

A BELATED TOWN UTOPIA

Plans, Images, and the Reality of a Socialist Town in the 1960s and 1970s
as Exemplified by Most in Northern Bohemia

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Most (Brüx), an historical town in northern Bohemia, was almost completely demolished in the 1960s and 1980s to facilitate open-cast brown coal mining. A new Most was erected directly adjacent, offering housing for almost 100 000 people. The present contribution deals with the ideas and conceptions for this city and of life there. This story is integrated into the broader context of how concepts of architecture and town planning developed in Czechoslovakia and how new towns boomed throughout Europe after 1945. At the center is the question whether experiments like Most had a legitimatizing function for state socialist rule. The demolition of the old town was justified by referring to rational decisions and with the promise of a life really worthy of a human being and of better hygienic conditions, and to the dire circumstances in which thousands of people lived. The study demonstrates, however, that this legitimatizing potential gradually disappeared with possibly just the opposite being the case in the end. The ultimate cause was a different mental approach which developed in East and West from the 1960s onwards. Socialist dictatorships could not master the challenges of the modern epoch. They remained firmly entrenched in the technocratic era with its focus on industrial production and on planning solutions which ought to be equally suitable for all people and for every aspect of life.