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inura
 International Network for
 Urban Research and Action



Int. Frans Naserelli, "Die Stadt"

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EDITORIAL

This is the first Bulletin of the International Network for Urban Research and Action (INURA). On May 12, 1991, twenty-one researchers and activists from Florence, Torino, Mexico City, New York, Durham, London, Brussels, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Rostock, and Zurich founded INURA at the end of an intense, friendly and inspiring week-long conference in Saletina, in the heart of the Swiss Alps.

INURA is a network of and for people involved in issues of urban development. INURA would like to stimulate and encourage critical researchers and activists in their work by promoting an international debate. With the exchange and dissemination of new impulses in theory and practice INURA wants to open frontiers of isolation between people and sciences. It is the aim of this network to make our cities and regions better places to live in. INURA welcomes individuals, informal groups and institutions as members and active co-operants.

This Bulletin is one platform of information and interaction of INURA. It reflects the activities of the network and informs about the work of its members, i.e. scholarly studies, media productions, activist documents, accounts of urban experience etc. It is one of the goals of this Bulletin to serve as turntable for information, ideas and debates. We are therefore inviting everybody to contribute in one way or another - be it academic, artistic, or political - to the success of this project. The Bulletin is open to non-members as well. It will be published in irregular intervals, according to need and request, at least twice a year.

Everybody is invited to help establish this Bulletin as an instrument of communication and dissemination of ideas and experiences and to enable INURA to become a powerful and living network.

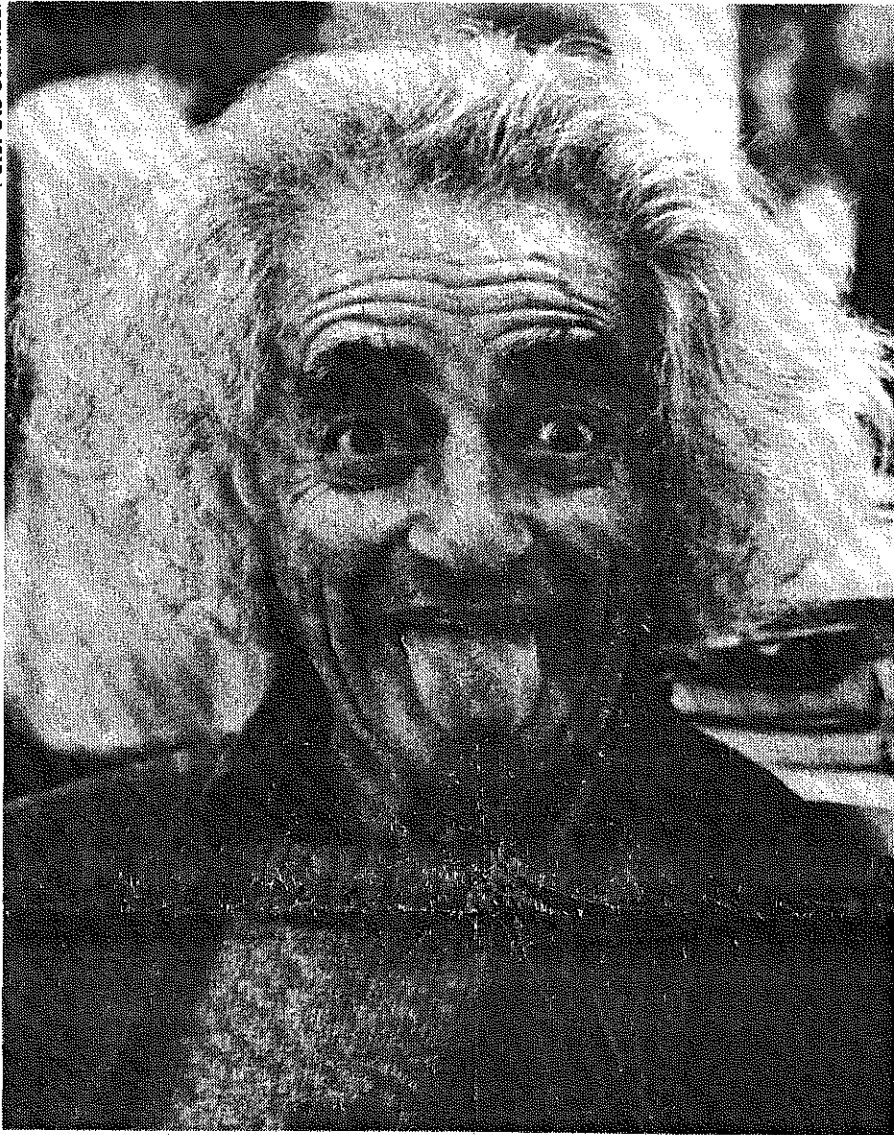
We thank all those who participated in the foundation of INURA, the fabulous Saletina conference group, and those who contributed their constructive criticisms and inspiring suggestions.

