamental societal and spatial structures underlying the European City appear largely to be in a state of dissolution. The age of industrialisation already saw the creation of polycentric metropolitan areas which appeared to exhibit various shortcomings by comparison with this model, but which ultimately also have come to represent a distinct manifestation of the process of urbanisation. The highly differentiated and flexible social, economic, cultural and communicative structures and developments which are associated with post-industrial western societies are increasingly at odds with the classical understanding of urbanity.

There is today clear evidence of the increasing heterogeneity and fragmentation of urban life styles and socio-spatial structures. Similarly there are definite signs of increasing levels of polycentricity and the diversification of urban functions in metropolitan regions. This change is taking place on various scales and has spatial impacts, for example in the emergence of new functional clusters (such as those for the knowledge economy and for creative industries), and in the localisation of new life styles and milieus. What we now see emerging are new urban clusters with specific locational patterns, catchment areas, addressing different target groups and with different symbolic

features. The creation of “urbanity” is coming more and more to rank as a key factor in the competition to attract international investors, a highly qualified workforce and members of the “creative class”. It is in particular in metropolitan regions that new forms of urbanity and new urban life styles appear first and in particularly sharp relief within the context of the far-reaching economic and societal restructuring and increasing competition between locations. But even where primacy is not attached to the economy and to competition, the actions of civil-society actors are leading to the creation of new social spaces within cities and new forms of urbanity. At the same time, various tiers of action are gaining in importance: on the one hand, the regional tier as the sphere and radius of urban action; but also, especially in the context of urban restructuring, the micro level as the area within which new urbanity finds expression.

Although it is now more than two decades since “new urbanity” first surfaced as a subject of discussion (cf. HÄUSSERMANN and SIEBEL 1987), it has more recently once again been at the focus of interest, not least in connection with the debate on tendencies towards “re-urbanisation”. This explains why the *Stadt- und Regionalwissenschaftliches Forschungsnetzwerk Ruhr* (SURF – a research network for urban and regional sciences in the Ruhr Area) proposed a session dedicated to this topic at the 2007 Congress of German Geographers in Bayreuth.¹⁾ The papers which were presented there are to be found in this number in revised form.

¹⁾ SURF was created in 2005 jointly by the Faculty of Spatial Planning at the TU Dortmund, the ILS – Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development, and the Geographical Institute at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. This joint venture now also includes the Institute for Work and Technology at the Gelsenkirchen University of Applied Sciences. SURF’s activities focus principally on comparative international research into metropolitan regions, the main interest to date being in the subject of metropolitan governance and research into planning cultures. For more information go to: <http://www.raumplanung.uni-dortmund.de/irpud/surf/>

In the context of restructuring metropolitan regions, three general issues are of particular importance. The congress session and the papers assembled here, attempt to provide answers to the questions these raise:

- What new forms of urbanity are appearing in the context of the economic and societal changes currently taking place in metropolitan areas? What spatial impacts do they unleash? The keywords associated with these questions include: demographic change, diversification of life styles, the relocalisation of life styles and patterns of daily life, new forms of civil-society urbanity, the significance of urbanity within the knowledge economy, new urbanity as a locational factor in the competition between metropolitan regions, new types of segregation and fragmentation.
- What constructs and concepts of urbanity underlie the plans and actions of public- and private-sector actors? What challenges facing society and the economy are these concepts intended to respond to? The keywords associated with these questions include: concepts of multifunctionality on different scales, of polycentricity and recentralisation, the cluster patterns associated with new urbanity in the network city, the “creative city” and the “convenient city”.
- To what extent is this giving rise to a strategic construct of new urbanity, to the production of new urban spaces in the context of urban renewal and the reshaping of cities by private- and public-sector actors? What constellations of actors are emerging? What options are available here to public-sector actors to exert control or guidance? The keywords associated with these questions include: the economisation of urban-development policy, the economic instrumentalisation of art and culture, new approaches to planning, and strategic approaches under the watchword of planning through negotiation, public-private partnerships, the new urban deal.

