

Annual Spa-ce.net Conference 2014

– Empirical Evidence of Urban Resilience in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe –

18th–19th September 2014

Bratislava, Spectra, Centre of Excellence (UM STU)

In the wake of its rapid expansion, the EU is being increasingly forced to take an active role in cohesion issues as well as in regional policy and development. This acceleration in spatial development has, however, also increased the likelihood of negative impacts from globalisation and EU integration. Recent economic and financial crises have highlighted this risk, presenting threats which were much less acute only a few years ago. Fragile spatial and societal structures have been exposed to huge pressures from international markets alongside unfavourable demographic trends, environmental hazards or other sources of risk.

Two particularly worrying factors are social instability and deteriorating social cohesion. Some municipalities have been stricken by a sense of alienation, the dissolving of traditional social structures, the loss of regional identities or dysfunctional social networks. Furthermore, they face many developmental challenges in the form of economic restructuring, suburbanisation, large-scale migration, the redevelopment of inefficient infrastructures, as well as pressures related to climate change. Europe's cities are particularly affected by all of these challenges.

Spatial planners must cope with increasingly ill-defined framework conditions for spatial development while reacting efficiently and flexibly to unpredictable external and internal shocks such as floods, fires and economic fluctuation. They must also deal with the unpredictable individual behaviour/decisions of multiple stakeholders. These factors represent risks not only for planning, but first and foremost for the sustainability of spatial development. Spatial planning has been transformed into an ongoing process of seeking useful solutions without any guarantee of success. Assessment and decision-making in the face of uncertainty – that's the order of the day.

Organised by

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Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development, Dresden (Germany)
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Network of Spatial Research and Planning
in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe

As already indicated, spatial planners are currently facing an ambiguous situation. Not only is there a lack of sufficient information concerning future possible development, but also suitable criteria for evaluation is missing. Who knows what stakeholders really want? This uncertainty permeates all societies and communities, involving all actors and stakeholders. The stakes involved are exceedingly high, namely the future development of cities, regions and states that have grown up over centuries as well as the quality of life of millions of people.

Although various approaches to risk management in spatial planning have been outlined in a range of EU policy documents, the exact methods of integration at the spatial planning level are still being deliberated, with the exception of natural disaster risk management. In addition, the modification of available methods to take account of each city's specific conditions is a complex problem requiring an integrated, holistic and multidisciplinary approach.

The annual Spa-ce.net conference aims to discuss the following key issues:

1. Resilience as a new challenge for spatial planning or a novel term for known concepts?
2. Which experiences have been made in regard to urban and regional resilience in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe?
3. Which risks and threats are most evident in the process of promoting urban resilience and which management strategies have been proved to be most effective?
4. Are there dedicated leaders, promoters or advocates of urban resilience or is this a purely process-related phenomenon?

We would like to invite you to contribute with your presentations and input. For more information feel free to contact the Spa-ce.net network coordinators:

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