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Globalisation, Eyes and Urban Space: Visual Perception of Globalising Prague
Jana Temelová, Hadevka Hrychová

Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, has been significantly changed during the transition period. Since 1989 transformation processes have influenced the urban structure of the city. The capital has opened itself to foreign investors, immigrants and tourists as well as to plural life styles and cultural patterns coming from the Western World. In Prague, similarly to other main cities, internationalisation and globalisation shape not only the everyday life of its inhabitants, but also the whole social and functional pattern of the city. Double transition, consisting of transformational and global processes has not affected all parts of the city equally. Thus, the spatially selective manner of these processes contributes to the social, economic and spatial differentiation of Prague.

Globalisation and its impact on cities have been recently a popular topic discussed in literature. Even though many conclusions have been based on statistical analyses, one wonders if the given results could be confirmed by pure observation of actors, their activities and physical settings in urban space. Our purpose is to find out whether the impact of globalisation has its visual reflection in urban environment and whether it is possible to spot its spatial inequality.

Globalisation and Cities: the Socio-spatial Dimension
Internationalisation, globalisation, new spatial organisation of production as well as deindustrialisation in advanced economies hangs tightly together with formation of global cities. Geographical decentralisation of production has led to the spatial dispersion of economic activities but at the same time to the need of centralisation of command structures and control functions (Friedmann 1995). Sassen (1991) believes that a new role has been opened for major cities as for the sites where decision-making activities internationalised advanced services and innovations are generated and concentrated. Accordingly, a new hierarchy of urban centres has been created on the global level. The cities occupying the top position in the hierarchy - the global cities - are seen as the centres of power and control over the world economy. While there is a broad consensus that New York, London and Tokyo lead the world city hierarchy the ordering under this top level is unstable and subject to a fierce competition (Castells 1996, 290).

Nevertheless, the concept of global cities has not been the only one describing the contemporary socio-spatial urban configuration and besides also the notion of globalising cities and networks has appeared to challenge the global city framework (Yang 1999). Not just global cities,
as Smith (1998, 608) suggested, but “all cities can be viewed in the fullness of their particular linkages with the worlds outside their boundaries”. Similarly, Marcuse and van Kempen (2000) assumed that the organisation of urban space differs from city to city nevertheless almost every urban structure has been affected by the same trends. Yet, the extent and the manner of global influence is not identical everywhere. The creation or integrated world system and the production of global cities have created social, economic and spatial inequalities not only among the cities but also within the cities (Hall 1998).

Sassen (1991) regards the impact of economic restructuring on the urban market as one of the main sources of social polarisation, a process that has been witnessed in global cities. Highly polarised labour markets, which have been created, have resulted in a skewed distribution of incomes and opportunities in global cities (Hall 1998). In this regard Sassen (1996, 632) emphasised that beside the highly paid professionals operating in producer services “in day-to-day work of the leading services complex, dominated by finance, a large share of the jobs involved are low paid and manual, many held by women and immigrants”. Thus, whilst a small group of managers and professionals forms a new social elite, a number of manual workers, people with temporary jobs, unstable incomes and unemployed extends the lower social classes. Moreover, King (1995) accentuated the important role of international migration since transnational professionals, Third World migrants and tourists often choose large cities as their destinations. Accordingly, different cultures weave one another and create a multicultural environment in these cities. The economic globalisation and the expansion of producer services have significantly affected the spatial organisation of cities and have contributed to the selective development of urban space. Thanks to the capability of internationalised service sector and its ancillary activities (such as top-off line restaurants and hotels) to generate extremely high profits these sectors dominate the competition for space, resources and investment in the attractive parts of large cities (Sassen 1998). Consequently, economic activities with moderate and low profit-making capacities (such as manufacturing, low-value added services, trade) have been displaced into the less popular parts of cities, often on the outskirts, or became a part of informal economy (Sassen 1996). Considering Sassen’s (1996, 634) remark referring to “replacement of neighbourhood shops tailored to local needs by up-scale boutiques and restaurants catering to new high-income urban elite” the local population is the one who might be the most concerned with the new situation. Accordingly, richer employees of producer services have been slowly dragging out the original and often poorer inhabitants. The coexistence of two fundamentally distinct social classes in the cities leads to the creation of quartered city (Marcuse and van Kempen 2000).

