

Summary



The Future of the City / Why and How Urbanity Will Shape Our Society in the Future (Robert Kaltenbrunner)

(pp. 470 – 473)

To see a city as something alive which not only changes and grows, but also, like a living creature, provides protection and needs to be protected, is an idea gaining more and more acceptance. At the same time there is a shift away from technocratic city planning from the drafting board. Nonetheless this turn-about has made itself known more through declarations, and less in practice. Upon closer inspection it becomes clear that Jahn Gehl's idea of »Life between Houses« represents a potentially self-reinforcing process, since people and events in the public sphere influence and stimulate one another. Here lays the central starting point for shaping the future of the city. Unmindful attempts at modernisation along ideological lines that give no heed to the residents will, however, prove insufficient.

Indeed the city is the seismograph of a society. Whether this be Babylon, the symbol of cacophony and unassailable differences of perspective, or the holy city of Jerusalem as the place where the promised oneness will be founded: cities have always been where decisive developments began and achieved culmination. Consequently, the course of the world up to now has been determined by the eternal struggle for a city-based society. Thus cities reveal themselves to be laboratories of the modern, as places in which the functionally differentiated centres of society – economy, politics, law, religion, education, arts and science – come together and find relationship to one another. It is in urban spaces that social structures, differentiation and routines are consolidated in one place. And, yes, ultimately cities are also places where a unique view of life unfolds before the perceptive observer in amusing, bewildering and lyrical episodes.

On the Offensive, Differentiating and Contextualising / How Public Libraries Can Handle Nonfiction Books from the Right-Wing Spectrum – A New Bachelor Thesis Offers Recommendations (Kirstin Grantz)

(pp. 478 – 480)

At the centre of discussions about how libraries should deal with nonfiction works from the right-wing spectrum is the dilemma of whether public libraries – as institutions which act as providers of basic sources of information, fulfil a basic role in democratisation, and invoke the right to free expression of opinions and access to information – should make available books which favour the restriction of these freedoms or oppose basic democratic values. In this debate opposing positions often collide with one another. Libraries themselves take a range of very different approaches. It is fundamental that public libraries, in accordance with their mission, take a position on this matter which is based on a solid and informed foundation. By taking the offensive and treating such books with discrimination, as well as viewing them in a narrower and a wider context, libraries can make a contribution to the prevention of right-wing extremism and the promotion of democracy.

Building upon the assumption that a narrower interpretation can reach a different, larger target group than a wider one – since users are simultaneously being »served« with information when selecting or reading a book and less initiative is required for this than for taking part in an event – different contextual methods need to be more closely examined in regard to their effectiveness. On the whole taking an offensive approach to the treatment of right-wing literature is recommended, because it is founded upon legal, ethical and professional standards.

Talking and Networking Over Coffee and Cookies / »Dialog in Deutsch«: Ten Years of Success with No End in Sight (Uta Keite)

(pp. 490 – 493)

Who would have guessed? In 2009, when the City Office for Social Issues, Family, Health and Consumer Protection approached the Hamburg Public Libraries, the Bücherhallen, with the wish to offer migrants and immigrants further opportunities to learn German in addition to the professionally run language courses, the library leaders immediately seized upon the scheme with a passion. After all, organising such a volunteer-based programme would be an ideal extension of the public library's core mission.

In the end it took nearly a year to coordinate with all the parties involved, develop a programme and negotiate its framework, particularly in terms of a budget and coordinating personnel. In December 2009 the first project coordinator took up her duties with the non-profit sponsoring organisation, the Bücherhallen Medienprojekte gGmbH. A few months later the first conversation group was launched in a small branch library in a part of the city with a very high proportion of immigrants. From the beginning the response was highly positive. As soon as word of the programme spread – and even today word-of-mouth recommendations have proved to be the best advertising – people from every country of the world have joined these groups. One after the other further groups were added. Today there are 110 conversation groups meeting each week.

The participants have come to Hamburg from all over the world – whether as an au-pair from Mexico or a professor from Finland, as a refugee from Syria or a housewife from Turkey who has lived in Germany for over 30 years. Each group has on average seven to eight participants, though in smaller branches it may be less. For many learners of German language and culture the small size of the group is especially important, because interactions are more personal, the inhibition threshold is lower and language support is more intensive.

Translated by Martha Baker