

AvBR #0

180°

160°

140°

120°

100°

28 AVBR #0

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Edgeless City, met als docenten Duzan Doepel en Ronald Wall, is een onderzoeksatelier op de Academie van Bouwkunst over mondiale verstedelijking. Het gehele onderzoek naar de Edgeless City loopt over drie jaar waarin per jaar stedelijke netwerken op verschillende schaalniveaus worden onderzocht: de wereld, Europa en Nederland. Dit zijn de uitkomsten na twee ateliers; de wereld en Europa.

# 160° Edgeless City

140°

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## Introduction

*Urban theory proliferates whenever the boundaries of the city are in flux.*

A. Waterhouse – *Boundaries of the City*: - 1996

*We need to break the tyranny of spatial scale in our imagination, the assumption that the urban scale must, necessarily be the dominant scale of action and organization. This is the result of urban disciplines bolstering their own legitimacy in profoundly uncertain times. Instead we must recognize that real democratization must be pursued through the myriad connections in different networks within and beyond the city.*

J. Painter – *The A-territorial City* – 1999

Globalization can be defined as the emergence of a borderless world, whereby geographical distance has dramatically been changed, and where some even speak of 'the end of geography'. Globalization's origins may be traced back far in history, but appears to have reached a new stage in the post-Second World War era. Basically, globalization indicates a qualitative deepening of the internationalization process, which strengthens the functional and weakens the territorial dimension of development (Katz, 2000). Furthermore, globalization implies the growth of a world market, increasingly penetrating and dominating the 'national' economies, which in the process tend to lose some of their 'nation-ness'. This means dominance of the world market over structures of local production, as well as the increasing prevalence of Western-type consumerism. A realm where nation state developments are being replaced by, for instance, multinational corporations such as ING Barings, Shiseido, STMicroelectronics and Citigroups, where money is dealt almost beyond the control of any country's government or central bank (Doz, Santos, Williamson, 2002).

Related to the overall phenomenon of globalization, an extensive amount of global-city theory exists, by authors such as Peter Dicken, Manuel Castells, Stephen Graham, Nigel Thrift, Saskia Sassen, Peter Taylor, Hardt and Negri, John Friedmann and Arjun Appadurai. Many of these authors emphasize the impending influence of social, economic, technological forces on the spatial organization

of the world and its urban systems, and additionally underline the importance of a rethinking of the disciplines of geography, planning and architecture. Understanding the cross-scalar world system, it is said, will lead to more intelligent solutions and future development. Unfortunately, these authors say little about the actual spatial implications at the physical level, nor are any directions given on how to apply, or put their theories into practice. This appears to be that because today's emerging object of inquiry, 'the world system', is so immense, that an exploration and understanding of this overall structure is a precondition, before engaging with the details. Although this theoretical approach is important, it simultaneously becomes essential for us to reveal the physical coherences and effects of the global to local scales, and hereby discover new ways to intervene in the real world, as architects and planners.

Confronted by the cyclone of global spatial transformation and the blurring of control and certainty, the existing foundations of planning and architecture are becoming increasingly obsolete (Castells, 1998). Yet, the contemporary issues to be solved by architects and planners are more important than ever. The role of architects and planners has always been to translate local information into design, leading to suitable solutions for the given context. Now that local information becomes increasingly multi-dimensional, it becomes the task of architects to comprehend the overall spatial system, and as a consequence accommodate the requirements of 'globalizing cities and regions', and contribute to the strategic development of competitive urban identities. In effect, planning and design powers need to be extended beyond the conventional paradigm, whereby urban theory and practice can proliferate (Waterhouse, 1996). It seems today that architects and planners can no longer focus only on local problems, and when they do, must associate these with other scales. Additionally they should develop new organizations that extend their spatial reach through collaborative endeavors and thereby provide another mechanism for responding to the multitude of particularly external actors who shape their communities (Beauregard, 1995).

It is therefore within this context, that architects and planners have to reposition themselves, to restructure their