

surfaces, etc. Non-residential space is demanded in residential houses; such as workshops, and spaces for development of leisure-time activities. This means increased standards for entrance areas, house surroundings, etc.

There is an intense need to conceive residential houses for different kinds of reconstruction; and for the revitalisation of devastated parts of cities, the so-called brown fields. An integration with civic services saves on public transport and the environment; construction plots; investment funds; the workforce; expensive equipment and maintenance. It also provides new possibilities of architectural composition, and an increased attractiveness of poly-functional facilities. It goes without saying that the removal of architectural barriers is necessary for the improved quality of life of the handicapped, mothers with prams, children, and the elderly.

---

Dr. Karel Schmeidler, Architect, Associate Professor  
Architectural Transport Research Centre Brno  
E-mail: schmeidler@cdv.cz

#### Notes

<sup>[1]</sup> The working hours are assumed to shorten by two to four hours a week, for example many Western European countries have adopted the model of 36-hour work week.

<sup>[2]</sup> If in 1969 only four computers with Internet address were registered in the whole world, a decade later there were about a hundred, in 1989 their number had increased to 100,000, and currently there are over 60 million computers of this type.

#### References

Bahrdt, H. (1974) Changing structures, functions, and townscape; The transformation of a middle-sized city in Thuringia. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*.

Heidegger, M. (2002) *Bytí a čas*. Praha, Oikoymenh.

Boštjan BUGARIČ

## Transformations of structure and programme in three Slovene coastal cities

### 1. Introduction – social and physical transformations of three Slovene coastal cities

Through the course of history, Slovene coastal cities<sup>[1]</sup> have undergone considerable physical and social transformations. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the medieval city centres with prevailing influences of the Venetian Republic were

struck by industrialization. The perimeter of city centre itself was not a suitable environment for the development of new social contents and new circumstances of trade. After WWII coastal cities experienced a rapid growth due to far-ranging political changes. After this industrial developmental episode further growth was boosted by the establishment of a new seaport in Koper. The socialist era has led to a considerable degradation of city programme in Slovene coastal cities as the requirements of the social structure, which consisted mostly of factory and port workers, were rather modest. Nevertheless, in the sixties some higher educational programmes begun to take shape. These efforts eventually resulted in the establishment The University of Primorska in the nineties. The end of the century was characterized by the economical restructuring as previously public property came into private possession. The consequences of this process included the collapse of large industrial plants due to their poor ability to resist the competition and the ever-increasing privatization of public space in the city. The process of touristification<sup>[2]</sup> of city centres has also had an important influence on public space, most notably in Slovene coastal cities.

The unsuitable and outdated legislation arranging the field of urban planning and the lack of methodological tools and criteria to assess spatial development are enabling real estate investors to operate rather freely. The preparations of urban plans are ineffective and lengthy. There is a lack of capacity to endorse flexible strategies and methods of urban planning, so developmental policies are reduced to the pursuit of profit, which subjects the entire coastal region to the mode of managing where urban planning is entirely governed by the financial benefits of investors. Urban planning on a local scale is oriented towards the establishment of long-term spatial plans, which prevents the detection of spatial consequences of the un-directional financial expansionism. In this context the urban planners are prevented from making open and democratic developmental decisions which would include all city actors and not just the elite.

The state of the three discussed Slovene coastal cities reflects the unbalanced nature of spatial planning, contributing to the divergence of different social classes and the continuous growth of the gap between the rich and the poor. The social structure of city centre users is changing because of the processes of gentrification<sup>[3]</sup>. After the establishment of independence of Slovenia the housing conditions in the city centres have become unsuitable. This was largely due to a lack of investments into renovation, since the city centre users were mostly members of marginal social groups.

