Experiential Design – Rethinking relations between people, objects and environments

- Paper / Proposal Title:
  You are the City-The art of catching urban change through storytelling

- Author(s) Name:
  Petra Kempf

- University or Company Affiliation:
  Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts, Washington University, Saint Louis, MO.

- Abstract (300 words):
  How does one experience and engage in a world that is always in a state of transformation, that is understood as a continuum with no beginnings or endings – a world where self and other are no longer separate from another? What concepts or tools could be applied to interpret such dynamics? The constantly changing character of these dynamic processes calls for an adaptable framing device through which dynamic spatial configurations may be played out or decoded.

  Inevitably, this dynamic moves the focus away from objects, such as buildings existing independently from human interactions (subject) and shifts the perception towards a continuous discourse between the object and the subject – a dialogue of temporal spatial configurations with no fixed beginnings or endings through which multiple agents and agencies participate.
Within this framework we are born in interaction out of patterns of interactions – a point of view wherein the object and subject are in a continuous dialogue with one another. As no impositions or intentions are projected, the act of interacting is from this point of view an inclusive process of world making in which self is as much imbedded in the other as the object is imbedded in the subject.

Developed as an open-ended framework, You Are the City, operates as an interactive mapping tool to observe, organize and participate in the dynamics of the urban construct in a non-hierarchical manner. Blurring the line between self and other, one interacts with You are the City exactly the same way one gets into any city: with no specific order or hierarchy. You can arrive by airplane, a main street or a secondary road, you may walk or use public transportation: the perception of the urban framework is always different, but the whole may be always the same.

Under the umbrella of a process-oriented discourse, the objective of this paper is to elaborate and display the empowerment of interaction through the lens of You are the City, an interactive and open ended mapping tool though which various actors participate in unfolding the urban construct.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Petra Kempf PhD. is an architect, urban designer and educator. Her background includes working with the public and private sector, such as the Department of City Planning in New York City, The Project for Public Space and Richard Meier and Partner. In addition to her current teaching appointment at Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts at Washington University in Saint Louis, she has taught at Columbia and Cornell University, Rhode Island School of Design as well as various other universities in the United States and Germany. She serves as a member on the editorial board for the “Journal of New Frontiers in Spatial Concepts,” and is the founder of urbantransits, a research initiative with focus on the transient nature of cities and the impact of this dynamic condition has on its architecture and culture. She has lectured in the United States, Latin America, Middle East, Asia, and Europe and her work has been exhibited in various galleries, institutions, and museums, both in the United States and Europe. She is the author of “You are the City - Observation, Organization and Transformation of Urban Settings" and "(K)ein Ort Nirgends, Der Transitraum im urbanen Netzwerk."