RINGEN IM HEUTE – CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS

31.05.2024, 2. panel discussion of the series of talks European Urban Studies on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Institute of European Urban Studies (IfEU) in Weimar with:

Daniela Zupan (Moderation)
Director of the IfEU and Junior Professor for European Cities and Urban Heritage at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar (BUW) with a research focus on planning guiding principles

Sandra Huning
Assistant Head of the Chair of Urban Planning at BUW since 2022, associated with IfEU in research and teaching

Raffael Beier
Acting director at the chair of International Planning Studies at TU Dortmund. His research topics are housing, social inequalities, displacement and resettlement with a focus on Africa and the Middle East

Noa K. Ha
Scientific researcher with a focus on urban studies, migration and racism and the scientific director of the German Center for Integration and Migration Research (DeZIM)

Giovanni Picker
Assistant Professor in Sociology of Inequalities at University of Glasgow. His empirical work on race, cities and nationalism extends across Europe

Introduction by Daniela Zupan, Director of the IfEU

This podium offers the opportunity to critically reflect on the question what European Urban Studies nowadays means for urban planning and research, especially for the Institute for European Urban Studies at Bauhaus-University. In a presentation of three different scrutinising interventions, the podium reflects on the European City's impact on urban planning and society – inside and outside of Europe.

Intervention by Raffael Beier:
European City as destruction

> *"Destruction comes from an ongoing vision of European Urbanity"*
> Raffael Beier

The first intervention touches on negative effects caused by the eurocentric and idealized self-perception of the European City. This perception tends to create an externally enforced adaptation of other planning cultures to the "superior" European norm. During the period of colonialism foreign European planners came to Africa in order to create masterplans for African cities based on the blueprint of the European City without taking the local conditions and unique features into consideration. Thus, African people perceive the European City as a story of destruction which continues to this day. For example, the UNESCO classified the city of Casablanca as World Heritage based on an European understanding of city and deemed informal settlements as unimportant. This view through the European lens denies the values of certain places and in consequence creates a stigma of otherness and poverty. Therefore, European planning is "blind to see what […] [it] cannot explain" (Beier).

Intervention by Sandra Huning:
European City strengthening the care gap

Huning describes how the promise of the emancipated citizen in the European City is only true for a few. The liberal ideal of the individual who can participate in political decision-making is blind for social inequalities of all kinds – particularly to those linked to race, class and gender. Accordingly, the "public space debate" lays out how space is not equally accessible, how social inequalities are manifested and certain groups are overlooked in public space. Furthermore, the need for social reproduction work has been ignored in the European City concept. The care crisis in which care work remains unconsidered at the expense of mostly women also results in implications for the urban environment: Care aspects are left out in the development of urban spaces although the way urban space is organized directly influences how easy or hard it is to care. As long as the European City stays a reproductive idea, the reproduction of exploitation will continue as well.

> *"The European City is based on the emancipation of some of its residents but also on exploitations of all kinds of people and nature."*
> Sandra Huning

Intervention by Giovanni Picker and Noa K. Ha:
European City neglects its history

> *"In the 60s, you would have never called German or Italian cities "post-fascist", but you still call eastern European cities "post-socialist"."*
> Giovanni Picker

"European imagination establishes a narrative of the enlightened, democratic and equal Europe, while so-called ethnic inequalities within European nations are analysed in the framework of 'migration' and (national) 'integration', considering neither race nor the European postcolonial condition." These words are the introduction to Noa K. H.´s and Giovanni Picker´s book European Cities – Modernity, Race and Colonialism. In the discussion both authors outline the fact that the European City promotes a positive image while degrading non-European planning strategies. The model especially focuses on western European cities and neglects eastern Europe. Considering itself as special, the European City is based on the idea of transferring its principles to other non-European cities that "need to catch up". Without an adaption, the value of the non-European Cities is not being recognized.

What are we criticizing? Discussion after the interventions

> *"Are we criticizing the European city or planning in general? Planning within the European City always benefits some and is othering critiques like Feminist Planning and Decolonization."* Sandra Huning

> Conserving only specific structures of the European City does not reflect our history to its full extent but neglects its downsides.

> *"Knowledge does not only have a value in itself but has an impact on society. How should we handle the production of knowledge in the future?"* Giovanni Picker
> - provincializing knowledge
> - non-hegemonic way

> But is it only planning, isn't it more general?
> Is it possible to imagine a truly just society?

Further publications:

Beier, Raffael (2021) 'From Visible Informality to Splintered Informalities. Reflections on the Production of 'Formality' in a Moroccan Housing Programme'. In: International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 45(6), pp. 930-947.

Huning, Sandra (2014): Gender Planning als Dekonstruktion von Raum- und Geschlechter(an)ordnung. In: Altrock, Uwe (ed.): Zielgruppen in der Räumlichen Planung: Konstruktionen, Strategien, Praxis. Berlin: Planungsrundschau, pp. 51-64.

Noa K. Ha, Giovanni Picker (2022): European Cities Modernity, Race and Colonialism. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Schubert, Dirk (2018): Europäische Stadt. In: ARL – Akademie für Raumforschung und Landesplanung (ed.): Handwörterbuch der Stadt- und Raumentwicklung. Hannover: Leibnitz-Gemeinschaft.

Simone, AbdouMaliq (2016): "Cities that are Just Cities." In: Michele Lancione (ed.) Rethinking Life at the Margins: The Assemblage of Contexts, Subjects, and Politics. Surrey: Ashgate.