Hansruedi Hitz
Christian Schmid
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Editors and publishers of INURA Bulletin 1:
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INURA Bulletin 2 will be published in September by SAU, Zurich.
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Theo Pinkus De-Sassi (1909-1991)
Founder of Salecina

THE SOUND OF NETWORKING

Founding Conference International Network for Urban Research and Action (INURA)

Salecina, Switzerland (May 6 - 12)

In 1990, the Ssenter for Applied Urbanism (SAU) in Zürich, Switzerland, invited more than one hundred scholars and activists from around the globe to join them in founding a network which would co-ordinate international research on urban issues, societal restructuring and social action. SAU wrote an initial discussion paper which people from around the world responded to with comments and criticisms. A conference was scheduled for May 1991 in Salecina in the Upper Engadin in Switzerland to begin establishing the proposed network.

Twenty-one researchers and activists - one third of whom were women - attended the week-long event in Salecina which had been superbly prepared by SAU. Those interested had the opportunity to join the organizers on a bus tour through Zürich on the first day of the meeting. The next day, the group left for Salecina by train. The special character of this trip and the conference's location deserve mentioning because they both contextualized the meeting and influenced work and outcome of the event.

Salecina, a farmhouse-turned-into-meeting-place just below the treeline in the mountainous scenery of southern Switzerland, is a true achievement of the confluence and continuity of the old labour movement and new social movements. Its initiator, Swiss leftist Theo Pinkus, had started Salecina in 1971 to encourage progressives from different political factions to come together at a time when the Left was about to be atomized into sectarian groupings: "Theo brought together countless people who would have never met without him" (Jürg Frischknecht). The INURA conference had similar integrative goals and emphasized strengthening the ties of theoretical work and organizing practice which were so important to the librarian/organizer Theo Pinkus. Theo Pinkus had died the week before INURA convened. He was 82 years old. The results of the conference were dedicated to him.

The non-academic and informal setting of the meeting in the Salecina retreat where groups organize their daily lives around a set of collectively shared chores, where "work and spare time" are not meant to be separated into alien spheres, inspired the discussions of the conference which had the relationship of urban theory and practice as well as of work and reproduction among its major themes.

Many participants teach at universities, yet most of them are also

involved in various kinds of political, social and planning projects in their hometowns and elsewhere. The political economy of financial core cities, community economic development, environmental planning, housing, immigration, and the conversion of railway spaces in cities were among those issues most mentioned.

The work at the conference dealt with three areas:

1. The group discussed the comments and criticisms made on the theoretical paper provided by SAU. This paper had lined out a framework for theoretical analysis and its various possible connections with urban political and social movements. In their analysis, the authors had made use of several competing and complementary concepts of global and urban restructuring, the crisis of fordism, the emergence of a new regime of accumulation, of a new spatial division of labour, and of struggles around these processes of restructuring. Many scholars who had received the invitation but could not attend had also sent in their comments; those present added their critiques. While the general tendency of the paper was accepted as a viable basis for the common project, criticism and additions were voiced especially on three grounds: non-class conflicts and collective experience are underrepresented in the analysis; the use of concepts such as "fordism" and "flexible accumulation" would have to be tested for their ability to explain realities in "peripheral" areas; and more emphasis needs to be given to the question of ecological and environmental aspects of restructuring.

