Shared Cities: mapping the post-communist status quo

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Editorial

Editor-in-chief **MARTA ŻAKOWSKA**

When I was a little girl, in the early 90s, our neighbours used to meet on the lawn in front of our 70s apartment block to watch TV together. The TV set was brought, and they sat on the grass, amid several tangled connection cords.

When I was 20, I rented a small studio apartment in the Warsaw city centre on my own. It was again in an apartment block – this one built in the late 60s. Although on entering adulthood I had vowed to myself that I would never live in an apartment block again – I had spent the past 20 years living with my family in one and considered them soulless and ugly – my new building had a huge common space on the ground floor decorated with a lot of flowers, and a little kiosk where you could dash for the forgotten milk for your morning coffee and a quick chat with your neighbours doing the same, all of us in our pajamas. And while the place was still ugly, suddenly it had a soul.

Warsaw apartment blocks and bottom-up *sharing culture* are big parts of my childhood memories. The late 80s and then the early 90s, the first years of Warsaw after the transformation, offered us a lot of opportunities for sharing. Most of us didn't have a lot after the system change, but the informal, communal networks that had for years sustained Polish communities continued to exist, and so we shared among family members, friends and neighbours whatever we had to spare.

As always, it is our past that shapes our present – and the future. Enjoy the issue!

Only twenty years later the world has changed, and people seem to have changed with it. The sense of community is no longer a driving force in urban life, and global and local discussions now focus on sharing as a *new* urban culture needed to help us in dealing with diminishing resources, air pollution and economic crisis. Cities around the world debate the value and mechanisms of *sharing* both in makro and micro-scale. While sharing is one of our first taste of life, and belonging to a group or community is a major psychological need (Abraham Maslow called it one of the five major sources of human motivation), suddenly we find that we need to be reminded of the benefits of natural behaviour of collective living. Thus, the emergence of the current urban trend of *sharing*.

While the post-socialist cities like Warsaw have different social history than, say, Seul, Amsterdam or New York, our common human need for *sharing* leads to the spontaneously created everyday life, uniting people in the process. This is why we decided to dedicate the first issue of the international edition of *Magazyn Miasta / Cities Magazine* to the subject of *sharing*. How does this concept, and the huge system that accompanies it, affect our everyday life? How does the past shape our current culture of *sharing*? Thanks to Shared Cities: Creative Momentum project we have mapped the social status quo of sharing in post-socialist world, and present different the current related projects that are shaping the new urban wave and our urban future in post-communist Europe.

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The Return of Sharing Cities

MAGDALENA KUBECKA

Understanding the notion of owner-ship is crucial when trying to grasp the specific nature of sharing in Central-Eastern European cities

It's one of the earliest lessons we are all taught, it guides many of our moral consciences throughout our lives, and although the practise of sharing is as old as the hills, it cannot be said to have a uniform configuration. It has been part of the natural behaviour of collective living where inhabitants have engaged in the practice both in formal and informal ways, on purpose and by accident. While in some regions sharing is essential and happens automatically, in others it is a trend that needs to be constantly promoted and practices maintained. Because of their complexity, density and human diversity, cities are playing a particularly important role in the development of the sharing economy because they depend so heavily on the communal distribution of space, goods, services and ideas. Today, cities are facing such problems as a lack of basic resources and an increase of economic inequality on the one hand, and the overflow of garbage and general waste on the other. Therefore, the idea of sharing has become crucial to meet these challenges.

The popularity of initiatives focused on implementing different ways of sharing is growing. Some cities such as Amsterdam, Seoul and London have introduced action plans to popularize the practice. Others, such as Portland, Barcelona and Melbourne are supporting more bottom-up initiatives based on the building of efficient policies.

Above all, communication technologies have allowed sharing to work on much larger scales than previously possible. Through online platforms, you can share anything from household items to your car not only with your neighbours but also with someone living further

afield in the city or even elsewhere in the world. People are engaged with this philosophy because they are assuming that there are others willing to share and pay it back. Hence, we see the growth of people offering their space in their homes or in their cars (e.g. the Polish based BlaBlaCar, a long-distance carpooling service connecting drivers with empty seats to people travelling in the same direction).

People are also sharing their time, skills and passions as can be observed on Meetup which lets people join and create groups of people who share your interests. There doesn't seem to be an end in sight as people can now share goods like on a Dutch based website Peerby which is enabling the renting and borrowing of "things" from others living nearby, or one can even share food, for example, via MealSharing which allows people to try home cooked meals in over 450 cities worldwide for a gift or small amount of money.

This practise is affecting the global as well as local economies because it is transforming the traditional provider and recipient model for the resource exchange circle. So-called collaborative consumption has become a reality. It is based on a peer-to-peer model of access to goods and services, and there are many enterprises that have built their business success on that same model such as Uber and Airbnb. However, one could argue that it undermines the idea of sharing by adding an interme-diary – a firm serving as a platform for the transactions. Allowing for this criticism, it still confirms the significance of sharing, and no longer can this be written off as a niche phenomenon. This important trend has been spreading across the world over the last few decades, and that includes a number of cities in Central-Eastern Europe (CEE).

Spaces for co-working, community gardens, shared allotments, garage sales, flea markets, cooper-atives, city bikes and shared meals with neighbours all point to the fact that not only is this burgeoning economy a reality in CEE, but it's a natural fit. There is a green colony of small rural wooden houses in Warsaw called Open Jazdów, which exemplifies the nature of this movement. It is a community managed area shared by different groups and institutions such as NGOs, music groups and urban gardeners. So too, there is Leila in Berlin, a shop where residents can borrow anything from electric drills to wine glasses. There is Magistrála road, a highway in the middle of Prague that is partly transformed into friendly space of fun, relaxation and a meeting spot where cars, pedestrians, cyclists and public transport can coexist.

We can take part in this global movement even if our perspectives and traditions are different. Our history with communism and our experience witnessing the transformation to a free market economy has influenced our approach to sharing. This happened not only by the weakening of social capital and level of trust in our societies, but also by (re-)shaping our relationship and understanding with possession. Obviously, the way we share is strictly connected to the how we conceive ownership; for instance, before sharing something, people must be sure they own it. Only then will they be ready to distribute it. Understanding the notion of ownership is crucial when trying to grasp the specific nature of sharing in Central-Eastern European cities.

COMMON MEANS NO ONE'S

In his seminal 1976 work, *To have or to Be?*, Erich Fromm criticized Western society for being extremely materialistic and preferring "having" to "being". By that time, private property had been stigmatised in the Eastern Bloc for more than three decades. Yet, the communist regime had not abolished private property entirely; it made it practically inaccessible and thus heavily desired. State property was considered the highest ideal for which other forms of ownership stood in direct opposition, and so the possibility of purchasing or selling private property was drastically limited.

Theoretically, communism was based on the idea that all property should be common and people should share most of the things they have with whomever in need, as the propaganda from this period proves. The reality of this practice was born out of economic necessity as access to basic goods such as flats but also food and even toilet paper was restricted. Food stamps were used in some periods of the communist era for rationing products and controlling prices. So, to make ends meet in everyday life, inhabitants had to exchange, reuse, transform and share things with other members of the community. There was often one television set for the block of flats so neighbours were meeting to watch a football match together. There were usually only a few cars for the quarter so people were borrowing them for special occasions or in cases of emergency. But the truth is that while practising different models of sharing, people dreamt of their own washing machine, television or car. What is more, sharing was happening mainly between people who knew each other - family members, neighbours or friends. Strangers – anyone of the general unknown – were perceived as competitors in getting access to the limited goods on offer.

Today, we can still see the consequences of this communist perception of common property. As a rule, public property was considered to be property of the state, not of the society or the people; "state" meant "ownerless". Public spaces in cities, as an example, were strongly dominated by the authorities. It was a place where people were expected to demonstrate their support towards the government. This was exemplified on May Day parades held in every town and city of the Eastern Bloc; they usually included a military display and the presence of party leaders being greeted by applauding crowds. It was a space of control and had nothing to do with the feeling of freedom or safety. However it might have been attached to communism, this idea did not automatically begin to change after the turn towards democracy; in fact, this concept of commonality still exists in the cities of our region. Discovering how and why it has survived the period of transformation elucidates many fundamental tenets of the Central European perspective.

FULFILLING DREAMS

When considering a broad-stroke comparison to communism, the free-market oriented economies found individual property to be morally superior to common property. This was reflected in the way individual property was granted strong legal protection. The post-communist

property transformation was based on a battle for the primacy of the private over the public and common. It was easily adapted in Central-Eastern European cities where the association with common property had been perceived with disdain.

The notion of ownership was central in this time. The fact that people were gaining their status on the basis of possession of goods caused a permanent compulsion to buy new things. And there were more and more things that people could afford; essentially, the dreams of everyman came true. Why should I share a car or TV with my neighbours when I am finally able to have my own? Owning was an end in itself for many people. "I am what I have" became the existential statement defining many in Central Europe and developed into the basis for success during the transformation in some countries of the former Eastern Bloc. The free market was the definitive sign that something new had happened, and this possibility of ownership was just the change the societies were waiting for. We could finally stop sharing and reusing. Wasn't this freedom? For many, it felt like it was.

Yet this shift took a toll on the cities. The dream of owning a piece of land and the aspirations of having a better standard of life resulted in dramatic (sub)urban sprawl. For instance, retail space in Sofia increased 250% between 1990 and 1995. In the same period, Budapest added 500,000 square metres of new retail space.

In a similar way, individual safety and comfort became a perceived opposition to the welfare of the society[1]. Thus, gated communities sprang up in many cities of the former Soviet Bloc. For example, the research from 2008 identified 183 gated communities in Budapest alone, with a total of 31.200 people residing therein[2]. But perhaps this isn't too surprising, the focus on consumption had turned cities' spaces into commercial properties, and these were organised mainly by private, individual interests.

ACCESS OVER POSSESSION

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and after the first years of economic transition, inhabitants of Central Eastern Europe got to know the taste of capitalism. Thanks to reforms, economic growth spread across the region and most of the countries witnessed the emergence of a middle class, which was inevitably accompanied by the rise of social stratification and wealth inequalities. For many people the necessity of sharing with each other again became clear. People had still good habits of sharing and were perfectly used to coordinating it with their everyday life. The difference, of course, is that sharing became more and more popular among those who were not forced to do it. Many millennials – those roughly born in the early-1980s to mid-1990s – are enthusiastic about the idea of sharing. For some, it is a practical solution as it is easier to use things temporarily without having to find space and store them in their apartments. For others, this is an ideological choice to consume in different ways, trying to take into consideration the limited resources of the planet.

Meanwhile, this still youthful generation has turned back to ideas, well-known by their parents, which were abandoned in the 90s. People grow vegetables together with their neighbours and take care of parcel

gardens. They are proud of eating homemade food and sharing meals with friends and strangers during picnics. Neighbours organize swap meets to exchange personal items and have installed clothing racks in public spaces so those in need can make use of what is available. These kinds of practices have begun to flourish in Central Eastern European cities, but it is still far from the mainstream.

Indeed, the shift in consumer values from ownership to access is very difficult. How we can truly believe that we don't have to own things to build our position in society when we had been assured that this was the "modern" barometer of success for such a long time? At very least, we are asking some important questions such as: In what cases can we share things without losing them? Would it be possible to share something when we do not possess it? How can we keep our traditional forms of sharing in our cities today?

RETHINKING SHARING

What we need to do now is reinvent what sharing is and means to our cities. We can do this through changing the idea of ownership. We need to own and co-own rather than possess, and, most importantly, we need to understand the difference between these notions. To possess is to have something; to own is to have owner-ship of something. For instance, you might own a bike and share it with your neighbour. When your neighbour is riding this bike, you still own it but you do not currently possess it. Furthermore, you can share things you do not own such as public spaces, green areas and the air. There is a great concept we should learn to attach with and refresh the idea of sharing: "enjoyment". In English, it means not simply a pleasure but rather the possession, use or occupancy of anything with satisfaction or pleasure. It is not a state of full control over something. Presumably this kind of enthusiastic approach could be a better starting point for sharing in societies of Central Eastern Europe. In essence, we really know how to share, our habits of sharing in our communities is well-established. What we need to do now is to learn its importance and value. Looking more deeply into our traditions and their unique examples of sharing will be crucial in making the practice more wide-spread. This is the reason for us to focus in this magazine's issue on the origins and different aspects of sharing in our region. We shouldn't wait to slowly build up sharing in cities or for "better times" because the creative momentum necessary for change is here today.

1   S. Schmidt, S. Fina, S. Siedentop, *Post-socialist Sprawl: A Cross-Country Comparison, European Planning Studies* 23(7):1-26, December 2014.

2   A. Rochovska, M. Miláčková, *Gated Communities: A New Form of Residential Areas in a Post-Socialist City,* 2012, available: www.researchgate.net.

FAMILY ALBUM

Stories collected by **KATARZYNA DORDA**

When asked what changed and when the "sharing" ended, he replies that the times have changed...

name

MATTHIAS EINHOFF

age: **45**

city: **Berlin**, **Germany**

For more than a decade, my band was sharing its rehearsal room with four other bands. We shared the cost of rent and used the limited amount of space for loud music in a very resourceful way. Besides saving a lot of money, sharing the space created social bonds with the other band members: playing together, borrowing instruments from one another, or just exchanging knowledge about the latest music or technology.

Of course, there was also conflict about rehearsal times and general tidiness (the empty beer bottle problem) and other minor things... but the benefit of sharing created a strong bond! We played together, exchanged knowledge and music. And sometimes even band-members.

MICHAELA JELÍNKOVÁ

Back in the 60s and 70s, we were a "chalupářský národ" – a cotter's nation. You couldn't really travel far away, so on Friday afternoons the whole of Prague was leaving the city for the countryside. Nearly everyone had a "chata" – a hut in the woods, and nearly everyone had built it by themselves. But not a lot of tools were available and the ones that were – were extremely expensive. That is why it was very common to rent them from somewhere in the center of the city, or from a neighbour, and take it with you for some weekend DIY.

I remember there was this one big rental place in Palác Metro in Národní třída, where I have always rented ice skates. Renting sport equipment was very common as well. People just didn't have much then, they knew how to share things, they had to…

MILA BAKIĆ

age: **36**

city: **Belgrade**, **Serbia**

My father Misha, likes to tell the story of how, during the fifties, sixties and seventies of the last century, the building in which he was born had common rooms in the basement. It was usually used for storing scouting and sports equipment for all the interested children from the neighborhood. It was well known who was responsible for keeping and maintaining the premises.

Although there were some rules, Misha says that a lot was done on the basis of trust. In the beginning, there was only basic equipment, but over the years, the neighborhood had managed to procure field beds, a mobile kitchen, better tents etc.

When asked what changed and when the "sharing" ended, he replies that the times have changed...

name

MILENKOVIĆ

age: **88**

city: **Belgrade, Serbia**

The laundry room of our building was in use until 1969, and the laundry was only done during scheduled times. Every family had a key and had to previously schedule the time when they would use the basement laundry room. However, more and more people began to buy personal washing machines.

When the head janitor died, a new janitor competition was never launched. And I think we still do not know what happened to all those machines.

NADA DOJČINOVIĆ

We moved to Block 70 in Novi Beograd back in 1975. "The Sun Neighborhood", as it was called, was under construction. The building contained common rooms where they held party meetings and later meetings of the building committee. At one point, after the privatization of the 1990s, during the transition, we, the building committee, started renting the common areas – today, a shop is there.

Today, our building is a self-sustainable system. The building has a regular flow of income from the money that the home committee earns by renting the common space to the store.

The most important thing is that the maintenance of the building no longer depends on the goodwill of individuals – whether light bulbs will be replaced on the 5th floor... Now all the light bulbs work!

name

ANNA HUSAR

age: **60**

city: **Ustroń, Poland**

In the late 1970s, I spent over two years hitchhiking. There was not much choice back then. If I wanted to travel from my home town of Olkusz to the university in Cracow, I had to thumb a ride. There were barely any buses going, there was no pre-sale and the lines for the tickets were way too long – it was impossible to get anywhere!

But in Poland, if you had the "hitchhiker's book" – that was your pass to a free ride. All you had to do was to wave that booklet at a driver and you could get a ride in just couple of minutes. It was a great lure – the drivers were getting special coupons with the marked number of miles on it, and with the right amount, you could even win a car in a raffle.

Although the authorities could monitor our trips, we loved the "hitchhiker's book" a lot. With a group of friends, we spent a whole summer traveling through Poland. Today I would be too scared to do this, but back then, those were completely different times…

MÁTÉ HORVÁTH

age: **32**

city: **Budapest**, **Hungary**

When I finished elementary

school in the 90s, my life and that of my friends took very different directions. What remained the same was our elementary school, and especially its backyard. For many years after graduation, we used to return to the backyard of the school. "Breaking in" the school was a real thrill for me and my partners in crime. We met there almost every weekend.

