
Appendix 1: Leora Farber and Ryan Bishop

THE JOHANNESBURG AND MEGACITY PHENOMENA COLLOQUIUM

BIOGRAPHY

Dr Ryan Bishop is Associate Professor in English Language and Literature and American Studies at the National University of Singapore. He has published on urbanism, critical theory, military technology, avant-garde aesthetics, modernism and international sex tourism. He is co-editor of the internationally accredited journal *Cultural Politics*. In addition to co-editing *The New Encyclopaedia Project* with Mike Featherstone, Couze Venn and John Phillips, he is the author or editor of *Night Market* (Routledge), *Postcolonial Urbanism* (Routledge), *Beyond Description* (Routledge), and *Baudrillard Now* (Henan University Press & Polity).

As noted in the introduction, the contents of this collection can be traced back to the papers presented at the *Johannesburg and Megacity* colloquium, which is the source of its production. As co-organisers of the event, we present a short overview of the colloquium, as it served as the point of origin from whence the material in this volume has emerged.

The colloquium was hosted by the University of Johannesburg's Research Centre, *Visual Identities in Art and Design*, in close collaboration with the editors of *The New Encyclopaedia Project* (NEP). The four NEP editors, Ryan Bishop (Associate Professor, Department of English, National University of Singapore); Mike Featherstone (Professor, Department of Sociology and Communications, Nottingham Trent University); John Phillips (Associate Professor, Department of English, National University of Singapore) and Couze Venn (Professor, Department of Cultural Studies, Nottingham Trent University) attended, as did a number of well-respected local and international academics. The latter included Jennifer Bajorek (Senior Lecturer, Department of Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths University, University of London); Michael Keith (Professor, Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths University, University of London); Scott Lash (Director, Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths University); Li-Shiqiao (Associate Professor, Department of Architecture at the Chinese University of Hong Kong); AbdouMaliq Simone (Professor, Graduate Program of International Affairs at The New School University, New York and the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths University, University of London) and Eyal Weizman (Director, Centre for Research Architecture, Goldsmiths University, University of London). The colloquium also included several academics from national universities, including the Universities of the Witwatersrand (WITS), Johannesburg (UJ), Pretoria (UP), Stellenbosch (SUN) and Cape Town (UCT). Academics from these institutions include: Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall, from the Wits Institute of Social and Economic Research (WISER); Cape-based academics Michael Godby (Professor, Department of Art History, UCT), Iain Low (Professor, School of Architecture, Planning and

Geomatics, UCT), Zayd Minty (PhD candidate, Department of Geographical and Environmental Sciences, UCT) and Edgar Pieterse (Director, African Centre for Cities, School of Architecture, UCT). Elfriede Dreyer (Senior Lecturer, Department of Visual Art); Sandra Klopper (Dean of the Humanities Faculty) and Amanda du Preez (Professor, Department of Visual Art) were present from UP. Other Johannesburg-based participants included:

- Monica Albonica. Principal Urban Designer, Albonico Sack Mzumara (ASM) Architects.
- Clive van den Berg. Artist, curator, co-director of the urban design company TRACE.
- Teresa Dirsuweit. Social Geographer, Department of Geography, WITS.
- Mark Gevisser. Writer, curator, co-director of the urban design company TRACE.
- Lizè Groenewald. Senior Lecturer, Department of Graphic Design, UJ.
- Stephen Hobbs. Artist, curator, director of The Trinity Session with Marcus Neustetter.
- Mocke Jansen van Veuren. Senior Lecturer, Department of Multi-Media, UJ.
- Bronwyn Law-Viljoen. Managing Editor: David Krut Publishing.
- Francis Legge. Associate Professor, Department of Civil Engineering Science, UJ.
- Alan Mabin. Professor and Head, School of Architecture and Planning, WITS.
- Fanuel Motsepe. Principal Architect, Fanuel Motsepe Architects.
- Marcus Neustetter. Artist, curator, director of The Trinity Session with Stephen Hobbs.
- Alex Oppen. Senior Lecturer, Department of Architecture, UJ.
- Hannah le Roux. Senior Lecturer, Department of Architecture, School of Architecture and Planning, WITS.
- Steven Sack. Director of Arts, Culture and Heritage, Johannesburg City Council.

The analytic framework of the NEP provided a starting point to conceptualise the key thematics of the colloquium. An aim of the NEP is to develop a critical, analytic and interdisciplinary encyclopaedia of the social and cultural sciences. (Featherstone 2007) Although encyclopaedias are ordering devices for handling large amounts of diffuse material and are particularly relevant at times of rapid social change, they are also the product of a time and place, and carry the imprint of a particular form of intellectual and academic authority. In the NEP project, the editors and contributors attempt to problematise existing disciplinary classifications by providing new spaces for counter-examples, dialogue and critical reflection. (Featherstone 2007) To this end, the NEP is being formed in dialogue with global scholars via colloquia,¹ of which the *Johannesburg and Megacities Phenomena* colloquium was one.

