

URBANITÉ *Mun Amos*

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Since 2005, the Urban Design Department at the Institute of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture of the Vienna University of Technology has taken part in an ERASMUS Intensive Programme of the European Union which addresses challenges of innovative developments in European urban regions.

In May 2006, a two-week workshop was held in Strasbourg; participants were the ENSA schools of architecture of Strasbourg and Paris-la-Villette, the Vienna and Munich Universities of Technology and the University of Karlsruhe. One central topic was the analysis of innovative developments in the areas of housing construction and urban development with regard to “new urbanity” criteria. The riots breaking out in the “banlieues”, the suburbs on the periphery of many French cities, in the months before the workshop almost inevitably imposed themselves as a second main topic.

The question of what needs to be done to avert such crises of European urbanity raised a special interest in the Viennese “best practice” of “soft urban renewal”. It therefore suggested itself to hold the follow-up workshop in July 2008 in Vienna. Instead of the Munich University of Technology, the Bratislava University of Technology came in as a cooperation partner, which provided a convincing organizational equivalent of the urban development vision of a “Twin City Vienna–Bratislava” as formulated in the Vienna municipality’s STEP05 urban development plan.

In cooperation with the Vienna municipality, the 16th district authorities, and the local STERN 16 neighborhood agency, a concept was implemented which provided for the diverse international group of participants to be directly confronted with the urban renewal area of the Brunnenviertel neighborhood, to live and work there and get closely involved with local urban life.

In two intense weeks, Vienna's urban areas of tension were analyzed, different theoretical positions were outlined in lectures by experts, discussions and activities were brought into the public realm and to the people, and finally, conceptual contributions were made and presented by students, which represent fairly provocative and leading-edge statements on core issues of European urbanity.

This publication is the—necessarily fragmentary—result of an attempt to provide a comprehensive documentation of what happened during those two weeks and to reconstruct the urbanist discourse that was concentrated in the workshop for those who could not be present. However, the attempt would have to be called inadequate if it failed to convey an impression of the intense working atmosphere, the creative dynamism and the immediately lived multicultural urbanity of those two summer weeks.

A film was produced to accompany this publication, since the medium of film stands a better chance of documenting in the most authentic way possible the dynamics of the workshop—the students' work, the guest lectures and field trips and the involvement of the local population.

In March 2009, this documentary was presented to an interested public in a film evening organized by the Department of Urban Design at the Schikaneder movie theater in Vienna's 5th district.