

Living in a corridor

In the second half of the twentieth century urban life has been marked by constant shifts. Cities have become places of increasingly faster morphogenesis. To many it is a source of disappointment and grief, often the new images of living comfort and freedom are tied to loss of known settings and are furthermore seldom replaced by at least acceptable imagery, if not such worth remembering. More than two thirds of all that is new in these places, termed as living environments, happened in the last fifty years. Effects on the environment are known, after all most of them materialised outside the traditional horizon of planning and design. Urbanism and planning have been translated from the art of city building into budgetary balances and codification of already finished acts of specific interest groups. Moreover, design guidelines, needed for creating desired urban physical culture, were never really accepted. Lately, except for rare, exceptional events, occurring mainly on the largest infrastructure developments, nothing important happened. Ah, maybe here and there the odd architecture done by a superstar.

A consequence of such specific apathy is increased physical vulnerability. To alleviate the present condition a new term is being often used, i.e. »new urbanity«. Often it is not more than a demand for maintaining the extant quality of technical infrastructure supporting comfortable modern living (railways, roads, heating, water supply, sewage, public transport etc.), despite realistic feasibility. In the spirit and collusion with classical mental or living patterns. However limiting discourse to technical aspects is simply not true. New urbanity is also described by the desire for re-hierarchisation and renewal of lost locus, search for new images or urban architectural quality and new topological patterns that don't stem from traditional divisions into centre and surroundings, as well as pursuit of different rhythms of life and mobility.

Urbanised corridors, which connect all urbanised space without classical differentiation, are one of the answers. Urbanisation in corridors implies building and transformation of cities – better urban space – into a network system, which follows four principles: design possibility (in the sense of smart improvements by redefinition of living qualities), sustainability (preserving the world for our descendants by respecting ecological principles), reconstruction (changing cities and substituting obsolete or inadequate contents) and responsibility (a trans-disciplinary game played by all bearers of change in the spirit of non-traditional decision making, also implying changed understanding of the urban system).

In the recently adopted and legally binding Strategy of spatial development of Slovenia, urbanised corridors with specified and ranked nodes, have a very important position. Although this document is very seldom publicly mentioned, alongside the Strategy of economic development, it is one of the most important national strategic documents. However, even the next national planning document – Spatial planning order – didn't achieve serious response during the first hearing, either complimentary or the opposite. Maybe possible discussants were tired; maybe they were on vacation. Maybe living in a corridor doesn't coincide with value systems of most physical planners or administrators, who are simultaneously users of the same. Maybe we are again codifying completed acts of spontaneous and uncontrolled urban development. Then again, maybe we have accepted the network city as our own.