CONFRONTING SUBURBANIZATION

Urban Decentralization in Postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe

Edited by Kiril Stanilov and Luděk Sýkora

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Edited by

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Contents

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List of Illustrations

Figures

Tables

Glossary

Most of the terms and expressions described in this glossary are commonly used in urban studies literature. Very few of them, however, have officially adopted definitions; and, where such definitions exist, they often vary from country to country. The descriptions provided here clarify the meaning of these key terms in the context of urban development in Central and Eastern Europe and in this particular volume.

Capital Metropolis A *capital metropolis* is a metropolitan area that contains the capital city of a state or nation (see *metropolitan area*).

City Region A *city region* is comprised of a central city and its suburban hinterland composed of small towns and villages that have strong functional ties with the central city. Usually the boundaries of a city region are drawn to include settlements from which a substantial proportion of the residents commute daily to the central city. A city region is rarely adopted as an official administrative unit; and the phrase is often used interchangeably with *metropolitan area.* Not every city region, however, is a metropolitan area. While all cities have their city regions, not all cities are large enough to be considered the center of a metropolitan area.

Compact City A *compact city* is a contiguously built-up area of a city. It is comprised of the historic city center and the high- to medium-density urban quarters that are built around it. The compact city may include areas that originated as towns or villages but were engulfed over time by extensions of the central city's urban fabric (see *urban fabric*). Most of the buildings in a compact city are multi-story structures and most of the open space is in the form of urban squares, parks, or communal green space (courtyards of urban blocks, open space around apartments, small private gardens).

Dacha Zones *Dacha zones* or *areas* are areas in the periphery of cities that are composed of clusters of small properties used for gardening, many of them featuring small structures built for seasonal or weekend habitation. The first communities of this type emerged spontaneously toward the end of the nineteenth century around the largest cities in Central and Eastern Europe – the dachas of Moscow being the most popular example. During the socialist period, dacha areas where formalized and designated as special zones, and new territories were assigned to meet the growing demand for such properties. In Bulgaria these areas are also known as *villa zones*.

Edge City The phrase *edge city* was coined in the early 1990s by Joel Garreau to describe recently emerging suburban nodes where the concentration of office, retail, and entertainment functions, often accompanied by high-density housing, has reached a critical mass comparable to that of city centers (Garreau, 1991). While Garreau's definition is based on the urban experience of several large metropolitan areas in the United States, this phenomenon has spread quickly to many fast-growing cities in Asia and South America. This volume presents evidence of the emergence of such edge cities in CEE as well.

Garden Suburbs/Towns These types of settlements, the majority of which developed in the early decades of the twentieth century, were designed according to the principles of the Garden City movement. The leader of this movement, Ebenezer Howard, envisioned the construction of a necklace of self-contained communities in the periphery of large cities. These new settlements were conceived of as individual but interconnected towns, designed to combine the advantages of urban and rural living in medium-density environments (Howard, 1902). The influence of the Garden City movement was not as strong in CEE as it was in Western Europe, but the design of a number of suburban developments from the interwar period at the edges of Prague, Budapest, and Sofia was inspired by Howard's ideas.

Housing The term *housing* denotes the entire range of residential building types and all forms of residential accommodation, regardless of location (urban, suburban, or rural), ownership (public, communal, or private), and legal status (formal or informal).

Housing Stock The phrase *housing stock* describes all of the housing available in a given area.

Housing Tenure *Housing tenure* describes the legal conditions of use by an occupier of a dwelling. The main distinction among kinds of tenure is created by ownership; and, on the basis of this criterion, a residence

can be classified as a rental unit or as an owner-occupied unit. Other housing tenure classifications are based on owner type (private vs. public) or duration of occupancy (permanent vs. short-term).

Inner Suburbs By *inner suburbs* we mean the collection of suburban areas that lie outside the compact city but are located within the administrative territory of a city.

Metropolis The term *metropolis* denotes the urban area of a large city, which is a significant economic, political, and cultural center for a country or a region and serves as a gateway for its international relations.

