

INTRODUCTION

The Ljubljana Conference was – after Calgary and Pretoria/ Durban - the third in a row under the commission's heading "Monitoring Cities of Tomorrow". The commission expresses its thanks to Prof. Dr. Mirko Pak and his team for organising our 2003-conference in such an outstanding way, both academically and personally. The group was hosted in a most attentive manner.

The Calgary Conference was primarily devoted to topics such as monitoring-concepts, the management of complexity and uncertainty in urbanised regions and governance. The next conference in Pretoria/ Durban dealt with cities as "reborn growth machines" and the development cycles of urban economic and spatial structures. Finally, the meeting in Ljubljana concentrated on new concepts of complexity derived from links between different spatial scales, on the re-definition of urban regions as "critical mass" in a globalising and regionalising world, as well as on a complex view of urban sustainability.

All in all, more than 50 presentations were submitted. Most of the papers concentrated on four major topics that, in one way or another, dominated our discussions (this is, of course, not to say that the other remaining presentations did not stimulate the commission's overall targets and visions!).

As a first topic, the invention of an intermediary spatial level between the "micro" and "macro" was discussed both in theoretical and practical terms. This concept is seen as a means to compensate for processes of spatial exclusion, fragmentation and polarisation that characterise economic and social change in urban regions. Such a level might be the "organised" urban region that manages intra-regional processes of segregation and polarisation while addressing inter-regional processes of competition and cooperation.

Considerable attention was also devoted to the second topic; this was related to the interdependency of economic, social, environmental, and cultural contexts and their impacts on competition and cooperation in and between regional networks. After discussion it was agreed that the importance of regional and local constraints should stimulate further research to make use of transferable regional/ local experiences.

The third topic focused on fallacies of "catching up" strategies in which less developed countries and states undergoing systemic transition imitate structures that have failed or are failing in more developed countries. The question arose whether it is unavoidable that these paths be followed or if there might be chances for alternative endogenous strategies that avoid these errors.

Much discussion was dedicated the fourth topic, that of "transition". Transition describes processes of radical change in development paths and often strong external forces operating with regions and cities that create new winners and losers in terms of function, space and people. Transition also can be understood as a period of uncertain societal and

economic development. At any rate, it is important to stress those processes, conditions and parameters (monitoring) which are decisive for specific ways of governing and planning that enhance competitive niches in a network system.

*The commission's goal for the period 2004 to 2008 can be described best in the new extended title "monitoring cities of tomorrow: reinventing cities in a changing global context". Rising complexities and uncertainties in the urban macro and microenvironment lead to a number of imaginable development paths of urban regions and agglomerations. "Monitoring cities of tomorrow" concentrates on identifying new urban problems and the processes behind them (**monitoring**), on identifying the importance of new spatial scales (**reinvention**) as economic, social, cultural and environmentally relevant actors under changing global and local conditions (**cities**), and on transferring results via projections, applications, planning measures and new governance-concepts (**tomorrow**).*

The Ljubljana-Conference was an important milestone in this development. The commission and all authors are looking forward to the wider discussion that the publication of the conference proceedings will stimulate.

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