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The urban space of post-communist cities, informal settlements and brownfields during climate change

This issue of *Urbani izziv* presents urban space from the perspective of alternative landscape futures, public transport networks, housing aspirations in informal urban settlements and the regeneration of urban brownfields. The articles expand on the specific findings of authors published in previous issues of the journal. To this end, a critical comparative analysis of these articles is carried out and presented below. The goal is to assign new value to the publications and research findings presented in this journal, and to further enhance their scholarly quality.

Alternative urban landscape futures during climate change

In his article “Challenges and potentials in using alternative landscape futures during climate change: A literature review and survey study,” Amin Rastandeh (2015) focuses on the feasibility of applying alternative futures and scenario analysis in landscape planning during climate change to provide a wider perspective and deeper understanding of this approach for better use and more effective application in the future. The author proceeds from the premise that increasingly more people around the world live in urban regions due to their inherent socioeconomic attractions. The same assumptions were used by other authors that published their articles in this journal in 2012, including Arun Kumar Acharya and Manuel R. Barragán Codina in their “Social segregation of indigenous migrants in Mexico: An overview from Monterrey,” Juyong Zhang et al. in their “Living in a changing Chinese urban landscape: The Dalian case study,” and Chen Gou in his “State rescaling, contested space and inequality in the globalising city-regions of China: Conceptual issues and empirical evidence.” In analysing the social segregation of indigenous migrants, Acharya and Barragán Codina proceed from a phenomenon typical of northern Mexico: spontaneous rural-to-urban migration. Zhang et al. describe the growth of Dalian, the second-most-important city in the southern part of Liaoning Province in northeast China. The authors establish that the most dramatic changes have taken place since 1984, when the city was declared a Special Economic Zone, and particularly during the 1990s, when Bo Xilai became the mayor and introduced parks, extensive motorways and many traffic circles. They determine that at present, having lost most of its traditional built environment, Dalian is a modern city marked by dramatic housing developments built for the newcomers. Similarly, Gou also focuses on the growth of cities and urban population in China; more precisely, in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Based on this, he explores whether this phenomenon is creating segmentation, displacement or polarisation in residence and work spaces.

Rastandeh (2015) believes that such urbanisation also results in haphazard urban development and the depletion of natural resources worldwide, which was already discussed in this journal in 2012 by Michael W. Mehaffy and Tigran Haas in their article “Poststructuralist fiddling while the world burns: Exiting the self-made crisis of ‘architectural culture’” and by Franklin Obeng-Odoom in his “Political economic

origins of Sekondi-Takoradi, West Africa's new oil city." Mehaffy and Haas focused on American cities and their suburbs, drawing attention to the fact that unsustainable patterns of urban development and growth are strengthening and that this sprawling American practice has been exported right around the world. Obeng-Odoom agrees with their findings in relation to West Africa's city of Sekondi-Takoradi, where oil was discovered in 2007. Due to its rapid urbanisation and demographic growth, this city has become one of the fastest-growing cities in the Dark Continent and has joined the ranks of other boom towns and quasi-resource centres in Africa, such as the Copperbelt in Zambia, Kano in Nigeria, Gaborone in Botswana and Kataroo in Tanzania.

Rastandeh (2015) establishes that, in line with this trend, researchers have also begun examining the impact of climate change on urbanised areas more intensely. In his opinion, climate change is one of the most powerful driving forces behind land-use and land-cover change, and it has led to unprecedented landscape upheaval in urbanised landscapes. He is convinced that, under conditions of rapid urbanisation and climate change, envisioning changes in landscapes caused by both urbanisation and climate change provides a basis for informed decisions on adopting appropriate landscape policies. Depicting the likely effects of these policies on a landscape's future can be an integral part of mitigation and adaptation strategies when planning urbanised landscapes. In response to climate change-induced urban and regional challenges, the author proposes using alternative futures and scenario analysis as an efficient tool supporting informed decisions on land-use and land-cover policies, and informing society about what the future might bring. The author addresses two major questions: 1) Is alternative futures and scenario analysis an appropriate and reliable tool for depicting future landscapes and consequently adopting landscape-planning policies during climate change? 2) What are the current challenges and potentials in applying this decision-making tool in the real world?

