



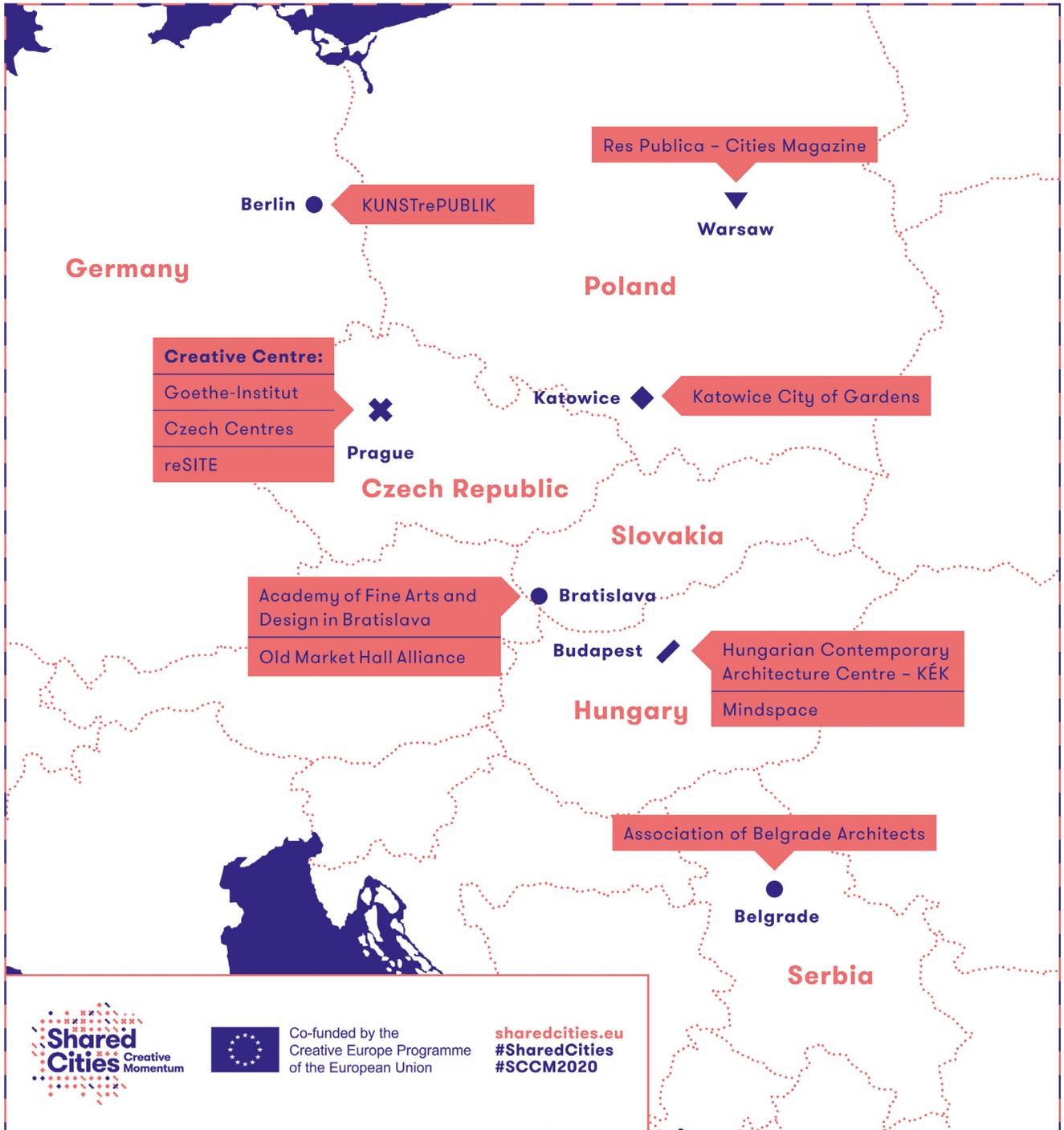
HOW CULTURE WORKS

SHARED CITIES: CREATIVE MOMENTUM

CREATIVE URBAN DEVELOPMENT
IN CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE

GOETHE
INSTITUT

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.



▶ Partner consortium Shared Cities: Creative Momentum

FROM BERLIN TO BELGRADE. SHARED CITIES: CREATIVE MOMENTUM

INTRODUCTION

The project “Shared Cities: Creative Momentum” (SCCM) addressed the challenges facing post-socialist cities in Europe using the concept of sharing. SCCM was co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union. It involved eleven partners from six countries and ran from 2016 to 2020.

