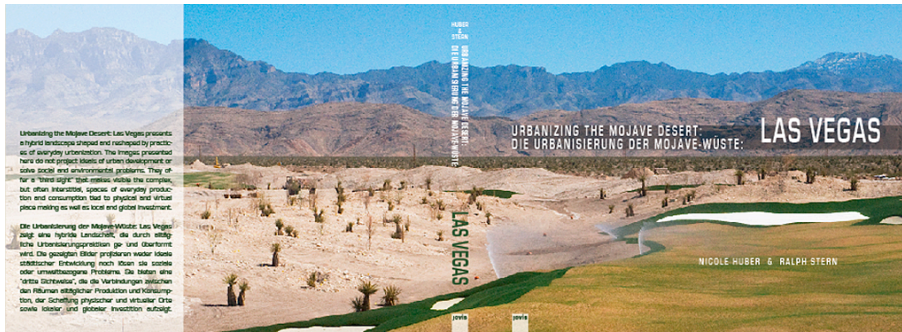


Fact Sheet for: *Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas* (book & exhibit)



Dust Jacket (back & front)



Cover (back & front)

Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas

Nicole Huber and Ralph Stern

English / German

192 Pages with 150 color Images

Hardcover with jacket

Dimensions: 21 x 14,8 broadsheet cm

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Fall 2008

In "Learning from Las Vegas" Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown focused on the glamour of the Las Vegas Strip, analyzing the city for its postmodernist qualities while ignoring the Mojave desert immediately beyond. Exploring the city at the same time as Venturi and Scott-Brown, the renowned architectural historian and critic Reyner Banham sidestepped the postmodernist lure of the Strip and focused his attention on what he saw as the strikingly modernist spaces of the Mojave desert.

Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas presents neither a modernist nor a postmodernist view of the city and its environment. The text and images do not project ideals of urban development, nor do they solve social and environmental problems. Rather, they present a hybrid landscape shaped and reshaped by practices of everyday urbanization for a city now characterized as the "first" city of the 21st century. They offer a "third site", exposing the complex but often interstitial spaces of everyday production and consumption tied to physical and virtual place making as well as contemporary local and global investment. This perspective reframes the seamless surfaces of draped neon lights, curtain walls, and landscape features layered onto the Mojave's stark topography, uncovering distinct strata that respatialize the social, cultural, and environmental implications of urbanizing a fierce yet fragile desert.

... transcend(s) the customary generalizations and statistics we deploy when attempting to comprehend rapid urban growth. It also transcends what Denise Scott-Brown termed the "semiotics" of life-style gratification in the most famous treatment of the city, thirty years ago. ... Stern and Huber do not preach; rather they have found a way in which the images capture the primordial drama and the text leads the viewer into the depth of the issue. This exhibition has the potential to make vivid what has so far eluded scholarship, development literature, architects' pronouncements: what is the true significance of the topography of mass-capitalism, how do we understand it, what is our stance with respect to it. This exhibition is about more than Las Vegas, and deserves every support.

Peter Carl
University Senior Lecturer
University of Cambridge

In its provocative presentation of the rapidly urbanizing outskirts of Las Vegas, *Sites of Transition: Urbanizing the Mojave Desert* can be viewed as a not-so-distant mirror to the low-density development that is happening on the ever-shifting, outward-moving edge of Phoenix. With their powerful images of planned communities and power grids arising in the Mojave Desert, Ralph Stern and Nicole Huber suggest that we know far more about how to manipulate the land than how to inhabit the desert in ways both artful and responsible.

Nancy Levinson
Director, Phoenix Urban Research Laboratory
College of Design, Arizona State University

The images in this project profoundly demonstrate what Las Vegas is as a place to live—a place of rather extreme economic and social stratification, sprawl, environmental exploitation, rapid development that is absent infrastructure, and fragmentation, yet also a place of energy and change as it morphs into a new but still undetermined urban form. I would think that the public, architects, educators, urban planners, and even developers, among other audiences, would be fascinated by the images in the project. Certainly anyone concerned with community sustainability would be concerned about the images.

