

## SHORT SEMINAR SUMMARY

Workshop of Exchange of Experiences in Prague took place from 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> June 2008. All participants met on Thursday in educational center at Novotného lávka, where all lectures were given. The educational center has a unique location just by the Charles bridge, so the lecture room provided also a beautiful view of the bridge and the Prague castle. On beginning, all participants were welcomed by Martin Roubík, Regina Loukotová and Petr Pištěk from GEM architects, who organized the Czech part of the programme. Participants were also given catalogues of projects by GEM architects and were briefly informed about a schedule of the whole workshop.

The first lecture, named "Design in context" followed and was given by architect Martin Roubík. He explained, what does context, both material and mental, mean to him and his architectural work. Design approach in really different contexts was illustrated by projects for Egypt — honoured project from competition for the Grand Egyptian Museum and also project of the Egyptian Chamber of Commerce — and for Pardubice (Central Bohemia) — competition project for a new university campus. After a short break with refreshment architect Regina Loukotová had the lecture "The House, which has never been built again", concerned with eight architectural competitions for Old Town hall in Prague historical core and public opinion on them. Since the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, and especially after the destruction of the neogothic part of the building at the end of World War II, persists the question, what house and in what style is suitable for such a special and important gap-site. Architectural design, building program as well as public opinion on contemporary architecture were discussed after the end of this lecture. In the evening, all participants met together at the restaurant Parnas to have a dinner.

Next day in the morning, an excursion led by architect Petr Pištěk in the Prague City Centre took part. One and a half hour walk was a chance to see several good as well as poor examples of integration of modern architecture into historical context, all from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A part of this excursion was also the exhibition of competition project for Prague Town hall, related to the lecture by Regina Loukotová, and a huge model of Prague city centre, both at the Old Town hall itself. After a lunch, block of three lectures followed. The first of them by Richard Biegel, historian of art and a member of the Club for Old Prague, who described architecture in historical centre of Prague after 1989. Biggest problem in this respect is huge commercial development in situation, when almost no concept and rules for monument preservation or urban building-up strategy exists. Many valuable historical buildings have been destroyed, many gap-sites have been filled with second-class architecture and many locations have lost their atmosphere. The next lecture, by landscape architect Petra Žerebáková from Partnership Foundation, was basically on use of urban spaces. Basic problems and principles, mostly described and searched out by famous Danish architect Jan Gehl (book *Life between buildings*), were resumed and strategies of public participation in activating urban spaces were presented, together with some real examples from Prague. The last lecture by architect Vlado Milunić was named "Dancing House Story". Mr. Milunić described an arise of this famous building — including free revolutionary atmosphere of early 90's, collaboration with Frank. O. Gehry, probably the first use of digital model of a house, unique construction technology and also public discussions about this building, today one of Prague's symbols.

The only event of the last workshop day was a trip — excursion into Litomyšl, which is not only important historical town (UNESCO), but is also well known for its systematic developing of high-quality contemporary architecture — the best example in the Czech Republic in this respect. Start of this approach of town council is connected with Mr. Miroslav Brýdl, a former mayor of Litomyšl, who also was a guide to the town for this excursion — after official welcome of participants' group at the town hall. Several projects — new public buildings, reconstructions of historical buildings and arrangements of urban spaces — were visited in situ; others were presented by slide show and document movie. The trip to Litomyšl was also a chance to look in two major cities of Eastern Bohemia, Hradec Králové and Pardubice.

Petr Pištěk, Praha 5.7.2008