Sharing as a concept covers the development of responses to urban challenges such as growing social inequality, exhaustion of resources, lack of affordable housing, loss of public space and democratic governance. At the same time it is contested, especially so in post-socialist environments. The process-based evaluation of SCCM provided facilitation and informed decision-making (formative evaluation). Based on the “Culture Works” concept and model (Goethe-Institut 2016), it enabled a comprehensive analysis of the initial assumptions, the implementation process, and the results.

Given the scope and depth of the project, it is difficult to summarise its results in a single publication. Still, there are critical aspects of the project that merit a public discussion. In terms of the SCCM approach, collaborations and capacity building, the partners have completed an ambitious joint

endeavour which has proved a crucial learning experience for everyone involved. It has yielded a wide range of cultural formats and products and has depended on a considerable management effort, sometimes hindering the creative process. The analysis of public participation and governance relations highlights trust-building strategies such as creating common places and bringing together different interests and adverse positions. The evaluation also looks at issues of transfer, impact and sustainability in relation to EU policy objectives regarding cultural heritage, social cohesion and well-being, as well as creating a nurturing ecosystem for artists, cultural and creative professionals, and European content in general. This refers to questions such as how the project has contributed to fresh perspectives on infrastructure built under socialism, how the project partners worked towards community-based processes in a climate of distrust, and how they have contributed to communicating the specificity of post-socialist cities to an international audience.

There is a prospect of linking SCCM with follow-up activities and contemporary global urgencies that need to be addressed jointly by civil society and political responsibility.

A NEW IMPERATIVE OF SHARING IN POST-SOCIALIST CITIES IN CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE

PROJECT BACKGROUND

SHARING IN CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

“In the past decades, Central European cities have gone through massive transformations but with significant differences. In the 1990s, with the Fall of the Berlin Wall, cities in the region seemed to converge towards a shared path, that of embracing the liberal market economic model. Some cities in East Germany – most notably Berlin – have advanced towards social democracy, others – like Vienna – have followed the welfare-oriented growth patterns, characterized by strong public control over housing and the real estate market. However, Central European cities have proceeded towards total privatization and liberalization of their property markets. With different arrangements, cities from Warsaw to Prague to Budapest have rapidly privatized their previously nationalized, publicly owned property stocks, resulting in the highest proportions of private ownership in Europe” (Polyak 2019, 50, edited)

Those living in post-socialist societies have had the experience of being forced to share. It seems natural that those experiences have strengthened their wish to own things, and they have also led to a certain perception of the public space. “[The] truth is that while practising different models of sharing, people dreamt of their own washing machine, television or car. What is more, sharing was happening mainly between people who knew each other. Today, we can still see the consequences of this communist perception of common property. As a rule, public property was considered to be property of the state, not of the society or the people; “state” meant “ownerless”. Public spaces in cities, as an example, were strongly dominated by the authorities. It was a place where people were expected to demonstrate their support towards the government” (Kubecka 2017, 10). To understand the notion of sharing in this part of Europe, it is crucial to recognize the particular views on ownership and possession, as

well as the level of trust that is common in these societies. But here the aspect of time comes in. As the change of the political system took place 30 years ago, there is now a generation of people who grew up with different experiences than those of their parents, and as such they also have a different perspective on the discourse of sharing. “Young people want to share more goods and resources, as they were brought up in the 1990s and saw the costs of working from dawn till the dusk [sic] to pay everything [sic] their parents wanted to have” (Peachment Brehmer and Żakowska 2019).

DIFFERENT ASPECTS AND THEORIES OF SHARING

“Shared Cities: Creative Momentum” channels the energy of emerging creative groups and self-empowered citizens into addressing the challenges and potential of sharing in urban environments. The project started by diagnosing a status quo in Central Eastern European cities fraught with post-socialist mentality, with symptoms such as inefficient bureaucracy, lack of transparency and an absence of international cooperation. The project therefore supported a shift from the exclusive domain of experts towards a more transdisciplinary and participatory process. The guiding idea was that sharing information, know-how, governance and infrastructure enhances innovative solutions to European challenges that stem from the lack or scarcity of resources, public participation, and appropriate expertise.

The project addresses several aspects of sharing. Mirroring the different interests and competences of the eleven partners, the project accumulated several interrelated theories of sharing, ranging from shared yet contested material and immaterial heritage to the challenge of creating new governance alliances in shared democratic processes; from sharing as a social and environmental duty in a climate of inequality and distrust to the potential and risks of sharing data and knowledge; last but



▶ Shared Cities: The Finale at CAMP in Prague, October 2019

not least, addressing the benefits and dangers of sharing in an economic setting. Discussing the contested aspects of sharing was an integral part of the project.