Metropolitan Area A *metropolitan area* is comprised of two parts: a large central city; and its surrounding territory composed of towns, suburbs, and villages, which have strong economic ties with the central city. The phrase *metropolitan area* is often used interchangeably with *metropolitan region* or *city region*, but, as we noted above, not all city regions are metropolitan areas or metropolitan regions.

Metropolitan Core In a metropolitan area, the *metropolitan core* usually consists of the central city. As the CEE central cities were often significantly "overbounded" during the socialist period (see *overbounded cities*), we consider the metropolitan core to be synonymous with the "compact city" zone of the metropolitan central city. This definition excludes (a) the suburbs located within the administrative boundaries of the central city and (b) the compact city zones of other towns that are located in the same metropolitan area.

Metropolitan Periphery A *metropolitan periphery* is made up of the parts of a metropolitan area that cover the territories outside of the metropolitan core.

Metropolitan Region In this volume we use the expression *metropolitan region* interchangeably with *metropolitan area.*

Outer Suburbs *Outer suburbs* are suburban areas located outside the administrative territory of a city.

Overbounded Cities *Overbounded cities* are cities whose administrative boundaries stretch far beyond their built-up areas. Thus the administrative territory of such a city includes not just the compact city, but also territories that might cover agricultural fields, green open space, and settlements of low, non-urban densities. Examples of overbounded cities in CEE are Moscow and Warsaw. Tallinn, on the other

hand, is an example of a city with very tightly drawn administrative boundaries, which do not include significant parts of Tallinn's built-up urban fabric.

Urban Fabric *Urban fabric* is a generic concept describing a combination of physical characteristics of an urban environment. These characteristics include the density of development, the mixture of building types and urban activities, the geometry of street networks, and the configuration and distribution of open space. Each city has its unique urban fabric, which is composed, like a mosaic, of the urban fabric of individual urban areas, districts, and neighborhoods. The part that carries the main meaning is *urban* – as the whole phrase is most often used to contrast and distinguish the built-up areas of a city from suburban and rural environments.

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Howard, E. 1902. *Garden Cities of Tomorrow.* London: Swan Sonnenschein.

Series Editors' Preface

The Wiley Blackwell Studies in Urban and Social Change series is published in association with the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. It aims to advance theoretical debates and empirical analyses stimulated by changes in the fortunes of cities and regions across the world. Among topics taken up in past volumes and welcomed for future submissions are:

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- convergence and divergence among regions of east and west, north, and south;
- urban and environmental movements;
- international migration and capital flows;
- trends in urban political economy;
- patterns of urban-based consumption.

The series is explicitly interdisciplinary; the editors judge books by their contribution to intellectual solutions rather than according to disciplinary origin. Proposals may be submitted to members of the series Editorial Committee, and further information about the series can be found at www.suscbookseries.com

Preface

The title of this book alludes to two principal ways in which suburbanization in the postsocialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe needs to be "confronted." First, after a turbulent period of suburban explosion – which characterizes the growth of metropolitan areas in the region during the transition years – it is time to pause and assess the scope and impacts of the new patterns of spatial development. The global financial and economic crisis that set in at the end of 2008 offers a good opportunity to do so and to consider a revision of current urban growth policies, which have unreservedly embraced a laissez-faire approach. The postsocialist cities of Central and Eastern Europe could utilize much better the advantages offered by their compactly built form, high urban densities, and well-developed networks of public mass transit. Second, postsocialist suburbanization needs to be confronted with a very rigorous analysis, of the kind that has developed in the countries of the West and has persuaded governments to employ an arsenal of tools and strategies to curb sprawl and direct urban development to a path of sustainable growth. In order to develop such policies, postsocialist societies need to expand the knowledge base necessary to grasp the nature of the phenomenon of suburbanization in terms of its forms, conditions, causes, and consequences.

