

Under the patronage of the President of the German Association of Cities, Dr. h.c. Petra Roth, Mayor of Frankfurt am Main, the *German Institute of Civic Arts* hosted a **conference on the beauty and viability of the city** in March 2010. The participants met to discuss the crucial challenges of urban design and to work out concrete measures to maintain and revitalize the city. Present at the conference in Düsseldorf were the executive directors of city regeneration from Aachen, Augsburg, Düsseldorf, Freiburg, Lübeck and Stuttgart, the deputies of those from Munich and Berlin, leading architectural critics from almost all of the German supplements (*DIE ZEIT*, *FAZ*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *FOCUS*, *Frankfurter Rundschau* etc.), staff of the building preservation departments of the federal states of Westphalia, Rhineland, Hesse and Saxony-Anhalt, as well as distinguished scholars from Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

The conference issued a concluding statement, **'10 PRINCIPLES OF THE CIVIC ARTS TODAY'**, which contains a concrete action plan. It is hoped that the issues defined and the measures proposed therein will become part of the framework of national urban development policy, as well as informing the projects undertaken by federal state governments, local councils and professional associations.

The mission of the German Institute of Civic Arts is to research and teach the art of urban design. The meaning of this term is twofold: firstly, it emphasises the artistic character of urban design, the aesthetic and creative side of the city; secondly, it refers to the art of bringing together different aspects of urban design, such as the social, economic, political, ecological, technical and cultural requirements, in the shaping of the city.

The institute aims to reunite the disciplines of architecture, town planning, regional planning, traffic planning and public works, which have drifted apart in the last few decades. The Institute, which is based at the Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering at the Technical University of Dortmund, includes the Chair of Urban Design (Professor Christoph Mäckler) and the Chair of the History and Theory of Architecture (Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Sonne).

Translated by Richard Toovey

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10 PRINCIPLES OF THE CIVIC ARTS TODAY

discussed at the
CONFERENCE ON BEAUTY AND VIABILITY OF THE CITY
held in Düsseldorf on 11th and 12th March 2010,
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PREAMBLE

Of the city neighbourhoods built in Germany these days, hardly any are perceived by the majority of the population as being suitable for everyday use, valuable and beautiful, as the so-called old quarters are perceived. This is happening despite widespread criticism, for over a generation, of the functional separation, road promotion and urban fragmentation inherent in the planning models of avant-garde modernism, and despite historically unprecedented, comprehensive, planning legislation with public participation.

In order to define more closely the causes of this deficit and to promote a culture of planning and building that will make it possible in future to preserve, improve and build urban neighbourhoods with a high quality of life and design, experts and leading figures in science, politics, public administration, cultural life and the media, as well as members of the public, have met in Düsseldorf and discussed ten principles for urban design.

The German Institute of Civic Arts will hold specialist conferences on individual subject areas and develop catalogues of concrete measures in groups of experts, with the aim of bringing about changes in urban design practice in Germany. We invite all interested parties to attend these specialist conferences and to promote the implementation of these principles.

OBJECTIVE

The guiding principle for any urban design planning in Germany should be to build sustainably, durably and beautifully. In rural areas, this means strengthening the character of each cultivated landscape through building measures. In the city, however, the goal should be a comprehensively urban character, appropriate to individual locations. An urban character of this kind is grounded in the need to minimize any construction activity outside the city limits, for ecological reasons. Every inner-city building should be durable and beautiful as a component of the city, thus creating a high-quality and sustainable urban environment.

In future, cities in Germany will have to be fully urban. This means that they should have architecturally well-designed public spaces, should consist of buildings appropriate to the context with attractive facades, and should be characterized by densities appropriate to the neighbourhood and its mix of uses. They should encourage pedestrian use to ensure a high quality of life, be open to people of all kinds of social class and origin, benefit from citizens' participation, rest on a diverse and locally based economy, offer a rich cultural life and maintain a relationship of contrasts with the surrounding countryside.

10 PRINCIPLES OF THE CIVIC ARTS TODAY

1. URBAN THEORY. Complexity rather than reduction

The civic arts should encompass every aspect of the city and give them all form. Cities cannot be reduced to single aspects that are dealt with by individual disciplines.

2. CITYSCAPE. Urban design rather than departmental planning

The cityscape results from the deliberate arrangement and design of urban buildings and it requires urban design that aims for enduring beauty. The neglect of the traditional cityscape in urban planning, which is caused by the separation of the various areas of planning, prevents the development of thoroughly high-quality places to live in.

3. CITY ARCHITECTURE. Built ensembles rather than individualistic event architecture

Urban architecture should form ensembles with expressive facades and create an articulated whole of cohesive texture and substance. Exclusively individualistic 'event architecture' disintegrates the urban context and the clarity of public space.

4. CITY HISTORY. Long-term urban culture rather than short-term functional performance

Urban design is a cultural activity, based on historical experience and education. Ostensibly scientific models and spontaneously formulated ideals, such as the 'car-friendly city', fail to recognize the long-term and comprehensive character of the city.

5. CITY IDENTITY. Preservation rather than branding

The identity of the city is the product of its accumulated history, as well as the care of its listed buildings, its street layout and its architecture. Individualistic branding negates the existing characteristics of a place and abets the loss of identity in an era of globalization.

6. URBAN SOCIETY. Neighbourhoods rather than housing estates and industrial parks

The city neighbourhood with mixed uses and architecturally defined spaces is the basic element of the city with its diverse ways of life. Monofunctional housing estates, as well as shopping malls and industrial parks outside the city, destroy its urban character and prevent the members of urban society from identifying with their city.

7. CITY POLITICS. Design by residents rather than anonymous property developers

Urban construction should be driven above all by responsible citizens, as its future users, and should be based on equal access to a real estate market with the plot as its regular unit. Institutional developers, such as public housing associations or property investment funds, with no long-term interest in the quality of a place, do not produce good city buildings.

8. CITY ECONOMY. Local shops rather than chain stores

The city economy should consist more of diversified inner-city shops and commercial enterprises. Big retail chains and outsourcing for large firms alone make the city economy more vulnerable to crises, as well as destroying jobs and small businesses in the city.

9. CITY TRAFFIC. City streets rather than urban freeways

City streets are diverse and well-designed living spaces, which in addition to serving various types of traffic are used for shopping, walking around, social contact, pleasure and political demonstration. Monofunctional freeways and pedestrian zones destroy the city.

10. URBAN ENVIRONMENT. Sustainable construction rather than a quick cover-up

The sustainability of the urban environment is created through comprehensive and sound durability and urban character. Reducing the required energy conservation measures to merely wrapping buildings in oil-based thermal insulation and producing stand-alone low-energy buildings creates the environmental problems of tomorrow.