Ronald W. Smith
Vice President for Research and Director of Sustainability Initiatives
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Huber and Stern's ... pictures of Las Vegas are emblematic of the ways a desert city, as a living if invasive organism, grows and changes, how it moves out from its unassuming center into the land of spectacle and a welter of ill-defined neighborhoods, and then marches out with ranks of 'brown roofs' forever swallowing up rural landscapes.

Lucy Lippard
Art Critic and Environmental Activist

... full of thought-provoking commentary, and the excellence and meaning of the photographs are similarly important and useful in developing a better understanding of Las Vegas ... For those who live in Las Vegas, or study it, or both, this book is not merely vital. It is vitally necessary.

Michael Green
Historian and co-Author of *Las Vegas: A Centennial History*

... Nicole Huber and Ralph Stern have given us ... a compact and thoughtful primer on the urbanization of the Las Vegas Valley, in particular on that very recent moment of frenetic over-development, right before the city fell off the cliff of the financial crisis. Huber and Stern understand that future analyses of Las Vegas need to move beyond comparisons with Los Angeles and other southwestern cities such as Phoenix. ... The authors rightly enlarge the discussion by citing the work of cultural critic Ackbar Abbas, who contends that globalization domesticates what was once exotic and in this way makes the strange seem strangely familiar.

William L. Fox

Director of the Center for Art + Environment

author of *In The Desert Of Desire: Las Vegas And The Culture Of Spectacle*

Places, Forum of Design for the Public Realm; posted 01.01.2010

... With their photographs and several maps, Huber/Stern present not only systematically selected aspects of this development dynamic (quarries, networks of streets) but, foremost, images of places simultaneously fascinating and alienating ... The book, highly attractive through its exact combination of text and images, makes visible a significant American case study of urban development, a development that in Germany is known only through schematic images. It offers points of interpretation that are far more reflective than what is usually presented in conjunction with Las Vegas: the City of the 21st Century (Rothman), All-American City (Gottdiener), democratic city (Venturi/Scott Brown). The book is innovative because it reverses the usual perspective ... from homogeneous visual expectations to the heterogeneity of places, from the inner city into the desert landscape, from an ideological determined success story to a realistic history of resources. Last but not least, a previously national point of view is expanded to a global perspective. (*from the German original*)

Clemens Zimmermann

Universität des Saarlandes

Die Alte Stadt, 02 / 2009

“Urbanizing” doesn’t present a new view of Las Vegas. Instead, it forces readers to reexamine the prosaic from a different perspective, to gain a new sense of awareness, if not alarm. As writer and art critic Dave Hickey predicts of readers who open the book: “They’re going to see what they’re used to seeing, but they’re not going to see what they’re used to looking at.” ... “It’s one of those books you need to take into account when you’re trying to understand the phenomenon of Las Vegas,” says Mark Hall-Patton of the Clark County Museum ... urbanists and architects Nicole Huber and Ralph Stern ... have observed how rapid—and rabid—development has obscured and erased cultural and physical history. A must-read for anyone who calls [Las Vegas] home or for those who wonder about off-Strip life.

Kristen Peterson

Las Vegas Sun, 11 / 2008 and 12 / 2008

Funding and Supporting Partners:

- Phoenix Urban Research Laboratory (PURL), Arizona State University (**Cooperating Partner**)
- The Nevada Arts Council / National Endowment for the Arts
- The United States Embassy Berlin
- Clark County Parks and Recreation (Nevada)
- Future Arts Research, Arizona State University
- Art Museum, Arizona State University
- School of Art, Arizona State University
- Department of Architecture, College of Architecture and Urban Design, University of Washington
- Johnston / Hastings Publication Support Award, (admin. through the University of Washington)
- The German Architecture Center (DAZ) Berlin
- Bund Deutscher Architekten (The Federation of German Architects)

Reviews have appeared as:

- **Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas (review by W. Fox)**
in: Places Journal / Design Observer, (January, 2010). On-line
- **Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas (review by M. Green)**
in: Popular Culture Review, (October, 2009): 79.
- **Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas (review by D. Dietsch)**
in: Architectural Record, (June, 2009).
- **Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas (review by C. Zimmermann)**
in: Die Alte Stadt, 2/2009 (German urban pub.), (Spring, 2009): 393-94.
- **Las Vegas Sun; (review by K. Peterson w/ comments by others)**
Developing the Desert: At What Cost to the Mojave? (11.28.08; 1 image): 7.
- **Las Vegas Sun; (review by K. Peterson)**
At Times Stormy, The Scene Continues to Evolve, (12.30.08).