POTENTIAL AND PITFALLS OF SHARING IN CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPEAN CITIES

“Sharing has not only risen to prominence via digital social networks and sharing economies, but is also celebrated by austerity-based urban governance. When public funding is dwindling, when public infrastructure continuously fails, when private-public partnerships put the public realm last or transform it into branded and corporate landscapes, then the helping hands of the public are invited to share the responsibility for their public space” (Krasny 2019, 126).

On the one hand, sharing is a challenge: it is “an intimate exercise of distributing ownership and decision-making among people who are not only not us, but might even be completely foreign to ourselves [sic]” (Krøl 2019, 7). When it comes to urban space, however, we have no choice but to share it with the people around us. One of the challenges addressed by

You need to work continuously to gain the people’s trust. These projects and their public perception take time.

Interview with project partner

SCCM was how to empower the locals together with the civic actors to become actively involved in urban development; to foster the idea that people have a right to the city.

SHARING AND COLLABORATING AS A METHOD AND DISPOSITIF

Sharing as a practice is an integral part of collaboration. As such, sharing and collaboration formed the dispositif of the SCCM project within the Creative Europe Programme. Sharing and collaboration were regulative and compulsory prerequisites for the project, as well as an on-going challenge for the partners in the course of learning how to share and collaborate, how to even out or make the best use of imbalances in resources, knowledge, and influence.

PROJECT FRAMEWORK

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project “Shared Cities: Creative Momentum” (SCCM) addressed contemporary urban challenges of European cities, specifically in post-socialist countries. It was co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union. The project started in June 2016 and ran until February 2020.

SCCM was a joint project of eleven partners from six countries: Goethe-Institut (DE), Czech Centres (CZ), reSITE (CZ), Academy of Fine Arts and Design Bratislava (SK), Association of Belgrade Architects (RS), Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre – KÉK (HU), Katowice City of Gardens (PL), KUNSTrePUBLIK (DE), Mindspace (HU), Old Market Hall Alliance (SK), Res Publica – Cities Magazine (PL). It focused on the cities of Belgrade, Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest, Katowice, Prague, and Warsaw. More than 300 activities took place: festivals, films, exhibitions, artist residencies, workshops (“Ideas Yards”), and case studies. The project was originally initiated by one of the partners, reSITE, and developed through the process of repeated application.

OBJECTIVES

1. Establish a platform to foster transnational communication about architecture and urbanism as a cultural agency
2. Research and identify state-of-the art in architecture, urbanism and community development with actors from other European and non-European cities
3. Utilize cultural activities to improve the visibility of the Shared Cities phenomenon and the transnational cultural actors organising these events
4. Identify opportunities for creative actors and citizens to engage in contemporary architectural and urbanism issues relative to the theme of Shared Cities
5. Build the capacity and international mobility of the partners
6. Develop new cultural products that utilize architecture, urbanism, mobile technology and open data to provide direct results for local cultural development

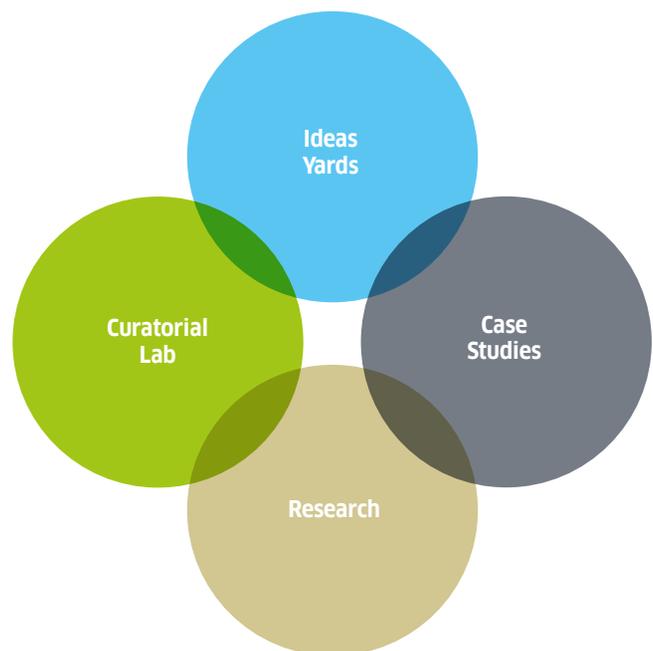
7. Present and circulate outcomes (in project cities and internationally) through contemporary curatorial means as well as publications, residencies, public discussions, web-ateliers, gamification, animations and visual media during the project and after
8. Reach new audiences by working with networks of self-initiated citizens, creative actors and key stakeholders in project cities

TARGET GROUPS

The project involved civil society organisations in Central Eastern Europe (specifically those positioned as facilitators in urban surroundings), citizens, local administration (specifically concerned with urban development/infrastructure, and culture), architecture students as well as European and international experts (specifically urbanists, architects, and artists).

