
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

THREE DECADES OF POST-SOCIALIST TRANSITION



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CHAPTER 3

The Urban Morphology of Post Socialism

Since urban form mirrors the life of society, the proposed session aims to explore relations of society and space as a synthesis of material and immaterial structures which are both witnesses of change and also the determinants of possible development. Since socialism emerged, both as a political and ideological system, it greatly affected the way cities are shaped and the way they function, thus making it necessary to research urban form in the time of post-socialism. Political, social and cultural changes have received much attention, but problems of urban design have not been considered to the same extent.

Research in urban form derives from a wide spectrum of disciplines - geography, urban history, architecture, urban planning and urban design. An interdisciplinary approach is therefore necessary and it is intended that this will be the result of a wide variety of individual contributions. The intention is to present detailed images of the changes of urban form ranging in scale from the city through to its component elements as a result of the major changes in urban law and regulation, standards, economies, land ownership, societal needs, and change of habits. The inherited patterns and culture of planning of different states suggests that these changes are not homogenous and vary from country to country.

The intention is through an understanding of the changes brought about in the built environment through social and economic processes to maintain, improve and guide further development.

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Post-socialist or global capitalist? Recent urban form in Belgrade and Krakow compared with developments in the UK

Abstract: *Based on recently published work (Djordjevic & Milojevic, 2018; Kantarek, Kwiatkowski & Samuels, 2018) and current studies work at Belgrade University and Cracow University of Technology, recent developments in these cities are compared with UK projects, mainly in Oxford. The projects are located on an urban transect from city centre to urban periphery. Some projects in Belgrade and Krakow e.g. new central area shopping malls, and gated housing communities, are immediately comparable to those in the UK since their form does not only depend on their regulatory contexts but on land ownership, finance and the structure of the development industry. Individual houses on the urban periphery are different as are attitudes towards post war housing estates. It is suggested that these differences depend on the traditions of planning and development, which have been carried across major changes in political and economic circumstances.*

Keywords: *urban form, post-socialist, comparison, Western Europe.*

Introduction

Cities take a long time to change – their rate of change is much slower than that of the economic or political context, which drives these changes. A decade since Hirt's and Stanilov (2009) ground breaking work is therefore an appropriate time to review a representative sample of these changes in two CEE cities and compare and contrast these with changes in a western European context.

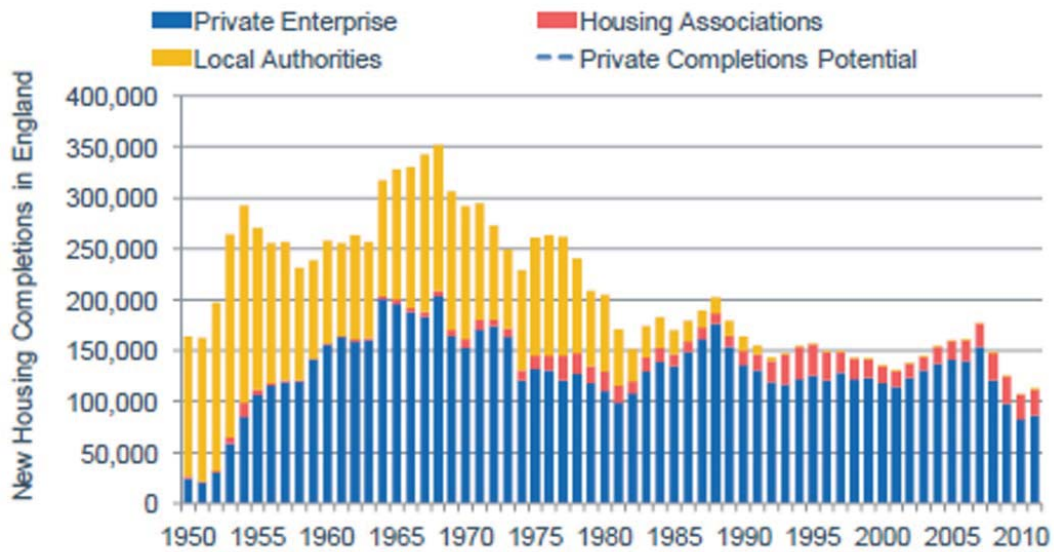
Parallel with the political and economic changes in the CEE countries, Western European states have experienced the rise of globalisation with market driven economies and extensive privatisation. In particular the withdrawal of the public sector from housing has had important implications for urban form. (Fig. 1).

