

Summary of the CEE-Network conference

Strategies for the Development of Industrialized Cities and Regions in Central and Eastern Europe

The 8th Conference of the Network of Spatial Research Institutions in Central and Eastern Europe took place on 24th and 25th of October at the Congress Center Leipzig. More than 70 participants from 14 nations attended the sessions. The conference was funded by the European Community Initiative INTERREG II C, the German Federal Ministry for Transport, Building and Housing (considered as a model project for spatial development) and by the Austrian Ministry for Education, Science and Culture.

On Monday afternoon, the participants had the chance to take part at an excursion through Leipzig-Plagwitz, a quarter which was dominated by textile works since the turn of the century. After a boat trip on the historic canal which was built for freight purposes but never really put into use, Mrs. Susann Buhl from the city guides' service took the participants on a guided walk and provided many interesting informations. Being a reference location for the EXPO 2000, Plagwitz gets international attention and has access to federal funds for the redevelopment of numerous buildings. Most interesting was the conversion of old premises into apartments and smaller commercial units, mostly for the services sector. However, it seems that the costly reconstruction of the monumental buildings will not in every case find new users, with the percentage of empty apartments in Leipzig coming to nearly 30%.

More information: <http://www.expo2000-leipzig.de/projekte/plagwitz.html>

In the evening, the city of Leipzig gave a welcoming reception in the great council hall. After some welcoming words from the head of the urban planning department, Mr. Engelbert Luetke Daldrup, Mr. Oliver Weigel, who is responsible for strategic city planning, gave a lecture on challenges for urban planning in Leipzig. He pointed out that the number of inhabitants is decreasing since 1945 which is typical for many industrialized cities and regions in Eastern Germany. In Leipzig, the problem is quite urgent: After having 740,000 inhabitants around 1900 and still more than 500,000 in 1989, actually 470,000 people are living in the city. This creates great problems for the quarters which were built at the turn of the century ("Gruenderzeit") and which are partly decaying, partly being modernised at high costs. At the same time, the tendency for single family housing in the suburban space can not be brought to a stop. Facing this challenge, the city of Leipzig has defined five types of areas in the historic residential quarters:

- areas which have the potential to develop by their own
- areas where the positive development is encouraged by the city
- areas with high priority for urban development
- areas with a "waiting status" where no action takes place, e.g. derelict land
- areas where the decay and the demolition of buildings will have to lead to a new urban quality, providing urban green, a lower density and the chance for new single-family housing

This means that the instruments for urban planning in Germany which were designed for growth situations (growth of population, of wealth and of settlement space) will have to be complemented by solutions for long-term stagnation or even decreasing population.

More information: <http://www.leipzig.de/amtsdaten/alle/amt.nsf/pages/stadtplanungsamt>

On Tuesday, the participants met at the Congress Center Leipzig. The penary opening session was introduced by Mr. Bernhard Mueller from IOER, Dresden, who moderated the session. Mr. Ernst Benedict from the Saxon Ministry of the Interior gave a deeper insight into problems of industrialized cities and regions in Saxony. Apart from the obvious progress the new Laender have made since 1990 in their economic development, he pointed out that some problems still have to be solved. For example, the facilities for research and development have been cut down sharply after 1990; bigger enterprises are controlled from outside Saxony, and there are not enough possibilities for vocational training, leading to the emigration of young people to other federal Laender. The rapid suburban development which took place in the first years after 1990 has to be completed by the development of attractive city centres. The figures of unemployment are still much higher than in Western Germany, this partly being a consequence from the broader integration of the population in the working process.

More information: <http://www.statistik.sachsen.de/>

After that, Maroš Finka from the Slovak Technical University presented a strategy paper for industrialized cities and regions in Central and Eastern Europe which sums up recommendations from the project FOCUS. Among them are the need for greater attention and external support for the structural problems, the demand for further administrative reforms (e.g. decentralisation, cross-sectoral development strategies) and the necessity of further trans-national research.

The panel discussion with Maroš Finka (Bratislava), Serban Nadejde (Bucharest), Kaliopa Dimitrovska Andrews (Ljubljana), Zaiga Krišjane (Riga), Hannes Schaffer (Vienna) and Karina Pallagst (Dresden) concentrated on the national views of the problems and strategies. It showed that the national frame conditions play an important role for problems and development strategies of industrialized cities and regions. It can be stated that EU policies and funds will become more important in the future. The exchange of knowledge and experience was named as a very important element of strategies.

