

Edited by Rahul Mehrotra

# Everyday Urbanism

Margaret Crawford

vs.

Michael Speaks

Michigan Debates on Urbanism volume I



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# Everyday Urbanism

Michigan Debates on Urbanism



Edited by Rahul Mehrotra

Everyday Urbanism  
New Urbanism  
Post Urbanism & ReUrbanism

Series Editor, Douglas Kelbaugh

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Margaret Crawford  
vs.  
Michael Speaks

Michigan Debates on Urbanism / volume I



**Everyday Urbanism**

**Michigan Debates on Urbanism: volume I**

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The University of Michigan  
A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture + Urban Planning  
2000 Bonisteel Boulevard, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-2069 USA

734 764 1300  
734 763 2322 fax  
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# Contents

- 2 Foreword  
George Baird
- 8 Preface  
Douglas Kelbaugh
- 12 Introduction  
Rahul Mehrotra

## Michigan Debate I

- 16 Everyday Urbanism  
Margaret Crawford
- 34 Every Day is Not Enough  
Michael Speaks
- 46 Discussion
- 75 Contributors

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**George Baird** is Dean of the University of Toronto's School of Architecture, Landscape and Design and a partner in Baird Sampson Neuert Architects in Toronto. He is the co-editor (with Charles Jencks) of *Meaning in Architecture*, the author of a book on Alvar Aalto, *The Space of Appearance*, and the forthcoming *A New Theory of Public Space*.

## Foreword

2

# The Michigan Debates on Urbanism

A year or so ago, Dean Douglas Kelbaugh asked me to write a letter of support for funding a project to launch a series of debates on urbanism in the United States today. I agreed to do so, since I liked the format that he proposed, combining public participation, intellectual gravitas, and engaged polemic. And I was sympathetic to his tripartite classifications of Everyday, New, and Post Urbanisms, on which I have heard him speak and which I have written about in *Building/Art* (University of Calgary Press, 2003). He has since added ReUrbanism to the typology.

Each debate was to have a proponent of one of the urbanisms and a respondent of a different persuasion. It is now a year later; the debates in question have occurred; and it is my pleasure to write a foreword to a series of publications that cover the debates. The expectations I held for the series have more than been fulfilled. Participation by both speakers and spectators has been lively, the level of intellectual discourse high, and the polemical stances of the factions represented well articulated.

But it seems to me that I – and the audiences at the University of Michigan – got a bonus from the series: one that is a byproduct of the specific combination of personalities participating. For example, two of the three debates are conducted by opponents who, in the course of the event, come to reveal powerful, personal shared sets of commitments to specific geographical locations, and intellectual lineages. In two of them, the anticipated format of proposition followed by commentary, is effectively superseded by one in which the presentation of the initial speaker constitutes as much a critique of the stance of the respondent as it does a position proposed for response. For me, these features of the debates give this publication a deepened intellectual significance.

A number of currents of thought in American urbanist discourse that usually remain well below the surface of public discussion here become startlingly – even poignantly – evident.

I did not expect, for example, that the conversation between Margaret Crawford and Michael Speaks would be so engagingly suffused by their palpable, long-standing, and mutual affection for the specific urban features of Los Angeles. They did indeed disagree on the plane of theory as the format of the debates required that they do, and no reader of this series of texts will doubt that they hold different positions. But it is clear as well that Speaks does not so much oppose Crawford's idea of "Everyday Urbanism" as find it an insufficiently efficacious tool for the address of contemporary urban issues. And Crawford is eager to align herself with such younger generation theorists such as Speaks on the matter of the role of the automobile in future American urban form. As she puts it: "the idea of eliminating the automobile is just a dream and, for me, not even a good dream. I don't want to give up my automobile. The thing I miss most about Los Angeles is the parking and the driving," an opinion to which Speaks quickly assents.

A parallel conversation comprises the third debate, even if this one, between Barbara Littenberg and Steven Peterson on the one hand, and Peter Eisenman on the other, plays out according to a quite different dynamic. Littenberg and Peterson argue for what is labeled in Volume III of the *Michigan Debates* as "ReUrbanism," rather than argue against any putative "Post Urbanist" position that might – per Kelbaugh – be ascribed to Eisenman. And this is probably just as well, since Eisenman confesses that he isn't sure that he is an urbanist at all.

But here too, two powerful undercurrents suffuse the conversation. The first one, as in the first debate, is a place: the city of New York, for



which all three speakers figures share a powerful affection. The second is the deep intellectual debt all three owe to their shared urban design mentor: the late Colin Rowe.

Eisenman begins by setting out his own classification of urbanisms operative in recent years, calling them "Arcadian," "Utopian" and Koolhaasian "junk space" respectively (he includes Littenberg/Peterson in the Arcadian category). But in a fashion which you may find as surprising as I did, Eisenman offers a nostalgic nod to the Arcadian group observing that "their idea was a wonderful notion of urbanity." He associates the "Utopian" category with modernism, but observes that "both of those positions...have been problematized by the failure of Modernism, and the idea that you can go backward in time. I don't think it is possible."

Then, having dismissed his first two categories, he characterizes the third one as: "what I call junk space, Rem Koolhaas' urban theories," and then dismisses it as well: "Junk space is not a project because it isn't critical, it's cynical..." Having thus dismissed all three, Eisenman presents several of his recent projects. Yet he attempts little linkage of the projects to the themes of the theoretical introduction with which he began, and which I have just summarized, limiting himself solely to efforts at "incorporating the possibility of negativity into new research in mathematics, biology, physics..." For their part, Littenberg and Peterson launch no theoretical introduction at all, save for the insistence I have already cited: that "multiple urbanisms" do not really exist, and instead that "urbanism is a condition."

They proceed directly to an extended descriptive/analytical account of their firm's own recent urban design proposals for the Lower Manhattan site of the World Trade Center – design proposals that preceded the later and

better-publicized design competition won by Daniel Libeskind.

But once Eisenman's and Littenberg-Peterson's opening presentations are concluded, their debate becomes charged in complex ways. To start with, Eisenman commends Littenberg-Peterson's "beautiful plans," but he then goes on to claim that "the concept of a good plan is no longer alive." Littenberg and Peterson resist this historicization, but in doing so, they argue that an urban design method that has the capacity to "heal the city" does not depend on a tightly determined relationship of an overall urban design plan to the design for any specific building to be erected within it. Before long, the methodological idea of "healing the city" and the non-determinist relationship of urbanism to architecture posited by Littenberg-Peterson drive Eisenman to balk: "I don't accept that architecture and urbanism are separate." Yet Peterson persists, and the exchange ends with his insistent observation that "the city is a different kind of form."

In this fascinating exchange, it seems to me that one sees being played out all over again, the tense dialectic between the more-or-less ahistorical methods that had been formulated and propounded by Rowe, and the more-or-less teleological revisionisms to them that have been so persistently pursued by Eisenman in recent years. But all this notwithstanding, Eisenman's Michigan references to the "failure of Modernism"; his disparagement of Koolhaas' characteristic current methodologies; his only lightly-theorized account of his own recent production; and his admiration (however guarded) for Littenberg-Peterson's "beautiful plans" together have the intriguing effect of returning him more closely to the intellectual lineage of Rowe than he has been for some time.

This brings me to the remaining debate in the series. This one – between Peter Calthorpe and Lars Lerup – had in common with both of the other two a reunion of former academic colleagues. But the interchange between these two protagonists, unlike that between both of the other pairs, did not underscore how much they have basically in common. In fact, in this case, one senses an estrangement between former colleagues, rather than a rapprochement. This effect is sharpened by Calthorpe's opening presentation, which he begins by describing his disappointment that the New Urbanism (of which he was Dean Kelbaugh's designated proponent) has been less successful as a coalition of diverse groups ("for people to think comprehensively about our patterns of growth") and is instead better-known as a neo-traditional style. Understandably exasperated by the its stylistic foregrounding in its East Coast versions, Calthorpe also dismisses in advance many of the criticisms commonly made of it – including, along the way, a number of those implicit in Lars Lerup's subsequent presentation. It is in this sense that I tend to see Calthorpe's presentation as being as much a critique as a proposition. But this is not to say that it is not a proposition. On the contrary, his eloquent plea for a shift from the familiar parameters of new urbanism to a consideration of "the Regional City" is a refreshing and compelling address to the whole panoply of issues central to contemporary urbanism: political, economic, environmental, social, etc. And his insistence on the need to bring detailed design sensibilities even to such obdurate matters as traffic flow on arterial highways, within the overall urban field, cannot be too highly praised.

To Calthorpe's broad – if somewhat impatient – account of the current scene, and of his own projects within it, Lerup responded

with an account of his own "outsider's" enduring fascination with the American "myth" of mobility as freedom. Using his current home town of Houston as his test case, he delivers an often caustic account of current urban failures: mono-functional land use, the degradation of the bayous, etc. – even summing them up, in a telling phrase, as "toxic ecologies." But Calthorpe challenges Lerup on what he sees as his excessive infatuation with the "myth," and presses him to go much further – and to do so propositionally. He is, for example, intrigued by Lerup's tantalizing account of the ecological potentials of flat roofs in a location such as Houston's.

I want to conclude my commentary with a crossover theoretical reference. Reading through this series of commentaries in sequence, I have found myself seeing Calthorpe's engaging combination of historical critique and ambitious urban proposal in a new and different light. To my surprise, it has reminded me again of Eisenman's complaint about Koolhaas' theory. Following on from the theory of Manfredo Tafuri (and of Tafuri's colleague Massimo Cacciari), Eisenman labels Koolhaas' method "nihilistic and cynical." Instead, Eisenman insists, "To have a project... means in some way or other to be critical."

I would not have expected it when I endorsed the Michigan Debates a year ago, but it seems to me that one of its fruitful outcomes is a reading of the efforts of such avowedly "on-the-ground" urbanists such as Peter Calthorpe as important contemporary – if perhaps unwitting – exemplars of the powerful theoretical ideas of Tafuri that Eisenman has championed, and that he has (perhaps less successfully?) sought to emulate for so long.









**Douglas Kelbaugh**, Dean of Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Michigan, has won a score of design awards and competitions, organized and participated in thirty design charrettes, and taught at eight architecture schools in the US and abroad. In addition to writing dozens of articles, he has edited and authored several books, most recently *Repairing the American Metropolis: Common Place Revisited*.

## Preface

Welcome to the Michigan Debates on Urbanism. In a series of three debates which led to three books, we explore contemporary urbanism. The first debate and first volume of the trilogy focuses on Everyday Urbanism. Let me try to put it in context.

There is the conventional urbanism that is quickly and randomly changing the face of the American metropolis. Their downtowns are now being transformed by new office towers, sports arenas, convention centers, and shopping/entertainment complexes, as well as the conversion of warehouses to lofts and of old office buildings to hotels. Their peripheries are developing with greenfield sprawl, while first ring suburbs languish. This development is market-driven and laissez-faire; so it is not self-conscious or doctrinaire. Nor is it particularly coordinated or coherent. And, the quality varies widely, often low or mediocre but is sometimes high, as seen in Volume III, where we introduce the term ReUrbanism to describe its best exemplars.

