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Harald Bodenschatz / Max Welch Guerra (eds)

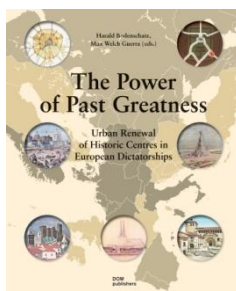
The Power of Past Greatness

Urban Renewal of Historic Centres in European Dictatorships

The redevelopment of historic city centres became an important policy field in the era of European dictatorships in the period following the First World War. At that time historic city centres were often regarded as shabby and tarnishing the desired image of a magnificent new city, of a showcase of the dictatorship. This led to the widespread demolition of older buildings. Historic streets and squares disappeared and were replaced by new apartments and workplaces for the loyal middle classes, by car-friendly roads and ostentatious new buildings. However, the redevelopment of historic centres did not exclusively mean the eradication of the 'old town'. The aim of the dictatorship in many cases was also the preservation, and often the cultic display, of historical testimonials to past greatness.

The title *The Power of Past Greatness. Urban Renewal of Historic Centres in European Dictatorships* presents examples of the redevelopment of historic centres from Mussolini's Italy (Rome, Brescia, Bologna, Naples), Stalin's Soviet Union (Moscow), Hitler's Germany (Berlin), Salazar's Portugal (Lisbon, Évora, Óbidos) and Franco's Spain (Madrid, Toledo, Barcelona, Zaragoza, Santillana del Mar). These are followed by a brief summary of the history of the redevelopment of historic city centres in Europe.

With this book the editors, who have been systematically researching urban development in dictatorships for several years, are able to present the very first attempt to identify the commonalities and differences in the redevelopment of historic city centres in dictatorships in Europe in the first half of the 20th century. The comparison of these experiences delivers an insightful path towards a better understanding of the history of urban development and the overall history of Europe in the 20th century. Even if most of the visitors and inhabitants of the historic centres are not aware of it, the fact remains that it was these measures of redevelopment which decisively shaped - and still shape to this very day - the capital cities, urban centres and towns. Thanks to the length of their reign, some of the dictatorships that were established in Europe during the interwar period were able to launch especially comprehensive and remarkable urban projects. The planned and realised interventions in the historic centres provide glimpses into the urban and socio-political character of the respective dictatorship. Equally revealing is which of the historical parts of the cities were deemed to be worth retaining, and which could be demolished.



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Urban Renewal of Historic Centres in European Dictatorships

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