

**WS 2004-2005**

Prof. Jacques Herzog, Prof. Pierre de Meuron, Emanuel Christ, John Palmesino, Simon Hartmann, Ann-Sofi Rönnskog

Exercise type: P

Group work in Basle and in Paris

Introduction: Tuesday, 19.10.2004, 10.15 AM at ETH Studio Basel, Spitalstrasse 12, 4056 Basel

**INERTIA**

**A research on urban transformation**

**Paris**

How is Paris reshaping its centrality? What are the contemporary relations between power and urban change? What are the pressures on its rational urban order? How is Paris re-organising its structures? What are its hindrances? What are its potentials?

Every city grows and takes shape with relation to its own specific scenario of menace, which has emerged in the course of its history and coerced it into an unmistakable and inescapable pattern. Cities are specific because they are confronted with specific threats and show a concrete, physical response to these threats. Cities are unfathomable, a trait that explains their distinctiveness and distinguishability. It also explains the difficulty of describing cities, of making plans for them or confining them to theories.

How are cities developing, changing and adapting their bodies, their physical configurations, when they are connected to the international energy flows? How are they reconfiguring their specific physiognomy?

This semester the research will focus on the urban transformation processes of Paris.

The perceptive, analytical and representational instances of this city will be the starting and central point of the research that will try to outline a 'portrait of a contemporary city' from its physical configuration. This will be different from a traditional general urban description and will focus on the specific traits and individual characteristics of Paris. This portrait will render Paris' contemporary adaptation, change, revision, renovation and transformation processes: a physiognomy of a moment within an evolutionary trajectory marked by centralisation of power and rational order

The core of the research activities of the Institute is the detection of traces of urban change in the materic space of the inhabited landscape. The researches engage the issues of contemporary urban condition by describing rigorously the modalities of physical transformation in different environments and contexts. The particular modality experimented in the last years of work with the students in Basel – with actually no separation between teaching, fieldwork, design and research – is going to be the centre of the activity of this semester which continues the new research on international cities.

Studio Basel investigates regions that are twofold, that are embedded both in the globalisation process and on the edge of a possible crisis. Places that maintain a spin, for they are connected to international energy flows that continue to evolve and change, without ever exploding or collapsing. Regions in penumbra, with an interesting, specific history.

A phenomenological reading of the urban condition of Paris is the starting point for a series of analysis that will render a deeper understanding of the contemporary city, its modalities of transformation and the role of architecture and urbanism in the overall urbanisation processes.

Divided in small teams and in close co-operation with assistants, scientific collaborators and the professors themselves, the students will have to investigate a series of specific locales of Paris and the Île de France. The diverse samples will sketch the outlines, or fragments, of a masterplan for contemporary Paris as a particular condition of modernity, revealing its potential for urban transformation.



© Francesco Jodice

In particular, the students will develop an understanding of the contemporary city of Paris and its structure-generating processes, reading change in the space in real time, from three distinct points of view, that also imply different conceptions of the city as a collective construction. The first observations will consider the city by an aggregate standard, analyzing the major shifts, persistences and energies that direct the growth of the metropolis. A second series of readings assumes a radically different point of view on the contemporary city: by looking at the urban landscape through the eyes of its inhabitants the research will try to give account for the uncoordinated small changes in the physical structure of the city that forms the background rumor of the urban activity. Another analytical tool will investigate the transformational devices that characterize the specific ways by which urban activities are related to the physical structure of the cities.

The results of the fieldwork and of the activities conducted in Basel will be a series of maps, diagrams, interviews, architectural portraits, urban biographies, diagrams of transformation. The research and design activity will disclose the generating processes of urban matter in Paris interfacing its population, to form a panoramic vision- a fragment of a masterplan – of its specificity free of rigid teleology and deterministic sources for its concrete urban, institutional and architectural forms. At Studio Basel, research is basically not different from project, the Portrait is research as project.

The work will be conducted on a weekly base at ETH Studio Basel's new premises in Spitalstrasse 12, Basel. Fieldwork in Paris, together with the Seminarwoche, is part of the activity of the course and will be mandatory. The final presentation of the student's work will be in the form of a booklet and a slide presentation. A series of readings of the most important literature of the recent past on urban studies will be part of the semester program. A symposium with international guest is programmed during the semester.

## Winter Semester 2004 – 2005 Programme

Date	Issue	Location	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
OCT 19	<b>Start</b>	Basel	Introduction Studio Basel INERTIA- A research on Urban Transformation Symposium		
25 26 27	<b>Fieldwork</b>	Paris	Visit to the sites Visit to the sites	Travel to Paris Visit to the sites Visit to the sites	Return to Zurich-Basel
NOV 1 2	Studio Work Studio Work	Basel		Film	
8 9	Studio Work Studio Work	Basel		Film	
15 16	Studio Work <b>Pin-Up</b>	Basel Basel		Film	
22 23 24 25 26 27 28	<b>Seminar week</b>	Paris	Visit to the city	Meetings with local experts	
29 30	Studio Work Studio Work	Basel		Film	
DEC 6 7	Studio Work <b>Pin Up</b>	Basel Basel			
13 14	Studio Work Studio Work	Basel		Film	
20 21	Studio Work Studio Work	Basel		Film	
JAN 10 11	Studio Work Studio Work	Basel		Film	
17 18	Studio Work Studio Work	Basel		Film	
24 25	Studio Work Studio Work	Basel		Film	
JAN 31 FEB 1	Studio Work <b>Final Critics</b>	Basel Basel			

### Information:

ETH Studio Basel  
Spitalstrasse 12  
4056 Basel

T 0612731685

F 0612731687

E [studio-basel@arch.ethz.ch](mailto:studio-basel@arch.ethz.ch)