

URBAINABLE / STADTHALTIG

HOW TO SUSTAIN THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CRISIS

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THE HYPOTHESIS: *The city itself offers the systems that will enable its sustainable development*

Since 2011, the Architecture Section has shown major exhibitions at the Akademie der Künste that have dealt with the tendencies of the European city at the beginning of the 21st century. "Return of Landscape" documented the changes in the relationship between city and countryside, critically appraised general urbanisation, and called for a new relationship to "urban nature". "Culture:City" examined the various roles of cultural buildings in the context of the transition from the second to the third and fourth industrial age. The exhibition focused on the role of architectural interventions as catalysts, intensifiers, and guarantors of urban life. "Demo:Polis. The Right to Public Space" focused on the changing nature of public space in the age of neoliberalism and "social media", calling for new urban spaces as sites of cohabitation and resistance.

"urbainable/stadthaltig" (5 September–22 November 2020), the fourth exhibition, will deal with the role of the city and its architecture in times of new challenges such as climate change, digitalisation, demographic change, and the dissolution of stable social relationships. Its hypothesis is that the city itself holds the greatest potential for its own reform and sustainable development.

The city has been and continues to be a motor of civilisation. Its development is existentially linked to the refinement of social, cultural, and technical systems. Today, we need this motor more urgently than ever. The challenges our societies are facing manifest themselves primarily in cities and must also be solved there.

These include the economic, cultural, and social differences resulting from immigration, demographic change, and the emancipation of the individual. In addition, everything is overshadowed by the fundamental question of how to deal with climate change and its effects. The seemingly minimal goal

of keeping the planet's average temperature rise between 2 and 1.5 degrees Celsius necessarily requires radical changes to the fundamental parameters of urban life.

The ethical foundations that have made the city in Europe so attractive since antiquity – the promises of economic independence, social cohesion, individual freedom – can only be secured through change. How these changes become manifest in built space is the central question that architects and planners are presently confronted with: What does comprehensive change mean for the built environment, how can this change be managed and cast into concrete form? To what extent can these reforms be promoted by architecture and urban planning? How can we compensate for the inevitable reductions that accompany the necessary changes in lifestyle, how can new technologies be integrated, new forms of behaviour be practised and ultimately sublimated into a functioning culture?

The exhibition will consist of two sections, a general section and a project review. In the general section, we will debate six leitmotifs as general parameters of current urban development and architectural intervention. The plan is to create a photo installation, where the leitmotifs will be identified by texts and translated into life-sized installations using the photographs of the Berlin artist Erik-Jan Ouwerkerk.

The second section of the exhibition will have a format similar to a biennial. Each participating team will be provided with a gallery space of approx. 30–40m² and can design this space according to their own needs. We expect about thirty-six contributions, primarily by members of the Architecture Section and one or more guests of their choice. The contributions will be arranged by the curatorial team in an exhibition embodying diverse and numerous facets of the debate on the city in terms of both content and form.

The exhibition will thus allow the viewer two perspectives: an inductive approach, where the project example suggests overarching principles, and a deductive approach, where basic strategies point to the solutions in individual cases.

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LEITMOTIFS: These are the basic strategies within which specific tactics help to maintain the city's promises of freedom, even under the changing conditions of the present.

The leitmotifs are:

THINK NATURE

The now 100-year-old vision of the dissolution of cities into the natural landscape seems to have come true in a rather problematic way. Today, the city consists of a network of infrastructures that covers entire regions – sometimes more, sometimes less populated. Accordingly, we are now striving for the rational organisation of the regional city and a balance between natural landscape and built-up areas. In this, the preservation of agricultural land as well as green recreational areas has to be considered part of the overall urban organism.

The industrial city was seen as a machine, the automobile city as a metabolism. The climate city must see itself as a diverse landscape. Its infrastructures have to aim for climate neutrality and – at the same time – provide a sensually stimulating place to live. This includes the synergy and dialogue between inorganic and vegetal architecture, neighbourhood and park, building and garden, apartment and terrace. Plant growth is a natural way to counteract extreme conditions in urban centres – in terms of both air pollution and summer heat island effect – as well as extracting CO₂ from the atmosphere.

DENSITY

The preservation of natural areas requires, in turn, the densification of built-up areas. In terms of structural density, we do not necessarily see a problem in Western Europe today – unlike at the beginning of the 20th century – but rather a potential contribution to problem solving: the dense city enables the energy optimisation of infrastructure systems, it functions as a catalyst for behavioural change and as an incubator for new social situations. Where traditional family and work relationships have been eroded over the years, new interpersonal contact emerges from sheer proximity.

In contrast to the heroic visions at the beginning of the 20th century, contemporary urban concepts are characterised by a certain diversity and pragmatism. The mixture of life, work, and leisure is as much a part of these ideas as the cohabitation of different social strata, religious and cultural communities, and lifestyles and their expression.