Excerpts have appeared as:

- **Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas (excerpt + images throughout the issue)**
in: Zona, 5 "Ecological Aesthetics", distributed in conjunction with Abitare, (01.2010): 18-23; 4-41.
- **Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas (excerpt + additional images)**
in: Column 5, College of Built Environments, UW, (Spring, 2010).
- **Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas (excerpt)**
in: Bauwelt, 47/08 (German arch. pub.), (December, 2008): 18-25.
- **Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas (excerpt)**
in: Lab Report 2 of the Phoenix Urban Design Laboratory, (Fall, 2008): 61-75.
- **Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas (excerpt)**
in: Magyar Építőművészet (Hungarian Architecture), 4, (Fall, 2008): 42-45.
- **Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas (excerpt)**
in: Topos: The International Review of Landscape Architecture & Urban Design, 63, (2008): 72-77.
- **Sites of Resistance / Sights of Transition (excerpt / concept)**
in: afiles (Journal of the Architectural Association London), 52, (July, 2005): 24-33.

Further publications have appeared as:

- **Las Vegas: From Excess to Environment**
in: Wiederkehr der Landschaft (Academy of the Arts Berlin), (Berlin: Jovis, 2010).
- **The Mojave Project**
in: Places Journal. A Forum of Design for the Public Realm, (December, 2009).
- **Cover Image ("Avoid Foreclosure")**
in: Bauwelt, 47/08 (German arch. pub.), (December, 2008).
- **Der Fall Lake Las Vegas: 50 Prozent Rebatt auf den Traum**
in: Bauwelt, 47/08 (German arch. pub.), (December, 2008): 26-33.

Exhibition of Images from this Project have appeared as:

- **Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas**
Arch2 Gallery; University of Manitoba, March – 28. April, 2015.
- **Urbanizing the Mojave Desert: Las Vegas**
Clark County Heritage Museum; Clark County, Nevada, 22. April – 30. June 2010.
- **Wiederkehr der Landschaft (*The Return of Landscape*)**
Academy of the Arts Berlin, 13. March – 30. May 2010. (contributing images)
- **Sites of Transition: Urbanizing the Mojave Desert**
College of Design, Arizona State University, March – April 2008.
- **Sites of Transition: Urbanizing the Mojave Desert**
German Architectural Center Berlin (DAZ), 19. December 2007 – 07. February 2008.

Reports, images, and Citations have appeared in:

- **German Wikipedia Entry under "Urbanisierung"**
<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urbanisierung> (accessed on 02.07.2015).
- **University of Manitoba Today**
Interview with Jack Rach, (April, 20, 2015; 5 images).
- **Suburbanisierung und Reurbanisierung: Wohnungsbau und Immobilienkrise in den USA**
Tilman Harlander and Dirk Schubert (eds.), (Bernhard Greiner Press; May, 2009).
- **Metropolis Magazine**
Interview with Paul Makovsky, (July, 2009).
- **Las Vegas Sun (on-line edition); Kristen Peterson**
New Book Highlights Las Vegas Displacement, (Culture Blog, 06.23.08).
- **Architecture: High Stakes / Revisiting Las Vegas, by Lyle Rexer**
in: DAMn: Design, Art, and Architecture Magazine, 15, (March 2008): 38-43.
- **Finanzblog (on-line magazine); Jörg Brause**
Las Vegas–Nüchtern und Trostlos, (12.30.07, ca. 1100 words, 4 images)
- **Telepolis (on-line magazine); Jörg Brause**
Im Hinterhaus des Spielerparadieses, (12.30.07, ca. 1250 words, 8 images)
- **Baunetzwoche (on-line magazine)**
Las Vegas – Die Kehrseite, (vol. 59, Special, 16 images): 2-9.

