



**ReNewTown**

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**NEW POST-SOCIALIST CITY:  
COMPETITIVE AND ATTRACTIVE**



**EUROPEAN UNION  
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ReNewTown project is implemented through  
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4.1 Area of Interventions: Developing Polycentric  
Settlement Structures and Territorial  
Cooperation

# ReNewTown

**NEW POST-SOCIALIST CITY:  
COMPETITIVE AND ATTRACTIVE**

## Brochure on market research & good practice results



## ReNew Town Partnership



Polish Academy of Sciences,  
Stanisław Leszczycki Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization  
Twarda 51/55, 00-818 Warsaw, Poland



Municipality of Velenje  
Titov trg 1, 3320 Velenje, Slovenia



Karlsruhe Institute of Technology  
Kaiserstrasse 12, 76131 Karlsruhe, Germany



Prague 11 Metropolitan District  
Ocelikova 672, 149 41 Praha 4, Czech Republic



## ReNew Town Partnership



Regional Development Agency of Usti Region, PLC  
Velká Hradební 3118/48, 400 02 Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic

*University of Ljubljana*



Ośrodek Kultury  
im. C. K. Norwida

The C.K. Norwid Culture Centre  
Os. Górali 5, 31-959 Cracow, Poland



Agency for development of Gemer region  
Vansovej 711, 981 01 Hnúšťa, Slovakia

Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana  
KONGRESNI TRG 12, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

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## 1. Introduction to the ReNew Town Project

### a. Overall Aim and Objectives

Central Europe's recent socialist past has left the more than 300 million people living there with a complex urban legacy. Some of them have experienced positive transformations of where they live. But many continue to be challenged by problems related to urban design, use of public spaces, economic decline, and social and cultural deprivation. The ReNewTown project, which is supported by the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, aims to address some of these challenges by finding adequate and feasible solutions through the promotion of a cross-border knowledge exchange between the eight project partners from Germany, Poland, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Slovakia.

### b. Pilot Actions

Within the ReNew Town project framework, four pilot actions are being carried out. Focused on reducing the disparities between districts in post-socialist cities, the pilot actions aim to:

- create a model for the development of the cultural and social life by transforming a post-industrial building into a centre for cultural activities (Nowa Huta, Poland),
- transform a public space to a new purpose by offering a meeting place for local residents (Velenje, Slovenia),
- support the development of local entrepreneurship (Prague, Czech Republic),
- transform an old building from the socialist era to a new purpose - a museum for socialist curiosities (Hnusta, Slovakia).



## 2. Research within the ReNew Town project

While some of the ReNew Town partners are implementing the previously described small-scale regeneration projects during the project's lifespan, KIT supports the partnership through providing knowledge and advice to facilitate the implementation of the pilot actions.

During the initial project lifespan, we have carried out an extensive good practice study to identify relevant examples of urban regeneration in Germany. This good practice selection was undertaken based on a set of criteria, driven by good governance. Other key criteria included neighbourhood-scale interventions, innovation, sustainability, transferability, stakeholder involvement and the need for small scale investments. While these selected good practice examples give interesting insights into small-scale participation projects, KIT has also done deepening research on stakeholder involvement and governance within two in-depth studies of larger urban regeneration projects.

To get more insights into the relevance of small-scale participation projects and to discuss the research results on stakeholder involvement and participation with people in practice, KIT has also carried out a stakeholder consultation meeting on the 20th of June 2012 (description and results see chapter 7).



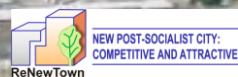
### 3. The Reunification and the Legacy of the GDR

As the peaceful revolution of the people in 1989 forced the wall to be opened, both East and West German citizens looked forward to a 'new' future. But the era of being separated left its marks and the reunited country soon had to face sudden-onset problems – not only but also in regard to urban regeneration.

The westward migration of 2.18 million East German people between 1991 and 2004 increased the housing vacancy rate in East Germany massively especially with regard to the prefabricated housing districts that were constructed as standard models of living during the socialist era. Furthermore, as the East German development policy concentrated on the construction of these large housing districts, the reunited Germany had to face the problem of neglected inner city Grunderzeit buildings which were not maintained or refurbished for years.

Both challenges, the high housing vacancy rate in prefabricated housing districts and the poor condition of inner city Grunderzeit buildings were in the focus of the German urban regeneration activities that were carried out after 1989.

Our research within the ReNew Town project has identified 10 good practice examples on how to cope with these challenges. Furthermore the two in-depth studies that were conducted both in East and West Germany, described two different ways of how to deal with urban regeneration.



