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Attractiveness for Younger Generation of Ostrava - Jih Housing Area Developed in Socialist Era: Through Interviews with the Inhabitants (Ostrava-City, Czech Republic)

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Abstract. Ostrava city had developed as an industrial city in socialist era but now faces to deindustrialization. Ostrava-Jih is one of the housing areas developed in the socialist era. In this paper, the attractiveness of Ostrava-Jih for younger generation was showed by interview with inhabitants. As a result, the accessibility to nature around the housing estate, commercial facilities and public facilities, reasonable rent and housing price were evaluated. Besides, the inhabitants have done some activities for making their neighbourhoods more attractive.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

After WW II, housing estates consist of mass productive housings have been built all over the world. Especially, the image of the housing estates developed in the socialist countries are generally negative such as "uniform," "grey," and so on. In the Czech Republic, one of the countries which have housing estates developed in the socialist era, the one third of the total population has lived in the prefab panel housings built in the socialist era until today. On one hand, a regeneration of these housing estates has been carried out in some areas, on the other hand, a degradation of living environment is pointed out in some areas [1]. To clarify the transformation of the housing estates developed in the socialist era after democratization and the present value of the housing estates is very important in order to make orientation towards the regeneration. In our previous research [2], a present value of the housing estates developed in the socialist era in Prague 11 was clarified. The economic condition of Prague city is relatively better and there is no remarkable population decline. Moreover, especially Prague 11 municipality has its own policy and activities for the regeneration of the area [3].

However, not all housing estates developed in the socialist era have regenerated under better conditions. In this paper, survey area is Ostrava-city (Figure 1), which was developed in the socialist era as an industrial city. At the same time, panel housing areas, mainly Fifejdy, Poruba and Ostrava-Jih area, were developed for labourers and their families. After democratization, Ostrava city faced deindustrialization and population decline (Table.1). Ostrava-Jih, consists of Zábřeh, Výškovice, Hrabůvka, Dubina and Bělský les areas, and is one of the largest housing areas developed in the socialist era in the city of Ostrava. The population trends from 1991 to 2008 is -1% in Ostrava-Jih and it is lower than -10% in Mariánské Hory a Hulváky, covered Fifejdy hosing area, and -15% in Poruba,

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[4]. It can be thought that Ostrava-Jih has attractive points for the inhabitants. In this research, fourteen inhabitants of the younger generation (including four parental generation) were interviewed in September 2015 in order to clarify the attractiveness of Ostrava-Jih housing area from the present viewpoint. Interviewees were asked about their daily lives, impressions about their neighbourhoods and activities aimed at improving their living environment along time since they were in Ostrava-Jih.

