Continuity and Transformation of Open Spaces in the Large Housing Estate Developed under Socialism in Prague, Czech Republic

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Abstract. After WW II, a large number of housing estates has been developed all over the world. Especially in the socialist countries at that time, prefab panel housings had been constructed quickly before the completion of neighbourhood facilities and open spaces. In Jižní Město, one of the largest housing estates in Prague, various open spaces and public facilities had been planned in 1960s but many of them had not realized as planned and remained without maintenance. However, it has been decades after the development, and now the regeneration of these open spaces has taken place. In this paper, it is clarified that the regeneration way of the open spaces depending on their own backgrounds and present situations. First, I clarified the original concept and present situation of open spaces in Jižní Město by archive documents and field survey. Next, I clarified the present policy and idea of the regeneration by an interview with the municipality. When a new building is constructed in Czechoslovakia under socialism, it was enacted that the part of the construction fee had to be used for artworks. At the development of Jižní Město, the concept of open spaces and the arrangement of artworks were mentioned in a document of the development plan. According to the document, every design should be designed not only for individual building or plot, but also the whole area of Jižní Město. Besides, the area inside of Jižní Město was divided into five parts and each of them had own theme. Various artworks -mainly sculptures, some reliefs and fountains etc.- were planned under each area theme. In addition, a design competition of courtyard and street furniture was held. This design process means the original concept of open spaces in Jižní Město paid attention to the artistry of place. Present regeneration of open spaces in Jižní Město is designed in a shorter period of time and smaller scale than the original plan because it can be cancelled in the course of planning if it takes a long time. Furthermore, the successful realization of regeneration can raise awareness of neighbours about open space and make the cooperative relationship easier for the future regeneration. Each regeneration of open space considers existing objects, neighbours’ needs and relationship with surrounding buildings and facilities. For example, a sculpture designed in the socialist era remains until today and became part of the regenerated open space. On the other hand, more functional materials such as laundry drying tool or sandbox are planned to remove when they have not been used anymore. An existing desire path route remains as a paved path in a new regeneration plan considering inhabitants’ convenience. The functional materials in open spaces can be changed flexibly by regeneration depending on the inhabitants’ needs and it can make open spaces more comfortable and convenient. However, at the same time, some artworks created under socialism are preserved and trees planted decades ago are now grown and provides rich green areas. These kinds of continuity indicate the history of the place through transformation.
1. Introduction

1.1. Background
After WW II, a large number of housing estates has been developed all over the world. Especially in socialist countries at that time, prefab panel housings had been constructed quickly before the completion of neighbourhood facilities and open spaces. In Jižní Město, one of the largest housing estates in Prague, various open spaces and public facilities had been planned in 1960s but many of them had not realized as planned and remained without maintenance [1]. However, it has been decades after the development and present situation of open space is various. The trees which had been planted at the beginning of the development are grown up, but the facilities have gradually deteriorated. Regeneration of open spaces has been taken place in some area and new buildings have been built in some vacant spaces. At the same time, artworks in public spaces under socialism are revaluated [2]. In this paper, it is clarified that the regeneration way of open space depending on its own background and present situation in Jižní Město.

1.2. Research method
The case study area of this research is Jižní Město, where the archive documents of the original development plan remain and the municipality has its unique activities to regenerate open spaces. First, I clarified the original concept of the development and present situation of open spaces in Jižní Město by archive documents and field survey. Next, I clarified the present policy and idea of regeneration by the interview with the municipality. Then, from the results of these two-step survey, the continuity and differences between past and present of the plan and planning process of open spaces are shown. At last, regeneration way of open space which considering its own history is discussed.

