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Mining-Induced Displacement and Resettlement: A Retrospective of the City of Most

Short Reflection.

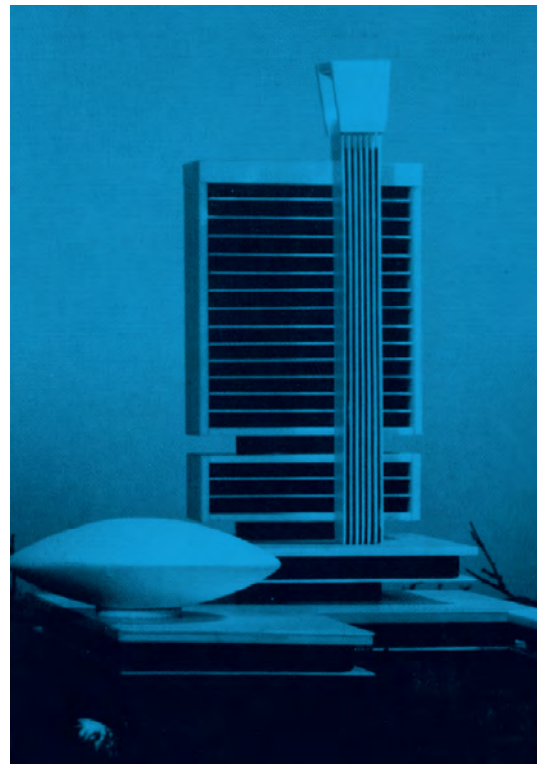
The City of Most in the Czech Republic is a testament to transformative urban design, particularly in the zone of mining-induced displacement and resettlement (MIDR). This research delves deep into the architectural vision that shaped the city, juxtaposing it with the lived experiences of its inhabitants over two generations.

Through a meticulous analysis of the city's plans and designs, this study unravels architects' intent to reinvent a new city, drawing inspiration from the old while infusing modernist principles. Integral to this exploration, graphic representations vividly capture the evolution of spatial patterns and offer insights into architects' aspirations and the realities of urban transformation.

However, as cities evolve, so do their inhabitants. The City of Most 50 years post-resettlement presents a compelling narrative of space reappropriation. Inhabitants manifested spaces and functions differently than originally envisioned, highlighting the dynamic interplay between design and lived experience. Through a design lens, this research seeks to understand these shifts, reflecting on architects' design choices and the subsequent spatial narratives crafted by the inhabitants.

In conclusion, this study underscores the significance of analysing architectural design in urban studies. This prompts a reflection on how, as architects, the cities we envision and design are continually reshaped by those who inhabit them, emphasising the evolving nature of urban spaces and the importance of adaptability in design.

Illustrations.



Extended Abstract.

Mining-Induced Displacement and Resettlement (MIDR) is a major transformation that alters landscapes, communities, and lives. It has positive and negative effects, such as economic growth, tapping into resources, and displacement. Yet, it requires immense sacrifices, especially from the vulnerable. Relocating populations is not just a logistical issue but a major social upheaval. The City of Most in the Czech Republic exemplifies this change. Cities with their own history and identity often transform due to MIDR, becoming a laboratory where architecture meets human experience.

The MIDR paradox lies at its core: activities that promise progress, such as mineral extraction or infrastructure development, also cause disruption and displacement. Communities with long histories and traditions are uprooted, destroying their social structure. Displacement caused many consequences. Social connections were broken, and local economies were uncertain. Displacement can cause psychological distress, such as loss, identity crises, and difficulty adjusting. Quickly built settlements may lack infrastructure, creating further socioeconomic issues. This haste can compromise long-term sustainability for short-term solutions. Displaced people confront the loss of their homes and integrate into unprepared new environments.

Urban Design is future-oriented, aiming to create environments that meet human needs, goals, and well-being. However, MIDR lacks Urban Design engagement; sociologists, economists, and environmentalists have studied MIDR, but Urban Design remains absent. This was a major oversight. The layout of new settlements, public spaces, amenities, and spatial organisation all influence the quality of life for the resettled. MIDR projects may be short-sighted without urban design, prioritising immediate needs over long-term sustainability and inhabitant well-being. Not understanding this can lead to repeating past errors, creating places that satisfy immediate needs but do not promote flourishing and resilient communities. In MIDR, urban design is not just about making spaces but also about forming futures.