The backyard was the space we shared, a space of good memories and bonding, a place for playing football, exchanging basketball cards, discussing the latest episodes of an anime series or just fooling around. And, it was in a time when we, otherwise, had all gone off in different directions, it truly was a connection us, a connection that lasted for a long time. Some of us are still good friends.

OURS, NOT THEIRS:
An interview with Don Kalb

BY JĘDRZEJ BURSZTA

While sharing may never have developed in human societies without the assistance of government, the varying form of governance determined how we viewed the practice and our communities

Jędrzej Burszta (JB): Is the concept of sharing universal for human societies?

Don Kalb (DK): There are many anthropologists who make basic distinctions between Western market societies and societies based on sharing rather than individualist acquisition. I don't believe in this simple polarisation of human societies. Societies have always been – at least for the last 5000 years – organised on a large-scale basis. Market exchanges are basically the norm of human history. Even contacts in large-scale exchanges of capitalist societies are still grounded in small-scale gifts and the redistribution of goods. Basically, it's politics that, over time, has produced particular capacities for sharing, for making communities. There's nothing in human kind as such, or in economics, that produces sharing however rational that sharing might be.

In European history, socialism was a political ideology where sharing was embedded as one of the main economic principles, in a different way that it is in capitalism. Is there a difference how sharing is perceived in these two systems?

I am not sure whether we can make such an easy distinction between capitalism and socialism. Of course, in a basic sense, socialism creates a much more sharing-oriented society than capitalism. But there are different capitalisms – compare Greece, Portugal, or Latin American countries. I reject those generalisations, that sort of binary thinking as reality is much more complicated.

Let's talk about public space. I had the chance to observe socialist societies in Eastern Europe from the mid to late 1970s, arguably at the high point of socialism.

Paradoxically, public space was shared in a much less hierarchical way than in Western Europe, even though Western Europe was much less hierarchal in those days than today. In the countries I visited, people would be sitting and hanging out in groups basically everywhere in cities. Public space was a shared space – its practical functions were encroached on by different forms of horizontal sociality. It was striking for me, and not something you would see anywhere in Western European cities. At the same time, I don't think it was a specificity of socialism as such, since you had a similar sort of sharing of public space and horizontalisation of public space for instance in the Mediterranean region or countries of the global South.

Where does this difference in sharing public space come from?

Two things are essential here. This is what Lech Wałęsa eloquently called the fish soup versus the aquarium. You can make fish soup when you have an aquarium, but what can you do with an aquarium once you have fish soup? What did he mean with this? In this case, you have a society – for the sake of the argument let us call it a populist society. This is not a liberal society where you have a lot of different changing functions, specific goals for specific functions that must be followed by the people. In socialism neither people nor the state believed in that, and the economy didn't work like that. Factories were overpopulated, apartments were overpopulated, cities were overpopulated. I'm using these metaphors to give you a sense of how I saw this as a Western person. You see, a lot of it is still a fact in Eastern Europe, even now, in a completely different political and economic situation.

That goes together:
property and propriety
are two words that hang
– in history and in practice
– very closely together.

For example, the way in which people in Eastern Europe are able to share personal space with each other is not something that West European middle-class people realise or can do, let alone in the United States. Being very close together, having no formal rules of how you regulate interaction among people, in general being physically closer to each other and sharing space is rather a characteristic of post-communist societies. But again – whether it is a heritage of communism, or whether it is a result of poverty from the bourgeois perspective – I cannot really judge that. I tend to think it is the latter because when you go to Greece, Portugal or anywhere in the global South, people are also very close together, and they are also more open to each other socially.

When thinking about this closeness in space the first thing that comes to mind are communities in blocks of flats that were being built during communism. These were really small spaces where being neighbours meant living very close to each other.

Exactly. That was sharing in practice – a very powerful experience for everybody. The same was happening in factories. Under communism, factories were a quasi-public space, which meant that a lot of people who didn't even work there could simply walk into a factory and talk to people. There were no guards to tell them not to do that. In communism – both in the Polish and Hungarian variants, perhaps even more so in Yugoslavia – you had a lot of informal hierarchies in these groups of workers, informal respect for particular sets of skills. It was not part of the rule-guided, bureaucratic, capitalist system, and thus, in that sense, there was always a lot of sharing: of space, of sociality, being physically quite close to each other, participating in collective events and happenings.

I was travelling by car in 1984 from East Berlin all the way to Budapest through Poland and Slovakia. As it happened, my car broke down in every country I visited, which ended up being a fantastic experiment! It gave me a chance to visit nearby houses and ask people for help. Everybody knew everybody, everybody knew who was the person that should be contacted to solve this or that problem. These people would take the car immediately from me, fix it and they wouldn't ask money for that. Of course, I paid them, but they wouldn't really push for being paid. It felt like for them that was a part of the normal act of sharing: something is wrong with a car, so we need to

deal with it; this person has something, that person has something else, this family has these particular parts. In the end, it took quite a while, but each time my car was repaired. This showed me the interactions happening through these processes of sharing and sociality, of taking time, and offering each other assistance.

Many sociologists consider "trust" as an important category that can be used to explain these connections, mutual assistance, sharing of goods and skills in communist societies. At the same time, research shows that the level of trust in our post-communist societies is gradually shrinking.

Well, I'm not so sure about that. First of all, I'm a little bit resistant about this conservative "sociology of trust". From the point of view of methodology, you cannot talk about a particular ethos of social interaction without acknowledging social interaction itself – relationships within which these interactions are embedded. Conservative sociology of culture perceives trust as a sentiment that kind of "hangs" above society. Anthropologists refuse to do that since we always study interactions and actual relationships. I reject that sort of right-wing sociology. You have sociologists who start to complain: "where has trust gone?", to which Marxists would say: "You know, it's really capitalism that's the cause of this."

But people needed to trust each other to establish such close, everyday interactions.

I would reject the idea that there was no distrust in socialist societies in Eastern Europe. There was a lot of distrust, lots of gossiping. Trust and distrust are not mutually exclusive elements of social interaction. There was distrust within families, among friends. The more you have to rely upon each other, the more reasons you have to distrust someone. You need a lot of gossip, because you need a lot of information. For instance, if the money that you lent to this person will actually come back to you next week, a year after, ten years later, or never. In capitalism, you have relationships that are regulated through bureaucracy, codified, guarded by specialised functionaries. And in communist countries you had to continuously negotiate, gain information, check things out. There was continuous trust and distrust. At the same time there was this sense, especially in the 1970s, that communism could be made to work for everybody. It was an issue of trust, solidarity, of people hanging closer together, feeling that they can

actually solve these contradictions. Naturally, over time this sentiment has evaporated both in the West, in the South and in the East.

> **Communist states promoted the idea of "collective work," encouraging people to work together for their city or village. Today such institutions as czyn społeczny or subotnik (community volunteer initiatives) are often the subject of jokes.**

The irony and the fun is entirely understandable, since the ideological rhetoric adopted by the state was so strong. Nevertheless, we should not forget that these were societies that were actually still being built at that point in time. Again, that was not entirely different in Eastern and Western Europe. One of the cities that I had a chance to study very closely, Eindhoven in the Netherlands, is a highly capitalist town established primarily by the Philips company. In the early 1950s the city had a housing crisis that was being dealt with by Philips: buying the materials, allowing groups of its employees to work

together, claiming the material and building houses with the assistance of specialists from among Philips' engineers. In general, I would say that, in the period between 1950s and 1970s, there was a sense in many parts of the world of the possibility of sharing a society, a shared vision of the future which they worked for together. It was basically after 1980, after "Solidarność" in Poland, that we observe how this feeling begins to fracture everywhere and, ultimately, in "really existing socialism" fail badly. I would consider it as the high point in Europe in terms of building society together on the basis of trust and distrust – togetherness, shared sociality, a shared vision of living together. After that, it evaporates everywhere, partially because of the way it is restructured in capitalism, and partially because of the collapse of socialism.

> **The concept of sharing is inherently connected with property rights. How do you perceive the changes that took place in Europe in terms of our relation to property in cities?**

I would say that property rights everywhere in the last 40-50 years have been strengthened and restored to their primary position, into what is called the rule of law. It is a political, economic and social process that is happening everywhere. Of course, the starting position of socialist societies in Central Eastern Europe was different from the more socially-democratic, Western European societies. However, we must remember that when it came to space, property rights in Western European cities in the 1970s were certainly weaker than they are now. The state was largely absent, the way the police force worked was on the basis of bargaining and all sorts of mediations. Nevertheless, there has been a process in the direction of capitalist reconstitution and the reassertion of private property and the regulation and supervision of public space. That goes together: property and propriety are two words that hang – in history and in practice – very closely together. When you are starting to develop property claims to space and ways to guarantee them, you are also developing a society where there are much more differentiated codes of what is considered appropriate behaviour in particular public spaces. This is the main difference we are talking about. In communism, you have a strong informal sociality of people hanging together, solving their problems, doing transactions etc. It's very different from a capitalist society – private property claims, the social machinery necessary to guarantee and monitor them, all in all, ultimately lead to a fracturing of the strong, thick, informal, populist socialites. Today we are living in these entirely technocratically-dominated, monitored societies, in other words: in capitalist, Foucauldian states. They organise permanent distrust in the population, to which it the population now reacts back with a distrust of the elites.

In post-communist societies, having property is what often defines economic success, respectability.

In most Western European countries, about 50-60% of the housing stock in the early 1970s was collectively owned, that is not so much less than in Central

Eastern European countries. For example, in Hungary, even in the 1970s about 70% of the housing stock was privately owned. Again, generalizing on socialism and capitalism doesn't really work here. We need to look at particular institutional and social histories. We should never forget about the importance of housing and the way that access to housing is organised in societies. I would say it is only in Germany for all sorts of institutional urban reasons (including the stagnating population) that this collective housing sector still functions in the way it used to function in the 1970s. The way in which collective housing sector has been able to survive in Germany is unique. In other countries, it has been gradually shrinking. If it comes down to entirely market-driven and property-oriented processes, then you are developing a very different society as compared to a society where 40-50% of the housing sector is still collectively matched on the basis of rents. This sort of a well-organised rental sector is a blessing for cities and urban life.

Of course, Eastern European cities have lost a lot of collective management capacities with the privatisation of the housing stock which has created numerous legal problems. It has also created a piggy bank possibility of housing collateral to function for loans. Elsewhere, it has created relative conservative societies, privatised societies where having a mortgage and having a private house becomes basically a key sign of citizenship. It is a complex sort of commitment if you think it through, because having a mortgage allows you to buy a house, allows you to have a status-based position in our capitalist society, while also establishing a strong commitment to being available on the labour market – to work your whole life. The result is the creation of this sort of privatised, relatively fearful citizenry that it entirely dependent and focused on future earning capacity. What it creates is a citizenry that is fearful, and I would say potentially open for a sorts of right-wing fear mongering – which is a very sad thought to have. The Left enjoys sharing, solidarity, diverse informality, but that's exactly what capitalist cities tend to destroy.

In recent years, sharing economy is being promoted as a sort of cure for capitalism, a way to address the social and economic problems connected with the financial crisis. Do you see it as a new way of organizing urban life in Europe?
I think sharing economy is a complete cover-up – it only magnifies the existing inequalities. I guess we are increasingly calling it platform capitalism rather than sharing economy. It certainly deepened the already existing polarisation of property structures. Platform capitalism proves to be good for those who already occupy a hierarchical position either via property, or via a rental position. Of course, at the same time, it makes travel (e.g. through Airbnb and Uber) much smoother and easier, but overtime you will see this is not going to

Eastern European cities have lost a lot of collective management capacities with the privatisation of the housing stock which has created numerous legal problems.

be very beneficial for the those of us who want to have more shared urban space and sociality. If they occupy only a very small niche in the market, then they can share all sorts of convenient functions. I have no doubt about it. And of course, it all started out that way. But at the present moment they have become highly capitalised social and economic sectors – currently Airbnb and Uber are worth billions of dollars at the stock market. There is really no reason to be optimistic about it, as this process will lead to further exploitation of labour and space on behalf of the those who are owners of those enterprises, and the smaller owners who may profit with them. You can see this clearly in Budapest, where the rental prices have increased more than 50% in the last three years.

That is massive.
That increase is largely generated by Airbnb and tourism. It leads to a massive displacement of poorer population from the centres of the city. The starting position in places like Budapest has been relatively good in comparison with the West. Housing prices were very low, square metre prices were very low, so until about five years ago, it was still quite possible for most people to secure a nice little niche for themselves in one of these interesting and dynamic cities. This seems to be over now.

Of course, this has been happening even more in Western European cities and the US, where the gentrification processes began much earlier. Speaking from my experience of New York City – I think it's absolutely impossible to live in a place like this. You can't even sit on the terrace, because everything is regulated on behalf of the highest profitability. In other words, if I sit here for 15 minutes and I drink my coffee, I must order my next coffee, and then another one. In European cities, I'm used to working in public spaces – either in cafes, restaurants or just out on the street. That is entirely impossible in New York, you can't do that. What I am talking about are

really micro observations that show what happens when these platform capitalisms services commodify even more space and time, resulting with even more regulated crowded-out, polarising urban societies. The result is something exactly opposite of what notions of sharing and sharing economy seem to convey.

Do you think this relatively new turn towards sharing is ultimately something dangerous for our societies?

I'm very pessimistic about these changes. In many ways, it is the same kind of trend we could previously witness happening with the internet. In the early 2000s, the internet was this horizontal feed free for all spaces where we could finally create all sorts of horizontal linkages and personalities, friendships, enjoy solidarity and intimacies that apparently were blocked before. A promise of infinite sociality in a horizontal way. What we know today is that it's the opposite – infinite sociality in a vertical way. It is organised entirely on behalf of big capitalist corporations with huge stock market value that

tend now to dominate all other corporations in the world. It is very perverse. Capitalism and hierarchy are always interconnected. I think we really must start thinking again about the culture of capitalism and how it shapes our capitalist cities, and all of the political processes these changes are setting in motion. In the end, they are always about hierarchy and fear: crafting fear from above and from below. What we see today almost everywhere in Europe are people buying into populist tendencies – which, in the end, seems to be a very predictable response to what is happening in our societies.

Don Kalb – anthropologist, professor of social anthropology at the Central European University and the University of Bergen, specializing in globalization, nationalism, post-socialism, economy and labor history. He is the author of *Expanding Class: Power and Everyday Politics in Industrial Communities, The Netherlands, 1850–1950* (1998), as well as numerous articles and co-edited books including on Central and Eastern Europe.

WHAT CAN WE SH
IN CITIES? / *no1*

HARE

Open Jazdów

Warsaw

Otwarty Jazdów (Open Jazdów), an urban community that was created in one of the districts of Warsaw – a green colony consisting of a number of wooden Finnish houses – provides access to educational, ecological, social and cultural activities for citizens. The history of the colony dates back to the last years of World War II, during which Warsaw was almost completed destroyed. The Finnish houses were donated by Finland in 1945 as part of reparations for the USSR, and were used as housing for workers who were given the task of rebuilding the Polish capital. In 2011, the District Government of Central Warsaw decided to demolish the colony. A few of the families living there in communal houses were evicted, and some of the houses were disassembled. The residents of Warsaw organized successful protests against this decision and took action to defend the colony which resulted in a cycle of unprecedented initiatives that started in July 2013 and went on for several months In the following years, open public consultations were also held, and their findings were accepted by the newly appointed district and city governments. Today, Otwarty Jazdów is working on introducing an experimental management model for social space by combining the colony together with local communities and public institutions. The final product may present a new formula for contemporary, urban "open neighborhoods."

photo PlusMinus

PlusMinus

Cluj-Napoca

In 2010, when Ina Elena Stoian, Tiberiu Bucsa, Istvan Pasztor and Istvan Benedek created the think-tank PlusMinus, they had previous experience in coordinating a three-week long pilot program in the public space of Cluj-Napoc, as well as the common goal of strengthening relations between residents and their city. Their activities and events turned out to be very popular among residents. Two years later, PlusMinus expanded their operation to include other Romanian cities, and today the 15 members of the group base their work in, among other cities, Cluj-Napoc, Galați and Petrila. They have also published two books: *The Would-Be City. Interventions in the Post-Communist Urban Space*, which discusses the future development of Romanian cities, and Post-Industrial Stories, an album of documentary photography. In 2016, PlusMinus coordinated an exhibition in the Romanian pavilion during the Architecture Biennale in Venice. One of their current projects focuses on defending the area of the former coal mine in Petrila. As a result of a study conducted by the group, the City Council decided to keep the historical building that is part of the coal mine complex. However, it was not until January 2016 that the quarter was officially recognized as part of the industrial heritage, only after the PlusMinus team – pairing up with the "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanis – had conducted a two-year long historical research of the site. It is still difficult to tell what will ultimately happen with the former coal mine. As for now, it remains under the protection of the group whose members serve the role of mediators, advisors and coordinators for the many actors and institutions working in the post-industrial quarter.