Portes and Sassen (1993, 475) pointed out that “high-income residential and commercial gentrification accompanies sharp decay in low-income communities” in global cities. The fact that specific economic activities and certain groups of people prefer the city centre for their operation has its positive impact in revitalisation of some central and inner city neighbourhoods. On the other hand deterioration of certain urban zones, namely abandoned brownfields, has occurred in many particularly former industrial cities. Nevertheless, in the last 20 years some of these declining inner city areas have been successfully redeveloped.

Concerning the physical environment, Sassen (1996) conceived that international firms and business people, those who she called the new city users, have significantly marked the urban landscape (airports, top-notch business districts, top-of-the-line hotels and restaurants etc.). But at the same time Knox (1996, 609) emphasised that urban space is not produced purely by global forces and flows but by their interaction with specific cultures and local settings. Similarly, Besant and Hall (2000) concluded that contemporary city reflects not only global trends but also processes associated with the past which had shaped the modern (Fordist) city.

What Makes the Impact of Globalisation Visible?

In this paper we will focus on the observation of several localities in Prague which we consider to be significantly influenced by globalisation. Marcuse and van Kempen (2000) would label this type of places as “soft locations”. Even though the global forces and flows are present in a number of urban realms, we will consider especially their reflection in the social, spatial and physical environment of Prague. Thereby we will omit some other not less important effects of globalisation in the example of political, cultural or ecological sphere. Our purpose is to demonstrate that some of the impacts and consequences of global processes witnessed in large urban centres and discussed in literature could be also present in Prague just by looking at actors, their actions and physical settings in certain localities. Further, based on our observations we want to show that global processes do not affect all the selected localities to the same extent and in the identical way.

Accordingly, we will try to find the answers to the following questions:

- Is the impact of globalisation on urban space visually distinct so that we can spot it by eyes?
- Can we see that globalisation does not influence different localities within the city equally?
Hannerz (1993) identified the most important categories of people who create the transnational manner of world cities. These categories include:

- **Managerial elites**, highly educated and skilled professionals and managers are one of the most conspicuous actors in world cities. Even though the locals form their majority, many of them are foreigners since their occupational career mobility is combined with geographical mobility.

- Third world population consists largely but not entirely, of people involved in low-skill and low-wage jobs. Thereby they usually occupy the opposite end of scale from transnational managers.

- **Expressive specialists** form a smaller group of people who are concerned with culture and specialise in expressive activities (art, fashion, design, filmmaking, writing, music, cuisine etc). They maintain a high profile in world cities.

- **Tourists** are always present in considerable numbers. They are actively engaged in the transnational flows of culture by being mobile themselves.

We believe that the major part of the above mentioned transnational categories is visually recognisable in Prague, nevertheless the frequency of particular groups varies in different urban areas and thus indicates unequal extent to which different places are globalised.

Social polarisation is frequently mentioned as a product of economic globalisation and expansion of producer services. Two crucial social groups are primarily involved in polarisation: those of highly paid managers and professionals and, on the other end of the income spectrum, those of manual, low-wage workers, unemployed and homeless. We expect that these antibiotic social groups are in evidence in selected localities and thereby make the social polarisation visible in Prague.

Multicultural and cosmopolitan environment are other relevant features of global cities, which we believe, have visual implications in social and physical background. As Jencks (1996) emphasised, heterogeneity in terms of ethnic variety, diversity of economic activities and "lifestyle clusters" is typical for global cities. Even though certain signs of cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism and coexistence of different activities and styles appear in Prague we do not think it has reached the level common in large urban centres.

Linking up to the transnational categories identified by Hannerz (1993), King (1995) tried to point out how these groups represent themselves in spatial and built environment of cities. He brought forward that transnational business class and tourists create cityscape which could be the best described by Lumsden's term "mashscapes of power". He presumed that institutions of international business class (such as headquarters, banks, hotels, corporate offices) "reproduce transnational symbolic forms and styles" of the same institutions in hegemonic states (King 1995, 225). We suppose that managerial elite is the most conspicuous and distinct class in built and spatial environment of Prague since it has the power and resources to mark the cityscape. We believe that the environment has been visibly accepted to the needs of managerial elite in some of the areas we selected.