The content of this book should be most relevant to an audience with an interest in contemporary urban development in Central and Eastern Europe, as the book offers valuable material and insights to a broad group of professionals such as urban scholars, public officials, planning practitioners, architects, urban designers, real estate consultants, and other specialists working in the field of urban development. The book can be of interest to a broader audience as well, given the similar experiences shared by many countries around the world where dramatic socioeconomic reforms aimed at deregulation and market liberalization have led to increasing rates of (sub)urbanization

in the absence of a clear understanding of its impacts or of available alternatives. The book also aims to make a more general theoretical and methodological contribution to the field of urban research, as it investigates the linkages between radical socioeconomic reforms and spatial patterns of metropolitan growth. It does so by utilizing structured case studies that serve as a basis for analytical comparison.

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1

The Challenge of Postsocialist Suburbanization

Luděk Sýkora and Kiril Stanilov

Introduction

Since the collapse of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), cities in the former socialist countries have entered a period of dramatic transformation. One of the most important processes in the ensuing frenetic rearrangement of urban space has been the dispersal of urban functions beyond the edges of the compact city, into territories that experienced very little development during the socialist years (Sailer-Fliege, 1999; European Academy of the Urban Environment [EAUE], 2003; Hirt and Kovachev, 2006; Borén and Gentile, 2007; Stanilov, 2007a). There is widespread evidence that, since the mid-1990s, suburbanization has become the predominant mode of urban growth in postsocialist metropolitan areas (Kok and Kovács, 1999; Hamilton, Dimitrowska-Andrews, and Pichler-Milanović, 2005; Pichler-Milanović, 2005; Tammaru, 2005; Tosics, 2005; Tsenkova and Nedović-Budić, 2006; Hirt, 2007; Leetmaa and Tammaru, 2007; Novák and Sýkora, 2007; Ouředníček, 2007; Stanilov, 2007a; Sýkora and Ouředníček, 2007; Leetmaa, Tammaru, and Anniste, 2009; Krisjane and Berzins, 2011; Szirmai, 2011) and has a visible presence in medium-sized cities as well (Timár and Váradi, 2001; Parysek, 2004; Kotus, 2006; Matlovič and Sedláková, 2007; Marcińczak, 2012). Furthermore, studies suggest that postsocialist suburbanization is characterized by fragmented spatial patterns broadly associated with urban sprawl and

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its controversial environmental, economic, and social consequences (Nuissl and Rink, 2005; Pichler-Milanović, Gutry-Korycka, and Rink, 2007; Stanilov and Sýkora, 2012).

After a tempestuous decade of suburban explosion that lasted roughly from the second half of the decade 1990–2000 to the second half of the next decade – a period during which little concern was given to the impacts of unreservedly embracing urban dispersal as a principal growth strategy – it is time to pause and look back at the effects of such practices. The global financial and economic crisis that set in at the end of 2008 is a perfect opportunity to do so. It has given investors and developers a strong impetus to reassess their intentions and plans. More importantly, the crisis has opened up opportunities to consider alternatives to the neoliberal, free market policies and approaches adopted by postsocialist governments that have contributed to the extensive decentralization of CEE urban areas since the mid-1990s. The massive suburban development that started in the mid-1990 is an entirely new phenomenon for cities in the former socialist countries. Understanding its forms, conditions, causes, and consequences has become a great challenge for the general public and, specifically, for authorities responsible for the management of urban environment.

Our ultimate goal in this book is to explore and understand the processes of suburbanization in the specific context of postsocialist societies that are transitioning from one sociospatial order to another. By casting a light on the swift trajectory of suburbanization in CEE we hope to illuminate the key conditions for the emergence and proliferation of this phenomenon and to highlight the typical forms and features it takes in a dynamically evolving urban context. The explosion of suburban development in the former Eastern Bloc countries offers a rare chance to trace the impact of socioeconomic forces on the logic of (sub)urban space generation in conditions of rapid and radical social transformation. The fact that most CEE countries underwent a second round of complete societal makeover in the course of less than 50 years allows us to look at the region as a unique laboratory, in which the built environment has been molded so as to adjust to profound shifts in the basic principles of social organization.