The intertwinement of economical development and political disposition has largely contributed to the formation of the present day appearance of Slovene coastal cities. The organization of space was set on the grounds of economic investments and different formal relations between the city and its users have evolved. After the end of the era of industrialization large buildings remained vacant and have come to represent degraded areas. During the time of transition large shopping areas have been introduced into the urban sphere. Their consumer-oriented nature has caused a further degradation of the city centre programme, as the cities of consumption are displaced from city centres and have no

connection with them whatsoever. The social and urban state of Slovene coastal cities is increasingly unstable due to the profit-oriented developmental policy which ignores long-term developmental objectives.

## 2. Transformations of medieval city structure as a consequence of industrialization; 1900

During the time of the industrial revolution the requirements of new programmes led to changes of the medieval structure and relations in the cities. New functions were beginning to concentrate within the city centre<sup>[4]</sup>, providing new possibilities for employment and raising of living standards. This caused a widespread wave of migration into the cities from the countryside. As early as 1969 Mumford discusses rapid growth of the number of city dwellers and reports that in the year 1800 each of the world's largest cities was inhabited by less than a million inhabitants, while fifty years later the population of certain cities exceeded one million. By the year 1900 eleven metropolises with more than one million inhabitants have developed<sup>[5]</sup>. Thirty years later 27 such metropolises existed. Because of exceeding concentration of programmes and high density of inhabitation of city centres large industrial plants and factories began to develop outside city centres.

The process of industrialization had also left traces in Slovene coastal cities. These are noticeable particularly in the case of Izola, which is currently facing a problem of degraded areas in places of former industrial plants. The developmental case of Koper is not a classical example of industrialization, since it represents a special case of development of the seaport and its infrastructure, which by far exceeded the scale of the old city centre in a short period of time. Industrialization is least obvious in the case of Piran, as the industrial objects were constructed outside the city centre in the direction of the neighbouring Portorož.

The city centre of Koper has been seriously influenced by the development of the seaport, established in 1957. The land for the port infrastructure was formed by filling in the shallows, separating land and the island, with debris. The dike near the mouth of Rižana river in the direction of Ankaran had left the Škocjanski zatok completely isolated, while the terminal part of Badaševica river was redirected to flow into the Semedeljski zatok. Today Luka Koper is the only Slovene seaport and spreads over 1600 hectares (Cifrek, 2002). It represents one of the fundamentals of the economic power of the country. Its size exceeds the scale of the city and it is not associated

with the city in terms of programme and space. It was difficult for the historical agglomeration of the city centre to compete with spatial and programme demands of the port. The modern way of life has influenced the urban appearance of the Koper island as well. Bernik (1968) establishes that the anthropocentric scale of the historical agglomeration had collapsed as the city was subjected to partial planning without an integral developmental vision.

In the case of Izola the industrial programme was developed in a completely different manner. Industrial activities were developed in close proximity of the city centre or even inside its perimeter. Like Koper, Izola too was once an island, which was merged with the coast as late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The setting of salt-pans in the shallows between the island and the shore played a significant role in this connection. The city centre of Izola begun to take on a new appearance because of the progressing industrialization and the construction of new industrial plants. The effects of industrialization were more significant than in the case of Koper or Piran. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the first canned fish factory in the Adriatic region was built on the northwest part of the peninsula. The Ampelo factory was constructed by foreign investors in the year 1879. It was erected in the city centre and contributed to the new development of the city. The factory was built by the French company Societe generale francaise de conserves alimentaires and was, in turn, transformed into the Delamaris factory. In Izola, this time period was marked by Austrian and Italian investments. Four new factories were built on the coastal part of Izola, reaching as far as the Simonov zaliv (Bernik, 1968). The fast industrialization of Izola contributed to the change of the social structure of the city centre users. The filling in of the land between the island and the shore enabled a new organization of space and the development of a new range of city programmes, which could not fit into the city centre. Industrialization had also left traces in the city centre of Izola itself – though the architectural appearance of the centre remained almost intact, the social structure of the centre was influenced profoundly. Today, modernized façades can be observed in the architecture of the outer line of buildings in the city centre and so can numerous examples of unsuitable use of colours, which bear no association with the Mediterranean region.

