

# Urban development and crisis management

Reflections from the humanities  
and the social sciences



*Fritz Lang: Metropolis, 1927. Set designers*

Booklet of abstracts

Institute of Philosophy, Research Centre for the Humanities  
Budapest, December 14, 2020



The city – defined as a continuous transformation – is a visual and built imprint of time. Throughout history, the city was determined for continuous development and transformation, because the needs of the current population always had to be served. Social transformations, wars, epidemics, economic and moral crises always force thinkers to reflect on the changes in the social environment. There is a constant need for rethinking, rebuilding, and redesigning. Spiro Kostof (1991) argues that urban design must include the definition with some very precise points about what shapes the cities. In his essay, “Urbanism as a Way of Life” (1938), Louie Wirth describes the city with a sociological definition. The discussion about visions of a good city and about the cities of the future started in the interwar period and has continued ever since. In addition to renewal, renovation and modernisation, creative and sustainable solutions are also needed in crisis situations. The most promising approaches to the current processes of urban development today offer multidisciplinary solutions.

# General information

Time zone: Central European Time

Zoom link for the conference:

<https://zoom.us/j/95492734064?pwd=ME1wS3VUdDN6cUxKQk82LzJydUVmZz09>

# Schedule

10:00-10:15 **Opening: Tomas Kačerauskas & Borbála Jász**  
(leaders of the Lithuanian and Hungarian bilateral project)

**Session 1** | **10:15-11:15 Chair: Vilmos Katona**

10:15-10:35 **Tomas Kačerauskas** (Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Faculty of Creative Industries, Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies): Whether Urban Creative Economy is Sustainable?

10:35-10:55 **Annamária Orbán** (Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Department of Sociology and Communication & BME Department of Urban Planning & Design): "DANube Urban Brand/DANUrB": more than an EU project... Regional identity building, networking and branding along the Danube

10:55-11:15 Discussion

11:15-11:30 Coffee Break

**Session 2** | **11:30-12:30 Chair: Tomas Kačerauskas**

11:30-11:50 **Vilmos Katona** (Institute of Applied Arts, University of Sopron): Regenerative Architecture: Changing the Principles of Contemporary Architectural Design

11:50-12:10 **Basia Nikiforova** (Lithuanian Culture Research Institute): City's Visibility and Creativity in Pandemic Time

12:10-12:30 Discussion

12:30-13:00 lunch break

**Session 3** | **13:00-14:00 Chair: Borbála Jász**

13:00-13:20 **Béla Mester** (Institute of Philosophy, Research Centre for the Humanities, Budapest, Hungary): Urbanitas and Sensus Communis. Transformation of a Key Word of the Urban Philosophy of Modernity

13:20-13:40 **Gábor Kovács** (Institute of Philosophy, Research Centre for the Humanities, Budapest, Hungary): Urban tribes, fluid modernity and surveillance capitalism – the future of democracy and urban spaces in pandemic times

13:40-14:00 Discussion

**Session 4** | **14:00-15:00 Chair: Béla Mester**

14:00-14:20 **Artur Lakatos** (Partium Christian University): Post-Socialist trends concerning the evolution of economic life in Cluj-Napoca: the fate of Socialist industrial sites and the evolution of the tourist industry – A synthetic approach

14:20-14:40 **Borbála Jász** (Institute of Philosophy, Research Centre for the Humanities / Department of Sociology and Communication, Budapest University of Technology and Economics): The Rise and Fall of Great Socialist Cities - an Eastern Central-European Story

14:40-15:00 Discussion

15:00-15:15 Coffee break

**Session 5** | **15:15-16:15 Chair: Basia Nikiforova**

15:15-15:35 **Jason Francisco** (Department of Film and Media, Emory College of Arts and Sciences, Emory University, Atlanta): Footprints and Footsteps: The Everyday Life of the Urban Jewish Nothing

