

Periphery as a model: small and medium-scale social care facilities in post-socialist central Europe

Peter Mazalan, Dorota Volfova, Michal Hronský
Slovak University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture

Keywords

Care facilities, Inclusion, Periphery, Post-socialist, Architecture

In the context of Slovakia, marked by deepening spatial inequalities and demographic decline, peripheral regions can become key environments for exploring new models of social service provision (elderly care homes, facilities for people with mental disabilities, children's homes, and services for the homeless people). This paper examines how architecture and planning can redefine social care facilities in sparsely populated areas - from residential homes and community centres to hybrid care typologies - and transform demographic regression into an opportunity for flexible, scalable, and locally embedded spatial solutions in line with the XS-S-M framework and the principle of "fitting."

The key concept of "fitting" refers to the appropriate calibration of scale and context-sensitive integration, turning material, financial, and demographic constraints into a productive design framework. Small and medium scale interventions emerge as suitable platforms for linking formal and informal care, enabling the multi-functional use of existing buildings, and fostering cross-sectoral cooperation among municipalities, healthcare providers, schools, and civic initiatives.

In the post-socialist context of Central Europe, these approaches respond to the legacy of centralised models while reflecting ongoing processes of decentralisation and transformation in social care systems. Emphasising smaller scales and the adaptive reuse of existing infrastructure represents not only an economically efficient strategy but also a means of strengthening local ties and identity.

The paper argues that well-designed social care facilities in peripheral regions can function not only as infrastructures of care but also as active spatial nodes supporting stability, identity, and sustainable regional development. In this sense, "fitting" repositions architecture towards public responsibility and offers scalable paradigms for future models of social policy and spatial justice.