

New Places for Urban Development – the Space between Historical City Centres and Post-War Expansions Areas

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1 ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the development and identification of urban zones, which used to function as a transition zone between the historical city and the outskirts. Usually these zones contained functions like car dealers, supermarkets, hardware stores, workshops, etc.. In summary these functions have in common that they need space and good connectivity, while their location nearby to the city was also of importance. During the last 20 years and encouraged by rising demand the pressure has increased on centrally located areas and plots, and forced a change of usage in these transition zones towards functions which are more profitable.

Besides the change of the functions a major challenge was the need to rethink established formal methods of urban planning, like legal strategic plans or city development master plans. The present paper will therefore examine whether such urban districts offer prerequisites for alternative (informal) development methods.

In this paper, a typology of urban districts will be generated to define a generic type. However, due to their size and heterogeneity, these urban districts can hardly be developed in their entirety with the help of the established, formal urban planning methods. It is therefore the task of urban planning to consider different informal and individual urban planning concepts and to act accordingly.

Keywords: urban development, historic city, post-war, districts, inner periphery

2 INTRODUCTION

For a long time, urban zones that are located between already redeveloped areas, like the old city centre and post-war housing areas, urban growth was not noticed as relevant for future-oriented planning. These intermediate zones have not been developed like other urban areas of the post wartime. These parts have arisen and were not planned, they were more or less left to their own devices, mainly functioning as transfer areas and have a heterogeneous structure.

Since the 1950s, cities in Europe have grown tremendously in space, which was not depending to the same extent on the enormous increase in population. The vast growth was more a result of the increase in land consumption, which was driven by the development of new housing estates, industrial development and traffic infrastructure. Based on this development, transport has increased in importance and enforced the segregational development of the cities. (Pålsson, 2017, p. 30f).

During the development of the cities, this movement has created areas which are located close to the city centre and have the ability to change their functionality. Based on the reurbanisation movement these parts of the city are under development pressure. Pålsson (2017, p. 127) points out that in addition to visible transformation zones like former old industrial, military and port facilities, the same attention must be paid to mixed residential and commercial areas.

The paper examines and develops a first approach to classifying the typology of these “inner peripheries”, which are increasingly under pressure.

3 THE INNER PERIPHERY

Based on the industrial revolution in the 19th century, the economic impact on society changed from agriculture to industry. This reinforced many changes in economics, technology and of society itself. Next to the development of these usages the relevance of transportation, especially based on railway, provided new opportunities for the mobility of people and goods. These vast developments were the starting point of what we now realise as the separation of functions, based on the division between housing and working. This fast development took place during a couple of decades and asked for quick reactions. (Reinborn, 1996, p. 21f)

Based on the enormous land demand for the development of space for new usages development occurred outside the former city boundaries and claimed former agricultural land. (Reinborn, 1996, p. 29) The

introduction of the railway system changed the layout of cities. Often, new railway stations could not be built close to the centre of the old city. This led to locations which created new developments in between the city centre and the expanding city. The usage of these new developed areas was usually for commercial and industrial purposes. (Reinborn, 1996, p. 22).

In this development phase the cities became more attractive for new industrial development, which was followed by the demand to create housing estates for workers. (Mueller-Haagen et al., 2014, p. 17f). This phase had an enormous influence on the role of these districts for the cities.

After the Second World War the idea of urban development was focused on a social democratic idea, which supported a generalist and comprehensive type of planning to serve the whole society with good living conditions. (Oswalt et al., 2014, p. 10). This trend of urbanisation led to monofunctional development which spread the different functions of housing, commercial and industrial areas to locate outside the cities. Housing was developed in terms of geometrically organised single family houses or as mass prefabricated housing estates. (Baum, 2008, p. 35-).

After the phase of rebuilding cities to replace war demolition and to create new housing supply, the phase of the 1970s and 1980s turned the focus back to the value of the existing city. Demolition and the consequence of neglect of the historical parts of the cities between 1945 and 1960 led to a rediscovery of the existing values. In particular, based on the rising awareness and the perception of responsibility for the past the historical old towns moved into the focus of urban planning. It started with the first revitalisation of historic areas, which was followed by the reconstruction of buildings and urban repair projects of the old pattern. (Reinborn, 1996, p. 288ff)

Initially during this phase the focus was drawn more to the existing pattern, structure and buildings of the city centre, with the possibility to developing mixed use quarters. (Baum, 2008, p. 40). During this period, strongly regulated, overplanned central zones geared to economic returns were created directly adjacent to those occupied by low-capital actors and socially disadvantaged residents. (Oswalt et al., 2014, p.10). In many cases the areas located between railway stations and former factory districts which had decayed following the outsourcing of industrial operations often mutated into such urban planning and social hotspots (Reinborn, 1996, p. 23).