In addition, there are several intentional, more self-conscious urbanisms being practiced, theorized, and written about. In my opinion there are three: Everyday Urbanism, New Urbanism, and Post Urbanism. There are other urbanisms to be sure, such as Landscape Urbanism, but I think that these three cover most of the cutting edge of theoretical and professional activity. All three, I would argue, are inevitable paradigms in the contemporary human situation and necessary models for the evolving metropolis.

Margaret Crawford and John Kaliski popularized and valorized the term Everyday Urbanism with their book of the same title. Everyday Urbanism celebrates and builds on the richness and vitality of daily life and ordinary reality. It has little pretense about the perfectibility of the built environment. Nor is

it about utopian form. But it is idealistic about social equity and citizen participation, especially for disadvantaged populations. It is grass-roots and populist.

Everyday Urbanism delights in the spontaneous and indigenous; in the ways that migrant groups, for instance, appropriate and adapt to their ad hoc conditions and marginal spaces. There are the flea markets in parking lots and the garage sales in private driveways and front yards, even drinking fountains for dogs in public parks. The city is shaped more by the forces of everyday life than by formal design and official plans. It champions vernacular architecture in vibrant ethnic neighborhoods, like the barrios of Los Angeles. Everyday Urbanism prefers street murals to fine art, local street vendors to national chain stores, although it is sympathetic to the people who hang out in malls. It is the bottom demographic sector of the economy – a sort of community capitalism without much capital.

The other two debates/books are on New Urbanism and on Post Urbanism and ReUrbanism. New Urbanism is the most civic and idealistic; it can be utopian in its aspirations and claims, maintaining there is a structural relationship between physical form and social behavior. The connection between form and function, however, is not thought to be as strong or as determinant as it was in early Modernism. Good form is considered to be essential but insufficient for good urbanism. The urban model is a compact, mixed use, walkable town or city with a traditional hierarchy of public and private architecture that is street-oriented and conducive to face-to-face encounter and interaction. The architectural hierarchy attempts to run the gamut from quiet, supporting roles for background buildings to prima donna



solos for civic and institutional buildings foregrounded in a well-defined public realm.

Post Urbanism is the most heterotopian and least idealistic of the three paradigms. In some sense, it is anti-urban, just as postmodernism was anti-Modern. It is inherently critical, promoting or at least accepting Post-structuralist theories of knowledge and new hybrid possibilities and programs. Form is predictably unpredictable. (Although the dominance of figural form and object buildings has morphed into a pre-occupation with pattern and field.) It attempts to wow an increasingly sophisticated clientele and public with provocative and audacious architecture and urbanism. Zaha Hadid's proposal for Hong Kong or Rem Koolhaas' Eurolille are early, well-known examples. Like Modernism, its design language is abstract, with little or no overt reference to surrounding physical or historical context. It is more beholden to non-local, exogenous forces, such as international finance, banking, corporate branding and politics. In the case of Koolhaas' "junk space," it can be quite cynical.

The three paradigms lead to very different physical outcomes. New Urbanism, with its Latinate clarity and normative order, achieves the most aesthetic unity as it attempts to mix different uses at a human scale in familiar architectural types and styles. However, it can be banal and trite at the architectural scale, accommodating as it is to consumer taste. Its grids of pedestrian-friendly streets look better on the ground than in the air, from which they often look neo-Baroque in their symmetries. Everyday Urbanism, which is the most ad hoc and least driven by aesthetics, is not so concerned about physical beauty or coherence at either the micro or macro scale, but it is

egalitarian and lively on the street. Post Urbanist site plans and perspectives look the most exciting, with their fragmented or wavy fractal geometries, bold architecture, and dynamic circulatory systems. But if developed, many would be over-scaled, windswept, and empty of pedestrians. Tourists in rental cars experiencing the environment through their windshields might well prove a better served audience than residents, for whom there is limited human-scale nuance and architectural detail to reveal itself over the years.

Their reputations also vary widely. Everyday Urbanism is seen as community-based, race-savvy, bottom-up, unpretentious, and democratic. Post Urbanism is viewed in the academic world and the media as hip, avant-garde, or post avant-garde. And New Urbanism is generally perceived as civic, traditional, and nostalgic. It is considered boring and uncool in architecture schools, but often respected in urban planning programs and popular with developers, elected officials and the middle class.

These groups represent genuinely different values, sensibilities, and modalities. Each is related to a time and place. What makes sense in North America may not in Western Europe, Asia or other parts of the developing world. It's very unlikely there is one urbanism that fits all peoples, not even all Americans. For instance, Everyday Urbanism may make sense in ethnic communities in Chicago or Los Angeles, New Urbanism in their suburbs, and Post Urbanism and ReUrbanism in their downtowns. Everyday Urbanism may take deeper root in the mushrooming megacities of Africa, South America, Southeast and South Asia, or the Middle East. New Urbanism is already a factor in the USA, Canada, Australia, England and in some northern European countries. Post

Urbanism seems most appropriate when there's enough existing urban fabric to act as a foil, as this modality seems to work best when there is tension between the old and the new. The denser capitals of Europe can best accommodate and absorb these interventions.

Everyday Urbanism seems also to make sense in developing countries where global cities are mushrooming with informal squatter settlements that defy government control and planning, and where underserved populations simply want a stake in the economic system and in the city. But does it make as much sense in the traditional cities of Europe, where there is the luxury of fine-tuning mature urban fabric and punctuating it with Post Urbanist projects as counterpoint to the traditional urbanism? In American cities, which lack the continuous fabric of European cities in their sprawling metropolitan areas, does New Urbanism offer the density and mixing of uses they presently lack?

In the ecology of cities, it may be that Everyday Urbanism in the developing world and in neglected American neighborhoods might be likened to early successional growth in a forest. Middle-aged American cities that are thickening their stand with mid-successional growth might need New Urbanist and ReUrbanist projects. And European cities, where there is little room for growth except on the periphery or in urban clearings made for Post Urbanist interventions, are more like late successional or climax forests.

A healthy ecosystem will simultaneously host the full range of forest types. Likewise, a healthy metropolis may encompass all of these urbanisms, with Everyday Urbanism taking root in informal settlement on the margins; New Urbanism and ReUrbanism infilling the downtown, commercial centers and neighborhoods; and Post Urbanism exfoliating in exceptional

places like the convention center, entertainment district, the sports arenas, airports, etc. Indeed, this messier cross-section of the metropolis may be more accurate than Andres Duany's "Transect." At least it might form the opposite and complementary half of his compelling, if oversimplified, diagram. In any case, a mature metropolis needs and benefits from multiple urbanisms.

These are the kinds of comparisons and questions that the three volumes of the *Michigan Debates on Urbanism* attempt to refine and explore in greater detail. Although several of the participants question or disagree with this typology of urbanisms, I hope the taxonomy will be helpful to readers. And I hope the series produces more light than heat on our urban situation and its future.

I would like to thank all the debater/writers, the moderator/editors, and the staff who worked hard on this project – but, alas, there are too many to name. I must, however, single out Keria Rossin for her patient typing, Christian Unverzagt and Martha Merzig for their thoughtful graphic design, and George Baird, who took time out from his new job as Dean at the University of Toronto to write the Foreword. For this volume, Tobias Armbrorst and Makoto Mizutani were indispensable in securing imagery and artwork for reproduction. I'd also like to acknowledge the Graham Foundation for their grant.

This first book brings together two of America's leading architectural theorists, Margaret Crawford of Harvard University and Michael Speaks, who was a visiting professor at the University of Michigan during these debates. Rahul Mehrotra, Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at Taubman College, introduces them and shares his perspective on Everyday Urbanism.





**Rahul Mehrotra** is an Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Michigan's Taubman College, a principal of Rahul Mehrotra Associates, and a founder of The Bombay Collaborative, a conservation architecture practice that works with historic buildings in India. His writings include co-authoring the book *Bombay The Cities Within*, *Banganga Sacred Tank*, *Public Places Bombay*, and *Fort Walks Walking Tours of Bombay Historic City Center*.

## Introduction

12

Urban design and planning has traditionally been involved with the creation of permanent, static urban conditions – as in the implementation of infrastructure, or the designation of open spaces and actual built form. However, in reality, it is the kinetic fabric – people, temporary paraphernalia, etc., that defines the ground reality of a city and the manner in which we experience a particular urban condition. It is this aspect of the city, the Kinetic City, the landscape of Everyday Urbanism that has not received adequate attention and is the focus of our discussion in this first Michigan Debate on Urbanism.

When I arrived in Ann Arbor a few years ago, I was amazed by the local interest in the Farmers' Market – a commonplace bazaar as I saw it! The excitement about the Farmers' Market, the produce and crafts, what you bought there, the experience of going there, and even its very existence seemed to ignite enthusiasm in Ann Arbor. For me, coming from Bombay, where the entire city's commercial activity is like a Farmers' Market, this excitement was intriguing.

In Asia, and in cities of South Asia in particular, "tidiness" is not as much of a concern as in cities in the West. Architects, planners and urban designers are concerned about the organization of human activity in space, and debates on urbanism are posed in those terms. Discussions generally focus on big moves, such as planning mechanisms, laws and broader infrastructure that are taken so much for granted in the West. Therefore in Asia, when someone tidies up a street, puts paving back on a public sidewalk or clears an encroachment – reorganizes or tidies up the Kinetic City (what we are now referring to as Everyday Urbanism) they become

urban heroes! It's an absolute reversal of the West, where a premium is put on creating or facilitating "Everyday Urbanism" while in Asia architects and urban designers are obsessed with the creation of the regular or static city.

So why are people in the West so fascinated by the farmers' market? It probably is because the farmers' market, the bazaar or the Kinetic City has a humanizing effect in the context of low density cities where the public domain is dead – where people have no public realm to connect to each other. J.B. Jackson referred to this as the "third landscape" in his seminal book *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*. He refers to the first landscape as one of mobility, temporal in its existence, which characterized the first phases in the history of settlements. The second landscape he referred to as one where people rooted themselves to a place – created settlements to make the Static City. The third landscape he suggested is, about overlaying the kinetic landscape on the static – connecting people through the creation of the temporal landscape of festivals, markets, cyclic events, etc. – rediscovering the ephemeral and the mobile.

And so when I saw the book, *Everyday Urbanism*, I was excited and found it refreshing because it allowed me to make a crossover between issues of urbanism in the West and the East, in developed economies and in developing economies. For it was the idea of the temporal landscape, the Kinetic City or Everyday Urbanism that I thought had universal relevance for our contemporary urban condition.

Of course, there are several questions that emerge in trying to make a case for the universal relevance of this issue. What are the prerequisites for Everyday Urbanism? Does it



necessarily mean a dynamic shifting demography and migrants to flourish? A vibrancy, which countries in Asia, and perhaps Los Angeles in the West, have? Is it about a less severe climate that allows street culture and the bazaar to emerge naturally? Is it about surplus interstitial space in the city that becomes the crucible for Everyday Urbanism? Or about transforming governance patterns and the ways local governments devolve responsibilities with regard to the public domain? In short, is Everyday Urbanism a manifestation in physical terms of the unsettled, restless urban condition experienced by cities (more often mega cities) in Asia and the West? These questions take us to many interesting challenges, and especially those that have to do with how we take this Everyday Urbanism beyond description to actual strategy? This volume of the first Michigan Debates on Urbanism engages with this very spectrum of challenging questions.

