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The Exchange of Ideas between the Western and Eastern European City: An Exploratory Analysis based on the Research on Stuttgart and Plovdiv

The analysis of the idea exchange between the Eastern and Western European city and vice versa in the field of architecture and urban planning is the starting point of the dissertation project. The current fragmentary nature of the movement of ideas and information and the absence of in-depth research on the factors leading to the present deficiency of the communication motivates the planned scientific contribution. In order to better understand the present situation we need to on the one hand analyse the historical development of both city models and on the other hand examine the existing paths of communication between both. The analysis of the built environment lies in the core of the research on the present state of the two city contexts.

The dissertation project is structured accordingly to the above formulated thesis. The initial introduction into the research topic and the current state of research is followed firstly by an in depth review of the historical development of the two city models and secondly by a comparative analysis of two representatives of both sides – Stuttgart (a Western European city) and Plovdiv (an Eastern European city). The latter comparison is based on the insights from the first chapter of research and studies the link between the individual historical development of both cities and the current characteristics of their urban environment. The last chapter of the project builds on the reached conclusions and elaborates them in a form which can serve as a vantage point for further research and a constructive exchange of ideas in the architectural and urban planning practice in Europe. Methodologically the dissertation project uses a complex approach to the topic of the built environment as a result of the architectural and urban planning practice in the city context and a form of “realized” exchange of ideas between the West and East. The material structure of the city as a testimony and result of the examined phenomena is analysed in four aspects – the urban structure, the quality of urban space, the treatment of architecture as an embodiment of collective memory and the architectural style. The main source of data for the analysis of the historical background and development of both city models will be literature and archive research. The same method of research will support the comparative analysis of Stuttgart and Plovdiv. The comparison of the two case studies will also be based on field work in order to document the current state of their built environment.

The complexity of the topic requires a faceted and well-balanced analysis of the built environment. In order to fully understand and examine the occurring phenomena we need to work not only from the architectural or urban planning perspective but to also

consider the methods of art history. The latter would allow a more profound apprehension of the development of the visual culture of the observed cities – both through planned interventions such as public art as well as through seemingly accidental transformations for example through street art as an unfiltered expression of the artists' reflection on the built environment its self. The planned forum at Humboldt-University Berlin and the conversation with other doctoral candidates researching on topics connected to the Eastern European art history is an invaluable opportunity to exchange experience and gain a more profound understanding of the methodology used in this field of research.