

NETWORKING EVENT

“A CRITICAL URBAN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEOLIBERAL HEGEMONY”

Thursday, March 25 - 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Venue: See at <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?typeid=19&catid=584&cid=7071>

Room W3-2

(simultaneous translation)

Promoted by: *Rede Democracia e Justiça Urbanas* (Urban Democracy and Justice Network) – LABHAB/FAU/USP – ETTERN/IPPUR/UFRJ

Erminia Maricato (Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo/Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil) - chair

Alan Mabin (School of Architecture and Planning, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa)

Arif Hassan (Urban Resource Centre, Pakistan)

Pietro Garau (Urban Studies Center for Developing Countries, University of Rome, Italy)

Simpreet Singh (National Alliance of Peoples' Movements, India)

About 25 years ago, rational planning was placed on the bench. Comprehensive plans, state regulations, zoning, as well as what has been classified as voluntarism and normative rigidity - basically all fundamental beliefs of modernism and modern planning model – were condemned and the modern city was thrown into the dustbin of history. The advocates of post-modern planning announced a new era – globalisation – and the “good” news: cities could be partners in the globalisation process... as long as they proved to be capable of successfully competing in a war of all against all to attract capital, tourists and major events. The recipe of urban competitiveness, including its case models and best practices, was copied from business schools and their MBAs. Their concepts of public-private partnership, normative flexibility, major projects, entrepreneurship and urban marketing were spread *urbi et orbi* by international consultants, cooperation agencies, multilateral institutions, academic and professional meetings. Despite the announced commitment to vernacular and local singularities, the market friendly planning was imposed with the same uniformity it blamed on rational planning. The new universal style, or better yet, the global style, is stamped in waterfronts, in “revitalisations” of historic centers, in the mass production of architectural icons, in the cultural and homogeneous spectacularisation of cities during major sports events and international exhibitions. After 25 years of the “new city model” hegemony, it is more than time to take stock. Are our cities more inclusive, equal, democratic, sociable and sustainable today? Are cities in central countries more likely to incorporate migrants pursuing a place in the promised land of developed capitalism? Were cities lying in the periphery able to broaden urban citizenship and democracy and reduce poverty and inequality? Are we closer or further from the universalisation of the right to the city?

The Urban Democracy and Justice Network (*Rede Democracia e Justiça Urbanas*) will promote discussions about these issues bringing together researchers and activists who have been standouts in debates and urban struggles from North and South.

NETWORKING EVENT – "IS A NEW CITY POSSIBLE? PRACTICES AND UTOPIAS"

Thursday, March 25 - 4:30 – 6:30 pm

Venue: See at <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?typeid=19&catid=584&cid=7071>

Room W3-2

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Promoted by: *Rede Democracia e Justiça Urbanas* (Urban Democracy and Justice Network) – LABHAB/FAU/USP – ETTERN/IPPUR/UFRJ

Carlos Vainer (Institute of Urban and Regional Planning and Research / Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) - chair

Edgar Pieterse (African Center for Cities / Cape Town University)

Medha Patkar (National Alliance of Peoples' Movements, India)

Edmilson Rodrigues (former mayor of Belém, Brazil)

Peter Marcuse (Columbia University, USA)

Soledad Bordegaray, Movimiento de Trabajadores Desempleados, La Matanza, Buenos Aires, Argentina)

Of all triumphs of conservative thought in the last three decades, none was as profound and of such serious consequences as the death sentence to all utopias. Yet they survive, emerging in the garrets of our cities through creative experiences of solidarity that defy individualism and competition by confronting them with the construction of a new lifestyle and sociable spaces, together with the invention of an insurgent planning professing alternatives to market fundamentalism and urban overflow that re(colonise) our cities. We are still far from what could become a model of the democratic and fair city; rather, instead of searching for an alternative model, we should recognise and progress toward already in place alternatives to existing models.

How to rescue and enrich the critical, revolutionary sense of what Lefebvre called "experimental utopias", time-spaces of transgression and of constructing a new urbanity, as well as of introduction of a daily life that is simultaneously cultural, political, economic and social? What are the paths of this new urban utopia? Where can we detect its practical and theoretical signs in the beginning of this century?

How can we ensure that utopias rooted in low-income neighbourhoods, slums and ghettos of every city, project themselves on national scales and celebrate the internationalist heritage reinvented in transnational counter-hegemonic networks and movements such as the World Social Forum?

The Urban Democracy and Justice Network (*Rede Democracia e Justiça Urbanas*) will promote discussions about these issues bringing together researchers and activists who have been standouts in debates and urban struggles towards the construction of democratic, socially and environmentally just cities from North and South.