

Prague City Archives, Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences,
Faculty of Humanities of Charles University in Prague and Institute of History
of Faculty of Arts of University of J. E. Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem

A CITY AND ITS RAMPARTS

The 36th international conference on Urban History
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Ramparts used to belong among essential building components of practically all towns and cities as of the Middle Ages, and of majority of European towns and cities since the early modern era (including specific exemptions, such as London or Paris after the Fronde).

City walls, often in a form of genuine fortifications and citadels thus surrounded cities and towns as one of their key – and tensely symbolic – attributes since the Middle Ages until the époque after 1850s or the beginning of the 20th century: Prague had its own ramparts since the 1230s.

Clay and wooden palisades were replaced by fortifications of stone. They had obvious functions of providing security and enabling city's defence, along with demarcation (and limitation) of the city's area, thus serving as a visualisation of a spatial border of legal and administrative districts, or at least, their cores. (Issues of both "Bergfrieds" and extensions of municipal law into suburban areas are to be omitted here, regardless the important role they played in terms of "proprietary law and duties" related to the ramparts.)

We are primarily interested in city walls as urbanistic, architectural, building and constructive phenomenona, namely – in the spirit of our previous conferences – thru the lens of the whole-European comparison. It will not be about history of military events, conquests or, from the opposite perspective, heroic defence of city walls. Quite contrarily, we would like to deal with the issues of measuring, the concept of demarcation within agglomerations and with building aspects, i. e.: Who initiated construction of city walls? Who planned them? And according to which patterns specifically? Who defined their building form and shape?

There are obviously numerous other issues we would like to deal with, either from the perspective of new research or knowledgeable comparative summaries of present state of knowledge: Who constructed the city walls – domestic masters, or foreign guilds called up for this purpose? Who paid for it? When and up to what extent did the construction or major reconstruction of city walls take place? Were they initiated by particular towns or cities, or was it a sovereign (or land representatives), who ordered statute labour, secured the construction financially and ordered the monasteries and chapters to send appropriate workers for the city walls construction?

What was left in front of new city walls and what did this new separation by city walls mean for the settlement of metropolitan agglomerations? How did the city walls contribute to bonus of districts settlement? Which types of buildings, which types of architecture and which building areas did then

arise behind city walls in different époques and why? What was the relation of the closest suburban areas, regulated by city walls, to the towns, and how did they operate daily, even in terms of security?

On which legal base the communities constructed their city walls? On which legal base and who cared for the city walls, in terms of financing the maintenance, repairs and improvements? Was there any reflection of establishment of “walled towns” from a sovereign’s side as well as from burghers’ (lately town councils’) perspective? How the city walls were perceived by both rural and foreign visitors of cities?

Namely for the early modern era and the 19th century, we are of course interested in changes within relations of fortification modernization towards changes and growth of a city as an organism. Is it possible to understand the domination of a citadel over a city, a multifunctional economic, transport, social and representative organism as a common phenomenon, or rather an exceptional one?

The theme includes the issues of city walls as solid baulks of experienced urban space, resp. later – namely after annulation of predominantly military significance of fortifications in the 19th century – a particular space, i. e. a part of municipal area and everyday life within towns.

Other issues are related to buying up, abolition and deconstruction of city walls (inner city walls around 1800 in Prague’s Old Town, and municipal outer city walls after 1866), resp. various means of utilization of now useless fortification areas.

Applications are to be submitted at the latest by **April 15, 2017**. Applications without **abstracts** will not be considered. The organisers reserve the right to choose. Chosen and/or presented papers in the appropriate form are to be issued within the journal *Documenta Pragensia*. The articles are subject to approval of the journal’s Advisory Board. There is no charge for participation. Foreign active participants will be provided – under the umbrella of the organisation – with accommodation at the hotels of the Czech Academy of Sciences or Charles University in Prague. Conference languages: Czech and German (possibly English). Simultaneous Czech-German translation is on hand.

The organisers:

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