The 1975 "Image of Most" research by Jan and Ivana Benda was a pioneering endeavour, shedding light on the immediate sentiments and perceptions of those who witnessed the transition from the Old Most to the New Most. This study provides invaluable insights into the immediate aftermath of resettlement, capturing the raw emotions, challenges, and adaptations of a community grappling with profound changes. However, similar to many pioneering studies, this study has some limitations. One of the most significant factors is the temporal scope. While it offers a snapshot of a community in transition, it does not account for the evolution of these sentiments over extended periods.

Fast forward to the present, the City of Most has undergone further transformations. The initial inhabitants of New Most have aged, and a new generation with no personal memories of the Old Most has come of age. This generation's perceptions, experiences, and relationships with their urban environment will likely be markedly different from those of their predecessors. They have inherited a city shaped by the MIDR, but their understanding and relationship with it are mediated not by personal experience of displacement but by the stories, histories, and the physical environment in which they have grown up. This presents a unique opportunity for future research. By juxtaposing the immediate post-resettlement perceptions captured in the 1975 study with the current sentiments of a

generation born and raised in New Most, we can gain a deeper understanding of the long-term impacts of MIDR on urban communities. This longitudinal perspective is crucial for several reasons. It allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the socio-spatial dynamics of resettled communities, offers insights into the evolving challenges and opportunities these communities face, and provides valuable lessons for future MIDR projects, ensuring that they are not only logistically sound but also sensitive to the multi-generational impacts of displacement and resettlement.

In essence, while the 1975 "Image of Most" research provided a foundational understanding of the immediate impacts of MIDR, the current study seeks to build upon this foundation, offering a more nuanced, multi-generational perspective on the City of Most and its inhabitants.

Building on the foundational understanding of the City of Most's transformation, the methodology adopted for this research is both comprehensive and multifaceted. At its core, this study seeks to juxtapose the theoretical underpinnings of urban design with the tangible realities of lived experiences.

Examining the city's archival plans and designs is essential. These documents, with annotations, sketches, and notes, show architects' technical and philosophical/aesthetic choices. They reveal the urban design and the motivations behind it. This research seeks to understand architects' vision for the New Most by examining their plans. It considers their ideas for public space, community hubs, green spaces, and transportation networks. How did they combine Old Most elements while creating a new future? How did modernism's focus on functionality, simplicity, and progress shape their designs?

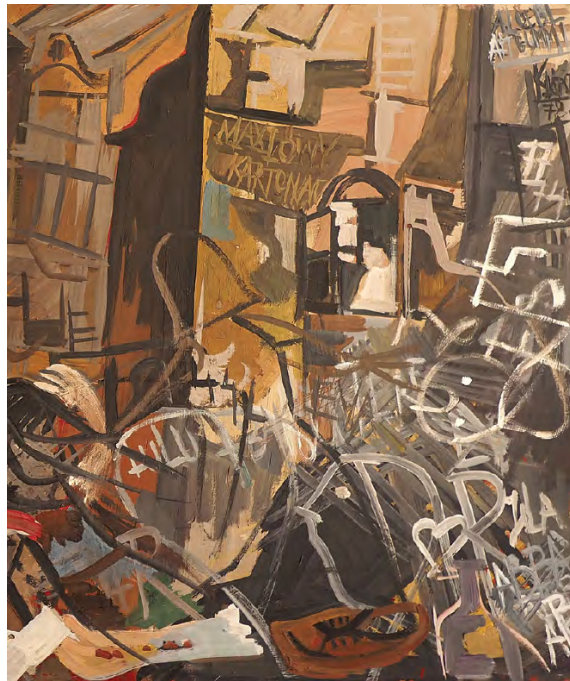
This archival analysis was complemented by graphic representations. Maps, interviews, and other visuals documented a city's spatial evolution, showing changes in layout, land use, and architecture. They also illustrated architects' goals versus actual outcomes. This visual approach is useful for identifying where design intent and lived experience match and where they differ.