In the 1990s, the planning procedures became more process-orientated, which meant that plans and strategies were developed in a more adaptive way to react to changing needs and circumstances. Parallel to this city administrations outsourced these tasks, because they were convinced that professional companies could act faster and more flexibly than they themselves. (Baum, 2008, p. 49).

Concluding this observation, an urban pattern can be identified with similar attributes which can be found in many other European cities. There the city centre consists either of an original old town centre or is (partly) new built following significant war damages. In the next spatial zone around the city centre buildings from the Gründerzeit period are usually connected in a more or less building block-like structure.

These districts or quarters are surrounded by districts in which a mix of small and large businesses, small industrial enterprises and residential uses could be found from the beginning of the 20th century till the 1960s. According to new generalist planning approaches introduced after the Second World War the mixed areas in peripheral locations were only partially workable. Therefore, in the 1960s and 1970s expansion tended to take place in the surrounding countryside where more easily accessible areas were found for the implementation of urban development projects. They now form the urban peripheries. Figure 1 schematically sketches a prototypical structure of Central European cities. The spaces considered in this paper are highlighted specifically.

4 CHARACTER OF THE INNER PERIPHERY

Characteristic features can be assigned to the prototypical districts resulting from the historical development outlined above which Sieverts describes as intramediary city (Zwischenstadt) (Sieverts, 1999, p. 13). It is determined by a non uniformity of architectural styles and building typologies and is crossed by traffic routes. Due to its characteristics, Sieverts describes the 'Zwischenstadt' as an outer periphery.

Related to the outer periphery, Dissmann introduces the concept of the inner periphery which she defines as unplanned, characterised by the disorderly interaction of different urban planning measures and decisions. In

contrast to the outer periphery the inner periphery does not separate the city from the countryside (or the intermediate city), but rather the functioning, compact inner city from vacant plots, abandoned city districts and areas with a lost function. (Dissmann, 2011, pp 113-).

