

4 September

9.30 — 10.00

Welcome Words & Programme Introduction
Andrea Průchová Hrůzová & Hubert Guzik (Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences)

10.00 — 10.50

Mikhail Ilchenko (Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe, Leipzig)

Reshaping the Image, Losing Urban Space: Neoliberal Urban Policy in the Socialist City

Unlike central urban areas, the spaces of socialist-era residential neighbourhoods found themselves on the margins of attention following the collapse of socialism. The paper explores how the so-called “model socialist cities”, which were built from scratch in the Soviet Union, today adapt, transform and function under the impact of neoliberal urban policies. The study focuses on cases from Armenia, Russia and Ukraine, and reveals how various social activities and heritage preservation initiatives contribute to a re-evaluation and to changing public attitudes towards those areas. The author assumes that neoliberal intervention in the urban space of the former “socialist cities” was largely delayed, slowed down and stretched out over time, but ultimately had a profound and dramatic effect on their urban fabric.

Mikhail Ilchenko is a fellowship holder at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) in Leipzig; he holds a PhD in Political Sciences and works at the intersection of social, cultural and urban studies.

11.00 — 11.50

Henrieta Moravčíková (Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague)

Hybrid Research on Urban Structure: (Un)planned Bratislava

The contribution will present a hybrid methodological approach that was developed for the needs of research and interpretation of the development of the urban structure of Bratislava. It combines methods from historical research, urban morphology, typological classification and architectural and town-planning visualisation. It also confronts the acquired framework of knowledge with phenomenological investigation of urban situations.

Henrieta Moravčíková is an historian of architecture who researches 20th century architecture and urbanism with a focus on the central European context.

12.00 — 14.00 Lunch

14.00 — 14.50

Jason Luger (Northumbria University, Newcastle)
Digital World-Building and Urban Public Space: Imaginaries, (Fast) Infrastructures, and Politics

This paper explores how digitally mediated urban processes are redefining the understanding of the public urban space and planning politics. The speed and virality of the digital space complicates the way public space is imagined; the way infrastructure is developed and networked; and the ways in which politics across the ideological spectrum affix to sites and take material forms in urban environments. Referring to examples such as Dresden’s ongoing online/offline negotiation over what the cityscape should be (which has hugely political undertones); to how authoritarian spectacle refashions cities in the Global South, such as Kigali and its ambitions to be a garden paradise; to how far-right nationalism shapes spaces for public recreation and conviviality in the suburban United States, I suggest that the public space today is increasingly fast, networked, and symbolic. Whilst these facets are not entirely new, the rise of digital platforms (and the ideologies of neo-reactionary or ‘NRx urbanism’) have accelerated and accentuated these dynamic characteristics and invite a re-thinking of what, where, and how the public space exists.

Jason Luger is a human geographer at Northumbria University (Newcastle) focusing on the shape, processes, identities and politics of cities and public spaces, both offline and online.

15.00 — 15.30 Coffee

15.30 — 16.20

Viktória Mravčáková (Spolka, Košice)

Interrupted Utopia: Searching for Infrastructures of Care

Šaca, a district of Košice located next to the steelworks, bears traces of socialist-era visionary planning alongside the current challenges of urban peripheries. While it was once equipped with large-scale cultural and social infrastructure, many parts of it—like closed schools and apartment buildings without elevators—no longer function and fall short in supporting the local community. Within the *Interrupted Utopia* project, we examine the current state of Šaca, investigating the extent to which these residual infrastructures adapt to or resist the evolving needs of residents. Simultaneously, we interrogate the emergence of new infrastructures—both formal and informal—that either foster community resilience or introduce new forms of governance and control within the neighbourhood.

Viktória Mravčáková is an architect, urban planner, and member of Spolka, an interdisciplinary feminist collective of sociologists and architects committed to participatory and collaborative spatial practices. Through research, education, and design, the collective seeks to democratise spatial planning processes and contribute to the envisioning of urban futures which are more just and inclusive.

16.30 — 17.20

Lynda Zein (Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague)

Navigating, Adjusting and Reframing within Continual Cycles of Destruction and Construction

What is public space in a turbo real-estate city defined by deterritorialisation and creative destruction? How to understand spaces of places in relation to a rapid world of flows? Have we all been excluded? In the post-covid city, where separation, as Guy Debord predicted, seems to be completed, what is the potential for transgressing enclosure and disrupting speed? Through concepts of community building, solidarities and imagination, we will ask how we can navigate the limits and fragilities of a broken environment.

Lynda Zein is an architect and researcher of critical urban theory at ÚSD AV ČR and AVU, Prague where she is currently researching her PhD on speed, gentrification processes and real-estate mechanisms in the post-socialist context.

