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Scritti di **Giulio Breglia, Michele Cera e Guido Sechi, Donatella Cialdea, Umberto Janin Rivolin, Giovanni Laino, Olivia Longo, Francesca Mattei, Carlo Olmo, Gabriele Pasqui, Marco Peverini, Fabio Samele e Sara Spiriti, Oana Cristina Tiganea, Maria Chiara Tosi, Davide Vettore** | fotografie di **Yevgen Nikiforov** | Libri di **Massimo Angrilli / Olaf Bartels e Behörde für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen / Bertrando Bonfantini e Imma Forino / Michele Cera e Guido Sechi / Giovanni Caudo e Martina Pietropaoli / Coordinamento rete nazionale giovani ricercatori per le aree interne / Andrea Di Franco e Paolo Bozzuto / Pier Luigi Crosta e Cristina Bianchetti / Francesca Giofrè e Pisana Pisocco / Claudia Pirina / Guido Rebecchini / Yvonne Rydin, Robert Beauregard, Marco Cremaschi e Laura Lieto / Susanne Soederberg**

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(ibidem) è curato da:
Luca Gaeta (Coordinamento)
Alice Buoli (Relazioni editoriali)
Silvia Gugu (Comunicazione)
Francesco Curci, Marco Milini e Giacomo Ricchiuto (Redazione)
Giulia Fini e Cecilia Saibene (*Planum. The Journal of Urbanism*),
con la collaborazione di Carlotta Fioretti

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*Lysychansk (Ucraina). La statua di Lenin colorata dagli attivisti locali
in una foto scattata pochi giorni prima della sua rimozione.*
Foto di Yevgen Nikiforov 2015 ©

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all'indirizzo email: planum.ibidem.2017@gmail.com

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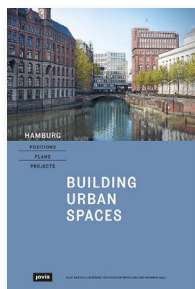
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Testo di Michele Cera e Guido Sechi

Davide Vettore

Reclaiming urban spaces in Hamburg



Olaf Bartels, Behörde für Stadtentwicklung und Wohnen (eds.)

Building Urban Spaces

Jovis, Berlin 2020

pp. 256, € 35

Hamburg has been pursuing an urban programme for years based on a demographic growth of approximately two million people by 2030. One of the largest harbour cities in Germany is now preparing for this new wave of citizens: a series of plans and projects are under development, some of which already completed. The new buildings on the northern banks of the Elbe river are finished and active, while the HafenCity district and the Sprung über die Elbe (Leap across the Elbe river) are still in progress. All these projects have had a huge impact on development strategies at the urban scale level. In the book edited by Olaf Bartels, different approaches to this topic are presented concerning a list of plans and projects for the urban development of Hamburg. As mentioned in the book, urban planning plays an essential role in the city's definition. In particular, this planning programme emphasises the city's peripheries and the urban spaces along its Magistralen (arterial corridors). The goal is the well-known practice of mixed uses that in Hamburg has become a reality with HafenCity, where it was possible to reach a new urban quality of life.

The identity of a city such as Hamburg can be perceived in its building density, the juxtaposition of residential buildings, offices, industrial and commercial areas, cultural and leisure facilities, gardens, parks and the peculiar density of transport routes. The result of this composition is a series of spaces in which the concentration of many people creates variety through diversity and simultaneously demands tolerance. It promotes gatherings and exchange, but also the desire for privacy.

Hamburg is a large city, but its growth is moderate, not comparable with the late 19th and early 20th centuries or with contemporary megacities. A particular feature is that Hamburg is growing internally: old harbour areas, abandoned industrial sites and railway areas have been reclaimed and are being developed as new city districts.

Thanks to the HafenCity district and the new concert hall Elbphilharmonie, designed by the Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron, Hamburg's internal development has attracted significant attention beyond the city boundaries. These reborn locations densify the city fabric and complete its structure. In some places, the purpose is to remove established single uses to increase or create structural and social diversity in the city.

In the first chapter, a series of large-scale projects are presented together with an interview with Hamburg's Chief urban planning director Franz-Josef Höing who explains his view on the city's future. Following this, Reiner Nagel, urban planner and chairman of Bundesstiftung Baukultur (Federal foundation for the culture of building), illustrates the construction plans for the peripheries. Subsequently, the city's major development projects are presented, starting from the eastern area of HafenCity, and the Elbtower, which is to be built according to the design of British architect David Chipperfield and has the ambition to become a new landmark in the city. Besides, on the southern bank of the Elbe, opposite to HafenCity, a new neighbourhood is being planned at Kleiner

Grasbrook.

In the south of the city, converted warehouses with new residential and commercial buildings and the Technical University of Hamburg are becoming a new district where people study, produce and live. In this area, the future Science City Hamburg Bahrenfeld is planned to become a science district with university research facilities, innovative companies, and mixed housing. In Oberbillwerder, a new urban neighbourhood is being created on greenfield sites, and a garden city is being planned at Lake Öjendorf.

