

## *open letter to the architecture, planning and building community:*

beware: the carriage turns into a pumpkin at 2°C!

Like the fairytale princess "Cinderella", we are in a race against time. Global warming, caused by a man-made blanket of greenhouse gasses (mainly carbon dioxide) that surrounds the earth and traps in heat, is well underway and if allowed to intensify over the coming years will seriously threaten our planet.

Unknowingly, we are chiefly responsible for these gasses and we have a unique and historic opportunity to reverse that for which we are responsible. The scientific consensus is that we must limit the rise in global temperature to less than 2° C above pre-industrial levels to avoid disastrous impacts. At 2° C, it is likely millions of people will be displaced from their homes. Impacts do not end there. Food production will decline, rivers will become too warm for trout and salmon, snow pack will decrease threatening urban water supplies, weather will become more extreme, sea level will rise inundating coastal areas, the world's coral reefs - home to 25% of all marine species - will be destroyed, a quarter of all plant and animal species on earth will become extinct and the Greenland ice sheet will begin to melt.

At 3° C the impacts are projected to be catastrophic. We can only imagine what the socio-economic and political consequences will be given this scenario. If we continue on our present course of burning fossil fuels, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change projects that we could reach 2° C by 2050 and 3° C by 2070. We are running out of time.

**cont.**

aiaVT



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### Teen Urbanism

Kazyz Varnelis  
Volume 3, Issue 4

<http://www.loudpapermag.com/article.php?id=39>

For the first time in history, urbanism no longer belongs to planners or to aged master architects; it belongs to the young. The last decade's rapid and completely unplanned urban change, from the unchecked sprawl of Phoenix to the booming development of the Pearl River delta, forces us to conclude that the most remarkable thing about architecture and urban planning at the dawn of the twenty-first century is their noticeable absence. What Rem Koolhaas calls "Junkspace" has won. We have covered the world in a landscape of the formulaic, the banal and the lowest common denominator.

In the new political landscape of radically small but incredibly powerful constituencies—from NIMBY homeowners, rich and poor, to guilt-ridden neo-Stalinist anti-rail activists—it is no longer possible for city leaders and planners to implement urban plans. Meanwhile, the avant-garde has come to a whimpering end in the polished antique halls of Manhattan's Century Club and the boardrooms at MoMA. There,

*cont.*

# 6.06:1

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To learn more about how you can help Marketplace explore green building, visit <http://marketplace.publicradio.org>.

What does this crisis have to do with us?

The building sector is responsible for half of all U.S. global warming emissions annually and our emissions are increasing at an alarming rate according to statistics from the U.S. Energy Information Administration. It is time for us to lead in the race to prevent dangerous climate change.

To meet our responsibility in keeping global warming under 2° C we must adopt the following targets:

- *That all new buildings, developments and major renovation projects be designed to use 1/2 the fossil fuel energy they would typically consume.*
- *This fossil fuel reduction standard for all new buildings must be increased to 60% in 2010, 70% in 2015, 80% in 2020, 90% in 2025 and carbon-neutral by 2030 (meaning they will use no fossil fuel energy to operate).*
- *We must also work together to change existing building standards and codes to reflect these targets.*

To support this effort, in our professional architecture and planning schools, we should require the establishment of a mandatory, full-year, innovative, studio-based program which promotes creative problem-solving relevant to climate change—one which incorporates a deep understanding of the relationship between nature and design in all core courses.

Since it will take time to implement this program, in the interim, all design studio instructors should include into the problems they issue to students that their designs “engage the environment in a way that dramatically reduces or eliminates the need for fossil fuels”.

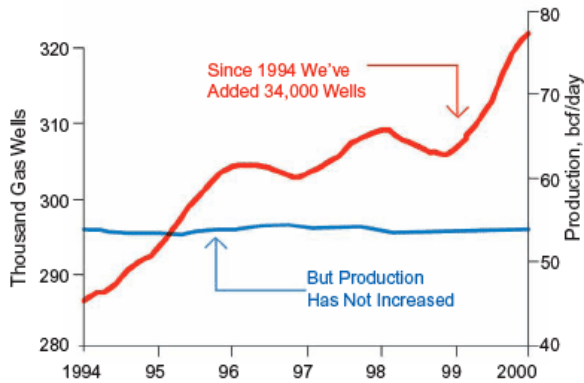
**cont.**

the last holdouts of a once powerful elite meet, a group that Philip Johnson calls his “kids”: at last count, Peter Eisenman, Richard Meier, Charles Gwathmey, Michael Graves, Frank Gehry, Robert Stern, and even, tragically, Koolhaas himself. I lauded in a recent issue of Architecture magazine for epitomizing “Power,” these “Kids”-led by a nonagenarian and virtually all senior citizens themselves-are more like a small town fraternal order than like eighteenth-century freemasons, their most remarkable legacy being their virtual inability to produce anything urbanistically significant.

