
EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY NETWORK

Fifth International Meeting
National Library of Estonia
Tallinn 2018, June 13–16

CALL FOR PAPERS

Submission deadline:
September 30, 2017

Spaces for Children as ‘Citizens of the Future’ in the Service of 20th Century Political Ideologies

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The recognition of childhood and the autonomy of children since the 18th century resulted in the provision of distinctive spaces specifically designed for them. Schools, medical facilities, playgrounds, orphanages, cultural spaces, sports facilities, among other typologies, were created during the 20th century, envisaged by Ellen Key as the *century of the child*. In the last decades, both architectural historians and museums (MoMA, Vitra Museum, RIBA) focused on the theme of material culture of children from an architectural perspective, leading to the attention of this theme to a wider audience.

The condition of children as significant means to transforming human condition was understood by pedagogues and also realized by different political regimes and ideologies along the last centuries. Regarded as the ‘citizens of the future’, children were one of the main focuses of political, social, and health/sanitary campaigns: as active agents in the persecution of political and ideological values of distinctive regimes and communities. Children’s spaces were meant to play an active role in the pursuit of those aims.

This session intends to discuss the relationship between the architecture of children’s spaces and the ideal of childhood of different political ideologies that looked at children as active agents in the shaping of new citizens and society. Different children’s spaces from the 20th century were considered as means of social change, serving at the same time as symbols of propaganda and as images of a strong political and social ideology (dictatorial regime, totalitarian regime, democracy, social democracy, communal societies, etc.). The session aims at gathering case studies from different geographical areas, providing a basis for reflecting on the historical significance of children’s spaces within an international framework.

The design for children’s spaces in the 20th century poses a particular challenge for the history of architecture by invoking visions of the future, and points to a number of research questions:

- How did political visions for ideal society reflect themselves in children’s spaces in different, often competing, international contexts?
 - How have ideological societies experimented on visions of the ideal future via children’s spaces?
 - How did the architecture of children’s spaces attempt to educate and shape future citizens, using the architectural means of typology, materiality, etc.?
 - In retrospect, what is the meaning of these ‘spaces for the future’ today for the identity, values and visions of society?
 - What was the impact of these spaces on their societies for different generations, and how have ‘future citizens’ historicized them?
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