

PREFACE

In 1995, UNESCO launched a comprehensive social science program titled “Managing of Social Transformation” (MOST). This program intended:

- to stimulate researches on the mechanism and impacts of globalisation process and neo-liberal economic regulation on the conflicting social transformation of countries of different civilizations and different level of economic development;
- to carry out comparative studies to find methods and techniques for a successful management of rising social tensions, and, as a conclusion
- to offer practical advises to political decision makers on national and/or local levels for helping a successful management of social conflicts and to assure a socially sustainable development.

The Hungarian National Committee for UNESCO joined to MOST programme in 1997, and since then has focused its efforts on urban problems. Hungarian scholars and urban planners participated in the project of “Socially Sustainable Development of Cities”; even Phase III of the project was directed by the Budapest team. The final outcome of the cooperation of six cities (Budapest, Cape Town, Geneva, Lyon, Rotterdam and San Salvador) in this phase was a practical handbook titled “Public Participation in Socially Sustainable Urban Development“ published in 2004 (Pécs, Hungary).

In 2004, a new project was started on “Social Perspectives of Historical Districts of Cities“. The Budapest Team (i.e. the MOST Hungarian National Committee) accepted to prepare an in-depth Central European comparative study on social conflicts raised by the revitalisation of city centres focusing on processes like social segregation, social exclusion and gentrification. In addition, a glossary was prepared defining the most frequent technical terms used in the studies of urban centres and we also elaborated an outline for a practical handbook to be offered for city mayors in order to implement successful social conflict management.

The first step in this project was to organise a roundtable conference in Székesfehérvár (Hungary) in September, 2005. Conference participants from various disciplines and countries had discussed specific features of city centre transformation in the Central European (mostly ex-socialist) cities. The publication of this volume was based predominantly on the papers presented at the conference. After two introductory papers we have a number of case studies dealing

with Central European cities. (The papers on Bucharest and Krakow were invited after the conference). The last paper on Lyon serves as a basis for comparison of Central and Western European cases. Authors have had different approaches (e.g. demography, urban sociology, urban geography and urban planning), but hopefully this collection of papers gives a good overview on the recent transformation of city centres in this important, but less known European region.

György Enyedi, Zoltán Kovács