As mentioned above, the influence of industrialization is least pronounced in the case of Piran. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century a soap factory, using sea salt as a basic raw material, was constructed in the nearby Portorož. The structure of the Piran urban tissue and the configuration of the terrain do not permit the construction of large buildings. Industrial plants were therefore constructed outside the city centre along the road to Portorož.

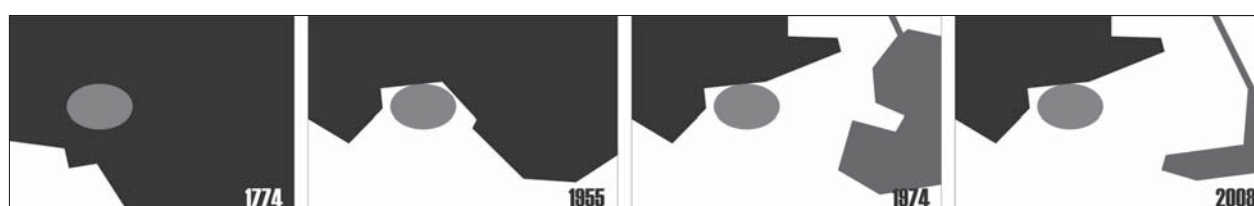


Figure 1: Development of the city and the port in the case of Koper. (Source: adopted after: Cifrek, 2002)

### 3. Large-scale functionalism or the new social utopia; the period after Second World War

After WWII the renovation of buildings was a fundamental social and political task. It was conceived on the basis of functionalistic thought and CIAM's critical discourse. The demand for the construction of housing buildings supported the ideological orientation of functionalism. A political orientation of this strategy, particularly in the coastal area, is perceivable in the formal interventions into the cities: firstly through the rapid growth of housing neighbourhoods and later through the conceptual urban interventions into the structure of the city. In the year 1966 Investi biro elaborated a regional plan of the Slovene coast. This plan represents the first integral plan of the coastal region of Slovenia and Istria as well as the first landscape design in the former Yugoslav area. The head urban planner in the preparation of an integral plan for the arrangement of the coastal region of Slovenia from Debeli rtič to Sečovlje was Edo Mihevc. Čebren Lipovec (2007) divides the interventions Mihevc had planned for the coastal cities into four categories: renovations of selected old buildings, interventions into the protected buildings, interventions of new architecture and the designs for parking areas. Mihevc's work represents a significant contribution to the integral arrangement plan for the Slovene coast. He combined functionalism and the traditional, well established solutions. Through the use of traditional details, which he incorporated into his modern architectural designs, he established a basis of critical regionalism and interpreted its contents in his own specific manner. Examples of this include the perforated concrete carrier, used as a balcony parapet or a pergola and the perforate roof pedestal, which he derived from a local motif of attic mezzanine windows.

Despite Mihevc's large-scale interventions and the integral character of his solutions of problems concerning the urban planning of the coastal region, some programme aspects, which influenced the development of this area in a particular way, were not taken into consideration to a sufficient degree. According to the functionalistic doctrine, the formal arrangement of space ought to cause simultaneous arrangement of programmes, relations and actions of urban actors. Košir (2000: 82) defines the problem concisely when he states that "in fact, functionalism commits two great errors; the first one is the teaching that the composition of society can be influenced by the urban form itself, the second one is the excessive rigidity of its theoretical basis, which only considers the rational, the vulgarly functional component and pushes all irrational and traditional aspects aside." Functionalism as a movement has attempted to solve the social problems within the cities. An utterly formal manner of renovation was employed and little emphasis was placed on directing the diversity of city programmes. Equating the social structure in equal buildings had contributed to the uniformity of needs for city programmes and in turn this led to the decrease in the diversity of the population of city users. In this context, the classification of functionalism by Rossi (1982), which explains that functionalism strives to transform the model of a capitalist house<sup>[6]</sup> into the para-capitalist house<sup>[7]</sup> and in turn into the socialist house<sup>[8]</sup>, holds true, particularly in the

case of housing buildings in Koper. This manner of operation initiated a social reform, which eventually produced a rather uniform supply of programmes for the city users. On the level of urban programme, diversity was replaced by equality and urban programme lost its diversity and became simplified.

