

---

Infrastructure Can Be Beautiful: Urban Design Workshops, A View Into the Future

Author(s): Lučka AŽMAN MOMIRSKI and Ivan STANIČ

Source: *Urbani Izziv*, No. 32/33, Orodja podobe / The Instruments of Image (December 1997), pp. 151-152

Published by: Urbanistični inštitut Republike Slovenije

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44180633>

Accessed: 24-02-2025 12:31 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



*Urbanistični inštitut Republike Slovenije* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Urbani Izziv*

time the continual communication between professionals and users on always changing arenas. Professional knowledge however doesn't lose in importance. Quite the contrary. The mode of its inclusion in planning activities changes.

We discovered that the inhabitants are interested in their environment and possible development which they know about and are subject to, but have to be stimulated to strengthen their abilities to articulate their needs and desires.

With this research we wish to encourage all planners, administrators, government employees to begin thinking and acting in a similar manner, i.e. to promote public participation and use methods of inquiry which give answers about actual use of urban public places.

---

Nataša Bratina, Landscape Architect, Senior technical advisor, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Nature Protection Authority,  
E-mail: [natasa.bratina@mopuvn.sigov.mail.si](mailto:natasa.bratina@mopuvn.sigov.mail.si)

**Footnotes:**

- <sup>1</sup> Bratina, N., Lah, Sušnik, M.: Experiencing urban open spaces (Seminar paper in Ecological psychology, mentor: Prof. Dr. M. Polič, post-graduate course), Faculty of Biotechnology, Department of landscape planning, Ljubljana 1997, 68 p.
- <sup>2</sup> After: Polič, M.: The town, public space, people. In: Design of open spaces in the urban environment (compendium), Society of Landscape Architects, Ljubljana 1996, pp. 38-40

**Tables and illustrations:**

**Table 1:** *September 1996*

**Figure 1:** *Saturday afternoon 11-12AM, sunny (method of time samples)*

**Figure 2:** *Saturday afternoon 3-4PM, sunny (method of time samples)*

**Figure 3:** *Cognitive map showing all popular areas*

**Figure 4:** *Cognitive map showing un-popular areas*

*For sources and literature see page 68*

**Lučka AŽMAN MOMIRSKI  
Ivan STANIČ**

## **Infrastructure Can Be Beautiful Urban Design Workshops, A View Into the Future**

Urban design workshops are becoming a commonly used method in the urban design practice. The fact was confirmed when a conference, titled Urban design workshops and competitions – instruments of urban design, was or-

ganised at Brdo pri Kranju, 12th November 1997. The conference was organised by the Office for Physical Planning of the Ministry for Environment and Physical Planning and the Urban Planning Institute of Slovenia to promote World Habitat day (6th November) and Urbanism Day (8th November). The motive for organising the conference were the activities of the Office for Physical Planning of the last two years and their incentive and sponsorship given to local governments to organise urban design workshops.

In Izola, for example, in the last week of September, we have already organised two workshops. We are convinced, that workshops are, because of their negotiation character and the spatial problems in the local community (defining dilemmas and strategies), a better mode of professional endeavor than, for example competitions. The point is, that in competitions each participant is oriented to adapting his own views to a better (individual) solution where no agreement is possible. Such solutions are by definition, individual views of one author or group, and they compete for the acceptance (victory) of their concept versus the concepts of other authors or groups. In workshops, the proposed solutions are seldom the result of better accessibility to information. Quite the contrary. During the workshop in Izola we organised a very intense and diverse series of lectures. Besides information on views and experiences of experts from different professional fields we also wanted to learn about physical plans of the local community, central government, particular sectors, landowners and potential investors. It became clear, that the level of communication, between these individual participants was very low and that the workshop was an opportunity for strengthening communication, i.e. getting them together. The number of participants in the workshop in Izola was 36.

The position of Izola in the Slovenian coastal region is specific: in the physical sense it represents a critical point on the coast – the point where two different images join. The project group run by the Dutch architect Maarten Struijs observed Izola as a place between an area which is undergoing heavy urbanisation and industrialisation, i.e. in the direction of Koper, and an area with protected environmental and cultural qualities, with potential for tourism development, i.e. the coastal area towards Strunjan and Sečovelje. The topic of the 1997 workshop was, to check the route of the planned highway from Srmin and Koper to Izola and Lucija and to assess the influences of the possible routes of the highway on the urban structure of Izola with its periphery and hinterland. At the same time the possibilities of maritime traffic were evaluated (nowadays somewhat neglected), connections to other traffic modes, as well as the possibility of establishing a maritime customs and border crossing point in Izola.

