

Views on Space

The point of further development of cities is in changing and adapting the use of land for purposes of existence. These purposes are not only those pertaining to the individual but also to all possible or potential users of 'space', which is understood as a commodity. Whether the user is a representative of the particular or of the public interest is not important. Principles concerning use are equal for both, after all they both have to obtain land, supply material for construction, connect to infra-structural networks, provide financial means and pay for the labour and, of course, to attract professionals - a guarantee of quality in realisation. Success of such endeavor can be measured by financial, aesthetic, social or emotional criteria although globally acknowledged criteria are hard to define.

If the activity of creating space (adapting and changing space for different uses) is understood as an activity for the perpetuation of social and economic order, driven by gain (profit), the designer can easily be manipulated by the will of outer interest. In short, what one considers as gain, is an unwanted 'alien' for another, especially when the recognized and loved is replaced by the self-referential 'unknown', whereby the one and the other are individuals or abstract public interests.

The interest of the individual can be limited by the boundary of ones property. In some cases it extends to the street corner, the crossroads of ones own road with the first more permeable road. It is quite uncommon, if ones interest lie in a distant city areas or even neighbouring towns or countries. If attachment by cable to global information networks is available, ones interests can be virtually realised anywhere or everywhere, the only condition being, another interested individual on the receiving side of the cable. If that is our individuals desire.

In the editorial to a previous issue of our magazine (No. 18, Values and evaluation, 1991) Vladimir Mušič wrote: "... we were expecting and received (from participating authors) a large emphasis on paradigmatic changes of basic views on planning and management of space, which we are experiencing in a time when humanity is caught in a process of re-evaluation or even a true metanoia, i.e. fundamental shift in our relation to the environment, threatened by cataclysmic failure"; and continued "... the promotion of free-market relations in the economy and investments will - probably - help in focusing our goals and values, which define these goals".

The concept of this issue is in continuation of the theme started five years ago. At that time a critique of prevailing relations in the planning and management of space under changing political and economic conditions was put forward. The reason for reviving the theme are events in the built environment of the past few years where large scale problems, such as ecology, infrastructure and other physical events, have shown (also protection of cultural and natural heritage, reform of the national government and local self-government, construction of high-ways and other large scale objects), that planning is inherently a long-term engagement. Needs and types of use don't change very fast, especially not those which are conditioned by physiological needs of man. The consequences of poorly thought out decisions are necessarily degradation of the environment, dilapidation of living conditions and loss of ambience, which are a possible source of social tensions. All of these consequences can be termed as damage. In all dimensions, even at the other end of the cable.

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