After lunch, the participants joined together in two working groups on regional resp. urban development. Working group 1 (Strategies for the development of industrialised regions undergoing structural change) was moderated by Zaiga Krišjane, University of Latvia (Riga). Three of the five lectures concentrated on regional experiences from the implementation of strategies; one lecture recommended a nationwide strategy for the Ukraine, and the last lecture highlighted factors which show the quality of regional management.

A lecture by Christian Reich (University of Graz) presented frame conditions and elements of the development strategy for the former mining region Eisenerz. The socio-economic benefit of structural change is limited which is typical for the endogenous approach, according to the author. The importance of decentralization and the support of regional development by a professional regional management was underlined. The following key factors of success were named: Endogenous engagement and independence, regional communication and cooperation, networks of knowledge and information and the permanent knowledge exchange with successful regions.

The following lecture by Garri Raagmaa (University of Tartu) showed reasons for the failure of the Regional Development Programme of Ida-Virumaa. The region depended heavily on the extraction and procession of oil shale which caused severe ecological and economic problems. The idea of the regional development plan was based on the expected role as a transit region between Russia and the West, giving priority to public and private investments in traffic and tourism infrastructure, to regional marketing through fairs and PR, and to the education of people in connection with the services sector. The plan may be called a failure, due to the design of the programme, the lack of funding and different interests of the regional actors. The future is seen in a focus on key services which react to the regional challenges, in a greater co-ordination among regional actors, in a more implementation-oriented approach and in a better education and training which will help changing traditional patterns of mentality.

Tatiana Galushkina (IMPEER Odessa) led the attention away from regional case studies and towards more general strategies. She proposed ecological management as a solution for ecological and economic problems in industrialized cities and regions of the Ukraine. As many industrial branches in the Ukraine still are producing with outdated equipment, the implementation of the EMAS (Environmental Management and Audit System) known from the EU would benefit the environment, at the same time being a step towards market-oriented economy. At the same time, ecological investments will have to be supported by the state and the international community. The distribution of political and financial power between the central state and the regions will have to be discussed - an issue which played an important role in the other lectures. Last but not least, a complex set of measures will be needed to form an ecological conscience.

Knut Koschatzky from the Fraunhofer Institut Karlsruhe presented the Ruhr district as an example for structural change in Central Europe which has been going on for 30 years. Some features like hierarchical relations between enterprises and an industrial mono-structure, weak administrative structures, ecological problems, coalitions against structural change, unclear visions can be found in many industrialized regions in the CEE countries. Compared with the seventies, the Ruhr district has been successful. On the other hand, some problems remain unsolved in spite of very high investments: Industry continues to depend largely on the traditional sectors; the real economic breakthrough has not taken place yet, the mentality changes quite slowly and the built-up research capacity can not be absorbed by the regional industry. Especially the last argument was an important point in discussions, as the Ruhr area often is presented as a "best practice" example. Participants came to the conclusion that the system of education and the administration both are key factors for the success of structural change.

The session was closed by Martin Heintel (University of Vienna) who based his lecture upon several years of experience in the field of regional management. He discussed conditions for safeguarding quality in regional management under the frame conditions of Austria which are currently changing,

due to EU integration and a higher degree of professionalism. Much of the success of regional management depends upon the person of the regional manager: He must be skilled in many fields which may be summed up by the categories project competence, knowledge and social competence. Like other speakers, Mr. Heintel also underlined the importance of contact with other regions. At the same time, he warned that regional management takes time, and that premature conclusions about success or failure are not appropriate.

In general, discussion was very enthusiastic; the following issues were stressed:

- A balance between „top-down“ and „bottom-up“ activities has to be found; local networks and global integration have to fit together;
- more and better exchange between projects has to take place; exchange of experience and co-operation between science and practice on the national and trans-national level is needed; actors have to come to a common understanding;
- national laws have to be improved;
- strategies have to leave the “corner of spatial planning”; economic, mental and other aspects have to be considered which do not always have territorial dimensions;
- conceptions and procedures on european level have to be considered; more information about activities in CEE countries is needed; a direct transfer of strategies is almost never possible;
- education and science have to be adjusted to the needs of structural change;

These points need a good regional management which is able to bring administration, business, NGOs and education institutions together.

Working group 2 (Strategies for urban development of industrialised cities undergoing structural change) was moderated by Jaromir Stejskal (Institute for Spatial Development, Brno). The lectures focused on local examples for structural change.

Beata Kuc-Sluszniak from the Technical University Gliwice named key factors for the conversion of industrial buildings, focusing on the Upper Silesian Agglomeration which is the biggest industrial area in Poland. Among these, the factors location, original function and building size seem to be most important. Re-utilization of industrial premises and wasteland can not only be seen as an ecologically sound alternative to greenfields development but is an important factor for the image of industrial regions (strategy of cultural heritage). It seems that the education of architects and town planners is focused mainly on new buildings, not on re-utilization and renovation; besides, many regulations (e.g. safety) stand against the flexible use of old buildings. In discussion, it was stated that even with the best strategies for re-utilization, it never can be possible to find new uses for all old buildings and areas - often due to feared or real contaminations.