2. The participants presented their work in a variety of ways: Scholarly presentations alternated with informal reports, anecdotes with statistical analysis. Presentations, slides, videos and music from areas as different as the Third Italy, the North of England, Mexico City, London, New York, Los Angeles, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium and various parts of Germany, including the new East states, produced an impressive mosaic of contemporary urban experience around the world and provided a welcome illustration of the complex theoretical issues discussed previously. Despite TV, a video co-operative from London, participated in the conference and gave samples of their fine and inspiring work on the restructuring of London and the politics of Thatcherism.

3. The participants took concrete steps to design and found the International Network for Urban Research and Action (INURA). One work group drew up a proposal for a set of principles and a research agenda to be used as the basis of INURA's work. Ten principles and a tentative set of fields of research and action were ultimately agreed upon. The principles - which can be obtained from INURA in full length - spell out the belief of INURA that research and action have to be linked, that information has to move both ways; that research needs to be

committed to empowerment of people discriminated against by the dynamics of current urbanization and restructuring; INURA supports cultural diversity, while it opposes racism, class and gender discrimination. It wants to assist in resisting and reversing social and spatial polarization and environmental destruction. For this, it establishes close links with urban social movements in a variety of fields; strong and diverse visions of urban life and of a sustainable environment are to be developed. Freedom of academic, artistic, visual, and other forms of expression will be encouraged.

A second work group designed an organizational form and a funding strategy for the emerging network. Although there was considerable interest in INURA shown by scholars and activists from around the world, the founders of the network decided to initially limit its scope to Europe. It was even pointed out that special attention will have to be paid to the structural differences between the East and the West and the North and the South of this continent, in order to provide for successful co-operation among the associates. At the same time, people agreed that the internationalization of today's cities brought many problems "home" into the European metropolises which had previously not existed there. The current restriction to the geographical confines of Europe does not intend to exclude co-operation with and participation of people from abroad.

The subjects of INURA can be individuals, informal groups and formal institutions from around the world. There will be annual meetings - the next one is scheduled for May 1992 in Rostock, Germany. Various member groups will hold interim bilateral meetings to co-ordinate research efforts and to design common projects. There are five regional offices in London, Rostock, Florence, Zurich and Brussels. A bulletin will be published to inform members about the meetings and the work done by various groups. INURA welcomes future members and encourages those interested in the network to contact INURA and to subscribe to the bulletin. If you are interested, write to INURA Zurich.

Roger Keil, Frankfurt, May 91

WHAT IS INURA?

Network

The International Network for Urban Research and Action (INURA) was founded on May 12, 1991 in Saiecina, Switzerland. INURA is a new network of people involved in action and research in localities and cities. Mutual support, exchange of information and experiences, and common projects are the main purposes of INURA (see also Founding Principles, page 10).

Membership

There are many ways of getting in contact with INURA, but only three types of membership: It is possible to join INURA as an individual, as an informal group or as an institution.

Structure

INURA's structure is decentralized, non-hierarchical and cooperative. It is based on regional nodes and thematic working groups. At present, the network has five regional offices in London, Brussels, Rostock, Florence and Zurich which also serve as contact addresses (see page 12). In order to co-ordinate research efforts and to develop common projects working groups will hold interim meetings. Working groups can be established at any time and to any topic of interest (see Fields of Research and Action on page 11).

Europe

The Saiecina conference decided to initially limit INURA to the geographical confines of Europe, thus giving preference to a step-by-step development of the network. But INURA does not exclude co-operation with and participation of people from abroad.

Annual conferences

Annual meetings will be INURA's main platform for presenting and discussing results of research as well as contributions from artists, political activists and social movements, e.g. media productions, activist documents and accounts of urban experience. The participants of these conferences will also plan the further activities of INURA, decide on organizational questions and develop common projects.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 1992 near Rostock, Germany, on the coast of the Baltic Sea.