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Chart 2: New housing supply in England 1950 to 2011



Source: Savills Research, DCLG

Fig. 1. The privatisation of new house building in the UK

Research

The case studies of recent developments are predominantly from three cities in which the authors are based: Belgrade, Krakow and Oxford. These cities vary in size from Belgrade with 1.23 million inhabitants, Krakow with 765,000 and 150,000 in Oxford. Because of these differences two case studies have been taken from London since Oxford does not offer examples of comparable development.

In spite of their different sizes and functions they are all historic centres of relative economic vitality compared with other settlements in Serbia, Poland or the UK. This has resulted in more investment being attracted to these cities than other locations and they therefore offer examples of recently implemented urban projects which may not yet have been realised elsewhere.

The projects are located on the rural to urban Transect, a concept developed by the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) (Centre for Applied Transect Studies, 2019). They range from recently constructed City Centre Shopping malls through new Gated Communities and Post World War 2 Modernist Estates, to Urban Peripheral Housing. The Transect was developed for North America and there are inevitable contradictions with European and particularly Central and Eastern European (CEE) practice. For example, in comparison with the original transect diagram, there is sometimes a relatively high density of development at the urban edge where modernist apartment blocks have been erected.

City Centre Malls

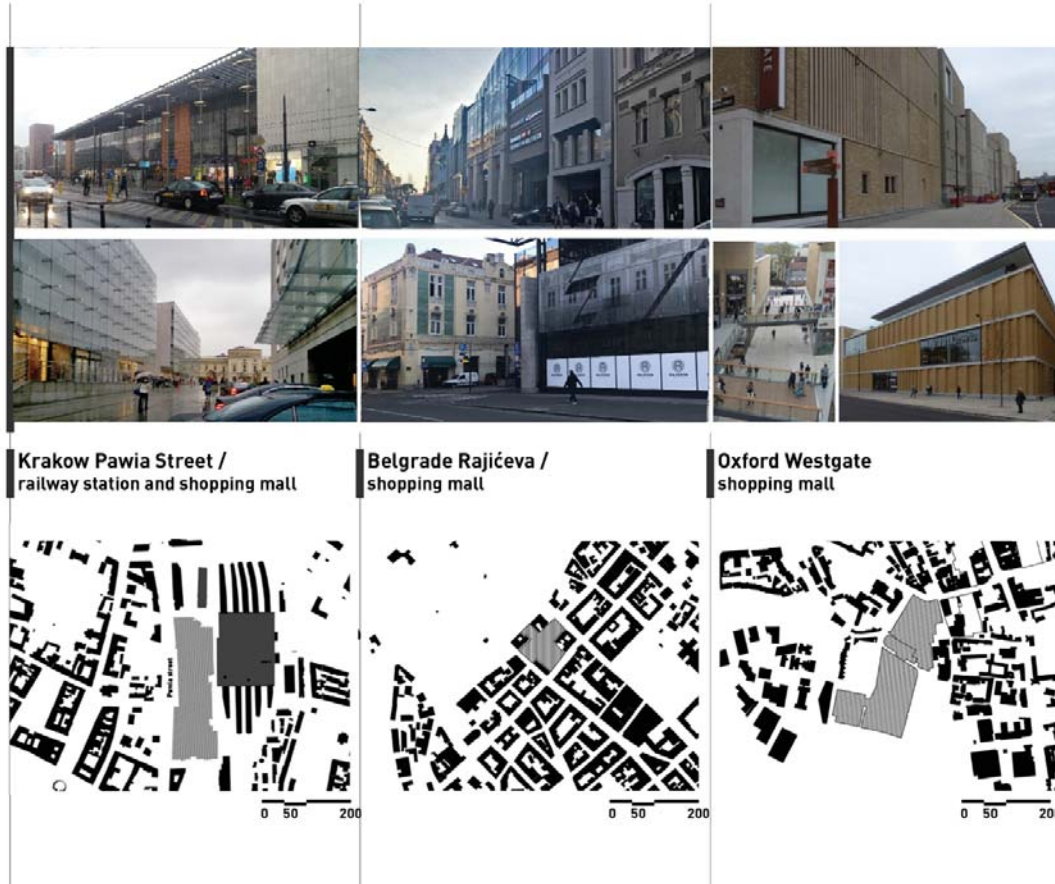


Fig. 2. City Centre Malls

Krakow

The area of Pawia Street is a central area associated with Krakow's main train station. The building of shopping gallery was a part of the remodelling of the train station. Pawia Street became the main arterial for traffic serving the train station from the city centre and built-up with large buildings (Galeria Krakowska, hotels, office buildings), while its western section is based on a traditional division into tenement lots. The area does not have a local plan in effect.

