

Abstract

Title: Americanization in a Post-Communist Industrial City: Transformation and Identity in Ostrava, Czech Republic

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Lecture description (this is from what I submitted to the committee):

Eva will talk about how Ostrava is becoming Americanized as it transforms from a communist-era industrial city to something else – what that is and could be is part of a very intense debate right now. She will discuss the rehabilitation of housing and public spaces, the construction of numerous shopping malls and big box stores, the subsequent struggles of the historic downtown shopping zone, and infrastructure investments in highways and roads to accommodate the significant increase in car ownership in the region. As a city with a strong industrial and now post-industrial identity, these changes are about more than just real estate development. As the city is adopting more 'American' qualities, many designers and local intellectuals are searching for ways to preserve its uniqueness and keep its local identity alive, especially its working-class heritage of mines, steel mills, and manufacturing. As a practicing architect and one of the first faculty members in the city's new architecture department (established in 2006), Eva sees the city's landscape and its physical environment as critical aspects of preserving its identity through this transition.

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