



★ NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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Report

Workshop I City and the Past: Cultural and Citizenship Education at the Interface of Remembrance Policy

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Scientific Inputs:

Regina Bittner, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation (Germany)
David Heath, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (UK)

Project Presentations:

“Plattenvereinigung”
presented by Robert K. Huber, zukunftsgeräusche (Germany)
“Sefer – stories about the Jews from our towns”
presented by Iga Kazimierczyk, Center for Citizenship Education (Poland)

Moderation:

Florian Wenzel, Center for Applied Policy Research (Germany)

When thinking about urban developments, especially about those of the 20th century, it becomes quickly obvious that many urban renewal projects cannot be analyzed and understood without reference to the complex field of remembrance policy. Due to the intimate relationship between memory and identity, the city itself and its urban spaces play an important role in the shaping of collective identities and therefore urban space becomes a subject of politics of remembrance and identity politics. The attention paid to this relationship has increased in global academic and intellectual spheres in the last decade, especially by those scholars adopting the concept of the “lieux de mémoire” of the French historian Pierre Nora and the concept of “symbolical capital” of the French philosopher and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

But, by observing the attitude and role of the general public in the context of how we deal with history in public space, it becomes clear that there is still a potential to increase the consciousness not only of the role of remembrance policy in contemporary urban development processes, but also of the links between urban space, memory and identity and the value and significance of urban heritage in general, as well as to strengthen the participation of citizens in contemporary city development processes.



Thus, the guiding questions of the workshop were:

- How cultural and citizenship education could take up the complex interdependence of urban space, collective and individual memory and remembrance policy;
- What are the opportunities of citizenship and cultural education in the context of urban spaces
- and if cultural and citizenship education can bring any additional benefit to the contemporary situation of cities and their complex relations to their inhabitants.

One of the most discussed phenomena of current tendencies in urban remembrance policies is the phenomena of reconstruction of lost historical urban structures as “new-old” “lieux de mémoire“. Accordingly, Regina Bittner, associate director of the German *Bauhaus Dessau Foundation* (www.bauhaus-dessau.de) as well as David Heath, architect and chairman of the British *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* (www.spab.org.uk) concentrated in their contributions on the issue of reconstruction and authenticity of urban heritage.

Reconstructions of historical buildings have taken place (and are still taking place) for different reasons, but are especially linked to times of transitions, when new powerful symbols in public space are used to (re)define the nation’s collective identity: in Russia the best-known example is the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, which was blown up under Stalin and has become the project par excellence of the “rebirth” of the Russian nation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Germany the most important example is the Frauenkirche in Dresden, which was destroyed in the Second World War and became - along with Berlin - *the* urban project of the reunification; in Mostar, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it was the famous bridge over the river Neretva which had connected the two sides of the city for centuries and was destroyed during the war in the 1990s. Even an exhibition in the *Museum of Architecture* in Munich was dedicated this year to the topic, as it was mentioned by Regina Bittner.

(www.architekturmuseum.de/en/ausstellungen/detail.php?which=204&show)

Showing many examples of reconstructions, different kinds of “lieux de mémoire” and sites of history from the Frauenkirche in Dresden to a protestant chapel in London - which became a synagogue and then a mosque - to the site of the guillotine in Paris which is marked by a granite block in the asphalt, both presentations provoked an intense discussion among the participants, especially concerning the legitimacy of reconstructions. For David Heath, the most important aspect in the complex process of remembrance in urban space is the authenticity of a building with all its traces of history, which cannot be attained by any reconstruction. For him, it is not only important to avoid reconstructions, but also to preserve the built heritage instead of restoring it, which is also the core of the manifesto of the British *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings*, written by its founder William Morris in 1877. For the case of the reconstruction of the Mostar bridge, Stella Chryssoulaki from the *Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism* remarked that the architectural task should have been to show, rather than reconstruct, history and, accordingly, to create a new bridge which also serves as site to remember the destruction of the original. Searching for the underlying reasons for the current boom of reconstructing history in urban space, Regina Bittner pointed out that the past has become more and more attractive as a “projection screen” for all kinds of aspirations of the moment, especially as the ideological future projects of the 20th century and with them their ideas and imagined utopias for a new urban life and architecture came to an end with the fall of the iron curtain. But she also stated that every individual case of reconstruction must be carefully analysed.

The discussion showed very clearly that despite the professional debate about urban heritage and authenticity - on-going since the 19th century - there is a sizeable gap between professionals and intellectuals and the general public. As a conclusion in the context of cultural and citizenship education, it is to say that there is still a lot of space within educational projects to create more consciousness of the interdependence of urban development projects and remembrance policy as well as concerning the question of authenticity. The most crucial question and a task for educational projects in the context of remembrance in general is to sensitize the general public towards the question of the histories we choose to remember, we are made to want to remember by politicians and the media, and how these histories are selected and for what purpose. Speaking about cities as sites of history, it would be important within citizenship education to stress the fact that cities are palimpsests and consist of multitude layers of remembrance which are worth preserving, rather than privileging one historical period, as Regina Bittner illustrated with the example of “baroque” Dresden.

Two very different examples of how to deal with urban heritage in projects of cultural and citizenship education were shown in the presentations of the project “Sefer – stories about the Jews from our towns” by Iga Kazimierczyk from the Polish *Center for Citizenship Education* in Warsaw (www.ceo.org.pl/portal/b_sefer_english) and of the project “Plattenvereinigung” (www.plattenvereinigung.de/) by Robert K. Huber from the German initiative *zukunftsgerauesche*.

The main goals of the project “Sefer” were to create consciousness for the often forgotten or neglected multicultural history of Poland, to collect and document stories of Jewish life in middle-sized towns, to take care of Jewish sites and to influence with all those activities the treatment of the Jewish urban heritage in Poland. As Iga Kazimierczyk stated, the experience in Poland is, that in cities, where people knew about the Jewish history of their town, this particular heritage (mainly cemeteries and former synagogues) was in better condition than in towns, where the Jewish history was not remembered or was neglected. The remarkable results of the project, which was implemented by local schools and their pupils (and even included their parents), show that little efforts can achieve a lot in creating more consciousness towards specific urban heritage issues and the preservation of heritage sites.

The presentation of the project “Plattenvereinigung” was a very interesting example of how to connect issues of urban heritage with the issue of sustainable development. This project united precast concrete slabs from East Germany with precast concrete slabs from West Germany in the experimental construction of a new house. The western slabs originated from the former 1972 Olympic village in Munich, which after the Games was transformed into a student village. This popular residential area for students was recently demolished because of new guidelines in fire-protection and energy efficiency, and will be reconstructed as it was before, as it is part of the whole protected ensemble of the Olympic village. The eastern slabs came from a typical GDR residential building in Frankfurt/Oder, which was dismantled as part of a wave of demolishment of precast concrete slab buildings in Eastern Germany implemented to stabilize the real estate market in areas with decreasing population - the so-called shrinking cities. The aim of the project, which consisted also of a huge interdisciplinary educational and cultural programme including public discussions and performances, was to create a platform for questions of the sustainable reuse of precast concrete slabs as well as sustainable urban development in general and for reflections about the modernist urban heritage.

Both presentations showed that there are interesting ways in cultural and citizenship education to deal with questions of urban heritage and remembrance and a huge potential to include a wide range of different kind of disciplines and people in such activities.