Public space and the challenges of urban transformation in Europe: Politics and culture

10th and 11th November 2010
Palais Kabelwerk, 12. District

Programme: http://skuor.tuwien.ac.at
Registration: info@skuor.tuwien.ac.at

Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space
Department of Spatial Development, Infrastructure and Environmental Planning
Faculty of Architecture and Planning
Vienna University of Technology
Welcoming Words & Conference Theme

We are pleased to see the wide range of interest in this conference, which is part of Vienna's timely initiative in generating a programme of education and research into an important subject. Public spaces of a city are windows into its society and culture, mirroring how people live and relate to one another, and how they respond to the challenges of social and economic change in an increasingly urban world. We hope that this conference, by offering an open platform to academics and practitioners from around Europe to share their ideas and experiences, can help develop and spread innovative ideas and practices.

European public space has eye-witnessed transformations in political regimes, cultural eras and social emancipation, just to name a few. To understand, plan and design processes and structures and to enhance public life in urban places, a group of luminaries coming from different disciplines is needed who are familiar with current theoretical debates – an essential base to reflect about and enhance innovation and change – and to translate complex theory into approaches suitable for architectural and planning practice. The newly established Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space (SKuOR) offers such a valuable working context. I feel honoured to welcome this fascinating field of participants to the European November Conference 2010 in Vienna.

Brigitte Jilka
Director General of Urban Planning, City of Vienna

Public spaces are crucial for the well-being and well feeling of urban inhabitants and visitors. Though in the opinion of some experts the variety of designs in Viennese public spaces seems to be limited, people estimate their usability. To provide spaces designated for public use and moreover to keep them for ever free, is certainly not an easy task, considering the pressure that more 'productive' uses impose on the same areas.

Public spaces are broadly defined as crossroads, where different paths and trajectories meet, sometimes overlapping and at other times colliding; they are the meeting place of politics and culture, social and individual territories, instrumental and expressive concerns. The conference investigates how city authorities understand and deal with their public spaces, how this interacts with market forces, social norms and cultural expectations, whether and how this relates to the needs and experiences of their citizens, exploring new strategies and innovative practices for strengthening public spaces and urban culture. The questions that will be explored revolve around three sub-themes: strategies, plans and policies; multiple roles of public space; and everyday life in the city.

How do public authorities address a growing pressure on public spaces? What are the issues, strategies, and tactics of dealing with public spaces, and what do they aim to achieve? Who are the state and non-state actors involved in setting the conditions for public spaces? How are they organized and what are the relationships between different actors? How are policies initiated, formulated, implemented, reflected and finally, how do people perceive and react to such policies? How do design and planning professionals contribute with their projects to the changing conditions of public spaces? How can innovative practices contribute to redefine approaching public spaces?

Public space is where public life unfolds: art works are displayed, commercial messages transmitted, political power is displayed and social norms affirmed or challenged. How do these different processes take place? How do public spaces accommodate these multiple roles? How are conflicts of interest addressed? Which new phenomena of social transformation do emerge in public spaces? How do contemporary design and planning interventions renegotiate the boundaries of public space? What is the (changing) position of arts within public space as an actor between politics and people?