Reports, images, and Citations have appeared in:

- **Lab Report of the Phoenix Urban Design Laboratory (PURL)**
Sites of Transition: Urbanizing the Mojave (ASU College of Design, 2007; 5 images): 62-65.
- **Las Vegas Sun; Kristen Peterson**
"Vegas' Obsession with Growth Captured for others to See" (04.05.07; 4 images): 7.

Interviews (live) have appeared in:

- **Los Angeles versus Las Vegas**
Podium Discussion with Bill Fox and Libby Lumpkin, Zócalo Public Square, (April, 2009)
- **KNPR Las Vegas; Nevada Public Radio**
Interview with Dave Berns; "The State of Nevada", (12.15.08; ca. 30 minutes).

Public Presentations related to this project

Nicole Huber:

- **Migrating Visions: "The Image of the City" and the Filmic Imaginary**
37th Annual Meeting of the Urban Affairs Association, 2007
- **Driving Visions: Road Movies and the Construction of the Urban Landscape (1960-1964)**
8th International Conference of the European Association of Urban Historians, 2006
- **Sites of Entertainment: Spectacle, Sprawl and Las Vegas**
University of Washington; Contemporary Built Environment (PhD Seminar), 2005

Ralph Stern:

- **Landscape and Water Scarcity in the American West**
Keynote Address to the Manitoba Association of Landscape Architects (MALA), (March, 2011)
- **Las Vegas and the Dynamics of Crisis: Environmental and Economic Perspectives**
States of Emergency Conference, Free University Berlin, (June, 2010)
- **Urbanization in an Extreme Environment: Las Vegas**
Urban Research Seminar, Bauhaus Universität Weimar, (June, 2010)
- **Las Vegas and Cinema: Fantasy, Fear, and Forgetting in the Mojave Desert**
Architecture after Las Vegas, Yale University, (January, 2010)
- **The Mojave Project: Urbanization, Economics, and Water in the Mojave Desert**
Urban Studies Program, Fordham University, (September, 2009)
- **The Mojave Project: Urbanization, Economics, and Water in the Mojave Desert**
Lehrstuhl für Städtebau und Entwerfen, Karlsruhe Universität, (July, 2009)
- **"Pop-Off": Denise Scott Brown and British Pop in the American West**
Keynote Speaker; Far West Popular Culture and American Culture Association, 2007
- **Imaging Las Vegas: From 'Miss Atomic Bomb' to the 'Cosmopolitan'**
Technical University of Budapest in conjunction w/ the Studio Metropolitana, 2007
- **Las Vegas and the »Venturi« Effect: Urbanism through a Rearview Mirror**
8th International Conference of the European Association of Urban Historians, 2006
- **Mega-Projects and Micro-Histories: Las Vegas**
Bauhaus Universität Weimar – International Program w/ Japan & Korea, 2006

Public Presentations related to this project

Nicole Huber and Ralph Stern:

- **Las Vegas: From Excess to Environment**
Akademie der Künste Berlin (May, 2010)
- **The Mojave Project: Urban Economics and Water Wars**
School of the Art Institute of Chicago (April, 2010)
- **Urban Laboratories from Weimar to the American West**
Future City—Future Bauhaus: The City as Transdisciplinary Research (November, 2009)
- **Gambling on Water: Italian Landscapes in the Mojave Desert**
Akademie der Künste Berlin, (June, 2009)
- **Foreclosing Las Vegas: Physical Erasure and Fiscal Evisceration**
John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, FU Berlin, (June, 2009)
- **Las Vegas 50% Off: Cash-Outs, Closeouts, and Contamination in the Mojave Desert**
Cities in Crisis Conference, Center for Metropolitan Studies, TU Berlin, (June, 2009)
- **Sites of Transition: From Babylon to the Emerald City**
Critical Practices in a Globalizing World, College of Built Environments, UW, (May, 2009)
- **Learning from the Mojave Desert: From Excess to Environment**
PhD Colloquium, College of Built Environments, UW, (March, 2009)
- **Las Vegas 50% Off: Tracing an Environmental Closeout Sale**
History & Theory Colloquium, College of Built Environments, UW, (January, 2009)
- **Sites of Transition: Urbanizing the Mojave Desert**
Featured Speakers in conjunction w/ exhibit; ASU Art Museum, (April, 2008)