

DIPLOMA PROJECT LEADER REVIEW

Diploma project leader: **Ing. arch. Veronika Šindlerová, Ph.D.** (Ateliér Šindlerová)

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Name of the diploma project: **Žatec: Reclaiming the riverplain**

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The subject of Esra Akgün Kulin's master's diploma project is an urban proposal for the regeneration of the urbanistically heterogeneous and unstabilized riverplain area of the right bank of the Ohře River in Žatec. The goal is a proposal to cultivate and make more attractive the area, which forms the base of the terrain promontory on which rises the "acropolis" of the historic core of the city, registered (together with the entire landscape of Žatec and the tradition of growing and processing hops) on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List.

The diploma project is based on the basic premise that (due to the attractive landscape framework and due to the immediate connection to the historical core of the city with the concentration of all service activities for residents), the solved area has the potential to stabilize and strengthen the residential function, in combination with the interpretation of the history of hop cultivation, which has deep tradition in the Ohře riverplain below the historic city. This premise is motivated by the fact that Žatec is a population-stagnant city in the inner periphery of the Czech Republic, with an outdated housing stock mainly in apartment buildings, including panel housing estates. Therefore, the diploma project does not come with a proposal for massive development of further housing, but with the transformation and cultivation of existing urban structures in the form of very sensitive partial impacts and acupuncture, which will offer a housing stock corresponding to current and future demand. This is a very relevant and conscious approach to the regeneration of a part of the wider center of a city with a stagnant or shrinking population.

The basis for the urban design is **research and analysis** of the current state of the solved area, including the context of the city as a whole. The research of the current state is somewhat inconsistent and fragmented, it lacks in particular a deeper and more consistent spatial and compositional analysis of the solved area, in relation to the visually very exposed terrain promontory with the dominant historical core. There is also lack of analysis of the terrain, which is closely related to the composition and plays an absolutely key role in the case of the solved area. The transport research is a bit incomprehensible, without the necessary explanatory value, and moreover, it lacks the capture of pedestrian transport as the main mode of transport in the core city. The map of the city's transport system is obviously a drawing from the spatial plan, but without a legend it loses its narrative value.

Knowledge from the research of the current state of the solved area is synthesized in a drawing of positives and negatives and a SWOT analysis. It is somewhat unclear why this synthetic analysis concerns the area of the entire city, it would have been more beneficial to elaborate in detail only on the solved area (obviously capturing all the necessary wider connections). From this point of view, paradoxically, the working hand sketch of the analysis of the solved area has a greater informational value. The essence of the analyzes is then processed in an illustrative and easy-to-understand diagram, which identifies the main factors of the future development of the city of Žatec. This diagram is a suitable starting point for the subsequent proposal for the revitalization of the solved area.

It is a nicely prepared brief excursion into the history of growing and processing hops in Žatec, including the related preserved values in relation to the solved area. Somewhat out of context, however, there is a mention of the settlement of Bezděkov, which is not related to the solved area.

The **proposal** of the diploma project is clearly structured from the overall vision of the development of the solved area, through the concept and proposal to the selected urban details. The vision evokes the atmosphere of the future form of the solved area. But it is limited to a set of all-too-general slogans, which noticeably lack an explanation of the content and concrete implementation into the solved area. In this regard, the concept is clear and understandable, as it assumes the structuring of the solved area around three thematically differentiated cores,

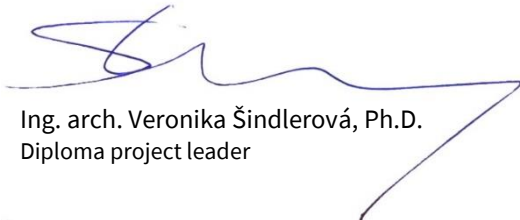
suspended like beads on a restored water channel, surrounding the historic core of the city. The concept gives the solved area a clear order and program.

The urban design then elaborates each of the three cores into the **urban detail**. At the same time, the proposal focuses primarily on the cultivation of public spaces, in combination with partial completions of new urban structures, especially new housing qualitatively corresponding to current demand, and missing local services. The proposal is processed honestly and responsibly, it is documented both in situations and in illustrative sections and bird's eye perspectives as well as perspectives from the pedestrian's horizon. The design of the main urban layers and systems is then documented in diagrams. Better comprehensibility of the entire proposal would have benefited from a greater degree of detail, both in situations and especially in perspectives from the pedestrian's horizon. The proposal documentation is very conceptual, without much ambition for a more detailed urban and technical examination.

The work is generally well managed both methodologically and content-wise. Despite partial shortcomings, the diploma project testifies to the unequivocal ability of the diploma student to independently elaborate complex urban assignments and to work at various scales and levels of urban planning and urban design details.

I unequivocally recommend the work for defense and grade it as B - very good.

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