PROGRAM LINES AND FORMATS

4 Conceptual Pillars



EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODS

The evaluation followed a qualitative, process-based Program Theory Evaluation approach (PTE) (Weiss 1997, Weiss and Rogers 2007, Giel 2013). This was integrated with the “Culture Works” concept and guiding model (Goethe-Institut 2016). PTE makes underlying assumptions about how programs are expected to work, and makes an explicit use of theory as an evaluation guideline. This also allows readjustments in the event that some assumptions prove weak or some expectations cannot be met.

The SCCM evaluation was split into two main phases. In the first phase (2018), through document analysis, interviews with the program coordinator and partners as well as a group discussion, the evaluator identified the general assumptions – program theories – about sharing in Central European cities. This first phase also reflected on the organisation of the collaboration process and identified its challenges. An interim discussion and report facilitated exchange, knowledge-based decision-making, and strategic adjustments in the project, as well as the specification of evaluation questions and areas that require further investigation. Subsequently, in the second phase (2019), empirical observations at the local project sites/events, together with additional interviews and discussions enabled a more in-depth analysis of the partners’ work and their collaboration. The comprehensive final report relates the projects’ initial objectives and theories with the implementation process and the results. Anke Schad-Spindler, PhD, an independent evaluator specialising in cultural management and policy, cultural education and international cultural collaboration, carried out the evaluation between November 2017 and February 2020.

EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of the qualitative, process-based evaluation of SCCM was to continuously interrelate the evaluation and the project process on three levels:

- Enabling reflection and strategic decision-making for the project consortium,
- Sensitising and specifying the evaluation approach and questions,
- Connecting the project assumptions, the actual implementation process, the (interim and final) results, their discussion and further development.

This on-going interrelation allowed for adjustments and knowledge-sharing, thus supporting the use of the evaluation as a means of facilitation, capacity-building and reflection/learning (formative evaluation). In a project-driven environment, this kind of thinking and working in impact cycles (Goethe-Institut 2016, 30-31) is critical in order to use the insights gained from the investment of work and resources in a sustainable way.

Meanwhile, the Czech *Economic Impact Art* institute carried out a quantitative Economic Impact analysis focusing on the measurable relation between the projects’ investment and its outcome and impact. The process-based evaluation offers the contextual insights needed to discuss the quantitative results.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The guiding and sensitising evaluation questions were based on the spheres defined in the “Culture Works” model and focusing on quality: *how* the partners worked in order to derive learning from experience.

Sphere of activity: How did the project partners collaborate in the project process? What kind of effects did the participation in a large-scale EU-project generate in terms of institutional capacity building? How did the Goethe-Institut fare in maintaining a working approach with the partners, based on the values of a pluralistic and democratic society?

Sphere of activity/societal context interface: How did the project partners address the actual demands and real needs of the target groups (relevance)? How did the project partners facilitate participation? How did the partners relate to power-holders in terms of governance relations?

Societal context: How did the project contribute towards impact, sustainability, and transfer in relation to EU policy objectives?

SHARING EXPERIENCES FROM LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

EVALUATION RESULTS

SPHERE OF ACTIVITY: WORKING APPROACH, COLLABORATION AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

The partners involved in SCCM collaborated for over four years on a project that was fairly ambitious given its objectives, the diversity of the partners, and the political environments of Central Eastern European cities. The four-year time span and resources provided valuable planning security for the partners. Still, keeping the creative momentum and joint commitment over time was also a challenge. The distribution of project resources over four years, together with a large and diverse consortium, reinforced imbalances. The 50% co-funding arrangement proved a significant problem for some partners in countries where public funding for culture is not easily secured.

