

# | 38 | EAST EUROPEAN CITIES AFTER THE POLITICAL CHANGE: REAPPROPRIATION, SECURITY, PRESERVATION

*Ana Fernandes*

## **Main issues**

The session is aiming at a comparative analysis of the East European cities, mainly Budapest, Moscow and Prague, after the end of totalitarian regimes in 1990. The problems of urban development of East European capital cities can be analyzed from several angles. The paper-givers of this session are proposing to demonstrate to interrelated phenomena through three themes:

- reappropriation of the urban territories: new political regimes have chosen different paths to deal with the symbolic heritage of the previous political regimes and to refurbish urban territories by their monuments; similarly, the built environment of the communist period are judged in various ways, but certainly meant a counterpoint to post-communist architecture and urban design;
- urban security: the shift towards open societies caused a certain unease at more open and, accordingly, more disputed urban space and lead to the rise of crime, which ended up in various techniques of property protection. The recent division of urban space into protected and unprotected areas modified the circulation possibilities in these cities and had a deep impact on social segregation;
- preservation: the three cities possess a considerable built heritage, which attracts large scale tourism. They all belong to the UNESCO World Heritage List. National and international preservation legislation has a deep impact on the urban development of city centers in the last two decades. Critiques of this process most often refer to lack of architectural creativity in the era of preservation and to tourist-dominated city centers. These phenomena lead to serious social and cultural problems as well as to different solutions.

## **Context**

It is hard to define what an Eastern European city is from the point of view of urban studies. The three cities in question represent three different modes of urban development, which were united by the ideological regime of communism for four decades. Their individual histories, however, diverge before and after this period, and it is an interesting task to spot the similarities and differences in the urban planning of these capital cities under the influence of a totalitarian regime. This analysis also serves to test and to verify the notion of Eastern European city, which is quite widespread in secondary literature.

The intervention of the central power in the urban planning of the three cities is a common phenomenon. Prague, one of the largest cities in late medieval Europe, was an important imperial city of the Holy Roman Empire and a showroom of the imperial power. From the mid-19th century till the 1910's was a privileged place to express Hungarian national pride to the world and especially to the Austrian part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. After the World War One, both cities were eager to demonstrate their national pride and/or their cosmopolitan character by installing art nouveau and modernist buildings. From its very founding, Moscow was destined to express the grandeur of the Muscovite/Russian Empire. Accordingly, all the three cities had a tradition in expressing the central power ideological and political message through their urban tissue. The communist regimes followed their predecessors practice in re-planning their capital cities. With the fall of communism, however, it is not just the traces of the communist regime are supposed to be removed or neutralized in these cities, but new guiding principles are expected to replace the old ones. These guiding principles do not seem to impose themselves so easily as they used to do in

the previous centuries. Therefore, one of the major questions of urban planning in present day Eastern European cities is how to validate intervention in the urban territory. It is not unique for this region, but the application of international trends is a crucial question, since Eastern, and especial Central Eastern Europe (i.e. Czech lands, Poland, Hungary, etc.) has always defined itself through the adoption of Western terms to their own reality.

In the last two decades, Budapest and Prague have lost some of its population, have become much richer and have been exposed to mass tourism. All these changes lead to a kind of new urbanism, which could be summarized in the triad of reappropriation-security-preservation. In the same period, Moscow has become the largest city in Europe and the most expensive cities of the world, with a huge concentration of financial potency. Though its recent evolution is different to that of the two Central European cities, the triad of new urbanism can be applied to its analysis easily.

In the case of Eastern European cities, similarly to other parts of the world, preservation is said to have replaced architectural innovation in urban planning. The social and cultural aspects of this new paradigm (which can be call the cultural heritage paradigm) will be analyzed through the three Eastern European metropolises' recent evaluation. The most important characteristics of this new paradigm from the point of view of city planning are the following:

- ambitious modernizing plans were disfavoured to urban habilitation in the city centers;
- the surroundings of the historic monuments gained more and more attention from the point of view of protection, what valorised old buildings with less monumental/architectural interest;
- a sort of urban hermeneutics developed gradually in urban planning of historic city centers, in which not just the author's (city planner's, architect's, etc.) will, but the receptor's (inhabitant's, stakeholder's etc.) perception was also taken into consideration;
- the widening scope of stakeholders lead to the legislative process of participation.

The influence of democratization on urban planning cannot be omitted in Western Europe and in North America, but it is worth examining whether the application of the participative principle to the (Central) European context was a real social necessity or rather a borrowing of an external concept to make local realities to look fancier. Obviously, the participative principle is more relevant in wealthy neighbourhoods, in which the inhabitants are more apt to defend their interest. Low-income immigrants and pauperized minorities are usually much more vulnerable to interventions in their territories all over the world. The way city minorities are handled in recent urban planning is an excellent indicator of the democratic sensibility of a society. Several cases from the three cities in question will demonstrate how to measure the level of democratisation through urban development.

