

5th N-AERUS Annual Workshop 2003
Beyond the Neo-liberal Consensus on Urban Development:
Other Voices from Europe and the South
Paris, May 15-17 2003

Proceedings of Working Group 2

1. Topics agreed upon

- Social, spatial and planning impacts of neo-liberal policies:
current trends and shifts
- Urban development:
new political objectives and innovative practices

Working Group approach: issue based open discussion drawing on participants' papers and experience

2. Terms to define

- globalisation
 - markets
 - modes of consumption
 - life styles
 - human rights
- neo-liberal economic policies
- liberalisation
 - „*liberté*“
 - democratisation, participation
 - civil rights
 - civil society
 - checking the suffocating state

3. The scope

- scales
 - global
 - national
 - regional and local
- sectors
 - regulatory framework
 - utilities
 - culture
 - urban form
 - informality
- specific effects of neo-liberal politics
 - spatial
 - economic, social, cultural

4. New models of urban form

Which urban models are embedded in neo-liberal thinking and politics?

- the invisible spatial model of colonialism
- the North-American „functional urban model“
 - efficient circulation
 - petrol-economy (case discussed: Harare)
- „*urbanisation diffuse*“
- the (European) „compact city“
- the informal city of the poor
- the city of the drug economy

5. Life-styles and modes of consumption

- Models of urban form are determined (to a certain degree) by modes of consumption.
- Is there a future for the peasant economy?
- Will the ‚green pastures‘ of urban life continue to feed rural-urban migration?
- Which degree of self-reliance is feasible?
- Sustainability depends on modes of consumption, not only on urban form.
- Which are the effects of global management of local resources for modes of consumption?

6. Impacts of neo-liberalism

- The tragedy of the commons
- Economic globalisation causes the loss of
 - local control over
 - land
 - markets
 - culture
 - the sense of ownership
 - the spirit of communal life
- Civil society as a remedy?

7. Neo-liberalism and the civil society

- globalisation of civil society assets
 - human rights
 - social movements
- contributes to
 - democratisation
 - decentralisation (devolution of power)
- versus deficits of governance
 - the suffocating state
 - the marginalised state

8. The weak state

- colonial and socialist legacies
 - inappropriate institutional framework

- wholesale adoption of „Northern“ systems
- skewed economy
- poverty
 - resource deficits
 - outside dependence
- governance
 - vested interests
 - lack of professional competence
 - apprehension, fears of the elites

9. The need for context-specific solutions

- Ambiguity of low access barriers to markets
 - female traders in Bamako:
 - low fees deprive the state of revenue
 - informal housing:
 - urban sprawl unchecked
- Failures to formalise
(e.g. petty traders, housing)
- Dominance of governance issues
(e.g. misappropriation of development aid)
- ‚Scaling up‘ of specific empirically validated findings to generally applicable concepts

10. Implications for research

- To which degree is empirical evidence required to enter the political discourse?
- Is research still concentrating too much on impacts, less on remedies, alternative strategies?
- How to link research findings with developments on the ground?
- How to conduct action research
 - as an academic?
 - with interest-bound funding?
- How to establish the interdisciplinary discourse?
- How to co-operate globally across cultures?

11. Research issues

- variations (spectrum) of the neo-liberal model
- impact studies
 - urban land markets
 - urban job markets
 - spatial structure
 - civil society and governance
- remedies and alternatives
 - information exchange (e.g. best practices)
 - human capacity development
 - global co-operation and networking

12. Transferring research findings

- How to inform the international institutions about the findings of the international research community?
 - International organisations provide little room to discuss modifications of the economic framework.
 - Research funding is increasingly interest-bound.
- Specific tasks of the research community are
 - to inform about visions and alternative concepts
 - to present empirical evidence for policy evaluation
- Specific tasks (and future) of N-AERUS