15:35-15:55 **Manuel Garcia-Ruiz** (CIES-Iscte & ISUP, Lisbon): TBA

15:55-16:20 Discussion

**Closing words**

# Abstracts

**Jason Francisco**

Department of Film and Media, Emory College of Arts and Sciences,  
Emory University, Atlanta

## **Footprints and Footsteps: The Everyday Life of the Urban Jewish Nothing**

This presentation is an artistic experiment in historical visualization, inspired by the art historian Mariëtte Verhoeven's study of architecture-as-process in Jerusalem: the built environment as an evolution of design, shape and function in time, to be seen in the mind's eye as a dynamic vision of what has appeared and also disappeared. My experiment asks: can such a processual imagination of patrimony and place arise in the aftermath of genocide? And specifically: are there techniques of visualization through which we can learn to see and see into the nothing that the Holocaust has given us, which might help us better to inherit it? In this presentation, I will offer two answers to these questions. The first is a rigorously structured visual query into three sites in the contemporary geography of Jewish loss in Lithuania and northern Poland. The second is a sequence of photographs from Vilnius that undertakes a rigorously un-structured querying of the intersection of everyday life and historical memory. Together, these two photoworks suggest—perhaps suggest—insights into the processual character of post-traumatic historical consciousness.

**Borbála Jász**

Institute of Philosophy, Research Centre for the Humanities  
BME Department of Sociology and Communication

## **The Rise and Fall of Great Socialist Cities - an Eastern Central-European Story**

The utopian concept in eastern Central-European urban planning and design during the years of socialism can be observed in two ways. The general pre-theoretical use of the expression 'Social Realism' refers to all styles during this era. However, we need to distinguish late/soviet modern and Socialist Realism, and this can be accomplished by analysing the different utopian visions as an urban design method in these two distinct periods. In my presentation I distinguish different periods of urban design in eastern Central-Europe during the socialist era. To this end I examine different appearances of the concept of utopia in city planning. First, I analyse the theoretical utopian approach under the dominance of the Socialist Realist style. After that I focus on the practical way of utopian thinking in constructing the new machine cities, which were built from precast, standardised, concrete material house blocks. I conclude that urban planning in Eastern Central-Europe was a more fine-grained process than it is usually assumed.

**Tomas Kačerauskas**

Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Faculty of Creative Industries,  
Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies

## **Whether Urban Creative Economy is Sustainable?**

In this paper, I analyze the main problem of the creative economy in the context of urban sustainable development. I group problems according to their degree of abstractness. Firstly, I present most general problems of creativity (1–9), then the specific problems of creative industries (10–13). Issues 1–3 address the nature of creativity from urban sustainable point of view. Issues 4 and 5 address the notion of social and creative capital with respect to sustainability. Issues 6–7 issues explore the axiology of sustainable creativity, or to be more precise, creative ethics (ecology) and with sources of culture that are distinctive from nature. Issues 8–9 issues examine meta-sustainability, i.e. education of sustainability, as well as the idea of progress from a sustainable point of view. Issue 10 continues the matter of the distinction between culture and nature but from CI's point of view. Issues 11–12 deal with such aspects of CI as technologies and dynamism. Issue 13 issue returns to a meta-question of creativity's uniqueness, but this time in respect of CI.

Vilmos Katona

Institute of Applied Arts, University of Sopron

## Regenerative Architecture: Changing the Principles of Contemporary Architectural Design

If the omnipresence of organised space is a product of political control (Lefebvre, 1974:33–4), then the border of this entity shows the finiteness of rule. In other words, the world beyond the known is a symbol of weakness (Solà-Morales, 1996), and borders are understood as a resistance to uncertainty. Terrains in-between borderlines, either orthogonal or curvilinear, are always defined as “nobody’s land”. However, borders lie also within the fabric of the society, which implies that the nexus between exactly defined circles of people or activities bridge social weaknesses and uncertainties. This depicts a ‘dark tree’ of voids with roots from outside and growing into the centre, shooting a branch structure on each scale. The architecture of voids deriving from this is a fractal of the unknown.