Former coal mine in Petrila

photo V. Hoshovskyi

Urban Space 100

Ivano-Frankivsk

Urban Space 100 is the main project of the Teple Misto initiative, a social restaurant launched in 2014 with a goal to unite the residents of Ivano-Frankivsk around the problem of improving the living conditions in their city. The restaurant was started by a one-hundred strong group of active citizens interested in the idea of creating improved urban spaces. The project proved to be a success, and even today more than 80% of the profits is redirected solely to the betterment of public space in Ivano-Frankivsk. Urban Space 100 is a place where you can not only eat great food, but also take part in everyday events as well as purchase books from a small bookstore that specializes in publications on urban issues. The decisions related to which of the many projects will be financed using the proceeds from the restaurant, café and bookstore are always discussed and voted among the founders of US100. Anyone can become a co-owner, provided that he or she donates a thousand dollars and receives recommendations from three other members. In 2016, the group financed five projects, including an artist-in-residence program for Jorge Pomara, an Argentinean street artist, a local radio station Urban Space Radio, and an Urban Grants program for residents who can apply for micro-grants that can be then used for financing improvements in public space. Up to now, more than 19 different projects have been financed by Urban Space 100, and the group is planning to expand their activity to other cities: Kiev, Odessa and Lviv.

REPRIVATISATION:
how hindsight helps us move forward

TOMASZ LUTEREK

Without understanding the process of reprivatisation, it is difficult to understand the post-communist relation to property, sharing and urban space

Reprivatisation has been an ongoing and large scale challenge for the post-communist countries (especially so for those in Central Europe) and is inherently connected with the gradual process of transformation towards liberal democracy that the region has been undertaking for over a quarter of century. Besides the numerous other pitfalls associated with the state-structured, socioeconomic order, the fall of communism has also brought to light the issue of property seized by communist authorities from the former owners. Nationalisation, the process of appropriating private property by the state, operated at prodigious levels, primarily in the 1940s. It occurred everywhere throughout Europe; however, in western countries, the reprivatisation dealt mostly with specific branches of industry: the arms industry, mining or transport. In the case of Central European countries living under the political influence of the USSR, the catalogue of nationalised goods was much more substantial – not only industrial enterprises, but also large farms, tenement houses, pharmacies, inland waterway vessels as well as cultural goods such as paintings or expensive cutlery.

Another significant difference was the related issue of compensation. In Western Europe, it remained around 40-70% of the value of the acquired property;

while in post-communist countries, proprietors were seldom paid anything. A tragic example of this comes from the former eastern section of Poland, which after the war became part of the USSR. The Poles living in this area were forced out of their homes and sent westward, migrating with only the most basic necessities such as linen or clothing.

Interestingly, the communist governments differentiated the amount of compensation for the acquired property according to the ethnic background of the former owners. Those who possessed citizenship of any Western country received compensation on the level of 30-50%, which was established as part of the so-called indemnity agreements (concluded between particular countries from the Eastern bloc and Western countries). It was accepted by Western countries and was indeed higher than any reparations paid by Germany for the crimes and devastations of World War II. Conversely, the former owners from communist states rarely received any compensation.

After the collapse of communism in Europe, at the turn of the 80s and 90s, the issue of how to recompense the original owners of the properties became more prevalent. Reprivatisation – reinstating property rights to people who were affected by nationalisation – seemed

A building in Warsaw city centre commemorating Jolanta Brzeska, one of the most active members of the Warsaw tenants' movement who was found dead in the woods in Warsaw. Her body had been burnt beyond recognition and it is unclear whether she was alive or dead when it happened. Jolanta was 64 years old. She was one of the founders of the Warsaw Tenants' Association, a good speaker and committed activist who went to all demonstrations against Warsaw reprivatisation process, who blocked evictions and advised other tenants of reprivitised social housing. The above neon work was made during Warszawa W Budowie festival (Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2015).

to be the simplest and most natural solution. Likewise, it felt like an instinctive component of decommunisation – rebuilding the democratic system and introducing free market principles. Furthermore, reprivatisation was one of the pillars of the ongoing process of normalising property relations and bringing them closer to structures that exist in countries that were not influenced by the communist doctrine. Unfortunately, this proved to be an example where the theory could not be implemented practically, and when we consider it from the perspective of the last 70 years, it turned out to be much more complicated than its initial simplicity had suggested.

A PARADOX IN PROPERTY RIGHTS

The process of restoring ownership relations from before the introduction of the communist regime, as well as providing compensation for any harm suffered by former property owners, would have to be done at the expense of millions of citizens currently living in Poland. To illustrate why, imagine this situation: the nationalisation of large farming estates that were then divided among landless peasants. Reinstating property rights from the 1940s would mean taking away the property from owners who have been working on it for more than

two generations. The circumstances were similar in cities, e.g. either forcing tenants out of apartment buildings, or forcing them to accept the conditions introduced by the new-and-old owners simultaneously.

The story becomes even more thorny in the case of Warsaw, a city that was destroyed almost in its entirety – methodically burned to the ground during the German occupation. The capital was later rebuilt as a result of an enormous financial effort by Polish citizens. This leads to the question whether it is right to return the rebuilt properties to their past owners – properties which at the time of nationalization were nothing more than a pile of rubble? And what about the loans that burdened most pre-war structures and which were cancelled during nationalization?

The simple answer that comes to mind is that everything can be worked out, including compensation for profits and losses. If so, then perhaps everything should be counted. Would this then mean that it would be necessary to pay compensation for other damages endured by citizens of communist states? Should we pay compensation to people who lost their savings as a result of currency reform? Or those who were deported to the USSR? Or who were forced to emigrate, or whose careers were destroyed because they did not join the communist party? The list of communist wrongdoings is infinite, but the question remains – who should pay for it? Today's societies which brought down communism? Should previous owners of properties be considered a privileged group among a sea of people affected by communists? Obviously, underneath every seemingly straightforward answer there arose even more questions and doubts.

Regardless of their possible snares, these enquiries had to be answered by the societies of post-communist countries such as Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic. These neighbouring countries – which have existed in close relation for many centuries and have been exposed to both similar and diverse historical circumstances – ultimately adopted different methods of nationalization during communism, and correspondingly choose distinct strategies for reprivatisation in the beginning of the 1990s.

DIVERGING PATHS

Overall, the situation is fairly regulated in Poland, although there are a few areas which require proper closure as well as statutory regulation. Whereas in the cases of the Recovered Territories (areas that were part of the Third Reich prior to 1945) and the Eastern Borderlands (Kresy Wschodnie – areas acquired in 1945 by the USSR) issues of reprivatisation have been

After the collapse of communism in Europe, at the turn of the 80s and 90s, the issue of how to recompense the original owners of the properties became more prevalent.

regulated, in the case of Central Poland the situation remains inhomogeneous and far from organized. The process of reprivatisation has been finished in relation to certain subjects: churches, citizens of Western countries (and former socialist countries). However, for Polish citizens, in most cases it would be necessary for the government to introduce appropriate legal regulations that would organize property and compensation issues relating to properties seized by communist states.

When we look closely at the reasons for rejecting the subsequent, complex projects of regulating reprivatisation issues, we can see a tight web of different conditions that have influenced and complicated Polish politics after 1989. However, it is important to emphasize that, after the fall of communism in Poland, reprivatisation never gained popularity neither among the majority of citizens nor among political parties. This was due to several reasons. After the annihilation of Polish elites in the 1940s and the subsequent waves of emigration, the circle of people interested in reprivatisation remained relatively small. There were also few political leaders who would be interested in the issue.

These premises seem especially interesting when we compare it with the situation of other countries: for example, the Czech Republic where the majority of society was for reprivatisation, and the issue was raised publicly by political leaders. This was influenced in a large degree by the level of advancement of the communist system. Paradoxically, because this process was relatively less developed in Poland (primarily because of Polish peasants who successfully opposed collectivisation), the number of voters interested in revising ownership relations was small. This could be mainly attributed to the absence of bold agricultural reforms during the interwar

period which, in turn, meant that the issue had to be addressed by the communists, who decided to connect the nationalisation of landowning estates with simultaneous privatisation – eventually appropriating the land for the peasants. As a result, Polish peasants became the direct beneficiaries of the nationalisation processes. Since more than 90% of the current Polish society consists of their descendants, it is not difficult to understand their reluctance towards reprivatisation.

The situation was different in the Czech Republic and other countries in which the realisation of the communist doctrine went much farther, e.g. materializing in the concept of collectivisation. Almost the entire society, in some way or another, suffered because of nationalisation: some wanted to reclaim several-hectares plots, service workshops, while others wanted to regain castles, palaces and factories. In the end, almost everyone was interested in reprivatisation. In countries where the majority of society has peasant roots the question of reprivatisation was further influenced by the agricultural reform introduced in the interwar years – before the establishment of a communist system. In countries such as Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia the properties were dispersed among the majority of citizens – the future advocates of the counterrevolution. In Hungary and the Czech Republic, interest in reprivatisation was also popular among the urban middle class, who were arguably much more fond of capitalism.

Another significant factor was the political leaders' attitude towards reprivatisation. Indeed, it is difficult to resist the temptation to compare Lech Wałęsa and Vaclav Havel, two leading figures in the anti-communist movements in Poland and Czechoslovakia and later presidents of their respective nations. It seems that their varied influence (at least in the first years of the transformation) may have had a decisive impact on the history of reprivatisation. To put it simply, Havel worked both for realising important public goals and those central for private capital (e.g. he was able to reclaim, together with his brother, the film studio "Barandov"). Unfortunately, the leader of "Solidarność" did not have such incentives. Perhaps it would have turned out differently; had Wałęsa been part a group of potential beneficiaries of reprivatisation, he might have made it one of his first priorities in the process of decommunization.

LESSONS LEARNT FROM NEIGHBOURS

The history of reprivatisation was different in other countries in the region – particularly in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Merely comparing the time that passed between the end of the Velvet Revolution and the introduction of reprivatisation laws, it is easy to say the problem was solved at an express pace. In addition to the conditions described above, it is important to note the relatively good economic situation of Czechoslovakia. The problem of properties that belonged to the Sudeten Germans was not in any way related to the issue of accepting existing borders. The first law on court rehabilitation in Czechoslovakia was passed in May 1990, which allowed to repeal court sentences confiscating property. As a result, thousands of court verdicts from the communist period were annulled without any resumption of proceedings. Things were sped along by the passing of a law in February 1991 – known as the "great reprivatisation law" and according to which the burden of providing necessary documentation on property rights was placed on the previous owners or their descendants. The entitled persons had the right to restitution of both movable and immovable property, and, more importantly, the former owners received properties in their current state, which meant that there was no compensation for the deterioration of property or the loss of profits. Generally speaking, the Czech and Slovakian models of reprivatisation are considered a successful solution to the problem, although many people forget that it only referred to properties seized after the communist revolution of February 25, 1948. It is worth noting that there were enormous nationalised transfers of properties taking place between the years 1945 and 1948. Nonetheless, the time and method of reprivatisation seemed optimal, in a way becoming part of the natural process of the counterrevolution.

Another interesting example is East Germany, a country which after the fall of the Berlin Wall was able to rely on the organisational and financial support of the Federal Republic of Germany – one of the richest countries in the world. In the context of the absence of compensation, it is interesting to note that the basic German reprivatisation law (the so-called property law II from September 13, 1990) did not cover the returning of property to the dispossessed, according to the occupation laws from 1945-1949. In Hungary, reprivatisation was limited to paying reparation in the form of compensation vouchers that could be later exchanged for stock shares in privatised companies or social pensions in the case of people who have reached retirement age. There were also significant financial restrictions: 100% compensation for amounts up to 200,000 forints, 200,000 + 50% for amounts between 200-300.000 forints, 250.000 + 30% for amounts between 300-500,000 forints, and 310,000 + 10% for amounts above 500,000 forints.

Interestingly, in the Czech Republic there were approximately three hundred thousand

In 2013 the law on the restitution of church property confiscated in the years 1948-1990 entered into force in the Czech Republic. In the course of the next 30 years, compensation of CZK 59 billion will also be paid. Restitution does not apply to certain objects, including the famous cathedral of St. Vitus in Prague.

reprivatisation motions submitted to court, and almost 1.5 million in Hungary. By contrast, in Poland, a country four times the size of Hungary, the number of motions is estimated to be around 170,000. What connects countries like Hungary and the Czech Republic to Estonia (where the laws were similar to Germany) is the fact that reprivatisation and level of compensation was based on the value of property determined not long after the fall of communism, at a time of deep crisis triggered by the political transformation. There are some similar cases in Poland, but these pertained to churches and religious associations, which received their properties in full (as the first subjects in the post-Soviet Bloc) according to laws from 1989.

These cases can serve as fascinating lessons as well as guidelines for Polish lawmakers and other post-communist countries that have still not resolved the problem (e.g. Russia or Ukraine). In Poland, the

first country to begin the process of reprivatisation, the process – while fairly advanced at this point – is nonetheless still ongoing, partially because of the complex geopolitical, social and economic situation. What is missing today is a clear statutory statement that property should not be returned in kind. The amount of compensations should be regulated in a similar way as in the case of indemnity agreements concerning Western European citizens.

It is not possible to properly compensate for the harms done by the communist dictatorships, similarly as from the time of German and Soviet occupation. We can only document them, making sure they will be remembered by future generations. We cannot return to the past, neither in political and social spheres nor in property relations. However difficult and painful it may be for former property owners, it is nonetheless essential for normalising the situation and building a healthy foundation for today's societies. The price for any lack of stability in property relations is gigantic, which is best seen in the centre of Warsaw – most of the biggest contemporary investments are constructed on the peripheries of the city, where there are not problems with reprivatisation. That is why we must hope that the difficult process of decommunization, of post-communist societies regaining subjectivity, will soon come to an end, and the problem of reprivatisation will become part of history.

WHAT CAN WE SH
IN CITIES? */no 2*

photo Andrei Mărgulescu

IARE

Ordinul Arhițectilor din România

Bucharest

The "corner house" in Bucharest was built in the middle of the 19th century according to plans fashioned by the architect Gaetano Burello. In 1890, Ion Minscu – one of the most famous Romanian architects – bought the house and remodeled it for his own family. The building remained intact until 1948, when it was reclaimed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs as part of the nationalization process. Since then, it has been gradually devastated. In 2002, the house was bought from a private owner by the Chamber of Architects (Ordinul Arhițectilor din România), whose members began the struggle to salvage and reclaim this important piece of Romanian architecture. The main initiator was Şerban Sturdza, an architect from the architectural design laboratory Prodid. The restoration of the building was carried out by experts and numerous volunteers who thoroughly cleaned up and renovated every centimeter of the house. In 2012, after ten years of toil, the building was reopened as the offices of the Chamber of Architects, while the ground floor and basements were dedicated for public events (exhibitions, conferences, classical music concerts or even music lessons for children). Furthermore, the fact that the ground floor was turned into an attractive public space resulted in a revival of the whole street – the historical "corner house" became a new centre for the local community. Although the process of recreating the ideas and functions of the building was very long and costly, today Romanians consider it as a model example of both modernisation and the successful adaptation of architectural monuments, as well as a good case study of how to socially engage with architectural heritage.

photo A. Plesiova

Shared Cities Creative Momentum

Czech Centres

Prague

Czech Centres is an active instrument of foreign policy of the Czech Republic, established to promote the Czech Republic's history, culture and language abroad. Our network consists of centres in over twenty countries throughout three continents and you can visit our centres abroad or the Czech Centres Gallery in Prague, where we host exhibitions and cultural works by Czech and international artists. One example is Noc Literatury (Literature Night), an annual event held in various countries, in collaboration with the EUNIC, which provides national works of literature translated into local languages. These are then presented to the public by well-known and upcoming actors usually in normally-inaccessible and thought-provoking venues. With thousands in attendance across the Czech Republic and abroad every year, Noc Literatury is representative of what Czech Centres stands for: bringing cultural works to the public sphere by sharing the premises, the public space, the ideas and the arts. As part of the Shared Cities project, Czech Centres is preparing a thorough quantitative analysis about the impact that this project will have on its participants, co-organisers and on a wider level. This will be in relation to the qualitative analysis carried out by Goethe-Institut. Czech Centres will aim to create a new process-based analytical tool to measure what the project actually brings, as well as new assessment tools that will be utilised by creative professionals in the project countries with whom the methodology will be shared. Together with VSVU, Czech Centres will produce exhibitions for the public focused upon the revival and reopening of significant buildings - the 'Iconic Ruins' – which are currently underused, unused or underestimated, albeit shared places, of the previous periods - such as the socialist palaces of culture.

photo Centre for Art and Urbanistic

Centre for Art and Urbanistics

Berlin

The Centre for Art and Urbanistics (Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistk, ZK/U) started operating in 2012 in Berlin, Moabit– an innovative venue, offering artistic and research residencies (durations lasting from quarterly to yearly periods) for artistic practice at the interface of urban research with a diverse set of formats and projects to explore and actively change the city. The ZK/U is located in a neighbourhood with various conflicts, which are mainly due to the diverse (and at times polar) backgrounds of the inhabitants: the more established "middle-class" citizens, precarious 1st and 2nd generation migrants and the newly arriving groups of refugees. Therefore, we particularly aim at (re)activating the social and spatial relationships between individuals and groups that can be divided by differences in education, income, gender or ethnic backgrounds. The current research and practice fields of ZK/U are *Practical Guides and Solidarity in Urban Learning* – in which we look at new self-organized ways to educate and self-administrate ourselves; *Urban Infrastructure Revisited* – in which we examine and critique current models of urban infrastructure; *BRIDGING Global Discourse and Local Practice* – where we bring together intellectual research with the local reality; and *THINKING: Resilient Cities in Post-Migrant Societies* – in which we react to the current influx of refugees and offer inclusive forms of activities.

