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INTERNATIONAL
NEW TOWN DAY
2021

*Minorities
telling the story*

29 NOVEMBER 2021

Organised by the [International New Town Institute](#)
and the [Independent School for the City](#)

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INTRODUCTION

The annual International New Town Day, on the 29th of November 2021, was an online expertmeeting where the themes of the discussion were 'Minorities' and 'Telling the story'. The 'Minorities' theme aims to address that the New Towns have been built with a specific group of people in mind to inhabit them, but in reality, the population of these settlements is varied and rich in minorities. Even though the New Towns were not initially designed for diversity, it is important to know who the minorities are, what their background, needs and stories are, in order to address and adapt to them in the future developments of the Towns.

The second theme, 'Telling the story', targets the negative image that the New Towns have. Often described as places that you don't want to find yourself in, the Towns need to tell their rich story and positive aspects and engage in showcasing their narrative through different mediums such as exhibitions, artworks, festivals, books, cartoons, and all the kinds of media that can communicate to the outside and inside people about the history and future prospects of the New Towns.

The goal of this International New Town Day is to extend the platform on a European level and exchange knowledge on the current questions that the New Towns have regarding these themes. Alongside INTI and partner New Towns (Milton Keynes, Nissewaard/Spijkenisse, Grand Paris Sud/Evry, Nova Gorica), a new series of New Towns have been invited to showcase their values and heritage and find similarities amongst each other. This association and representation can possibly lead towards ideas sharing, connection strengthening and new projects that could be supported by EU-subsidies (CERV, Urbact and/or Creative Europe).

An example of a previous project by this network of cities is 'New Towns, Arrival Cities'. Starting from the idea that New Towns consist per definition of migrants, this project offered a platform for citizens, policy makers and migrant groups to be protagonists in elaborating innovative models of inclusive practices and policies. See for the results: www.newtowninstitute.org/spip.php?rubrique149.

The next steps after INTD 2021 are to continue and expand the knowledge exchange and use the two themes 'Minorities' and 'Telling the story' to formulate new projects and find common prospects for the New Towns.

ATTENDEES

The INTD 2021 has put a spotlight on several fascinating New Towns from all across Europe, and has followed up upon the existing partners and their progress. Insights were shared from Eastern and Western European constitutive New Towns and during the talks, mutual issues have been found. The talks have been about Dimitrovgrad (Bulgaria), Ilijas (Bosnia Herzegovina), Milton Keynes (United Kingdom), Nova Gorica (Slovenia), Zingonia (Italy) and Zoetermeer (the Netherlands). All New Towns are facing a potential recognition of their heritage and transformation. The presentations focused on either one or both aforementioned themes and speakers have stated their personal interests towards the progress of these initiatives.

PROGRAMME

The event started with a warm welcome from the moderator Simone Rots (Managing Director, INTI), followed by an introduction by Michelle Provoost (Executive Director, INTI) and Shane Downer (board member INTI) that touched basis on the network, its goals, and steps so far, alongside themes for the future & possible applications for CERV, UrbAct, Creative Europe.

Michelle Provoost explains that the International New Town Day this year has a different format: instead of showcasing results of previous research on New Towns, the goal of the day is to extend the European network and research the possibilities for new European projects.

Michelle introduces INTI and explains that the institute is a research and knowledge exchange platform on New Towns that works on a world-wide scale. INTI previously worked on the Asian continent and within the African context, which resulted in a.o. the publications *Rising in the East* and *To Build a City in Africa, a History and Manual*, on how to develop New Towns within the context of multinational investments in Africa.

In the last three years, INTI decided to focus on Europe, where many pressing issues are at stake (such as climate adaptation and migration) that address urban transformation. Within that context the post-war European New Towns have the same age and share the same characteristics and DNA, because they are developed in the same era. Therefore they show the same challenges. Unlike other cities, the New Towns have to renew themselves as a whole, on a large scale, after 50-60 years of age. This applies not only to Western European New Towns, but also to Eastern European New Towns, although they originate within different regimes and political systems.



INTI database, Eastern and Western New Towns



Minorities



Hoogvliet Minorities

Telling the Story



Hoogvliet Telling the story



Zingonia
Dimitrovgrad
Iljas
Nova Gorica
Zoetermeer



The New Towns invited

Michelle explains that INTI started in the context of the transformation of Hoogvliet, a New Town in the Rotterdam region, that is like many Eastern European New Towns: a one issue city, planned for one kind of industries, the Shell refineries. “During seven years we worked on the transformation of Hoogvliet which was based on historical research and through defining the challenges at that moment (2001-2007). The two topics of today were also relevant then. Hoogvliet was built for one specific group of people. The minorities that came to Hoogvliet, which mostly originated from a large influx from the Antilles, were largely overlooked. This meant that the narrative of the city at that moment and the real, lived-in city were two different things. Through enriching the narrative of the city with the migrant experiences, their need and characteristics were incorporated in the transformation.”

