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Shifting Borders in the Wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic in European Cities and Regions

Verankert an der TU Berlin als Gastgeberinstitution der Sommerschule ist in wenigen Tagen ein Palimpsest europäischer Krisenerfahrungen und Neuanfänge in der Stadtentwicklung von den Studierenden erarbeitet worden. Unter dem bekannten Motto „global denken und lokal handeln" weisen Studierende aus ganz Europa auf soziale und physische Grenzverschiebungen als planerische und gestalterische Herausforderung hin. Konsens unter den Teilnehmenden ist, dass Krisen zugleich Belastungs- und Lehrproben für das Städtische darstellen. Fünf besondere Dynamiken beschreiben wir in dieser Publikation, die als Befund und Auftrag vom fachlichen Nachwuchs an die Stadtentwicklungspolitik in Europa formuliert werden:

Nachbarschaften bilden entscheidende Orte um BewohnerInnen zu re-aktivieren und stabile Gemeinschaften in Krisenzeiten zu formen

Die Neubewertung des öffentlichen und privaten Raums bricht gewohnte Muster des Zusammenlebens auf und erfordert neue Wohn- und Arbeitsorte

Der öffentliche Raum muss anhand neuer Bedarfe und Kennwerte transformiert werden

Zur Überwindung sozialer und räumlicher Ungleichheiten werden inklusive Zugänge und gemeinschaftliche Prozesse entwickelt

Infrastrukturen werden als öffentliche Güter aufgrund von neuen Funktionen und Dienstleistungserwartungen vernetzt und räumlich adaptiert

Neighborhoods Serve as Key Venues for Re-Activating Residents and Building Stable Communities in Challenging Times

The neighborhood is the nucleus of a crisis-proof city. Future urban planning in Europe needs to focus more on the equality of housing conditions at the neighborhood level. The current rise in awareness needs to lead to paradigmatic adjustments of urban renewal programs in the long run. The crisis represents a stress test for communities and highlights the necessities in urban structures for redistributions of spaces by means of neighborhood design approaches. Socially disadvantaged groups especially need to receive more attention in long-term strategies when it comes to risk management.
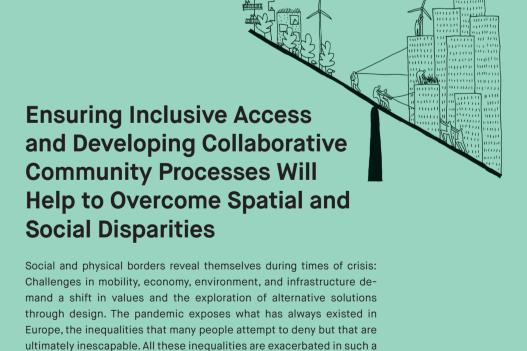

The Reevaluation of Public and Private Space Breaks with Conventional Patterns of Cohabitation and Demands Innovative Residential and Work Environments

Current restrictions on commuting, working, and meeting have uncovered the opportunities offered by a digital city. Urban planners across Europe need to rethink our way of traveling and moving through the city while thinking ahead to take into account online communication. In the future, the virtual public sphere is conceivable everywhere, but it will require appropriate spaces and infrastructure. The private sphere will become a place for work, education, and interaction. Individual life-work balances will vary enormously and demand new concepts for our housing and work environments.

Public Space Must be Transformed in Line with Emerging Needs and Key Parameters

The measures taken to combat the crisis have shown that it is possible to adjust the size of traffic areas in our cities and shift borders in favor of pedestrians and cyclists! Using human-scale figures, we call for lively, diverse, accessible, and resilient public spaces that allow for a high quality of dense urban life in European cities. We need to appropriate local streets, squares, and other communal places. Let's rethink our cities and transform them from car-friendly cities into human-friendly, quieter, greener, and fairer cities that contribute to combatting climate change!

Ensuring Inclusive Access and Developing Collaborative Community Processes Will Help to Overcome Spatial and Social Disparities

Social and physical borders reveal themselves during times of crisis: Challenges in mobility, economy, environment, and infrastructure demand a shift in values and the exploration of alternative solutions through design. The pandemic exposes what has always existed in Europe, the inequalities that many people attempt to deny but that are ultimately inescapable. All these inequalities are exacerbated in such a way that they reflect the fragility of the economic, political, and ethical system in which we live. However, coordinating efforts to respond to future challenges will be all but impossible if inequality persists.

Infrastructures Are Being Networked and Adapted Spatially as Public Goods on Account of New Functions and Service Expectations

The crisis has been a catalyst for new roles, functions, and interfaces in infrastructure networks, which are negotiated between users and services on an ongoing basis. Be it public transport, Internet platforms, or health care, these commodities must be rendered accessible and interoperable for everyone. This in turn will create a new spatial experience and better services for inhabitants across national and social borders. Moreover, the concepts of global cities and connectivity need to be reconsidered and linked with the discussion concerning the limitation of fundamental rights and spatial justice in mobility.

Even before the spread of COVID-19 across the globe during the crisis of 2020, cities and regions acted as venues and drivers for a dualistic development dynamic by both creating and dissolving borders. The results obtained from various university seminars and a European summer school form the basis for a crisis manuscript, while serving to review the planning and design activities in different European cities and regions. For the first time ever, a network of students from the urban planning and design departments at 19 European universities have defined common requirements for crisis-resistant and people-friendly urban planning in Europe: On the one hand, crisis-related experiences act as catalysts for fundamental social, economic, and ecological changes, and, on the other hand, they accelerate changes that are already underway with regard to urban development policies. The crisis and border situations explored in this joint investigation extend beyond the mere operating principles of European cities and regions. In fact, as an endurance test and didactic example, they provide a guide for crisis-proof urban renewal in Europe. They lead the way in building a bridge between the European architecture and planning disciplines to create vibrant border landscapes.

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