ZK/U is one of eleven partners co-creating Shared Cities: Creative Momentum project.

SHARED LAYERS OF HISTORY

— urban phenomena of post communist cities

KATARZYNA DORDA

After the fall of communism, we had to learn how to shop and sell, how to build and how to lead an everyday life in a completely new realm. It does not matter if we are in Belgrade, Warsaw, Berlin or Bratislava – our cities are layered with history and scarred with the changes.

One cannot understand the post-communist attitude towards sharing without knowing the twisted history and numerous transformations involved in the perspective. Presented here is our selection of socio-urban phenomena that helps explain – and hopefully offers a more detailed picture of – today's spaces.

Poland

The multiculti symbol of the free market

In Warsaw, the 10th-Anniversary Stadium was a symbol of the system, sports and politics. Built in 1955 on the ashes of the Warsaw Uprising (1944), it eventually became a symbolic grave of the communistic era – on which a new capitalistic model took over in the form of the biggest market in Europe. However, after its initial construction, it was quickly recognized as a national symbol of Poland. Under the Polish People's Republic, it housed the most important international football matches and athletics competitions as well as being the principal venue for the communist party galas, concerts and commemorative festivals. It has even served as the final lap of the Peace Race.

It's symbolic meaning was solidified in the documentary movie "Hear My Cry" (1991), by Maciej Drygas, which tells the story of Ryszard Siwiec's self-immolation in protest against the military invasion in Czechoslovakia during a harvest festival in the stadium in 1968.

After 1989, unable to host any major games, it was used mainly as a bazaar called Jarmark Europa. Famously known as "the place to buy nearly anything", it was the main selling point for black market goods in the country. The multi-level construction dictated a hierarchy of sellers, echoed simplistically in the topographical layout of the stadium. Everybody knew who the crown of the stadium belonged to, where one could find Vietnamese food and where the Roma sellers should stand.

This melting-pot of Warsaw was commemorated, just before its demolition in 2008, by several artistic events celebrating the architectural and social aspects of its multi-layered history. "A Finissage of the 10th-Anniversary Stadium and Jarmark Europa in episodes" was held by Bęc Zmiana and the Laura Palmer's Foundation, curated by Joanna Warsza and co-funded by the city of Warsaw.

The building of the new National Stadium was delayed by disputes with vendors who protested against the orders to leave. But three years after the initial demolition in 2008, the construction of the new stadium was finished in time to host the 2012 UEFA European Championship.

Poland

Housing for
the distrustful

Gated communities are one of the most important symbols of the social, economic and cultural transformations that have taken place in modern Poland. Their number, scale and diversity raise numerous questions not only among the critically-inclined social or urban researchers, but also among the city dwellers living on both sides of the fence. According to Henrik Werth's analyses made in 2004, Warsaw had about 200 gated communities, while Berlin had just 1 and all the whole of France had only 72. No other European capital has numbers this high.

In the 1980s, Poland started the classic suburbanisation, fuelled by the free market forces being unleashed and foreign capital beginning to flow into the country. In the early 1990s, private entrepreneurs started buying more and more land and new houses popped up like mushrooms over a period of twenty years. When one of the first gated communities was built in Warsaw in the late 1990s, Gazeta Wyborcza – the most popular daily newspaper in Poland – stated that "an oasis of luxury and a slice of America" had now landed on Polish soil. The same tendency was happening in other larger Polish cities and in other countries in the former Eastern Bloc.

Marina Mokotów is one of the best known examples of this gated exaggeration. Built in 2006 on the outskirts of one of the most famous districts of Warsaw, it holds about 1,800 housing units on an area of 30 hectares. The entire area is enclosed by walls or fences about two meters high, guarded round-the-clock by guards and CCTV. As reasons for choosing to settle there, the residents report a fear of crime and the desire for personal safety: although a full 87% of Poles feel safe in their neighbourhoods, and crime statistics indicate that Poland is a safe country when compared to most other countries in Europe.

"If we were building Marina today, we would not have decided to fence it" - said Radosław Bieliński, spokesperson of Marina Mokotów's developer, Dom Development. But the matter of prestige is related primarily to how the communities were marketed as peaceful areas created for and/or populated by people who belong to a certain social class.

Slovakia

The Bronx of Bratislava

In one of the youngest capitals in Europe and on the opposite side of the Danube from Bratislava's Old Town, lies Petržalka – the most densely populated residential district in Central Europe (4085 people per km²), and one of the two biggest housing estates in the EU. This enormous housing project is now home to 150,000 people or one-third of the city's population, all living in these sprawling concrete blocks of flats, the so-called panelaky.

Built mostly in the 1970s as a separate urban district, Petržalka was supposed to be primarily a residential area; therefore, it has no clearly defined centre. With the fall of communism began a careful restoration of the long-neglected structures in Bratislava, yet Petržalka was somehow forgotten in this process. In the 1990s, new kinds of architecture were added to the district, and random office buildings, shopping malls and additional residential buildings were stuck between the panelaky.

The inhabitants of Petržalka usually do not take care about their space, because to whom does this space belong to? It is a no-man's land, abandoned by the new democratic state though not yet taken over by the inhabitants. Although people started gradually buying the flats from the city and their attitude toward the property has improved, it is still a very visible example of the lack of responsibility for the public space, a situation so common in post-communist cities.

This relation with the public-private property is noted in a short documentary "Petržalka Identity" by Juraj Chlpík (2010, 24'), a continuation of an exhibition and an album of 36 portraits of Petrzalka inhabitants. In it, one of the residents says, "Well, there is quite a lot of dirt because it is anonymous there, nobody cares. Papers are flying around and it's messy all around the houses."

Petržalka has the highest suicide rate in the country, the divorce rate is nearly 54%, and the number of hypersensitive people raised six times during the last 25 years. It was sometimes referred to as the Bronx of Bratislava because of a high crime rate and drug dealing, but nowadays crime in Petržalka is not significantly different from the other boroughs and is still decreasing.

photo J. Kaplický, Future Systems

Czech Republic

Dispute about the Eye on Prague

One of the most revolutionary symbols of changes in Prague is Letná hill. Built on a plateau above the Vltava River, it is directly connected to the Prague Castle. In 1955, a large monument of Stalin was erected at the edge of park which in 1962 was ceremoniously blown up and later, the site served for some important demonstrations during the Velvet Revolution.

After the transformation of 1989, it seemed that everybody was delighted to be, at last, free to build – unconstrained by the suffocating conservatism of the Soviets or the equally suffocating folkloric inheritance of "Magical Prague". And so, in 2006, the National Library of the Czech Republic announced an international architectural competition for the design and construction of a new National Library building. "The first Czech international competition and the first competition in a free country," as said the renowned Czech architect and founder of the London-based Future Systems, Jan Kaplický, who won with a concept that has come to be known as the "Blob" or the "Octopus". But winning an architectural competition is not synonymous with the realization and implementation of the project; in this particular case, it was the beginning

of a battle over Letná hill which lasted longer than two years. The Prague mayor, Pavel Bém, initially supported the Blob, but later he changed his position, claiming that the project would not be suitable for Letná; a similar thought process was followed by numerous municipal and government representatives. Insofar as former President Havel supported it and then current President Klaus opposed it, this architectural discussion took on the form of a political dispute. A special committee was appointed to settle whether the project had, in fact, won the competition fairly, while the public discussion continued including organized happenings and various petitions. Nearly two years after the publication of the results, the then minister of culture cancelled the project, siting a supposed lack of resources. Unfortunately, in 2009, Kaplický died suddenly. The students organized a manifestation in favour of the National Library, and the supporters filled the entirety of Staroměstské náměstí.

The design and building process was supposed to be followed by documentarist Olga Špátová, but because of the complicated story of the competition, then the political debate around it and then sudden

death of Jan Kaplický - the movie has told the story of a Czech phenomenon – the battle for the library. It premiered in April 2010 with a title "Eye on Prague".

Today, the Letná plain is still empty. The National Library hasn't been built, and the society is left with an undesirable taste in their mouths – who makes the decisions? Somehow the new socio-political reality is still in line with the principle of "we know better how it looks", better than the international experts even. Right after battling one regime, we ended up in a better one, but still a regime with no possibility for sharing the power and decisiveness.

Germany

The better part of history

Over the last 70 years, Germany has restored and rebuilt a considerable portion of its architectural heritage, and its citizens have held countless debates as to whether these rebuilding campaigns were appropriate or not. The decision to rebuild the former winter residence of the Kings of Prussia was yet another source of controversy in Berlin. The "most ambitious cultural project in Germany", according to German Culture Minister Monika Grütters, is a symbol of a shared heritage split between the East and the West of Berlin. A difficult yet inevitable dispute over the injustice of history: which parts are more important than the others, which are worthy ofrevival?

Stadtschloss was damaged extensively by Allied bombing during the Second World War. In 1950, what was left was pulled down by the East German government and in the same place was built the Palace of the Republic (Palast der Republik). The modernist structure, completed in 1976, housed the East German People's Chamber (Volkskammer), as well as art galleries, theatres, a bowling alley and a 'discotheque') – a building of vast historical and aesthetic importance, a symbol of East Germany.

Later on, the structure was found to be contaminated with asbestos and was closed to the public. By 2003, all that remained was the dark scaffolding of steel girders standing in the middle of the city like a skeleton for five years. It was just a matter of time for the creative types to come and the structure was a temporary home to many so-called "survival artists".

However, in 2006 the Palace of the Republic was totally demolished, in spite of objections from Berliners, who felt that West Germans were demolishing their parliament to make sure everyone knew who had won the Cold War.

Then came Wilhelm von Boddien, a young graduate who was passionate about restoring the Schloss. He raised enough money from donors to hire a French artist, Cathrine Feff, who together with 50 art students created a huge painting, a recreation of Berlin Schloss, that was mounted of a scaffolding for 15 months. The stimulation was a huge success. Suddenly thousands of Berliners, from the west and east, fell in love with the idea of rebuilding the Schloss. In 2003, with the help of the mayor at a time – Eberhard Diepgen, who was supportive of the idea from the beginning – the

German Bundestag voted with a 2/3 majority to rebuild the Schloss.

Due to German government budget cuts, construction of the "Humboldt-Forum", as the new palace was titled, was delayed, but the foundation stone was finally laid in June 2013. On its completion in 2019, the building will aim to be a world centre for culture. Designed by Italian architect Franco Stella, it will have the same shape and size as the former City Palace. Three sides of the exterior of the building will reproduce its historical style, while the interior will be modern. The new Schloss will mainly be a platform for art exhibitions and intercultural exchanges. It will house a modern museum containing collections of African and other non-European art, as well as two restaurants, a theatre, a movie theatre and an auditorium.

By rebuilding the Stadtschloss in place of the Palast der Republik, Berlin is airbrushing over its own history. East Germany happened and that part of the history, although maybe painful, shouldn't be ignored. To be fair, Schloss is being reconstructed, but its new function is taking into account the common use of the spaces from the times of the Palast der Republik.

photo E. Andor, Wikimedia Commons

Hungary

Reclaiming public space

One of the first public parks in the world, Városliget (City Park), the oldest and largest public park in Budapest, was created in the early decades of the 19th century. Yet, today, its future is uncertain.

The history of the park dates back as far as the 13th century and according to legend, the area served as a venue for national assemblies of medieval nobles arriving from all over the country. Fast-forward to the 18th century, trees were successfully planted here during Hungary's era under Habsburg rule, and the first pedestrian path was built. By the mid-1800s, as Pest's settled areas began expanding eastward, the park was thriving: it became the terminus of the first omnibus line of Pest; the Budapest Zoo, one of the first animal parks in Europe, opened in 1866. Then in 1896, City Park provided a home for the Millennium Exhibition with more than 200 pavilions to showcase all kinds of cultural attractions. City Park saw many rapid changes, including the construction of new buildings like the ornate Kunsthalle exhibition centre, the fairy-tale palace of Vajdahunyad Castle, and other novelties such as the Millennium Underground, the very first metro line of continental Europe.

Unfortunately, during World War II, bombs hit almost every building in the park. The following years of communism under Soviet occupation weren't exactly kind to Városliget either. However, things got better as the end of the Soviet era drew closer, and a huge landscaping project in the 1970s brought back more trees to the park. Still today, there are parts of City Park that feel sort of haunted, including the communist-era buildings like the long-unused Hungexpo, and the PeCsa music hall.

After this long period of neglect, City Park is again at the centre of attention with a major new renovation project on the horizon. In the middle of 2013, the government announced plans to renovate and turn the park into a kind of "family cultural-recrea-tional theme park" featuring a new museum quarter, as well as various botanical gardens and the like. The government plans have met with considerable hostility on the part of opposition leaders, urban planners and environmental protectionists alike. A group of prominent urban planners and architects called for a boycott of the international planning tender announced later that year.

Regardless of the boycott, the plans for "Liget Budapest" have not been cancelled and are being executed slowly having some palpable impacts on park life: since 1985, PeCsa was a popular venue for concerts, but last autumn the indoor-outdoor facility was forced to close to make way for the new National Gallery. However, the PeCsa Flea Market is still operating in the old PeCsa building. Although the Liget Budapest construction hasn't started yet, some elements of City Park were already removed to make room for the new plans. This stirred a great deal of unrest among a lot of environmentalists and other locals, which led to the formation of the Liget Budapest protest group called "Ligetvédők" (translating as "Park Protectors"). The group organizes regular demonstrations in the park, including a recent one with Greenpeace. Although according to 2016 surveys, 81% of Budapest residents are opposed to having new buildings in the park. Still, it remains to be seen if the protest movement will have any impact on the Liget Budapest plans.

photo: G. Thuene

Serbia

Layered cities

In the Western Balkans, the collapse of the socialist economic system in Yugoslavia and Albania has given rise to extensive informal building activity that represents a new form of urbanisation. After the territorial division of former Yugoslavia – including the political and social turns made in the wake of the breakup– as well as the rapid transformation from a socialist planned economy into a neoliberal market economy, the high pressure of urban development was met with weak public institutions which had not yet adapted to the post-socialist and post-war order. Serbia shows one of the most visually fascinating forms of illegal superstructures, many of which ignored design principles and legal construction regulations. The self-initiated roof extensions, so called "nadogradnje" are an example of self-organized bottom-up urbanism. The way inhabitants solved the lack of housing and initiated construction projects on their own account is outstanding.

Next to Branko's Bridge, leading into the historical centre of Belgrade, sit two family houses. Nothing special one might say, but the houses are on top of each other. The imagine of this particular mid-1990s building became an icon

of the traumatic urban transformations in Belgrade and other parts of former Yugoslavia. It was a laughing point, an object of popular jokes. Even after 2000, it wasn't possible to take these buildings down. Thanks to the intricate Serbian building law, the owners had all the needed paperwork - everything was formally legal. As a continuation of this fascinating story of a house on a house another absurdity occurred, so typical for understanding problem-solving in this part of the world. Unable to remove the extensions, municipal officials swept the problem under the rug by covering them with a giant billboard.

New urban and architectural orders of varying scale bear witness to this development and are firmly rooted in the cityscape, both visually and structurally. One of the side effects of this deregulated situation was the informalisation of public space. As a consequence of the privatisation of municipal residential buildings, many of these buildings were extended anywhere from one to three storeys.

The phenomenon of such extreme roof extensions has been vastly commented. Curator Kai Vöckler held an exhibition called "Balkanology" at the Swiss

Architecture Museum in Basel in 2008. Eight years later, in 2016, the Salon of the Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade hosted an exhibition of Branislav Nikolić titled "Superstructure". It showed a roof structure or architectural addition transformed into an artistic object symbolising the spread of unregulated building in urban areas. More recently, there is the photographic work of Gregor Theune"Nadogradnje: Urban Self-Regulation in Post-Yugoslav Cities" (2016), which is reviewed on page 92 of this issue.