As specified in the introductory text, the project accumulated various contested assumptions (program theories) on sharing in social, economic, political, data-technological, cultural heritage and urban development contexts. This proved a strategic asset which resonated with diverse segments of the public (experts, citizens, municipality), and integrating eleven different partners and their specific interests and approaches. This additive structure enabled the partners to do what they identified as relevant while supporting the achievement of adequate results. The collaboration among the partners worked best in co-productive settings with clear-cut roles and tasks – e.g. advisory/capacity-building, teaching/learning to use tools, or when there was a clear shared interest e.g. in market halls, public furniture, or open data. It was chiefly through these personal, hands-on encounters that the partners contributed to the realization and amplification of each other's work and learned from each other. These situations deepened trust, commitment and shared understanding – decisive factors in learning how to cooperate and eventually complete the project in a joint effort.

Partners discuss the administrative demands of a large-scale EU project critically. Although they acknowledge the learning effects in terms of project management and the need for a rigorous joint framework of accountability, the partners found that the project administration should have been more geared towards enabling face-to-face cooperation, joint experimentation, and co-creative content creation. This touches upon the known conflict between open and complex processes and efficiency in temporary projects: providing more room for negotiation over content (specifically the contested notion of sharing) and approaches could have enabled a more in-depth debate and potentially a more coherent and synergetic collaboration – but it also bears the risk of getting lost in endless discussions and failing to reach an agreement and produce results, especially given the size and diversity of the consortium.

As the first project of this size, duration and content in the region, SCCM proved an immense learning experience not only for the partners, but also for the project team at the Goethe-Institut Czech Republic. A sustained coordination effort was undertaken in order to thoroughly understand the conditions of partner civil society representatives along with their respective political environments – which changed rapidly at times – and to adequately assess when to provide room for open-ended creative processes, and when to manage project deliverables and accountability. The SCCM team at Goethe-Institut Czech Republic also had to reconcile the short-notice demands of the project with lengthier institutional demands. The initial plan for a shared three-partner leadership working in a core group was not executed due to unequal institutional capacities and the impossibility of assigning a single partner to curate the creative work of such a diverse and large partner consortium. Eventually, the Goethe-Institut took a clear coordination lead along with the challenge of sharing responsibility for the project throughout its duration.

The bottom-up process can make a very big change through exchange between actors who are involved in it. It is not a revolutionary but an evolutionary process.

Interview with project partner

SPHERE OF ACTIVITY/SOCIETAL CONTEXT INTERFACE: TARGET GROUPS, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND GOVERNANCE RELATIONS

In the project region, phenomena such as increasing social inequality or EU aversion triggered by nationalist politicians create a challenging environment for citizen engagement; however, they also highlight the importance of dialogue between different social groups. The partners were aware that participative projects need structure and support, while facilitators are tasked with balancing activation with a thorough understanding of the different interests, abilities and needs of those using the spaces and environments in question, be it markets, public squares, factories or schools. In the case studies conducted by the partners, tool development and data collection took more time than expected, as did the communication with experts and, perhaps most crucially, with those who routinely use the spaces, all in order to understand their implicit social, economic, and emotional needs and functions. In parallel, they used quick wins, ie. efficient temporary interventions like repurposed urban furniture to demonstrate to “shared holders” that improvement is feasible. Thorough research, persistent communication, and inspirational glimpses of opportunities were prerequisites of creating trust and alliances of responsibility, and of preparing the grounds for larger and more durable transformations in participatory frameworks. Trying to “regulate regulations informally”, stepping out of zones of consent and custom, improvising and interpreting established legislative frameworks were all important in finding opportunities to use spatial potential to shape social potential (Stavrides 2019), such as turning a dilapidated market hall into a popular breakfast spot (Budapest), turning a busy parking lot into a place to rest under trees and play chess (Bratislava), trafficking second-hand goods and teaching crafts at a former railway depot turned art space



► "Urban Hub 1" collaboration of the Association of Belgrade Architects with Čuvari Parka in Belgrade, November 2017

(Berlin). These simple and inexpensive ideas create much-needed common spaces which help social integration as they reflect simple human needs and competences.

Complex power relations and conflicting interests and ideologies often block the access to and application of these ideas. Creating alternatives to top-down urban planning was one of the driving forces behind the project. How did the partners relate to this objective? This was very situation-specific and can be narrowed down to three strategic positions: firstly, in situations where the relationship of local stakeholders with politicians was complicated or contentious, partners acted as facilitators, moving in between different positions, thus avoiding direct conflict that would impede the project process. Secondly, partners were cooperating with or directly integrated in the municipal administration, enabling an alignment of policies and implementation. Thirdly, partners tried to refrain from direct contact with politics to avoid negative interventions in their work with communities. The project affirmed that there is no single success strategy but that NGOs need to negotiate their own position in relation to power-holders.