Further, King (1995) remarked that Hannerz omitted two groups which are also significant in large cities: the first one of academics and scholars and the second one of practitioners of architecture and urban design. King (1995, 220) sees the architects and urban designers as those who "produce the surface representations" and thus consider them to be "some of the main brokers in the economy of signs in the world city". The global architectural elite, who designs buildings of international institution, helps to reproduce their symbolic forms and styles (King 1995). Although we actually hardly spot international architects by their appearance we can easily distinguish their products - constructions which contribute to create the "landscapes of power".

Sassen (1996) brought forward that it has been increasingly difficult for activities generating low or moderate profits to compete for space and investment. Therefore services and shops aimed at the locals have been replaced by those oriented on the needs of high-income urban elites. We suppose that uneven frequency of particular transnational categories in different neighbourhoods has its outward reflection in built form as well as in functional organisation of space. Therefore we believe that we can visually distinguish the dominance of internationalised companies and appropriated services in some localities while in other rather local firms, shops and services tend to serve the vernacular inhabitants prevail. We believe that it is feasible to spot uneven development in various neighbourhoods by observation of social, physical and functional environment, its actors and elements. Even though all the localities we selected could be qualified as 'soft spots' (Marcus, 2000) we expect that the global forces do not effect all of them to the same extent.

**Double Transition Shaping the Urban Environment of Prague**

Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic has roughly 1.2 million inhabitants and its position in the national urban system is undoubtedly dominant. Since the Iron Curtain fell down the Czech Republic has opened itself to the world trends, foreign actors and capital flows. Compared to the rest of the country, Prague metropolitan area shows an exceptionally high attraction, importance and development potential (relatively high concentration of investment, foreign capital and producer services, fast development of service and construction sector). Therefore, Prague is
regarded as a gateway. A complex of processes termed as double
transition has affected the social, economic and physical structure of the
city, coupling various theses of (Eastern European) to market economy,
economic globalisation and its impact on local political, economic,
social as well as cultural restructuring.

Although the both components of double transition - the global and the
transition - are complex the social, economic and political processes
took place are complex and the local authorities have already discussed
the impact of globalisation in the context of transformation.

The local transition is the internal development of the Czech society
and is described as a process of decentralisation of state administration
and the taking over of local authorities and the local population in
the management of regional activities. The local transition has
affected the local government's ability to manage the local economy,
business sector and the local environment. The local transition has
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environment. The local transition has affected the local economy,
the business sector and the local environment.
5. Karlin – Křižíkova metro station
There are many similarities in the character of Anděl (the locality described above) and this soft location. Karlin is also one of the inner-city neighbourhoods where the CBD functions have been expanding to in recent years. Compared to Anděl, the Brownfields redevelopment has more often the form of reconstruction than predominantly new construction of commercial space.

6. Lethany housing estate
As the locality represents a housing estate on the fringe of Prague it the best fits to the type Concentration of social housing. However, we have to admit that we do not find the term Concentration of social housing suitable for any area in Prague notably because the process of socio-spatial differentiation has not fully progressed yet. Unlike Marcuse and van Kempen we suppose that housing estates in double transition cities have not been considerably influenced by globalisation so far.

7. Regional shopping centre Černý Most
We chose this suburban housing estate location because we are convinced that the area has undertaken a fundamental change during the double transition period. The regional shopping and entertainment centre and many other retail facilities have recently grown up next to the highway and metro station. It is obviously not just a Concentration of social housing.

Marcuse and van Kempen (2000) did not identify any suburban areas as soft locations. One of the reasons might be that urbanisation, originally a process of modernity and Fordism, has been already well developed in Western cities. However, in the cities experiencing double transition the suburban structures are being created now and their character is similar to the contemporary form of Western suburbs. Thus, the trends of modernity are concurrent with global trends in post-socialist cities.

