

Trends in Urban Development

Anna Vaňová

The author of the reviewed monograph is prof. Ing. Anna Vaňová, PhD., who has been active for many years at the Department of Public Economics and Regional Development at the Faculty of Economics of Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica. Her research systematically focuses on innovative concepts of urban and regional development, as well as marketing in the public sector. In these areas, she is a recognized Slovak expert and the author or co-author of over two hundred publications. She has applied her knowledge in practice through participation in more than seventy international and national projects. Her intensive cooperation with public administration bodies and the private sector confirms not only the academic but also the practical relevance of her research, which is directly reflected in the formulation and implementation of local public policies.

Professor Vaňová enters the Slovak expert discourse on urban development with a remarkable scientific monograph that, thanks to the topicality of its themes, also appeals to professionals in public policy and urban governance. The publication is highly relevant and beneficial in the current context, in which Slovak cities are seeking concrete ways to link digital transformation with environmental resilience and social inclusion. The dynamics of climate adaptation and smart technologies position cities as key actors not only in economic growth but also in public health protection. The monograph captures these contemporary challenges in a synthetic overview of trends and offers methodological tools that urban leaders can apply in the development of strategic documents.

The structure of the publication *Trendy v rozvoji miest (Trends in Urban Development)* is exceptionally clear and systematic. Following the introduction, four interconnected chapters guide the reader from general theoretical foundations to practical implications. In the conclusion, the publication summarizes the findings, compares the presented concepts, and formulates recommendations for urban policies. Particularly valuable is the inclusion of the table of contents and a summary in English, along with a rich bibliography and appendices, which provide the reader with a strong foundation for further study.

The first chapter, titled *Cities at the beginning of the 21st century*, serves as a solid theoretical foundation for the monograph. The author begins by explaining the importance of cities in a globally changing society and highlights the urgency of finding new development concepts in the face of rapid urbanization and climate challenges. She then systematically examines the definition of a city, its historical evolution, and typological classification, with particular attention to the specific characteristics of the Slovak urban environment. A strong point of this chapter is the clear logic of its subsections and the rich argumentative base ranging

from national legislation to international urban studies. This provides the reader with a well-anchored terminological framework that facilitates orientation in the later, empirically oriented parts of the book. The first chapter thus reliably lays the groundwork for the subsequent analysis of urban development issues and trends presented in the following chapters.

The second chapter, *Problems and challenges of urban development*, systematically builds on the introductory definitions by dividing the topic into four logically progressing sections: theoretical aspects of urban development, the nature of urban growth, key challenges, and the connection between urban development and regional development theories. The author begins by summarizing the basic growth models, then identifies the factors that currently shape the dynamics of cities the most. At the end of the chapter, she illustrates how these factors are reflected in regional development theories, thereby creating a logical transition between urban and regional discourse. This chapter thus provides a comprehensive analysis of the main problems and challenges, while also laying an effective foundation for the in-depth analysis of trends in the next part of the monograph.

The chapter *Trends in urban development* forms the analytical core of the publication. Following an introductory theoretical framework in which the author explains key categories and indicators of urban development, the chapter presents eleven thematically focused subsections. These consist of theoretical foundations and ten specific concepts, including sustainable, green, solar, smart, resilient, creative, agile, charter, happy cities, and finally, the city as a living laboratory. Each trend is introduced through terminological and historical context, identification of key factors and measurable indicators, as well as illustrative practical examples. A strong feature of the chapter is its clear structure, which allows the reader to quickly compare the potential of each concept and its conditions for application. Thanks to the combination of theoretical depth and practical examples, the third chapter offers a valuable overview that can serve as a methodological guide for municipal governments when selecting suitable innovative tools.

The fourth chapter, *Summary of trends in urban development*, serves a synthetic function by connecting key insights from the previous parts of the publication and focusing on their mutual comparison. In clear diagrams, the author compares the strengths and weaknesses of the presented concepts and identifies areas of overlap where the individual models complement or intersect with one another. A valuable aspect of this chapter is its emphasis on practical implications, from leveraging synergies between digital transformation and climate adaptation to offering recommendations for measurable indicators and participatory approaches in the creation of urban strategies. Although the recommendations are primarily oriented toward the European context, the chapter provides a clear framework for

integrated and coherent urban development planning, thereby logically concluding the monograph and highlighting its relevance for both academic and policy practice.

In the conclusion, the author formulates key recommendations for urban policy makers based on a critical comparison of the presented trends and their indicators, emphasizing the need to connect digital transformation with the green agenda and participatory urban governance. She also outlines directions for further research, highlighting the importance of quantitative methods and applied studies that would track the practical impacts of these trends on municipalities and support the transformation of Slovak cities into modern, resilient, and inclusive centers of the 21st century. Thus, the final chapter contributes not only by summarizing previous findings but also by issuing a clear call for the systematic integration of theory and practice in future development strategies.

The monograph *Trendy v rozvoji miest (Trends in Urban Development)* presents a meticulously crafted and uniquely comprehensive synthesis of contemporary urban concepts. Its greatest strength lies in combining theoretical depth with a clear practical orientation, giving it the potential to appeal not only to academics but also to urban strategy designers and public policy makers. Its systematic structure, clear argumentation, and rich bibliography make it a reliable reference framework for further research and practical implementation. Although some subsections work with domestic examples more selectively and international comparisons focus primarily on the European context, the author balances this with clear recommendations that reflect current challenges of digital transformation and the European Green Deal. Overall, the publication can be regarded as a significant contribution to Slovak urban development literature and is recommended to all those seeking theoretically grounded yet practically applicable insights for the sustainable and innovative transformation of cities.

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