This process started largely due to the political events, which took place after the year 1954, when the Slovene coast lost its economic and political centre with the annexation of Trieste to Italy. The process of urbanization of coastal cities initiated large-scale migrations stimulated by the need for new workforce. The immigration of workers and intellectuals from Slovenia and other Yugoslav republics was supposed to speed up the urbanization process of coastal cities. The coastal region was envisioned to become an unbroken urban strip with well developed tourist programme, without considering the programme and communication links of coastal tourism to the activities in the hinterland. All three coastal cities have developed their character on the basis of certain activities. Koper assumed the central role of the entire coastal region because of its location near the border and its seaport. Izola developed fishery and tourism, which were overshadowed by industry in the eighties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Piran was the only one of the three to remain a key tourist destination and thus represents a unique example of a well preserved coastal city per se.

The interventions, planned for the Slovene coast after the WWII, were labelled political because of their socialistic orientation. The demand for new housing directed the construction of new housing neighbourhoods, which began to substitute the former bourgeois architecture. The relationship towards the management of the city structure had changed from capitalistic to socialistic. Koper and Izola have lost their original fishery town character to industrialization and much attention was devoted to the construction of new housing buildings. "The social programme, demographic changes and poor physical condition of the existing urban tissue have directed the extent and the quality of new constructions" (Koselj, 1997: 44). Several new housing neighbourhoods were constructed, including Semedela in the hinterland of Koper (1961), chain houses in Piran (1960), prefabricated houses in Šalara (Koper, 1962) and a particular type of tourist accommodation, examples of which are bungalows in Lucija and Strunjan (1960–62). A unique example of Mihevc's mode of operation is the introduction of a new typology – a skyscraper – into the city centre of Koper. In part, this is an ideological statement as the skyscraper were intended to construct a sort of city walls, a dominant structure which could compete with the church bell-tower. Koselj (1977) establishes that the emphasis on high structures reflects a market oriented economy, leading to the increase of real-estate prices. The consequences are clearly observable in the silhouette of the city, pierced by new shapes of high structures. These new shapes cut into the visual structure of the city, while their inhabitants, mostly immigrant workers, lowered the demand for the diversity of city programme in the old city centre. This sort of 'cleaning' of the city centre is not justified even according to theoreticians like Jacobs (1961), who claims that urban planning cannot be considered a form of art. Her proposal for the renovation of old city centres is not oriented towards radical interventions, which bring about new programme, like in

the case of functionalists, but rather towards self-organized renovation programmes which put a human face on urban planning. In this context it is important, that urban planning does not only follow the capital interests, but is also formed on the basis of needs and desires of city users.

#### 4. Degradation of urban planning as a consequence of transition: 1990

All Slovene coastal cities exhibit the absence of participative urban planning. The unbalanced manner of placing programmes into the urban space and excessive interventions into the natural environment have supported the excessive stereotypization of space. The public space has begun to lose its basic function as the programmes it houses are oriented commercially. The processes that have transformed the city in a sense of form and programme, have commenced in the industrial period, as is shown on figure 2. The transition from the classical industrial city to the Ford type city and finally to a post-Ford type metropolis has caused the evolution of new programmes and their dispersal in space. A dispersed city structure can function better, if it possesses suitable communications, linking different areas. In places where new forms of transport have linked different areas, the city had begun to grow, while in other areas the lack of traffic communications has caused a development of abandoned zones. The city centre once played a central role, but has since become a business or a bureaucratic centre. New organization forms, distinguished one from another by their function, begun to take shape in the suburbs. New cities of consumption, consisting of shopping centres, emerged and so did theme-park areas, industrial areas, technological parks and new housing areas, organized as gated communities.<sup>[9]</sup>

The contemporary city is shaped by the fast flow of capital, governing the contemporary way of life. The city centre used to be the main holder of the city's identity. Today cities of consumption, with almost exclusively commercial programmes, have been built outside city centres and are attracting a growing number of consumers. Decisions, made by experts and politicians, do not create favourable circumstances for the development of programmes. The city centre is managed by a small group of individual actors, who are merely puppets of the capitalist arrangement governed by a few wealthy individuals. Their decisions direct the entire flow of capital and consequentially the physical development of the city. Members of the political public are important actors in the making of space-related decisions as well, so resolving spatial problems relies heavily on political decisions. These decisions are partial to capital interests, which do not provide a long-term basis for the regular development of space. The development of cultural programmes – key indicators of the level of social development – is neglected.