Public transport networks in post-communist cities

In their article "Evaluating issues and performance of a public transport network in a post-communist city using a quantitative spatial approach," Lucian-Ionuț Roșu and Alexandra Blăgeanu (2015) argue that the urban dynamics in eastern Europe after the fall of communism (seen as a consequence of the changes generated by the transition to a new ideology) have highlighted deficiencies in local public services. Sasha Tsenkova arrived at a similar conclusion in her article "The housing policy nexus and people's responses to housing challenges in post-communist cities," which was published in *Urbani izziv* in 2014, as did Janez Koželj and Jasna Stefanovska in their 2012 article "Urban planning and transitional development issues: The case of Skopje, Macedonia." Tsenkova focused on efforts to create a market-based housing system and competitive housing markets in the post-communist urban world. She found that the transition in housing has exacerbated the initial differences in housing conditions across the region, leading to significant affordability constraints, deterioration of privatised housing and slum formation in post-communist cities. She concludes that, beyond growing poverty, informality and exclusion, affordability of housing remains the fastest-growing and most pervasive challenge in post-communist countries. Koželj and Stefanovska draw attention to another issue these countries are dealing with: urban planning. They focus on the Macedonian capital, which, like many cities in neighbouring countries, has undergone radical changes that have affected urban-planning processes for over twenty years. The crisis that is affecting the city during its transition phase has led to deterioration in the quality of

the built environment and has created fertile ground for speculative developments. The authors believe that urban planning is no longer able to operate as an instrument of control and development with the primary aim of protecting and promoting public interests. The issue of urban landscape transformation during the transition from communism to capitalism was also addressed by Lazaros E. Mavromatidis and Asimina Mavromatidi in their 2012 article "Reinventing the doubt of the icon: A virtual case study in a post-Soviet country's capital," which focuses on the Armenian capital Yerevan. Choosing Yerevan as the territory of study and always having in mind the Soviet era of this capital, by also focusing on the post-Soviet period this article explores how space production was oriented to organise social life in order to serve the dominating interests of each historical period through official or unofficial state planning. The authors emphasise that the transition from the Soviet system to a liberal capitalist system can influence the cultural landscape of a city by creating virtual landscape images in order to obtain favourable publicity in the contemporary context of globalisation.

Roşu and Blăgeanu (2015) draw attention to another major issue that eastern European cities are dealing with: public transport systems. They highlight the fact that practically all the urban public transport systems in eastern Europe face similar issues determined by poor capacity to adapt to the rapid changes in the urban environment resulting from the post-communist transition. To identify and illustrate the shortcomings of a public transport system from this region, they analysed the transport network of Iaşi (Romania) by taking into consideration various dimensions of efficiency. They argue that assessing the quality of a public transport system should be based on passengers' views of various attributes (frequency, price, vehicle characteristics, travel time, etc.), which create a general perception of the quality of services supplied. A similar approach was also employed by Špela Verovšek et al. in their article "Using visual language to represent interdisciplinary content in urban development: Selected findings," published in this journal in 2013. The authors believe that presenting and integrating ideas, and using an interdisciplinary approach to spatial problems raise the issue of coordinating views and proposals by professionals and various public groups such as investors, the general public, governmental actors and so on. In their opinion, the dichotomy between professionals and the general public has various causes. Some issues are due to differing interests and priorities, which vary greatly even within different public groups, and much divergence is the result of a failure to communicate. This was also discussed, among other things, by Igor Bizjak in his 2012 article "Improving public participation in spatial planning with Web 2.0 tools." His reflections were confirmed by Aidan Cerar in his article "From reaction to initiative: Potentials of contributive participation," published in this journal in 2014.

