

Shrinking Cities at the 10th International Architecture Biennale in Venice

The Architecture Biennale /// "Meta-cities - Cities: Architecture and Society" is the theme of this year's 10th International Architecture Biennale in Venice. Primarily presented will be the overflowing growth of megalopolises of the South and East, from Mexico City to Shanghai. Richard Burdett, Professor at the London School of Economics and Curator of this year's Architecture Biennale, has invited the project Shrinking Cities - as the sole German team along with twelve other renowned international research groups, including ETH Zürich Studio Basel, Berlage Institute Rotterdam, AMO/OMA-Rem Koolhaas, SENSEable City Laboratory - Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Multiplicity / Stefano Boeri, and the university IUAV di Venezia - to present its results in the international section of the Biennale.

Contribution /// The Shrinking Cities project's contribution to the exhibition is a stark contrast to the superordinated theme of the Biennale. In the Shrinking Cities room, a 45-meter-long and 4-meter-high panorama photo by the photographer Christoph Petras gives the viewer the impression that he is in one of the many shrinking city districts of eastern Germany. A huge world map on the floor of the room shows more than 350 big cities that have markedly shrunk, at least temporarily, in the last 50 years. A collage of short film scenes shows how this often-repressed theme has been taken up in the cultural history of cinema. An exhibition newspaper in an edition of 20,000 provides background information and sketches possibilities for action.

Excursion through Venice /// On Friday, September 8, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., in the framework of the opening program, the Shrinking Cities project will also conduct excursions to the parts of Venice that are shrinking. For Venice, too, despite and in part because of its increasing tourism success, is affected by the phenomenon of shrinkage; it has lost 60 percent of its inhabitants in the last 50 years.

The tour will follow an unusual route across the lagoon, touching some exemplary and unexpected points of Venice's transformation: new urban interventions that suit tourists' demand, public services like schools and cinemas closed down as inhabitants have left, abandoned islands, and Porto Marghera, symbol of industrial decay.

The city excursion is an event organized by Shrinking Cities, with statements contributed by Thomas Krämer-Badoni, Philipp Oswalt, Lorenzo Romito (Stalker), and others. Organized by Giovanni Piovene.

Meeting point: Redentore Church, Giudecca. Vaporetto stop: Redentore. As the number of participants is limited, reservation in advance is necessary. Please call or sms: +39 - 349 72 42 280.

Philipp Oswalt (curator, mob: +49-173-8604845) and Nicole Minten-Jung (coordination, mob: +49-163-3781175) are available on request for talks and information on site in Venice from September 5 to 8.

Exhibition Contributions in the Shrinking Cities Room ///

NO TITLE, 2006

Wallpaper and sound installation, by *stadtimbild/Christoph Petras*, with sound by Olaf Augele and written quotes from *Drei Städte* (Three Cities), a project by Sybil Kohl, Philipp Oswald, Albrecht Schäfer.

A ca. 45-meter-long, 4-meter-high 360° photo and sound installation gives the visitor the impression of being in a partly abandoned prefab housing estate in Wolfen-Nord (Germany). A second glance at the photo panorama reveals quotations from interviews with inhabitants, who speak about their personal experience in the partially abandoned settlements they live in or have lived in.

WEGE (PATHS), 2004

Video, 6 min, by *Antje Ehmann*

How are urban shrinkage and decline represented in film images, and what function do they have there? What recurring topics are shaped in film and how do they influence our perception? In the context of a film research project, the author of this film collected from various genres sequences on 7 keywords associated with various aspects of shrinking cities. At the Biennial, one topic out of the 7 is shown.

WORLD MAP OF SHRINKING CITIES, 2006

by *Project Office Philipp Oswald* (Researcher: Tim Rieniets)

A mapping of the over 350 cities in the world with a population of more than 100,000 that have lost (at least temporarily) more than 10% of their population between 1950 and 2000.

