

Research Group on the Slavic Cultures in the Habsburg Monarchy
Institute of Western and Southern Slavic Studies, University of Warsaw

would like to invite you to take part in the conference

ARCHITECTS OF THE SLAVIC-HABSBURG AREA (1868—1938)

The architecture requires technological skills. It is a form of art. Its objective is to build houses as well as to create urban landscape. It shows a specific connection between public sphere and its quality. Architects were responding to the demand of developers and at the same time creating the physical and symbolic world, in which social and political life went on. They would give a material form to ideas and visions, thus their conceptualizations have always been materialized with care for functional and technical solidity and usefulness of projects, as planned. However often buildings, different architectonical realizations or extraordinary projects may be considered part of national or regional heritage, and become icons of culture or memorial sites, their designers and constructors are rarely integrated by collective memory and only exceptionally turn out to be recognizable personalities of cultural imaginaries. Nonetheless, it is them who have been responsible for creation of the social space, responding to individual and collective needs and expectations.

For that reason we want to inquire who architects of the Habsburg-Slavic area were.

We propose a debate on the question of identity of these people, who created the cultural landscape of Slavic cities and villages in the Habsburg monarchy. However, in this case especially in relation to the urban spaces, we should be talking about multiethnic communities, about spaces of contact and common ground, where the Slavic meets the non-Slavic and ceases to be the most important distinctive feature. After the Habsburg monarchy collapsed, the public space quickly became an object of nationalization and was almost totally absorbed by monocentric narratives: Czech, Slovak, Serbian, Croatian, German or Hungarian-oriented. Today's perspective does not help us perceive complex processes, complicated and non-evident decisions laying behind realization of particular buildings or broader urban space concepts. In cities like Ljubljana, Brno, Bratislava, Zagreb or Novi Sad, traces of architectural trends from Vienna and Prague, but also from Roma or Paris are quite evident. The role of such centers like Vienna or Munich was undisputable in formation of architects and builders. The specialists regularly changed their places of activity thus creating networks in the whole Habsburg area. Many a time they crossed its borders in search of inspiration. Last but not least, at the time they belonged to the middle class, the new bourgeoisie who played an important role in the political and social life of local communities.

Looking at the architects from this perspective, their issue appears to be a question of cultural processes ongoing together with formation of contemporary national cultures in Central Europe. It could also help imagine a social order alternative to supposedly clear ethno-national divisions. Having been adjusted to a specific geographical and social area, the buildings or other architectonical and urban planning projects are often influenced by economy and culture and yet imminently they have a local character. This quasi obvious observation should prevent us from overrating ethnic and/or state-centered narratives. We propose a debate, based on microhistorical approach, focused on attitudes and choices of social actors (architects) and the backstage of the social sphere (architectonical formation, professional networks). During this debate we would also like to talk about a few individual biographies of architects that were active in the Slavic-Habsburg area.

We invite scholars of different professional background to join our discussion. Here we propose some aspects, which might help concentrate on the debate:

- public space

- Habsburg/ national/ multiethnic city
- architecture of the countryside
- great projects
- architecture and theory
- professional networks

The conference will take place in **Warsaw, 31st March 2017**.

The abstract with a short information about the author should be submitted by **20th February 2017**.

Languages of the conference: English, Polish.

We look forward to your proposal. Please do not hesitate to ask if you have any additional questions.

Conference committee:

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You can find more about our research group at: <http://uwhabzburgstudies.uw.edu.pl/>