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Book Title: HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS
IN POST-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

Editors' Name: Andrzej Buchacz, Elzbieta Niezabitowska, Elzbieta Lesko.

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The book called "Housing and Environmental Conditions in Post-Communist Countries" contains a collection of twentyseven seminar papers, which were presented at the Silesian University of Technology in Gliwice between 11 – 13 October 2007, two guides for Tychy and Nova Huta, and a detailed overview of the seminar.

The symposium had an interdisciplinary nature combining the papers of sociologists, geographers, economists, real estate specialists, environmental psychologists, architects and urban planners. As it is presented within the overview of Elzbieta Niezabitowska, which takes place at the end of the book, these papers contain:

- comparative studies of social and demographic problems,
- case studies on social, spatial and economic problems in various cities in post-communist countries,
- urban quality problems,
- housing environment quality problems,
- free market economy and its impact on real estate market,
- legal and economic forms of housing,
- urban shrinkage,
- changes in family structure,
- stratification of the society,
- ageing of communities and of the existing housing structure,
- volatile real estate market,
- perception, symbolic identification of the inhabitants with the occupied space,
- rapid changes in urban space evoked by abandoned post-industrial zones,
- insufficient development of the non-profit sector,
- poor quality of some housing estates,
- poor quality of flats, their surroundings,
- problems in the management of the housing tissue.

The papers demonstrate that there are many similarities as well as differences between the problems of post-communist countries and many other European countries.

The following list contains the objectives of the papers, which are collected within the book.

1. to examine the direction of changes in the symbolic identification of the space in Katowice, Poland by its inhabitants during the two decades of social and economic transformation.
2. to give information about Polish awareness of interior space, which is different than the previous monotonous and poor quality spaces of communist Poland.
3. to question the social image of East German estates and to find out if they are seen as 'normal' or 'unwanted.' This paper focuses on the estate of Grünau in Leipzig through a sociological study, which was realized by eight questionnaire surveys between 1979 to 2004.
4. to study the changes in the city center of Tychy in Poland since 1920's. Since there is an ambiguity about the place of center in the city, a sociological research was made to find out people's perceptions about the possible places of center in Tychy.
5. to introduce the challenges focused by the UN-HABITAT Warsaw office, which focused on Eastern Europe, in realizing its mission of promoting socially and environmentally sustainable cities and towns with the goal of providing shelter for all. The paper also presents a draft regional program of the Warsaw office against the problems due to rapid privatization and rapid decentralization.
6. to introduce the relationship between spatial policy, spatial planning, space management, development and space value understanding in society. The paper also presents the 'Rave' Space Project, which has partners from five countries of central and eastern Europe, and their aim to include space value and sustainable spatial development to primary and secondary schools.
7. to present a research, which contains analysis of recreation related needs of housing estates' residents, and to suggest some actions, which require relatively low investments.
8. to describe the concept of local society among young residents in a district of Cracow through participant observation and interviews. However, only abstract of this article is in English.
9. to describe the types of structural problems, which can be seen on mining areas, which share the problem of over exploitation of natural sources in post-communist countries, and to define some solutions in order to avoid these problems.
10. to present the conditions of dramatic social changes, increasing unemployment and decreasing population in the large area of Silesian – Moravian Coal Basin, which is partly in Poland and partly in Czech Republic, due to the serious economic crisis and political upheavals after 1989. The paper also contains a comparison between the two parts of the area.
11. to study the issue of residential property changes and change of value systems within the context of second demographic transition in the inner districts of Gdansk through a literature review and three semi-structured interviews.
12. to consider the nexus between demographic change and inner city housing with the help of an extensive literature review, to look at the situation in East Central European (ECE) cities in relation to this urban research, and to focus on Polish and Czech cities as case studies, and finally to answer the pivotal question of: *'Does demographic change lead to structural shifts of the residential population and housing in the inner city of the case study cities?'* This paper is based on an ongoing international research

project titled: *'Socio-spatial consequences of demographic change for ECE cities,'* which has been carried out since 2006.

13. to argue that shrinkage is one urban development path, to focus on the conditions in the east of Germany and its similarities to the recent changes in Eastern Central Europe, to explain the causes and consequences of shrinkage through literature review and a long-term sociological (1979-2004) project, which aims to observe and evaluate social and demographic changes in relation to building characteristics and changes of a large housing state called Grünau in Leipzig.
14. to analyze housing consumption and neighbourhood revitalization in the particular environment of inner city of Budapest. The aspect of demand is analyzed through empirical modelling, and attractiveness, quality and housing consumer preferences are investigated. The aspect of supply is studied with the help of a case study and the effects of housing production and relevant market institutions on housing market are investigated. Also the outcomes are compared with other cities to make the evaluation more comprehensive.
15. to acquaint the readers with a large building called: Super-Unit in Katowice, to analyze this building's adaptation to ecological, economic and social needs of society, and to make some suggestions to improve its condition.
16. to show how the isolation and degradation of the housing environment of elderly people can be the context of integration or desintegration of elderly people to society, to discuss the architectural and infrastructural barriers that could hinder moving around for them.
17. to study the changes in the use of grange objects in the Bialy Ladek Valley after the year 1945. However, only the abstract of this article is in English.
18. to present and analyze the post-industrial heritage in Mazovia Region and Warsaw, which are transformed to contain tourism related functions. The research is based on seven case studies, which were conducted in the Institute of Tourism and Recreation AWF in Warsaw between 2005 and 2006.
19. to compare the current socio-economic and demographic conditions of urban renewal in East Germany and Poland on the examples of Leipzig and Poznan.
20. to present the new relationships, which has been formed in the investment process among consumer, architect and developer in last fifteen years in Poland by considering its effects on the space quality and by considering the procedures of data collection and interpretation.
21. to look at the ways, in which people relate to the outside immediate surroundings in the apartment block developments of post-communist Romania, Maaştur, Cluj through the lens of territoriality, appropriation and affordances. For this purpose semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with eight people and analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.
22. to assess the influence of the socialist period on visual image of an old multi-ethnic town/city (Bialystok in Poland) with the main focus on vernacular urban tissue.
23. to give information about a place of habitation: Tychy in Poland. The paper covers information about the architectural characteristics and processes of housing estates and individual buildings in Tychy.
24. to discuss the spatial problems in Polish post-communist cities, including suburbanization, urban sprawl, new ghettos and gated communities with a focus on ghettos, and to discuss some possibilities of solutions for these problems.
25. to discuss the recent changes in the land use, demographic changes and property development in the inner city of Brno in Czech Republic.

26. to discuss the big housing estates in Poland in terms of the quality of neighbourhood, identity of spaces and the requirement of safety.
27. to discuss the 'Western patterns for the Polish transition.' However, this article has no information in English.

The most important merit of the book is to give a good idea about the past and current environmental conditions in the post-communist countries. Most of the papers contain professionally carried out and well presented research. However, the same quality has not been reached in a few papers.

The book is illustrated in black and white. There are 45 tables or graphics to express research results, 18 drawings or maps, and 92 photographs. Most of the papers are well illustrated.

This book can be useful especially to architects, urban planners and sociologists. Since only three of twentyseven papers are not in English, the English speaking professionals will be able to understand this book.