**Approach to Observation and Urban Elements under the Lens**
We carried out several empirical observations in the seven selected soft locations. For each area two separate observations were accomplished, both during the working days nevertheless varying as to the time of day. We focused especially on the following three matters:
- People (e.g. age, sex, social group, visage, nationality, family status)
- Activities (e.g. social contacts, reason of one’s presence in the locality)
- Physical setting (e.g. condition of buildings, public space, communications, structure of shops and companies, quality of cars)

We divided the observed people into fifteen categories for a detailed elaboration (see Table 1). For a broad view we grouped the fifteen categories into three clusters according to people’s presumed life style and occupational and income structure (all based on our visual experience). Thus, we distinguished upper strata (categories 1,2,3), middle strata (categories 4,5,7,12) and lower strata (categories 6,8,9,10,11,13,14,15). We intentionally did not call these clusters “classes” since social classes could be defined primarily in terms of their relation to production (Johnston – Gregory – Smith, 1994). From our point of view yuppies belong to upper strata. Simiarily, Hančar (1993) talked about “managerial elites” who can be hardly included to middle strata.

**Table 1: 15 categories of observed people**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>male workers in advanced services, managers and professionals in suits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>female workers in advanced services, fancy ladies with boutique paper bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>tourists, foreigners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ordinary and grey looking people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>mothers with small kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pensioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>school-kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>working class and lower class looking people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>cleaning workers, messengers, taxi drivers, security workers, gate-keepers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>manual and construction workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Gypsies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>non-conformists (e.g. unconventional outlook, hippies, dreadlocks hair style)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>fops, dandies, sparks, street-girl outlook, gay outlook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>street criminals, black marketers, pickpockets, dealers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>homelessness and underclass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We are fully aware of the fact that classifying of people into the above mentioned categories and strata is a very subjective question which could be subject to a wild discussion. Moreover, many of the identified groups are overlapping and thus one person could be often easily included in more than one category. Therefore, we do not offer any purely statistical conclusions which would be based either on absolute data or relative proportions of particular categories. In this kind of research statistical analysis would be misleading also due to the fact that those people who are distinctive and contrast are more likely to be noticed than the ordinary masses. Thus, we want to stress that our research is
primarily qualitative using description, analysis and explanation of the matter we could observe and spot by watching.

Footprints of Managerial Elite in Urban Landscape

According to our expectations transnational managers and professionals operating in advanced service sector represent the most conspicuous and distinct group in social, built and spatial environment in Prague. Among the seven selected localities we observed the highest relative share of high-income strata in the shopping street Na Příkopě, which we earlier classified as a Central city office and residential location and a Central city amusement and tourist location. Wealthy looking employees of banks and progressive services, yuppies in suits, smart-dressed customers of luxurious shops and, of course, foreign tourists belonged to the most common users of this area (see Photo 1). On the contrary, working-class and old people who both can be regarded as low-income strata in the Czech Republic were rarely seen in the crowd floating in one of the most luxurious shopping streets in Prague.

Since the beginning of 1990s the urban landscape has been influenced by foreign and international elites especially in the city centre. Managerial elite together with tourists has significantly marked the cityscape and have been creating so called landscapes of power (King 1995). Obviously, the presence of yuppies and tourists has the most significantly effected the centrally located pedestrian zone Na Příkopě. The urban environment has been visibly adapted to the needs of tourists, managers and professionals who are the relevant users of the space. Alongside with the expansion of producer service companies and managerial workers an appropriate structure of shops and services has appeared in the area. Walking down the street Na Příkopě we would hardly find anything else but doorplates of companies specializing in real estate, law consulting or banking and luxurious shops, designer’s boutiques and expensive restaurants aimed to the well-off clientele.