Galeria Krakowska was built in 2004-2006 (four floors, 129 000 m² of total surface, 1400 parking lots) with a connection to underground railway and bus station passages (Galeria Krakowska, 2019).

Belgrade

The 15300 square meters shopping mall with a hotel and 450 parking lots was completed in 2017 by the investors from Israel. It was built in the Belgrade city core, on an archaeological site that was previously occupied by the City Library depo. During the design stage, architect tried to create a contemporary resemblance to the buildings that were demolished during World War II, to present archaeological heritage and establish a connection to all four streets

with placing four entrances. Yet, it is possible to observe inactive fronts facing the Kalemegdan Fortress and two remaining streets.

Oxford

The current Westgate Shopping Centre was completed in 2017 following the remodelling of an earlier covered shopping centre which had been completed in 1972. It is the result of a joint venture between two major developers The Crown Estates and Land Securities. It has 74,000 sq. metres of retail, eating and leisure space and includes an anchor department store John Lewis. There are 59 new apartments and a 1,000-space underground car park which was heavily criticised for having destroyed the remains of a mediaeval friar. It has also been criticised for the way it presents windowless and inactive fronts to the surrounding streets.

Gated Communities



Fig. 3. Gated Communities

Krakow

Two gated communities – *Moje Eldorado* and *Eldorado* are located next to historical fortification areas converted to park and Krakow Museum of Aviation (former first Krakow airport). Nine apartments buildings (5-6 floors) have also small amount of services. It is divided by fences in two separate communities and accessible from different streets. Built in 2006-2011 they are considered one of the more expensive places to live in Krakow.

Additionally, the building at the corner of Jana Pawła II St. with the ground floor services opened to the street and fenced at the back could be considered as another small gated community.

Belgrade

Gated communities and physical enclosure in Belgrade, as researched by Hirt and Petrović (2011) has much to do with asserting private ownership and territoriality – spatial behaviours that were suppressed during socialism. Gating, on the scale from single plot to large residential groupings, is even more evident in present days. New 70 000 m² housing estate “The Duke’s gates” is promoted as the first condominium in Belgrade with the biggest private park. This housing estate is financed by Israel investors on the land of former factory “Novi Dom”. The seven hundred new units are arranged to enclose the inner part, restricting and controlling the entrance into the so-called park.

England

Gated communities in England are predominantly of two types; large (by UK standards) developments on single, often walled sites such as former dockyards or hospitals in city centres or the suburbs. Developers find it relatively easy to enclose these since the land was never accessible to the public. In 2007 a survey found that only four local authorities had developments of this type larger than 300 houses. The other type is the small enclosure of around six houses of the traditional British detached, semi-detached or terraced type which again are built by developers. One of these is shown being marketed as a traditional street.

Post World War 2 Modernist Estates

Krakow

The construction of Nowa Huta steelworks complex was the most important investment in post-war Kraków. Initially planned as a separate town, in 1951 it became one of the districts of the city. The classicizing urban layout of the new district was associated with the social-realist ideology promoted by Russia.

Today, this complex is considered to be an important heritage of Polish urbanism (with the neighbourhood units programming) and conserved⁴. This protects Nowa Huta from disordered modern investments.

2 Pułku Lotniczego Estate in Krakow was built (1978-1989) as one of two estates (with Dywizjonu 303 Estate) on area of previous Krakow Airport. Airstrip was preserved and previewed as a compositional axis of the site and a division of housing complexes. The program of neighbourhood unit was never accomplished (the lack of schools, sport facilities, greenery, shops).

As the area has no local plan, from 1989 on, different plots were built up with freestanding apartment buildings.

The next area, called *Nowe Czyżyny*, started in 2011, is a new housing complex with high-density (3500 apartments) and no Local Plan. It focused on the construction of apartments almost without basic services (schools, kindergartens). A very dense structure is based on orthogonal grid with buildings up to 17 floors.

⁴ The decision of the LittlePoland Provincial Conservator of 30.12.2004 regarding the entry of the monument (urban layout of Nowa Huta) into the register of immovable monuments (Miasto Krakow, 2004)



Fig. 4. Post-World War 2 Modernist Estates

(source for Robin Hood Gardens: upper figure: Stevecadman - Flickrtik hartua, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3946512>, lower figure: By Stephen Richards, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=14264205>)

Belgrade

Centrally positioned super block - Block 21, as one of the most iconic modernistic housing setting on New Belgrade, has been exposed to drastic increase of floor area ration by adding business and a mix of commercial and housing facilities on edges. These changes must be observed by changes of land ownership, where after 1990s land privatisation, residents became owners of the land underneath the building, while previously commonly owned land in the rest of the superblock became public ownership, opened for further subdivision and selling. Planning scope from the completely new part of the city were reduced to a single intersection or section of the block.