2. The original concept of open spaces in Jižní Město

2.1. Original development plan and present situation of Jižní Město
When a new building is constructed in Czechoslovakia under socialism, it was enacted that the part of the construction fee, basically 1% but rarely up to 4%, had to be used for artworks [2]. Jižní Město had been developed in two stages, Jižní Město I and II during 1971-92. At the development of Jižní Město I, a concept of open spaces and arrangement of artworks were mentioned in a document of the development plan. According to the document “Generel výtvarného řešení Jižního Města v Praze, 1976 (The general art solution of Jižní Město in Prague) ”, every design should be proposed not only for individual building or plot, but also the whole area of Jižní Město. Besides, Jižní Město I was divided into five areas and each of them was planned to have the own theme and various artworks -mainly sculptures, some reliefs and fountains etc.- based on each area theme. First group Háje has a metro station named “Cosmonaut” and the centre part of this area named “square of work.” A total of 11 artworks were planned to put on public spaces of this area such as metro station, hospital and school. The name of the metro station changed to Háje after democratization, but still, we can see some artworks which related to cosmonaut at the metro station (Figure 1, 2).

The character of the second group Opatov was internationalism, international solidarity of workers and friendship among people. In this group, 11 artworks were planned and the square of this area named “square of national friends.” The third group Litochleby and the fourth group Chodov were combined and given a character of “Peace” as a whole. The themes of artworks in these areas are youth and joy which were recognized to strongly connect with peaceful life. 14 artworks in Litochleby and 5 artworks in Chodov were planned in this group. Finally, the fifth group was the main centre part of whole Jižní Město I. This centre named “socialism square” and the name of the central park in this area was “Czech park.” There are 41 artworks on the lists from the first to the fourth group in the document, but the present situation of these artworks is unclear. 8 artworks (include one artwork removed 2010) in the first, third and fourth groups are recognized in the book by Karous, 2013 [2]. Maybe some of the last of artworks just have not been found, but others might have been already removed or not realised.
2.2. Design competition for courtyards
In addition to the design concept in the area scale, a design competition of courtyard and street furniture was held and the result was published as an article of a journal Architektura ČSR in 1971 [3]. This competition has two categories; the comprehensive plan which includes all the requested contents and the individual content design. The individual contents are street light, public transportation stop, waste basket, bench, and figurative decoration. This design process means the original concept of open spaces in Jižní Město paid attention to the artistry of place.

3. Regeneration of the open spaces in Jižní Město
3.1. Documents for the regeneration of selected courtyards
Recently the Prague 11 municipality is working on a regeneration program of courtyards. The target places are 48 and the basic information and progress status can be seen on the website [4]. The documents of regeneration plans contain A) basic data of the target area (area name, address, landowner etc.), B) land register and present usage and situation, C) comprehensive plan of new usage and more detailed plan, appendix and so on. In this chapter, 19 courtyards which have already had concrete regeneration plans and belong to Jižní Město I area were picked up. Then, the items in 19 courtyards and the future treatment of them were analysed using the C part of the documents (Table 1).
| Area group* | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | * in original development plan |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|------------------------------|
| Area name   | Haje | Opatov | Litochleby | Chodov |
| Document No.| 18 | 22 | 25 | 28/39 | 43 | 46 | 32 | 33 | 44 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 15 | 37 | 45 | 1 | 2 | 36 |
| Item        | ●: preservation (incl. relocation) | ●: regeneration | ●: new construction or addition | ▲: investigation | ×: removal |
| sculpture   | ● | ● | ● | ▲ | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| fountain    | ● | ● | ● | × | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| amphitheater| ● | × | ● | ● | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| mini-library| ● | ● | × | ▲ | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| street lamp | ☆ | ☆ | ☆ | ☆ | ● | ● | ▲ | ▲ | ☆ | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 0 |
| clothes pole| ● | ● | × | × | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| waste basket| ☆ | ☆ | ☆ | ☆ | ☆ | ☆ | ● | ● | ● | 0 | 3 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| container   | ● | ● | ● | ▲ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| notice board| ● | ● | ● | ▲ | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| bench       | ☆ | ☆ | × | ● | ☆ | ☆ | ☆ | ☆ | ☆ | 2 | 3 | 10 | 0 | 1 |
| public drinking fountain | ▲ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| pergola     | ● | ● | ● | × | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| porch       | × | × | × | × | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| fence       | × | × | × | × | × | × | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| gate        | × | × | × | × | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| part of building structure (wall etc.) | × | × | × | × | × | × | × | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 6 |
| building    | × | × | × | × | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| sandbox     | × | × | × | × | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| ground paint for playing | ☆ | × | × | × | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| play equipment for small children | × | × | × | × | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| exercise tool for seniors | ☆ | × | × | × | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| basketball hoop | ☆ | × | × | × | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| table and chairs for chess | ☆ | × | × | × | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| other street furniture | ☆ | × | × | × | 0 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| sports ground | ☆ | × | × | × | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
As a result, the following tendency can be seen. Street furniture such as bench and waste basket are planned to be added newly. Sculptures will be reserved, but the treatment of plant, tree and flower bed does not have a specific tendency. Although the number is not so many, various playground equipment will be added instead of removing of sandboxes.
3.2. Regeneration process of courtyards
On March 2019, I interviewed with the Prague 11 municipality about regeneration way of courtyards. According to this interview, the regeneration is implemented step by step. At first, municipality staffs work around Jižní Město and find an open space which can and need to be regenerated. Then they research the present situation and inhabitants’ usage and the result is taken into account when they make new regeneration plan. For example, an open space is located near an elementary school, so they designed various playgrounds for children of different school years (Figure 3, 4). Besides, another open space is located near a bus stop and close to a metro station, but the visibility was poor because of grown shrubs. Therefore, the regeneration plan was designed more expansive (Figure 5). When an event is held, the vacant space can be used as a market. The young trees just planted near the benches are expected to grow up and make shade in the future.