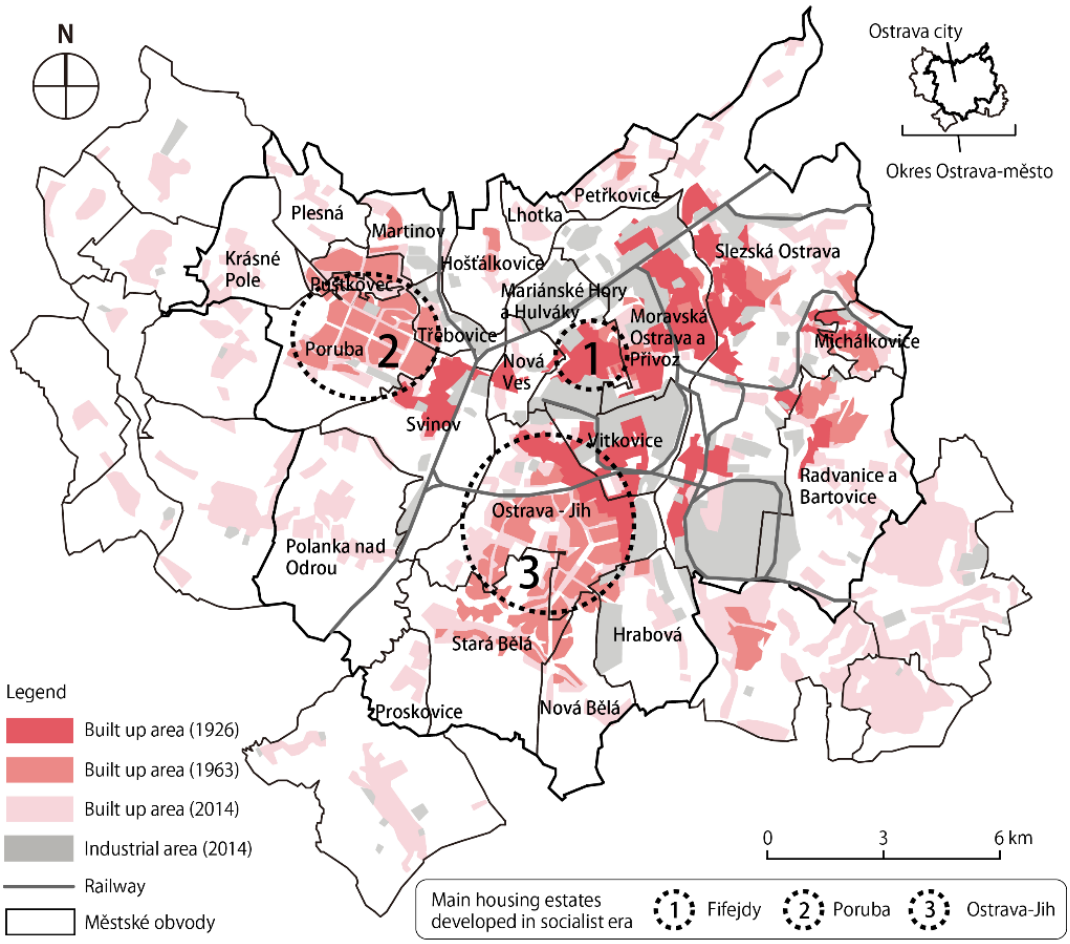


Figure 1. Built up area prescribed by land use plan and housing areas in Ostrava

Table 1. Basic information of Prague, Ostrava and Czech Republic

	Prague	Ostrava	Czech Republic
Area [km^2]	496	332	78,867
Population (2014)	1,259,079	325,640	10,538,275
Population trends (2007-14)[%]	103.9	96.7	101.5
Unemployment rate (2014) [%]	2	8.3[a]	5.9
GDP per capita (2012) [CZK]	762,956	319,314[a]	365,955

[a] Data of Moravskoslezský kraj

Source: Czech Statistical Office

1.2. Research Method

This survey is divided into two steps. First, physical inner difference of Ostrava-Jih are shown by the documents of Ostrava city archive and field survey. Secondly, the evaluation about present situation of Ostrava-Jih is clarified by the interviews with inhabitants. At last, transformation in Ostrava-Jih after democratization and inhabitants' evaluation about the present situation of Ostrava-Jih is considered based on both results from the first two steps.

2. Spatial structure of Ostrava-Jih

2.1. Development time

At first, the transformation of the built-up area in Ostrava-Jih is clarified by three digitalized maps owned by Ostrava city archive (Figure 2). Exact time of developments are unclear because there are no records about the year on the maps, but the order of development area can be seen. The development plan of each area was partly found in Ostrava city archive.