“To change the negative image of New Towns by telling their story in a positive way is quiet a challenge. In Hoogvliet we tried to do that in different ways, through art in public space, exhibitions for different groups, festivals using music connected to minorities and other specific groups, cartoons next to publications. What works and what doesn't? We have to talk about that today.”

The New Towns that will be presented today are all different and have their own characteristics, but also share the same DNA, same sort of seeds that have been planted in the fifties, on a physical and social level. Michelle hopes that at the end of the day we have singled out some themes and work on new projects. So INTI can play its role as a platform for all the cities and initiate new projects collectively.

Then Shane Downer (heritage officer Milton Keynes, board member INTI) explains that Milton Keynes forms a core group as a start of the network together with Nissewaard, Grand Paris Sud and recently also Nova Gorica. The network originated in a previous project that was European funded: New Towns Arrival Cities and the report of this project engaged strong factors in recognising that there are some issues with the New Towns that need to be addressed both individually and as a collective.

The three main objectives for the network revolve around Regeneration (because of their age), Growth (housing is needed) and Reinvention (producing a positive image instead of the negative image), based on the main idea of the shared unique DNA between the New Towns and their perception that is not allways favourable.

The second reason to establish the network is to secure funds to achieve these objectives. While addressing the two themes of today, but also themes like activation of the Public Realm, Climate Change and Sustainability, it is important to find opportunities for projects and find ways to move forward individually and as a collective network.

The third element is working together on an active program on a European scale, such as collective events, like today and other events of the different New Towns.

Possible funding can be found on a European scale through CERV (replacement of the former European for Citizens subsidy) that has a 100% funded basis, UrbAct (urban transformation) and Creative Europe, that are cultural and activity, citizens-based programs. And Nova Gorica together with Chemnitz will be European Cultural Capital in 2025. For the first time New Towns get this status and program.

Shane ends with expressing his hope that in 2022 we can cooperate in projects that are based on the themes and challenges we discuss today.

PRESENTATIONS

During the event, each presentation revealed the special features of the specific New Town but also signalled the similarities between them.

Nova Gorica

City In Motion: Heritage and Minorities

Blaz Kosovel (independent researcher, editor journal Razpotja) reflects on the origins of Nova Gorica.

In 2025 Nova Gorica will be Cultural Capital of Europe, together with Gorizia, its “twin” town on the Italian side of the border. The origin of Nova Gorica is connected to its location and relationship with Gorizia.

As a result of a border dispute, the decision was made that Gorica after the World War II became part of Italy and was called Gorizia from then on. But 2/3 of the region of Gorica became part of Yugoslavia, so a new centre for this area was needed. Not an extension of an existing town, but a New Town that will shine over the border: big, beautiful and proud, a socialist showcase for the West. The ideological decision was made in Belgrade and Nova Gorica became the first New Town built in Yugoslavia. Edvard Ravnikar was the main architect and urbanist in Yugoslavia in that period and he designed a modernist CIAM-like plan for the town. Ravnikar was influenced by Le Corbusier. Nova Gorica was planned to be built in five years, with housing for 10.000 people. Youth brigades, youngsters from all over Yugoslavia, came to Nova Gorica to start building the town in 1947. But when they started with the first building, the project was stopped immediately, because Yugoslavia was kicked out of the Soviet Union by Stalin: Tito became too powerful. Because of this decision the ‘Iron Curtain’ was not located between Italy and Yugoslavia anymore, so the idea of a socialist showcase shining over the border was not needed anymore. Instead, a good relationship was needed with the West. Nobody wanted the New Town anymore, so already from the beginning Nova Gorica had a problem with



Nova Gorica Border



Young brigades building Nova Gorica (Nova Gorica archive via Topography of Memories)



Nova Gorica

its identity. The plan with its vast green areas and big housing blocks was never finished. They started to build on a smaller scale, densifying the vast green empty spaces with for example a botanical garden. The plan was appropriated to a more human scale.