![Figure 3. Playground equipment for small children. Regeneration Project No.06, 2019](image1)

![Figure 4. Basketball court for teenagers. Regeneration Project No.06, 2019](image2)

Treatment of the items in courtyard has been decided by the following reasons. Practical equipment such as bench and waste basket which became old and deteriorated is replaced to a new one. Laundry drying tool is removed if it has not been used anymore, but it remains if inhabitants use it. The decision depends on the present situation which is clarified by field observation before starting regeneration. The number of sandbox is more than present demand; therefore, unused sandboxes are removed or replaced to another playground equipment. A fountain which has no appropriate water system is difficult to maintain and will be removed (Figure 6). On the other hand, sculptures are recognized as cultural heritage and preserved (Figure 7) and an amphitheater since socialist era were renovated (Figure 8). In addition, new artworks are added through the regeneration process. For example, a mosaic was designed by a student at a local art school (Figure 9). A desire path which was not originally planned became a paved path in the regeneration plan considering the inhabitants’ convenience (Figure 10).
These kinds of decision-making process come from individual detailed observation research by municipality staffs in each place. Present regeneration of open spaces in Jižní Město is planned by the municipality in a shorter period of time and smaller scale than the original plan in 1960s. It is because the political situation of the local government is unstable and if the regeneration process takes a long time, it can be cancelled before the realization according to the change of local government. However,
on the other hand, a certain successful realization of regeneration in the short term can raise awareness of neighbours about open space and make the cooperative relationship easier on future regeneration.

4. Differences between the original concept plan and present regeneration plan

The original development plan under socialism has a larger scale concept. Jižní Město I was divided into five area groups and given a specific theme to each area. Besides, artworks which followed the area themes were created and a design competition of open space and its contents was held. The importance of ideology of open spaces is high and the plan of open spaces is rather comprehensive and abstractive in the original development plan. On the other hand, each regeneration process of open spaces considers existing objects, neighbours’ usage and relationships with surrounding buildings and facilities at present. The scale of planning is smaller than before and the design process is more individual and practical.

5. Conclusion

The practical contents in open spaces can be changed flexibly by regeneration depending on the inhabitants’ needs and actual usage which are gradually clarified in their daily lives. It can make open spaces more comfortable and convenient, but at the same time, some artworks created under socialism are preserved and trees planted decades ago are now grown and provides rich green spaces in the regenerated open spaces. These kinds of continuity indicate the history of the place through transformation.

Regeneration design of open space considering the present situation instead of creating a totally new design or remaining the original design without maintenance is possible only after the place has its own character which has grown over a long time. Therefore, the regeneration method cannot copy entirely to other areas but it is important to consider the creative response which is appropriate to each character of the area by learning from prior examples. Besides, once a redevelopment occurred, the situation can remain for a long time. Hence, the regeneration plan should consider not only the present situation but also further future situation and the sustainable management way after regeneration completed.

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