

# The “Architecture” of the Markets

## Architectural and Urban identities in the era of Neoliberalism

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The paper aims to be a contribution to the debate regarding the so called “Neoliberal City” and in particular the relation between the Market and Contemporary Architectural and Urban Design thinking.

Cities had a key position in the triumph of the Free Market Economy in Western Societies (Harvey : 2009, Hall : 2002). Urban Regeneration projects, across US and Western Europe were the best examples of the “miracles” of the new economy. But the most interesting thing is that these changes in the urban environments were also motivated and consecrated but the Architectural and Cultural Avant Garde. Development Corporations used with great success the decline of Modern Cities and the Urban decay of late 70s in order to create a pro-market cultural “revolution”.

The new cultural establishment was based to a “free market democracy” against the “socialist-state” development, and contributed in breaking the balance between not only private and public spaces but also the sense of privacy. It promoted de-politicization as one of the most basic design process, by stripping architecture and planning from any social meaning (the end of great narratives). But on the same time it embraced a populist gesture which inherited but also annulled any radical thinking of the time. The result is the contemporary “archistar” or “archiartist” (La Cecla : 2009), an ambiguous personality both radical and pragmatist the one that Sevastakis describes as the “New-Liberal”. (Sevastakis : 2009)

These characteristics will be examined through Architectural and Urban Design Projects but also the thinking of Architects and Urbanists.

However the paper argues that the current economic crisis will also affect the cultural identity of neoliberalism. The transformation towards a post-democratic “capitalism with Asian values” (Žižek : 2010) according to many scholars and researchers is already in motion. The question is how contemporary Architecture will support this process.

### Key Articles and Bibliography

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