

DIENER HERZOG MEILI DE MEURON
WS 2006-07

Prof. Jacques Herzog, Prof. Pierre de Meuron, Simon Hartmann, Manuel Herz, Ann-Sofi Rönnskog
Exercise type: P
Group work in Basel and in research location
Start: Wednesday, 25. October, 2006, 10 AM at ETH Studio Basel, Spitalstrasse 8, 4056 Basel



MetroBasel

The Masterplan

We have to acknowledge that the master plan has failed. Once devised as a tool to project a vision of urbanity into the future and to steer a city's development, the standard instruments of urbanism have denigrated into mere tracking devices, desperately trying to hold on to static models of the city. Based on a concept of the city as a sharply defined and well enclosed entity, with a strong preference for the plan view with a top-down approach, and preoccupied with an ultimate state of the city to achieve, for it to be completed, the master plan has become a fragile *Fata Morgana*, unable in today's world to show a direction and ever endangered by the multiple voices and actors impeding on the city's development. Today, when the future of cities is still decided by choosing zones on scaled maps, today, when the destiny of an urban region is marked in colored patches on paper, corresponding to static use patterns, favoring the conventional, politely respecting existing street patterns, and slowly making the city come to a grinding halt, the question arises whether not fundamentally different approaches and tools have to be developed, if the profession still wants to be taken seriously.

The Region

MetroBasel is the region around the core city of Basel, including its suburbs, the urbanized agglomeration in the valleys to the south and the north as well as more rural areas in its sphere of influence. It spans from the Jura in the south to the hills of the Schwarzwald in the northeast and the flatlands of the Alsace in the northwest. MetroBasel is the identity, forming a unit of the trinational metropolitan region of Basel.

It is maybe in this metropolitan region of Basel, that this failure becomes most apparent. The city and its thoroughly urbanized surrounding area of altogether 800.000 inhabitants, stands for a hub of international acclaim, being one of the global leaders in the fields of art, the chemical industry and life sciences. In spite of its comparably small size, Basel has achieved a worldwide prominence and recognition. On the other hand, spanning over three countries, spread over 9 cantons or administrative regions and consisting of more than 200 communities, each having their own regulations, planning guidelines and, at times conflicting, development aims, any coordinated effort for a regional plan and a concerted urban development seems futile and is quickly dissolved in an intricate web of administrative obstacles and organizational incompatibilities. In spite of the geographical location and the international character of the region, urban masterplans are still developed in a traditional fashion with little coordination of neighboring communities, triggering few, if any, cross border visions of how the region should develop. While the planning department of the Kanton Basel-Stadt is currently working on formulating a new Zonenplan – the first major revision in more than thirty years of the city's primary master plan – Studio Basel takes this as an opportunity to develop an alternative proposal and to suggest a different methodology of how the city should develop in the future.

MetroBasel in 2028

The masterplan has also failed with respect to incorporating and reacting to major developments in the sociopolitical arena. Architecture, and probably even more so urbanism, as being the most visible and public fields of activities, a profession affecting virtually all of society directly, cannot but take social, political, economical and ecological aspects into consideration. This though, has not happened! It is valid to say that we are expecting major shifts in a number of those vital fields. At a time, when the demographic structure of Europe is structurally changing, with – for the first time in human history – the ageing population representing a larger share of society and with an ever shrinking birthrate, at a time, when the first forebodings of a fundamental climate change are being recognized, and at a time when the limits of growth and of resources, as previously foreseen by the Club of Rome, are for the first time starting to have a direct impact on our daily lives, urbanism has to begin to account for those major shifts affecting our society in western Europe as well as all over the globe.



Themes, Actors and Aims

How should the region of MetroBasel develop? How can we develop a stronger interdependence of its individual parts, thus overcoming the traditional blockages of, and along, the political and administrative boundaries? How can we develop a masterplan that will allow for subsequent amendments and for future reaction to developments still unforeseen, without being restrained by its own rigidity and static nature? How can elements of a 'gameplan' enter urban planning? Can urban planning develop instruments that work through scenarios and include the public in an emancipated way? How can a public desire for change arise again? What are the major fields, sites and themes that will shape the region, not only within the next 15 years, but within the next 30 years, and how can demographical or ecological changes as well as shifts in the notion of resources be incorporated in regional and urban planning? What changes on administrative and organisational level are required? These are some of the issues and questions that Studio Basel will try to address and suggest answers to, through the study of MetroBasel. By applying specific themes and aspects of urban planning, such as housing, leisure, landscape, traffic and energy production, with an extended timeframe onto selected sites in MetroBasel, the studio will aim to devise a new kind of masterplan, intended to be brought into public discussion towards the final phases of the project.