Border

Nova Gorica became an opening of capitalist Western ideas to the East, because of its position at the border, an entrance point for capitalism. Urbanists from Yugoslavia started to visit Western Europe, to gain more knowledge, for example the Lijnbaan in Rotterdam was copied in Nova Gorica and the first pedestrian area of Yugoslavia was built. Next to the existing industry more capital was needed and by developing a casino (Las Vegas style), money was imported in the country. In the end, the biggest casino of the European Union was built in 1994. Nova Gorica benefitted from the wealthy northern part of Italy. In all the years of its existence many minorities came from different countries and different regions of the country to Nova Gorica, to develop and work in the New Town and industries surrounding it. The border between the two towns was set on the location of the railway and all the streets are rectangular, parallel to the railway/border. The square in front of the station was at first divided, but open from the fifties until last year because of Covid 19. This border has an important status in terms of heritage due to its plurality as a window to the East when you look from the Italian side, and a collection of influences of the west when you look from the Slovenian side.



Nova Gorica

Slovenia entered the EU in 2004 and the main event regarding this was done in Nova Gorica. The first and biggest collaboration between the border-cities started now, for the 2025 Cultural Capital events.



Nova Gorica

City in Motion

Jasna Fakin Bajec (Head of Research Station Nova Gorica, Research fellow Institute of Culture and Memory Studies) is a cultural anthropologist and ethnologist. She explains the research project for the European Cultural Capital 2025: City in Motion, in which theoretical research and the reality of the New Town Nova Gorica is combined.

In the wider area, Nova Gorica is identified with “young”, “new”, “border” and as a city of roses, still in search of its urban identity and its potential for urban development. Heritage institutions have already mapped buildings of socialist architecture, but unfortunately without including the stories, memories, and beliefs of the local population that form the pulse of a living city – a city in motion. Due to different ethnic roots and social backgrounds, local people have different attitudes towards the past. The elements of intangible cultural heritage (dialect, memories, legends, rituals closely related to industrial



Nova Gorica

work, culinary habits, etc.) are less explored.

In this project, the interdisciplinary research team will investigate and reflect on the different affective experiences (events embodied with emotions) that

trigger different relationships with the local history, reshaping the collective memory and creating a space for reflection on what the heritage of the young city is. Theory and practice will be connected in the project with a focus on youth involvement and heritage. The involvement of young people next to others stakeholder groups like scientists, experts, local politicians, local entrepreneurs and local people, is essential in the future development of the city and any initiative related to it. This is being achieved through an approach in which the different communities of the town explore how to use their personal memories and experiences to the benefit of future urban development. This is sustained by the theoretical approach of researching the importance of modernist heritage based on ethnographic methods. Through observation, interviews, roundtables, and intergenerational debates, with old people talking about their experiences of how they built the New Town, and young people telling why they like to live in Nova Gorica.



Nova Gorica drawings

European Route of New Towns

Part of the program is a European Route of New Towns. A route that showcases the New Towns and groups them together based on similarities and their unique shared DNA. Heritage is an important message of a museum (to be established virtual or real), that would be able to reveal the tangible and intangible, the objects and subjects of the respective New Town. In Nova Gorica a virtual museum will be made of the whole research, interviews and case studies.

New Towns have always been places characterized by migration: by definition, they have no 'original' inhabitants – every resident is a migrant. As such, New Towns are the prototypical 'Arrival Cities' and have in the past been more successful than most towns in integrating migrants or 'newcomers'. However, many of the communities in the older New Towns from the 60s and 70s seem to have stabilized in such a way that as economic and political resources diminish, migrants from outside the country have a hard time being accepted

When you actually walk into some of these places, you feel alienated in some ways. When you actually say is this my place? Do I belong to this?

<http://aha-mk.org/inclusion-and-diversity>

Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes The Diversity and Inclusion Report

Milton Keynes, planned in 1967, represents the third generation of UK New Towns built under the New Town Act of 1946, in which the focus on the car and growing car ownership became a leading planning criterion, with a non-hierarchical homogenous structure to make the New Town accessible to all. Milton Keynes applied a grid pattern, that can be repeated and aimed to balance living, working and recreation for the residents, with a comparatively large city centre operating on a regional scale.

Milton Keynes was planned as a town for 250,000 people midway between London and Birmingham, originally with the goal of relieving housing pressure in London. The town is famous for being one of the last and arguably largest New Towns in the UK, with a unique scale and ambition. The Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) was a development corporation operating from 1967 to 1992. The MKDC was created to oversee the planning and design of Milton Keynes and coordinate its construction. The early days of the Development Corporation saw huge investments in infrastructure and the development of a unique framework of grid roads, separate pedestrian and cycling 'Redways', and corridors of linear parks and waterways in which the housing, employment and other buildings and land uses were dispersed. The city's low density and respect for existing historic towns and villages, plus its generous green space (some 26% of all land use) has given it a feel of a rural city, often called a 'City of Trees' or a 'City in a Forest' (from INTI Arrival Cities, 'Culture, Migration and Identity')

www.newtowninstitute.org/spip.php?rubrique150)

Francesca Skelton (Chair, Arts and Heritage Alliance Milton Keynes) and Anouar Kassim (Founder and Director MKIAC) touched upon 'The Diversity and Inclusion report', that was initiated to create more inclusion in the Milton Keynes communities.