And where have these processes of transformation of Slovene coastal cities lead to? Which are the consequences of foreign investments into the sphere of public space and how do the unbalanced interventions into urban planning manifest themselves? The architecture of all three considered cities is characterized by the use of unsuitable colours, which are supposed to bear an association with the Mediterranean

area. Outside the city centres new mega-structures are being constructed. They provide an attractive scene and thus contribute to the emptying of city centres. Turistification, perceivable particularly in the case of Piran, leaves the inhabitants of the city in want of suitable programmes. This is most clearly observable outside the tourist season, when the city is rather abandoned. Izola and Koper are undergoing a process of gentrification; the high real-estate prices are causing a deliberate change of the social structure of city centre residents. In part, the population of Koper is slowly changing due to the activities of the university programmes. Thus it is gaining a critical mass of users, who require additional social programmes. Capital interventions have initiated the construction of the city of consumption with densely packed structures, which dominate the first plan of the city view. Izola is facing a problem of restructuring abandoned industrial buildings. The demand for new apartments on the market could cause these areas, located in the city centre itself or in its close proximity, to become sites of densely packed apartment buildings, with a high density of population. In long-term this could cause significant changes on the level of public space. To prevent the disappearing of public space certain activities which attract visitors to certain city areas need to be developed. The consumer society represents an ideal target audience for the commercial events, taking place in the suburbs, and is pressuring the activities in the city centre to take on a commercial character as well. "Capitalism, and the modern age, is a period in which, with the extinction of the sacred and the 'spiritual', the deep underlying materiality of all things has finally risen dripping and convulsive into the light of day; and it is clear that culture itself is one of those things whose fundamental materiality is now for us not merely evident but quite inescapable" (Jameson, 1991: 67).

The optimal solution, which would enable the association of city actors and users, is a systemic transformation of tools for the coordination of spatial plans. In the process of decision making and formation of city programmes it is important to form a link between independent groups of civil society (non-government organizations, independent experts) and the municipality, which has to provide them with the possibility of free operation. Action manoeuvring can lead to a higher diversity of happening in the abandoned and impoverished city areas and to higher awareness of the public regarding the problems of urban planning. Communication amongst all involved actors is imperative as "no organic improvement is possible without a reorganization of its processes, functions, and purposes, and a redistribution of its population, in units that favour two – way intercourse, I – and – Thou relationships, and local control over local needs" (Mumford, 1961: 645). Kos (2006) discusses the solution to the crisis of spatial planning in the form of strategic planning, which would lead to more transparent and open planning procedures, particularly in the case of the Slovene coast. According to Kos (2006), this manner of operation enables different actors to attempt to win public support for their developmental perspectives. When employing such a planning scheme certain changes can be expected: higher diversity of actors as opposed to one manager of space; the undertaking of unfinished operations, open to change and capable of adapting to developmental processes; the decision making processes becomes open to meet the requirements of all co-dependent actors. Goličnik (2006) asserts that the

