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CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN URBAN, CITY AND SETTLEMENT PLANNING

Introduction

"Civilisation and culture have developed as the product of concentration. Human existence had to concentrate in the form of urban life in order to generate culture, art and technology. City has become the most intense physical concentration of socialised human life.

Cities have emerged as an onset of a new system level. Urban structure develops at the background of rural structure. Rural structures try to draw maximum out of natural and human resources, while the more mobile urban citizens try to overcome the limitations of local conditions by becoming connected to the wider rural and natural environment and to the network of other cities. The city is not only parasitic for the drawn areas but becomes a centre of defence and administration, as well as of cultural and spiritual life".

Róbert Špaček¹,

City Planning, the unified development of cities and their environment. For most of its history, city planning made the system of settlement with the regulation of land use and the physical arrangement of city structures, as guided by architectural, engineering, and land-development criteria. In the mid-20th century, the system of city planning included the comprehensive guidance of the physical, economic, and social environment of a community. Elements characteristic of city planning in global, include:

- (1) general plans that summarize the objectives of land development;
- (2) zoning and subdivision controls that specify permissible land uses, densities, and requirements for streets, utility services, and other improvements;
- (3) plans for traffic flow and public transportation;
- (4) strategies for economic revitalization of depressed urban and rural areas;
- (5) strategies for supportive action to help disadvantaged social groups

(6) guidelines for environmental protection and preservation of scarce resources.²

My research work at the Faculty of Architecture is inspired by discussions, solutions and responses to problems of new trends in urban planning in Slovakia. The title of my Dissertation is: "Contemporary Trends of Urban, City and Settlement Planning". In recent years, the topics of urban planning in Slovak professional architectural world have been discussed more than ever before. Slovak political and economic scene is now getting ready to be accepted by European Union. It is very important for Slovakia to become a member state of the European Union in near future and it will be necessary to adopt such system of urban planning, that would be compatible with planning systems of west European member states.

In my thesis, I will try to concentrate my interest in a selected scope of topics. I will try to outline new trends of building, proposing and designing of main functional parts. They are integrated into one unit - THE CITY.

Main functional parts of city spaces can be divided as follows:

1. **residential areas**
2. areas for recreation and green lands
3. work and commercial areas

The communication and cooperation of these main functional parts are secured by two subsystems:

1. transport
2. technical infrastructure and lines

Very interesting for these topics is the opinion of **Lesley Matthews**. She describes the city as an attractive and affective organism. This organism is changing its growing by changing the rules in time. Main part of my dissertation is analyzing history and contemporary trends of **residential areas** in European and American cities.

Why the residential areas? Because city without people is not a city. We can build

agricultural areas or industrial districts, but these parts are not the cities without people. Living standard of these people is the basic information about developed level of society.

Housing is considered to be the basic need for all people. All people need shelter from sun, wind and rain. Some locations, they may also seek housing as protection from wild animals. In the aftermath of a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or hurricane, the provision of shelter is second only in importance to securing adequate supplies of food and clean water. To help to secure their well-being, people everywhere need housing. Housing takes many forms, in part reflecting cultural needs (so tents, for example, are well-suited to the needs of Bedouins), but more importantly perhaps, reflecting what can be afforded. Housing takes on the additional role of securing the safety of both people and their possessions from others.³

Housing by Lesley Matthews has two distinct roles in most capitalist societies:

1, provides service to its occupants, by offering shelter warmth, security etc. this means that it can be seen as a consumption good, product which satisfies an immediate need of the consumer.

2, as a long lasting financial asset, it is capable of being traded and of generating financial gains for its owner. This makes housing an investment good, also called a capital good, which has the potential to provide a flow of future income for its owner. This income may be in the form of revenue payments from households which pay for occupying the property in the form of rent, and/or it may generate capital returns, when the property is sold for a price higher than the original purchase or construction cost.³

But contemporary opinions don't speak only about the above mentioned aspects of solving the problems. In this time very important for growing and development of the city are political, economic and social aspects. These aspects are very important for the city. If we analyze the city as a compact unit, we have to analyze these problems on local level. Local planning is the basic level of solutions and responses of urban city space. **Paul Crompton** is speaking about this level. He defines the **context of local planning**.