Semester organisation

After the Canary Islands, Napoli, Hong Kong, Paris, Casablanca though first and foremost Switzerland with the publication and our studies on a thoroughly urbanized country, we continue our series of international urban portraits with the study of MetroBasel. The study is coordinated with a complementary research carried out by thesis students of the Harvard School of Design, who will work on the same subject as the ETH students. The start of the semester is at 10 am, Wednesday 25th October 2006, at ETH Studio Basel, Spitalstrasse 8, Basel. The following day, Thursday 26th a presentation by the Harvard students, together with a symposium on urban research, will take place at Studio Basel. All participants of the MetroBasel project are expected to take part. Divided in groups of two, and in close co-operation with Professors, scientific collaborators and teaching assistants, the students will investigate a series of specific themes and agendas in the region of MetroBasel. The diverse samples and 'drills' will sketch the outlines, or elements, of a new kind of masterplan for MetroBasel. The results of the fieldwork and of the activities conducted in Basel will be in the shape of maps, diagrams, interviews, architectural portraits, urban biographies, but also on the level of specific propositions and scenarios for the future of MetroBasel. The final presentation of the student's works will be in the form of a book and of a slide presentation.

A series of lectures and workshops with invited researchers and urbanists / architects, as well as seminars with the major institutional actors of the region, such as the head of the planning department, the Messe Basel, the chemical industry will complement the studio activities.

The work will be conducted on a weekly basis at ETH Studio Basel's premises in Spitalstrasse 8, 4056 Basel. Fieldwork in the region of MetroBasel, conducted as a collective trip is part of the activity of the course and is mandatory. During the MetroBasel trip, the students will reside in two different locations in the region, one being very centrally located in the midst of Basel giving (literally) an overview, and one in the provincial part of MetroBasel as a cloister, where concentrated study and workshops will be held. In addition, a trip to the Venice architecture Biennale this year with a special focus on the future of the cities, and with a central space curated the ETH Studio Basel, will commence the project. The previewed costs of the MetroBasel Seminarwoche and the Venice trip (travel expenses and hotel) will be of 400.- to max. 500.- CHF per student. Financial issues should not be an hindrance to the participation to this course. Access to a special fund can be discussed in case of grave impediments.



Winter Semester 2006 – 2007 Programme

Date	Theme	Location	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
OCT	25	Start	Basel	Introduction Studio Basel	
	26	GSD	Basel	GSD Pin-up	
	27	Biennale	Venice		Travel to Venice Biennale
	28 29			Visit to the Biennale Visit to the Biennale	return to Basel
NOV	31	Studio Work	Basel		
	01	Studio Work	Basel		
	07	Studio Work	Basel		
	08	Studio Work	Basel		
	14	Studio Work	Basel		
	16	Studio Work	Basel		
	21	Studio Work	Basel		
	22	Studio Work	Basel		
DEC	27	Seminarwoche	MetroBasel	Travel to MetroBasel	
	28			Zwischenkritik / Interim Jury	
	29			collective trips	workshops and lectures
	30			collective trips	workshops and lectures
	01			collective trips	workshops and lectures
	02			collective trips	workshops and lectures
	03			concluding workshop	dinner: Basler Lummelbraten
	05	Studio Work	Basel		
	06	Studio Work	Basel		
	12	Studio Work	Basel		
	13	Interim Jury	Basel		
	19	Studio Work	Basel		
	20	Studio Work	Basel		
JAN	09	Studio Work	Basel		
	10	Interim Jury	Basel		
	17	Studio Work	Basel		
	18	Studio Work	Basel		
	23	Studio Work	Basel		
	24	Studio Work	Basel		
	30	Studio Work	Basel		
	31	Final Jury	Basel		dinner: Basler Zibelewäie