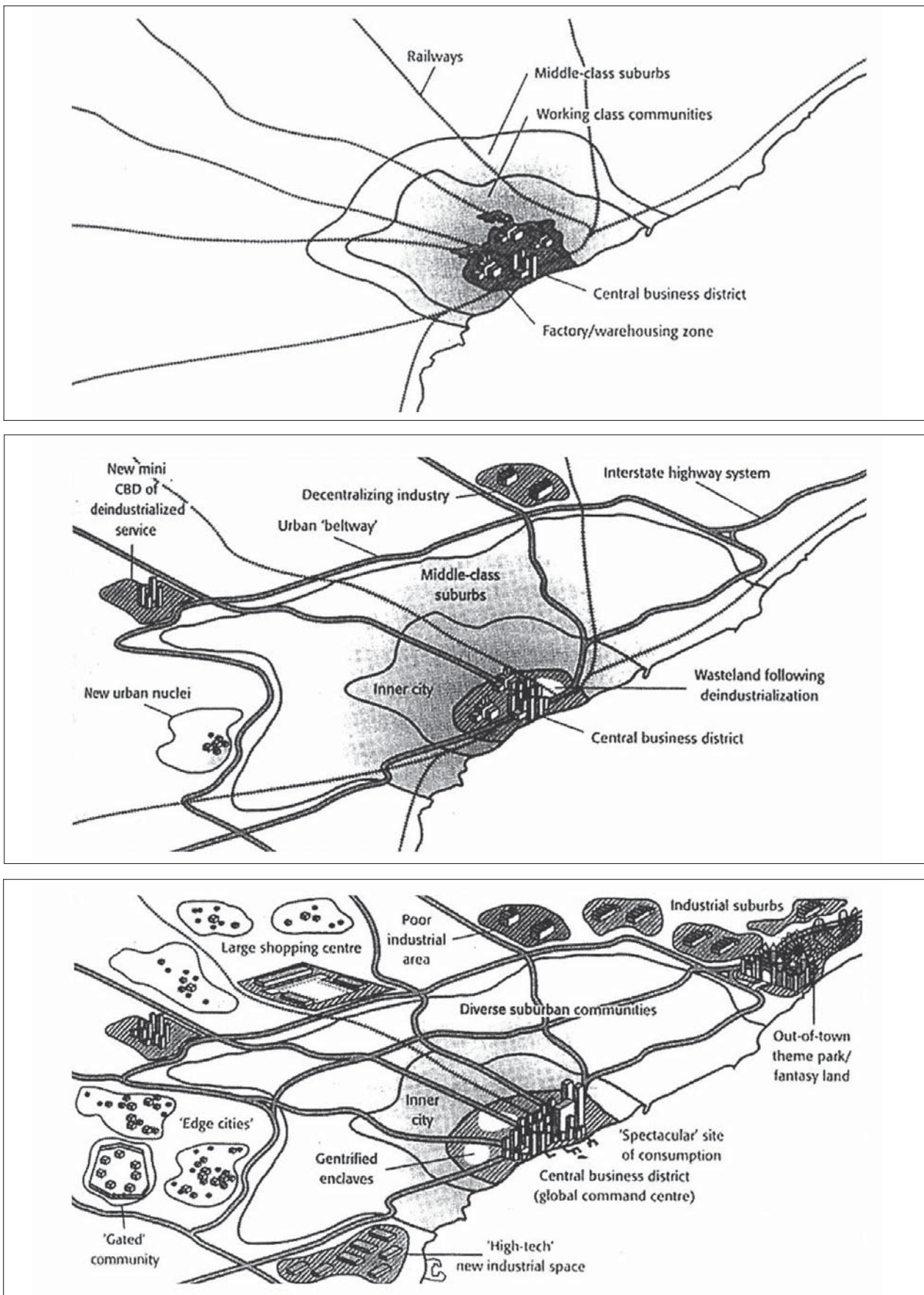


Figure 2: The transformation of a city with the central concentration of programme into a city with dispersed programme. (Carmona et al., 2003: 30)

selection of indexes and the assessment of the quality of living must consider several different spatial aspects and points of view of city users. This creates a mutual process between users and the physical space, the environment of events. The key and basic step for further development of Slovene coastal cities is the reorganization of communications, particularly the introduction of new and diverse models of public transport and promotion of the so called 'soft' mobility. To ensure a higher quality of living in the city it is necessary to encourage the mutual association of programmes of the city and its hinterland. Multi-modal nodes can contribute to the restructuring of traffic arrangement and help to solve the problems of parking in the city centre and pollution on account of the ever-increasing use of personal transport vehicles on the Slovene coast. In this respect it is important to raise awareness of users regarding different mobility options and implement strategies to create new kinds of public transport.