What is interesting, *nadogradnje* are not unique to the post-socialist period; the two houses were built on a building from 1930s that was previously expanded with additional floors in the 1960s. Moreover, it is not only a phenomenon of architecture and building engineering, but also an issue in a broader context: political, philosophical and sociological. There is a certain disregard for established architectural norms and the defiance of formal rules and regulations. Such structures existed long before the collapse of Yugoslavia and today can be found in many post-Yugoslav major cities, not only in Serbia.

Croatia

King of my castle

As Croatia attempts to rebrand itself as the EU's newest luxury tourist destination, the hotel industry is literally lying in ruins. According to Zdenko Cerovic's study, a professor of tourism and hospitality at the University of Rijeka, there are a staggering 96 abandoned hotel structures in Croatia. That number is the result of a Croatian phenomenon called "apartmanizacija" – the rampant construction of insipid housing developments on the Adriatic coast.

The transformation of the Adriatic coast, its densification, didn't happen overnight. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, a radical deindustrialisation of its major cities took place, which today is mostly visible on the coast of Croatia. The formerly diversified economy was slowly transformed into a mono-economy of tourism. The number of tourists grew gradually each year letting the inhabitants slowly expand their businesses as well.

Yet the municipality wasn't bothered by this random development and radical landscape transformations. They were focused on the possibility of the economic growth. Due to this tourist boom – with its loosely regulated additions of small apartments and rooms, as opposed to the planned hotel complexes of the past – "apartmanizacija" spread. Unresolved legal disputes continue to hamper investment in Croatia today, while less welcoming local planning authorities impose very strict limits on construction activity. Therefore, the primary problem, at the time of writing this piece, is not so much the major tourism developments but the random sprawl of smaller private residences.

Unfortunately, the process of uncontrolled touristic investments is still visible today and not only on a small scale. A mammoth apartment complex has been proposed, offering golf resort as an excuse to give the urban plan the title of "Sports and recreation centre with a golf course and a tourist complex" in area of Srđ in Dubrovnik. The proposed plan is enormous - it encompasses an area of the Srđ plateau more than twenty times as large as the historical centre of Dubrovnik, and totally disrespects the actual spatial plans for the region. Although according to the valid spatial plan for the County, the land on Srđ is a building area outside of a settlement, located in a notably valuable protected landscape, and anticipated and planned specifically for sports and recreation facilities, yet somehow the project of the mega-apartment resort with golf course as a minor facility is expected.

The opposition to the proposed luxury golf course resort on the hill of Srđ overlooking the UNESCO town Dubrovnik resulted in the Citizens' Initiative "Srđ is Ours" that became symbol of the resistance to mismanagement in spatial policy.

The citizens' initiative "Srđ is ours" and the NGOs Friends of the Earth Croatia and Zelena Akcija (Green Action) kept fighting for years (since 2011) and has let to a referendum held in April 2013. Even though, 85 % of Dubrovnik citizens were against of the project, the referendum failed because of to low turnout.

Finally in February 2017 "Srđ is ours" has proved before the court the illegality of the project of "apartmenizacja" of Srđ. Although the initiative has won the battle, the war of illegal touristic investments is still on.

Germany

Common rooms

The "service" sector of the residential buildings contained the premises that could not be incorporated functionally into flats: coal cellars in the basement mirrored by drying areas and lumber rooms in the attic, with laundry and ironing rooms usually situated on the ground floor. The assignment and upkeep of these premises were among the manifold duties of the concierge. Common spaces were created on the wave of improving living conditions in the post-communist realities of the former Eastern Bloc, and it was also very much related to the policy of the changing roles in the family and the allowing of women to go to work (on the same wavelength were established canteens, milk bars, Crèches and kindergartens). This is, in spite of appearances, a very important topic; in comparison with Western Europe, many women from this part of Europe were active.

Unfortunately, in most of the post-communist countries like Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, one of the free market's repercussions is the buying out of these common rooms and their subsequent conversion into flats. This way the co-op gets more income because they are increasing the renting space – again money rules

the market. However, a tendency has started to change the thinking of this matter. People have realized that these ideas for sharing in communist buildings might be quite handy.

One of many examples of such investment, proposing up to 10% of shared spaces, is Berlin's Coop Housing at River Spreefeld, which was designed by the collaborative team of Carpaneto Architekten, Fatkoehl Architekten and BARarchitekten in 2013. A low-cost residential building open to both the neighbourhood and city, with a strong percentage of shared and communal spaces that proposed a joint ownership for long-term affordable rent. The individual and communal terraces offer a much-used compensation for the "loss" of open spaces to the public. Moreover, the common spaces take up to 10% of the whole surface: guest rooms, fitness, salon, play areas, storage, laundry, terraces and a music and youth room. In addition to conventional units, there are six cluster apartments that provide a communal living structure for groups of 4 to 21 people where the inhabitants share a bathroom, kitchen, living room and a terrace. The ground floor is largely open to the public and includes a carpentry

workshop, a catering kitchen, studios, a day care centre and a co-working space. Available to non-residents are Option Rooms – unassigned, unfinished spaces for community, social or cultural projects.

The residential population is quite diverse. It is multigenerational and multicultural, which was made possible by people both with and without money. In exchange for the required equity capital, users could carry out needed construction work within their dwellings on-their-own. Rents start at a level on par with government subsidized housing, without having received this subsidy which has helped many of the Spreefeld residents, who could not otherwise afford to live in the city centre under today's conditions. As planned from the start, participation has focused on collective concerns, uses and spaces.

New Cooperatives – Looking Back, Looking West

KRYSTYNA SZURMAŃSKA

Activists who are trying to revive the spirit of cooperativism in Central Europe operate in a unique context, created by the convergence of the region's turbulent history and an influx of ideas from the West

The statistics on the number of cooperatives operating in Central Europe seem encouraging. According to the 2016 "Power of cooperation" report, cooperatives are widespread throughout all the countries of the region. In Poland, the number of cooperative members is estimated at 8 million, which means that one in five Poles belongs to a cooperative. In Hungary, housing cooperatives consist of over 700 thousand members, which indicates that about 8% of Hungarians live in cooperative housing, a far bigger proportion than in Western Europe. At the same time, every edition of the European Social Survey shows that the countries of Central Europe are generally the ones where the fewest respondents are voluntary members in organisations or agree that "most people can be trusted." The 2014 edition reveals that this statement is approved by a mere 16% of Poles and 23% of Czechs, while in the Western Europe those numbers are several times higher, reaching as much as 70% in Denmark and 66% in Finland.

If Central Europeans do not trust one another and are unwilling to participate in organisations, how can they have so many cooperatives? The answer lies in the history of the region, which was greatly shaped by communism. Most of the existing cooperatives are remnants of the previous socio-economic system and have little to do with their Western counterparts. In the communist era, cooperatives were large top-down organisations, heavily bureaucratised and tightly controlled by the state. When communism ended, the laws on cooperatives underwent numerous changes which were aimed at empowering cooperative members, but it did not take into account the fact that people were tired of forced collaboration. As a result, thousands of housing cooperatives and cooperative business underwent commercialisation or privatisation. They remained cooperatives in name only.

HOUSING: NOT WANTING TO 'HAVE YOUR OWN PLACE'

After the fall of communism, Central Europeans began to perceive property ownership as the best way to win a certain freedom and control which seemed unattainable through the housing solutions promoted by the communists. Because cooperatives were associated with communism, it is not surprising that most of them underwent complete or partial privatisation. Those which survived remained stuck in bureaucracy and stagnation. "In the last 3 decades no new housing co-operatives were established and the existing ones didn't develop further. (...) They are not community oriented, have no influence on the housing developments, don't generate any social or cultural developments,"[1] comments Bence Komlósi on the existing housing cooperatives in Hungary.

Bence Komlósi is a co-founder in Community Living (Közösségben Élni), a knowledge transfer hub

which was set up in 2012 by a group of Hungarian architects who started researching housing while studying in Switzerland. They were looking for an alternative to the "top-down housing cooperatives forced [on them] by the socialist regime" and discovered cohousing: "bottom-up initiated housing developments where community-oriented thinking and sharing play a key role."[2] They decided to disseminate the knowledge they had acquired abroad and started to provide mentoring to groups who want to develop cohousing in Hungary, including Rakoczi Kollektiva.

The core of Rakoczi Kollektiva consists of nine young people who currently live in two shared apartments in Budapest. Most of them are no strangers to cooperativism, thanks to their experience with shared apartments and a local cooperative bar called Gólya. For the past six years, they have been searching for a housing solution which would be more stable than renting in the private market. At the moment, they are checking out several municipally-owned buildings which stand abandoned on the outskirts of Budapest. They hope to obtain a long-term lease of one of them, renovate it and turn into a cohousing for about 30 people. They already have a rough architectural concept of their living space. It is supposed to consist of 15 small private units and a significant amount of common space, including a large kitchen for meal sharing.

Rakoczi Kollektiva members know that they do not want to be property owners, but they are not sure

if the legal structure of a cooperative is the best solution: "Municipalities and financial institutions may not have procedures or offers for cooperatives, which aren't popular in Hungary anymore," says Márton Szarvas, one of the group members. When asked about the reasons why Rakoczi Kollektiva tries to bring a new bottom-up, community-oriented type of housing into the country, he says: "Of course, we were inspired to some extent by projects from Western Europe such as squats or cohousing, but we also noticed the problem with affordable housing in Hungary. We realized that in the current market we can't afford to buy any property. And if we managed to buy it, we would be indebted for years with no freedom to move. Therefore, our project has a political purpose: it is supposed to serve as a new model of affordable housing, which can be later adopted in other places in the country." If Rakoczi Kollektiva succeeds, it will be probably the first urban cohousing completed not only in Hungary, but also in Central Europe.

Even though bottom-up initiatives are likely to be replicable, it is hard to say to what extent they can be scaled up in the economic and cultural realities of Central Europe. Zsofia Glatz, an architect and co-founder of the Community Living collective, notes: "In every country where the economic situation is unstable and the fall of communism is relatively recent, most people think that having private property is a basis for one's well-being. Private ownership is a status symbol and one needs to

be very open-minded here to consider cohousing". The economic situation and the cultural attitudes seem to affect not only housing initiatives but all kinds of projects based on the idea of cooperativism which have been emerging in the region, including cooperative businesses.

WORK AND FOOD: COOPERATING FOR A FAIRER TRADE

In Central Europe, new cooperative businesses are rarely inspired by their more experienced counterparts, i.e. cooperatives founded before 1989. Though thousands of them are still in operation, there are just a few where the spirit of cooperativism has not been destroyed either by communism and the subsequent economic transformation. Most are accused of disregarding cooperative values, of excessive bureaucratisation and commercialisation. Such a critique is directed, for example, at the Polish network of grocery stores called "Społem," which was a strong cooperative before World War II, but is now indistinguishable from commercial businesses. Its reputation is so bad that it is even used as an example showing why cooperatives are regarded with suspicion in modern Poland. An illustration of this distrust comes from an article in the Polish press: "After the war, [Społem] was nationalised and cut off from the pre-war values related to autonomy and democratic control of members over their cooperative. That has influenced the current public image of cooperatives."

Interestingly enough, the article is co-authored by members of *Dobrze*, a group responsible for the first cooperative grocery stores established in Poland after 1989.

Dobrze was created in Warsaw in 2013 as an informal consumer cooperative, connecting consumers with producers of ecological food and implementing principles of cooperativism (e.g. through a democratic decision-making process). Sociologists Aleksandra Bilewicz and Ruta Śpiewak estimate that about 30 groups have been set up since the first consumer cooperative appeared in Poland back in 2010. Because most of them have an informal character, some are ephemeral and, for example, in 2015 only about 15 functioned regularly. Studies indicate that Polish consumer cooperatives prefer acting informally and "having a very loose, leaderless structure" which reflects their more general inspirations and philosophy. Most of their members "are not deeply interested in the cooperative tradition and are rather oriented towards Western-driven ideas of ecology, sustainability and social activism."[4] For the time being, *Dobrze* is the only consumer cooperative in Poland which has registered its activities.

These days *Dobrze* has over 230 members and sells ecological food in two grocery stores which are operated solely by the members (out of whom only seven are employed part-time and the others work three hours a month as volunteers). The premises for the stores are rented at a discounted rate from the Warsaw municipality; *Dobrze* qualifies for a discount because it is registered as a non-profit association. If it had chosen the legal structure of a cooperative, its access to the benefits reserved for non-profits would be much more difficult – the Polish law generally classifies cooperatives as commercial entities, irrespective of whether they actually make any profit. Even when the law is not as impractical as in Poland, it does not mean that people do not have trouble establishing cooperatives. "The lawyers with whom we consulted asked us if we were crazy. They claimed that a cooperative is a stupid anachronism, but eventually it turned out that there were no legal barriers to set up one. Still, the court clerk who accepted our registration was surprised that we

Man from Hungarian Farmers' Cooperative writing down new members

Spolem shop in Warsaw, 1967-1972

Cooperative Dobrze

wanted to create a cooperative, saying that we were the first in years," says Lubomir Luptak, one of the founders of the Inkognito cooperative cafe, which is based in Pilzno.

Inkognito is one of only three cooperative cafes created in the Czech Republic after 1989 (the two others operate in Prague and Brno). Its history goes back to 2014 when five academics decided to buy a cafe and use it as a space to pursue the interests they could not explore in the world of academia. Now, they not only run a cafe with fair trade beverages (such as a beer from a local microbrewery which employs handicapped people), but also organize cultural events, sell books and provide photography services. The cooperative currently consists of eight members who do not get any money for the time they devote to the cafe. They do, however, employ bartenders. Thanks to the fact that they do not support themselves through the cooperative, they can offer better working conditions to their employees. "We can afford wages which are a bit higher than usual, with proper contracts and insurance," says Lubomir.

When asked what he sees as the main barriers to the development of cooperative businesses in the Czech Republic, Lubomir points to the difficult economic situation: "If we did this for profit, we would have to squeeze our employees very hard and avoid taxes in order to be able to survive. That seems to be the norm in pubs and cafes I know of – tax avoidance, minimum wage, no contracts, no tips, exploitation par excellence." His observations support the hypothesis that cooperativism is hindered in Central Europe not only by the culture or the law, but also by the economy. For the time being, cooperative businesses find it difficult to succeed in highly competitive markets and many survive thanks to volunteer work. However, it is likely that their situation will improve as Central Europeans become wealthier and more of them can afford ecological and fair trade products which cooperatives have on offer.

If cooperatives do indeed become more popular in Central Europe, it will mean a revival of the movement which flourished in the region before World War II, especially in 1920s and 1930s. Back then it led to the creation of tens of thousands of cooperative housing societies, cafes, grocery stores, credit unions, manufacturing businesses and even power plants. These days its energy comes to a large extent from the West, but, nonetheless, it has the potential of showing that Edward Abramowski, one of the founders of cooperativism in Central Europe, was right saying that: "the significance of cooperativism lies in developing creative freedom and being a breeding ground for real democracy."[5]

1   Bence Komlósi, Living Democracy – Bottom up initiatives for sustainable Housing Developments in Budapest – Housing Co-operatives as potential Tools, 2013.

2   Zsófia Glatz, Bence Komlósi, Co-Housing Knowledge Transfer for a Sustainable and Resilient Housing Future - the Community Living Hub in Hungary, 2015.

3   Monika Kostera, Adam Markuszewski, Justyna Szambelan, Organizować po nowemu: Kooperatywa "Dobrze" in: "Krytyka Polityczna", 2015.

4   Aleksandra Bilewicz, Ruta Śpiewak, Enclaves of activism and taste: Consumer cooperatives in Poland as alternative food networks, 2015.

5   Edward Abramowski, Znaczenie spółdzielczości dla demokracji, 1906.

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photo M. Babinčák

IARE

The Alliance Old Market Hall

Bratislava

The Alliance Old Market Hall (Aliancia Stará tržnica - o.z.) is a civic association founded in 2012 with the aim to revitalise the then-abandoned and closed historical building of The Old Market Hall in the centre of Slovakia's capital, Bratislava. We have been in charge of the building since September 2013 and have gradually turned it into a modern urban centre, which provides space for various markets as well as cultural events. It is a unique project in the sense that the building belongs to the Capitol City of Slovakia – Bratislava, but the municipality lacked the resources – both financial and personal – to be able to run the building. It is not typical in Slovakia for civic projects to be successful and not many believed that the city's deputies would actually support the project and give us a chance to realise it. Furthermore, our activities have also catalysed progress for the whole surrounding area, with the revitalization of the square in front of the Old Market Hall project as being part of the Shared Cities, and the next step on our journey.

Aliancia Stará tržnica is one of eleven partners co-creating Shared Cities: Creative Momentum project.