Urbanization, Suburbanization, and Socioeconomic Order

A starting point for our exploration of postsocialist suburbanization is the juxtaposition of the trajectories, patterns, and underlying forces of urbanization and suburbanization under socialism and capitalism. These two opposing systems produced their own logic of urban space generation,

which was shaped by contrasting approaches to setting the balance between the public and private realms. In this section we bring into focus the underlying bond between (sub)urbanization and socioeconomic order, which constitutes the theoretical foundation of our approach to understanding the phenomenon of postsocialist suburbanization.

Urban growth under socialism

Following the establishment of communist rule in the countries of CEE that fell under the influence of the Soviet Union after World War II, socialist government authorities imposed strict control over private property rights and economic activity, including the right to own, develop, rent, or trade land. The void created in the socialist economy by the imposition of strict constraints on private property rights and economic freedoms was filled by a commensurate expansion of the public sector through massive expropriation of the means of production. The socialist state became the main owner of land, as well as the main provider of goods, housing, and services through a centrally planned system of top-down hierarchical control exercised by the Communist Party. The emphasis was placed on planned production and controlled collective consumption as a more efficient and equitable system of resource utilization than the one based on balancing demand and supply through the actions of independent individual agents on the market.

Under these conditions, urbanization under socialism took on a strikingly different form by comparison to urban development in capitalist countries in terms of the allocation of human activities in space (French and Hamilton, 1979; Andrusz, Harloe, and Szelenyi, 1996; Enyedi, 1996; Gentile and Sjöberg, 2006; Sýkora, 2009). In contrast with the patterns of urbanization shaped by forces operating within a market economy that characterized development in capitalist countries, including those in CEE during the period up to World War II, the new socialist regimes promoted planned or "managed" urbanization (Musil, 1980; Smith, 1996) as the key instrument in the rational distribution and efficient utilization of economic and social resources.

A paramount development priority of the communist governments was the industrialization of the socialist economy. This goal absorbed the lion share of public resources, channeling them toward the formation of urban industrial hubs. The demand for labor in these growing industrial centers attracted waves of rural migrants pushed away from their villages by the collectivization of agricultural land and the mechanization of agricultural production (French and Hamilton, 1979; Musil, 1980). As a result, the socialist CEE countries experienced a dramatic boost in their urbanization rates. Between 1950 and 1990,

the urban population of the region almost doubled, increasing its share from 38.3 to 66.5 percent, in contrast to an increase from 61.7 to 72.8 percent registered in the Western European countries over the same period (UN, 2011).

While the socialist system of central planning concentrated investments in selected cities and towns, which acted as regional and local growth poles, other areas and settlements were largely neglected. As a result, socialist urbanization was characterized by a sharp contrast between the growing, densely developed cities and towns, and the disproportionately smaller villages found within their surroundings, which featured a very limited range of economic activities. Despite the clear spatial separation of cities from their rural hinterlands, these two elements of the city regions were functionally related. Due to the decline in agricultural employment that resulted on the one hand from collectivization and modernization, on the other from the growth of industrial jobs in urban areas, an increasing share of rural residents started to commute to cities, using mass public transit systems – which consist of busses, trains, underground and trams – as a main form of transportation. The rural to urban commuting was further impacted by the discrepancy between jobs and housing availability. As the growth of urban jobs was not paralleled by a corresponding supply of new housing, a significant portion of the rural population employed in nearby cities retained its rural residence – a phenomenon described as under-urbanization (Murray and Szelenyi, 1984; Szelenyi, I., 1996).

As the highest priorities were placed on public ownership of resources, centralized delivery of goods and services, and collective consumption, the socialist system generated compact urban environments characterized by high-density residential districts, extensive industrial zones, fairly well-developed networks of public transit and infrastructure, and hierarchically organized provision of space for retail and service facilities. Once land development was completely under the control of state authorities, government policies concentrated the spatial allocation of public investments in three target areas within cities: (1) the expansion of industrial capacity through the development of new and the extension of existing industrial zones; (2) the development of massive housing estates at the urban edges; and (3) the redevelopment of city centers as monuments of the social and economic prosperity achieved under the leadership of the communist regime.

Most of the investments and new construction were concentrated in vacant areas found within the existing urban fabric and on the edges of the built-up urban cores. Most of the new residential development during the socialist period was in the form of large housing estates planned as urban extensions at the urban edge, side by side with newly established industrial zones (Figure 1.1).