The Arts & Heritage Alliance Milton Keynes (AHA-MK) is a forum of organisations that work together to position the arts and heritage sectors as strategic contributors to the community and economy of Milton Keynes. They promote, represent and develop arts and heritage, collaboratively delivering or supporting exciting activities. Through their work they encourage the rich heritage and the creative future of Milton Keynes. They also assist in making the case for support to funders and strategic organisations, they are demonstrating – locally, regionally and nationally – the successes and achievements of Milton Keynes' arts and heritage organisations.

Through arts and culture, Francesca explained that the focus on minorities in Milton Keynes has been approached in previous projects but it still needs to be addressed and monitored. Twelve focus groups were organised to explore how underrepresented communities viewed and engaged with the arts and heritage sector. The minorities groups covered: Black, Asian and ethnically diverse communities, a range of faiths, disabilities, socio-economic deprivation, LGBTQ+, women and young people.

Francesca mentioned that the alliance recommended a programme of change to include both self and institutional interrogation with a review of awareness, culture, language, engagement, systems, processes and procedures. The goals mentioned were: the creation of an empowered community that feels a sense of belonging to, and a sense of ownership of, the Milton Keynes Cultural sector; the development of an inclusive cultural workforce, paid and volunteered, that is representative of, and welcoming to, diverse communities and offers young people job opportunities and skills development; the ensuring of an effective communication with diverse communities; the ensuring that inclusion and diversity measures are evaluated and sustained across the Milton Keynes cultural sector.

Francesca highlighted the quote from the previous project 'Arrival Cities' that has been inspirational for



Indian Lunar festival held in Milton Keynes

the report: 'New Towns have always been places characterised by migration: by definition, they have no 'original' inhabitants – every resident is a migrant. As such, New Towns are the prototypical 'Arrival Cities' and have in the past been more successful than most towns in integrating migrants or 'newcomers'. However, many of the communities in the older New Towns from the 60s and 70s seem to have stabilized in such a way that as economic and political resources diminish, migrants from outside the country have a hard time being accepted.'

Considering that Milton Keynes has a population of 275.000 and is still growing, Francesca quoted: 'We need to make sure the infrastructure of our new city is representative of its diverse population to address the desires of these emerging diverse communities and their cultural wellbeing. We as a city need to understand our diverse population and their desires and align the infrastructure accordingly. So that our city will not just be a diverse city by numbers but a true diverse and inclusive city of Milton Keynes for generations to come'. An example of a great multicultural event was the collaboration between the chair of the African Diaspora foundation and the director of the Milton Keynes Art Centre that is still existing today and that facilitated the African Culture festival and the celebrations of arts and culture of Africa at the venue of the Art Centre. The focus for these projects is on building a collective memory. Through activities, appropriate infrastructure and inclusion, Milton Keynes tries to provide a platform for all cultures to intertwine and cohabit.

Anouar Kassim is the chair of Milton Keynes Islamic Arts and Culture organisation that has been created as a response to the 9/11 attacks. Inspired by Islamic arts, heritage and culture, encompassing both traditional and contemporary art forms, MKIAC covers a broad spectrum of inclusive arts-based events throughout the year. Their primary focus is using the arts as a vehicle to overcome societal divisions and provide a sense of community in Milton Keynes. Through programs such as Art in the Park and Women empowering projects, the organisation is seeking to bring closer all types of minorities and create a way of interaction and a sense of community. For example, the Cross Stitching Beyond Borders textile workshops brought women from diverse communities including Syrian refugees together through a shared arts experience to learn embroidery skills such as cross-stitching, machine sewing and needlework.



MKIAC Art in the park event

Some of the voices of Milton Keynes have mentioned: Minorities find it hard to cross out thresholds, 'it is not enough to have something put up. Invite us!' How inclusively do we plan our New Towns? 'Whose city is it?'



Fragment from the film *The Artifice*

Zingonia The Artifice

Francesca Bertin (Filmmaker) presents her vision of the New Town Zingonia through the perspective of the 20th century as the age of planned cities.

"L'artificio" shows the vision of a utopian urban landscape from the 1960s interwoven with the experiences of today's inhabitants, thus giving the planned city Zingonia (in the region of Bergamo) a voice.