London

Robin Hood Gardens was completed in 1972 in the East End of London by Alison and Peter Smithson, pioneer architects of Brutalism. Following its structural and social deterioration proposals were made to redevelop the site and replace the 252 apartments with more than 1,500. This would re-orientate and integrate the new buildings with the surrounding streets and reduce the area of the central green space. After an unsuccessful campaign to list the buildings and prevent their removal, demolition started in 2017. A three storey of the original building will be reconstructed in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Urban Periphery Housing

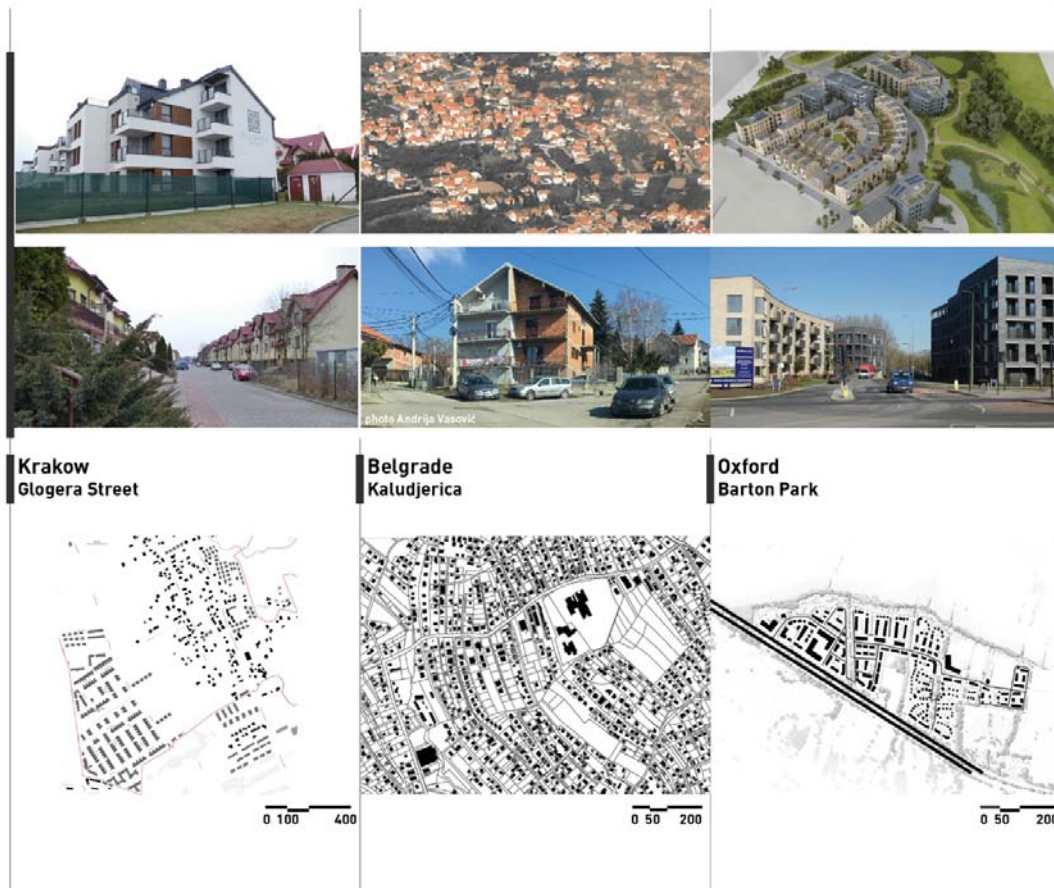


Fig. 5. Urban Periphery Housing

Krakow

Glogera St. leads out from the city towards the village called Zielonki. It is interesting to observe that an investment in the city limits is less dense than on the periphery (Kucharczyk, 2012). It is a *plot by plot urbanism* without Local Plan.

We can see different pieces of rural land merged and built up mainly on the basis of new local perpendicular paths (Caniggia & Maffei, 2001; Kantarek, 2019). Some of complexes are open, some gated.

Belgrade

Serbia has more than 1.000.000 illegal structures (Zekovic & Maričić, 2008), which affected the agricultural and green area along the major roads. Kaludjerica, as the most evident example, is settlement that lacks infrastructure, sidewalks, public spaces and public facilities, has small plots and thus small distance between buildings with no firmly defined street matrix (Simeunčević Radulović et al., 2013). Additionally, most of the buildings, that are two to three stories high, as witnessed by Blagojevic and Kušić (2013), are left in the construction phase without façade cladding to avoid taxation. The current state is not very promising since new

Legalization Law by whom legalization of those illegally built buildings has been proclaimed as a public interest (Sl. Glasnik RS, 2015).