The Bratislava Department of Architecture

The Academy of Fine Arts and Design

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Bratislava

Although small, the Bratislava Department of Architecture is an influential school of architecture where students benefit from intensive contact with their pedagogues. The studios of the department offer opportunities of deep immersion in the research of architectonic ideas, methods and techniques. The focus of the Department of Architecture in response to Shared Cities: Creative Momentum project is research on iconic ruins – buildings of cultural and social institutions that when built were projected as palaces shared by the multitude. This concept dictated a distinctive architecture and choice of urban location, but, today, they are in a state of obsolescence. Through collaborating with students, a lecture series as well as workshops, we are exploring the possibilities of how these complex buildings in prominent urban locations could be transformed once again into viable public infrastructures without compromising their architectural qualities. As iconic ruins are a common heritage shared by numerous cities, we do see the potential to examine a specific Central European phenomenon.

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The Bratislava Department of Architecture is one of eleven partners co-creating Shared Cities: Creative Momentum project.

photo G. Schoff

Shared
Cities Creative
Momentum

Contemporary Architecture Centre

Budapest

The Contemporary Architecture Centre (KÉK, Kortárs Építészeti Központ) is an independent architectural cultural centre in Budapest founded in 2006 that aims to bring architecture closer to the wider public. KÉK organizes and hosts domestic and international events including workshops, conferences, debates, exhibitions, festivals, community gardening projects, public talks, urban walks and much more. KÉK's office, located on Bartók Béla Boulevard, also functions as a co-working space. One of our current projects, *Working with the City*, is run within the Shared Cities: Creative Momentum program of the European Union, and it is a professionally oriented, five-day long workshop and event series in Budapest that focuses on the relationship between urban institutions and organizations – such as churches, schools, museums, exhibitions halls, NGOs, etc. – and between the communities and neighbourhoods the institutions are embedded in. How can urban institutions strengthen their ties with local communities and with other local institutions? How can their cultural and economic impact on their surrounding be measured and maximized? What challenges are they facing physically, culturally and economically today? Such questions were put on the table at our first edition held this April that consisted of an international symposium with speakers from Austria, Serbia and Slovakia, followed by a three-day long workshop series for our institutional partners, and various programs open to the public. While the event is planned to take place annually, our aim in the future is to expand the programme to related events thorough out the year.

Allotment Gardening For Everyone

PAUL CETNARSKI, *Illustrated by* JAGA SŁOWIŃSKA AND OLGA DEMIDOVA

Each allotment garden colony, each garden and each shed is a personal or communal self-expression. The comparison of post-communist Europe – like Poland, the Czech Republic or Slovakia – with the countries like Germany or France only proves that despite any original differences in meaning and usage, the gardens have become a common urban language for the whole of Europe

The unifying attribute of allotment gardeners is the fact that everyone can become one. One does not have to be an urban planner to set up an allotment garden colony; likewise, agricultural knowledge is not needed to maintain a garden, nor is any technical qualification necessary to build a shed. This simplicity of becoming an allotment gardener is the foundation of the movement's diversity.

And what is the key to understanding gardens in Central Eastern Europe? The peak of the movement happened during the era of state socialism, as a remedy for market shortages in the planned economy. The limited access to apolitical activities, travel restrictions and the general narrow possibilities of unrestricted activities made gardening popular in the 50's and 60's. What seems to be the most important factor, and pretty often forgotten, is that during that time, allotment gardens were a resemblance of the non-existent private property, which is why the current state of the gardens is so controversial. Since they sustained the change of governmental systems, the principal rules of the privately-owned gardens are, nowadays, understood in a complete different way. These former dreams of the community have become blind spots for contemporary cities.

Nevertheless, it seems that the allotment gardens were always performing as de facto democratic phenomena, where *a will* is all it would take to become a gardener. And now, almost 30 years since the dissolution of the Berlin Wall, allotment gardens are still where they were, even though they have gone through significant changes. Surprisingly, the political or economic transformations are of minor significance. It is the social perspective where these entities have had an actual impact, which is key to understanding these curiosities. That is to say, the only one way to truly comprehend the current state of allotment gardening is to recollect each and every angle that shapes these unique communities.

LIFESTYLE MANIFESTATION

Estonia's gardens are probably the closest in form to the Russian *давать*, davat, which means to give)[1]. As in all post-communist countries — the Estonian gardens boomed during the times of food scarcity. Recently, they have regained their original uses as tools for improving city life and providing leisure space for urbanites.

In a different sense, but also culturally-linked, the allotment gardens for Latvians have a very special meaning. Agriculture helped the country to develop in times of recession and became the pride of the nation. The gardens created during that time lost their core role of

supplying food and became a manifestation of living and working with the land in urban environments. Nowadays, the allotment gardens are present in all Latvian cities and their structure, location and function has nation-wide similarities; the citizens are proud and responsible gardeners.

Similar to the Latvians, the Slovenians consider their allotment gardens as an expression of their preferred lifestyle. Despite living in times of growing urbanization, they are still keen on cultivating the land. However, their two main types of gardens vary significantly from one another: some use them for organic farming and increasing the diversity of plants in the region while others take the form of classical agriculture with clearly defined vegetable beds.

THE GROWING TREND OF SUSTAINABILITY

Recently, allotment gardening has been presented as a tool to introduce sustainability into our cities. The current state of the Czech Republic gardens is a perfect example, where it would be challenging to find examples of gardening for profit. The whole movement is strongly focused on encouraging sustainability and

decreasing any adverse environmental impact, which is beneficial not only to gardeners themselves, but to the overall city as well. Czech citizens have found a balanced way of expressing their gratitude toward the city that gave them a chance to cultivate a small plot of land.

Similar situations can be seen in Hungary where allotment gardens are becoming popular instruments to increase awareness of our ecological footprints. Even though it sounds obvious, these garden initiatives, through their simplicity and flexibility, are targeted towards citizens to help them become conscientious urban dwellers. The ideal example, a project called 'Community Gardens' – conducted by the Contemporary Architecture Centre of Hungary – uses allotment gardening typology to reach as many Budapest citizens as possible, raising awareness of sustainability among the population.

EXTENDING THE LIVING ROOM

Allotment gardens also have their intimate side for users. The booming urban development lead to the prefabricated blocks of flats that used to be a remedy for housing demands but are nowadays questioned on the quality of life they provide. For example, the Polish

Illustrator – Olga Demidova

gardens became outdoor extensions, opportunities for those living in these concrete towers to have access to a slice of land and grass. Paradoxically, the growth of the cities increased the need for garden space, which is visible especially around existing and newly built settlements, where the distance to gardens and their availability seems to play an ever more important role. This situation is not unique to Poland, however.

"Garden colonies", the name they go by in Slovakia, are strongly linked to the prefabricated blocks of flats. Likewise to Poland, the soaring urbanization and increased pollution strengthened the need for citizens to have their own green space, and it seems to be the primary reason of their existence. In Serbia, it is even more visible; even though the legal status of allotment gardening is still not fully regulated,people have started to occupy the lands illegally. The existing gardens in the city are mostly formed by bottom-up initiatives. They are located close to the apartments of the gardeners and disregard any official "ownership" of the land. Surprisingly, those illegal gardens have often existed for over 30 years and are socially accepted by the majority of city dwellers.Nonetheless, initiatives like the Serbian "Gardening Plot" (Baštalište) are trying to establish and promote a more planned method of allotment gardening.

ALLOTMENTS IN WESTERN EUROPE

Does allotment gardening in Central Eastern Europe really differ from Western Europe? One might say that the former Eastern-Bloc countries are 30 years behind democratic countries. Well... if we look at the example of France where a lot of work was done to cease public anxieties about aesthetic and planning values of allotment gardeners (including the involvement of Renzo Piano in designing a tool shed!), it seems about right. Nowadays, allotment gardens in France are well-crafted, suburban spaces that are planned by professionals and serve a broader audience than the gardeners themselves. Jardins familiaux, as it is called in France, has become a tool to optimise cost for public parks. When it was evaluated, 15–70 euros is needed to set up every square meter of park; if it includes allotment gardens — the price drops to 20–28 euros. Gardeners work along with other citizens to maintain the quality of their shared urban space.

In comparison, Germany – the hub of the allotment movement in Europe – the city gardens have undergone a rebirth. In 2011, at the former Tempelhof airport, animportant initiative, "Allmende Kontor", was held and aimed to establish communication between the gardeners and city activists. On the 5000 sqm plot, almost 900 allotments were created. The key point of that initiative was to establish formal and informal learning about the nuances of the gardening movement. Here gardeners teamed-up with professionals to streamline their passion together and to utilise their knowledge for developing urban space.

While the above has focused on the differences between Western and Central European allotments, in practice they are quite similar. The small distinction is that the involvement of professionals in the movement in the post–communist regions is still in its nascency, while in other countries we can see that this is already a well-established relationship. Regardless of the political history, the aforementioned examples show that the gardens are a great tool for citizens to act in accordance with their beliefs, to enrich their experience of living in an urban environment. The gardens' qualities are the pure embodiment of the individual needs and desires of an area. Each garden colony, each allotment garden and each shed is a personal or communal self-expression. The comparison of post-communist Europe – like Poland, the Czech Republic or Slovakia – with the countries like Germany or France only proves that despite any original differences in meaning and usage, the gardens have become a common urban language for the whole of Europe.

One more thing worth noting — the popularity of allotment gardening is so high because it requires no professional skills and costs gardeners almost nothing. For cities, it's a chance to balance their maintenance expenses and allows them to transform land that would not be possible to use in any other way. But the paradox of allotment gardening is pretty straight forward — the more gardens a city has the more generous it seems to be, but the more space allotment gardeners occupy, the more space is excluded from the rest of the city dwellers. To exaggerate this issue, the current spatial status of allotment gardens is not clear. Even though the space is not owned by the gardeners, it has limited accessibility for the other citizens. The emerging examples of collective gardening in countries like Hungary (and many others) shows that there is a slowly shaping trend of open garden space.

To maintain balance, Central Eastern European gardeners will have to start opening up their urban oases for the rest of the citizens.

1   F. Galparsoro, A. Maria, *COST Action Urban Agriculture Europe: Comparative study on urban agriculture. Germany, Spain and Estonia, Aachen, Germany, 2014.*

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Shared Cities Creative Momentum

HARE

The Association of Belgrade Architects

Belgrade

The Association of Belgrade Architects was established in 1960 as a section of the Union of Engineers of Serbia. Our main activities aim to promote the implementation of contemporary scientific, cultural and professional knowledge, standards and contents in architecture. One of our main activities is the Belgrade International Week of Architecture – an annual festival that was founded in 2006 and organised by the ABA and the Cultural Centre of Belgrade (CCB). The festival encourages and promotes intercultural dialogue, transnational cooperation, citizen participation and mobility from its beginnings. With the development of two experimental URBAN HUB projects for the improvement of common urban spaces through neighbourhood participation, BINA wants to explore opportunities for carrying out the proclaimed "right to the city" in Belgrade. The knowledge that will be acquired during these projects will be used for mobilizing both experts and citizens towards collaboration in the city making.

photo P. Hajska

Goethe-Institut

Prague

Besides promoting the study of German, the Goethe-Institut encourages international cultural exchanges by organising programmes of events and contributing to various festivals and exhibitions across the globe. With a network of locations, cultural societies, reading rooms and exam and language learning centres, these German institutes have played a central role in promoting the cultural and educational policies of Germany for over 60 years. As the Goethe-Institut has 159 centres worldwide, the exchanging of ideas, the transferring of knowledge and the sharing of good practices between cities is why it was drawn to Shared Cities: Creative Momentum in the first place. You can meet the SCCM team every Tuesday in Foyer2 – a unique public space inside the beautiful art-nouveau building of the Goethe-Institut in Prague. Designed by the renowned Berlin architecture group ifau, Foyer2 is a shared space for co-working, a lounge for cultural events and a place for creative meetings with a stunning view of Prague Castle.

Goethe-Institut is one of eleven partners co-creating Shared Cities: Creative Momentum project.

photo Mindspace

Mindspace

Budapest

Founded in 2011, Mindspace Non-profit Ltd. is an independent NGO based in Budapest that aims to create more liveable cities. Our main goals are motivating citizens through cultural urban projects, focusing on developing smart cities, increasing the level of sustainability and using the tools of participation and gamification. Our main projects are: Budapest in 100 words (a story-writing contest for citizens); Danube Flow – Danube calling! (a series of events that uses experience-based awareness raising and non-formal education to draw attention to the values of the Danube) and the Smart City Budapest Initiative (a display of smart city projects in Budapest). Within the Shared Cities: Creative Momentum and Mindspace arena, a cultural pop-up space was opened in the heart of Budapest's Eighth District. This open space allows visitors to interact with an enormous map which displays events, organized by Mindspace, about the cultural aspects of the district. We believe in the power of facilitation through which we can help various groups of citizens and institutions find their best solutions to issues in the neighbourhood that they all share. We also cooperate with the Contemporary Architecture Centre (KÉK) by facilitating their workshops and organizing our own, later in the year. In the frame of the SCCM project, we are working together on research into the liveability of urban landscapes with practical workshops to understand and translate to everyday citizens what it means to "improve the quality of life".

The Housing Estate as a Community?

KAROLÍNA JIRKALOVÁ

It would make sense to view the housing estate as an autonomous urban environment, and take these gigantic open spaces as both a challenge and an opportunity

Within Czech society, the collective imagination of the housing estate still remains deeply influenced by a variety of longstanding clichés. Most widespread is the dystopian impression of the estate as an incomprehensible mass of anonymous and utterly identical tower blocks, set in a hostile landscape devoid of historical memory, where the inhabitants are strangers to each other and only come into contact unwillingly on the overcrowded buses heading in towards the city centre. To imagine that, in this setting, one could find such phenomena as neighbourhood grill-parties, mobile cafes parked among the super-blocks and teenagers coming together to perform amateur theatre might seem taken from a mediocre propaganda film. Yet, this is the reality, even if the aesthetics of the environment are hardly idyllic.

Indeed, the commonly held stereotype of the prefabricated estate was overturned as early as the 1980s by sociologist Jiří Musil in his book *Lidé a sídliště* [People and Estates]; when on the basis of opinion surveys, he confirmed that neighbourly relations on housing estates did not appear worse than in other types of urban development. However, his findings did not do much to shift public opinion. Moreover, the image grew darker in the 1990s, when the housing estates took on the unfortunate moniker of 'rabbit-hutches' and many sociologists feared their transformation into socially excluded ghettos. Even more extreme were the voices predicting that the estates would eventually be demolished and replaced with "better" buildings.

Considering that, today, roughly one in four residents of the Czech Republic live in housing estates, we can see that these harbingers of doom were over-zealous in the forecasts and no demolition has taken place. As note to its maturity, the society has slowly come to realise that the heritage of prefabricated housing is a legacy that it must learn to live with. In other words, we need to examine and uncover its overlooked qualities, while admitting their weak points and attempting to compensate for these deficiencies. The panel building has become a major theme for academics to explore; it was initiated by artists who found the anonymous estates captivating; their interest was then followed by historians of both art and architecture, and only after this slight delay, did sociologists and social anthropologists follow suit. Significantly, the residents themselves have begun to take an interest in 'their' estates, and from this a different picture has started to come into focus. No longer should they be viewed from one collective viewpoint, but rather as hundreds of specific residential areas with their own inhabitants, histories, problems and opportunities.

This unignorable growth in interest in the housing estate is also linked to the generation known as 'Husák's Children' – born during the 1970s and 1980s while Gustáv Husák was the Czechoslovak president, and who are now a driving force in the Czech culture. A significant number of this group spent their childhoods on prefabricated housing estates, which at this time began to arise on the edges of nearly all of the country's larger towns.

Le Corbusier, who is considered the father of housing estates, was responsible for creating the concept of self-sufficient dwelling units surrounded by green spaces. The use of prefabricated elements made construction fast and economic. These advantages were quickly recognized in the communist bloc. Since the 1960s, huge housing estates were built in response to the enormous post-war devastation and desperate need for inexpensive housing. Today, in the so-called New Union countries (UE-13), an estimated 30-40 million people live in housing estates (34% of the population), but the situation of these communities is often very different than in Western Europe. Although the technologies used in construction often came from, for example, the GDR, the apartment blocks were not always built with the same, meaning higher-quality, materials. Today, many of them require renovation. Furthermore, unlike the countries of the old European Union, mass privatisation has also occurred in the region – e.g. 95% of the population of the housing estate Havanna in Budapest is now privately-owned.

Perhaps the most important and strangely neglected aspect is that these housing estates are far from identical

photo J.Čejka

↑ *Jižní Město,*
Prague 1982

→ *Destrict XIV,*
Budapest

AWAKENINGS IN JIŽNÍ MĚSTO

A typical example of these settlements is Prague's massive Jižní Město (South Town), best known for the inhospitable welcome it gave its first residents as was captured in Věra Chytilová's film *Panelstory* (1979). Hence, it is only appropriate to begin our investigation into the community activities among the prefabricated tower blocks here, in the most 'estate-like' of all housing estates, and the one where the reality of mass housing production perhaps diverged most widely from the original urban plans than anywhere else.