However, cities have more than just bricks, mortars, and design principles. They are living, breathing entities shaped as much by their inhabitants as by their designers. To capture this aspect, this research employs qualitative methodologies, delving into the lived experiences of the inhabitants. Through interviews, surveys, and observational studies, this study seeks to understand how spaces have been reappropriated, modified, and personalised by the inhabitants once designed with specific intents. This exploration sheds light on the dynamic interplay between design intent and lived reality, thereby revealing urban communities' adaptability, resilience, and creativity.

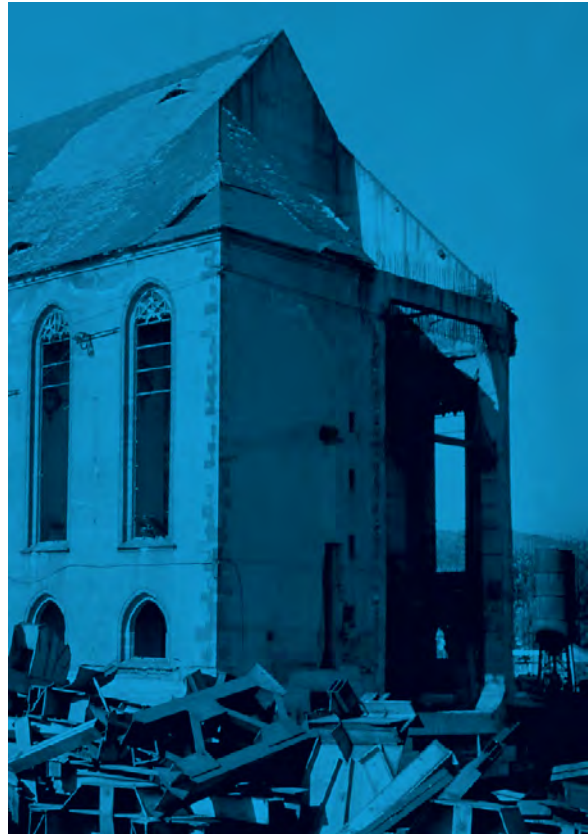
Drawing from the intricate tapestry of the City of Most's transformation, several pivotal insights emerge that hold profound implications for design-driven research in urban studies. With its layered history of displacement, resettlement, and evolution, the city serves as a microcosm for the broader challenges and opportunities inherent in urban design and planning. One of the primary takeaways is the fluidity of the urban spaces. While architects and urban planners lay down a city's foundational blueprint, inhabitants breathe life into it, often in ways unforeseen during the design phase. This organic evolution of urban spaces, driven by residents' needs, aspirations, and innovations, underscores the importance of design flexibility. Rigid prescriptive designs can often lead to friction between the intended use of spaces and the actual needs of their inhabitants. Hence, adaptability has emerged as a desirable trait and is necessary for urban design.

The City of Most's story exemplifies the link between design intent and life experience. Design-based research offers tools to imagine urban futures, while inhabitants' experiences test these visions. This interaction is evident in high-stake, challenging contexts like MIDR. Finally, this research underscores the importance of a multidisciplinary approach. Urban challenges, especially those that are as complex as the MIDR, cannot be addressed in silos. Collaborative and cross-disciplinary efforts that bring architects, sociologists, environmentalists, and other stakeholders are crucial. Such collaborations ensure that urban solutions are holistic, sustainable, and attuned to the diverse needs of their inhabitants. In essence, the City of Most's narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the complexities and dynamism of the urban environment. It champions the cause of design-driven research, emphasising its role in envisioning urban futures and ensuring that these visions are grounded, adaptable, and inclusive.

Illustrations.



Kostel Nanebevzetí Panny Marie po
přesunu, bezprostřední poškození
stabilizační zdiva a demontáží
ocelových konstrukcí.



Městské divadlo a muzejní sálup
se vnohou tv. Anny Samothel,
L. náměstí, 2014.