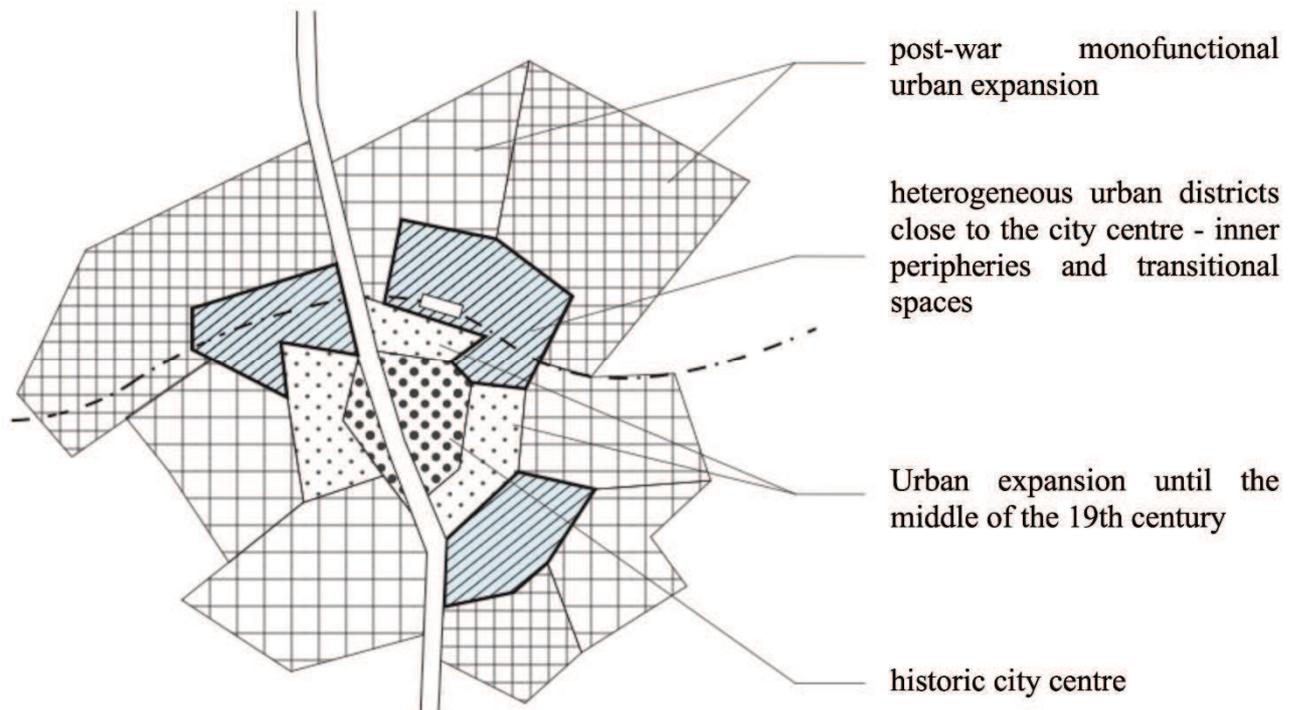


Figure 1: Schematic representation of the urban structure (own illustration)

In her definition of urban places, Baum explains their characteristics in her dissertation ‘Urban Places; (‘Urbane Orte’) (Baum, 2008, p. 75) using different dimensions. She names the mixture of uses as an element of their functional dimension. In addition, Baum defines different characteristics of spaces, whereby, in particular, the functionally diffuse spaces occupy a central place in her considerations. She describes them as ‘possibility spaces’ (Möglichkeitsräume). The centrality of urban places also plays an essential role for Baum in their functional dimension. The concept of centrality refers to the relationship between individual locations and their environment. (Baum, 2008, pp 75-). Another important point for Baum is the significance of urban locations within the city. Today they are often located close to the centre or at least they have a potentially good connection to the surrounding districts. (Baum, 2008, p. 98).

Kees Christiaanse refers to such areas as ‘Waiting Lands’. As characteristic features he cites a mixture of newer and historical structure or a contrasting mixture of large and small architectural building blocks, as well as a combination of nature, existing usage structures and remnants of earlier functions. According to Christiaanse, the intermediate layers require special development strategies. (Christiaanse, 2005, p. 154)

In the publication ‘Handbook for the urban periphery’ (Handbuch zum Stadtrand) – (Magnago Lampugnani et al., 2007, p. 30) Anne Brandl also refers the concept of suburban space to the ‘Zwischenstadt’ of Sieverts. The characterisations cited by Anne Brandl refer to suburban space, but from the point of view of this paper they should also be applied to the neglected areas between the city centres and the post-war expansion of the city. She accuses these suburban spaces of lacking a clearly perceptible feeling of spatial isolation and self-sufficiency, as well as a lack of interaction between urban planning elements (Magnago Lampugnani et al., 2007, p. 34).

Overall, the districts considered in this study have the following qualities: partly economic devaluation thus favourable conditions, partly protected building stock, spatial potentials and spatial qualities due to vacancies, symbolic potential from historical development, very good location and connections, openness to use (Baum, 2008, p. 98). As only in areas beyond economic control can temporary, informal and innovative practices emerge in urban planning. (Oswalt et al., 2014, p. 10), it is clear from the historical development of urban planning methods that such districts are difficult to grasp with the formal planning methods established to date in the second half of the 20th century, while informal methods offer a promising opportunity.

5 SUMMARY

The formation of industrial and commercial districts around the historic city centres in Central Europe began in the middle of the 19th century, often in connection with the construction of transport infrastructure, such as railway and port facilities. Until the middle of the 20th century, the original functions were mostly preserved.

The division of the various functional areas - commercial, industrial, residential - was not subject to any clearly defined control at the time of their creation and therefore often appears unstructured. After the end of the Second World War, new urban planning methods were the reason for an outward expansion of the city. The former urban areas themselves were first neglected, but from the 1980s onwards at least the historic old towns were rediscovered. Their revival was primarily motivated by the creation of urban mixed-use neighbourhoods and easily marketable, economically valuable districts.

However, the spaces between the city centre and the outer districts which have always been mixed remained unaffected by this development. These areas had to, and still have to struggle with the migration of commercial and industrial enterprises, are not much sought-after as residential areas and are burdened by mostly superordinate transit traffic.

Such areas are difficult to define and process with the established, formal means of urban planning for the reasons mentioned above, while informal approaches to urban development may offer new opportunities. Since their establishment, formal urban development processes have not offered sufficient possibilities in their application to carry out what are often desired urban district developments. How to deal with such urban districts from an urban planning point of view has not yet been conclusively clarified.

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