The participants in this debate are Margaret Crawford and Michael Speaks. Margaret Crawford, who opens the debate, is a Professor of Urban Design and Planning and Theory at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. She teaches courses in the history and theory of urban development, planning, and design, and her seminars have included conferences on "Contemporary Urban Dynamics," "Contemporary Urbanism," "Listening to the City," and "The Culture of Cities." She has also taught studios, where she attempts to make this theory inform design.

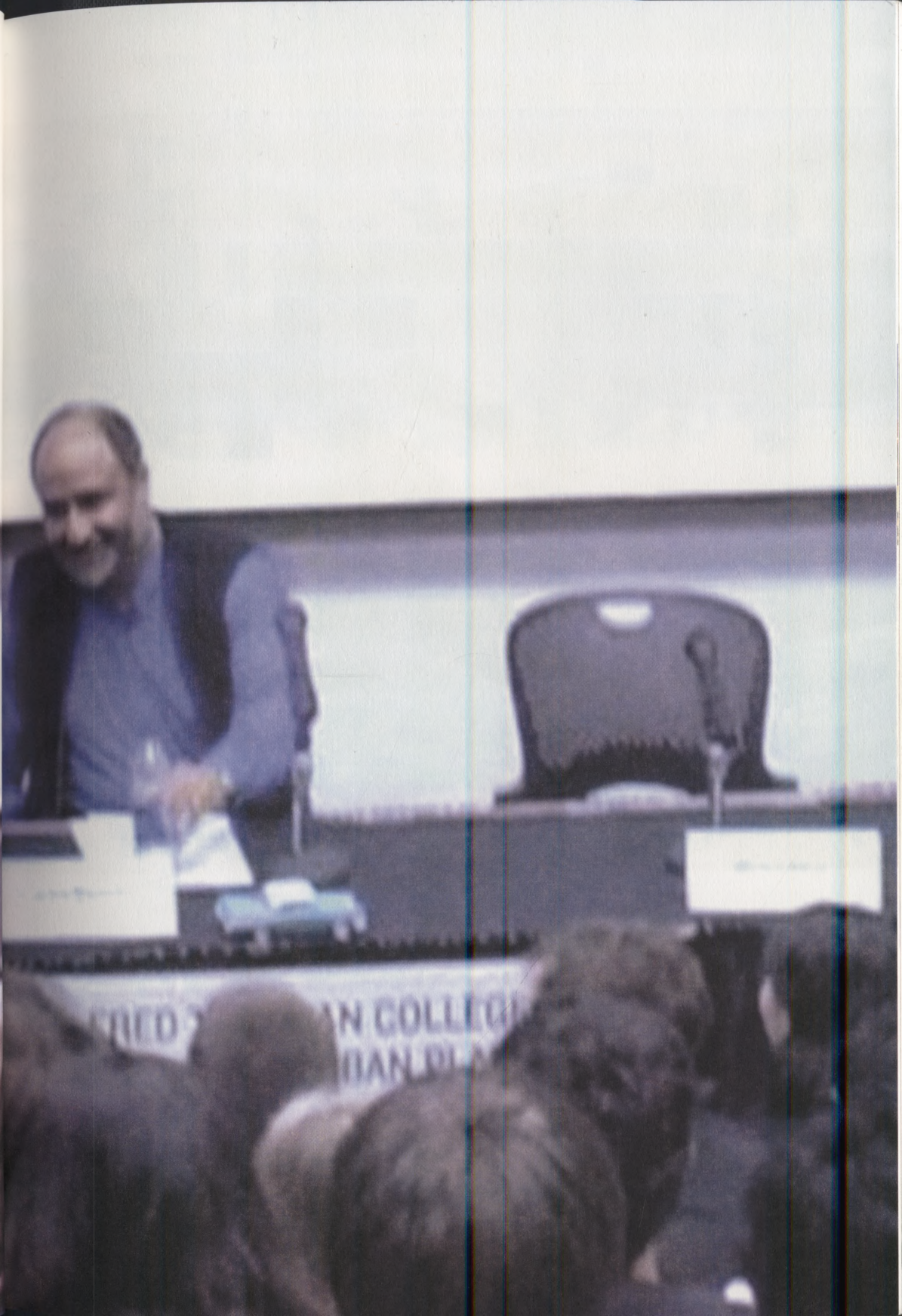
Her research focuses on the evolution, uses, and meanings of urban space, and her books include: *Building America's Workman's Paradise: the Design of American Company Towns*, which examines the rise and fall of pro-

fessionally-designed industrial environments. She has also edited *The Car and the City: The Automobile, the Built Environment and Daily Urban Life* and *Everyday Urbanism*, from which emerged the subject of this debate and book. She has written extensively on shopping malls, public spaces, and other issues in the American built environment. She has taught at SCI-Arc before she went to Harvard University.

The respondent, Michael Speaks, is an educator, researcher, editor, and a visiting professor at the University of Michigan this year. He is also currently the Director of the Metropolitan Research and Design Postgraduate Program at SCI-Arc in Los Angeles. He has taught at the Graphic Design Department at the Yale School of Art, in the architecture departments at Harvard and Columbia Universities, and has been a researcher on the architecture faculty at the Technological University at Delft in The Netherlands.

Michael Speaks has published and lectured internationally on art, architecture, and on urban design scenario planning. He is a contributing editor for *Architectural Record*, as well as a member of the editorial advisory board of *A+U*, for which he edits a series on design intelligence that has in many provocative ways brought focus on contemporary and emerging architecture around the world.







## Everyday Urbanism



**Margaret Crawford** is Professor of Urban Design and Planning Theory at the Harvard Design School. Her research focuses on the evolution, uses, and meanings of urban space, as reflected in her latest books, *Everyday Urbanism* (co-edited with John Kaliski) and *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns*.

What is Everyday Urbanism? It is exactly what it sounds like. It is an approach to urbanism that finds its meaning in everyday life, but in an everyday life that always turns out to be far more than just the ordinary and banal routines that we all experience. Based on the ideas of the French philosopher, Henri Lefebvre, and a number of other writers (although, strangely, not the ones Michael Speaks cites) we see everyday life as a repository of all kinds of meanings. These range from the ordinary to the extraordinary that is hidden within ordinariness. Once you start to look at everyday life, it opens up to reveal an amazing richness of meanings. This is the basis for all of our work. We want to reconnect these human and social meanings with urban design and planning, something that hasn't been attempted for quite a while.

How do you connect urban design to everyday life? One of the ways we've done this is by conceptualizing what we call everyday space. It is the physical domain of everyday public activity that exists between the defined and identifiable realms of the home, the institution, and the workplace. As the physical domain of everyday public activity, it is the connective tissue that binds daily lives together. This makes it a kind of public space. Here is an example of what we would call everyday space in Los Angeles.<sup>1</sup> It is the opposite of designed public spaces such as Pershing Square, LA's historic public square, recently redesigned by Ricardo Legoretta<sup>2</sup> or commercial public spaces such as CityWalk at Universal Studios designed by John Jerde.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to these



clearly defined arenas of space with coherent formal characteristics, everyday space is a diffuse landscape. It is banal, it's repetitive, it's everywhere and nowhere, it's a place that has few characteristics that people pay attention to. We don't regard everyday space as a major aesthetic problem like the New Urbanists or call it Junkspace like Rem Koolhaas, but see it as a zone of possibility and potential transformation.

Everyday space is often described as generic and generalizable. But, once you closely observe the people who inhabit it and the activities that take place there, it becomes highly specific. Thus everyday urban design is situational and specific, responding to very particular circumstances. In this sense Everyday Urbanism is not an over-arching design philosophy. It does not seek to transform the world through totalizing master planning, large-scale operations or "best practices." It's a partial approach that can be used in a lot of different situations. It's not interested in transforming greenfield sites into something new, but instead typically retrofits already existing situations to better accommodate everyday life. It works in the nooks and crannies of existing urban environments. It is an accretional approach, where small changes accumulate to transform situations. It is a partial practice that works in certain circumstances but perhaps not in others. It is not intended to replace other urban design practices but to work along with, on top of or after them. As a result, as a design approach it is elusive and hard to characterize.



1 ↗ Everyday Space in Los Angeles



2 ↗ Pershing Square, Los Angeles.  
Designed by Ricardo Legoretta




3 ↗ CityWalk, Universal Studios  
Designed by Jon Jerde



4 ↗ Mothers Day on La Brea Avenue  
Baldwin Heights, Los Angeles






5  Clothes for Sale  
Street-side Garage Sale, Hollywood.

Tonight I'll try to demonstrate some of our key ideas with examples from two very different places, Los Angeles and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Everyday Urbanism tries to refamiliarize urban environments. This might be contrasted to the work of Rem Koolhaas, which is primarily concerned with producing the modernist sensation of defamiliarization. This is the avant garde strategy of "making strange" ordinary experience. Koolhaas' recent urban research has dealt with extreme and radical types of urbanism, embracing their shock value and accepting the alienation that they produce. Everyday Urbanism seeks to replace this with what we would call *refamiliarization*, which produces the opposite sensation. It domesticates urban space, making it more familiar, more like home. So the urban environment, instead of being a relatively brutal and not very pleasant place, becomes more like the interior; it becomes a softer place that is more inhabitable. It can be argued that New Urbanists also pursue strategies of refamiliarization. What they are also trying to do is create an environment that is more rather than less familiar, to replace alienation with a kind of comfort. But unlike Everyday Urbanism which is concerned with the experience of daily life, New Urbanism is scenographic and image-driven in its production of familiarity.

Refamiliarization flourishes on the streets of Los Angeles, a by-product of residents' economic and cultural activities.<sup>4</sup> For example, every Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, and