Photo 1: Shopping street Na Příkopě

A relatively high frequency of upper-strata was visible also on the fringe of CBD, namely in the inner-city neighbourhood Vinořady. The people present there appeared to be a mixture of local gentrifiers, high-income office employees, and vernacular permanent inhabitants. The last mentioned group, the “indigenous” inhabitants, are those who have been living in the neighbourhood for a long time and belong mostly to the middle age group and middle strata. Vinořady has kept its good-address image even during the egalitarian period of socialism which could explain a limited amount of low-income social groups living in the area today. Just as in the city centre the foreign and international capital have contributed to the physical revitalisation of buildings in Vinořady. The reconstructed residential houses, clean streets and tidy public spaces describe the quality of physical environment in the neighbourhood (see Photo 2). Furthermore, the shops and services in the area focus rather on high-standard products (e.g. cosmetics, oracle, design) than on the goods of everyday use and thus reflect the presence of high-paid elite. A similar trend shows the structure of local restaurants and pubs. There are many facilities where professionals and managers would come for a lunch or for a drink but also where young people who search for a trendy place would go.

Photo 2: Gentrified inner-city neighbourhood Vinořady

Although the group of managers and professionals was not as dominant in Anděl and Karlin as in the zones mentioned above this group has considerably influenced the landscape in the two Brownfield locations. The both neighbourhoods are situated close to the city centre, which made them attractive for new development projects. The construction of several office and commercial centres initiated the brownfield redevelopment in these former industrial zones and created the conditions for emergence of new secondary city centres. Consequently, the majority of high-income people we observed were yuppies employed...
in the recently constructed office blocks. As the use of foreign languages suggested some of them came from abroad. Similarly, the company locos on the new buildings suggest the involvement of foreign and international capital in the projects. King (1995) emphasised the role of global architects as of those who help to create the “landscapes of power”. In Anděl, a well-known French architect Jean Nouvel designed an office and shopping complex Zlý Anděl for a multinational developer ING Real Estate (see Photo 3). Likewise, in Karlin, a Spanish architect Ricardo Bofill drew up a regeneration plan of a vast brownfield area for a foreign developer Real Estate Karlin.

Photo 3: Commercial complex Zlý Anděl in Smíchov

The soft locations in outer city of Prague represent the opposite to rather centrally located areas with high frequency of upper-strata. We hardly spot any managers and professionals in the housing estate Letňany or in the shopping centre Černý Most. Obviously, these people have no reason to come there - they do not live there, they do not work there, they do not use the services there. Although the centrally located Národní třída is certainly a different case as we also did not notice many managers and professionals, nevertheless foreign tourists represented the upper strata.

Surfing between Footprints:
The Middles and the Lovers in Urban Landscape
Now we move to the groups of people who visually evoke a more or a lower social status. It follows from the text above that we registered a relatively high share of these people in the two inner-city brownfield areas, in the outer-city housing estate and on the traffic junction Národní třída in the centre of Prague. On the contrary, people belonging to lower-strata were rarely present in the city-centre shopping street and in the gentrified inner-city location.

We observed a considerable concentration of lower class looking people, pensioners and local gypsies in the two originally industrial city-quarters. now redeveloping Brownfield locations Anděl and Karlin. In Anděl, the low-income groups included working class (local or travelling home office shopping) and to a smaller extent also low or underclass people hanging around in front of the commercial complex. Besides, many ordinary and middle-strata looking people were doing shopping in one of the several shopping facilities newly built on the brownfield sites. Thanks to its role as an important traffic junction Anděl is a popular meeting point for various groups of people. In Karlin, most of the lower social status population seemed to be local inhabitants including an above-average amount of local gypsies. The members of upper and middle class employed in modern offices usually just passed by heading to work or for a lunch and thus suggesting their non-residential status in this location.

Yet, the coexistence of different social groups, namely of mobile highly paid yuppies and local low-income inhabitants creates two contrast physical environments in Anděl and even more distinctly in Karlin. The modern and shiny commercial buildings create a sharp opposite to rather neglected residential houses and public spaces. While foreign and international companies occupy the new or reconstructed palaces, shops and services for locals have to put up with much less splendid and often second-class quality spaces (e.g. backyards, basements etc.). Thus, the physical environment reflects the existing social polarisation in Anděl and Karlin where two completely different environments have been surviving next to each other (see Photo 4). Accordingly, the structure of services reflects the existence of two different kinds of users. While shops and services aimed to vernacular inhabitants coexist with those for managerial elites in Anděl, the shopping facilities for locals clearly dominate in Karlin (clothing, footwear, electronics, grocery, butcher's shop, toys etc.). Although the high-income employees, the potential consumers of the new facilities operate in the area the appropriate services have not expanded there yet.