SOCIETAL CONTEXT: TRANSFER, IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY IN RELATION TO EU POLICY OBJECTIVES

In terms of EU policy objectives, SCCM has specifically contributed to the sustainability of cultural heritage, to social cohesion and

well-being, and has fostered a supportive ecosystem for artists, cultural and creative professionals, and European content (Council of the European Union 2018, European Commission 2018).

The project has contributed to a critical understanding of the different aspects of sharing in Central and Eastern European cities in terms of cultural heritage. This was achieved through exploring and presenting how the so-called iconic ruins – prominent socialist buildings – could be transformed into viable buildings while accounting for their contested position in collective memory.

In terms of social cohesion and well-being, the partners worked in a general climate of distrust and rising inequality, making their work all the more relevant and difficult. They developed and applied strategies that needed time and effort but were often concerned with reducing the complexity of suggesting solutions that generate social impact, as they tend to be intuitively simple. However, this does not mean that these solutions can be easily applied in other contexts – the collaborative processes that led to them, together with the quick wins, helped build trust, created incentives to participate, and fostered commitment and shared understanding in the specific constellations of actors and are thus integral to the legitimacy of each particular solution. It is therefore “not a plug and play” situation (quoting from a statement from one of the project’s events), but the general methods can still be shared and applied given the openness and willingness to re-enter the complex processes of generating trust and understanding.

In relation to fostering an ecosystem supporting artists, cultural and creative professionals and European content, the project enhanced the collaboration of actors in Central and Eastern European cities, highlighting their specific approaches to alternative urban development: dealing with the various ecological, economic, political and social challenges germane to the region, but also recognizing their potential. The eleven partners organised over 300 events in a joint effort of learning how to share knowledge in different formats. Project-based publications like the three issues of the *Magazyn Miasta/Cities Magazine* and the *Shared Cities Atlas* offer international experts an insight into the developments in Central and Eastern Europe. Through these activities and formats, the partners helped connect local and international networks and served as facilitators between different audiences. In the sense of an ecosystem, the project triggered new ways of sharing practices across and beyond the respective limits and opportunities of professional and disciplinary perspectives to enable new alliances. Yet the ongoing task remains of learning how to share knowledge while cooperating and amplifying one another in a climate of competition and self-interest.

OUTLOOK

In the course of the project activities, a range of new areas of interest emerged and the partners are in various constellations discussing follow-up projects: e.g. on markets as ecosystems; civil society organisations in democratic processes; women in urban activism; as well as mentoring and exchange programmes on urban development. The partners embrace the responsibility they have accrued through working with participants, and stress that they would like to extend cooperation with these groups and partners and to confirm that they are independent or at least well-linked to institutions that support their further development. They are keen to test out the experience gained in SCCM in other contexts, although time is needed to discuss conscious implementation and the sharing of know-how in new contexts. The conditions for transferring and scaling the experience and impact from SCCM sites and situations seem favourable, given the globally growing demand for comprehensive sustainability strategies and post-growth economies, notwithstanding recent local political changes in Bratislava, Budapest, or Warsaw. At the same time, however, civil society organisations involved in the project also experienced backlash due to anti-liberal policies. The partner civil society organisations in Central and Eastern Europe are forging new approaches to the sharing paradigm in order to attenuate the wide-ranging and increasingly damaging effects of failed policies such as excessive privatisation and exploitation of resources. The economist Jeffrey D. Sachs argues that recent protests in some of the world’s most affluent cities – Paris, Hong Kong, Santiago de Chile – have been caused by “conditions of low social trust, high inequality, and a widely shared sense of unfairness”. He argues in favour of more policy attention towards Social Development Goals (SDGs) as a “much richer set of objectives, including social fairness, trust, and environmental sustainability” (Sachs 2019). Similarly, the capacity of the civil society organisations involved in SCCM was developed very locally but strongly pertains to urgent global necessities and as such must not be exhausted but rather matched with responsible political action.

ABOUT THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

As the most internationally active cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Goethe-Institut promotes the study of German, encourages international cultural cooperation and provides up-to-date information about Germany. Our language, cultural and educational programmes strengthen the development of civil society structures and foster international discourse on key issues of the increasingly globalised society. With its 157 institutes in 98 countries and through cooperation with partner institutions, the Goethe-Institut offers around 1,100 contact points worldwide. The first Goethe-Institut abroad opened in Athens in 1952.

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