Zingonia was the brainchild of the wealthy Roman entrepreneur and banker Renzo Zingone. His ambition was to realize a self-sufficient industrial and residential New Town. Not a sleepy suburban town nor an industrial terrain but a real city with hotels, theatres, a shopping centre, kindergartens, swimming pool, cinema etc. He undertook the project with architect Franco Negri who designed the masterplan and various buildings and started in 1965. In the beginning of the 1970s construction halted due to various reasons amongst them the economic crisis of 1973 and administrative problems. Resistance from the five communities of which Zingonia is part prevented Zingone's full vision from being realized. What emerged, however, is an image of shared prosperity, spaciousness, stately and efficient places. Over the years, the ups and downs of subsequent oil crises have resulted in the town becoming increasingly orphaned, creating a sociocultural wasteland used by drug trafficking and prostitution. It never became the city it should have been, an ideal, utopian city which combined living and working to solve the commuting problem. Instead of the 50.000 inhabitants the New Town aimed for, it never reached more than a few thousand. (from: francescabertin.com/L-Artificio)



Fragment from the film *The Artifice*

The *Artifice* is a poignant short film, a piece of art showing the rough and unpolished lives of the inhabitants and of migrants in Zingonia. The issues presented are redevelopment and the relocation of local inhabitants that resulted from that, the six towers that are known for large numbers of minorities and alarming crime rates and the estranged feeling that the locals have while being resilient to their environment. The heritage is comprised of multiple facets of the same wish to belong, to be accepted and to integrate.



Fragment from the film *The Artifice*

As Francesca Bertin describes: the ideological roots of Zingonia were cast in concrete until it started being demolished in 2019. The urban design with iconic features like fountains, towering monuments in roundabouts and the increasing accumulation of working people has been altered through time and the monuments turned to ruins. The modern apartments in the iconic towers, with their once luxurious sanitary facilities, were said to be a social construct that would trap working people in the capitalist dream of shared economic prosperity. Although Zingone's Zingonia has never been materialized, it is inhabited and full of people and vitality. It is made up of immigrants and people who want to escape

poverty and unemployment. They came, stayed, and made Zingonia their place in various ways, giving it its own meaning, and writing their lives on its walls. But investors, the private sector and the local ruling party in Italy are using a system of exploitation that proposes a regeneration through redevelopment and densification that is not welcomed by its locals. The pertinent questions that arise on Zingonia's actual state regard its degrading heritage and fading story, and its minorities that are plenty in this New Town.



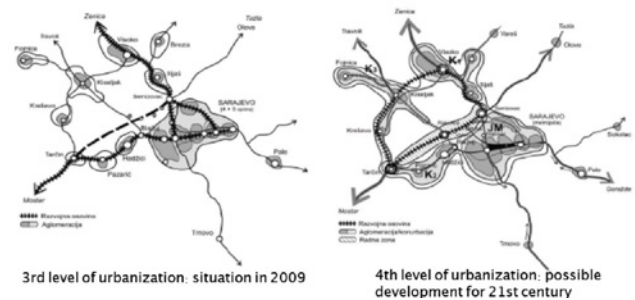
Olympic postcards Ilijas

Ilijas The New Town Ilijas, and the changing relationship with the ‘mother-city’ Sarajevo, from satellite to suburb

Elsa Turkusic (Senior Teaching Assistant, Department of Architectural Design, Faculty of Architecture, University of Sarajevo) talked about the New Town Ilijas (Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina).

Elsa just started research on Ilijas, and presented her first findings showing its heritage richness and future potential. Ilijaš is a small post-industrial town and municipality located in the Sarajevo Canton of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is located north-east of Sarajevo and was established in May 1952 by the organization of people’s committees. The town is divided in three parts that also capture its historical fabric. Firstly, the Old Ilijaš consisting of the old medieval settlements and the late 19th century industrial developments (sawmill). Secondly, the new Ilijaš that started in 1939 as a worker’s settlement and in 1952 benefitted of an urban redevelopment. The third part is the industrial complex; the ironworks that were established in 1952.

Positioned strategically in the middle of the industrial zone that was once the most important industrial cluster of former Yugoslavia, Ilijas now holds important industrial heritage sites and is a fascinating representation of a location with a layered heritage from medieval to industrial times, intertwined with nature and socialist housing. As a big municipality with a low density (50-60 residents per square km), and after the new urban developments made in 1965, nowadays Ilijaš is a picturesque, heritage rich, green city that has incredible stories to tell.