Photo 4: Contrasting environments in Karlin
In many ways the socialist urban landscape has survived in housing estate Lethany (soft location Concentration of social housing) since not many changes have been happening there under the influence of transformation and globalisation. The neighbourhood represents a monofunctional area of prefab residential houses with almost no public space and services, with unsatisfactory parking opportunities and quite large areas of wasteland (see Photo 5). Even though the technical, architectural as well as urbanistic quality of housing estate is very poor, the regeneration has involved only a few buildings so far. In some high-rise houses small shops oriented on local customers were established to enrich the supply of two supermarkets in the area. As the appearance of present people indicated (often fat, shabby-looking, not smartly-dressed) most of the population in the housing estate apparently belonged to lower-middle-strata and working class. We suppose that the observed people were local permanent residents or inhabitants of neighbouring housing estate who came for shopping to adjacent large shopping centre. In Lethany housing estate we could clearly see how a poor physical environment of residential area corresponds to social milieu of local working-class and lower-middle social groups.

Regarding the quality of physical and social environment the observation of cars parked in the neighbourhood could also indicate the potential prosperity or stagnation of a soft location. Even though it does not mean that the cars parked in a certain neighbourhood belong only to the people living there it certainly shows which kind of users (inhabitants, workers, visitors, etc.) operate in certain areas. We conducted a detailed survey oriented on parked cars in the housing estate Lethany. Lower standard cars, mainly Czech-made and old-type vehicles created 35 % of all the parked cars. On the other hand only 22 % of all cars fell to non-Czech make vehicles younger than 5 years. Expensive and luxurious cars (e.g. Mercedes, BMW, off-roads, etc.) were almost missing in the area. This might indicate rather stagnation and a generally lower social status in housing estate were in comparison to the centrally located neighbourhoods where the majority of cars created expensive and rather new vehicles.

We registered a recognizable amount of local lower strata people in all of the observed locations apart from the CBD shopping street and the gentrified inner-city neighbourhood (presumably due to the expensive housing there). We already indicated earlier, that the soft location Národní třída, even though centrally located and defined as a Central city office and residential location and a Central city amusement and tourist location showed a completely different scene from the other two central spots. In the surrounding of Národní třída metro station we observed a relatively high concentration of pathological social groups and underclass (categories 14, 15) likely created by non-locals. Accordingly, the untidy and dirty character of physical surrounding in Národní třída reflects an extensive occurrence of underclass. An interesting structure of retail facilities arises on the one hand from the area's function as a traffic junction (fast foods, takeaways, supermarket, etc.) and on the other hand from a considerable concentration of "black activities" in the area (betting shop, non-stop pawnshops, etc.). People embraced into underclass seemed to be unemployed, some of them homeless or tone of alcohol who used the public space by metro station to gather together and to enjoy chatting and drinking beer (see Photo 5). As the language suggested they were Czech including Czech gypsies (we suppose non-local in the area). The second group included in underclass consisted of people whose appearance and even more acting strongly reminded this of street criminals, pickpockets and dealers. Most of them were youngish and obviously did not have a Czech origin (seemed to be immigrants from the East). They usually came there either for a ‘business meeting’ or to visit a non-stop pawnshop situated nearby. Finally, unskilled employees of tertiary sector, such as shop assistants selling fast food, people offering leaflets and cleaning streets were also active in the area. Again, concluding from the used language and the accents, a particular
amount of them might have been immigrants from Ukraine or other East-European countries.