The lecture of Sergey Ilyukhin (All-Russian Institute for Nature Protection, North-Caucasian Branch, Krasnodar) could not be presented by himself. However, his main point is that numerous problems of industrialized cities and regions - as the change of land use and the need for a better urban quality - can be solved by the methods of landscape planning.

This was contradicted by Przemyslaw Szymanski (Technical University Łódź) who explained the failure of the landscape planning strategy in Łódź, the former leading textile city in Poland. The „Green Ring of Culture and Tradition“ which was intended to incorporate ecological and cultural monuments around the city center was spoiled by american-style shopping malls, erected on the very spot where the park was planned. Here, the crucial point seems to have been the lack of political support for the plan and the power of foreign investors. In addition, numerous examples of a small-scale reutilization of industrial premises were given.

Manca Prašnikar from the community of Zagorje ob Savi described the development strategy of the former mining town in the heart of Slovenia. The three elements of landscape engineering in former mines, support of small and medium enterprises and tourism seem to be enough for the town to avoid economic and social decline. However, it cannot be denied that the favourable location within commuting distance from the nation's capital may have had its share in the relative success.

Another lecture came from Ilgvars Francis (City development department Riga). He explained the strategies for urban development in the Latvian capital. Major trends of urban development are the change from the industrial to services sector, the demographic change which led to the loss of almost 10% of the population since 1990 and a rising demand for land, mainly for commercial uses and single family housing. Understanding itself as a city in global competition, Riga has prepared a city master plan which proposes - among other actions - the recycling of brownfields in the “industrial belt” between the inner city and the Soviet-type suburbs.

The session was closed by a short lecture about urban development problems in Tuzla (Bosnia and Hercegovina), given by Azra Zecevic (JP Urbanizam Tuzla). There, the mining for salt has caused numerous damages in the historic city center due to depressions, and the redevelopment of the center remains a difficult and costly task.

In general, it became very clear that the remnants of an industrial past are not a burden, but a big chance for the formation of a new, positive regional and local identity. This has to be brought into the minds of people. The lectures and discussions showed that the traditional "top-down" physical planning may be at a turning-point, having only limited success (e.g. in the case of Lodz). Thus, the future work of urban planners may be rather "convincing and arguing" than "drawing plans".

On the following day, the plenary session was opened by Rolf Kuhn (IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land, Großräschen) who presented visions about the landscapes after lignite open-pit mining. The IBA (International Building Exhibition) stands in the tradition of the IBA Emscher Park in the Ruhr Area, taking up ideas like the preservation of industrial monuments for touristic purposes and the conversion of industrial buildings for new users. Unconventional ideas like the construction of swimming houses for recreational purposes are also propagated.

More information: <http://www.iba-fuerst-pueckler-land.de/>

Karl Becker, regional manager from Amstetten, and Josef Lueger from a touristic marketing association in Ybbsitz, both in Austria, gave insights into the practice of regional management. The key role of the regional manager as "communicator" and the importance of regional identity was stressed in both lectures.

More information: <http://www.mostviertel.at/> and <http://www.eisenstrasse.or.at/start.htm>

Summaries from the working groups were given by Irina Gukalowa (Ukrainian Nat. Academy of Sciences, Kiev) and Karl Schmude (Institute of Ecological and Regional Development, Dresden). Karina Pallagst from IOER Dresden presented further steps in the development of the CEE-network. The cooperation between the partners will be strengthened, and the internet platform will be enlarged to provide more and better information.

The declaration "The Future of industrialized cities and regions" was adopted after a short discussion. In this document, the following important points for industrialised regions in CEE are brought to the attention of decisionmakers:

- In general, the structural problems of industrialised cities and regions need more political attention
- A discussion about sharing the burden of revitalisation and development between municipalities, regions and the national government has to be encouraged
- New institutional arrangements will have to be found, from decentralization over regional agencies to public-private partnerships
- Integrated strategies for revitalisation and development will have to be found which focus on the future viability of sectors
- Co-operation between regions in structural change will have to be promoted
- The exchange of knowledge and experience will have to be continued, as well as the comparing trans-national research on basic problems in industrial cities and regions

The document was sent to the partner institutes in the FOCUS project and will be distributed among science and politics in the CEE countries.

In the afternoon, participants had the chance to visit the EUREGIA, a fair on spatial development issues in Europe.