Ilijas Urbanisation levels

Elsa presented these three layers of history that unfold throughout the city: from medieval to industrial, to post-industrial and green oasis. The medieval heritage comprises of the necropolises of Stecak at Kuposici and at Bijambare, and the medieval town of Dubrovnik, all from the 13th century. The necropolises host medieval tombstones that have been recently listed as Unesco Heritage. Through archaeological excavations, the remains of Prince Mirko Radojevica’s brocade funeral cloak have been discovered and are now exhibited in the national museum. The remains of the medieval old town of Dubrovnik can be seen in Ilijas, with the tower and fragments of the fortress wall that have been maintained and reconditioned in the recent years.

Due to the exclusive focus of the authorities and municipality to develop Ilijas as an industrial city, during the 20th century all cultural and heritage aspects of the city have been rather ignored. The post-industrial period has revealed the potential of exploring all heritage aspects of the city. One aspect was uncovering the medieval parts of the town and listing them as national heritage. Another aspect was appreciating the integration of industrial architecture throughout the city, for example the workers settlement in the east of Ilijas, designed by architect Juraj Neidhardt in 1939. He was commissioned by Jugocelik, a Zenica based industrial company, and the industrial complex of Ilijas, Ironworks. All these aspects find themselves in a green oasis, as Ilijas is comprised of 55% forest land. The quality of greenery can be found throughout the New Town and it is one of the most appreciated assets of the town by its locals and tourists. There is a potential to use all these cultural, architectural and landscape values to further develop the future of Ilijas.



Area development analysis

The landscape surrounding Ilijas



SO2 emission

Ilijas is a town that started as a satellite of a capital and slowly has been assimilated and transformed into a suburb of Sarajevo. Now it is developing to become a suburb, assimilated by the ever-growing Sarajevo and adapting new functions. It is a city that uses its nature and context to continuously build on its historical values. As shown in the presentation and based on the reactions of the event audience, the green landscape has always been an asset of Ilijas and, as Michelle observed, nature occupies a quarter of the image on postcards from the Olympics. This resource is valued by the inhabitants of Ilijas and visitors alike, transforming the perception of the New Town in a positive way. This green quality can become a new theme that can be developed and explored through the INTI network, through the reinvention of green and landscape.



The landscape surrounding Ilijas



Zoetermeer 1960s

Zoetermeer

The role of architectural heritage in the future development of Zoetermeer

Magriet Panman (Heritage and Spatial Quality Advisor of the municipality of Zoetermeer) tells the story of Zoetermeer.

Between 1960 and 1985, a number of towns and villages were designated as growth locations in the Netherlands in order to relieve the existing cities of the enormous population growth. Zoetermeer was designated as a growth area ('Groeikern' in Dutch) by the national government in 1962. Urban planners W.F. Schut, S.J. van Embden and R.H. Fledderus were appointed to form a working group to draw up an urban plan for Zoetermeer. The village would have to grow from 8,000 to 100,000 inhabitants in a short period of time (nowadays: 125.000). In Zoetermeer, building had to take place in a high density in order to affect the landscape as little as possible. The designs for Zoetermeer were inspired by the functional city philosophies of the CIAM (Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne). In order to achieve a healthy and efficient city, the separation of functions was central to these philosophies. Not only was the separation of traffic flows safer, but it would also create a quieter living environment.

In 1966, construction of the first new districts in Zoetermeer began. The neighbourhoods were designed in such a way that they form a smooth transition from low-rise buildings around the old village to high-rise buildings on the edge of the city. Whereas gallery flats with parking decks and roof gardens were built in the neighbourhood Driemanspolder, the increasing demand for housing in Palenstein meant that there was no more room for these parking decks.

Meanwhile, not only in Zoetermeer but nationwide there was an increasing criticism of these large ‘inhuman’ housing estates. From 1968 onwards, therefore, the predicate ‘experimental housing’ could be claimed for ‘experimental housing construction’, in which architectural experimentation creating a varied and better living environment with new types of housing could earn an extra subsidy. In 1974, experiments began in different neighbourhoods of Zoetermeer.

In 1968 the Structure-plan was developed by the Workgroup Development Zoetermeer and the New Town has been developed according to this plan until today. It consists of an H-structure of parkways, with the new City Heart in the centre, surrounded by residential areas. The huge green areas that are part of the plan determine the identity of Zoetermeer as a green city: every neighbourhood has its own green areas, connected also to the countryside immediately outside of the city. The green identity is important within the heritage and identity of the New Town.



Structure plan Zoetermeer 1968

Thorough research on the cultural heritage of Zoetermeer has been done on different levels. Firstly, by telling the unique story of the development of Zoetermeer. Then, on the level of the neighbourhoods, each neighbourhood got its own biography (containing the historical spatial planning and a housing analysis). Thirdly, an inventory has been made on the scale of objects, complexes, areas and structures, which consists of churches, schools, office buildings, utility buildings, care and wellbeing building and housing in all kind of sizes and forms. Important to mention are the housing experiments

that were built in the seventies, like the elevated housing blocks with parking downstairs and living at first level.