Photo 6: Underclass in traffic junction Národní třída

In the outer-city shopping and entertainment centre Černý Most, the majority of people seemed to belong to middle strata while the share of people with presumably lower or upper social status was relatively small (see Photo 7). The regional shopping centre does not house just the inhabitants of neighbouring housing estate but also the users from a much wider district extending far behind the city boarders. It is obvious from the core parked in front of the mall - between 30% and 40% did not have a Prague registration number. The project of a suburban shopping and entertainment complex in Černý Most is very similar to the same kind of facilities built in many West-European cities. Thus, the global aspect is represented in the universal international architecture. In standardised supply of products, in organisation of interior space as well as in the creation of multifunctional rather than monofunctional space (combination of shopping and entertainment facilities). The restaurants (e.g. McDonalds, Italian pizza, Chinese and Spanish fast food), fitness centre and Village Cinemas inside the entertainment centre seemed to reproduce the international style especially distinctly.

Photo 7: Shopping centre Černý Most

Conclusion: Polarisation, Eyes and Urban Space

The observations that we carried out in seven selected soft locations in Prague proved that some impacts of global processes are visually perceptible in urban space. The transnational categories identified by Hannerz (1993) are recognizable in Prague, however, the frequency of certain social groups and categories varies in different urban areas depending on the character of a soft spot and on the intensity at which the global processes win recognition in particular locations (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Social stratification of people observed in selected localities

Note 1: Upper strata consists of employees, other high-income people and foreign tourists (groups 1,2,3). Middle strata includes middle income people skilled or relatively educated, families with children, students (groups 4,6,7,12). Lower strata is composed of the poor, workers and unskilled low-wage people, unemployed and homeless people, criminals and immigrants from the Third World (groups 6,8,9,10,11,13,14,15).

Note 2: In the chart localities are arranged according to their distance from the city centre - the closer the more left.

Consequently, the polarisation of social and physical environment has been emerging in some areas in Prague. The transnational managers and professionals and low-wage manual workers on the other side of social stratification are considered to be contributing to the socio-spatial polarisation in cities (Sassen 1996). Concerning the employees of low-tertiary sector (e.g. messengers, security workers, porters, cleaners, taxi drivers) we noticed their presence in each of the selected soft locations with the exception of housing estate Lethany (unskilled low-paid employees of tertiary sphere could not have been distinguished). Moreover, only very few upper-strata people were apparent in Lethany.
Thus the outer-city housing estate represents a location where polarisation has not been occurring till now. We suggest it is not appropriate to call the area a soft location at present time. The second district where we did not observe social polarisation was the pedestrian zone Na Příkopě in the centre of Prague. Almost no lower-strata appeared in the luxurious shopping street. On the other hand specifically the city centre attracts non-urban and ecstatic looking people. Similarly most of the tourists move only in the historical core of the city. Considering the fact that the population of the Czech Republic is quite heterogeneous it is a relatively significant presence of people from different countries could be understand as a certain degree of cosmopolitanism. On the contrary we registered a strong trend towards polarisation especially in the two inner-city brownfield development areas, Anděl and Karlín. The professionals and managers mixed with the local low-income residents and thus have been creating a contrast in social as well as physical environment. To certain extent social polarisation was visible also in the central-city traffic junction Národní třída. Concluding from our observations we ranked the inner-city gentrified neighbourhood Vinohrady the outer-city shopping centre Černý Most as the areas with mild polarisation. We have to add that although we did not distinguish polarisation in each of the selected localities at the level of whole city polarisation processes have been obviously recognisable. The social environment is strongly tied in with the quality and conditions of its physical surrounding. Accordingly, among the selected soft locations considerable differences exist not only in social milieu but also in built environment. It indicates that global processes do not influence particular areas equally. For example the frequency of foreign and international companies and shops varies in different areas and creates inequalities among soft localities. The flow of transnational investment is a visible sign of globalisation and could be interpreted as an indicator of place's “global-ness”. Multinational and foreign companies are frequent users of commercial spaces in the city centre (Na Příkopě, Národní, Vinohrady) and of the new buildings in emerging secondary centres (Karlín, Smíchov). On the other hand local companies dominate in Letňany and in second-class quality spaces in Karlín and Smíchov. The competition for space and investment occurs in all selected soft spots excluding Letňany. Thus, revitalisation contributes to the improvement of physical environment the most distinctly in brownfield redevelopment areas Anděl and Karlín and creates contrasts between the old and the new buildings, facilities and social groups. On the other hand resulting from uneven development rather decay has been affecting the housing estate Letňany.

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