INNOVATION

The construction sector currently produces around 40 per cent of all greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere. Part of

the solution to climate problems will undoubtedly be achieved through strategic and technical optimisation in the construction and operation of buildings and infrastructure. The priority given to urban planning and architecture according to the criteria of sustainable development leads to a new paradigm that gives new directions to modernist strategies. Experiments with the harvesting of renewable energies, the conscious use of ecologically sound materials and processes, the introduction of circular economies, and the reduction of demand lead to new solutions. Just as the European city has been transformed time and again under the influence of technology, for example in the military sector or during the various stages of mechanisation and industrialisation, today we also find ourselves in a state of rapidly changing technological development, the results of which, in the sense of updating the existing culture, are still to be processed.

VITA ACTIVA

Sustainable development can only succeed in stable social conditions that cultivate a certain sense of community. In times of expanded mobility, increasingly contact and frictionless infrastructure, and virtual socialisation through internet networks, it seems more difficult than ever to build communities around a specific location. This means that the city must offer spaces dedicated to encounter, shared experience, and the development of a collective identity. If, according to Hannah Arendt, contemporary life – characterised above all by work and consumption – leads inevitably to feelings of abandonment, then in times of “supercapitalism” and fluctuating working conditions, the urban stage, the public concern, is needed more than ever to make the manifold elements of society visible and bring them together. These spaces can be found in the central locations of collective urbanity as well as the multiple transitory situations of contemporary urban agglomeration.

WORKING WITH THE EXISTING STRUCTURES

In the context of worldwide communication and the resulting globalisation of economic and social relations, a previously unknown extension of our horizons is emerging; but for many people there is also an increased need for demarcation and identity-building. For many Europeans, their own city – beyond its function as a place to live and work – serves as one such vehicle of differentiation, as it represents a mirror and a container of their (cultural) history.

From an energy point of view too, the preservation, adaptation, and extension of existing structures is by far the most intelligent approach to building in the city. This applies not only to inner cities with listed buildings but also to the heritage of

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garden cities, suburbs, and satellite towns. The built fabric contains so much “grey energy” and CO₂ that its demolition can only be offset by new energy-efficient buildings in the very long term – if at all.

But the reaffirmation of one’s own history alone does not create a future. Therefore, in addition to the meaningful optimisation of what exists, the updating and reinterpretation of one’s own identity remains an essential task of contemporary building culture.

FAST NETWORK – SLOW CITY

In many respects, the automobile city has reached its limits. Car traffic takes up too much space, causes air pollution, and produces greenhouse gases. Alternative systems must make mobility more efficient, must be coordinated and offer the right means of transport for the right distances and speeds. Sufficient space must be dedicated to pedestrians and cyclists. Also, once the number of cars can be reduced, the potential of spatial reserves needs to be explored. At the same time, the networking of cities and districts must be optimised in an appropriate form. This applies not only to mobility networks but also to the infrastructure for communication and data transmission. If economies can operate (at least in part) without factories and heavy goods vehicles, other priorities for urban infrastructures will emerge.

PARTICIPATING OFFICES:

Barkow Leibinger, Berlin / Bollinger + Grohmann Ingenieure, Frankfurt am Main / Brandlhuber +, Berlin / Michael Bräuer, Rostock / Brenne Architekten, Berlin / Werner Durth, Darmstadt / Dietmar Feichtinger Architectes, Montreuil / Gigon/Guyer Architekten, Zürich / gmp (Volkwin Marg), Hamburg / Grüntuch Ernst Architekten, Berlin / Hager Partner AG, Zürich / Peter Haimerl. Architektur, München / Thomas Herzog Architekten, München / Hoidn Wang Partner, Berlin / KCAP (Kees Christiaanse), Zürich / Keller Damm Kollegen GmbH Landschaftsarchitekten Stadtplaner, München / Lacaton & Vassal Architectes, Paris / Pierre Laconte, Kortenberg bei Brüssel / Léonwohlhage Gesellschaft von Architekten mbH, Berlin / hg merz, Berlin / Günter Nagel und Partner, Hannover / Florian Nagler Architekten, München / Nieto Sobejano Arquitectos, Madrid / Arhitektuuribüroo R-Konsult (Irina Raud), Tallinn / Ian Ritchie Architects, London / Sauerbruch Hutton, Berlin / Schlaich, Bergemann und Partner, Berlin, Stuttgart / Schulitz Architekten GmbH, Braunschweig / Thomas Sieverts, München / Snøhetta (Kjetil Trædal Thorsen), Oslo / Staab Architekten GmbH, Berlin / Szyszkowitz-Kowalski Architekten, Graz / Christiane Thalgott, München / Transsolar Energietechnik (Thomas Auer), Stuttgart / Marco Venturi, Venedig / Jörn Walter, Hamburg