

ENGLISH ABSTRACTS OF KEY ARTICLES

15th National Conference on Physical Planning and the Building Code, editorial

The 15th Conference on physical planning took place on 10–11 November 2005 in Prague. The tradition of regular conferences is based on events organized annually in the town of Carlsbad before 1991, followed then by meetings in various Czech locations. The conference was focused on the new Building Act. By coincidence, the draft of the Act was being discussed by the Parliament of the Czech Republic on the days of the conference. On one hand, this made it impossible for the representatives of the Ministry for Regional Development's Physical Planning Department (thus the authors of the Act) to participate, but on the other hand, the participants could immediately get information about the current state of the debate. The Act has now been ratified by the Chambers of Deputies and commented on by the Senate. In the supplement to this issue of UPSD you will find some selected speeches and a summary of the conference.

OPINIONS & DISCUSSIONS**Architectonic and Urban Planning Aspects of the Construction of Prefab Housing Blocks in Bratislava, by Henrieta Moravčíková, Slávka Doricová, Matúš Dulla, Katarína Haberlandová and Mária Topolčanská**

In Slovakia the mass housing construction is viewed as a typical example of the failure of the ideals of modern architecture. The construction of prefabricated blocks of flats has annihilated the ideas of modern urban planning, its typification and unification, and the whole system of the communist building industry. The situation under which the state was the developer, the constructor, and the architect at the same time, has liquidated any economic competition, imposing tragic consequences for the Slovak building industry: no responsibility for the work, decrease in productivity, and the bad quality. There were some objections against such massive development as soon as in the 1960s but no comprehensive analysis was made before the end of the 1980s. The construction of prefabricated blocks of flats belonged to the agenda of the totalitarian rule — such technology constituting 93.5 % of the housing construction in the former Czechoslovakia — so criticism could hardly work before the fall of the regime. Nevertheless, it is to say that such blocks of flats did help to solve the problem of lacking dwellings. It was between 1971 and 1980 when 1,261,000 flats were built, offering fair spatial and hygienic standards to most of their inhabitants. The prefab housing estates still make up a substantial part of the environment of Slovak towns and cities, which is another reason for us to approach them in a constructive manner, instead of a desultory rejection.

Brno in the Progress of Changes: Metamorphoses of the City's Inner Structure from the Viewpoint of Global Trends, by Michaela Šuleřová

Cities all over the world are undergoing changes, reflecting the new progress and trends in the society. Another wave of suburbanization, gentrification, commercialization, town centre revitalization, and other processes have had their impact on the look of cities. A medium-sized European city, Brno could not avoid such changes or stay off the global developments. Rather than an analysis of all the types of Brno's urban landscape, the aim of this article is to outline the spatial (and, consequently, social) metamorphoses of the city as a result of the worldwide social, economic, cultural, and political changes.

Extracts from reviews:

The analytic dimension of the article is reduced, making way for an attempt of a very wide synthesis. Subjective judgements prevail but no evaluation structure, on which the judgements are based or to which they are related, is known beforehand. What is missing is the assessment of the hierarchy of importance of the current changes. The article quotes literature the references to which are rather indicative, as a free referential framework, and a profoundly structured dis-

cussion is not presented. The opening paragraph inappropriately connects deductions from literature about globalization and the informational society. The literature of globalization does not say that locations are losing their importance, on the contrary: the global economy is based on a significant territorial division of work, with certain territories fulfilling certain roles. Globalization means geographic dispersion of routine productions (in semi-peripheral regions) and, at the same time, strong concentration of management in a few global cities and small zones within them. The location remains important but the relation between the hypermobile global capital and the local community is disappearing, which is not discussed in the article.

Reviewer: Luděk Sýkora

Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Charles University, Prague

The article rightly combines the general, or rather generalizing, phenomena of the development of cities and city parts, and the specific problems of Czech settlements which have lived through a long era of communism. The characteristics of the process of deindustrialization and the quest for new contents, however, seem to be very much the same all over Europe, or even the world. In this respect, Brno represents all the positive and negative features of the processes under observation. The author concentrates on Brno's industrial history in the framework of what is called postfordism, with impacts on the urban structure, commenting on both benefits and let-offs (utilization of brownfields/greenfields, construction of industrial zones, and so forth).

Reviewer: Radoslava Cívárková

Section of Strategy and Regional Cooperation, Office of the Mayor of Brno