The editor's intentions are to produce prototype cluster volumes in a *Theory, Culture & Society* and ultimately to develop a digital version of the project. (Featherstone 2007) This will be realised as a website with hypertext links and extensive use of visual and aural material, which permits wider public access. Such a potential *encyclopedia* will explore the intellectual and institutional space between the encyclopaedia and the archive, in an attempt to further the potential of creative rethinking and refiguring of knowledge. (Featherstone 2007)

The first NEP volume, titled *Problematizing Global Knowledge*, (Bishop, Featherstone, Phillips & Venn 2006), features entries, citations, clusters and supplements on a wide range of topics gathered under the headings of metaconcepts, metanarratives and meta-sites and institutions, as way of rethinking the encyclopaedia form and content under the impact of globalisation and digitalisation. (Featherstone 2007) The second, upcoming volume is entitled *Megacities: Problematizing the Urban*, and focuses on global megacities. This volume will be of interest to those in disciplines across the arts, humanities, social sciences and physical sciences. It is structured in three main sections. The first section deals with the basic concerns of urban knowledge. Its three main entries – 'Megacity', 'City' and 'Global City' – provide a critical account of current knowledge about the city. These main sections will be supplemented in order to provide more detail and a sense of the problematic character of current knowledge. The second section gathers entries and supplements under the rubric of 'Knowledge, Narratives and Representations', while the third section uses the taxonomic terms 'Materials, Technologies and Socialities'. The final section gathers entries and supplements under the title 'Sites.' (Phillips 2008)

For the purposes of the Johannesburg colloquium, a working framework for the term 'megacity' was adopted from various NEP working documents, specifically the document entitled: 'Megacities and *The New Encyclopaedia Project: Towards Problematizing the Urban*' (Phillips 2008). These documents indicate the emergent and processual nature of NEP volumes, and thus were tabled in a site that allowed for engagement with the differences and unique issues which characterise Johannesburg, and using these, at times, as a springboard for further debate. Using the many challenges which megacities pose to the many and diverse attempts to understanding them, colloquium participants reflected on the challenges, benefits, participation, action and obstacles that a city such as Johannesburg, which encompasses megacity phenomena, poses to urban studies research. Thematically, Johannesburg was also discussed in terms of its post-colonial, Pan-African dynamics, which emphasise diversity, hybridity and transformatory processes of cultural exchange. Some papers focussed on Johannesburg's Pan-African, post-colonial identity and included characteristics of Johannesburg as a creative city; a city of refuge; an imaginary city; an inter-cultural city and a transforming city.

As Phillips (2008) states in the NEP concept document entitled 'Megacities: Problematizing the Urban',

An element that is essential to the way in which the NEP problematises standard theories and readings of the urban can be found in the modes of representation for specific urban formations. The NEP is concerned with epistemology and is thus interested in the inclusion of, as well as development of, forms of knowledge production, circulation and legitimisation that can help add to, alter, supplement or render problematic standard ways of thinking the urban ... We are therefore interested in pursuing means of evoking the conditions that prevail in ways that will open up urban studies, as well as all the disciplines that engage with urbanism.

In keeping with this ethos, a significant aspect of the colloquium was its focus on interdisciplinarity. Given both the RC's focus on practice-based research, as described in the introduction to this volume, and the NEP's commitment to interdisciplinary modes of representation, emphasis was placed on inclusion of papers by academics practicing across a range of fields in the humanities and urban studies, as well as visual artists, applied researchers and official city representatives. Given the editors' commitment to practice-based, visual research (the NEP incorporates visual culture, audio culture, new media culture and non-standard modes of evoking and engaging life in megacities) and the RC's focus on *Visual Identities in Art and Design*, an emphasis was placed on visual representations of the urban.



fig 1 Presentations at the colloquium

Endnotes

1. The *New Encyclopaedia Project* has been underway since 2001. Colloquia have been held at: Hitotsubashi University in June 2001, Cambridge University in July 2001, Nottingham Trent University in August 2002 and August 2003, Kobe University in October 2002, Tokyo University, Yonsei University, Korea University, Seoul National and Kyoto Bukkyo University in October 2003, as well as in Singapore in April 2004, December 2004 and March 2005, London in February 2005, Tokyo in July 2005.

For further information on the colloquium, including abstracts of all papers presented visit:
<http://www.uj.ac.za/JohannesburgandMegacityPhenomena/tabid/11963/Default.aspx>.

For further information on the Cities in Crisis: Photographs of the South African Urban Landscape exhibition visit:
www.citiesincrisis.co.za.

For further information on the journal *Theory, Culture and Society* visit:
<http://www.sagepub.net/tcs/>.

For information on the first volume of NEP Problematising Global Knowledge contact: nep@ntu.ac.uk and visit:
<http://www.sagepub.net/tcs/bin/main.aspx?page=encyclopedia>

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