

New hometowns (Prague, 29 Aug–1 Sep 2012)

Aug 29–Sep 1, 2012

Deadline: Oct 1, 2011

Evert Vandeweghe

11th International Conference on Urban History Cities & Societies in Comparative Perspective
Prague, August 29th -September 1st, 2012

NEW HOMETOWNS: LINKING MODERNITY AND TRADITION IN THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR I

In the aftermath of the First World War, radically new architectural and town planning concepts were developed for the devastated regions in several European countries. Construction innovations enabling cheap mass production in building construction went hand in hand with hygienist ideas and changes in transport and management in responding to the overwhelming housing need. However, the media, politicians and the public at large often did not comply with these new, radical ideas and demanded some kind of emotional compensation for the shaken society's post-war misery, the intolerable urban living conditions and the industrialization of the world at large. The symbolic elevation of everyday life in order to create a new sense of community seemed to be a prime concern.

For a long time, the resulting traditionalist environment had been considered a failure by architectural historians because it missed the opportunity for profound modernization. However, this rather biased historiographical rejection is increasingly being questioned. Beyond that, it seems that the simple dichotomy between traditionalism and modernity, which has often been the overpowering image of reconstruction, in fact conceals a much more complex reality: On the one hand, many of the traditionalist realizations were in fact very modern in their production methods. The reliance on simple forms of pre-industrial housing, for example, suited the modern demands of faster and cheaper housing production as well as a healthier living.

On the other hand, modernists often tried to legitimate their projects by referring to historical models such as the medieval town with its picturesque streets, limited size and social unity (for town planning), the beguinage (for the garden town) or the campanile (for the skyscraper). It is obvious that reconstruction, in fact, consisted of a wide variety of traditionalist and modernist strategies in architecture and town planning.

For this session on traditionalist-modern hometowns, we are searching for case studies and theoretical reflections that question the simple dichotomy of modernity and tradition during reconstruction after World War I, by highlighting the traditionalist contextualization of modern ideas and the modern aspects of seemingly traditionalist initiatives in architecture and town planning. An international view on the subject, possibly including transnational comparisons between different European countries involved in the war, and reconstruction, respectively, will hopefully further our understanding of this phenomenon.

Chair:

Dr. Kai Krauskopf, Technische Universität Dresden Evert Vandeweghe, Ghent University

All abstracts (maximum 500 words) should be submitted by October 1, 2011 per online paper proposal form at:

<http://www.eauh2012.com/sessions/call-for-paper-proposals/>

For more information, please visit the website of the conference on www.eauh2012.com

Reference:

CFP: New hometowns (Prague, 29 Aug-1 Sep 2012). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 13, 2011 (accessed Jan 12, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/1646>>.