

URBANITY
- TWENTY
YEARS
LATER

-
PROJECTS FOR
CENTRAL EUROPEAN
CAPITALS

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HAS SOMEONE BEEN TALKING ABOUT CENTRAL EUROPE AGAIN?

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The Urbanity Project is a several-year project initiated by MOBA platform and organised by the Centre for Central European Architecture. It is a research project which is rediscovering Central European urban values and seeks a new form for their integration into a broader European and world context. The tool for this process comes in various forms of inter-field cooperation where the topic of city and urbanity is interpreted, analysed, critically assessed and developed by a number of participants, ranging from non-government organisations and artists, architects and architecture students to city mayors, administrators and urban planners of Central European capital cities.

Despite the extensive number of players involved, the aim of the project is not to duplicate the work of urban planners, but to refine it in the long-term. By asking the question of how our city will look in twenty or fifty years we are opening a broader dialogue and trying to remove the ad hoc methods of the current governance of cities. By selecting capital cities in which the region's political and

economic power is concentrated, we can follow cities which are easy to identify even outside the Central European space. The mechanisms which work in these cities are universal and can be monitored anywhere in the democratic world. Although the project is regional, "Urbanity - Twenty Years Later" is aiming to find answers for the future of our cities as such, regardless of their location.

Capital cities in the democratic world are not directly controlled, but are influenced by a concentration of diverse interests. Unlike other urban planners, Urbanity has the advantage that it is not something commissioned by someone and therefore does not follow any particular political or economic interest, but at a theoretical and practical level it attempts to communicate the idea of a better city. The principal communication channel of the project is architecture. We are not searching for new urbanism, but for a discipline which, in an architectural form, will assess the existing city and discover its further possibilities and visions.

Urbanism in Central Europe has been dormant for forty years, incessantly repeating the principles of Modernism. Paradoxically this dormancy protected the city centres and it would appear that after 1989 we will continue from where Modernism left off and will avoid the mistakes made by the more developed countries in urban planning. Today, when we begin to realise the potential which our cities had after the socialist conservation, we regret the mistakes

of urbanism after revolution. Unfortunately, in the last twenty years urbanism has disengaged itself from visions and passed over its decision-making to the all-powerful market. The project is looking for the answer to the question of how to restore the aesthetic and moral quality to the discipline which designs space.

UNDERSTANDING

The publication we present here shows a path of the cooperation of seven universities from Central European capital cities. Thanks to the willingness of the students and tutors, these universities have become part of two-year research activities by which we are jointly defining and creating Central Europe twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The first question by many students asking why we are here and if we are really part of Central Europe opened up room to mutual recognition and understanding. The search of an answer to the question of what is Central European space aroused a series of discussions. A sincere understanding of their surroundings and stereotypes by which everyone from the environment lives became a starting point for future cooperation. Two workshops were jointly organised in Prague, further work took place in individual studios. An informal form of communication by email and facebook then became a real space where ideas appeared, visits were organised to other cities and discussions developed about the senselessness or essence of the project "Urbanity - Twenty Years Later".

The publication does not offer the range of procedures dealing with the problems of cities, but projects the thoughts of a generation of upcoming architects about the city and its potential. At the same time it offers a comparison of various educational approaches which led to projects from paper architecture to the architecture of deeds.