It is no longer appropriate to conduct the discourse on new urbanity in metropolitan regions solely in a Eurocentric fashion; it is vital also to include the development of urbanity and the production of new urban spaces in non-European metropolitan regions. This is essential to create the degree of distance and the multiplicity of perspectives which are required for any critical appraisal of normative concepts of urbanity, such as the model represented by the European City. Accordingly, in at least one case study, the subject of discussion is “new urbanity” in a non-European metropolitan region (Tokyo).

RALPH LÜTZELER (Tokyo) refers *inter alia* to the Minato urban district of Tokyo in investigating the extent to which the processes of re-urbanisation which have been in evidence in the central districts of Tokyo since the mid-’90s are also leading to the creation of new, gentrified urban areas. In this context, special recognition has to be given to the urban-renaissance policies both of the Japanese government and of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. As part of a strategic policy to reshape the city, the aim of public policy since 2002, conducted in partnership with the private sector, has been to foster the creation of new urban spaces dedicated to the objectives associated with economic competitiveness. This has led to the creation of both multifunctional islands of urban regeneration, such as Tokyo Midtown with its symbolic function for the global city, and equally of new housing complexes with a distinct waterfront character. In many cases, these housing developments have been built by private-sector developers on derelict industrial sites; in more attractive locations this can be seen as a case of “new-build gentrification” following DAVIDSON and LEES (2005). This paper shows how the interplay between housing supply and potential demand on the part of new occupants can result in the diversification of this newly created space in terms of location, housing quality and features, and the social structure of residents.

Against the background of urban governance, FELICITAS HILLMANN (Bremen) reports on the changes currently taking place in Genoa. Here the fulcrum of urban transformation is the harbour: compared with other European port cities, quite recently there has been a functional shift in favour of the potential for tourism afforded by the old harbour area. Urban development has taken markedly diverse advantage of major events, such as Columbus Year (1992), the 2001 G8 Summit and the city’s status as 2004 European Capital of Culture. The author identifies the constellations of actors which have particularly favoured a strategic urban-development policy, and explores the importance (if any) which should be attached not only to economic/functional renewal, but also to the problems of socio-spatial segregation. One aspect which becomes particularly apparent is the importance of the trend towards greater aesthetic quality as a feature of urban planning geared to achieving “new urbanity”.

THOMAS POHL (Hamburg) has studied socio-spatial differentiation within a growing metropolis. Taking inspiration from the theses and studies of RICHARD FLORIDA on the role of the “creative class” and “cultural diversity” in generating success-

ful urban development, he investigates not only the “classic” factors (social status, family status), but also “openness to diversity” in the context of socio-spatial differentiation in Hamburg. The patterns of distribution and change over time which he identifies are to some extent expected, but some aspects are more surprising. In Hamburg there is no detectable positive correlation between high levels of openness to cultural diversity, on the one hand, and economic success at the neighbourhood level – in contrast to what has been postulated by RICHARD FLORIDA. There may be many reasons to promote cultural diversity as a feature of “new urbanity”; this does not, however, guarantee economic success, at least at the level of urban neighbourhoods.

JULIA LOSSAU (Berlin) has studied a completely different aspect of “new urbanity”, namely the changes to public spaces which are taking place in some cities as a consequence of the societal and economic changes which these cities are undergoing. Her interest is focused primarily on changes to the buildings and monuments which shape the cityscape. She analyses public art – paying particular attention to a current example in Glasgow – with specific regard to the concepts of urbanity which these artworks express. This example of interpretive cultural geography at the micro level also serves to show just how our understanding of urbanity is changing – or more accurately has become more nuanced – at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Changes in urbanity are evident in a broad range of phenomena at different levels and on different scales: from the functional polycentricity of the spatial structure of metropolitan regions to public art in pedestrian precincts. There are certainly some areas which display the attributes and qualities of “classical urbanity”; however, these are now no more than isolated elements in the “city-regional archipelago” (KUNZMANN 2001) of metropolitan areas. Or, to put it in other words, the European City is but one element in “new urbanity”.

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