The context of local planning is being transformed by a more increased period of social, economic and political change. The causes of these changes are often quite independent of each other, but make motions of world. Employment trends are raising fundamental question about the nature of work. Social trends show an ageing society, with more fragmented patterns of family life reflecting the changing relations between men and women. A multicultural society thriving for equality of opportunity. If local planning is to make a positive contribution to the management of change it must develop an understanding and interpretation of the changing world. The basic changes of context that will generate the problems for local planning are defined by Paul Crompton. Local government and its planning policy is about different issues and problems in different localities.⁴

Concerned questions raising about the following trends by Paul Crompton:

- Changing patterns of economic growth
- Structural changes of employment
- The fiscal crises
- Demographic change
- Dependency and poverty
- Social change
- Political change
- Relations between local and central government⁴

City planning is conducted by governments on all levels: local, county, regional, state, and federal and by private groups. It is also a subject of university-level study.⁴

Cities are the result of centuries of decision-making by individual owners and developers, and government intervention. If we want to find the right way of solutions of the urban problems in cities and villages, we have to understand the historical facts about its growth. The basement of solutions and the result designs are in ancient hearts of past. That is the reason, why I integrate the history report in my work. For example some examples of city plans are very interesting for my topics.

Short report of History of City Planning⁵ City Planning in Greece and Rome

The emphasis on planning broadened during the Greek and Roman eras. The Greek architect Hippodamus of Miletus planned important Greek settlements such as Priene

and Piraeus (Pireás). Called the father of town planning, he emphasized a geometric design for towns. Religious and civic citadels were oriented so as to give a sense of aesthetic balance; streets were arranged in a grid pattern; and housing was integrated with cultural, commercial, and defense facilities.

The Romans continued these principles. Their designs for monumental temples, arches, gymnasiums, and forums are classic examples of city planning based on strict regard for symmetry. Their colonial cities, planned as military camps called *castras*, were laid out with a grid of streets surrounded by rectangular or square defensive walls.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, cities declined in population and importance. From the 5th to the 14th century AD, medieval Europe planned towns around castles, churches, and monasteries, with informal street arrangements.

The Renaissance and Beyond

The emulation of Greco-Roman classicism during the Renaissance revived city-planning efforts along classical lines. The Piazza of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome and the Piazza of Saint Mark's in Venice represent an ideal of grandeur in civic structures and public places. In sharp contrast to the narrow, irregular streets of medieval settlements, Renaissance planning stressed wide, regular radial and circumferential streets, that is, streets forming concentric circles around a central point, with other streets radiating out from that point like spokes of a wheel. Examples include the street design in the *Plan for London* (1666) by the English architect Sir Christopher Wren and the streets of Mannheim and Karlsruhe in Germany.

During the past century of the Industrial Revolution, the few design standards that were introduced often neglected basic physical and aesthetic considerations. This is evident in New York City's *Commissioner's Plan* of 1811, which divided Manhattan into identical rectangular blocks gave possibilities for rapid settlement. By the end of the 19th century, the largely uncontrolled growth of New York and other major cities led to problems. The reaction to these conditions became the basis for a new era of city planning.

After World War II

The extensive physical rebuilding of cities following World War II lent new urgency to city planning. The "**garden city**" settlements of Letchworth (1903) and Welwyn (1920), built according to his ideas, had been designed as self-contained cities that were protected from urban encroachment by greenbelts, or farmland areas.

Other European countries similarly emphasized physical planning after World War II. Major urban reconstruction took place in Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Hamburg, West Germany (now part of the united Federal Republic of Germany); Helsinki, Finland; and elsewhere. New towns were also built, among them Tapiola, in Finland, and Melun Senart, on the outskirts of Paris. Europe's new towns in turn encouraged the planning and construction of similar self-contained communities in other areas of the world, including Brasília, in Brazil, and Ashdod, in Israel.

In the world of the city and urban planning we know two main existing ways of building contemporary cities. One is continental (European) and the problems are with revitalization and rebuilding of the existing city areas. Main part of this kind of city is historical center with its problems. The opposite example is an American city with commercial centre. Supermodern centre consists of skyscrapers and highways, but loses the soul and atmosphere of European historical cities with the ancient elements. On the other hand we should stress that the system of American planning gives the new possibilities for solutions of continental troubles... That is the point why my work includes this information. In short report I will try to explain in general the **modern City Planning in the U.S.**

City planning in the U.S. and other countries broadened in the late 1960s beyond a purely physical orientation. In its modern form, city planning is an ongoing process that concerns not only physical design but also social, economic, and political policy issues.

The Comprehensive Plan

The **basic city-planning document is a comprehensive plan** that is adopted and maintained with regular revisions. The plan receives its day-to-day expression in a series

of legal documents—zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and building and housing codes that establish standards of land use and quality of construction.