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis of urban development of three Slovene coastal cities through three subsequent historical periods demonstrates how combined social and economic factors can change spatial relationships in the cities. Every time period leaves its own physical mark which can prove to be spatially unsuitable in the next historical period. Today we can observe numerous examples of abandoned industrial sites in the cities which have become degraded and of little or no use. The functionalistic architectural and urban design interventions in the cities exist without contributing to the city because of their untimely ideological and social features. Shopping areas, which have appeared during the period of transition, follow the developmental trends in much the same fashion as they proceeded in the USA. They represent attempts of transformation of programmes in these areas and occur as a consequence of investors taking possession of real estate and implementing its commercialization. In the USA this process has already progressed to the next level since it started as early as fifty years ago. The process of commercialization is increasingly present in European cities as well. The spatial interventions in the period of industrialization and functionalism have been characterized by the construction of new architecture in the city centre or its close proximity, while today, commercial mega-structures are constructed in the suburbs. The emptying of the city centre is causing several negative consequences: the buildings are not in use and are left to decay, the lack of programme in the city centre is becoming apparent. If this trend will proceed Slovene coastal cities could become a target of touristification and gentrification. This would ensure their formal renovation, while the restoration of urban programme and society would remain questionable, as the city actors would pursue the goal of making profit and produce programmes, intended for a single type of user. In turn, this could lead to the further reduction of the diversity of city programme. Consequently, the new relationships between the city users would most likely lead to the privatization and elitization of public urban space.

Dr. Boštjan Bugarič, Architect, Research Assistant  
University of Primorska, Science and Research Centre of Koper  
E-mail: bostjan.bugaric@guest.arnes.si

## Notes

- [1] The article discusses three Slovene coastal cities: Koper, Izola and Piran.
- [2] Touristification is a criterion of dominance of tourism-related activities, the basis of which is an unselective spatially-functional transformation of ambiances and buildings for the purposes of tourism and free-time activities (Hočevar, 1998).
- [3] Gentrification is an action strategy of attracting the middle and higher social classes back into the old city centres and urban areas with unfavourable social structure. Hočevar (1985: 85) describes it as a "process of physical renovation, new construction and transformation of social classes, in exceptional cases even the complete change of population. The essence of this concept is to stimulate strong investments into urban areas within the city centre, which are populated by immigrants and/or lower social classes and therefore create a suitable housing environment for the higher social classes".
- [4] The city centre comprises the area of the historical city, where, normally, basic urban functions are concentrated.
- [5] These metropolises were Berlin, Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Tokyo, Calcutta, London and Paris (Hudnik, 2002).
- [6] The capitalist house is let by its owners. Everything inside it serves the production of profit (Rossi, 1982).
- [7] The para-capitalist house is built for a single family, who can let an entire floor (Rossi, 1982).
- [8] The socialist house is a new type of building in socialist countries, where there is no private property (Rossi, 1982).
- [9] *Gated community* is a closed urban neighbourhood, an area populated by the higher social classes. It represents an example of the physical segregation of the population, where the residential areas of the higher social classes are physically separated from the streets with all their crime and violence.