Public space is the realm of sociability. How do public spaces address people's everyday needs and expectations? How are the boundaries between public and private spheres set, and how does this affect people's daily life? How are cultural differences and social inequalities addressed in public spaces? How is local everyday life knowledge taken into account by professional disciplines planning, developing and designing public spaces? Which latent social needs get visible in public spaces? How can a fair sharing of public spaces be arranged? How do designers deal with the involvement of people in the process of producing public space? How do city representatives handle the 'voices of people'?
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<td>10am to 10.30am</td>
<td>Strategies, plans and policies</td>
<td>The production and management of hybrid spaces. Uwe Altrock, Dr.-Ing, Professor of Urban Regeneration, University of Kassel, Germany</td>
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<td>Rethinking</td>
<td>Ali Madanipour</td>
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<td>Reconsidering</td>
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<td>9.45am to 11.15am</td>
<td><strong>Claiming</strong> Struggle, conflict and voices of the unheard &lt;br&gt;Sarah Habersack &amp; Chiara Tornaghi &lt;br&gt;<strong>Neumayer, Karl</strong> The origin of graffiti and street markings: Signs in transition from fordism to postfordism &lt;br&gt;Polyak, Levente Exchange on the street: Rethinking open-air markets in Budapest &lt;br&gt;Kleedorfer, Jutta The strategic project &quot;simply – multiple&quot;, facilitating public space in Vienna &lt;br&gt;Mitteregger, Matthias Drawing a circle: Search on mobile devices</td>
<td><strong>Challenging</strong> Multiculturalism, religion and migration as emerging demands &lt;br&gt;Andrea Rieger-Jandl &amp; Ceren Sezer &lt;br&gt;Koutouloukou, Panagiota Spatialities of ethno-religious relations in 'multicultural' London: Discourses of contact, interaction and social mix &lt;br&gt;Palumbo, Maria Anita Urban transformation, social transition: Barbes where ‘otherness’ takes (public) place. &lt;br&gt;Esposito de Vita, Gabriella Multiculturalism and social conflict &lt;br&gt;Ghyka, Celia Luxembourg of the two capitals: A programme for public art</td>
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<td><strong>Changing</strong> Codes, norms and rules in public spaces &lt;br&gt;Jens Danschat &amp; Gesa Witthöft &lt;br&gt;Brotherhood, Angelina; Reinprecht, Christoph; Butler, Georg; Keckes, Carmen - Capturing changing social dynamics: suggestions for an analytical framework &lt;br&gt;Klapt, Martin Places of power: Power of places &lt;br&gt;Wettstein, Felicitas Public spaces in the urban periphery of Paris</td>
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<td>2pm to 2.30pm</td>
<td><strong>Multiple roles of public spaces</strong> Happy ending, Keynote speech Chris Keulemans, Journalist, Artistic director, Cultural Centre de Tolhuistuin, Amsterdam, The Netherlands</td>
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<td>2.45pm to 4.15pm</td>
<td><strong>Producing</strong> Public spaces under the conditions of manifold structural transitions &lt;br&gt;Johannes Suitem &amp; Florian Wachter &lt;br&gt;Koch, Regan; Latham, Alan Re-imagining urban public space: Transformation on Harrow Road, West London &lt;br&gt;Hristova, Svetlana Public space of central and East-European cities: Between consumerism and spectacle &lt;br&gt;Voisin, Chloe The transformation of the central public spaces in Dresden: Which spaces for which society? &lt;br&gt;Panatopoulou, Panajota TransUrban strategies: The production of space in Luxembourg</td>
<td><strong>Inviting</strong> Public Space and Social Cohesion - Workshop II &lt;br&gt;Andrea Breitfuss Urban renewal management 11th district, Andrea Mann and Peter Mlczoch, Urban renewal management 2nd district, Vienna</td>
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<td>4.30pm to 5.00pm</td>
<td><strong>Vienna: Culture, Politics and Public Space</strong> Keynote speech Dr. Monika de Frantz, Marshall Plan Chair University of New Orleans, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Centre for Austrian Culture and Commerce, USA/University of Vienna, Austria</td>
<td><strong>Participating</strong> Public spaces between discourse, design and decisions &lt;br&gt;Ian Banerjee &amp; Wencke Hertzsch &lt;br&gt;Happach, Marlene; Happach, Marek Involvement of people in the process of producing public space &lt;br&gt;Brando, Pedro; Remesar, Antoni Interdisciplinarity: Urban design practice, research and teaching matrix &lt;br&gt;Roskamm, Nikolai 4.000.000 m² public space or the fear of emptiness: Reflections about the Berlin ‘Tempelhofer Feld’ debate</td>
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<td>5.15pm to 6.15pm</td>
<td><strong>Panel debate</strong> Moderation: Aagåe Degros &amp; Ali Madanipour &lt;br&gt;Kurt Puchinger (Executive Director for Urban Planning, City of Vienna), Andrea Seidling (Curator &quot;Platz da! European Public Space Exhibition&quot;, Architekturzentrum Wien), Chris Keulemans and Monika de Frantz</td>
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<td>6.15pm to 6.30pm</td>
<td><strong>Closing</strong> Aagåe Degros, Sabine Knierbein and Ali Madanipour</td>
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Keynote Speeches

Uwe Altrock
Keynote Speech
Strategies, plans and policies
10am to 10.30am
Wednesday
10th November

The production and management of hybrid spaces
The talk will discuss the role of public space in different spatial settings and socio-economic contexts. Building on an analysis of current governance arrangements in the production of urban space, it will focus on selective approaches to manage hybrid spaces that are characterized by differing degrees of publicness. When the role of public institutions and planning in particular is challenged in a partly neo-liberal environment, new concepts, policies and types of intervention into the public space are developed. However, contrary to a popular line of thought, the author does not see a general trend towards privatization of public space. The production and management of public space, the talk will argue, can be seen as a continuous series of negotiations, conceptual innovations and governance rearrangements that influence public spaces very selectively. This results in a system of hybrid spaces that blend pre-modern, modern and post-modern design elements and that fulfil a broad range of old and new social functions. This in mind, the discourse on who controls public space is increasingly replaced by a discourse on who is able to invent new roles for the public space and to make use of them in his own interest. The role of traditional public regulation is limited while publicly initiated and mediated policies for the production and management of hybrid spaces are of crucial importance. Any reasoning on the future of public spaces will have to redefine this strategic role of public policy-making and the necessary resources.

