

## Lifting The Curtain Central European Architectural Networks

Research project and exhibition

Collateral Event of the 14th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 2014

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The exhibition is a first episode of a research project that investigates the role of Central European architecture over the past century by searching for an alternative perspective from which to expand and revise the existing narratives.

Lively architectural culture and intense transnational collaborations in this part of the continent are still largely absent from both Western and local architectural discourses. We argue that an international network had significant but hitherto marginalized importance for the transnational architectural exchange between centres and agencies – embracing a variety of activities: working on complex issues or in an international context, sharing ideas and knowledge. This network had a formative influence on the shape and condition of architectural culture – the specific vision of modernity that emerged in Central Europe.

After the fall of multinational monarchies and the birth of modern states, Central Europe became the heart of Europe, connecting East and West. During the Cold War, the same region became a border territory, separated from the rest of the continent by the Iron Curtain. In this exhibition, the stories from across the borders of Austria, Hungary, Poland, former Czechoslovakia (nowadays the Czech Republic and Slovakia), Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia (which succeeded former Yugoslavia) are investigated. Their importance goes beyond the region, as the ideas, forms and relationships originating in Central Europe have been widely transferred and can serve as a key to understanding modernization in different parts of the world.

The transition from “national” to “universal” architecture and the perception of their contradictory nature is thus significant for the transformative character of modernity in the region. In this way both regional interactions and the impact of their localized architecture in Western and Eastern architectural discourse can be traced.

The concept of a network (e.g. according to actor network theory approach) adopted in the project highlights that an object or a person are not isolated entities, but rather a part of a dependent circuit. A junction of a network that influences or changes the way in which architectural culture develops could be either a school, an organisation, an enterprise, a person, as much as a technical solution, a shape, an idea, a newspaper, an exhibition or even an event, such as an earthquake.

The exhibition shows significant cases filed in six provisional groups – *Experiments, Collectives, Transfers, Encounters, Research* and *Publics*; these suggest clues to explaining how Central European architectural culture arose as a consequence of events or knowledge exchanges that have eluded both traditional historiography and the acknowledged role played by individuals or offices. The research will be developed through a long-term project for which this show serves as an introduction. As much as rediscovering one’s own history, the project attempts to revive and foster currently existing networks in Central Europe. Lifting the curtain – of the Cold War, of national borders and that of disciplinary divisions – is on the way. The exhibition uses an active formula that will adjust itself along the way and will give the opportunity to complement and revise the material with the subsequent events of the project.

More information: [www.ce-arch.net](http://www.ce-arch.net)