Oxford

The expansion of Oxford is severely constrained by its greenbelt boundaries which the adjoining districts vigorously defend to prevent its expansion. Given the cost and shortage of housing in the city, one of the few sites available which lies beyond its outer ring road is being developed as a partnership between Oxford City Council and Grosvenor Developments to provide 885 new homes in apartments and houses ranging from 2-5 storeys in height, a primary school and local shops all following a design code (Barton Park, 2019).

Conclusions

Given the ubiquity of contemporary processes of globalization the similarity of recent developments in Serbia, Poland and the United Kingdom is not surprising even if the temporal sequence varies. Planning has been replaced by the interest of land ownership and finance with a subsequent reduction in the influence of local interests. In the case studies the attraction of the urban centre for these actors is demonstrated by the transect which shows the reduction of globalization impacts towards the periphery (Fig. 6).

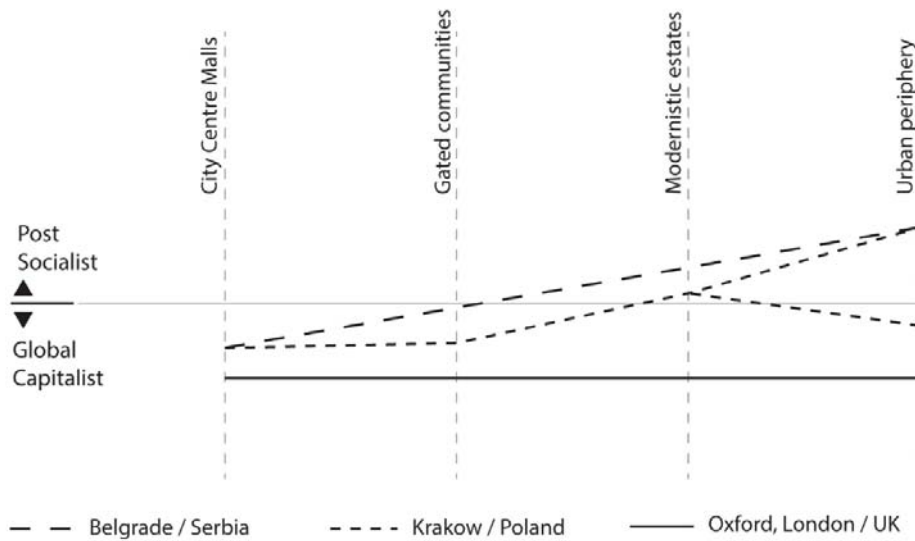


Fig. 6. Post-socialist versus Global-capitalist in urban space of Belgrade, Krakow and UK

At the Polish and Serbian urban edges, the housing types are part of an inherited rural tradition, which predated and survived the socialist period and is based on agricultural land ownership patterns. The problem with this dispersed pattern of development is its car reliance and the difficulty of servicing. In the UK in spite of the dominance of large house builders the traditional suburban house and garden dominates, but the greenbelt has prevented the same degree of dispersal.

The difficulty of integrating shopping malls into urban centres has been noted above and recently in the UK these enclosed malls have begun to suck retail activities from town centre streets. This problem has been exacerbated by the growth of online shopping so that in some parts of the UK 14 % of town centre shops are empty (Clarence-Smith, 2019).

Although there are strong local precedents gated communities are widely promoted globally as a lifestyle choice and while perceived security is certainly a motivation for living in these developments it is suggested that purchasers believe that this type of property will maintain its value better than one in a more conventional location. The relative security of gated communities is debatable and they may be no more secure than traditional streets (Blakely and Snyder, 1998). However, it is certain that they reduce the safety of the public street by reducing the opportunities for surveillance.

Some post war modernist estates are extremely popular (e.g. the Barbican, City of London) and some are protected as architectural heritage (e.g. Nowa Huta.) but many demonstrate physical and social problems and are undergoing programmes of redevelopment. In the UK this being done on the basis of new street networks which increase the number of dwellings whose sale finances the whole operation (Savills, 2016). This scale of work requires large contractors and /or housing associations and would be impossible on a plot by plot basis as in Belgrade. These are just a few of the lessons which the CEE countries could use to avoid the problems of modern urbanism which have been exhaustively documented since Jane Jacobs, but are still being repeated.

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