The somewhat soporific atmosphere began to grow livelier through the theatrical experiences of Jiří Sulženko and David Kašpar. From 2007 to 2012, they managed the civic association 'Kulturní Jižní Město' and were entrusted with the management of the Zahrada (a garden/ cultural centre) and the gallery in the Chodovská tvrz - a medieval fortress converted into a Renaissance manor and one of the area's few historic landmarks. In between the massive concrete monoliths, their 'street festival', entitled *Street for Art*, was just short of a revelation, combining interpersonal encounters of local residents with displays of contemporary artwork. Indeed, many of the residents joined in, though the majority of visitors travelled there from the more central districts of Prague. Likewise, the gallery in the Chodovská tvrz, under the guidance of curator Helena Blašková began displaying, in place of more popular favourites, works by contemporary Czech artists. *'You can feel a kind of uprootedness here'*, Blašková noted in an interview for Artalk, *'which is furthered by the popular belief that everything important takes place in the city centre. Basically, this is where things do take place, but it doesn't have to be like this'*. Chodovská tvrz certainly was, at least for a brief period, somewhere where it made sense to travel for a quality exhibition.

Nonetheless, creating a genuine strategy for the development of cultural and community life in Jižní Město was never truly achieved by Jiří Sulženko and his associates. The major reason was a lack of understanding on the part of the district government, which continually reduced its financial support for these projects. Nor did the residents of the state entirely accept these activities as their own. Evidently, the interspersion of contemporary art among the rigid structures and surrounding space of the housing estate was too abrupt and created a feeling of discontinuity.

Jižní Město is also the site of a second story, one of local sociability, as it was described by social geographer Martin Veselý. The focus here is the 'memorial forest' of Litochleby – a mature linden alley which leads to the war memorial honouring the one-time inhabitants of the (no longer extant) villages of Litochleby and Chodov. In 2010, the district government decided to sell this land for development: the site was to be used for an office complex and the monument moved several metres away. In response, there arose an entirely unexpected wave of protests from individual residents as well as local associations. Perhaps surprising to some, the arguments employed were not only in defence of the 'forest' as a place where people like to walk and escape from the prefabricated stereotype; on the contrary, the chief claim was that it formed one of the few places displaying the lineage and local memory of the area: the original villages now long absorbed into the outskirts of Prague. This lack of anchorage and weak identification with the place was an unintended outcome of the uniform physical environment of the housing estate, and worse still, it formed a vacuum of character by erasing awareness to its historic ties.

When the residents of Litochleby became conscious of the fact that their sole connection to this history was under threat, they came together to defend it. In doing so, they gained a sense of identity as 'citizens of Litochleby' and defined themselves as a local society against the 'outsiders' intending to take away 'their' memorial forest. And only thanks to this exceptional groundswell of public engagement was it possible, in the end, to save the Litochleby Forest.

WHEN YOU SAY 'ESTATE'...

Can we draw upon these examples to derive any general contours of community life on Czech housing estates? Is it based on different foundations than social ties in other types of urban construction? Or can we even speak of the prefabricated housing estates as a separate urban environment with unified features?Let's take a look at what the 'housing estate' actually means in Czech society ...

Perhaps the most important and strangely neglected aspect is that these housing estates are far from identical. They differ in the time of creation, locality, scale, architectural and planning quality as well as their composition of residents. Housing estates were built from the end of World War II up until the start of the 1990s. At first, they used traditional masonry but with standardised

designs and several prefabricated components; then from the end of the 1950s on, fully prefabricated concrete-slab elements replaced the brickwork. Structures assembled from these components, the 'standard systems', gradually evolved: the span of the panels used, the quantity of parts and the variability of their use were all periodically altered. So too, the urban planning of the estates changed over time, from the first post-war projects where the architects drew inspiration from Scandinavian residential quarters to the later rationalised, almost impersonal, compositions. The harsh Stalinist practices of the 1950s had their reflection in a turn toward the Soviet method of socialist realism with classically-decorated and arranged 'ensembles'; conversely, the political thaw of the 1960s witnessed generously open

urban plans and a new interest in the quality of public spaces and buildings, if still on gigantic scales. After the Prague Spring was crushed by the Soviet invasion of 1968, the new regime was faced with even greater demand for new housing; at the same time, architects found themselves fully subordinated to economic and technical demands. Finally, the late Socialism of the 1980s witnessed primarily the arrival of post-modernist tendencies.

Housing estates also differ in their size, from smaller groupings of a few buildings to the literal satellite towns for tens of thousands of residents, and once again, differences can be discerned in the relationships with the earlier built settlements. This disparity also spread to the quality of planning, in both architecture and urban design.

photo Praha 14 kulturní

Černý Most,
Prague

In certain estates, we find well-conceived buildings, varied and comprehensive urban structures, pleasant and inviting public spaces and artworks. Elsewhere, there may only be uniformity, parking areas and trampled grass. And, of course, the residents of the estates are hardly a uniform group: their age, social and educational composition differs greatly based on the construction period, location and architectural quality of each separate area.

SPACE AS A CHALLENGE

Still, there does exist a kind of shared imagining of a 'typical housing estate' – an extensive residential area of large prefabricated apartment blocks and grouped public facilities built between the 1960s and 1980s. Though such estates, of course, differ in many respects – most notably their architectural and planning qualities as well as their connections to town centres – they nonetheless do display some clearly shared traits. Most prominent is their shared starting point in Modernist town planning, which creates an impressive spectacle when viewed from above, yet, on the ground level, often leaves the visitor confused with the excess quantities of open space. And generally, these were grandiose and universal 'spaces', not unique and specific 'places'. However, it cannot be said that the composition of freestanding, large-scale apartment blocks surrounded by green areas and vegetation is a kind of historical error or that the sole path to a living city lies through traditional block development. In particular, many housing estates from the late 1960s, when the burden of responsibility still lay with the architects, attest to the fact that even in a Modernist plan, a pleasant neighbourhood can emerge. Moreover, to capitulate entirely to the post-modernist critique of this city-planning method, creates a dead end: no criticisms can ever improve the

environment in which a significant share of the Czech population still lives.

It would make far more sense to view the housing estate as an autonomous urban environment, and take these gigantic open spaces as a challenge and opportunity. Indeed, precisely this oft-critiqued Modernist open space provides the basic quality that the estates' dwellers themselves stress the highest. Thanks to the open plan, there is sufficient vegetation; thanks to their mono-functional residential character, there is quiet; the large areas of land without automotive traffic allow children and adults to spend more time outdoors. Furthermore, the large estates at the edges of cities often directly adjoin protected natural areas in the immediate vicinity. Nonetheless, there are equally blatant disadvantages, primarily the uncertainty and lack of conception of public areas that are neither park nor square nor meadow nor playground. In addition, these unbounded spaces require financially demanding maintenance, which is often neglected and at best limited to regular mowing of the grass. And a purely residential function leads to a depopulation during the working hours, as well as an insufficient network of places for meeting or cultural use.

NOT TO CREATE, BUT TO SUPPORT

It was from this spatial characteristic of the housing estate that David Kašpar drew his own inspiration when he left Jižní Město for another Prague estate, Černý Most, to become director of the NGO 'Praha 14 kulturní'. '*One of the main systematic changes that we provided was that we began to view the public space of the estate as a place that is also cultural infrastructure*' he said in an interview for the journal Smart Cities. Along with the district mayor, Radek Vondra, Kašpar agreed that the aim should not be only a better series of events in the local 'culture-house',

but, more importantly, a long-term change in the atmosphere of the estate as a whole, a renewal of sociability and support for social activities. As a result, they first commissioned in cooperation with social anthropologists a detailed mapping of the local, more or less formal communities, active individuals and institutions. Then, in working discussions with all of these entities, they jointly formulated the themes, possibilities and opportunities of development. '*As an organisation, we don't operate simply by creating culture, but instead by formulating the conditions and environment in which the others can realise it*', added Kašpar in the same interview. '*It's really about a supporting logic*'.

This path can help to alleviate the negative perception among housing-estate residents mentioned earlier by curator Helena Blašková – the sense that everything important takes place elsewhere. Professional support for local activities can give local associations and communities the necessary self-confidence to develop further. Similarly, the same can be said for the connection of individual action groups and organisations into a kind of local community network, which can partially, but definitively, replace the non-existent web of established cultural and social institutions.

Urban anthropologist Michal Lehečka, who works closely with district 14 in Prague, stresses the importance of local stories, of narratives that form local memory. These can be found, in some cases, in the historical elements of the location – as we noted in the case of the 'Litochleby Forest' – yet, at the same time, they can also be slowly reinforced through the micro-stories of the people who have lived on these estates since their original construction. It is for this reason that the coordinators in Prague 14 have supported the creation of a community documentary theatre, drawing from the actual stories and experience of local residents.

For many, David Kašpar's team has embarked on the right path. A disused boiler room in Černý Most, which had served previously as a skatepark, was transformed into the cultural centre 'Plechárna', drawing on the already-present energy of the site for support. In addition, a temporary mobile café was created, to be parked among the tower blocks in the summer months. No less important is cooperation with the local town hall's Institute of Planning and Development, which in a pilot project for the area of a single super-block is searching for methods of how to work with the public space of the estate.

Even in the 1980s, Jiří Musil voiced the proposal that the ideal way towards supporting housing-estate societies and sociability was to bring together professionals and local initiatives. And these can no longer be avoided simply because the estates are still largely inhabited by those who first settled there. It was in the new flats that, during the 1970s and 1980s, young families with small children tended to move; now, the parents are beginning to approach the retirement age themselves. In other words, they are now at a stage of life when people only unwillingly accept new things – particularly if these changes concern the places where they have lived for over three decades.

Every housing estate needs to find its own community key, yet the goal is a common one: a richer cultural and social life as well as the strengthening of local identity. Through these changes in the public mentality, the quality of the physical environment will also be improved.

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Jižní Město, photo J.Cejka

IARE

Paneláci

Czech Republic

One fourth of the population of the Czech Republic lives in housing estates, so it is no wonder that the subject is becoming more and more popular. The Czech trend for housing estates began almost a decade ago with the exhibition Husákovo 3+1 (3 rooms + kitchen – the most popular apartment arrangement in Prague blocks of flats built in the 1970s), and was continued with the publication of the book Paneláci cz 1. 50 sídlišť v českých zemích, a companion piece to a cycle of events entitled "The History of Housing Estates." The catalogue presents a socio-demographic study into each of the six stages of housing estate construction. The authors discuss the changes in resident populations, the size of apartments, the varying structure of the ages and the education of the local communities, following them from the moment when the estates were first built up until today. The book is set to be published in English next year. Many interesting audio and visual materials, as well as interviews, articles and photographs presenting the available data on Czech housing estates can be found on the project's website (www.panelaci.cz, www. vetrelciavolavky.cz). Although most of the information presented in the project has been collected and published for the first time, it is not the only sign that Czechs are interested in the period of the so-called "normalisation." For example, the project Vetřelci a volavky, produced under the supervision of Pavel Karous, also provides a catalogue of sculptures that were created in the 1970s and 1980s in the public space of Czechoslovakia. The photographs can be seen in a photo album published in 2014, as well as on the project's website and Facebook group connecting enthusiasts of this artform.

Medialab

Katowice

The City of Gardens initiative was created on the 1st of February 2016 due to a merger of the Cultural Institution of Katowice – the City of Gardens and the Krystyna Bochenek Cultural Center in Katowice. Its responsibilities, among others, involve cultural, publishing and educational activities as well as organising artistic events. Additionally, the City of Gardens is responsible for the Microgrants programme, which focuses on supporting artistic projects of NGOs and various enterprises involving education and cultural animation, such as Medialab Katowice, the Katowice Bureau of Sound and "Plac na glanc" – a Silesian backyards' revitalisation initiative. One of Medialab's work groups is currently focusing on a project to visualise Katowice's budget. Its main objective is to prepare a database that will allow the public to conveniently check, among other things, how much of the budget does Katowice spend on culture, what types of cultural activities are receiving the most funding and whether the city's budget for these projects has increased in recent years. The visualisation is also designed to compare Katowice's figures to other Polish cities and make the budget data more comprehensible to residents. First, the workgroup will develop an open budget data repository for the last few years. Then, using a project approach, the members will develop a product or service concept for the target audience. In the final stage of work, an online visualisation of the budget will be prepared. The workshop's participants include local government officials, activists, representatives of NGOs, designers, programmers and other people interested in the functioning of the city as well as in data analysis and visualisation.

Katowice, the City of Gardens is one of eleven partners co-creating Shared Cities: Creative Momentum project.

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Prague

reSITE is a global non-profit committed to improving the urban environment and creating liveable and lovable cities through design thinking. Known mainly for its annual international conference and festival held in Prague every June, reSITE inspires people and professionals to unlock and realize the potential of their city. We believe in fostering the collaboration between architecture, urbanism, politics, culture and economics, and we also encourage dialogue and social innovation relative to urban development. We focus on quality public space, civic architecture, the sharing economy and infrastructure. We organize conferences, festivals, workshops, design competitions, urban games, films, bike rides, discussions, exhibitions and public space interventions. Our next event reSITE 2017: In/visible City will take place in Prague's Forum Karlin on June 22-23 and will bring dozens of international speakers including globally renowned architects Kazuyo Sejima, Teddy Cruz and landscape architect Kathryn Gustafson. "We will make the connections visible between the invisible infrastructure that drives real estate, cultural and economic development in smarter cities," Martin Barry explains the theme of the conference.

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reSITE is one of eleven partners co-creating Shared Cities: Creative Momentum project.

VISTULA RIVER PARK
Inspiring Polish social communication and cooperation using Dutch methods

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SYLWIA MIKOŁAJCZAK, *RDH Urbanists Architects*

Representatives of Polish businesses, academia and the government have formed a coalition for the development of a section of the country's largest river. The Vistula River Park will introduce a model for knowledge sharing and building cross-sectoral partnerships more effectively in Poland

The Vistula River Park is a pilot project currently being implemented in the Polish Mazowieckie Voivodeship under the governmental program of the Netherlands' *Partners for International Business (PIB)*. This novel concept combines the activities from the water sector, urban planning, environment and economic development. The project covers an area of about 1868 sq. km of agricultural land that includes unique natural environment, a hydrographic network, a national park, service and production facilities, recreational areas and cultural heritage areas surrounding the Vistula River. The area is close to the Warsaw metropolis (3 million inhabitants) and two urban centers – Płock (over 100 thousand inhabitants) and Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki (nearly 30,000).

The main objective of *Vistula River Park* is to create opportunities for building local partnerships while stimulating the economic, urban and social development of the region. Once completed, it is expected to attract young entrepreneurs while those already professionally active in the area will be more motivated to stay. Among others, the plan includes unique opportunities located along the riverside.

The *Vistula River Park* project can be a good example of combining design activities with the process of building an effective partnership and creating an organization capable of managing the future implementation of the proposed changes. We would like to highlight the sharing of culture which has had in this process both local and international (Polish-Dutch) dimensions. Proven Dutch practices of cooperation, knowledge and experience in sharing between representatives of different sectors have been transferred onto Polish soil.

NO ONE IS A PROPHET IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY

This project illustrates the challenges facing the post-communist Polish society in implementing multi-sectoral cooperation and participation. An interesting comment to the story of *Vistula River Park* is the statement that *no one is a prophet in their own country*. The feedback on our habits, our daily or historical dilemmas and events, from people looking at our local reality from the outside is a great opportunity for learning. Although the observers are not always fully aware of local realities, they can assess the situation from a distance, without emotion. The same is true when working on *Vistula River Park*. Our foreign partners often tell us: *Let's keep it simple, do not over think it... Do not complicate, it's a simple task or solution..., Simplify and not formalize too many procedures..., Believe it can work..., Let's talk about it...*

From the perspective of many years of cooperation and implementation of projects with the Dutch partners, what I value the most is their openness to new ideas, directness and simplicity in searching for solutions, in communication and in their relationship to the building process. This is often the foundation for the most advanced projects and innovations – and not just the ones related to the water sector, which undoubtedly are the core of what the Netherlands offers. The Dutch partners have also created a model approach based on collective respect for the space they work in and the culture of its development.

SHARED IDENTITY

The development of the city and the region is a matter best conceived in decades. Therefore, when we are making decisions and plans, we need to keep in mind that most of them will affect not us but our children and grandchildren. What kind of cities will we pass on to next generations? This is a question not only for politicians but for active citizens and the civil sector as well. Projects that do not have the support of a well-functioning organizational structure of a government office, those that are not planned with the cooperation of willing civil servants and those which are not based on sound urban planning or are not the result of long-term decisions are always difficult to implement even with state-of-the-art funding models. We have tried to keep this all in mind while working on the *Vistula River Park* project. To be successful, we have tried to consider and promote areas which can unite people from the numerous sectors this project will affect.