**Palavras-chave:** east european cities, reappropriation, security, preservation

## REAPPROPRIATION OF THE URBAN TERRITORIES IN EAST EUROPEAN CITIES

*Luda Klusaková*

### **Resumo**

Prague in result of transformation became an important gateway city, attracting transnational labour migration of "creative class". The re-discovery and re-definition of spaces appeared shortly after the collapse of the "ancien régime", followed by the re-

appropriation of spaces and massive privatization of public space. This is often in conflict with the principles of heritage preservation.

- During the twenty years after the collapse of communism we witness in Prague continuous rediscovery of urban spaces, its re-definitions, motivated mainly economically. Prague as well as Budapest was based on large apartment buildings allowing us to see vertically structured society residing in the old city districts. Already in the beginning of the 20th century middle class residential districts in suburban area appeared, as well as residential districts for upper middle class or districts which were labeled as working class or lower middle class. There were districts with diversified social structure as well as districts socially labeled or even stigmatized. Since 1990 we observe the gentrification of city centre: the historical town is losing its residential function, the hotels and institutions replace apartments, and the regular grocery stores are replaced by shops with luxury goods or tourist souvenirs. The nineteenth century districts are gentrified in a different way, they are attractive for projects of developers to build offices or housing estates with special regime. The locked housing estates are constructed in suburban settlements of Prague, making the effect of the growing metropolitan area, while cities in the country are generally shrinking in population.

**Palavras-chave:** territories, east european cities, reappropriation

## URBAN SECURITY IN EAST EUROPEAN CITIES

*Gábor Sonkoly*

### **Resumo**

Reappropriation, security and preservation were among the main concerns of Budapest decision-makers in the post-communist period and could be treated according to the following aspects:

- Budapest was designed as a representative capital to compete with its counterpart, Vienna. Accordingly, the urban space and urban design have always been central to different political regimes in the stormy history of 20th century Hungary to transfer their political and ideological message to the citizens. From this point of view, the communist were not unique in their appropriation techniques. The political history of Hungary can be read through the installation and changing of monuments in the city. The battle of monuments is still going on.

- The last two decades of capitalism, mass tourism and immigration lead to a new use of urban space. The traditional city architecture is based on courtyard buildings, which hosted the rich (front side) and the poor (back side). The last two decades, however, shifted to locked courtyards and to the construction of housing estates, which represent the social stratification.

- Budapest is remaking its urban development plan according to the new European Union principles, i.e. harmonizing its built heritage with its natural setting. The redefinition of the city center in this new context as well as the proposed extension of the protected built area by the unique cave system under the city center mean new challenges to urban planning, which is being reconsidered according to the cultural heritage paradigm.

**Palavras-chave:** east european cities, security, segregation

## PRESERVATION IN EAST EUROPEAN CITIES

*Olga Zinovieva*

### **Resumo**

Moscow with its 10 million of inhabitants and many roles of the political, business, financial, cultural, historical and transportation capital of Russia presents a mixture of urban issues, which different groups of people face and address. The Soviet period (1917- late 1980s) had its strongest impact on the metropolis, both preserving some of the historical center and destroying it, broadening streets and squares, adding new territories of standard residential housing. In Perestroika of early 1990s new decision makes showed a noticeable desire to bridge with the prerevolutionary urban culture over the Soviet regime, rebuilding and reconstructing destroyed monuments, churches, as well as erecting new constructions in the prerevolutionary styles of art-nouveau and other historical revivals. Russian orthodox Church claimed its many buildings back, gained support from the government and some business people, reestablishing its political and urban presence. The legislative structure on the historical preservation was not able to cope with the privatization process, new reconstruction and construction initiatives. Though historians, preservationists, ecologists, residents and often business people, who did not want to lose their privileged positions in the historical environment, opposed the destructive process.

- Business policy of the last decade has attracted considerable Western capital as well as Western customers, architects and construction technologies. Local landscape becomes globalized.

Democratic processes and openness, on the one hand, and social stratification, internal and external immigration, on the other, has brought security issues of private and public spaces to life, engaging policing technologies and impacting mentality of gated communities

**Palavras-chave:** preservation; east european cities, heritage

## PROCESSOS DE REESTRUTURAÇÃO URBANA: O QUE HÁ DE COMUM ENTRE ELES?

*Ana Fernandes*

### **Resumo**

Trata-se de buscar compreender, no quadro das profundas transformações por que passam os territórios urbanos no Brasil, que processos estão também em andamento em outros países, com destaque para cidades do Leste europeu após a queda do muro de Berlim, em 1989. A partir de uma história social, urbana e urbanística de corte profundamente diverso daquela desenvolvida em países ocidentais, trata-se de buscar compreender com quais elementos de referência (propriedade, legislação, valores, tecnologias) os processos contemporâneos têm lugar em realidades tão distintas entre si.

**Palavras-chave:** reestruturação urbana, países de leste, crise urbana