6  Rugs for Sale, Los Angeles.





**Margaret Crawford**  
Harvard University

**Rahul Mehrotra**  
TCAUP

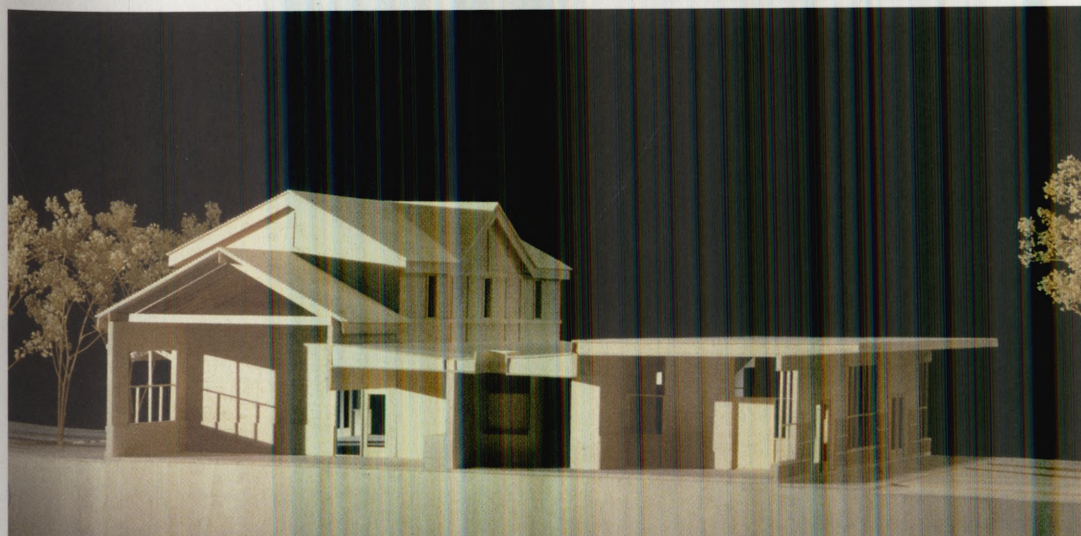
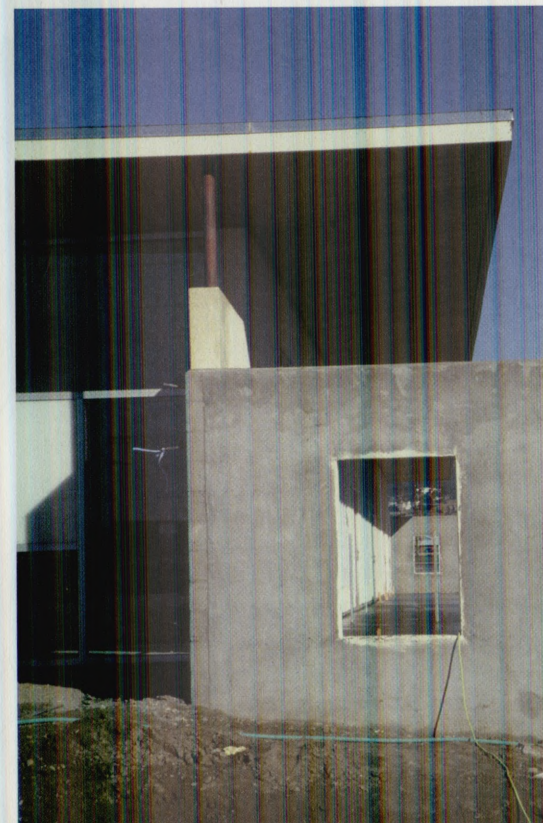


Martin Luther King Day, vendors load up U-Hauls with crafts that they spent the rest of the year making in their homes. They sell them from an unused parking lot on La Brea Boulevard, a major six-lane street in an African-American neighborhood. The literal qualities of their goods, shimmering pink and red cellophane, delicately patterned lace and ribbons, or cut flowers evoke the intimacy of the interior rather than the no-man's-land of the street. In a public place, items usually seen inside the home such as tables, chairs and tablecloths transform neglected spaces into islands of occupation. Products based on African or African-American imagery articulate the neighborhoods social narratives and cultural values. Other vendors sell used clothes from chain link fences.<sup>5</sup> This is an even more intimate statement publicly displaying the inside of the most private spaces in the house – the closet and the drawers – to be viewed or touched by anyone driving or walking by. Cheap rugs cover the harshness of chain link fences, overlaying it with the soft textures and bright patterns of the interior.<sup>6</sup> On the sidewalk, apron-clad vendors sell tamales prepared at home, extending the domestic economy into urban space.<sup>7</sup> Once recognized, these examples suggest ways in which designers might think about blurring other boundaries between public and private space.

The dialogic is another key principle of Everyday Urbanism. This concept comes from the Russian literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin. Dialogic is when a word, discourse, language, meaning (or building) becomes



87 Chatsworth Train Station, c. 1930



97 Chatsworth Metrorail Station and Childcare Center  
Designed by AIJK (Aleks Istanbulu and John Kaliski)

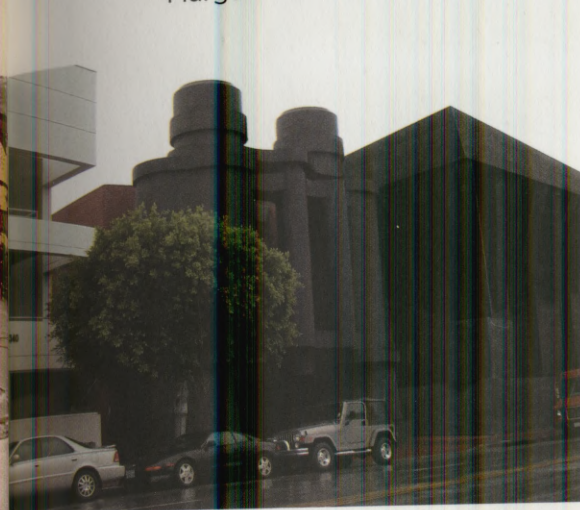


deprivileged, relativized, and aware of competing definitions for the same thing. This can occur in real architectural projects dealing with contested situations, where the desire of the designer and the desires of the community don't match. One of the authors of *Everyday Urbanism*, John Kaliski, was hired to design a commuter rail station and childcare center in Chatsworth, California, a distant suburb of Los Angeles. Because it was a public project a mandated community process occurred before the architect was selected. The people of Chatsworth made it clear that they didn't regard themselves as suburbanites, but as dwellers on the rural fringe of a place that had had ranches not so long ago. So they demanded the western ranch style for the project. Kaliski's firm was hired because they were the only architects who agreed to work in the western ranch style. They also discovered that the community still mourned the loss of an earlier train station that had burned down years before.<sup>8</sup> The architects found the plans for the original station in a model railroad magazine, which they reproduced as closely as possible. They then designed the childcare center in the same elegant modernist style that had won awards for the firm.<sup>9</sup> Juxtaposing these two radically different parts of the same building without any mediation, the final building architecturally produces the condition of dialogism, making these competing meanings publicly visible.

According to Bakhtin, dialogism is the characteristic mode of a world dominated by *heteroglossia*. Heteroglossia describes the

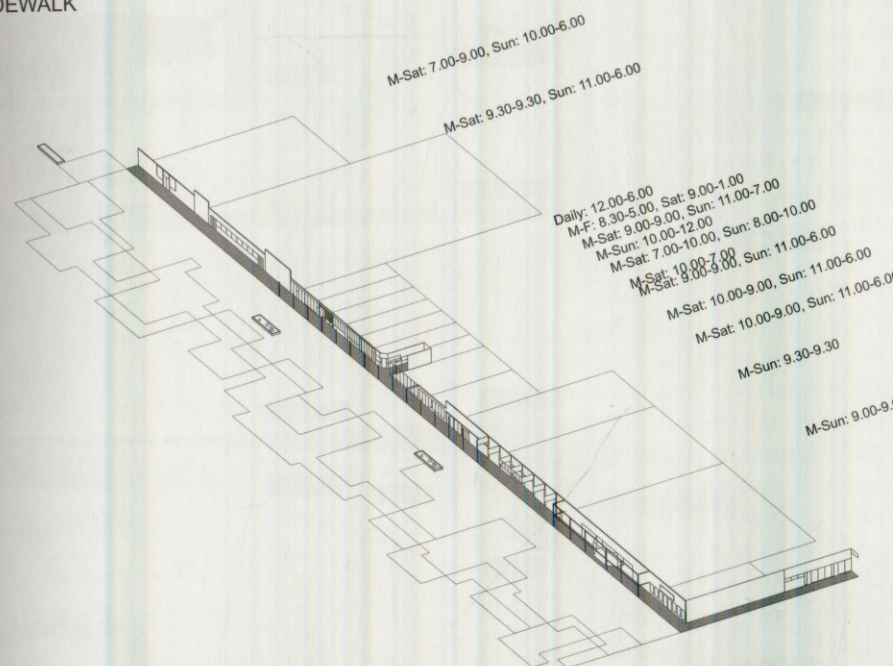


10 Along La Brea Avenue, Los Angeles.



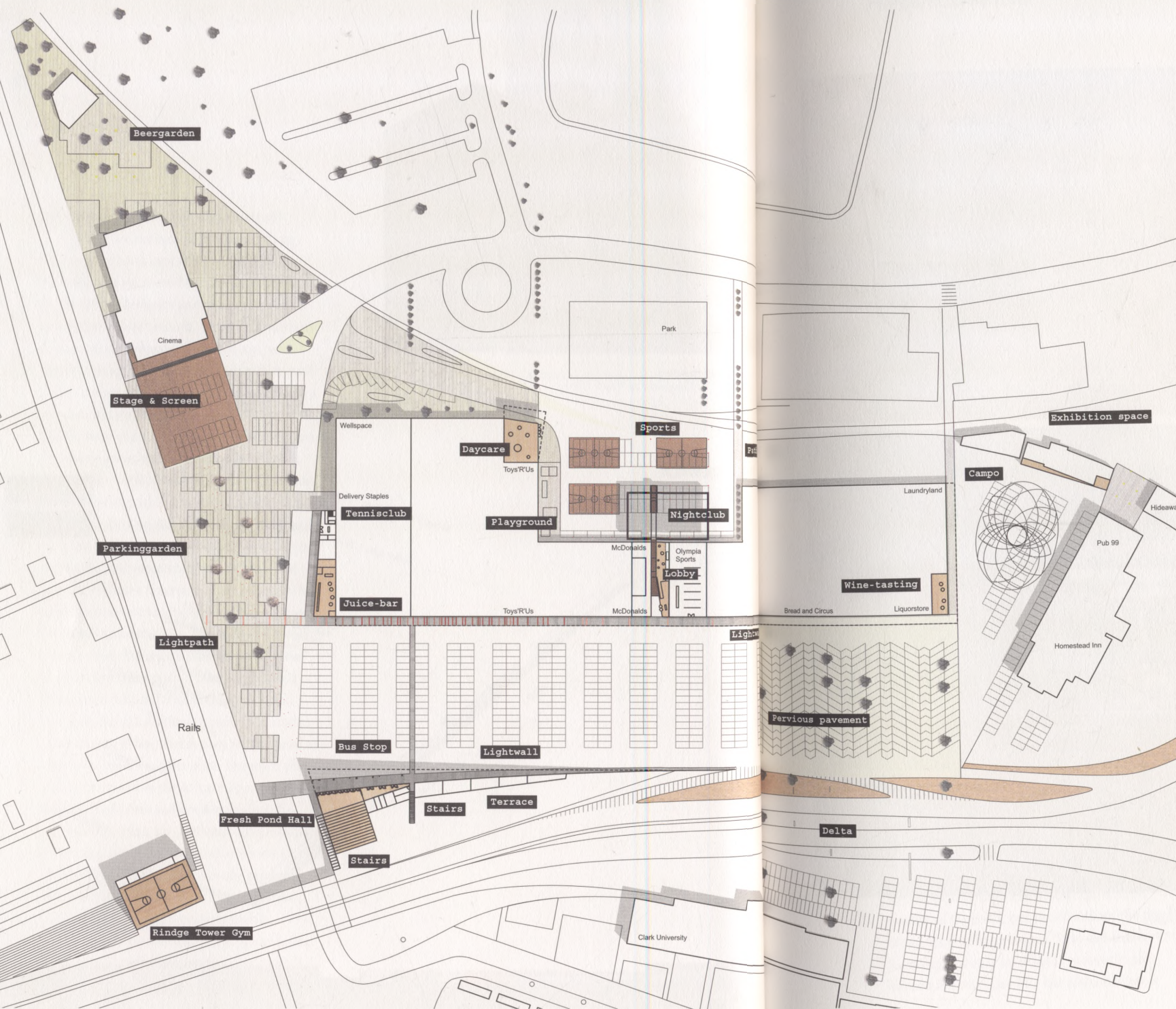
11 Chiat-Day Building  
Venice, CA. Designed by Frank Gehry.