Neighbourhood Buitenwegh, Dwellings located on decks, with parking below

Zoetermeer tells her story for example through the Architecture Centre that organises excursions and exhibitions. But also the city council needs to be informed and stimulated. So the message to the city council is that also by development one can preserve, that heritage is connected to identity, that heritage should be considered in the context of future tasks (for example sustainability) and that heritage and public participation are connected; in Zoetermeer already from the beginning onwards: ‘Samenspraak’ (Dutch synonym for dialogue) with the inhabitants was used in the creation of the plan.

Through appreciation of the 1960-70’s architecture, the question is raised how new developments can take place while maintaining and celebrating the aesthetic of the city; especially within the context of the present housing needs in the Netherlands. Next to that, also business developments are important in the transformation. In less than 40 years, Zoetermeer’s population has jumped from 8.000 to 125.000, while 2.900 businesses provide almost 45.000 jobs. Today, the city is facing new challenges, such as the multiculturalism and diversity integration, with more than 33% residents of other nationalities.



Dimitrovgrad being built

Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria The dichotomy of Dimitrovgrad and industrial New Towns in using their heritage

Aneta Vasileva (Cofounder WhAT Association, Secretary DOCOMOMO Bulgaria) spotlighted Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria in her presentation 'The dichotomy of Dimitrovgrad and Industrial New Towns in using their Heritage'.

Founded in 1947, Dimitrovgrad is a planned city built by the People's Republic of Bulgaria following World War II. The established communist government designed the town as a socialist model city, named for the first communist leader of Bulgaria, Georgi Dimitrov. What makes an impression in Dimitrovgrad is not only the significant presence of heavy industry, but also its specific architecture and the particular attention given to the landscaping. Dimitrovgrad was the ultimate propaganda showcase to outline the transition from rural to urban society and a flagship example of the rapid modernization efforts which coincided with the official introduction of the aesthetic doctrine of socialist realism in 1948 and thus formed a specific genre of proletarian luxury.

Aneta explained that the territory, developed before the war as a mining region, had already started to become an active industrial region after 1944. All the pre-existing mines had been nationalized and the new nitrogen-fertilizer plant, the cement plant "Vulkan" plus one of the biggest power plants in the country

were under construction. New settlements had already started to appear close to the new industrial complex by the Maritza River. And then the decree came in 1947: the first socialist city in Bulgaria was to be built at this location, benefitting from the already existing railway system, the favourable natural setting and the river. Dimitrovgrad united the pre-existing villages Rakovski, Mariyno and Chernokonevo with a brand new central urban zone. It was decided that construction works would be carried out by young volunteers. The first builders started to arrive in May 1947 and by the end of the grand construction effort their total number had reached a staggering 50.000.



Plan Tonev

The construction of the green areas, including three parks, green belts along the Maritsa River, numerous gardens between blocks and neighbourhoods, and the significant street and boulevard landscaping, make the city one of the greenest settlements in Bulgaria. This can be attributed to the two urban plans that have shaped Dimitrovgrad: the plan of Tonev (1947) that was characterised by satellite villages around a core with low density housing for around 30/35.000 people; and the plan of Tashev (1950) that introduced compact high-density housing in socialist realist architecture, for around 75.000 people. Today the town has kept its name paying little consideration to what ideological groups think. The landmarks to Georgi Dimitrov are eliminated, yet there was a plan to assemble every one of the country's communist landmarks in a recreation area.

Today, the entire town is a landmark with regional public significance. For example, the so-called Nedelen (Sunday) market that gradually started developing in the late 1980s and exploded in the 1990s as an ad-hoc informal place for all kinds of formal and informal commerce. It used the city's

favourable geographical position and its strong transport connections with both Turkey, Asia and Western Europe. It also used all the cracks in the chaotic world of early post socialist economy and managed to exist on the periphery of all regulations.



Plan Tashev

Aneta recalled a story that in late 1980s the local journalist Dimitar Beremski made a bet with a fellow colleague from Deutsche Welle that wherever you live in Dimitrovgrad, you live in a park. The German did not believe him and... lost the bet. Indeed, one can walk the town from north to south and from east to west only through green areas and parks. All the residential blocks, even the much later additions of prefab districts, are placed within generous green spaces with mature trees, flowers and pedestrian alleys. Dimitrovgrad is perhaps the only non-stop garden city in Bulgaria.