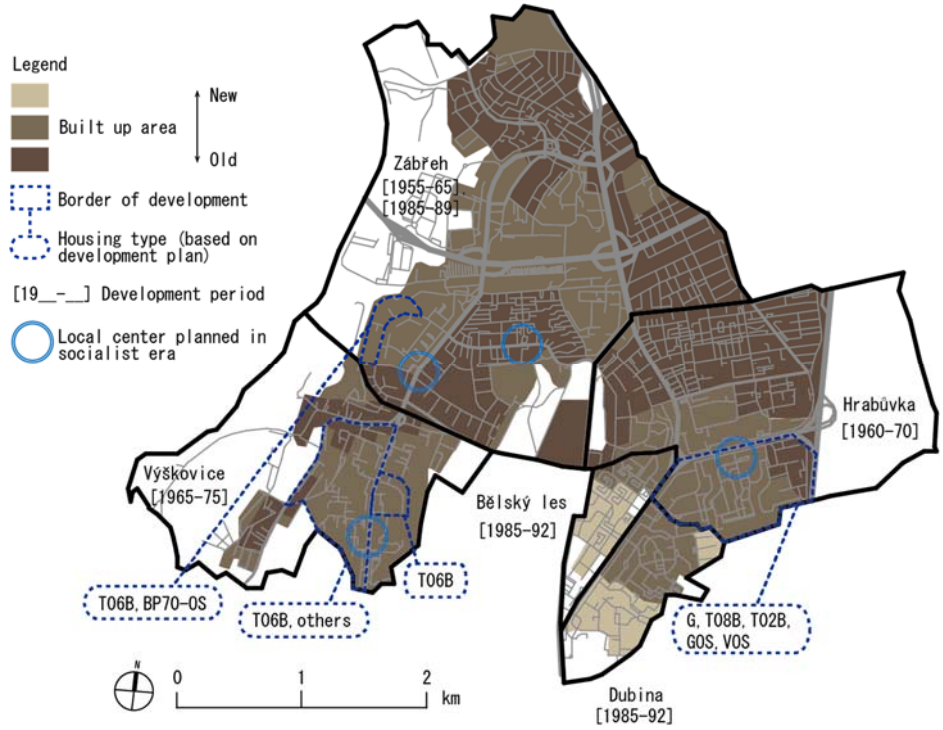


Figure 2. Transformation of built up area in Ostrava-Jih and housing type (partly)

2.2. Spatial structure

Figure 3 shows the classification by storey of apartment and the location of public facilities. By Figure 2 and Figure 3, it can be confirmed that detached house area and the low-rise apartment area were developed at the beginning of Ostrava-Jih development. Difference of accessibility to public amenities such as school and hospital among the areas in Ostrava-Jih are not remarkable in present, but most of the schools and hospitals are located in the apartment area, so these public facilities should provide services to inhabitants of the detached housings, too.