## THE SIDEWALK



12 Temporal Analysis of Fresh Pond Mall  
Tobias Armbrorst





137 Collected interventions at the mall  
Tobias Armbrorst

constant interaction between meanings, all of which can potentially influence the other. Undialogic language remains authoritarian or absolute. Visual heteroglossia is omnipresent in the Los Angeles landscape. Everywhere you look there are startling juxtapositions of scale, of images, of building types, and of style. So this is an idea you can pick up simply by looking around you and paying attention.<sup>10</sup> Frank Gehry's building for Chiat Day in Venice, California, takes a similar approach, playing with the same concept in a more formalized way.<sup>11</sup> The Chatsworth project demonstrates the complex interactions between theory, vernacular urban practices and design principles that inform Everyday Urbanism. Rather than just appreciating what's happening on the street we attempt to connect it to existing theories in order to formulate new principles that can serve as the basis for design projects.

Another Everyday Urbanism project focuses on time more than space. This acknowledges the multiple ways in which everyday life is highly structured by time. This includes both natural time – night and day, the cycles of the year, the seasons, the weather and the schedules imposed by modern life – the working day, the weekend, the vacation, holidays. In his Harvard GSD thesis project, Tobias Armbrorst has redesigned a strip mall according to the simultaneous presence of multiple temporalities. On the edge of Cambridge, Massachusetts, the Fresh Pond Mall is an absolutely ordinary place, a collection of everyday functions such as a





14-15 3PM: Parking garden at fresh pond mall in daytime use;  
8PM: After dark, the movie theater becomes the dominant  
element in the parking lot. Images courtesy Tobias Armbrorst

grocery story, big box retail, a McDonald's, a Multiplex theater. Yet it is also very ambiguous. For Cambridge residents it's the beginning of the suburbs, with a suburban landscape and suburban commercial activity. For people from the suburbs, the city begins here, with greater density and the beginning of public transit lines. Armbrorst began his project with an intensive 24-hour ethnographic investigation of this mall.<sup>12</sup> He analyzed car-parking patterns in great detail, including the brands of cars. He discovered a surprisingly rich temporality. Clark University, for example, had its Boston campus of the second floor of the mall, with a complex schedule of evening classes. At 2:00 AM the punk rock bars along the mall's back alley were hopping. McDonald's party room hosted non-stop birthday parties on weekends. On Sundays and holidays, even when the rest of the mall was closed, the movie theaters were packed.

Based on this analysis, Armbrorst designed a series of projects to produce what he called "public time" (as opposed to public space). Each of these times emphasizes different temporal activities and different groups of people.<sup>13</sup> By extending and making visible all of these multiple and coexisting interpretations of this place, he built up "thick" layers of meaning, transforming the experience of being there. He did not attempt to change the fragmented and incoherent quality of the mall, but to accentuate the pieces into a kind of heterotopia.<sup>14</sup> He did this by focusing not only on what is present in the banality of everyday life, but also on what is

absent yet might be there.<sup>15</sup> At the end of the day, what did he achieve? Here we come to the heart of Everyday Urbanism as a design strategy. The mall doesn't look that much more beautiful, it's not less fragmented or more coherent. It hasn't been transformed into a little town center in the New Urbanist mode or a modernist programmatic assemblage a la Rem Koolhaas. Intensifying what was already there produces a new type of urbanism that enhances daily experience, building in a kind of ordinary magic that was absent in mall's previous everyday life.

Finally, then Everyday Urbanism is an attitude toward the city. It can have any number of different outcomes. Everyday urbanism is a shape-shifting type of activity that changes in response to different circumstances so it doesn't produce a singular formal product. The point is its multiplicity and heterogeneity. It is radically empirical and highly specific rather than normative. It begins with what already exists then encourages and intensifies it.



## Every Day Is Not Enough



**Michael Speaks** is Director of the Metropolitan Design and Research Program at the Southern California Institute of Architecture and has twice been a visiting professor at Taubman College, as well as other institutions. He has edited five books and contributed essays in fourteen other books, and his articles span many publications, including *A+U*, *Architectural Record*, *Archis*, and *de Architect*.

I want to respond to Margaret's presentation, but first I want to disagree with Dean Kelbaugh's opening remarks, especially his assertion of a "market urbanism" separate and distinct from the more self-conscious forms of urbanism he outlines, namely Everyday, New and Post Urbanism. First of all, it is hard to imagine any form of urban intervention that exists or could exist outside of the market, that is to say, outside the reality of contemporary life. All urbanisms are market urbanisms, and all for that matter, are self-conscious. In fact, I would suggest that the efficacy of each of these forms of urbanism – if indeed these are three forms of urbanism and not just straw categories – is directly related to its proven ability to transform the constraints thrown up by the market into opportunities for active urban intervention. Of the three forms of urbanism Kelbaugh identifies, only New Urbanism has managed to reshape the city in this way. Whether in Detroit, Pasadena or Nashville, New Urbanism has reclaimed the ambition to systematically intervene in and change the city ceded long ago by Modernists as the complexity of contemporary capitalism overran their ability to comprehend and transform it. The answer to Rem Koolhaas' question, "What Ever Happened to Urbanism?" at least in the United States, seems to be that it became in name and in deed "New." Everyday Urbanism and Post Urbanism, by contrast, have made little tangible impact on the city, or at least they have made little impact as forms of urbanism. Gehry and Eisenman – whom



Kelbaugh identifies as Post Urbanists – have certainly produced buildings that make an impact on the city. But these architects, whose formal interests supersede any urbanistic ambition, can hardly be described as a school of urbanism. They don't even claim to be urbanists so it is hard to understand how they form a school of urbanism. Perhaps that is why Kelbaugh calls them Post Urban, though "Not Urban" might have better suited. On the other hand Koolhaas and the various practices of "landscape urbanism" that Kelbaugh also describes as Post Urbanists are decidedly urbanist in disposition, and as such more closely resemble New Urbanism than Post Urbanism if by such designation he means a form of intervention that is "after" or beyond urbanism. In the end, the category of Post Urbanism falls apart, leaving only Everyday Urbanism in contention.

Everyday Urbanism is consistent with a number of academic discourses that emerged in the English-speaking world in the late 1980s that focused on the writings of French theorist Henri Lefebvre, especially his ideas about everyday life and their relevance to a more materialist understanding of urban space. Among those were the so-called postmodern geographers David Harvey and Ed Soja as well as the numerous accounts of the city and urban life that emerged from cultural studies in the UK, especially in Birmingham. Like Lefebvre, the theorists of Everyday Urbanism, almost all of whom are, like Soja, from Los Angeles, seek hidden or concealed meaning in the banal residue of everyday life;

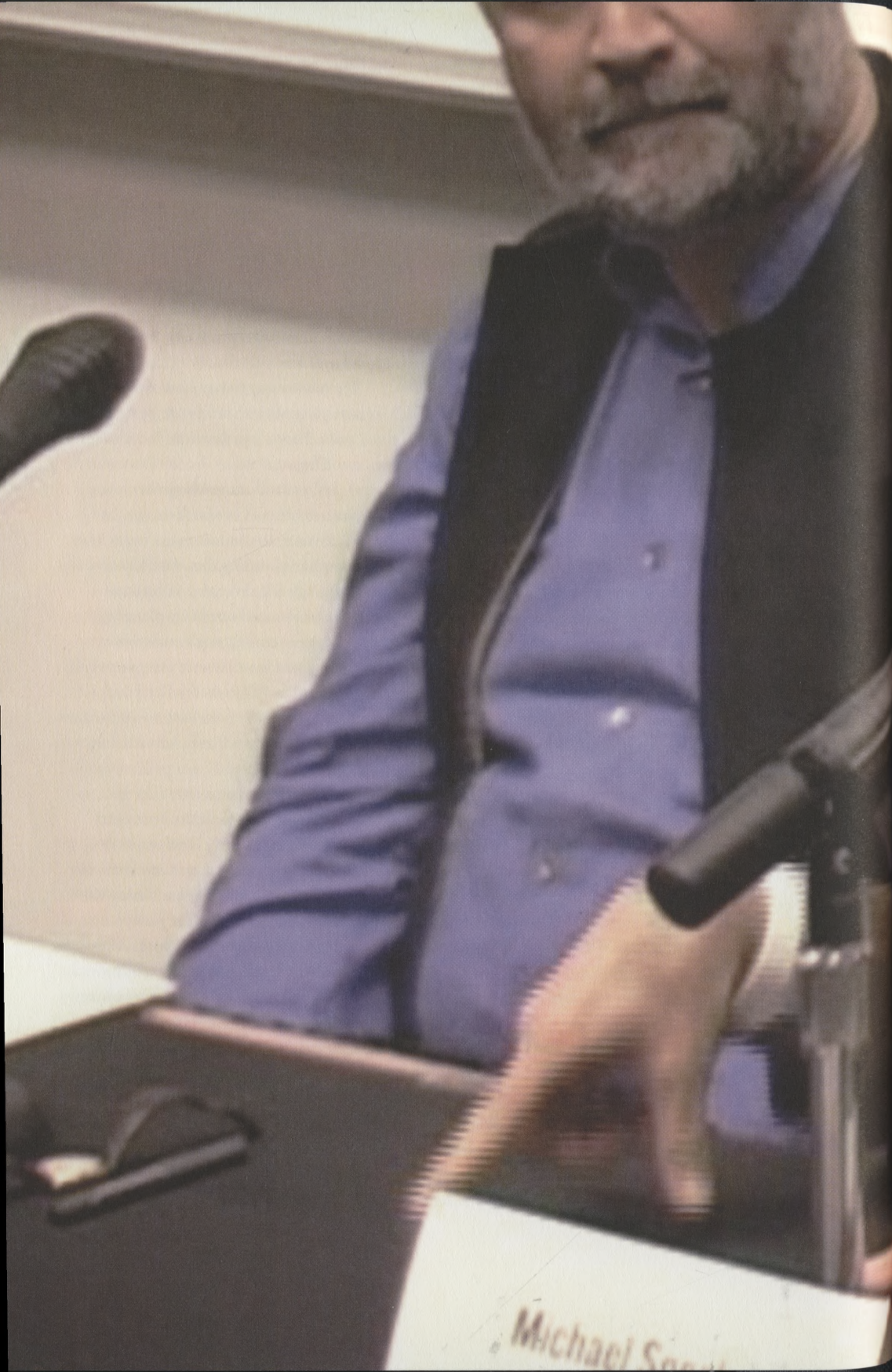
they focus on things overlooked by professional urban design, things that are not simply formal or even physical, things that hold the key to discovering alternative meanings to those offered by the prevailing urban condition. Everyday Urbanism, like the postmodern geographers and like the cultural studies theorists, is primarily interested in reading the city as if it were text. Its adherents are thus concerned primarily with meaning and interpretation not with design and planning. Some projects that Margaret discusses, for example the John Kaliski project for a commuter rail station and childcare center in Chatsworth, CA, she describes as "dialogic." The intention of such projects, she argues, is to create a condition in which two different architectural meanings are brought together to create a kind of conversation. In many ways this approach, and its ultimate aim of refamiliarization is not unlike the postmodern strategies of double-coding that Charles Jencks advocated in the 1980s. Indeed, the interventions of Everyday Urbanism, like so much of the linguistic-based architecture of the 1980s and early 1990s – postmodernism and Deconstructivism included – is not so concerned with what any particular urban design can do, in other words with its performance; rather, it is concerned with what particular urban designs mean. The struggle to change the city is thus always at the level of interpretation and meaning, of contesting received meanings and disclosing hidden or marginalized ones that somehow make us more familiar with and thus comfortable in the

city. That is why ultimately Everyday Urbanism is a commentator on the city, an interpreter rather than a force of transformation.