Plans of protected heritage Dimitrovgrad

Currently the industrial buildings of Dimitrovgrad are rejected as heritage by the citizens due to their political and historical socialist negative connotations. Therefore, it is urgent to create awareness and

showcase this heritage of the town in a manner that resonates with the locals.

Dimitrovgrad is also characterised by something rather controversial: the music industry. This industry was even more prevalent during the 2000's and has been using the socialist realist architecture as the backdrop for video clips, showing the societal discrepancy between the generations. But, as the cultural anthropologist Velislava Petrova points out: "What makes Dimitrovgrad intriguing is the ability of its imaginary to combine the shameful and the glorious, from its past and present, and in such a way to stand apart from other Bulgarian cities".

As Aneta highlights, the socialist realism has always been the shameful child of socialist architecture, labelled as the "kitsch" period and opposed to the "heroic" return of the so-called "socialist modernism" of the 1960s. It was burdened with ideology, linked to the hardest time of Stalinist repressions and rejected vehemently after the death of Stalin and the Thaw under Khrushchev in 1956. Its esthetics were rediscovered, however, in the late eighties with the postmodern agenda. In the words of Boris Groys, it turned out that "the art of socialist realism has already bridged the gap between elitism and kitsch by making visual kitsch the vehicle of elitist ideas, a combination that many in the West even today regard as the ideal union of "seriousness" and "accessibility".

Post socialism added layers of multiple identities and managed to form hybrid and actually inclusive cities, with Dimitrovgrad being the ultimate Bulgarian example. This bridging of two polar opposites creates an opportunity for an extraordinary story telling of the rich and controversial heritage of Dimitrovgrad.



Dimitrovgrad landscape

CONCLUSIONS

As a reflection, Stefan Ghenciulescu (Zeppelin Magazine, Editor-in-chief) presented an analysis of the characteristics of Eastern European New Towns and large urban extensions. He talked about the way they were designed to be cities for the new socialist man, and about the differences with Western European New Towns. As was discovered during the presentations, the New Towns share a similar DNA on multiple levels such as their origins in top down planning, mass housing for everybody, evolution and development, the neglected role of minorities, an increasing awareness of their heritage, but also a negative image. As Stefan noted, the towns have been facing significant changes in the last few decades and they have encountered similar issues that need to be identified and addressed. Both in the East and the West the triumph of the private market has taken its toll. New developments and demolitions should take into account all stakeholders including the minorities, in order to assure the sustainable development of the New Towns.

The overlap between Eastern and Western European New Towns lies mostly in the fields of heritage, green and immigration. On the topic of heritage, it is clear that for most towns the concept of heritage is in constant change. The New Towns have a shorter history but their heritage layers enrich their context. Heritage is a vehicle for critical thinking and identity forming. In terms of telling their story, all the New Towns that presented their heritage have a rich and similar story of creation and evolution. The New Towns are in distinctive stages of their exploration and research, for example Milton Keynes and Zoetermeer have already identified their strong and weak points and started to tackle them through projects and actions, while Ilijas is just starting to be researched and its rich heritage and potential is not yet uncovered. It is also clear that the appreciation of heritage is different with subsequent generations: for example in Eastern Europa, the younger generations appreciate the New Towns and the underlying ideas and ideals more than the generation who strived for independence.

Green spaces and interpretations of the 'garden city' that are visible in the New Towns remain extremely valuable. For Dimitrovgrad it was a result of planning, for Ilijas it was a result of its medieval heritage and multiple stages of planning and for Zoetermeer and Nova Gorica it was included in the planning as part of a regional scheme. This common theme can be explored through the INTI network and the issues concerning protection and maintenance of the environment can be addressed collectively.

The need of integration of minorities within all layers of the city has been signalled throughout this event. Various methods have been mentioned such as social programs for inclusion, offering safe spaces for events and interaction between minorities, and the possibility of appropriating the city. The fact that most New Towns have seen a strong influence of immigration is no surprise due to the forming of these places, and it should be celebrated as a quality and developed into more inclusive spaces.

Nova Gorica, Milton Keynes, Zingonia and Dimitrovgrad have displayed multiple facets of this subject, from integration of minorities, to the recognition of the minority groups as essential parts of the city culture and to the celebration of this multiculturalism within the spaces provided.



Typical modernist housing blocks of the Khrushchev era and later in Eastern European cities

In the end discussion, the perceived dichotomy between Eastern and Western Europe proved to be a mirage, as the New Towns share a plethora of similar obstacles and historical defining moments, the undeniable differences being their political backgrounds, heritage and geographical position. These findings have enriched the opportunities for collaborating and developing projects in the prospects of the European New Town network.

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Images were taken from the presentations of the speakers during the INTDay 2021.

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