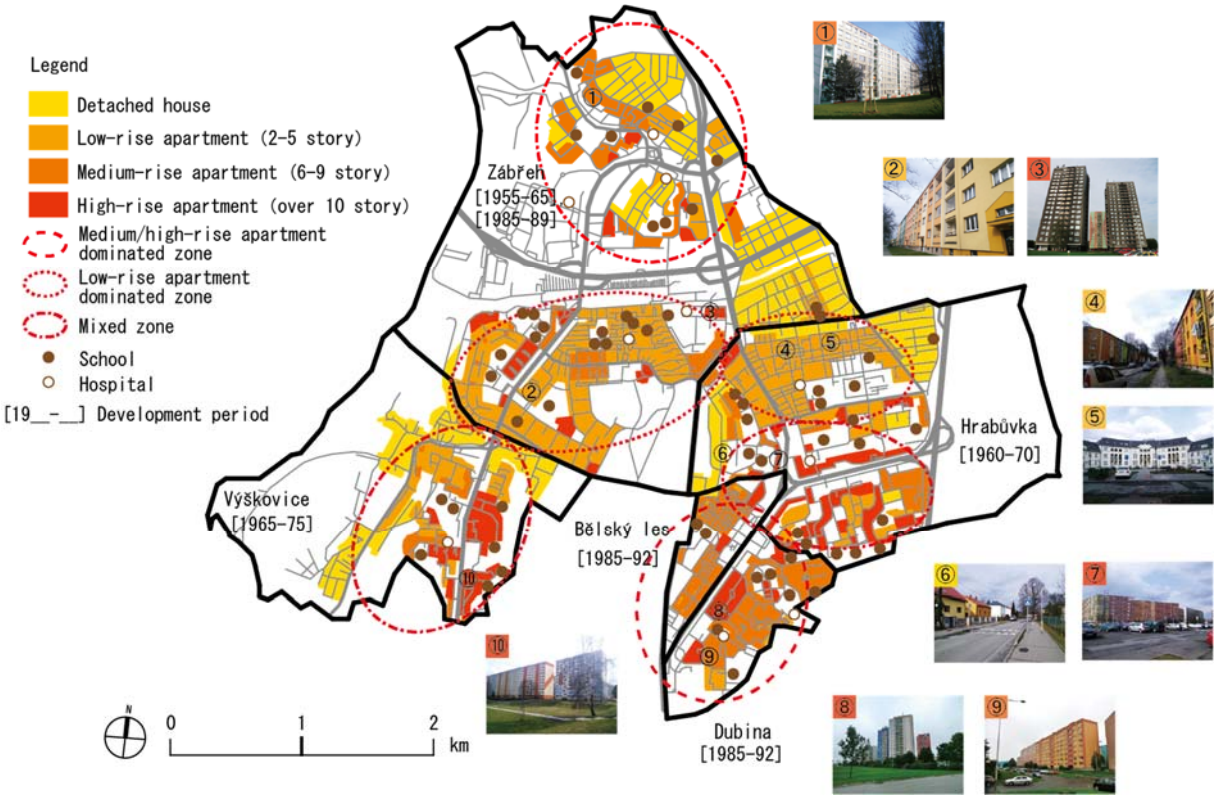


Figure 3. Classification by storey of apartment and location of public facilities

2.3. Rate of population classified by age group

Present rate of population classified by age group in Ostrava-Jih are shown on Figure 4. There is not quite difference of population aging in Hrabůvka, Výškovice, and Zábřeh areas compared with the whole Ostrava. Besides, it shows a higher rate of younger population (under 39) in Bělský les and Dubina areas which developed later compared with other areas in Ostrava-Jih.

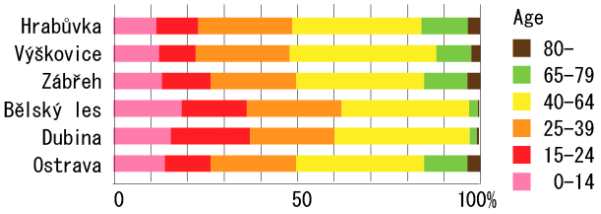


Figure 4. Rate of population classified by age group in Ostrava-Jih (2009), [5]

3. Attractiveness of Ostrava-Jih for younger generation according to the interviews with the inhabitants

3.1. Research Method

Fourteen interviewees were gathered by research co-operators who know Ostrava-Jih well. The interviews were implemented through a Czech-Japanese interpreter from September 27th to 30th, 2015 (Table 2). Interviewees are mostly younger females, but they talked not only about themselves but also about their families. Therefore, it can be thought that their comments were reflected in their families' opinions, too.

Table 2. Basic information of interviewees

Inhabitant				Building type
	sex	Age (in 2015)	Period of residence in Ostrava-Jih	
A-1	Female	52	Zábřeh 1963-	Low-rise
A-2	Male	54	Zábřeh 1961-	
B	Female	36	Zábřeh 2005-	Low-rise
C	Female	27	Zábřeh 1988-	Middle-rise
D	Female	29	Dubina 1986-	Middle-rise
E-1	Female	62	Dubina 1991-	High-rise
E-2	Female	29	Dubina 1991-2013, Hrabůvka 2014-	Low-rise
F	Female	38	Zábřeh 1977-1999, Hrabůvka 2000-05 Zábřeh 2006-	Low-rise
G	Female	63	Výškovice 1990-2010, Zábřeh 2012-	High-rise
H	Female	35	Výškovice 1990-2010, Zábřeh 2014-	Low-rise
I	Female	30	Zábřeh 1985-2007, Hrabůvka 2008-	Low-rise
J	Female	35	Zábřeh 1980-2005, Hrabůvka 2006/7-	Middle-rise
K	Female	36	Zábřeh 1979-2005, Výškovice 2006-	Middle-rise
L	Female	28	Výškovice 2009-11, Zábřeh 2012-	Low-rise

Low-rise: 2-5 story apartment Middle-rise: 6-9 story apartment High-rise: over 10 story apartment

*A-I and A-2 are a married couple, A and C are a family, E-1 and E-2 are a family, G and H are a family

Interviewees were asked about their daily lives, impressions about their neighbourhoods and activities improving their living environment along time since they started their lives in Ostrava-Jih until today. Topics were prepared in advance in order to give some chances to remember their memories and recognize their customs but the topics which interviewees want to talk were prioritized. If an interviewee had a special role or did a unique activity, the related questions were added according to the situation. At the interview, the map of Ostrava-Jih and its surroundings was prepared and checked the places of each topic on the map for reduce ambiguity and misunderstanding of places as possible. After the interviews, the places pointed out in the interviews were confirmed by the interviewer's field survey.

3.2. Results of the interviews

The results of the interviews were organized in Table 3 and Figure 5. The comments were summarised to following categories; green space, playground, commercial facility, public facility, public security, transportation, and housing.

