

*Prefabricated housing estates today - Jižní Město (Southern Town)
through the eyes of two generations of its first inhabitants*

The current state and possible development of prefabricated housing estates is a very serious issue and there are many blank spaces on the present knowledge map that have not been investigated yet, as well as questions that have not been answered yet. At the same time, prefabricated housing estates in the Czech Republic represent an issue on which most of the general as well as professional public (across the impacted fields) has a clear opinion, which is frequently quite firm, even though they may have no -- or only minimal -- personal or professional experience with the environment. The fact that the real situation at the housing estates may be quite different from the image of housing estates perceived from the outside -- as presented by the media and viewed by “outsiders” that do not live in housing estates and do not actually know that much about them, except how the housing estates come across physically and what feelings and notions they evoke in them -- is the basic hypothesis that is tested in this thesis. This hypothesis is based on findings from domestic research as well as research from abroad that in contrast to the problematic reputation -- respectively image -- that prefabricated housing estates have in the awareness of a large part of the non-housing estate public, research of residential satisfaction in housing estates usually shows a high degree of their inhabitants’ satisfaction. Yet it is the reputation of a given prefabricated housing estate neighbourhood and the image of housing estates, which are generally considered to be among the key factors that significantly influence whether the given housing estate is accepted as a reasonable place for living, whereas stigmatisation accelerates its social and subsequently also its physical decline.

The general chapters of this thesis deal with the current state and possible development of prefabricated housing estates, especially how they are perceived by the Czech professional architectural and urbanistic public, art community and the inhabitants themselves of the housing estates. The goal is to describe the discrepancies in the perception and judgement of housing estates by these groups (experts, artists and inhabitants of housing estates) and inside these groups. The key part of the thesis is called *What life is/was like in Jižní Město from the perspective of two generations of its first inhabitants*, which is a report from qualitative research performed via in-depth interviews with today’s thirty-somethings and their parents who started to inhabit the then under construction housing estate in 1978. The main objective of this research probe was to determine how the largest Czech housing estate -- which is a symbol of probably all negative aspects of housing estate living for the general as well as professional public and the media -- is perceived as a place for life by those who grew up here and/or spent a significant part of their life here, and thus get an answer to the question of to what degree the image of housing estates in myths and stereotypes corresponds to reality.