

This is not Detroit: Seven theses concernig the city of Bochum on the verge of a new era

First of all, I want to congratulate the team of the Schauspielhaus Bochum and Urbane Künste Ruhr on making this international event possible. With references to the theses of English scientist Colin Crouch on the “*The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*”, we need exactly those forms of transnational social networks between actors of different areas of culture, academia, and politics in order to break boundaries and bring alternatives to the economic and political power of a few giant global players that have emerged within the last three decades.

Thesis #1:

The Ruhr area, which was once the industrial pulse of Europe, has been practicing the political design of economic, social and cultural change for the last 50 years.

After the era of mining in the late 1950s and the era of steel in the late 1970s and 1980s, the Ruhr area and Bochum in particular has been facing constant economic change. Especially after the closing of the NOKIA plant in 2008 and the looming shutdown of the OPEL plant after 50 years as well as Outokumpo in 2014, the region is facing another period of very deep industrial structural change. The first phase of this structural transition, however, was marked by two exceptional features: a) as a result of the inclusion of works' councils and unions (Montanmitbestimmung), the mining and the steel industry both saw a socially compatible handling of the downsizing-process accompanied by qualifications programs and alternative placements for many of the workers – a socio-political process that remains still unique even in international comparison; b) Those alternative placements were firstly provided by the new GM/OPEL location in Bochum in the early 60s as well as by the first university of the Ruhr valley – the Ruhr University - and the Ruhr-Park shopping mall. These new structures of industry, science and service put the region on the verge of a new era of mobilization

Thesis #2:

Inspired by the culture of workers' co-determination and the experiences gained through the first structural transition in the region, GM/OPEL cannot radically eradicate the region with the closing of the plant in 2014.

The industrial relations in the U.S. are marked by an almost non-existing degree of institutionalization and juridification, meaning that there are almost no institutionalized forms of participation and the employees do not have a legal claim for interest-representation within their companies. Workers' representation only exist if a union managed to organize the employees beforehand. For that to happen, 51% of employees have to vote for the union. Unions in general are not institutionally implemented in the political system and therefore only exact a marginal influence. For example in the USA, during the bankrupts of 2009 GM shut down nearly 20 factories with the lost of 20 thousands of work places. Germany's so called coordinated economy with a dual model of industrial relations of works councils at the plant level and union representation at the sector level have allowed for a relatively high negotiation-power on behalf of the OPEL works' councils and the Industrial Metal Union. Workers' representation will actively participate in the negotiations on the future of the OPEL location in Bochum. So far they could reach employment guarantees and socially acceptable transition models over the last two decades. The actual "Perspective Bochum 2022" as a board of members of union representatives, GM-management, academia, and politics currently is working on a master plan of future city development. This serves as proof for this cooperative culture of conflict regulation originally developed in the Ruhr-valley by mine and steel workers during the last 100 years.

Thesis 3: The cooperative culture of conflict regulation of the Ruhr valley has been a crucial factor in keeping OPEL plant Bochum open beyond 2004 until 2014/2016.

The run-down process of the OPEL location in Bochum had already started in 1993 and culminated in the first threat of closure of the GM management in fall 2004. As a result works' councils and representatives of the IMU in cooperation with university members developed an alternative production and cooperative training plan. Through

innovative partnerships with other companies and the world of academia, they managed to keep parts of production and finally the system of dual apprenticeship (with more than 200 trainees) up and running until today. Those corporative networks that were mainly developed by works' councils and not by the management has made use of the in the ultimate decades founded regional scientific institutions.

Thesis #4: Simultaneously to the run-down process of the industrial production, the region saw a rising opportunity for universities, and other institutes for higher education to become now important actors of the second structural transition.

At the same time as Bochum saw industrial production declining, the region could also observe a new important trend – mainly being the most dense region of institutions for higher education in all over Europe, with five universities, 15 other tertiary institutions of applied science and more than 250.000 students combined. This trend has started as early as in the 1960s and is today more important than ever – not just on a level of education policies. Science now holds a grand opportunity for employment in the region as well. In Bochum, the Ruhr University and the other 6 colleges of applied science give jobs to more than 10.000 people and have become at least the largest employers in the city. The future of the city and the entire region are dependent upon the quality of science, education and qualification since these are the factors to successfully cope with the ongoing transition. The new structures will serve as the gateway for future city planning in order to reverse the region's marginalization process.

Thesis #5: The region's future jobs will be developed in cooperation with and as a spin-out of universities, colleges and institutions for higher education.

The Ruhr area's future employment possibilities will no longer be provided by industrial mass production of big companies. The future's potential can be found in universities and other tertiary institutions as well as companies that will invest in the area as a result of the density of higher education facilities and knowledge. The new Health Campus and facilities for medical engineering have already become an important cluster of the Bochum's health economy. This is especially important with regards to

the ongoing demographic change process. In the face of this development, however, it is important to improve local cooperation and a functional differentiation of economic focuses within the whole Ruhr area. Not competition, between the cities, only a joint effort of science, economy, politics and society can bring about the paradigmatic change.

Thesis #6: In future Bochum will develop into an internationally acknowledged center for education and system of dual apprenticeships.

In the face of the current crisis of industrial production we should not “whip up” a couple of hundred new jobs for those 3.500 Opel and 400 Outokumpo employees who will soon be affected by the shutdown of their factories. More importantly, we need to use this crisis to start the process of sustainable development which will in the medium term create a multitude of jobs on all levels of qualification. In the center we need to place the development of the educational branch and regional offers for education training especially with reference to dual apprenticeships and innovative Learning Factories for universities and companies. That way, the currently very successful export of the German dual apprenticeship in many regions of the world can be converted to a successful import into the region, where international companies send their employees to receive trainings

Thesis #7: The current severe crisis provides the opportunity for a paradigmatic change in the city’s development: the culture of productivity power (Grönemyer’s steel pulsation) is turned into productivity power of science, education and culture

After the end of mining, steel and actual the automobile industry, Bochum has undergone a deep transition resulting in a relatively stable economic and social structure. The fabric of that structure is made up by science, education and culture. For a very long time now of 50 years, Bochum has been so much more than only OPEL and it is everything but a “shrinking city”. Bochum is in the middle of a profound and lengthy passage of change. Short-termed solutions of industrial mass production or a speedy recruitment of companies is not to be expected. It is much more likely that we will see a paradigmatic change of the city that - in its future - will not have coal, steel or cars

at the end of the value chain but science, education and culture. Let's build the foundation for this future together in local and transnational networks in the meaning of Collin Croach. Let's do it! Good luck or as the miners used to say here in the Ruhr valley:

Glück auf!