Table 3. Selected comments of interviews

Topic	Location	No.	Selected Comments
GS	【O】 in Figure 5	1	・*It takes only 10 minutes from my apartment to the river and forest. There is a cycling course around the river, so it is good for taking a walk.* ・*I often went to the forest in my childhood.* ・*I do cycling along the river.*

	【B】 in Figure 5	2	*・Bělský les is my best favourite place. I can take a rest here or play sports. I go mushroom hunting in autumn.* *・I used to take a walk with my dog when I was a high school student. It is good that the forest is close to my house.* *・I often go to Bělský les. In winter for skiing, and in summer for cycling. There is a cross country course in Bělský les.* *・I like taking a rest with my child in Bělský les. The forest is maintained better than before. My child likes to take leaves and pinecones.* *・Bělský les is well maintained now and better than before.* *・At the beginning, I used to do jogging in the forest. When I started dating my boyfriend, we used to exercise together and take a walk. I like river Odra and Bělský les in Ostrava-Jih.*
	D	3	*・I am not satisfied with the poor green spaces compared with other areas.*
PG	V	4	*・My child used to play in front of our apartment. A sandbox and old equipment constructed in socialist era has been still exist. A new playground has been planned, but it has not been implemented yet.*
	Z	5	*・Recently a new playground with rope equipment was made.*
		6	*・There is a mound near the school. It was made by sand which was dug for the housing development. I had played with a sled here in winter.*
	H	7	*・There were no playgrounds around here even one sand box. Therefore, we (inhabitants of the apartment) made a soccer goal and a sandbox by ourselves. Around 40 children play there in sunny days. It is good that I can see them from the window of my house and there are no cars around here, but sometimes it is noisy because of the children's voice. My favourite place in Ostrava-Jih is this playground in front of my apartment. Parents often talk on the bench and do birthday parties for children. We have strong connection with our neighbours.*
	D	8	*・Playground equipment was not enough, but there were small sandboxes. The number of playgrounds has increased. There was no playground with special rope equipment in the socialist era.*
CF	V	9	*・This place was very comfortable and convenient when I moved in. Everything is in Shopping street Odra, such as beauty salon, restaurant, post office and cultural centre. Now shopping street Odra is being reconstructed.*
		10	*・I had often been to the tea house (čajovna in Czech) in Poruba. It is also in Ostrava-Jih and very popular. The atmosphere changed a little now, but it is still good.* *・I used to go often to the čajovna when I was a university student.*
	Z	11	*・I go to Kaufland for special shopping. There was no such large shopping centre before.* *・I do my shopping mainly at the shopping centre. It is near to my apartment. It was built in the 90s. It is a good change because it is convenient.* *・I go to Shopping Park for special shopping. I can go there on foot.*
		12	*・In socialist era, I used to go to the shopping street Kotova in Vyškovicka.*
	Z	13	*・A market near my house has existed since the socialist era and still remains. They have sold fresh vegetables.*

	H	14	*・I often go to the restaurant in Venuše after I got married. In a part of Venuše, some events for children are held.* *・I often go to the pub in Venuše.* *・I used to go to the shopping street Špalíček when I was a student. There had been many small shops such as pet shop.* *・I had a part-time job in the disco for a half year.*
	H	15	*・Shopping street Broadway was a good place for shopping, but nowadays it is noisy and makes me feel unsafe.* *・In Shopping street Broadway there were restaurants and discos in which I used to go.* *・There are small shops and restaurants in the shopping street Broadway.*
	D	16	*・Hruška was the only supermarket in 1991 around here. I have to go shopping to Hrabůvka for shoes, for example. Now everything is in Dubina.* *・The oldest supermarket in this area is Hruška. It was built probably at the beginning of the 90s. Intersuper was built around the year 2000.*
	D	17	*・It takes about 10 minutes on foot from my house to Tesco which was built probably in 2000.*
PF	H	18	*・Hospital, Kindergarten and school are near here. It is very convenient.*
PS	Z	20	*・The public security has become worse. Especially, there are about five dormitories for low-income people. This square was safe before but after the dormitories were built it is not safe anymore. The change started around ten years ago.* *・It was a safe place at first, but now it is not so safe. Troublesome people and pickpockets are increased. The special dormitory for low-income people was built.*
TP	Z	21	*・The traffic system is same as before. The timetable of tram and bus looks not changed significantly.* *・Poruba, my workplace, and the central part of Ostrava city, my husband's workplace, are rather close from here.* *・I'm satisfied with the transportation system. It is convenient because the bus and tram route is close to my apartment.*
HS	Z	22	*・I'm rather satisfied with the renovation of the whole housings. The renovation was completed quickly with no problem.* *・We decided to renovate the roof and windows eight years ago. At the renovation, construction works of roof and window were bad, therefore the walls got mould and air was entering through cracks of the windows. We wanted to complain but the company does not exist anymore. This apartment was built 60 years ago, but renovation of insulation has not been done yet. Part of the inhabitants do not want to do anything anymore. They disappointed to do renovation because of the failure of renovation of the window.* *・I like the high-rise apartment because of good view. I'm satisfied with my apartment perfectly. I do not want to change anything.* *・I have maintained the public spaces in my apartment as a part time job. Not only cleaning, but also decoration of flowerpots and pictures. I cleaned just yesterday.* *・I want to live in a low-rise building. I don't like high-rise. However, low-rise housing is popular so it is difficult to find a good one. In future, I want to live in*