(a)

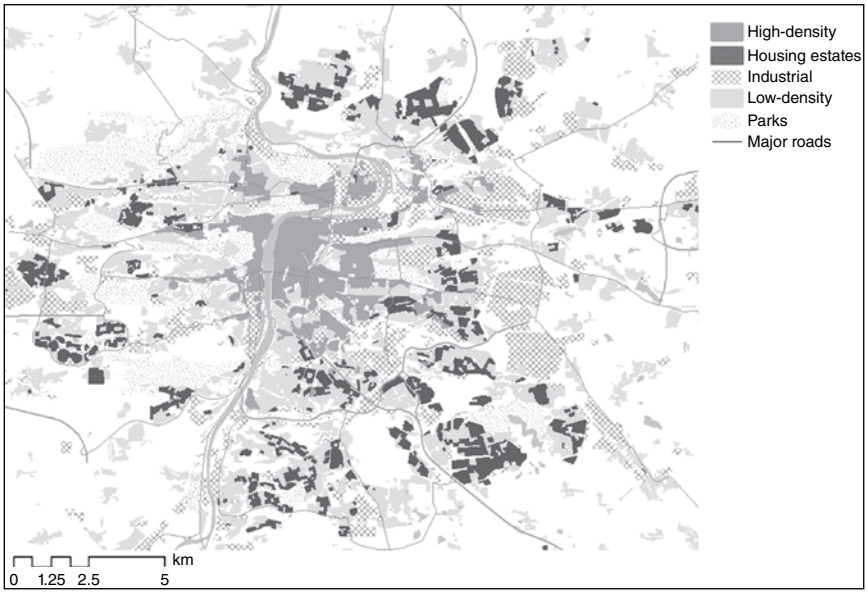

Figure 1.1a Location of socialist housing estates and industrial zones in Prague. Source: the authors.

(b)

Figure 1.1b Location of socialist housing estates and industrial zones in Sofia. Source: the authors.

Besides housing, these estates provided a selection of local services in carefully planned retail, educational, medical, and recreational facilities. We should note that this model of urban expansion through high-density extensions in the form of housing estates was not a unique invention of the socialist states. It was embraced by many governments in postwar Europe (Power, 1998; Rowlands, Musterd, and van Kempen, 2009) and spread to other parts of the world. In the Eastern Bloc countries, however, it was adopted extensively and universally, as the key housing policy of the socialist states. A main reason for this was the fact that the modernist concept of urban growth through high-density extensions suited perfectly the communist ideology of centralized control over the production, supply, and allocation of housing and urban services.

The new socialist housing estates were only rarely located at a distance from the compactly built-up urban areas. They were planned as an integral part of the socialist city, functionally integrated with industrial zones and service nodes through public mass transit infrastructure. Under these circumstances, the socialist cities developed as fairly compact urban environments with sharply delineated physical boundaries (Ioffe and Nefedova, 1998). Thus, while most western cities began to deconcentrate in the postwar decades, the socialist countries in CEE experienced accelerated urbanization in conditions of urban centralization (van den Berg, Drewett, Klaassens, Rossi, and Vijverberg, 1982).

Outside of the well-defined boundaries of the compactly built-up area of the socialist city, new developments were limited to the growth of some settlements in the metropolitan periphery; this process was spurred by the influx, from the rural interior, of migrants in search for jobs in the emerging large industrial centers. Compared to the expansion of socialist housing estates, however, the growth of these peripheral communities was relatively minor and had very limited influence on the prevailing dynamics of metropolitan growth, which was characterized by the increasing dominance of the urban core. The tight control exerted by the state over land development prevented the growth of middle-class suburbs of the type that characterized the evolution of metropolitan peripheries in the western world. Experiments with the relaxation of constraints on the private ownership of land and the development of such properties in Yugoslavia and Hungary during the 1970s and 1980s were a key factor in the emergence of elements of low-density suburbs in the periphery of Budapest and Ljubljana, but on the whole these instances remained exceptions in the socialist Eastern Bloc countries.