Uwe Altrock (born 1965) has a degree in Mathematics and Urban and Regional Planning and holds a Dr.-Ing. from Berlin UT Architecture Environment Society. Since 2006 he is Professor of Urban Regeneration at the Planning Faculty, University of Kassel. His core themes of work are: Theory of planning, history of planning and city planning.

Sophie Watson
Keynote Speech
Everday life and sharing the city
9am to 9.30am
Thursday
11th November

Rubbing along: Everyday encounters in public space.
In this paper I argue for encounters between different people in the city in which people engage with each other, even to disagree, rather than slide past each other without contact, and against a prevailing tendency for some sections of the public to segregate themselves from others in private domestic, commercial and leisure spaces where they have no need to engage with different others at all. The paper considers a range of sites in the city which are often ignored - for example religious sites, street markets, public baths, to think through why encounters across differences in the city sometimes lead to antagonisms, while at other times lead to engagement and mutual understanding. Given the growing diversity of city populations across the globe, as a result of vast transnational movements of populations, the role of public space as a space of mixing people up and enhancing interactions between different others, it is increasingly important that we understand what are the possibilities and what are the limits of public space as a key site in the multicultural city.

Sophie Watson is Professor of Sociology at Open University, UK. She holds a PhD in Geography. Previous positions held include University of East London, University of Sidney, University of New South Wales and London School of Economics, amongst others. She published several books and articles about public space, e.g. City publics. The (dis)enchantment of urban encounters.
Happy Ending

Amsterdam is a great city. There is arts, architecture, money, public space and creativity in abundance. Yet, this is a city without public squares of any real elegance or grandeur. Why is that? Could it be that an abundance of creative and financial means somehow paralyzes the development of public spaces to proudly share? No: cities like Barcelona, London, Stockholm and of course Vienna prove the opposite. Then what could be the reason? I believe that the cocktail of three particular obsessions, shared by municipality and citizens alike, is lethal to the creation of a true common public square: democracy, orderliness and safety. Fine qualities each, and irony wants that each of them is indispensable to the best public squares, but brought together they create a fear of exactly what brings a square to life. Our three main squares – Leidseplein, Dam and Rembrandtsplein – are a case in point.

Outside of the city centre, though, you will find squares that work. I will illustrate this by Mosplein, in the often forgotten Northern part of Amsterdam. A mishmash of urban design, hardly remarkable, in a state of neglect, but alive. The surrounding population – poor white trash, elderly Turks, young Moroccans, starting artists and American stewardesses – has little grip on its formal development, but uses its limited possibilities to the max. Does it show elegance and grandeur? Absolutely not. And yet, there is a beauty to it that shines through ever stronger with every day that passes. Is it safe? Barely. Is it orderly? I am afraid not. Is it democratic? Absolutely. Does it accomodate multiple roles? Any role you like.

In this speech, I will not sing the praise of arts, nor of temporary creativity or the necessity of corporate responsibility. I will even try not to be too optimistic about human nature. Still, if some of the most unremarkable places in a city turn out to be its most vibrant, I am sure there has to be some kind of happy ending to this story.

Chris Keulemans

(Tunis, 1960) is an Amsterdam-based writer, journalist en cultural organizer. During the nineties, he was the director of De Balie, a centre for arts and politics in Amsterdam. After that, he traveled across Europe and beyond, always fascinated by public spaces in cities struck by crisis: Sarajevo, Tirana, Beirut, Jakarta, New Orleans, Detroit et al. He published several books of fiction and essays, and numerous articles on cinema, football, war, refugees, visual arts and urban transformation. Right now, he is setting up a large new arts centre in Amsterdam, on the wrong side of the river.