The second chapter highlights the developments in Hamburg's inner city. The city centre was significantly destroyed twice: by the Great Fire of Hamburg in 1842 and during the Second World War. After that, the inner city was largely rebuilt, and today represents an important impulse for its architectural identity and is also the place of intensive building activities. At the beginning of the chapter, Karin Loosen, President of the Hamburg chamber of architects, together with Christoph Falger, architect and partner at David Chipperfield Architects, Swiss architect Roger Diener and British architect Peter St John discuss how to deal with Hamburg's inner city, which on the one hand has to meet high demands due to a permanent pressure to change in terms of construction but, on the other hand, is supposed to remain recognisable and forge an identity for Hamburg's residents and its visitors. They discuss the handling of buildings from the post-war period and their potential integration into the city fabric, addressing the significance of the building façades for the spatial quality of public squares and as spatial attractions for pedestrian and cycle traffic.

The architectural and urban development projects presented illustrate the approach to new pathways using the examples of the Stadthöfe building complex at Stadthausbrücke, the redevelopment of the southern inner-city area along Nikolaifleet and around the ruins of the St. Nikolai's Church, and the redesign of public squares to give them better urban quality.

The thoughts expressed by the experts and the architectural and urban development projects shown make clear that the qualities of public spaces are only partly a matter of traffic or parked cars. Re-

ducing the frequency and number of vehicles will undoubtedly increase the appearance of these locations and raise their attractiveness for pedestrian and cycle traffic. However, this will also have to be connected with measures for the urban structure and architectural interventions to improve the spatial qualities of places.

The third chapter focuses on traffic and the overall infrastructure of roads, cycle paths, rail tracks and stations that not only serve mobility purposes, even on a larger scale, but also define urban spaces. Chief urban planning director Franz-Josef Höing points out the complexity of the necessary structures and the significance of traffic hubs such as the main railway station and the new Hamburg-Altona railway line. Hamburg is planning the construction of a new underground railway line and extensions to existing suburban trains and underground lines to strengthen public transport and provide connections for existing and new development areas. New stops and stations give an impulse for urban development and become an important part of the urban space. In addition, the Hamburg Senate has set itself the goal of promoting cycle traffic through a network of well-developed *Veloroutes*, a medium to long-distance cycle routes, thereby establishing the bicycle as an everyday means of transport and enabling new perspectives on urban spaces.

However, the Magistralen (arterial corridors) are the central topic of this chapter. They set out a network of development lines that extend from the heart of the city to its peripheries, providing access to areas of urban development along with the access and exit roads, but also in their surroundings, which have been previously of minor importance. Finally, the city's new structures and urban spaces, including courtyards, streets, squares, parks, and rail stops and stations, can only be seen as an offer to their users to arrange their daily lives inside them. Thus, the urban spaces serve as a framework for the social, economic, and cultural areas that make up most of the city.

The City of Hamburg has set up several participatory procedures in its urban workshops to allow not just those already active in urban development but all city residents to participate in planning processes. These procedures are supplemented and



changed by citizen initiatives. Urban planner Klaus Overmeyer introduces a wide range of participatory planning in Hamburg, including PlanBude, which came directly from residents' initiatives. One of the most important is the International Bauforum, a unique planning method that the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg has held regularly since the 1980s, with national and international architects participating. The 7th Hamburg Bauforum, which took place in August 2019 and focused on the urban possibilities along and around the city's Magistralen, was reviewed by architecture journalist Benedikt Crone.

Due to Magistralen's peculiarity, the consequences must be regarded as a widespread strike with a long-term impact, affecting all districts in Hamburg, including places that are still regarded by many as backyards of the city. The results of the Forum illustrate that large-scale and long-term planning projects are still achievable today. However, they no longer imply a large-scale and uniformly styled rebuilding, as is commonly assumed in modern urban planning. Instead, the plans are adjusted kilometre by kilometre along the Magistralen, emphasising preservation and addition rather than demolition and large-scale new construction.

With these programs and methods, Hamburg is prepared to become a model of urban development planning.

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic vividly demonstrated how sensitive is the city's principle based on personal interaction, density, and closeness. Empty streets and city squares became symbols of the crisis, and residences were transformed into multi-purpose spaces. It's reasonable to think that the coronavirus will impact architecture, town and city design, especially given the impact of previous significant epidemics such as the plague or cholera on city buildings and living culture. At first look, the idea of a robust urban development also appears to be sustainable in this sense, with the principles of extensive greening and high flexibility use in architecture. The architectural proposals for the Hammer-Brooklyn project, as well as the town planning concepts for the Öjendorf garden city and, on a larger scale, the Grasbrook development area, demonstrate what this can imply.