The study conducted by Roşu and Blăgeanu (2015) is representative, and thus the model developed as part of it, highlighting a post-communist system's capacity to adapt to urban changes, can be replicated for any eastern European city. Because the final outcomes highlight a mismatch between the performance of the current public transport network and the growing needs of the city residents, they can easily be used by policymakers and various stakeholders: investors, non-governmental organisations, economists and urban planners. The last were already discussed by Visar Hoxha et al. in the 2014 article "Cultural factors affecting urban planners' intentions to regulate public space in Prishtina, Kosovo," in which they emphasised the fact that planners' conception range from more abstract ideas of perception to planning practices of more concrete urban infrastructure, which also include the

city's transport system. The fact that, for residents and other users, accessibility is one of the key elements of the urban environment is also highlighted by Alenka Temeljotov Salaj and Andrej Pompe in their article "Qualitative criteria of urbanism and brands: A comparative analysis," which was published in this journal in 2014.

Housing preferences and aspirations in informal urban settlements

In their article "Housing aspiration in an informal urban settlement: A case study," Akunnya P. Opoko et al. (2015) establish that the aspiration of Nigerians for homeownership has been overwhelming in recent times. Consequently, low-income households have been left to fend for themselves, often through an informal housing market that has been described by Ashley Gunter – in her article "Renting shacks: Landlords and tenants in the informal housing sector in Johannesburg South Africa," which was published in 2014 in a special issue of this journal – as a classical neoliberal market, where housing supply is weak and demand is constantly high. In her opinion, in cities in the global south, the ever-increasing housing shortage and the lack of low-cost housing stock in the formal housing market to meet the demand have resulted in a proliferation of informal settlements and informal dwellings. Hence, the housing market in many cities in the global south is the informal housing market. In their article "From informality to formality to informality: Extralegal land transfers in an upgraded informal settlement of South Africa," published in the 2014 special issue of this journal, Lochner Marais et al. drew attention to the fact that, in many cases, the processes initiated to transform informality to formality have merely generated a new form of informality. The informal sector has thus become the main source of survival for families and urban communities in the global south, a fact criticised by Sophie Oldfield in her article "Intertwining lives and logics: Household and informal economies in Cape Town," which was also published in the 2014 special issue of this journal. Oldfield highlighted the fact that the informal economy has a local character and limited connections to the formal economy, and is organised around subsistence practices that are understood as broadly uncompetitive.

In their article, Opoko et al. (2015) proceed from the assumption that an adequate understanding of housing aspirations and preferences is essential for achieving an efficient urban housing market that meets the expectations and aspirations of all categories of households in informal urban settlements in Nigeria. They investigated the housing aspiration of households in Ayobo, an informal settlement on the outskirts of Lagos that has many low-income households. Their main research objectives were to examine housing characteristics, explore the residential history and aspiration of residents, and identify factors influencing the housing aspirations of Ayobo residents. With regard to aspirations, the authors refer to the article "Social sustainability in urban renewal: An assessment of community aspirations" published in *Urbani izziv* in 2012. In it, Daniel Chi Wing Ho et al. describe aspiration as individual attitudes towards a place, thing or process, adding that individuals' inspirations determine the way they intervene in their built environment in terms of redevelopment or rehabilitation. Opoko et al. (2015) also mention the article "Structural equation modelling of building quality constructs as a predictor of satisfaction in subsidised low-income housing" by Clinton Aigbavboa and Wellington Thwala, which was published in the 2014 special issue of *Urbani izziv*. The study presented in this article revealed various levels of satisfaction with existing housing and a wide gap between current housing conditions and people's aspirations in South Africa, which Opoko et al. (2015) also confirmed for their study area in Nigeria. Both studies also showed that the extent to which occupants are satisfied with their housing situation

is a measure of fit between their housing consumption experience, preferences and aspirations. Opoko et al. (2015) believe that by providing new insight into housing aspiration among residents in an informal settlement in one of the fastest-growing megacities in the world, their study has contributed to the current discourse on housing in informal urban settlements in developing countries.