Vienna: Culture, Politics and Public Space

Not only the restructuring of global markets, but also the political responses to transnationalization transform cities and states, and thus capital cities as centers of states. Responding to as well as actively constructing a climate of economic competition, urban policy makers use symbolic flagship strategies to support economic development, revive their political constituencies, and promote feelings of pride and unity. But the plural nature of urban cultures may not only promote collective mobilization. Particularly as capital cities are associated with the centers of nation and state, the deep symbolic meanings of cultural heritage can also enhance contestation and conflict. In the context of the European transformations since the 1990s, the public controversies about Vienna’s cultural district Museumsquartier illustrated how the political leaders of this old European capital struggled for a collective response to institutional adjustment pressures. Taking further the political economic differentiation between the ‘selling’ and ‘making’ of places for global markets, this posed the question of who makes culture and how in the local context. Enquiring into the discursive politics of culture-led urban regeneration showed how culture in its diverse forms and meanings can serve or constrain urban leaders to redefine legitimacy and govern institutional change. Challenging the static opposition of states and markets in urban political economy, this case of discursive contestation stressed urban culture as diverse and differentiated local context of reflective state-transformation. In order to ‘bring the state back in’ and ‘repoliticize’ urban globalization, the case of capital city cultures may contribute to conceptualize a comparative research agenda of transnational urban politics.

Dr. Monika De Frantz

works on politics and space, incl. urban cultures and globalization. She is Visiting Professor and Marshall Plan Chair at the University of New Orleans. Previous positions were at London School of Economics, University of Vienna, Bauhaus-University Weimar, and European University Institute Florence, where she also defended her Ph.D. Forthcoming books: ‘Capital City Cultures’ on Vienna and Berlin (Peter Lang); Contemporary theories of European urban politics (Palgrave Macmillan).
Remains

The definitions for the term ‘public space’ are as various and different as the disciplines concerned with urban topics themselves, that try to define it. But what kind of specific and tangible space is described by this term and the ideas behind it? Or is it – more than anything else – a definition for a not concrete, not permanent, but socially and culturally constituted space without any clearly definable borders? A possible approach to sharpen the concept of public space is to experience space by balancing it along its borders. These boundaries between public and private, between here and now, the one and the other individual can best be defined in movement and on-site. With our event we will make visible the interfaces and crossovers between public and private concerning property, availability, permanence and temporality within a concretely defined space, a street in Vienna Meidling.

Building on theories of social movement research, every participant in this event is invited to mark his/her individually perceived borders between private and public space so to make temporarily visible the heterogeneity and subjectivity of public space and its usability.

Theresa Schütz Gehsteig Guerilla and IFOER, Vienna UT, Emanuela Semlitsch IFOER Vienna UT and Wolfgang Stempfer, Urban Renewal Management 12th district, Vienna

Public space and social cohesion in diverse communities

The workshop focuses on the role of public space concerning social cohesion in diverse communities. After a short input upon the results of workshops we currently hold with practitioners, academics and representatives of the administration in the course of an EU financed project (social polis) we want to discuss the influence and role of public space upon social cohesion and vice versa with interested participants of the conference. Can public space play a role to strengthen social cohesion? What are specific criteria for cohesive public spaces? Is it enough to provide attractive public space in a neighborhood or does it need more? How much public space is necessary? Do we need streetworkers or other partners to support communication? What are the challenges for urban planning to deal with a diverse community and different interests?

Andrea Breitfuss, Urban renewal management 11th district, Vienna Andrea Mann and Peter Mlezoch, Urban renewal management 2nd district, Vienna

Conviviality

The workshop will start with an introduction to the aims of the newly established AESOP thematic group on Public Space and Urban Cultures. The session will then proceed with small group discussions, in the form of ‘world café’ and facilitated by the organisers, around the theme The Politics and Practice of Convivial Public Spaces. Participants will have the opportunity to get familiar with the history, perspectives and objectives of the research group and shape future research design and methodology, by engaging in short discussions around the following questions: ‘What is a convivial space for you? What are your personal experiences with conviviality in public spaces? How can the link between practice and politics constitute the base for a promising analytical framework?’

Chiara Tornaghi (Leeds) Ceren Sezer (Delft), Sabine Knierbein (Vienna), Thematic Group on Public Spaces and Urban Cultures, Association of European Schools of Planning
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web: http://skuor.tuwien.ac.at

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S7 Schnellbahn - Slow but cheap airport connection to Landstraße Wien Mitte http://www.schnellbahn-wien.at/english/maps.htm
Wiener Linien - Public transport in Vienna http://www.wienerlinien.at/wl/ep/home.do?tabId=0
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ÖBB - Austrian federal railway http://www.oebb.at/en/index.jsp