The culture of sharing has played a major role in the process of developing local identities and the ways in which we perceive them. Do we see it only through the prism of the house fence, the street we go through every day, or maybe the part of the city where we like to hang out? How do we perceive our freedom? Is it only in terms of victorious battle scenes, or perhaps in the context of reflection, on our real involvement in the life of our community, our city, our country? What does the notion of sharing mean in our society, in our daily work; how does it affect our duties, the roles and tasks assigned to our position? Whom do we consider our most important partner in this process? Finding the balance between our past, our present and our future determines our identity and the identity of the place where we live. It also defines our expectations for the future.

The pace of social and economic changes that any society undergoes requires from us a constant adaptation, and sometimes even preparatory work to meet the changing expectations and social needs, especially in view of the lack of civic involvement, which is currently one of the major challenges faced by most of our cities. On the one hand, some of us want to actively participate in the life of our city, to have a say in its appearance, functions and quality of life that it offers. After decades of communism, during which the Polish society was forced to live with someone else deciding for them, this is a welcome change. On the other hand, even if today we define ourselves as an active and open society, at the same time some of us opt to live outside its core essence and structure. Being a part of a metropolitan community, a source of pride for some, could be a problem and even a

drama for others because of the disappearance of the local climate, the blurring of identity, and the destruction of structures, architecture or social relationships that have been built and defined us over the past.

Feeling "at home" in your home and neighbourhood requires more than having a roof over your head and a bed to sleep in; it is more than just nice trees along our streets or available parking spaces nearby. The sharing of culture also manifests itself as a noticeable common effort and drive to build a genuine local community and to be an active part of it. This applies equally to older people, young people, NGOs, and business and housing communities alike. While each of these players has its own purpose and expectations in the city, each of them speaks its own language, all of them can and should be equal partners in a joint effort to build their public space together.

THE DEEPER DIMENSION OF PARTNERSHIP

Concepts such as social participation, consultation or social communication with regard to projects – especially those that are complex and socially sensitive – are treated with some suspicion in Poland. The terms themselves are often being abused, so many people do not trust the process and are careful with their commitment. Cultural misconceptions or the lack of understanding of the importance of social communication and collaborative processes are major challenges that should lead us to search for new ways to build an active civil society. We need a reliable culture of sharing that will help people see beyond the communist legacy of mistrust towards social commitment, a culture that will gradually rebuild both social relationships and social capital. That requires specific, targeted actions, so that the notion of communication is no longer reduced to discussing investment plans while marginalizing the sociological and social aspects of change, which carries with it the lack of acceptance even for the most ambitious and necessary projects. The essence of cultural sharing lies instead in understanding and accepting the role cooperation plays in social communication.

In the Netherlands, thanks to which we have the ability to conduct the *Vistula River Park* project in Poland, the sharing of culture manifests itself through the exchange of knowledge and cooperation between business, research institutes, the government and through the creation of public-private consortiums between these communities. In recent years, there has been a growing trend there to organize and meet social needs through increased cooperation with the private sector. Such cooperation includes the most important as well as the most expensive areas of development, which is investment activity (road infrastructure, water management, housing, health care, social policy, research and innovation). One of the major factors positively influencing the concentration of the policy of broadening the sphere of cooperation with private entities - apart from the financial ones – is the noticeable change in the society in the perception of the role and expectations of public actors. The government and local authorities in charge of the implementation of public projects are no longer seen by the Dutch as the exclusive supplier of all types of public services. Instead, the

RDH Urbanists Architects, Deltares, Arcadis and Eurolandscape are part of a Dutch-Polish consortium working on the revitalization of the Vistula River from Warsaw to Gdańsk (The Vistula River Park). The subject of cooperation is the development of an integrated spatial approach for the revitalization of the Vistula River. Within this initiative, the best practices of the Dutch are being promoted in a tailor-made approach for Poland. The Dutch consortium is cooperating very closely with the Polish authorities and other relevant stakeholders in the water sector in Poland. Currently, the consortium is focusing on the Mazowieckie Region, which is under the direct influence of the Warsaw Agglomeration. The project is the effect of the Partners for International Business (PiB) program in Poland "Vistula-cooperation towards solutions – Revitalization of the water track MDWE-40 Warsaw-Gdansk".

This project illustrates the challenges facing the post-communist Polish society in implementing multi-sectoral cooperation and participation.

constituents perceive them as mere organizers responsible for creating suitable conditions for other, independent entities to implement these services. The importance of leaving space for innovation – which the public partner should include in these processes and which clearly affects the business strategies and the nature of the partnerships that develop as a result – is strongly emphasised.

In what direction will the Polish society develop? What will be the expectations of future generations? What problems will we face in the future and how to avoid them? What kind of economic, social, urban and environmental setting should be created to prepare the cities and regions for the next decade? The scale of investment needs of local governments and the limits of budgets and the availability of financing investment options will increasingly determine the new forms of cooperation. *Vistula River Park* can therefore be an example of addressing these challenges

and a great area for developing new, innovative forms of cooperation that require both trust and the ability to build lasting partnerships. All the more that, as practice shows, the biggest factors that block or threaten the stability of development in Poland are not always the legal regulations or insufficient budgets. Often, they are the social attitudes, the divergent preferences of different parties, and difficulties in reaching consensus, as well as abandonment, delays, and the shear lack of communication. Although the *Vistula River Park* project has already attracted the attention of serious international partners and institutions, its development may benefit from the Dutch beliefs *"that it can work if we try"* and *"communication is key"*.

Review by **MARTYNA OBARSKA**

Architecture of the VII Day

3779, ca 50%. These numbers describe a social phenomenon that occurred in the architecture of the post-war Poland without which it is impossible to comprehend the culture of this country. 3779 – this is how many churches were built in Poland during the communist period, a number unmatched by any other European country. How was this possible within the orbit of the USSR? It is remarkable when considering that – especially under Khrushchev – fighting religion was official government policy. Who built these churches? Who gave them permission? And how was this church-building boom connected with a major crowdsourcing trend which was up and running in Poland well before it was popular? All these questions are tackled in a fascinating book *Architecture of the VII Day*, published in Polish in 2016.

And now to that second number of importance, about 50% of all of the buildings that appeared in communist Poland were built by the private sector. Such statistics are both exceptional and hard to fathom. After all, it was always presented that, during communism, only

large state construction enterprises were able to build on massive scales...but appearances can be deceiving. In reality, it was the surprisingly abundant private construction sector which propelled the urban sprawl. Many people built houses on their own with the help of relatives and neighbours. This practice was particularly popular in the countryside where communal co-operation was cheaper and easier in general. Furthermore, the need for such entrepreneurship was extensive as the 1950s in Poland was a period of vast reconstruction, following the destruction of the war. Hundreds of thousands of young people migrated from rural to urban areas to find better education and living conditions. More often than not, their first stop was construction sites where they toiled at rebuilding the devastated cities or building anew in the middle of nowhere, such as the district of Nowa Huta in Cracow – the architectural epitome of socialist realism. Far and wide, the country was brimming with domestic migrants practicing their trade––they knew how to build and, despite firmly believing in the slogans of the new regime,

photo J. Snopek

they had been raised traditional Catholics. For them, the split between the church and the communist ideology was incomprehensible.

The Polish authorities were quick to realise that they could not out influence the Catholic Church, the latter holding a particularly strong position in Poland. The Poles moving into brand new socialist realist blocks of flats refused to forgo Sunday mass. The periods when the communist party fought the clergy, particularly after 1956, were followed by a brief thaw as communists turned a blind eye to the activity of the Catholic Church. Essentially, they had no choice after Karola Wojtyła was elected pope in 1978. And thus, Poland was governed by the dichotomy of two independent orders – secular, when Labour Day was massively celebrated on the 1st of May; and religious, when throngs of people turned up to church every Sunday, including communist party members secretly baptising their children. This state of limbo could not but be conducive to a nationwide grassroots church-building boom. Churches were erected as joint efforts from thousands of people working together, every resident contributing to the best of their ability. Even though today most of the churches are architecturally unappealing, the story behind their origin is all the more fascinating. And, looking at the contemporary Poland, it seems that church-building – along with the Solidarity movement – was the last common effort to have united the Poles.

Izabela Cichońska, Karolina Popera, Kuba Snopek: *Architektura VII dnia*, Fundacja Bęc Zmiana, Biuro Festiwalowe IMPART, Wrocław 2016. The *Architecture of the VII Day* served as a basis for one of the ArchDaily's top ten most popular articles last year, and the authors are currently working on the English version of the book.

Review by **JĘDRZEJ BURSZTA**

Berlin Now

In *Berlin Now*, Paul Schneider – a popular German writer (and proud Berliner) – paints a colourful tapestry of a city coalescing into one urban organism after the many years of separation. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 serves as an opening for an intricate and richly detailed exploration of the transformations occurring in the German capital in the last twenty-five years. The first chapters describe the difficult process of bringing back together the Eastern and Western parts of the city. Berlin was in a unique position – architects and urban planners were assigned with the challenging task of designing a new city centre. Their main objective: to create a space that would ultimately bring together two parts of the divided society. The contested history of Potsdamer Platz – with the clashing ideas of different architects and heated public discussion on the future role of the landmark site – perhaps best exemplifies the many difficulties connected with constructing a new narrative for Berlin. As the city opened up for even the most daring experimentations,

the modern history of Berlin's architecture is indeed a fascinating story, explored primarily through case-studies (e.g. Schloss, Berlin Brandenburg Airport). Schneider's insightful book provides a passionate and well-researched story of this ambitious urban planning project, a must-read for architecture aficionados interested in the history of one of Europe's most interesting capitals.

At times, *Berlin Now* also seems like a tender love-letter written to the city. Having lived there since the 1960s, Schneider has been an attentive observant not only of the architectural transformations happening in the newly emerging city but, more importantly, to the growing importance of Berlin as a cultural capital. He traces the early-twentieth century bohemian tradition of street theatres, cabarets, burlesques and variety shows, showing how the city became the home for avant-garde poets, writers and artists. Some of the chapters investigate the city's famous nightlife – the techno scene, numerous night clubs, and the atmosphere of tolerance for sex (and

commercialization of sex life) and with the more recent political activities. The book skilfully combines cultural history with more recent politics, especially when the author characterizes the problems facing ethnic minorities (e.g. the Turkish and Vietnamese populations), or the post-war heritage and how to remember the crimes of World War II. He is not afraid to address such complex issues as contemporary racism and political correctness, as when he discusses the controversial politics of Heinz Buschkowsky, the Neukölln district mayor. *Berlin Now* offers many interesting observations on everyday life in the hipster capital of Europe, focusing on the specific nature of Berlin – a city burdened, but not only defined by

its tragic history. In the end, Schneider's part-reportage, part-memoir presents a perfect introduction to the city, highlighting the multitude of secrets still awaiting urban explorers, while at the same time convincingly arguing that today, Berlin is the indeed the most unique and fascinating capital in Europe.

Peter Schneider, *Berlin Now: The Rise of the City and the Fall of the Wall*, trans. Sophie Schlondorff, Penguin Books, 2014.

Review by MAGDALENA KUBECKA

Common Space: The City As Commons

In the beginning of his book, Stavros Stavrides draws a beautiful metaphor of today's metropolis as an urban archipelago. The islands can build complexes, closed neighbourhoods, barricaded urban areas with restricted public access, shopping malls, and the unexplored seas correspond to the chaotic urban space. The urban sea contains various spaces that potentially escape total surveillance – the urban metro network which is partly organized but, in many aspects, stays out of control; there are slums in the peripheries and many undefined spaces. They are often treated by inhabitants and local authorities as some kind of grey zones, places that need to be reorganized or more controlled. For Stavrides, they are tantamount and crucial – they cannot be totally controlled.

Stavrides takes a firm stance on the capitalist usurpation of common areas in European cities. He presents his political approach defining the liberal power and economy as an invisible controller over how cities shape themselves and grow. According to him, these urban islands appear to be ordered by sovereign power while the urban sea is ordered through traffic rules and unpredictable planning. Private enclaves try to integrate themselves through gentrification. The author seeks for new mechanisms of power that may change the understanding of norms and rules in urban space. Stavrides describes public spaces as primly created by a certain authority which controls them and establishes the rules under which people may use them. Private spaces belong to and are controlled by specific individuals or economic entities that have the right to establish the conditions of use. According to the author, common space remains common when it keeps on destroying the boundaries between private and public.

As an activist, he is fascinated by the collective actions of common space creation. In the Navarinou Park in Athens – a car park converted into a lively urban square and garden – he finds an example of the collective management of space by people from various social

groups. In the community of El Alto in Bolivia - that has organized against the privatization of water through numerous, small-scale actions - he finds the example of the dispersion of power linked with cooperation. As an architect, Stavrides is fascinated by housing experiments in shaping the common. The Alexandras building complex is his example of a shapeless and open – thus important and informal – public space. Built in Athens, it was to be a model settlement for refugees from Asia Minor; it has become a manifestation of Modern architecture. The space around was planned as flexible and unstructured. Formless outdoor space with no defined uses let people show their passion of improvisation. Everyday life came to take place in the stairways, courtyard, in front of doorways and around buildings. Inhabitants transformed the outdoor space into a network of improvised meeting spots, playgrounds, small courtyards and tree-shaded areas.

What Stavrides tries to show in his book is that urban space is an ongoing process that needs to be reproduced every day. For him, it is always "in-the-making", shaped through the practises of diverse communities. What is even more catchy in his book is the understanding of space-as-common. More than an ownership status, it is a set of social relations which potentially challenges the very foundations of ownership. Especially for this reason, the book should be an important lecture for activists and decisionmakers from post-socialist cities that struggle to define the notion of ownership and support dominant capitalist command. The City as Commons might be a good incentive to discuss shared spaces' status in our cities. It can be an excellent guide to urban space-as-common not only for urban activists or decisionmakers but also for other people interested in housing, architecture and economics.

Stavros Stavrides, *Common Space: The City as Commons*, Zed Books, 2016.

Review by MARTYNA OBARSKA

Nadogradnje. The Phenomenon of Balkan Top Floor Extensions

Superstructures – top floor extensions – began to appear suddenly in the mid 90s; most prominently in the form of two single-family houses nesting atop a modernist building by Branko's Bridge in the very centre of Belgrade. Resembling abandoned doll's houses, they quickly became an absurd symbol of public space transformation in countries of former Yugoslavia. In 1997, the Association of Belgrade Architects even published *A Declaration Against Top Floor Extensions*. The declaration failed to stop the architectural trend, however. Top floor extensions – which gradually, like parasites, started sprouting on old tenements, blocks of flats, and every free public space – continued to conquer the roofs of Belgrade, Skopje, Prishtina and Sarajevo.

This architectural and social phenomena was documented by Gregor Theune, a German photographer and architect. His trips across the countries of former Yugoslavia resulted in a meticulously designed book titled *Nadogradnje. Urban Self-Regulation in Post-Yugoslav Cities*. This publication was included in the top ten best books on architecture at the 2016 Frankfurt Book Fair, the most prestigious event in the publishing industry. The acclaim the book has garnered is well-deserved. *Nadogradnje...* is not another 'quaint album on architecture'. The pictures, though engrossing, in the first place serve to document this unique occurance. So too, the texts are an equally pivotal element of the book – six analyses presenting superstructures within the socio-political history of the Balkans, reflections on the autonomy of architecture or juxtaposing the phenomena occurring in informal architecture with similar practices applied in South America Asia and Africa. The publication also analyses former Yugoslav cities in the wider context of changes undergone during the post-Communist era.

Despite designing the book for the West-European reader, the authors from M BOOKS – a German publisher – do not orientalise countries of Southern Europe, nor do they simplify its picture. The authors also successfully contextualise the phenomenon of top floor extensions in informal architecture occurring in the cities of the Global South, a trend becoming more and more popular over the recent years. This is exemplified by the fact that this topic formed the core of the Venice Biennale agenda last year. The authors of the publication point out, however, that the informality of Balkan top floor extensions is not the consequence of poverty, but a gap in the system. Superstructures are a *signum temporis* – a moment when the *ancien régime* collapses, also ruining the rules governing public space and the whole Soviet system. The newly formed chasm is then filled by the activity of residents, exponentially developing free market economies (in a turbo-capitalist form), the lack of new regulations, and the failure of state institutions. A similar process – *apartmanizacija* – underwent in Croatia, where the free space on the Adriatic seashore was rapaciously annexed by private investors, hotels, and health resorts. The authors of *Nadogradnje...* present two sides of the coin – the chaos of informality and its unbridled potential.

What does the future hold for superstructures? This is yet to be seen. As of yet, the two emblematic top floor extensions in the centre of Belgrade are covered with gigantic advertising banners which – paradoxically – exemplify the desired form of municipal aesthetics.

Sven Quadflieg, Gregor Theune (edit.), *Nadogradnje. Urban Self-Regulation in Post-Yugoslav Cities*, texts by Martin Düchs, Monika Grubbauer, Hanna Hilbrandt, Vladimir Kulić, Dubravka Sekulić, photography Gregor Theune, M BOOKS, 2015.

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