

# New Europes

**Adam Siegel**

So here is a new Europe (Eurozone. Schengen-cage), although it never really changed. The surface has been altered, the political structures have morphed and expanded (and now may be contracting, hmm?), but the embedding of human actors in their built environment is more or less the same as it was a century ago: its cities are (mostly) still pedestrian-scaled, its population (mostly) cosmopolitan. 2011 is a good time to take stock: twenty years since Gorbachev shut down the Soviet Union, twenty years since Yugoslavia dissolved into internecine warfare.

So the new Europe, although it never really changed. For some of us, the period immediately before the convulsions and raptures of 1989-1991 was the last flowering of the old Europe: tense, frozen, sometimes grim, but possessing a material culture that has since been effaced. Nostalgia's sepia darkens it for us. *Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?* Where is West-Germany? Czechoslovakia? Yugoslavia? The USSR? Cities that stink of diesel, coal, and kerosene? Gone, all gone.

All that's left is all there ever was: real life.

The effervescence of politics. The landscapes and streetscapes, the built environments – all of it is as fixed and unchanging or as mutable as anywhere else. What draws the eye.

*Streetnotes: New Europes* affords a glimpse at the newest version: street-level (former) east and (former) west, a less pale version of what came before.

In Western Europe, John Heathcott's "Belleville" and Jerry Krase's "Berlin" reveal the metropolis turned cosmopolis. Nella Young offers another view of Germany transformed.

In Southeastern Europe, Jennifer Long leads us through the enigma of arrival. Gabrielle Coman shows us a new Transylvania, and Eliane Bots escorts us through life amidst the socialism's ruins.

In Central Europe, Vad Erent's Czech Republic shows us why what the Czechs call "kič" feels so at home there; Octavian Esanu shows us that the Soviet avant-garde is still with us, and still can shock. John Fekner and Don Leicht demonstrate the ongoing vitality of what is known in Central Europe as *Kunst im öffentlichen Raum* (Art in the Public Space).

New Europe as poetic *topos*: Patricia Ranzoni and Pamela Gesualdi present the American connection to the Old World: the immigrant past and the tourist's present. And Petra Ganglbauer examines the legacy of European past while Spring Gombe documents its polyglot quotidian.

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Thanks to one and all.

**About**

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