

PROVOCĂRI URBANE CONTEMPORANE

Introduction

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The urban life represents nowadays a complex construction that draws the social, cultural, economic and political paths for increasingly extended areas. From the little town to the big metropolitan areas and conurbations the opposition between the natural environment and the built (artificial) environment has generated new processes and contents, difficult to estimate only few decades ago, which try to assure a continuous adaptation of the lifestyles to the contemporary challenges. The urban regeneration of the physical and symbolic environments under the pressure of the continuous enlargements of the specific communities is nowadays a topic that cannot be managed without an adequate knowledge of their manifestations and direct consequences. This issue contains five papers that want to contribute to the identification and clarification of the contemporary processes, phenomena and manifestations that constitute serious challenges for urban communities.

The journal is opened by an article by Matjaz Ursic from the University of Ljubljana dedicated to changes into the using and valorisation of the built space: *Globalization with Local Flavour? Transformation of spatial Values and the "new Localism" Trends in Slovenia*. The author makes some analyses starting from the results of a social survey concerning the public evaluation of the desirable housing and finds that there is a strong wish for intensive community, for living in a small village or a small town:

“The orientation, aspiration toward increasing the number of small settlements, residential areas in the vicinities of larger cities is not a negative aspect of community building as long as it supports the urban structure of the territory”. The final conclusion of the author is that the globalisation does not have yet a direct and consistent impact on the reconfiguration of the physical environment in Slovenia, but only at the level of mentality and values system.

Another contribution is signed by Professor Dieter Rink from Helmholtz-Zentrum für Umweltforschung GmbH – UFZ, Leipzig, Germany: *Urban Shrinkage as a Problem of Post-Socialist Transformation. The Case of Eastern Germany*. The article is focused on the very complex problem of population decline and the urban shrinkage that affected to a significant level the urban space from Eastern Germany, especially after the political changes from 1990. The losing of population is coming simultaneous with economical reconfiguration (“de-economising”, closing of former industrial facilities), with the extension of the vacant houses stock (1,000,000 apartments at the beginning of the 2000s), with the perforation of the urban grid, with the decreasing of the municipality budget, and with the underuse of the urban facilities. All these consequences had generated consistent measures of urban reconfiguration and regeneration toward obtaining sustainable communities.

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The third article is signed by Alberto Violante from the University La Sapienza of Rome: *Competition Behind Creativity: A Southern European Perspective*. The author follows the theoretical framework of the “Creative City” as a new alternative to the urban economical competition. Focusing on the case of Rome as Creative City the author explains that this is more a vulgarized approach into an universal script that can be easily sold to the city municipality: “The last point to be made regarding the case of Rome is that if the creativity script is universal, its validity in secondary cities like Rome is limited since it has succeeded in attracting nothing more than tourists.”

The contribution signed by Robert Krzysztofik, professor Jerzy Runge, Iwona Kantor-Pietraga, and Tomasz Spórna from University of Silesia, is dedicated to *Characteristic Features of Urbanization on the Area of Silesian Province (Poland) on the Beginning of 21st Century*. This article discusses into a socio-geographical approach the specific problems of urbanization development in the area of the Silesia Province in Poland and describes the phenomenon of transformation of the Katowice Conurbation, the functioning of the so called “non-metropolitan” agglomerations or the collapse of the hitherto prevailing administrative structures due to the separation of some of their districts.

Into a complementary approach, Marta Chmielewska and Marzena Lamparska from

the University of Silesia wrote about *Post-Industrial Tourism as a Chance to Develop Cities in Traditional Industrial Regions in Europe*. The authors focus on the economical regeneration of the former industrial areas, such as Ruhr Metropolitan Area (Germany) and Upper Silesia (Poland). For the revitalization of these kinds of mono-industrial communities a sustainable answer can be offered by creating tourist routes toward post-industrial objectives: “As a result it is ascertained that in spite of the difficulties in adaptations of industrial facilities into tourist objects such actions are profitable and may help in further development of traditional industrial regions”.

A research note (*The Patterns of Depopulation in Timișoara*) present several outputs from the FP7 project “Shrinksmart: The Governance of the shrinkage into the European context” applied from 2009 by a consortium of 8 European Universities involving 10 case studies. In this research note the authors follow the causes, the dimensions and the consequences of the population loss in the case study of Timișoara, Romania.

The contemporary urban phenomenon is very complex and has many implications in various life domains. The scientific approaches remain a consistent challenge all over the world and dedicated research papers represent an attractive topic.

Primit la redacție: august, 2011