

CITY CULTURES IN FOCUS

Cities are conglomerations of people, power and capital, creativity and communication, where a higher concentration and more differentiation of each of these elements lead to increased vibrancy of the city.

Each city, criss-crossed by travel routes and channels of infrastructure, is a complex system of residential and commercial buildings, structures with social, cultural and sacral purposes, pedestrian promenades, commercial and industrial zones, gardens and parks, as well as waste grounds, and exclusive and disreputable quarters. The individuality and diversity of these elements specifically define each city. They form the city's structural and typological skeleton, a framework that gives the freedom of a unique approach to life to each individual within the anonymity of the masses.

"Each city is a living organism in itself, which develops in its own way according to distinct rules" (Isabella Marboe). Based on its history and its architectural and topographic structures the city continuously re-invents itself out of the sum of the activities of all its inhabitants, users and visitors. With every step city dwellers etch traces into this 'city image', choose their own paths and develop a system of personal coordinates, made up of favourite places, meeting points and locations, through which they explore their city. The resulting web of countless superimposed paths reflects both individual and social modes of behaviour, which in turn are distinct to, and create the specific culture of, each city.

A close investigation of and reflection on this network is the primary aim of the inter-cultural project **CITY CULTURES IN FOCUS**, planned to take place in Bucharest, Ferrara, Hanover, Istanbul, Krakow, Milan and Vienna.

Specifically, the following questions (**project modules**) are to be investigated in the project cities:

- How is the city perceived by its everyday users – inhabitants, workers, students, flâneurs, as well as men and women, the old-established and new immigrants, the rich and the poor? Are the various perceptions of the city sociospecific, and how do they differ from each other? Which everyday perceptions take place consciously, and which on an unconscious level? (**Views of the city**)
- How is the city reflected in the work of local artists (along the lines of the 'city culture' outlined above)? What opportunities do these works offer to residents to experience their city and its culture afresh and anew? What kinds of 'calling cards' do these works represent for an audience from outside the city? (**Multimedia exhibition**)
- How do artists from the outside perceive an unknown city and its culture? Which approaches to penetrate a new city (or 'city culture') do they choose and find? What kind of new images of the city do these glances from the outside result in, and what do they reveal? (**Diary**)
- In which buildings and open spaces do specific aspects of 'city culture' manifest themselves today (see above: power, capital, creativity, communication, hot spots, meeting points, favourite places etc)? In how far do architecture and urban design change these places? And to what extent do these disciplines correspond with or contradict the needs of the city dwellers? (**Design workshops**)
- Which plans and visions for the future culture of the project cities can internal and external artists, authors, designers, architects and urbanists distil from each of their city reflections in a common discourse? Why are these different from city to city? (**Presentation & discussion forums**)