			another area because the number of rooms of this apartment is not enough. Poruba is also OK, but the price is higher.
	V	23	*·A part of this apartment is owned privately and the remain of it is owned by cooperation. Therefore, the inhabitants divided in two groups and each group selected renovation company separately. Then, we renovated separately. Now I want to renovate insulation of facade, but we cannot because we have not reached a consensus building.*
	H	24	*·I have more unpleasant points than pleasant points. The insulation of apartment has not been renovated yet, so it is cold here in winter.*
	D	25	*·The quality of the apartment developed in the end of the socialist era is not very good, but it was very cheap.*

GS: green space, PG: playground, CF: commercial facility, PF: public facility, PS: public security, TP: transportation, HS: housing

Z: Zábřeh, H: Hrabůvka, V: Výškovice, D: Dubina

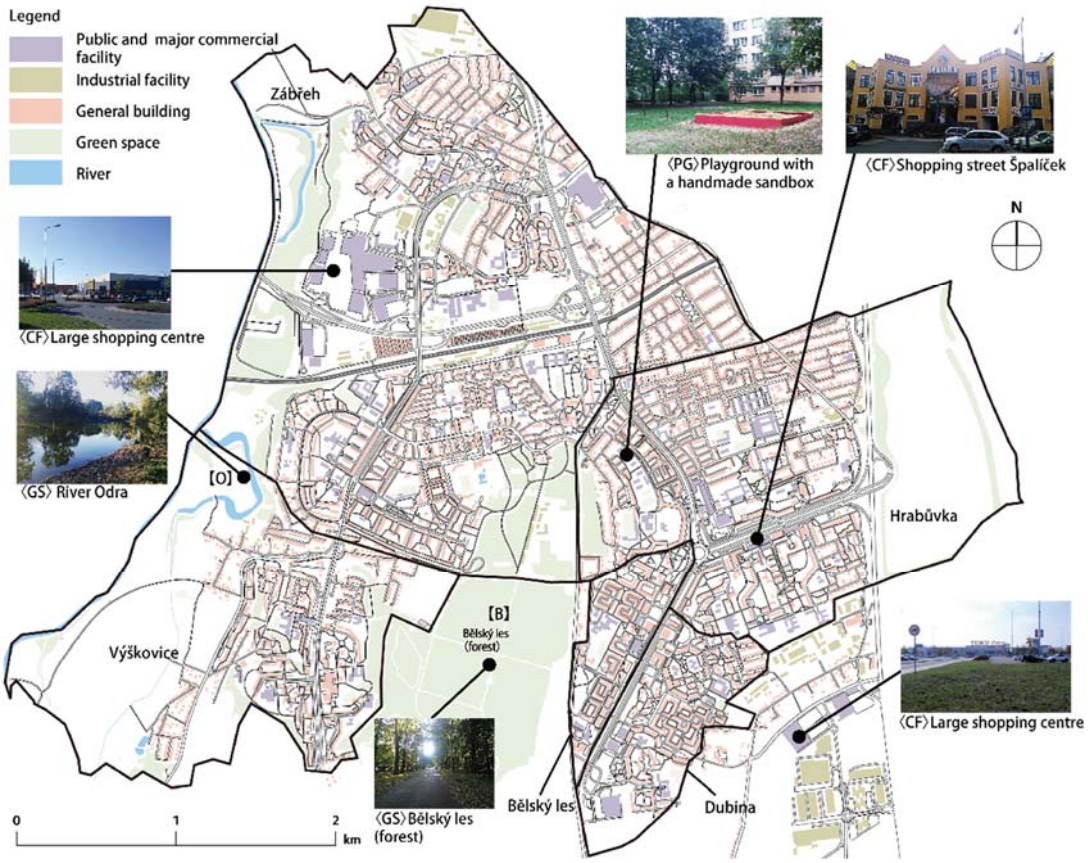


Figure 5. Locations pointed out by interviewees in Ostrava-Jih

3.2.1. Green space. The rich green areas such as Bělsky les, River Odra and the surrounding forest are used for recreations such as walking, cycling and jogging by many inhabitants with their families.

3.2.2. Playground. One of the inhabitants of Hrabůvka said that she made a sandbox and a soccer goal in an open space in front of her apartment with her neighbours. She also said that the playground was very popular for children and communication among neighbours was very strong.

3.2.3. Commercial facility. About the accessibility to commercial facilities, there has been at least one core centre with commercial facility in each area of Ostrava-Jih, except for in Dubina area where no commercial function had been constructed at the beginning of area development. However, new commercial facilities were built after democratization, also in Dubina area.

3.2.4. Public facility. Public facilities such as school and hospital are located in each area of Ostrava-Jih. Some interviewees pointed out the good accessibility to public facilities from their apartments. It can be confirmed from the location map of the public facilities in Ostrava-Jih.

3.2.5 Public security. Some people pointed out that dormitories for low-income people built after democratization are connected with security problem.

3.2.6 Transportation. Public transportation systems such as tram and bus have been kept since socialist era and the good connection to other areas among Ostrava city were pointed out.