EXHIBITION NEWSPAPER, 2006

by *Project Office Philipp Oswald*

A free newspaper introduces the theme of urban shrinkage as a global phenomenon, presents four examples of studied international sites, and introduces models for action.

MOVING DATA, 2003/04

Computer animation, 3 min, by *Project Office Philipp Oswald* (Project management: Anke Hagemann, Graphics: lkilo)

The city is not permanent and stabile, but a dynamic system of growth, shrinkage, and constant shifting. Moving Data consists of animations that present spatial data in their temporal development, for example the development of population density or the change of the built fabric over the last 50 years.

URBAN SCAN, 2003/04

Video, 13 min, by *Albrecht Schäfer*

To convey a direct impression of the various shrinking urban spaces, characteristic urban situations are filmed from a slowly moving car in

Detroit (USA), Ivanovo (RUS), Halle/Leipzig (D), and Manchester/Liverpool (UK), the four cases that the project Shrinking Cities has extensively studied over the last 4 years.

The "Shrinking Cities" exhibition contribution to the 10th International Architecture Exhibition at the Venice Biennale was produced by the Project Office Philipp Oswald.

Curator: Philipp Oswald; research assistants: Elke Beyer, Anke Hagemann, Anita Kaspar, Tim Rieniets, and Füsün Türetken, with the assistance of Gabi Eisenreich and Giovanni Piovene; coordination: Anita Kaspar and Nicole Minten-Jung; management: Florian Bolenius, Peter Boragno, and Nicole Minten-Jung; graphic design: Tanja Wesse; exhibition installation: atelier 35/Jacob von Dohnanyi.

Shrinking City Venice - Facts and Figures ///

Municipality of Venice

Population 1970: 367,500

Population 2006: 270,000

Population loss: -26.5%

Historical center

Population 1950: 174,800

Population 2006: 62,300

Population loss: -64.4%

Venice, in 1700 the third-largest city on the Italian peninsula, was for centuries a political and economic center of international significance. Despite losing its independence to Austria and being incorporated into the independent Kingdom of Italy in 1866, around 1900 it was still the largest manufacturing center in northeastern Italy. Because the historical city districts were structurally unsuitable for modern industry, additional areas were developed around Mestre on the mainland. From 1918 on, Porto Marghera developed as an industrial port surrounded by commercial and residential properties. Venice nonetheless retained its administrative role.

Until the Second World War, the city in the lagoon became ever more densely populated in spite of the fact that its old building fabric was crumbling and its infrastructure became increasingly unable to cope with congestion. From 1951 on, tens of thousands of inhabitants and established businesses left the old city, because the maintenance of property had become too expensive there. Real estate speculation has been squeezing out further population groups since the 1970s. The ratio of inhabitants in Venice to those on the mainland is reversing. Venice is aging at a rapid rate and becoming increasingly international: today only around half of the historical center's 62,300 inhabitants are Venetians. In the daytime, commuters and visitors double the city's population. Venice is a staged city, a singular show put on for the twelve million tourists who teem through its alleyways every year. Yet the lagoon's fragile ecological system has been

radically damaged by industrial and infrastructural developments that have led to frequent flooding, salinization, and pollution, which also cause damage to historical buildings.

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Press and Publicity

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Shrinking Cities is an initiative project of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation) in cooperation with the Project Office Philipp Oswald, the Gallery for Contemporary Art Leipzig, the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation and the magazine *archplus*.

Since 2002, with more than 100 participating artists, architects, city planners, journalists, scientists, and local initiatives from many countries, the project has investigated processes of shrinking and strategies for intervention for the affected regions. The results of the work have been communicated in exhibitions in Berlin (2004), Halle, and Leipzig (2005/2006) and in several publications with the publishing Verlag Hatje Cantz and arch plus Verlag. A dozen follow-up exhibitions, including in the United States, Britain, Russia, Japan, and Germany, will be held from 2006 to 2008.

For more information:

<http://www.labiennale.org> or
<http://www.labiennale.org/en/news/architecture/en/62177.html>