Brownfield regeneration and measures aimed at sustainable development

In their article “Regeneration of the Hazaribagh urban brownfield: An imperative for Dhaka’s sustainable urban development,” Mohammed Nawrose Fatemi and Tahmina Rahman (2015) proceed from the same premise as Rastandeh (2015) – that is, that urban areas are spreading and that increasingly more of the world’s population lives in cities. They argue that such densification tendencies also place pressure on large cities’ infrastructure and facilities, which was already highlighted in three other articles published in *Urbani izziv*. The first article, “Land Administration System structured land rent residuals and China’s urban sprawl – A case study of Dashi, Guangzhou,” was written by Liu Xuan and Li Xun, and published in the 2012 special issue of the journal. The second article, “Housing provision in the Kathmandu Valley: Public agency and private sector initiation,” was written by Bijaya K. Shrestha and published in the journal in 2010. According to Shrestha, the haphazard growth of settlements in the Kathmandu Valley is the result of rapid urbanisation, growing poverty, the high cost of land and construction, and dependence on the traditional practice of owner-built housing. This growth has resulted in huge housing deficits and poor home conditions. In another article titled “Residential neighbourhoods in Kathmandu: Key design guidelines,” which was published in this journal in 2013, Shrestha reports that the residents of the neighbourhoods in the Nepalese capital still face the problems of inadequate water supply, a poor drainage system and poor streets and open spaces in their daily lives. The overall result is the development of a poor sense of place and a low level of feeling of belonging to the community.

Fatemi and Rahman (2015) confirm this, emphasising that many cities in the world are dealing with these types of problems. In addition, they have a significant amount of unused areas that often occupy attractive land, but are generally environmentally unfriendly and are often characterised by substantial contamination. This is also the case in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh and the eleventh-largest mega city in the world. According to the authors, Dhaka emerged and expanded from the bank of the Buriganga River, and the city’s major industries also developed along this river, following the typical pattern. Among these industries, the leather-processing industry (i.e., tannery) is one of the oldest. The majority of tanneries can be found in the Hazaribagh area. As the country’s principle leather-processing zone, comprising 90% of the tanneries in Bangladesh, Hazaribagh is investigated as a case study in the article. However, the authors establish that the use of inferior technologies, coupled with the absence of proper industrial waste-management and waste-treatment facilities, have destroyed the ecology of this area and badly impacted the road network and built infrastructure in the surroundings. Something similar also happened in the city of Solapur in the state of Maharashtra, India, only that there the textile industry was the main source of urban pollution and degradation. This was discussed by Rahul B. Hiremath et al. in the article “An integrated networking approach for a sustainable textile sector in Solapur, India,” which was published in *Urbani izziv* in 2012. Solapur is described as a fast-growing city, best known for its textile products, including towels, bed linens and cotton blankets. Today there are about 25,000 power looms

in the city employing about 100,000 workers. The mass production of textiles in Solapur currently uses manufacturing process and chemicals, and also consumes large quantities of water and electricity, which has a damaging effect on the environment. The effluent disposal facilities of these industries are also very poor, resulting in major industrial pollution. The authors review various textile industries' approaches adopted in order to evaluate models and methods for measuring the current impact of the textile industry on the environment, human health, biodiversity and climate in Solapur. Based on this understanding, they suggest a possible sustainable integrated model to mitigate the risks to the environment in the city.

In their article, Fatemi and Rahman (2015) also propose a solution for reducing the impact on the environment, which would provide an opportunity for urban regeneration. This solution is based on moving the tanneries from Hazaribagh and redeveloping the area. To this end, the authors investigate the Hazaribagh area's potential as an example of a planned sustainable area for the entire city, free from the severe pollution that it is notorious for. They believe that regenerating the Hazaribagh urban brownfield can serve as a model for sustainable twenty-first-century neighbourhoods, incorporating contemporary facilities and environmentally friendly elements for healthy living.

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