The architects, leaders of project groups, were invited from different regions and countries. Gorazd Kobal was representative of the coastal region, Ivan Stanič, came from the Urban Planning Institute, dr. Sonja Jurković from the Faculty of architecture in Zagreb (Croatia) and Maarten Struijs from the Town planners office in Rotterdam (The Netherlands). Despite the various backgrounds (experiences and environments, where they operate), they were unanimous that most of the problems in Izola were concentrated in the East part of the town. Nevertheless, their proposals were quite different, but all of them included proposals, which could be used

in establishing guidelines for future planning documents or a future master plan of Izola. Maarten Struijs's group was boldest, with a perspective until year 2050 or even 2500. The proposal was radical, but only at first glance. In fact, such an approach enables exact identification and understanding of the present condition. The proposal can be misunderstood as a vision of a final state of all future solutions, however, that it can never be. What it is, is a concentrated mass of problems and ideas.

◆ ◆ ◆

During the discussion at the workshop in Izola, Maarten Struijs, a geographically unprejudiced expert talked about his experiences and realised projects. Some of these thoughts are as follows ...

**In what way did the Euclidean elements influence your design of infrastructure?**

In Holland we deal with the element water – we build dikes. Everything in the countryside is planned, designed, it is common. It is only in the last 15 years that architecture and landscape architecture got involved although we did have a tradition of big scale design. Therefore our plans always includes the elements, primarily water.

In Rotterdam the closeness of infrastructure to the city and the smallness, narrowness of the area brought in problems of other elements. In my recent projects the new element was wind, on one of the smaller shipping canals.

Other problems in the city areas are noise, which is not an Euclidean element, but nevertheless, one we have to deal with and air quality. We do not only deal with the elements but also the senses – eyesight, hearing etc. The latter resulted in a smoke cleaner for the garbage incinerator...

**From the architectural point of view, what was the rationale behind the design of the smoke cleaner?**

It is a project about clean air. What I also tried to do, was a project about clear light (clean air and clear light coincide). To arrive at such a project I looked at the behaviour of the sun during the day. So the form, elevations etc. of the building correspond with the changes of light during the day, seasons, different atmospheric conditions. The material and colour of the smoke cleaner were selected with the idea, that the effects of light on built structures have different colours – ranging from gray in cloudy weather to red on a sunny winter day – the smoke cleaner assumes the colour of the sky – the air.

If the air is clean, the light can come into the city and paint the buildings.

**Most of these infrastructure objects are built for the benefit of the general public. How were they financed?**

The local government is responsible for infrastructure – not only traffic but also energy provision, waste management and social infrastructure. Most of these are not profitable, so private investors don't show much interest. Anyway, it is the responsibility of the municipality, which collects taxes, to spend them for the public good.

In the last years we tried organising private-public partnerships. Mainly in the fields of waste management (not in Rotterdam as yet, but in other cities in Holland) and public transportation. Roads and similiar infrastructure somehow still aren't very interesting. We did however try to finance the port terminals in this way, but at the end of the day, doing it only with public money seemed easier. There is an interesting development going on however, where office space is concerned, where the private investor builds office space knowing that the central or municipal government will rent it for, lets say, 20 years. Jails for instance are also interesting for private investment.

**The scale of the workshop in Izola was probably smaller than of the projects you designed at home. How did your experience as a city planner in Rotterdam influence your proposals?**

It was very interesting, after all I experienced the growth of the harbour in Rotterdam (the biggest harbour in the World). The rate of growth was 1 kilometer per year! We also had to deal with changes in technology – containers and such. Therefore, if you are building the main port of the country and the wider hinterland of Central and Eastern Europe, that is what can happen in a 30 year perspective. This fact is very important for the workshop.

For myself, as an architect, large scale projects are a special challenge. *After all infrastructure is also architecture and it can be beautiful!* If for example we build a tunnel through a mountain and push a road through it, that's sad. Nobody can see the beauty of the road or of the tunnel, except the drivers.

Another feature is public transport. If we want to solve the problem of traffic congestion caused by cars, public transport is the place to invest. Therefore the mentality of decision making has to change. If a problem is identified as such and has to be solved one has to be radical and simply do it! That's how it is done in Rotterdam (as opposed to Amsterdam, where they tend to complicate *ha, ha*). If for example the wind is causing problems – *we do something about it!* So could you.

**Beauty in infrastructure – is it expensive?**

No. Attention should be given to all architectural elements. The architecture of infrastructure has features such as long lines, the rhythms of columns, textures of materials, details of construction etc. Attention should be given to the form and logic of the large scale and to the articulation in the small scale – of the small pieces. Such care is not necessarily more expensive.

---

Mag. Lučka Ažman Momirski, Architect, University in Ljubljana, Faculty of Architecture, Ivan Stanič, Architect, Urban Planning Institute

**Figure 1:** *The architect in front of the police station in Rotterdam*

**Figure 2:** *The air cleaner in Rotterdam*

**Figure 3:** *The wind barrier on one of the shipping canals*