To blame either technocrats or architects for their failure to realize physical urban form, however, would be futile. Already as early as 1938, Louis Wirth, one of the members of the “Chicago School” of sociology, unleashed urbanism from any particular physical quality. Wirth was concerned with defining urbanism in a sociologically rigorous way and thus came to an understanding of the city as constituted not

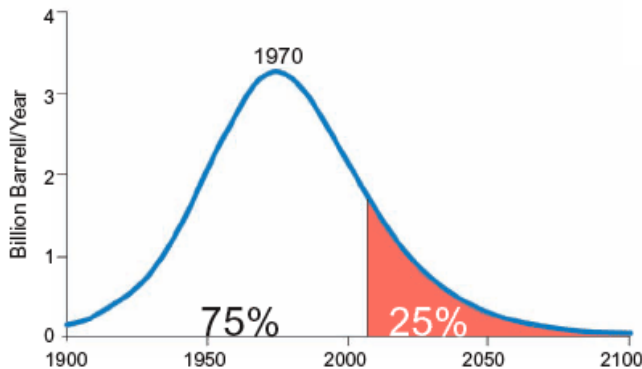
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# 6.06:2



U.S. NATURAL GAS PRODUCTION  
(GRAPHIC)

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration statistics



U.S. CRUDE OIL PRODUCTION PROJECTION  
(GRAPHIC)

Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration statistics

U.S. oil and natural gas production have been in decline since the 1970's and global oil and natural gas reserves are limited (the static lifetime of global oil reserves is only 42 years and natural gas 63 years). With global energy demand increasing, coal is becoming the fossil fuel of choice. The U.S., Russia, China, Australia and India have plenty of it and it is cheap (and dirty). Clean coal technology is decades away as is capturing and storing CO<sub>2</sub>, and they are costly.

We have consumed 75% of all the oil in the ground in the U.S. and are now using up the remaining 25%.

And finally, we are responsible for directing the purchase of over a staggering one trillion dollars worth of goods and services annually. We can effect major reductions in the emissions produced by the manufacture of building products and the construction of buildings and infrastructure through the specification of innovative, low-embodied energy materials, technologies and processes. Today, we are called upon to lead in the race against human-induced climate change. As architects, designers and planners we strive to pursue and reflect humanity's most noble aspirations. Let us accept this challenge and make this our professions finest hour.

**Edward Mazria AIA**  
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as a physical structure but rather as a way of life. In his "Urbanism as a Way of Life," Wirth defined urbanism as being marked by a large and heterogeneous population, a density that concentrated that population and the new forms of behavior and relationships that resulted.

Urban life, Wirth noted, stood in stark contrast to rural life. Rural people knew their place, occupying territories that their ancestors had lived in for time immemorial. Their bonds and even their rivalries with their neighbors were centuries old. Kinship systems and caste structures made one's position in society clear. Almost always, the population of the village was homogeneous in thought and blood. In contrast, for Wirth, urban life meant being uprooted from that traditional place to a new environment filled with sociologically heterogeneous individuals. Under the pressure of encountering more people more frequently at close physical proximity, the city dweller would be forced to develop a stronger sense of self to survive. The result would be the emergence of a more sophisticated, hybrid cultural production as the individual strove to articulate his or her differences from others.<sup>2</sup>

cont.

**6.06:3**

## federal tax incentives for energy-efficient buildings



Federal legislation has been passed that provides tax incentives to designers, owners and tenants of energy-efficient commercial structures as well as to builders and owners of energy-efficient homes. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPACT) will provide tax deductions from \$0.30 to \$1.80 per square foot to designers of public commercial buildings or to owners or tenants of private commercial buildings. Builders of new homes meeting energy-efficiency standards are eligible for up to \$2,000. Owners of existing homes can receive a maximum credit of \$500 for certain energy-efficiency improvements. Additional incentives are available for residential and commercial solar energy systems.