## References

- Bugarič, B. (2006) *Univerza in mesto; univerzitetne vsebine kot generator družbenega dogajanja*. Ph. D. Thesis. Ljubljana, Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za arhitekturo.
- Bernik, S. (1968) *Organizem slovenskih obmorskih mest: Koper, Izola, Piran*. Piran, Mladinska knjiga.
- Carmona, M. et al. (2003) *Public places – urban spaces; The dimensions of urban design*. London, Architectural press.
- Cifrek, I. (2002) *Urejanje krajine sodobnih prometno logističnih terminalov na primeru Koper (diplomsko delo)*. Ljubljana, Biotehniška fakulteta, Oddelka za krajinsko arhitekturo.
- Čebren Lipovec, N. (2007) *Modern Architecture in Historical City Centres: Case Study on Edo Mihevc in Koper and Valorisation for Reuse*. Leuven, Master's Degree thesis for Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation.
- Goličnik, B. (2006) *Vedenjski zemljevidi ljubljanskih trgov in parkov: Novi izzivi in pogledi na načrtovanje in urejanje prostora*. Ljubljana, Zbirka Urbani izziv – publikacije.
- Hočevar, M. (1998) Analiza revitalizacijske problematike koprškega mestnega jedra; fizični prostor in družbene vsebine. *Annales, Series historia et sociologia*, 8(12), pp. 79–94.
- Hudnik, Š. (2002) *Mobilna arhitektura in možnosti njene uresničitve v realnem svetu: bioelektronska telesa*. Ph. D. Thesis. Ljubljana, Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za arhitekturo.
- Jacobs, J. (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. London, Jonathan Cape.
- Jameson, F. (1991) *Postmodernism*. London, Verso.
- Jameson, F. (2001) *Postmodernizem*. Ljubljana, Društvo za teoretsko psihoanalizo, Analekta.
- Kos, D. (2003) Postmoderno prostorsko planiranje? *Teorija in praksa*, 40(4), pp. 647–657.

Koselj, N. (1997) Arhitektura 60-ih let v Sloveniji; kontinuiteta ideje. *Arhitektov bilten – posebna izdaja*, 25, pp. 6–52.

Košir, F. (2004) *Med strukturalizmom in dekonstruktivizmom. Prostorske znanosti za 21. stoletje*. Ljubljana, Fakulteta za gradbeništvo in geodezijo, Interdisciplinarni podiplomskih študij prostorskega in urbanističnega planiranja.

Košir, F. (2000) *Kako so minevali "novi časi" ali stanovanjsko okolje kot kompozicijski pojem. Izbrani članki 1970/1985*. Ljubljana, Fakulteta za arhitekturo.

Mumford, L. (1961) *The City in History*. London, Penguin Books.

Mumford, L. (1969) *Mesto v zgodovini*. Ljubljana, Državna založba Slovenije.

Rossi, A. (1982) *The Architecture of the City*. Massachusetts, The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies.

Tomaž PIPAN

## Reading Pearl River Delta from an Aldo Rossi perspective

### 1. Introduction

The ability to understand a city is believed to be a fundamental necessity of every urbanist. The multitude of scientific texts and theories that have spawned from this

belief gives one little reassurance that this understanding is even remotely possible. Is it a problem of the theoretical discourse or a problem of nature of the city? Maybe it is a problem of subjectivity and different ways in which people perceive and read the city. Whatever the reason, the fact that the City has so far always managed to outgrow its theories will not change, at least for now. In this aspect we could assume it is no different with the reading of the city as proposed by Aldo Rossi in *The Architecture of the City*. This text will confront Rossi's theory with the new type of a city that has sprouted on the East, post-communistic and hyper-capitalistic city of Shenzhen.

The conditions and reasons on which this city came of being are very specific and, above all, different from conditions of the cities that Rossi was looking into. One of the main differences that could be understood as of great significance is the time span in which Shenzhen developed from a local village into a sprawling metropolis. What took European cities centuries, Shenzhen 'accomplished' in two decades. What happens when a city comes into existence in a glimpse of time, in a comparative fraction of a second? Do the rules of reading such an entity still comply with the rules set out by Rossi?

### 2. Pre-assumptions and Focus

First, the main focus of this argument and its critical assumptions which will confront Rossi's reasoning has to be examined. The text will focus on the *Early Phase* in development of Shenzhen. This phase is not endemic to Shenzhen, in fact it is common for the whole Pearl River Delta (PRD). It assumes that urban fabric in this phase consists predominantly



Figure 1: Deng Xiaoping on one of the 'advertisements' for building a new Shenzhen. (Source: Chung et al., 2001)