The other thing to say about the projects Margaret presents is that they are by definition small scale. They are pedestrian, mundane, ordinary. They operate, as French theorist Michel de Certeau, whom Margaret quotes in the introduction to her book, insists, at the tactical level. In contrast to the normative forms of urban planning that work top-down, that is, strategically, Everyday Urbanism is touted as a form of bottom-up planning where change occurs through accretion over time. Or at least that is what seems potentially valuable about it. But in reality Everyday Urbanism is not really even bottom-up because it is mostly, or almost entirely, bottom. It never develops any kind of comprehensive proposals that might be activated by the small-scale interventions. It does not even seek to understand the implications of the small-scale interventions that it launches, but is instead content to fetishize and tinker with the everyday things it finds ready made. It is anti-design and begs the question: How do you design with the banal and to what end?

I became associated with several young Dutch offices in the mid-1990s that were keenly interested in the same kinds of everyday activities as Everyday Urbanism. One of those offices in particular, Crimson, seemed to do the kind of larger scale things – go bottom up, and then find a way to redistribute the stuff from top down through the middle and back to the bottom again – that Everyday Urbanism







promises but never delivers. Everyday Urbanism has never aspired to or addressed the problem of bottom to top then top to bottom, which is how you create a planning model that is somewhere in the middle. I want to introduce here three terms Crimson uses to describe their practice: *software*, *orgware*, and *hardware*. Software deals with ideas, ideologies, policy or even meaning. Hardware is the actual physical stuff that is designed, the buildings, infrastructure, etc. And orgware is the middleware that negotiates between them and that actually makes and remakes the city. Orgware gets things done. Everyday Urbanism deals only with software, with meaning and interpretations. But it does not intervene, does not make things happen. Even when it does create hardware, the aim – at least according to Margaret – is to create alternative meanings.

Crimson did a remarkable analysis of a facility built and sponsored by the City of Rotterdam, a facility that did not exist on paper though it did exist in reality. These facilities were called Tolerant Zones for Prostitution. They were basically sheds. Imagine six carports on this side, and ten little bicycle sheds on this side, and a driveway like a horseshoe. Basically you drive your car or bike in, have your way with the prostitute, and then you drive or bike out – drive-in prostitution. What is amazing about these facilities is that they are underwritten and sponsored by the City of Rotterdam. On official city maps you never see them, because the way the city maps read, at least in this code, anything that happens after 6:00 PM doesn't show up on the map. Why?



17 Map: Hoogvliet, Suburb of Rotterdam.



28 "Logica" Scenario for Hoogvliet. Designed by Riens Dijkstra.



What were they doing? They were placing prostitution zones away from the shopping areas where they wanted to encourage people to walk. Prostitution they knew needed to happen, and the city needed to underwrite it, but it couldn't do it officially, so they did it in this unofficial way.

What's all this about? What Crimson discovered in their analysis was a whole range of governmental orgware that allowed the hardware/sheds and the official city policy/no sanction of prostitution to work together to solve a problem. It's that kind of middle zone that allows a translation from software to hardware and back that Everyday Urbanism is not able to account for. I want now to show a project by Maxwan, another Dutch office that often works with Crimson, that uses the same kinds of techniques of observation that happen with Everyday Urbanism, except that it translates those into actual policy. In the case of this project, it's become the official policy for the City of Hoogvliet, a suburb of Rotterdam located near the harbor.

It's a plan that as of January last year is the official planning document for that city. The city is a small Shell town, abandoned by Shell, and left in a mess. No money. No jobs. All the industries have moved out into the harbor. Crimson was asked to create a master plan to re-energize the city. Rather than create a single master plan, they decided to catalog everything that was there. What they discovered was that there were four or five big decisions that needed to be made. From these they created a set of twenty-four scenarios that,

by the end of the day, forced the government to make certain kinds of decisions about how the city would be planned.

The plan is called Logica. First they created a Logica council, a voting body with stakeholder members. They found four big choices that they wanted the city to consider. The council drew its members from the community, from business, from all over. The council voted on whether or not to make the green space small and scattered or make four or five big ones, whether to make a ring road or an axial road. At the end of the day this Logica council voted on this and came up with twenty-four permutations. It had the effect at the policy level of making the city act.

One of the problems was, the city didn't want to recognize the community; they didn't want to recognize business, the harbor. There were so many competing forces that no one was ever going to do anything. Generally it was at a standstill. They used this process as a way to feed bottom-up, to then use this orgware planning method to force the city to make decisions.

3 "Logica" Scenarios for Hoogvliet. Designed by Riens Dijkstra.





## Discussion

**Rahul Mehrotra, moderator:** One of the issues you raised, Michael, was the limitation of Everyday Urbanism, that it doesn't go beyond observation to show strategy, and how form can be made and a city designed. So I thought we would start with Margaret, and ask her to respond.

**Margaret Crawford:**

Among the slides I was unable to show there were forms that represented a particular strategy for making, which we called "quotidian bricolage." The Chatsworth project is one, and I'm sorry you didn't get to see the Fresh Pond Mall projects which use the same strategy. If you'll look at *Architecture Plus* you'll see them published.

I would say that Everyday Urbanism is accretional. It's not big moves. The description of the Crimson project, basically is a different way of producing a master plan. At the end of the day you still have the same set of planning decisions.

What I think is more radical about Everyday Urbanism is that it is an accretional method where you do little pieces that accumulate to make changes rather than finding a new way to create a community process that is mandated by the state and decision-making on a large scale.

Is large scale good? Maybe it's better to do it single building by single building. Maybe it's better to have an attitude about the city. Maybe that's what Everyday Urbanism



is actually about: an attitude toward the city that can have a number of different formal outcomes. Everyday Urbanism is a shake-shifting kind of activity that changes in all kinds of circumstances, so I wouldn't want to have a singular formal output as a result of it. The point of it, in fact, is its multiplicity, its heterogeneous quality.

**Crawford:**

That's just a version – for people who are familiar with American community planning techniques – this is just a version of community process and outcomes. I don't see it as being particularly different. It may be more artful in the way in which it's posed, with code words like "orgware," but actually I don't see it to be significantly different than what happens in planning in many different places.

**Speaks:**

Actually the plan was designed by Maxwan, but was designed as a game for the constituents of the city to play by choosing. What they really chose in the end, were these four or five off-on things.

**Speaks:**

What is different is that it's not a plan. It's a gaming strategy that requires the city to do one thing or another. Actually, the project is at the larger ten-year International Building Exhibition that Crimson has organized. It's a ten-year project. This plan was in a way – I don't want to say demagogic – but more than a plan, it forced the city to begin to act on some things. In fact, the pieces of that plan are part of a much larger living, changing plan that will happen over ten years. There are no design pieces in it. It simply says that parks have to be dispersed or that parks have to be in these four or five places. Everything other than that can happen willy-nilly in this very heterogeneous way that you talk about.

The reason it's important for things not simply to be here and there and everyday, willy-nilly, is that a city like Hoogvliet has huge economic problems. There are no jobs. One of the things that is happening with this planning strategy is to introduce new businesses there, and there is a whole new housing scheme. There are things that need to happen on a larger scale that are not master-planned in the old fashioned way, but that are not simply additions to houses with train stations attached. There are larger scale issues at stake.

**Crawford:**

Maybe that works in Holland, where the State has an enormous amount of power to structure this. I don't actually see the relevance in the United States where the State is relatively powerless to plan on such a scale and with such economic power. It seems unlikely to be effective here.

**Speaks:** That's a fair criticism.

**Mehrotra:** That's an important difference. With that, I'd like to open the discussion for questions from the audience.

**Questioner 1:** A question for both of you. I haven't really known about Everyday Urbanism, which strikes me as a kind of contrast to formal urbanism. I have two interpretations, and I'm curious which way you fall. One interpretation is to say that in America, we don't have enough urbanism. It's too suburban, anti-urban. This is to say we too narrowly define urbanism as formal urbanism, when in fact in America we have urbanism which is more vibrant. We just have to look more broadly. Particularly to a place like Los Angeles, where updated models of urbanism make us feel good about a broader notion of urbanism.



But an alternative interpretation would be to say that Everyday Urbanism is a kind of distraction, that in fact the search for emergent urbanism or insurgent urbanism is a way for us to take our minds off the fact that we really do have a kind of anti-urbanist tradition in the United States. And that, we have a hard time dealing with the lack of positive urbanism here. Nostalgia for urbanism and envy of European urbanism drives us to ignore the real difficulties we have with urban problems, and makes us feel good about this kind of informal or everyday urbanism. It takes our minds off of formal urbanism, which should be our goal.

**Crawford:**

That's kind of the Bob Beauregard argument in *Voices of Decline*. I don't think that paying attention to Everyday Urbanism necessarily distracts one from other urban issues. In fact, it seems to me that when you unearth everyday lives, those issues actually become present. At the heart of a lot of everyday lives are exactly those urban problems. They can't be denied. This perhaps seems overly celebratory to urban planners, but I would argue that that is partly the problem of urban planning, which is a discipline in a sense that needs problems to solve. It's very problem-oriented, particularly the more progressive parts of urban planning. So I can understand that it seems overly celebratory. At the same time, it's written within an urban discourse in response to the perceived decline argument, the argument that's put forward by Michael Sorkin and Richard Sennett of the fall of public man, that in fact there is a normative idea of public space the United States has never achieved. That idea of this loss, which is a narrative of loss, keeps people from actually seeing what's happening that's good. It's an attempt to turn that argument around.

**Questioner 2:** A question for both Margaret and Michael: Is Everyday Urbanism not willing to take a different trajectory? One of the cardinal ideas of Surrealism is the validation of spontaneity – what they call “automatic writing,” which is the idea that to produce literature you would sit down with a piece of blank paper and immediately start typing whatever would come into your head. It seems to me that one of the problems with this idea is that it equates spontaneity with freedom. In other words, it's possible for some people to act spontaneously, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the activity is not structured from various types of unconscious pressures or from various political, economic, social forces of which they may be completely unaware.

Thus my question to both of you is this: Are people who spontaneously use a parking lot or some area of the city to put on a garage sale, or whatever they wish to do, necessarily more free than the urban planners who design a city or an area of a city using very carefully planned out typologies and urban planning concepts. Does spontaneity necessarily give us more freedom, or necessarily a better result?