New buildings must be substantially completed after August 8, 2005 and purchased from builders between January 1, 2006 and December 31, 2007. Efficiency improvements to an existing building must be completed between January 1, 2006 and December 31, 2007.

To get help with identifying qualifying equipment and to learn about energy-efficiency requirements, contact Efficiency Vermont, toll-free, at 1-888-921-5990. You also can find quick fact sheets about these tax credits by entering 'EPACT' in the search box at [efficiencyvermont.com](http://efficiencyvermont.com). For comprehensive EPACT information, visit [energytaxincentives.org](http://energytaxincentives.org).

Efficiency Vermont recommends consulting your tax professional to learn about tax deductions specific to your situation.

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If for Wirth, urbanism referred to a way of life, for architects, urbanism is synonymous with urban design. I'd like to suggest that rather than thinking of this as a case of a word having multiple meanings, Wirth's argument denotes a shift in what is the proper object of urbanism. We can say so long to the drawings of Camillo Sitte and Daniel Burnham. After Wirth, a city's objects remain only important as symptoms: radically new ways of life developing within real urbanism. For their part, architects have paid no notice to this development. Even the most remarkable urban projects that these self-styled urbanists came up with in the latter half of the twentieth century—think, for example, of Archigram's Walking City, Alison and Peter Smithson's Berlin Hauptstadt, or OMA's Euralille—all suffered from object fixation.

cont.

# 6.06:4



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aiaVT welcomes

daniel haedrich, *assoc. aia of norwich*

Since Wirth's day, we have become even more urban. The last century began with less than 10 percent of the world's population living in cities, but this century began with over 50 percent living in cities. To continue to speak of an opposition between rural and urban is increasingly impossible. Prior to the dawn of cable and the Internet, one had to go to the city to experience its culture. Today, the village is wired and one doesn't need to go to the city to learn of Woody Allen or Moby. Urbanism as a way of life penetrates the deepest reaches of the countryside. If a park like Yosemite is the epitome of nature, then surely the densities and heterogeneous populations of its tent cities make it an urban park. Similarly, where is technology, a marker of urbanity, more necessary for human life to exist than at the high camps of Mount Everest or the laboratories of the South Pole?

There is something distinctly post-metropolitan about this condition of urbanism everywhere. The metropolis depended on density and concentration but since the early '70s, more Americans have lived in suburbia than in the city. Already by the time Wirth was writing, the city itself had been redefined as a demographic entity: from the city's political boundaries to a larger metropolitan region. Today, large, sprawling, megalopolitan regions such as the Pearl River delta, the Atlantic corridor in the Northeast United States, or the Dutch Randstad, undo the notion of a city as a Manhattan-like, concentrated area. Above all, however, the city is no longer new. We are no longer newcomers to the urban world. If we can still manage to be alienated—and increasingly alienation seems so boring, so twentieth century—it is certainly not because the city shocks us. If we experience shock, it's because we go from a familiar to an unfamiliar urban experience: from Orange County to Los Angeles, from New York to Greenwich, from Stockholm to Hong Kong.

So what's an urbanist to do, then? With the end of the plan and the grand gesture, a new way of engaging urbanism is necessary.<sup>3</sup> I suspect that, given the conservative nature of the profession, architects will see the idea that urbanism as they knew it has come to an end as a pessimistic argument. This seems rather bizarre and nostalgic to me. More than anything, urbanism after the city makes it possible for architects to take on new, more exciting roles. Maybe they miss the Century Club. I say good riddance to the senior citizens of the avant-garde.

Urbanism is the province of the young, as yet unfettered by the shackles of compromise and tradition. Today, as the Baby Boom generation flees the real world to the New Age, the antique store, and endless reruns of Woodstock: The Movie, youth culture is reshaping urbanism as a way of life. Creator of the weblog, the rave, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer, youth culture makes up all that is vital in urban culture. What might, for want of a better term, might "teen urbanism" bring? For the rest of this essay, I'd like to take a look at the work of young designers who are undertaking radically innovative approaches to urbanism.