Bulletin

You are holding INURA Bulletin 1 in your hands. This Bulletin, published at least twice a year, is another platform of communication and interaction between members. It informs about past and future conferences of INURA, common projects, other events, publications and

media productions. Bulletin 2 will contain the proceedings of the Saiecina conference. It will be published in September '91.

Pin Board

If you are looking for fellow researchers and activists for the exchange of information or to join in a common project you can place an announcement in the INURA Bulletin's Pin Board stating your specific interest and your expectations.

Organizing committee

The responsibility for this job rotates every year and lies always with a regionally based group of members. Until the end of 1991, the SAU group from Zurich is in charge and in 1992 the group from Rostock. This yearly changing group will organize the annual meeting and will also publish at least two Bulletins: one before the meeting they are organizing, giving all the necessary preliminary information, and one after the meeting including the proceedings. The organizing committee is in charge of the entire INURA secretariat for one year, i.e. correspondence, the updating of the membership list, etc.

Finances

INURA needs some minimal financial resources to organize its meetings, to publish and mail the Bulletin and to pay for the expenses of the organizing committee. The inscription fees for the annual conferences and the membership fees only partly cover all these expenses. Additional funding is necessary. Thanks to funds raised by SAU, Zurich, finances are sufficient to complete this year's work. To fully cover expenses in the future INURA members are obliged to contribute in the search for funds, especially because it is our aim to also grant travel and accomodation assistance.

Common projects

INURA is not only a network for the exchange of information and experiences, it also supports common projects of urban research and action, initialized by its working groups (e.g. comparative studies, readers, etc.). Funding of common projects is another one of INURA's aims.

Perspectives

After the Saiecina conference, the echo from participants was - and still is - very encouraging: everybody is networking! After those important initial stages of organization, INURA should be able to serve as a platform for the design, the financing and the realization of common projects within and between different cities and regions.

FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

1. INURA is a new network of people involved in action and research in localities and cities. We are committed to sharing our experiences and information in order to further the understanding of the problems affecting our areas.
2. We are committed to the empowerment of people in their neighbourhoods, communities, cities and regions.
3. In our work we recognize the importance of ethnic and cultural diversity, and the need to oppose racism, class and gender discrimination.
4. Changes in forms of work and of community and domestic life must be understood and planned in relation to each other.
5. We must resist and reverse the process of polarization of income and quality of environment, both in the social fragmentation of our cities and the divergence of core and periphery regions.
6. Our network particularly wants to broaden its links with housing, employment and environmental campaigns.
7. We aim to further the process of environmentally sustainable urban development.
8. We seek to resist centralization and the damaging effects of globalization.
9. We are working to create strong and diverse visions of future urban life.
10. INURA will work with a variety of methods of research, communication, interaction and dissemination of information, including scholarly work, media productions, activist documents, debates and stories of urban experience. INURA invites future contributions from academics, the arts, political activists and social movements.

11 May 1991 Salecina.

FIELDS OF RESEARCH AND ACTION

Note: This is a first rough listing of activities of those at the first meeting and should be read in conjunction with the rest of this Bulletin.

Global urbanization

The consequences of EC 92 (common market policies) on urban development in Europe

Comparison of international financial control centres

Decline and growth of peripheral regions

Spatial and social restructuring of core and periphery

New forms of urbanization: e.g. peri-urbanization, new business districts, "fabbrica diffusa"

Redevelopment projects and recycling of old industrial infrastructural spaces (railways, harbours, airports)

Alternative projects and concepts of urban development

The production of the built environment, land markets, real estate markets and property development

Power and discrimination

Questions of gender

The social costs of development

Housing and homelessness

Migration, guest-workers and refugees

Racism and multiculturalism

Every-day life and the reproduction of the workforce

The use of private and collective space

Urban social movements: comparison of different experiences

Local and regional politics

Community participation: possibilities and limits

Self-organization of local people and forms of regulation

Environment, identity and the quality of living in the territory

Cultural policies and identity of localities

The effects of different planning systems

Theory and practice

Forms of developing pro-active links between theory and practice

Community media and dissemination of information

... list to be extended