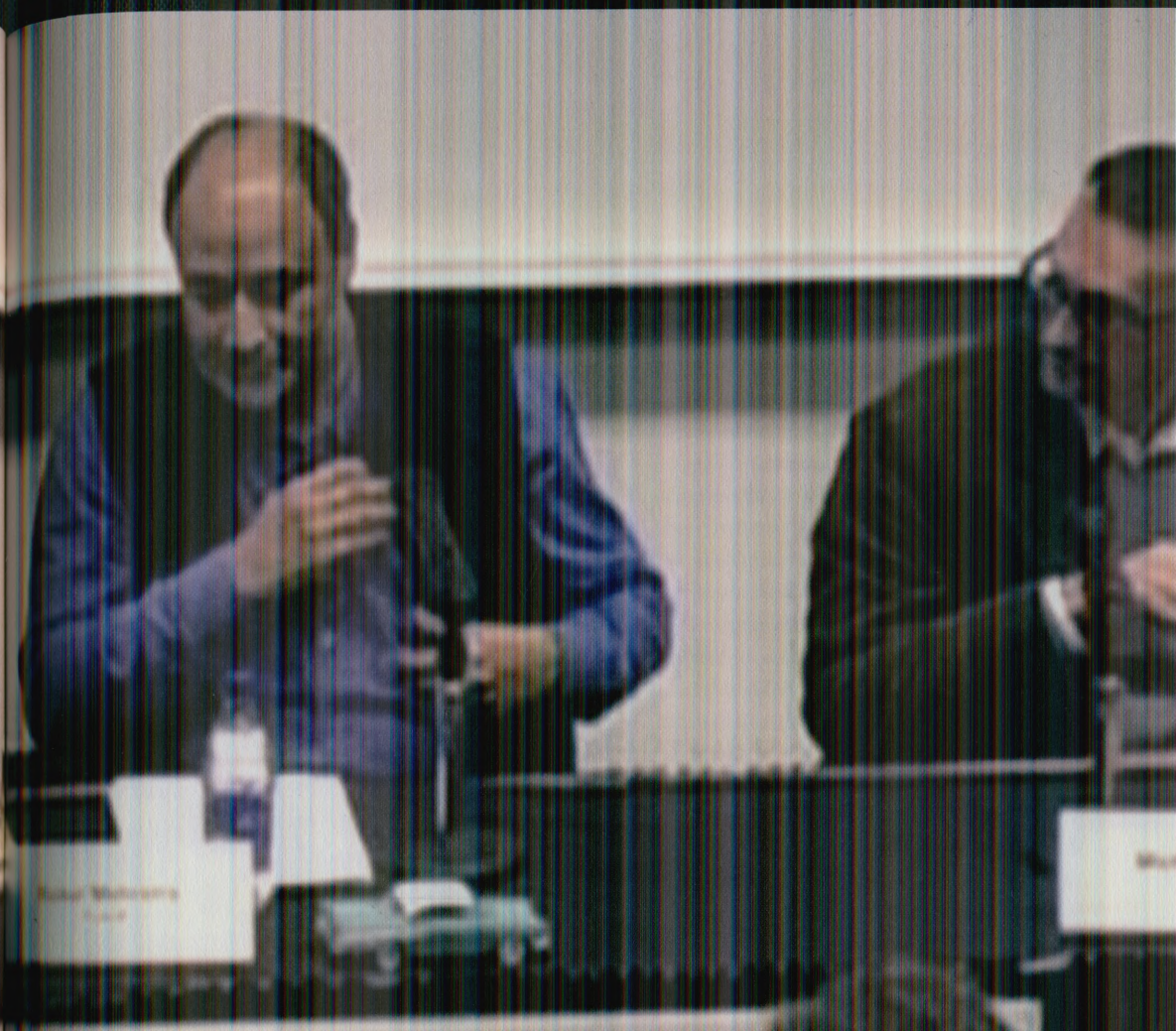
**Crawford:**

I think you are absolutely right in identifying surrealism as one of the conceptual threads that fed into Everyday Urbanism, but perhaps not so much the idea of spontaneity and freedom. The idea is that in the ordinary is the extraordinary, which is one of the main tenets of surrealism, that you can read into banal situations quite fantastic results.

I don't know what to say about freedom as either positive or negative. But it certainly is less constraining to have a garage sale in a parking lot than to have a master plan that's implemented, because it can vanish the next day.

Also I'd like to say that Everyday Urbanism is not totally about transitory situations; it's also about things that could be more permanent, more long lasting, and more transformative. It doesn't necessarily have to be







about something. This goes to what Michael was saying about the low, from bottom up. That's not quite the case. I understand why. People read that because many of the examples in the book, *Everyday Urbanism*, are bottom-up examples. For example, the Fresh Pond Mall is a situation that to me is in its absolute ordinariness, not in the bottom, it's right there in the middle of everyone, as urban experience.

Then, top-down, what do we mean? In the United States do we have access to the state in terms of transformation? Possibly, and it seems to me that you are valorizing the market as a positive and great thing, yet Crimson is absolutely dependent on State power for their activities. So I'm confused about that. Certainly one has to accept market forces acting in the United States as the dominant shaper of urbanism, but I wouldn't say that you shouldn't try to operate with whatever policies and state intervention that might be possible. I wouldn't differentiate between that. So I'm confused about your position vis-a-vis that.

**Crawford:**

I'm confused because you seem to be valorizing the market.

**Crawford:**

Seems to me you said *Everyday Urbanism* is good because it accepts market forces.

**Speaks:** What are you confused about?

**Speaks:** No.

**Speaks:**

Let me try to clarify that. We did a charrette two weeks ago in Detroit. There were four teams. One of the exciting things about the charrette was that it involved city officials, it involved developers, it involved economists, it involved architects, it involved what appeared

to be real world activities of which the market in this country is a principal driving force. One of the things I realized after being there only for a day, with the exception of the team that I was on, which was a Dutch team, it was decided from the get-go that there would be a design made without a real and sober analysis of the reality of the conditions that obtained on the site.

One of the realities that was not observed was a company that owned two huge pieces of land that would make impossible three out of the four proposals that were made. At the public presentation an esteemed urban planner/designer, who I think made his design after the first ten minutes in Detroit, said that our proposal, which acknowledged that this company in fact owned this land – and we knew that because they showed us the ownership chart at the time, and they showed us all the pieces of land that they owned – he said that the two Dutch members of the team were naïve and that they didn't know anything about America because in America property and ownership counted for everything.

The thing that stuck in my mind about that was in fact that this is precisely what we were basing our proposal on. It was the reality that had to be observed to make something real or something plausible. It's that kind of reality, and this goes back to your question earlier, it seems to me that urban planners want to make a design, and in this charrette the designers made their designs, but what they didn't observe was reality. They thought they could design their way out of reality.

The reality of that site and of that charrette was that there was a company that owned land that would make the pieces of





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Michael Sprinks  
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FAIRMAN COLLEGE  
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the big objects, the big beautiful designs that they made – turning, for example, the Detroit waterfront into Manhattan, putting a race course in there with horses or NASCAR or whatever – seemed to be slightly unrealistic, not only because it would be hard to do that, but because the land was unavailable.

In order to intervene and do stuff on that site, you had to observe a basic reality – did somebody own this piece of property? The reality in Holland and the reality here is that the market does drive the kind of planning that they were forced to do. It just so happened that Shell is a very big multinational company. It moved to this town in the sixties and left its facilities in Curaçao; it promised everybody jobs. Within fifteen years Shell had left that site because of automation and new technologies and moved all of its facilities out.

So it's a market situation, it's a global situation, it's an economic situation that has to be observed. I'm not for the market, but it's like air, you breathe it. It's a reality and you have to deal with it. It seems to me that one of the useful things about Everyday Urbanism is that it observed that you couldn't do anything on a large scale and so you would find smaller uses. What you are talking about are vendors, those are mini-capitalists, those are market forces.

**Crawford:**

Yes, I understand what you're saying. I'm struck by the Dutch example because there are thousands of towns in the United States – and I know this because of all the work I've done in company towns that were abandoned by corporations – yet in none of them I can name, has the State ever stepped in with an economic revitalization program. I think that that kind

of social-democratic state with economic intervention, and even hiring young planners, is something almost impossible to conceive of in the United States.

I think there is another difference that needs to be observed, which is the difference between the urban planning and urban design, which is significant. Urban planners are not often operating in such a physical way. That tends to be urban designers.

**Questioner 3:** I want to take Margaret back to her last example of the shopping center, Fresh Pond Mall. I wasn't sure what your critique of that place was, and beyond that, I wasn't sure how from the point of view of Everyday Urbanism you could critique it at all. It's a place that's working, certainly every day, and fulfilling certain needs. It looks pretty awful, but people still go there. Why in the name of Everyday Urbanism are you generating a critique of that place?

**Crawford:**

I don't think there was a critique of the place, which is doing very well and everyone uses. There was an idea that this could be a site for more intensification. This is a functioning place, but it's a discursive comment to work on it, more than an actuality. Maybe that leads us to something about speculative design projects.

The idea is that it could become nudged and tweaked to become even better, and to become slightly more urban, and you'd create a new kind of urbanism. I consider Fresh Pond to be a kind of urbanism that could be better, but not that much better.



**Questioner 4:** We can look to Everyday Urban space like parking lots, barber shops, and corner stores. Socially constructed in various cultural contexts, they establish real spatial roles and codes that are crucial to understanding how urbanism is to take place. Do these rules and codes that define our consensual social spaces have a place in the larger planning picture in American cities?

**Crawford:**

The whole point of Everyday Urbanism is not responding to the large scale, master planning, normative idea of planning, but it seems to me in all the struggles over space that occur in almost every city, that this attitude can be useful in keeping those places and encouraging them. I think it has a place, but not in the typical normative and generalizable sense.

**Speaks:**

Would there be a difference for you (and for the people who wrote the book and brought Everyday Urbanism into being), between Jerde or CityWalk or Celebration or a lot of forms of what people would call commodified, homogeneous everyday space or everyday activity and the more informal arrangements that you observe on the sidewalk?

**Crawford:**

Between CityWalk and normal spaces?

**Crawford:**

I'm not even so preoccupied with small bazaars. I'm concerned with supermarkets, strip malls, the places people go every day to buy food, to take their laundry, to get the dry cleaning, to get their nails done.

**Speaks:** But they go to CityWalk everyday too.

**Crawford:**

No, they don't. People go to CityWalk as a special occasion place.

**Crawford:**

I've actually been to the Grove. CityWalk is a special occasion place. They sell nothing that you could use there, it's a place you go to movies and things like that, and you park your car and you pay five dollars. This is not an everyday place.

**Crawford:**

The Grove is just an expanded shopping mall.

**Crawford:** There's a continuum.

**Crawford:**

I'm not saying one is okay. I'm saying it exists and they are different.

**Crawford:**

I'm not making any value judgments about the Grove. I think that CityWalk is a special occasion place. It is a monumental designed space. It is not an everyday space.

**Speaks:** They go to the Grove for that.

**Speaks:** What about the Grove?

**Speaks:** So do you see a difference between that and small scale stuff?

**Speaks:** So the Grove is okay?

**Speaks:** The Grove is almost okay?

**Speaks:**

If you go to the Grove on a Saturday – I don't know if you've been? The Grove is an amazing new shopping center, and it has the most







incredible water show. People go to this – it's like a water ballet and they play Phil Collins music, and what's incredible is that at the end of each tune in the water people clap, as if there were performing.

**Crawford:**

Maybe we've been in too many shopping malls. I'm a shopping mall scholar. (I wasn't going to mention that; I wrote some very well-known articles about shopping malls.) This isn't anything new. This is the way shopping malls have been developing for quite some time. The Grove is a familiar type.