### 4. Good Practice in Germany

The following 10 good practice examples were identified as exemplifying small scale investment projects executed in urban neighbourhoods (a detailed description is available on <http://www.renewtown.eu/good-practices.html>):

- Verein Kunstplatte e.V., Stendal: Foundation of an association for cultural offers in a prefabricated housing district,
- Ein Platz für die Marie, Berlin: Creation of a green park on a demolition site,
- 400m<sup>2</sup> Dessau, Dessau: New types of open spaces on wasteland areas,
- Stadthalten, Leipzig: Art intervention on wasteland,
- Boxion Kunst und Kultur für Leerläden, Berlin: Vacant shops for culture and arts,
- Heikonaut, Berlin: Transformation of a vacant kindergarten building into a start-up business center,
- Wächterhäuser, Leipzig: Support for small business operators to rent spaces in Grunderzeit building,
- Fassadenmalerei Volière, Berlin: Painting the façade of a large building complex,
- Bürgerjury, Berlin: A citizens' jury decided on urban regeneration projects within their quarter,
- Kulturhochhaus, Berlin: Provision of cultural and social events in a prefabricated high-rise.



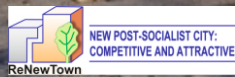
## 5. The Two Surveys within the ReNew Town Project in Germany

As the previously described good practice examples identified small scale investment projects, the following section describes the two in-depth studies that were carried out in East and West Germany.

The first in-depth study of urban regeneration focused on an alternative living project, the MiKa in Karlsruhe, West Germany, where four former military barracks were transformed into residential apartments for around 180 inhabitants. In 1997 more than 100 people decided to form a community and to refurbish four military barracks both with a starter loan of the Baden-Wuerttemberg state government and the willingness to carry out a lot of work by their own hands.

The second case study focused on a state-run urban renewal project that was executed in the East German municipality of Cottbus. Its youngest housing estate, Neu-Schmellwitz, was constructed in 1985 to meet the housing needs of 5,000 inhabitants. It became part of the German funding programme 'Stadtumbau Ost' in 2003. Within the project, nearly half of the apartments (2,000 from 5,500) were demolished and the outside area was developed.

As a result of both research works, the good practice selection and the two surveys, three approaches – using both hard and soft tools – were identified as predominant urban regeneration measures in Germany



## 6. Identified Tools on How to Cope with Urban Regeneration Challenges in Germany

### a. Hard Tool: Demolition

In 2001 the German Bundestag set up the funding programme 'Stadtumbau Ost' to subsidize demolition in order to reduce the housing stock and housing density and to stop the on-going indebtedness of the housing associations who owned most of the buildings that fell vacant.

Our studies showed that:

- Demolition is a tremendous disruption in people's lives.
- Not all cities participating in the funding programme „Stadtumbau Ost“ carried out citizens' participation and involvement (e.g. Weißwasser or Plauen). Usually, municipality and municipal housing associations acted as key stakeholders.
- Demolition is not enough. In Neu-Schmellwitz for instance, other incentives were given to the citizens in order to motivate them to stay (e.g. cheap rents, provision of a public transport system, provision of social assistance and a contact point).
- It is questionable if demolition activities can prevent outward migration.



## b. Excursion: The Mika Tenant Initiative – an Alternative Way to Deal with Urban Regeneration

The MiKa community-based regeneration project showed that:

- A bottom-up project can work if citizens' motivation is utilised.
- Participation and common decision-making can successfully come to live if a management structure is elaborated where everyone is allowed to participate.
- An urban regeneration project can be carried out on a low-cost level if compromises are agreed by the involved stakeholders.

New questions posed by the study:

What is it important to consider – from a good governance perspective – in planning and implementing an urban regeneration project?

What ways of living should interventions encourage? Should local authorities be motivated, for instance, to implement projects like the MiKa co-housing?

What is needed to prevent outward migration in prefabricated housing districts after demolition activities were carried out?



## c. Soft Instruments (I): Revitalisation of Inner City Gruenderzeit Buildings

As a result of years of neglect, inner city Gruenderzeit buildings had to be refurbished after 1989. In cities where this happened (e.g. Leipzig), the whole city earned benefit from the refurbishment measures. But it is generally difficult to motivate private building owners to invest in their properties and potential tenants to rent apartments or spaces in Gruenderzeit buildings.

Our research identified three small scale projects which have tried to solve this problem for example by bringing property owners and potential tenants together (Projekt Wächterhauser), Leipzig), by offering a Gruenderzeit apartment for trial living (Projekt Probewohnen, Görlitz) or by offering consultancy services to property owners (Projekt Eigentümermoderation, Glaucha). For a detailed description please have a look at <http://www.renewtown.eu/good-practices.html>, <http://www.renewtown.eu/initiatives.html>.

## d. Soft Instruments (II): Enhancement of Overall Quality of Living: Non-structural Projects

Insights from the good practice study in (former) East Germany:

Urban regeneration is more than architectural enhancement or refurbishment of the urban fabric. As (city) life is manifold, German regeneration activities do not only focus on structural projects but also on projects to enhance the quality of life such as redesigning outside areas, activating the social and cultural life and strengthening the business sector.

In all of our good practices, an intermediate institution (e.g. neighbourhood management office, civic association) acted as a link between local authorities and citizens. They motivated people to participate in projects and acted as mediators.

