

# Title: Driving on the Left: Sorkin's View of the Street, the City and architecture

Michael Sorkin

Interviewer / author – Graham Cairns  
Research – Rachel Isaac-Menard

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## Abstract:

Sardonic, cutting, insightful, provocative: Michael Sorkin is one of today's most radical architectural commentators with a staunch leaning to the political left and a literary bent for framing painful truths in ironic, and sometimes hilarious, verse. However, he should not be dismissed as a radical, isolated, or lone and unhindered voice however. He is a Distinguished Professor of Architecture and Director of the Graduate Program in Urban Design at the City College of New York, and he has been Professor of Urbanism and Director of the Institute of Urbanism at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. In addition, he has taught at architecture schools across the world, including the Architectural Association, Columbia, Yale, Harvard and Cornell. Sorkin runs his own design studio and research institute and has been a contributing editor of the *Architectural Record*. He was the architecture critic of the *Village Voice* for ten years and has published innumerable articles and essays.

A list of some of his books includes: *Twenty Minutes in Manhattan*, *Variations on a Theme Park*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *The Next Jerusalem*, *Indefensible Space*, and a long list of other *etc.*s and *alsos*....In this interview-article, he offers his opinion on a range of issues, including the environmental threats to contemporary America, architectural symbolism and paranoia, the importance of political action on the streets of the modern city, and the role of the architecture critic in the complex tapestry of contemporary culture. With regard the position of the modern critic, he begins by responding to a question regarding the relevance of Noam Chomsky's description of the media as a form of propaganda and the contemporary journalist as functioning through the structure of what Chomsky defines as "filters," or constraints and biases that dictate what gets written and published in the press.

# Interview Article

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## Definition:

Architecture\_MPS has developed a new genre of academic writing: the ‘interview article’. It is a variation on the interview format that deepens the scholarly potential of that particular genre. Extensive notation and footnotes are interwoven within the text to offer supplemental information and alternative argumentation.

## Authors:

Interview-articles are authored by the Editor of Architecture\_MPS, Graham Cairns, in conjunction with the guest authors. Research is conducted by Rachel Isaac-Menard. Previous guest authors include: Kenneth Frampton, Daniel Libeskind, Michael Sorkin, Noam Chomsky and Alberto Pérez-Gómez.

## Open Access Policy:

This series of interview-articles was initiated by Architecture\_MPS in 2012. They will be collated into a full collection intended for publication in a self-contained volume in 2015/16. For this reason they fall outside the standard Architecture\_MPS open-access policy but will be available shortly.