3.2.7 Housing. An interviewee had repaired her house well and satisfied with present situation of her housing. However, an interviewee experienced a trouble of repair and some interviewees could not have been repaired because of the difficulty of consensus building. An interviewee maintained common spaces of her apartment as a part time job. According to her, the maintenance was generally done by a management company, but the maintenance of common spaces could be done by more unique way such as decoration when the owners of the apartment agreed to do so. The reasonable price of renting or buying an apartment unit was one of the important reasons why house seekers decided to buy or lent their present apartments. Some interviewees have done renovation of the equipment and rooms individually.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Attractiveness of Ostrava-Jih

Firstly, it can be said that green spaces around the housing area represent a big attractiveness for the inhabitants. Many interviewees talked about green spaces connected with their memories with their families. Evaluation of rich green areas around housing areas can be also seen in the Prague case. It might be thought that green space around housing area can be common merit for inhabitants in large housing estates developed in the outside of the city centre. Secondly, accessibility to commercial facilities and transportation system is also highly evaluated. Transportation system and local centre of each area planned in socialist era have served a function since socialist era and after democratization, more commercial facilities were built even where local centre were not exist in socialist era such as upper Zábřeh and Dubina area. Variety of commercial facility after democratization can be also seen in the Prague case. Thirdly, a reasonable price for renting or buying an apartment unit was one of the important reasons why house seekers decided to buy or lent their apartment. Besides, a unique point of Ostrava-Jih is inhabitants' own action for improving their living environment such as making playground equipment and decorating public spaces of apartment.

4.2. Conclusion

The younger inhabitants who started living in Ostrava-Jih after democratization found several attractiveness in the panel housing area, which were realized both before and after democratization. The tiny story of neighbourhood cooperation for children's playground sounds significant as a means

that some shortage of function can be a seed for new attractiveness. These interviews suggest that the large panel housing area should be regarded and encouraged as the living environment with gradual realizations of various attractiveness for the inhabitants. In Japan, population aging is going on in many housing estates built around the 1970s and promotion of them for younger generation has been one of challenging topics. The attractiveness of Ostrava-Jih for younger generation even in severe economic situation of Ostrava city could give a hint to improve this aging problem also in Japan.

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