Another interpretation of borders implies a different viewport, because nobody’s land is a potential chance for occupation due to the absence of order. A clearing in the forest welcomes a new hut to be built (Sharr, 2006), an airport lounge allows travellers to regenerate, a state border offers refugees the promise of sanctuary, and, finally, demarcation zones often become the stages for ecological revival. If not part of a larger body, life wants to evolve, form communities and extend its spatial structures, thus it encourages the generation of new places and interaction. The act of building reproduces its archetypes from what is already there, nature and culture, given that the latter is capable of migrating. Thus, the structure of voids excluded by socio-cultural borders openly invite knowledge, habits, techniques from abroad, yet always remain local due to its limited material resources.

Keywords: architectural theory, regenerative architecture, phenomenology of place, crisis management, disciplinary borders

Gábor Kovács

Institute of Philosophy, Research Centre for the Humanities

## **Urban tribes, fluid modernity and surveillance capitalism – the future of democracy and urban spaces in pandemic times**

City has been the incubator of democracy since the emergence of this political arrangement. Polis, in antiquity, was a laboratory of fragile, premodern democracy, medieval town introduced, mixing democratic and aristocratic elements, the patrician democracy. The new kind of publicity appearing in the emerging metropolises of early modernity constituted the social context of modern representative, parliamentary democracy. This, role, stretching through historic epochs, is due to the mobile, flexible, innovative character of the city. Urban space is the 'natural' home of democratic ethos. In the age of fluid modernity, borrowing Zygmunt Baumann's phrase, according to Michel Maffesoli, city becomes the terrain of postmodern urban tribes; he prognosticated the advent of a new, affectual community. The arrival of the pandemic, from many respects, questioned the optimism of postmodern thought concerning the consequences of fluidity: solidity, locality, closedness seem to regain prestige in these pandemic times. The maxim of 'stay at home' would carry long-term consequences if this state of exception proved to be a lasting situation. What can be the role of urban places in this new situation? These are the topics my paper intends to deal with.

Keywords: urban tribes, fluid modernity, city, pandemic times, democracy

**Artur Lakatos**  
Partium Christian University

**Post-Socialist trends concerning the evolution  
of economic life in Cluj-Napoca: the fate of  
Socialist industrial sites and the evolution of the  
tourist industry**

**A synthetic approach**

This paper will describe and analyze how certain phenomena, produced during years of the post-Socialist transition period, affected the economic life of the city of Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár, and what were the effects of the new environment and transformations caused by this. This city, just as cities of Romania in general during the last decades of the Socialist system, was heavily industrialized, much of the industrial plants being privatized following the change. Many of them ceased to exist in a short time, others survived through their brand, and a third category adopted itself successfully to the new rules and settings. An important and interesting niche of the city's economic life is represented by the evolution of the hotel industry. In my presentation, I will reflect on this issue too, highlighting certain trends in the mirror of statistics.

Keywords: post-socialist transition, economic changes, heavy industry, the hotel industry

Béla Mester

Institute of Philosophy, Research Centre for the Humanities

*Urbanitas* and *Sensus Communis*  
Transformation of a Key Word of the Urban  
Philosophy of Modernity

Hans-Georg Gadamer's main work entitled *Truth and Method* is a milestone in the revival of the term of *sensus communis*, at least, in the Continental philosophy. In my presentation it will be offered an overview of the significance of Gadamer's interpretation of this term, in a close connection with the idea of *urbanitas* what was a central concept of the Continental *common sense*-tradition. By my hypothesis, this tradition can be interpreted as a philosophical answer to the transformation of the modern scholar public sphere, amongst them the change of the role of the *urbane public realms*. After the long and close relation of the idea of *urbanitas* and *sensus communis* as a widespread answer to the changed structure of the scholar communication, it is a surprise that the concept of common sense was strongly attacked in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century professional philosophy. After this mainly, but not exclusively Hegelian attack, the concept of *sensus communis* lost its connection with the term of *urbanitas*, and *urban philosophy* disappeared from the core of the European scholar discourse. It is interesting that by Gadamer's interpretation does not focus on the hard attack against the *common sense*, and nor on the evaporation of the *urban philosophy*.