**Questioner 5:** I'd like to follow up the discussion about these kinds of everyday practices that generate rules and codes that develop into planning. I was thinking about William Whyte's work on the social life of small public places as you were talking, and it seems like an interesting difference. As I understand *Everyday Urbanism*, you are saying, on the one hand, everyday place-making practices are generative, transformative, and equal. People can take over spaces and change them by some everyday activity that happens there. Whyte says: We need to pay close attention to these generative space-making practices, and to rehabilitating programatically-designed intentional public spaces. So the implication of Whyte's work, as I understand it, is that generative everyday activity can become part of the technique for programmatic planning even if it is always at a more local scale. That seems to me at odds with the way you're drawing from del Sarto and the Surrealists, and the way you're emphasizing the interstitial, fragmentary, the unplanned.

**Crawford:**

Actually, when you say "rules and codes," I kind of say no. The idea of the rule and code is that you come up with a normative notion of how to make this work, which is what William Whyte is also trying to do, to come up with rules on how to make it happen. I'm interested, and I think *Everyday Urbanism* is

not uninterested in, design practices, but not in coming up with normative notions of how to make it happen. Rather it's based on what is already there, and working with that and encouraging and intensifying it, rather than coming up with a set of ideas that you can then operate with.

I'm resisting the idea that this can be generalized into a set of operative rules, and saying that maybe there is the accumulation of experience instead. I'm trying to maintain a resolutely postmodern position here, instead of generalizing from a set of observations in some sort of normative notion. The idea would be a cumulative notion that you can look at a lot of different things and you probably would get some ideas about how to do it again.

**Questioner 6:** There is a distinction between making something generalizable and making something intentional and normative. There are clearly normative rules that govern flea markets, various rules from a master plan. You can have notions about programmatic design that have built into them the understanding that ongoing activity will transform the space. That's programmatic but it's not generalizing across the bigger scale.

**Speaks:**

That is what Crimson does, and they did this in a couple of other plans, but I don't know if it's an accretion over time – what accretes that will tell you what to do next time, if not a rule or some kind of knowledge that you accumulate to let you know it works this way and not that way.



How do you also know that on a larger scale the very things you think are indigenous, in fact are not indigenous, but are just as artificial as the things put there by rules or planning, or whatever else. How do you do it again if you don't accumulate knowledge? How do you repeat it?

**Crawford:**

You accumulate knowledge, but not by abstracting a certain set of principles from a set of examples. The fullness of the example is part of the significance of this. I agree with you, there's a shorthand for a flea market that shouldn't lead to design.

**Douglas Kelbaugh:** Since this was advertised as a debate, what is your reaction to each other's comments tonight? What differences or objections do you hear?

**Crawford:**

That's a very nice question. This is not the first time Michael and I have met and, frankly, I'm a little disappointed that our conversation has not proceeded very far in all these years. In many respects we are not even addressing the same issues. Michael is describing a uniquely Dutch situation and I am talking about the American built environment. I don't find the Dutch examples comparable or particularly relevant. American urbanists have always yearned for the power that European planners possess. In Holland the State has an enormous amount of power to plan economically, socially and spatially. In the United States, no level of government will ever intervene on such a scale and with such financial resources. I find it particularly ironic that hip young

Dutch designers like Crimson celebrate the market yet absolutely depend on State power to support their activities. They feel oppressed by the social democratic state so they valorize market forces even though the State is the one who hires them. In the US we've known for some time that market forces shape our built environment. We would be happy to have more State intervention!

There is specificity and a meaning to the American environment for better or worse and we need to focus on it: suburbia, in-between areas, everyday space or whatever you want to call it. All those strip malls and parking lots are our environment and we need to engage with them in a productive way. That is what everyday urbanism is all about, understanding the American built environment as it is rather than yearning for some other set of circumstances.

**Douglas Kelbaugh:** I have a question for Margaret, maybe for Michael as well. Everyday environments are pervasive in every culture, every period, every city. They are ordinary environments in which are hidden extraordinary things, sometimes even, as has been noted, surreal things. Artists and writers try to reveal them for the rest of us, as do some architects. But there's a major difference to me between the shopping mall environment that you showed and ordinary commercial places of the past. It has to do with all the cars and the parking lot.

You can crop photos of parking lots and freeways to make them look good, even artistic. You can frame photographs of autotopia, with its cloverleaves and bridges, to look beautiful, even epic. But that's through the eye of the camera lens, often from above or telephoto, but rarely wide-angle. When you are actually out there on the ground, it can be incredibly inhospitable to the human being. Whereas ordinary environments in traditional cities revolve around the human being not the automobile.

Today's ordinary environments revolve around the automobile. Nobody in those parking lots is taking sun





**Margaret Crawford**  
Harvard University

**Rahul Mehrotra**  
TCAUP



baths, or having picnics; and no one is wandering around the cloverleafs of those freeways happily picking wild flowers. There may be ordinary and there may be extraordinary aspects to these landscapes, but are they humane or pedestrian-friendly?

**Crawford:**

I have a different opinion about the car. The car is a technological marvel that is both wonderful in its freedom and flexibility but in many respects also destructive. But there is no going back. I don't care what New Urbanists say; people will not stop using their cars. In Europe where there is every disincentive for car use, car use is still rising dramatically. So the idea of eliminating the automobile is just a dream and, for me, not even a good dream. I don't want to give up my automobile. The thing I miss most about Los Angeles is driving and parking.

We shouldn't say the car is bad, period. People use their cars in many interesting ways. You have to look carefully at how cars function in urban environments and work with that. That's why, for me, the parking lot should be the fundamental site for urban design in American cities. Today, when I arrived in your parking lot, I met Tom Buresh, who I always used to see in the SCI-Arc parking lot. So I felt at home. But your parking lot needs work! Its cold out now, but if there were some trees and benches and permeable pavement it would be much nicer. This is where Everyday Urbanism could help. We would start there.

**Speaks:** I agree with Margaret on all of that.

**Douglas Kelbaugh:** Michael, you mentioned the market and market forces. Market capitalism has never been stronger and yet, you'll be the first to concede I'm sure, that it's only one of the atmospheric gases that fill the air. There are conventions, institutions, laws, regulations, governments and all sorts of other controls and invisible forces. Where do they fit in with unbridled market forces?

**Speaks:**

At the presentation in Detroit the Dutch guys, because they observed the realities of the ownership of those properties, the Bridge Company, I think it was assumed that they were in favor of the Bridge Company, and I think a similar kind of mistake is being made by my observation that the market is just air that you have to breathe and you have to figure out how to work within it. I'm not a Milton Friedman Chicago-school economist. I'm not a free marketer.

Let's put it this way – you, in your typology, argue that these three, New Urbanism, Everyday Urbanism, and Post Urbanism are self conscious and therefore are not participating in the willy-nilly everyday market-driven urbanism that you cite as something else. I can't imagine New Urbanism not being part of the market. In fact, whenever one asks Andres Duany why do you make these houses neo-traditional, he says, "that's what people want." That's called a market; people want to buy those things. That's why he makes what he makes. New Urbanism, it seems to me, is just as market-driven as Post Urbanism.

**Douglas Kelbaugh:** You are right about New Urbanism. It accepts, even embraces the market. It's the first design movement in my lifetime that is very much connected to and savvy about the market. I don't see the contradiction.







**Speaks:**

You said that in contradistinction to willy-nilly market urbanism, there are these three self-conscious ones, Post Urbanism, New Urbanism, and Everyday. You're saying all three of those categories are participants in the market?

**Douglas Kelbaugh:** Yes. The market is inescapable in our system. But New Urbanism embraces it the most self-consciously of the three. That's why it seems to be working. But, more than Everyday or Post Urbanism, it also embraces social, civic, and environmental ideals.

**Speaks:**

So at some level urbanism is impossible without acknowledgement that the market is a principal driving force, it seems to me.

**Crawford:**

I think everybody would have to agree upon that. I'm responding to some articles by the Crimson people who were really celebrating the market. I understand that in a social-democratic country like Holland where the State has such a heavy hand, that the market is a kind of inversion, that it's cool and interesting, you've got to love the market because you feel oppressed by the social democratic state. But I think that's a uniquely Dutch, not even European, situation.

**Crawford:**

That's what I find weird and bizarre. Maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea to have a little more control by the State. As for these Dutch people loving the market and embracing it, this is just a kind of inversion. What they have, they don't want, so they simply invert it.

**Speaks:**

It's a fairly complicated story about a shift in the Dutch economy in the mid-nineties from a state-controlled housing market to a market-driven market where state planners were no longer deciding who and where and what would be built, and, in fact, private developers were. That's why you have a lot of young Dutch offices because private planners didn't trust old state ideology-driven planners to make sexy new housing for people who wanted to drive cars and be like Americans. That's why you have that society.

**Douglas Kelbaugh:** We're finding common ground again.

**Speaks:** Everywhere.

**Rahul Mehrotra:** "Common ground...everywhere" is a good note on which to end the debate. Inherent in the structure and categorization of the debate is an implication that we have to make a choice as we go through these three sessions. But, the real lesson will be to understand and build a consensus on the simultaneous validity of these different forms of urbanism. It's clear that cities around the world are becoming highly complex and pluralistic and are dependent on diversity coexisting. Therefore, pluralism is an important notion to embrace in the contemporary world and particularly when we look at urbanism.

The lesson that we can derive from "Everyday Urbanism," as a process, is the suggestion of a bottom up or grass-roots set of considerations that ought to be recognized in any urban system. Small moves that grow out of real needs that, if recognized, could in some way be woven into a coherent recognizable schema for urbanism - bringing to other "formal" types of urbanism the richness of human presence.

With that, I'd like to thank our speakers and the audience for having participated in this debate on Everyday Urbanism and invite them to join us for the following two debates.







## Contributors

George Baird is Dean of the University of Toronto's School of Architecture, Landscape and Design and a partner in Baird Sampson Neuert Architects in Toronto. He is the co-editor (with Charles Jencks) of *Meaning in Architecture*, the author of a book on Alvar Aalto, *The Space of Appearance*, and the forthcoming *A New Theory of Public Space*.

Margaret Crawford is Professor of Urban Design and Planning Theory at the Harvard Design School. Her research focuses on the evolution, uses, and meanings of urban space, as reflected in her latest books, *Everyday Urbanism* (co-edited with John Kaliski) and *Building the Workingman's Paradise: The Design of American Company Towns*.

Douglas Kelbaugh, Dean of Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Michigan, has won a score of design awards and competitions, organized and participated in thirty design charrettes, and taught at eight architecture schools in the US and abroad. In addition to writing dozens of articles, he has edited and authored several books, most recently *Repairing the American Metropolis: Common Place Revisited*.

Rahul Mehrotra is an Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Michigan's Taubman College, a principal of Rahul Mehrotra Associates, and a founder of The Bombay Collaborative, a conservation architecture practice, that works with historic buildings in India. His writings include co-authoring the book *Bombay: The Cities Within, Banganga: Sacred Tank, Public Places Bombay*, and *Fort Walks: Walking Tours of Bombay Historic City Center*.

Michael Speaks is Director of the Metropolitan Design and Research Program at the Southern California Institute of Architecture and has twice been a visiting professor at Taubman College, as well as other institutions. He has edited five books and contributed essays in fourteen other books, and his articles span many publications, including *A+U*, *Architectural Record*, *Archis*, and *de Architect*.