Overall, people were willing to participate. The 'Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung Berlin' for instance detected that a small-scale project such as a neighbourhood jury (where citizens can decide about which projects to fund) gives a new self-confidence to the people and the ability to change something instead of having the feeling to be alone with their problems ([http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/wohnen/quartiersmanagement/download/QM\\_quartiersfonds.pdf](http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/wohnen/quartiersmanagement/download/QM_quartiersfonds.pdf)).



## Residual questions/unresolved issues:

Can good practice experience be transferred effectively from East to West Germany and from Germany to its Central European neighbours? Or vice versa?

How can interventions be implemented so that they continue to work beyond short term?

At what scale is it most beneficial to intervene? What's the (longer term) impact of small-scale projects?

What kinds of 'brokerage' work best? Which institutions are most effective at playing the role of intermediary?

## 7. Consultation Workshop

In the course of 'ReNew Town: New post-socialist cities – competitive and attractive' a workshop was held on the 20th of June 2012 under the auspices of project partner number 4, the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), in Karlsruhe, Germany.

The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss our research results and to find answers to selected questions posed by the studies on small-scale projects and stakeholder involvement. The results should then facilitate the work of the pilot action city partners and help to solve their problems within their particular locality.

KIT invited more than 30 local and regional stakeholders and interested citizens and communities to attend its workshop. The workshop was then divided into two parts: First, the good practice examples were presented to the participants followed by a structured plenary discussion on selected questions while the second part of the day was dominated by the results on the in-depth studies and a discussion about stakeholder involvement, its success factors and failures.



## a. Workshop Results on Good Practice in Small-Scale Projects

To get answers to the question on how to implement small-scale projects so that they work as good practices and beyond short term, the participants at the Karlsruhe workshop were asked to elaborate sets of criteria that make small-scale projects become successful good practice examples. According to the workshop participants, the following key criteria are relevant in making a small-scale project a good practice:

A small-scale project is a good practice if it

- involves stakeholders,
- is demand-oriented and generates benefit for people inside and outside of a particular quarter,
- stimulates inspiration,
- has a firm prospective and is sustainable, and
- meets a local interest.

In the plenary discussion, participants emphasized the significance of sustainability in small-scale projects and underlined the importance of them having the power to inspire – the power to inspire people inside of a locality but also the power to inspire people outside of a particular locality and the power to serve as initial spark for further projects. The participants expressed that small-scale projects have the ability to change present community structures but they also emphasized the need not to overload project participants and to be vigilant in regard to group formation processes and social exclusion.

In conclusion as advice to the ReNew Town pilot action city partners, planners of small-scale urban regeneration projects should think about what might be inspiring for local as well as other people within their planned urban regeneration project while at the same time if a small-scale project is to become a successful good practice it is essential to integrate project participants well without overloading them for the sake of gaining more attention.

## b. Workshop Results on Stakeholder Involvement: Success Factors

From the two in-depth-studies that were carried out by KIT, it became clear that stakeholder involvement is multi-faceted.

On the basis of different occurrences of stakeholder involvement within the two in-depth studies, the KIT team wanted to figure out on what is important in planning and implementing an urban regeneration project together with stakeholders. Therefore, the workshop participants were asked to elaborate a shared view on success factors and failures of stakeholder involvement in urban regeneration projects.

The list of success factors reads as follows:

- Involve all groups of actors and meet on an equal basis (administration and citizens etc.),
- leave room for manoeuvre, which means be open concerning results, be transparent and provide allowance to act,
- provide enough time and a locality for participation,
- involve an impartial moderation entity for the moderation of the participation process.

This list can be complemented by the already identified success factors, which became apparent during the study on the MiKa project:

- Elaborate a good management structure where everyone is allowed to participate,
- put effort on the achievement of compromises between the involved stakeholders, if you want to carry out a project on a low-cost level.

### c. Workshop Results on Stakeholder Involvement: Failures

Interestingly, our participants were at one with each other when thinking about factors that make stakeholder involvement fail. In the course of their discussion, the term 'inflationary stakeholder involvement' was raised and interpreted in the following manner:

Though stakeholder involvement gains a lot of attention these days, participation processes are sometimes implemented for having an 'alibi' tool when wanting to justify decisions.

Again, this statement leads back to the success factors mentioned earlier by the workshop participants – the idea that stakeholder involvement does only work if there is a real existing room for manoeuvre which will allow stakeholders to act effectively.

For further information on the ReNew Town Project and project results, please have a look at

[www.renewtown.eu](http://www.renewtown.eu)

#### Project Partner 4 Contact Details:

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)  
Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS)  
Karlsruhe 11, 76021 Karlsruhe, Germany

Local Project Team: Dr. Krassimira Paskaleva-Shapira (Local Project Leader),  
Christina Götz, Dr. Ian Cooper

Email:  
[krassimira.paskaleva@kit.edu](mailto:krassimira.paskaleva@kit.edu)  
[christina.goetz@kit.edu](mailto:christina.goetz@kit.edu)

Phone:  
0049 721 608 28036

Web:  
<http://www.itas.kit.edu/>







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