Let's begin with what would appear to be the most traditional approach to teen urbanism. The WOS 8 (Warme Overdracht Station 8), is designed by NL architects and built in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in the late '90s. A heat transfer station, WOS 8 will eventually take waste heat from a power plant and redistribute it to 11,000 future dwellings that will eventually engulf it. As an infrastructural element, WOS 8 has to precede the construction of those dwellings. For now, it lies surrounded by fields and sheep, soon to be rezoned as building land. The building's lifespan, then, would inevitably be that of an invader: a harbinger of a future displacement of the

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**6.06:5**


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sheep and later on as a mysterious infrastructural element. Thus, NL eliminated any contextualist reference to present or future architecture in the area. With no real inhabitable or public space in the program, NL architects focused on its wrapping. Since the building would be a potential target for vandalism left to fend for itself, NL covered the building in an indestructible polyurethane coating. But the building will also make friends: a climbing wall invites kids to test themselves against the building gently, as does a giant hole and a basketball hoop. Finally, when water runs over the building's contoured surfaces, it creates odd effects.

Apart from engaging the teen vandals who will inevitably visit it, WOS 8 acts as teen urbanism because it rejects any possibilities for a master plan, or even for knowing what the future will bring. Like the monolith from 2001, the building will always be at odds with its environment, as different from the world of suburban homes as it is from the sheep pasture. Instead, like an André the Giant sticker, a cryptic T-shirt logo, or a pair of sneakers thrown over telephone wires, WOS 8 hints at a secret symbolic order that may or may not be real. Time will tell if NL will create more objects in this language, but, one suspects that WOS 8 will generate its own meaning in the clandestine maps of the city that the young make.

In his design work, Phillippe Starck undertakes a similar form of appeal to stealth urbanism. A bit older than the rest of the designers I'm looking at, Starck is still a Leftist, disapproving of materialism and consumption, but he believes that for the moment, its impossible to break society's addictions. For Starck, denial is a mistake. Instead, he says, we should realize that the twenty-first century will be the first century of the immaterial: there will be no more need to possess to enjoy. With the end of materialism, it will be possible for Love to evolve freely.

But Starck is a designer, creating objects to sell in the market. Like X-Large T-shirts, Starck's designs allow members of a scattered tribe to recognize each other. Starck's target audience, he explains, are "Mutants in a Mutating Society." Understanding Starck as the creator of a way of life, rather than as the designer of a series of discreet objects allows us to redefine urbanism for the post-material millennium. This form of urbanism is no longer limited to a particular or country, but rather is something we can find scattered throughout the global city.

Similarly, in Dayware, a line of clothing created by Joe Day, an architect who practices with the Hedge Collective in Los Angeles, clothing becomes urbanism. Dayware is clothing for young, urban dwellers who identify themselves with design culture. Offering an array of simple, practical and stylishly informal clothes Dayware, for now at least, pointedly isn't available in the mall. Dayware sells its clothes at a 10 percent discount to anyone who claims to be an artist or designer. 10 percent off. Since nobody checks, few customers fail to check the 10 percent discount box. The result is that Dayware's customers become artists and urbanists themselves.

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These three possibilities for teen urbanism—other examples, such as Israel Kandarian's designs for his Ministry of Architecture, Chip Minnick's SCI-Arc thesis on Nike Housing (in the latest issue of *Off-Ramp*), and even *Wallpaper* magazine and loud paper, also come to mind—allow us to foresee a time when we will all be aware of our roles as urbanists, no longer passively waiting for master planners to fix things but instead actively reshaping the city as a way of life.

1. Tragically not because *Koolhaas* would associate himself with the *Johnson*, that was predictable after I gave him a copy of my dissertation on *Johnson's* role as fascist sympathizer in the 1930s and power broker since the 1970s, but rather because one would think *Koolhaas* would have something better to do with his time.
2. *Louis Wirth*, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout*, *The City Reader*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 1999), 97-105.
3. Another important diagnosis of the end of the plan is by *Manfredo Tafuri* in his *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1976). *Tafuri*, however, urged political activism as a response. In an argument that has been influential on this article, *Michael Speaks* has argued for the substitution of soft strategies for hard plans. See *Michael Speaks*, *Big Soft Orange*, 1998.