Development Controls

Land is allocated and private activities are coordinated with public facilities by means of zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations. A zoning ordinance governs how the land may be used and the size, type, and number of structures that may be built on the land. All land within a city is divided into districts, or zones. In these districts certain land uses are allowed by right, and general restrictions on building height, bulk, and use are specified.

Social, Economic, and Environmental Policy

A city has social needs and economic capital. The city government acts as a purchasing agent for many services needed by residents and businesses for example, education, water supply, police and fire protection, and recreation. The quality, character, and efficiency of these services require planning to fit needs and desires with funding, with technological change, and with objectives for physical development.

The Future of Cities and City Planning in general⁵

City planning in the last decades of the 20th century is becoming increasingly involved in setting or executing policy about public services and with delivering these services. Since it is apparent that resources are limited and that global events affect the future of each community, city planning must be done within a framework of national and international planning for mutually sustainable development.

The capital infrastructures of many older cities need replacement. Public schools and city hospitals are a shadow of formerly dominant city institutions. For half a century the American public was mesmerized by the outer reaches of metropolitan areas. The force of this attraction has been so strong that when travel distances to jobs in the central city became excessive, companies moved and took the jobs to the suburbs. In the late 20th century, however, the newest generation of adults younger than most city residents, more

mobile, frequently childless, and having greater freedom in their living relationships—has become enamored of city life. Cities are responding by directing public services and capital improvements toward upgrading the quality of life in those areas that have unique attractions for this new population.

In this setting, different groups of city residents have become more sophisticated in pursuing their special interests. They are better informed, understand laws and procedures, have greater political skills, and are more militant and persistent. They have learned that planning brings order to change and, thus, they want to influence the planning. In turn, city planners are attempting to balance the demands of competing interests into a dynamic community consensus sufficient to allow decisions to be made.

In the future, city planning will continue to work under conditions of scarce urban economic resources and will constantly be faced with competing priorities of neighborhoods, interest groups, businesses, and residents. The targeting and delivery of adequate public services will pose serious problems during the rest of the 20th century. As cities search for a revision of their role, they will undergo recurring adjustments. It is the task of city planning to minimize the impact that changing cycles have on the city's residents and businesses.

These theses describe the future of city and urban planning in general. But in context of world issues of settlements, there are differences between European and American way.

Contemporary Europe

In recent years the town-planning and settlement issues are more discussed. The political changes in Europe in the 90s gave the new suggestions for urban topics. In the last ten years we spoke about town planning, urban planning, city planning, regulations, land use planning, spatial planning and more.... All these terms we can explain as the different form of solutions and responses. In my opinion all these terms could be connected by Urban Sustainable Development of European Region.

Henrich Pifko is speaking about this topic in more ecological way. This way is very

important, but I will try to speak about general possibilities of solutions in comprehensive and global access.

The sustainable settlement development is the main problem of future environmental town planning. The Rio Summit in its Agenda 21 codified many relevant tasks (affordable housing for everybody, support of sustainable exploitation of resources, energies and traffic systems, importance of human resources...) Aalborg Charter is another relevant document concerning urban sustainability. Important was the Istanbul Conference Habitat II, dealing with two housing themes - the second one was the sustainable settlement development in urbanized world. The common **principles of the sustainable development** are well known: respect to life community and the care for it, improvement of the human life quality, protection of the Earth vitality and diversity, respecting of the environment carrying power limits, minimising of the resource utilisation, regulation of population growth, changes in human behaviour and value hierarchy, strengthening of self-government, integration of development and conservation on global level as well as on local one. We can try to define those principles of sustainability, which are most relevant for architecture and town planning. First of all it is the orientation toward the future. Our activity may not endanger the future generations, if our activities will be environmentally friendly. We have to accept ecological limits and if we are not able to define the acceptable impact, we have to prefer nature conservation. The principle of equality in the resource accessibility can be implemented inside the town as well as between the town and rural settlements. As last, but not least we mention the democratic participation of inhabitants in the decision-making about the ways of development of their city or village.⁶

The urbanisation problems are not new: the glory of antique cities was paid with devastation of their surroundings and a drastic change of landscape (sometimes into the desert). In the current western civilization (includes also east-European countries) the main problems of the cities are: bad interaction with the landscape and nature, unbalanced material and energy flows (including environmental pollution), dominance of private cars on the streets, deteriorating hydrological

and micrological situation, high energy and material consumption of the buildings. We are trying to find solutions for those problems in multifunctional area utilisation with the local needs satisfied on local level, in higher ecological, social, commercial, stability of the urbanised areas. The sustainable city has to be pleasantly inhabitable, life quality of its inhabitants should be the main motive of our architectural and town-planning designs.⁶

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