**Basia Nikiforova**

Lithuanian Culture Research Institute

## **City's Visibility and Creativity in Pandemic Time**

Always the potential of the cultural and creative activity is best realized and demonstrated at city level for three main reasons. First, cities have historically been at the center of innovation and change, second, local autonomy has increased over time to enable cities better to address cultural opportunities and challenges, and third, geographical clustering, generated positive externalities in the areas where they are located. All these tendencies were clear in our "past normality". Today we observe new type of city's visibility, which includes the reality of losses, the rapid spreads of disease and mass death of people, the generalized instrumentalization of human existence, the unemployment rate, the fear of density, helplessness and the radicalized intolerance of inequality (Nicholas Mirzoeff, Judith Butler, Roberto Esposito and George Yancy).

The pandemic crisis may provide a short window for our cities to reset and to reenergize their creative scenes. During presentation will be showed some Vilnius creative cases: how local powers and artists are keeping and developing creativity alive.

Keywords: creativity, past and new normality, pandemic, visibility.

**Annamária Orbán**

BME Department of Sociology and Communication & Department of  
Urban Planning & Design

## **“DANube Urban Brand/DANUrB”: more than an EU project...**

### ***Regional identity building, networking and branding along the Danube***

Today in the era of rapid globalization, technological change, commodification and uniformization, we could say that identification with a locality, being aware of the past history, traditions, knowledge, moreover re-using the locally based knowledge and cultural heritage e.g. in cultural economy through regional branding and networking can be an advantageous strategy for survival and even development. Local-cultural identity is attachment, devotedness, self-awareness and ideally, a proudness of the local culture, in its many-folded and multidimensional meaning, as culture has both tangible and intangible elements. Being aware of the cultural richness of the locality, to realize that there are similar communities inheriting the same cultural capital from their ancestors, moreover, to nurture solidarity with them on a network basis, empowers these communities both in socio-cultural and economic sense.

In the DANUrB (2017-19) and DANUrB+ (2020-22) EU Interreg projects lead by BME Department of Urban Planning and Design, - in which the author is a founder, chief researcher and motivator of the project - one of our main goals was to find common tracks, living and forgotten/or hidden remnants of cultural heritage in the DANUrB countries' small and medium size settlements (SMS) from Austria through Hungary to Romania, which can be re-discovered and activated for regional identity and brand building, as well as local economy and community development. During the first DANUrB research project – based on various (quantitative and qualitative) research methods and project activities – we have learnt that many settlements in the transitory, post-socialist DANUrB countries are struggling with economic and social depression, decreasing population, dismantling societies, lost and abandoned production facilities, infrastructure, all signalling the shrinking city (region) and peripheral position phenomenon.

Therefore, in the DANUrB+ (see: <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/news-and-events/newsletters/5499>) phase – in the lower Danube region, from Slovakia to the Danube Delta - we try make advantage of a – seemingly disadvantageous position – and to long-run realize and institutionalize our previous results: be it e.g. the virtual platform of DANUrB cultural promenade and network – “slow, authentic and adventurous” - represented by various stakeholders of SMS (municipalities, cultural and educational institutions, civil organizations, local entrepreneurs etc...) through initiation quality labelling of the local products and services to starting stakeholder cooperatives in Danube related development projects as well as educational programs of arts & crafts knowledge transfer for the younger generations to learn and be proud of what they have inherited from their parents, grandparents and ancestors.

Edited by Borbála Jász

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