17.30 — 19.30 Break

19.30 — 21.00

Embodied Spaces, Memories, and Power
Screening and Talk with Joanna Rajkowska (independent artist, Warsaw-London)

How does artistic performance transform our bodies as incorporated in the public space, activate the memories hidden on various levels in both bodies and spaces, and challenge existing power dynamics and hierarchies? The programme presents three short films created by the multimedia artist Joanna Rajkowska dedicated to the critical reflection on politics through performative constellations in the public space: *A Walk* (2007), *Performance V* (2023), and *شهداء / دیبوکیم (Dybbukim i Shuhada – Dybbuks and Martyrs)* (2025). The screening will be followed by a talk with the artist.

Joanna Rajkowska is a Polish multimedia artist who frequently touches upon politically and socially engaged themes, paying specific interest to marginalised voices and female perspectives.



5 September

9.30 —10.00 Morning Coffee

10.00 —10.50

Vojtěch Dvořák (Masaryk University, Brno)

Urban Margins through the Lens of Media Participation

Unhoused people continuously create, negotiate, and transform public spaces, making it vital to understand their perspectives and spatial practices. Through media participation and participatory methods, their voices and experiences can be centred rather than silenced. Such work not only amplifies marginalised knowledge but also disrupts harmful public stereotypes about homelessness. Co-creation and co-research with people experiencing homelessness invite a collective rethinking of who belongs in and shapes the city.

Vojtěch Dvořák works at Masaryk University, where he focuses on media participation, ethnographic and participatory media research, media ethics, and the impact of new technologies on vulnerable populations.

11.00 —11.50

Vladimír Turner (independent artist, Prague)

Community Service

Art in the public space as an avant-garde standing-up against the technocratic packaging of the public space. Interventions with an overlap into social themes in the spirit of historical movements such as Situationism or Provo. Creation oscillating between site-specific art and activism. Art that is not decoration, but a radical intervention and a driving force fighting against the conservative perception of the world. During the lecture, excerpts from the current film *Community Service* (2025) by Vladimír Turner will be shown.

Vladimír Turner is a visual artist, filmmaker, and performer whose artistic practices are dedicated to the issue of inequality in the city and public space.

12.00 —14.00 Lunch

14.00 —14.50

Jana Tsoneva (KOI, Sofia)

"In the name of the law". Ethnic Cleansing and Enclosures as 'Lawfare': On the Largest Demolition of Informal Roma Housing in Contemporary Bulgarian History

This presentation zooms in on the demolition of over 30 houses on public land in the working-class Sofia neighbourhood of Zaharna Fabrica, which left 200 people homeless in the run-up to Easter 2025. While Roma

settlements are often subjected to punitive demolition all over Bulgaria (and most commonly around elections), the latest iteration of this logic resulted in the largest such "domicide" (Azzouz 2023) in recent times. The case presents an example of urban space as a terrain of competing and overlapping legal regimes and di/visions, and is thus amenable to analysis from the perspective of the notion of "lawfare", taken from studies on the war-crime-enabling role of international humanitarian law (Weizman 2010).

Jana Tsoneva is an assistant professor of sociology in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the president of KOI: a Sofia-based research and publishing house.

15.00 —15.50

Michaela Pixová (Charles University, Prague)

Urban Agriculture as a Path to a Resilient and Cohesive Society

Urban agriculture is becoming one of the key ways of addressing the challenges of our time—whether transforming the food system, protecting the environment, strengthening community ties, or creating a more liveable urban environment. As a reconnection with a fundamental aspect of human life, it offers not only practical solutions but also a symbolic response to the civilisational alienation from food and nature. The public space can play a significant role in this, providing the soil—both literally and metaphorically—in which urban food initiatives can take root. Its openness and accessibility enable urban agriculture to become a tool for social transformation, resilience, and cohesion in times of multiple crises. But to what extent is this return to the soil and food even possible within the context of today's profit-oriented city?

Michaela Pixová is a human geographer affiliated with the Institute of Ethnology, Central European and Balkan Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, where she teaches political ecology and is a co-investigator in international research projects focused on climate and food movements.

16.00 —16.15 Closing Remarks

The workshop is organized within the framework of the project Urbanity: Inequality, Adaptation, and Public Space of Cities in Historical Perspective (reg. no. CZ.02.01.01/00/23_025/0008735), supported by the Operational Program Johannes Amos Comenius.

PROGRAMME INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

UNDERSTANDING
THE PUBLIC SPACE:
INNOVATIVE METHODS
AND CONCEPTS FOR
INTERDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH

4–5/9/2025

● DISPLAY GALLERY

● Organised by the URBANITA research project
Institute of Contemporary History
Czech Academy of Sciences

● Reservation is recommended: velkova@usd.cas.cz
● Dittrichova 9/337, Prague ● www.urbanita.cz



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