



NEW POST-SOCIALIST CITY:
COMPETITIVE AND ATTRACTIVE

ReNewTown

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Newsletter



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Dear reader, we are very pleased to release the eleventh issue of the ReNewTown project newsletter. ReNewTown constitutes a platform for discussion on urban regeneration problems reaching beyond the project's own case study research. It focuses on the most interesting urban regeneration examples in the countries involved in the project: Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Germany.

This issue contains the following articles:

ReNewTown Steering Committee Meeting in Karlsruhe

The ReNewTown meeting was organized by the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS), Karlsruhe. An important part of the agenda was dedicated to the key ReNewTown project outputs: Handbook of models entitled "Post-Socialist City: A Role Model for Urban Revitalisation in the 21st Century", Transnational Manual for Urban Revitalisation "ENGAGE. Brighter Future in Your Hands" and Transnational Development Strategy FOR THE POST-SOCIALIST CITIES OF CENTRAL EUROPE

Transnational manual for districts with a socialist burden - a positive change in your neighbourhood

Transnational manual for districts with a socialist burden is created on the basis of the results of a market research reports and good practice reports. The document contains tips and advice, as well as an illustrative scenario of how to plan and implement urban renewal projects.

An interview with Professor Grzegorz Węclawowicz, PhD, an expert on urban revitalization

Professor Węclawowicz is a recognized expert in issues related to the development of post-socialist cities in Central Europe.

RENEWED POST-SOCIALIST CITY: COMPETITIVE AND ATTRACTIVE, Final ReNewTown Project Conference

It will be held at University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Economics, February 11th and 12th, 2014. The conference aims to provide broader perspective on the competitiveness and attractiveness of post-socialist cities in Central and Eastern Europe.

The ReNewTown databases and project in brief

We present the main goal of the ReNewTown project and three databases: on good practices, initiatives and experts in the field of regeneration of urban areas built during the socialist period.



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ReNewTown Steering Committee Meeting in Karlsruhe, October 18, 2013

The ReNewTown meeting was organized by the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS), Karlsruhe.

The meeting was opened with the presentation of the project entitled “District Future – Urban Lab. An inspiration for all our cities?!” The District Future – Urban Lab project is focused on developing and testing sustainable living space in Karlsruhe. The project idea is trans-disciplinary and oriented towards the principles of sustainability, integrating ecological, social, economic, cultural, and institutional concerns.

An important part of the agenda was dedicated to the key ReNewTown project outputs:

■ **Handbook of models entitled “Post-Socialist City: A Role Model for Urban Revitalisation in the 21st Century”.** The publication presents the key models of post-socialist urban districts renewal that have been developed on the basis of surveys, pilot investment and the experience from other projects.



■ **Transnational Manual for Urban Revitalisation “ENGAGE. Brighter Future in Your Hands”.** The Manual contains tips and advice, as well as an example of how to plan and implement urban renewal projects.

■ **Transnational Development Strategy FOR THE POST-SOCIALIST CITIES OF CENTRAL EUROPE**

What is the strategy to follow in the development of post-socialist cities? Specificity and recommended courses of actions.

The above listed documents belong to the main dissemination tools of the ReNewTown project knowledge and achievements. The Transnational Manual is already available online, and the Strategy and the Handbook of Models are in the final stage of preparation. For details please visit www.renewtown.eu.



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Transnational manual for districts with a socialist burden A positive change in your neighbourhood

Post-socialist housing estates suffer from many shortcomings. Improving living conditions is not only the task of local government, but it may be a task undertaken by the residents organized in various forms of interest groups. Those who want to work to improve living conditions in residential areas often lack the knowledge and financial resources to do it. As part of the ReNewTown project, a publication was developed, which aims to help solve these problems. It draws inspiration from towns that have successfully resolved local problems and changed these places into locations that are pleasant to live in.

Transnational manual for districts with a socialist burden is created basing on the results of a market research report and good practice report. It is also based on the experience and lessons learnt from the public consultations conducted in 5 countries. The Manual concept was created on the basis of ideas and inspiration of strongly committed people in the field of revitalization of cities and towns with a socialist burden. The document also contains tips and advice, as well as an illustrative plan of how to plan and implement urban renewal projects. The actions are discussed on the basis of the model of investments realized as part of the ReNewTown project in Velenje, Slovenia.



Transnational manual includes example solutions to the most common problems identified in the course of the project:

- **Increasing the amount of cultural and social events**
A huge problem for some post-socialist town suburbs is that they were built for accommodation only. Today we see anonymous spaces, we miss common gatherings and cultural events, and the active use of public spaces.



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■ Improving the quality of public spaces

In the course of the housing estate development, prefabricated apartment blocks were first built with some spaces in between to be completed and replenished some time later. This did not happen in many cases and we are still coping with insufficient quality public spaces.

■ Development of small business

Within the socialist housing estates, the private commercial activities of their residents were not considered important. Therefore, spaces for small businesses are missing there now. Business owners have no places to operate their businesses, and residents often have no basic services available close to their homes.

■ Improving the functionality and attractiveness of buildings

The housing estate developments of that time were regarded as the highlight of the art of socialist architecture. However, we currently face the deterioration of the functionality of these buildings. Aesthetic requirements in architecture have significantly changed over the last twenty-five years.

■ Involvement of local people

Often, housing estates are characterised by an anonymous atmosphere. People are seldom interested in what is happening outside the door of their apartment. When city leaders decide about new investments in a suburb, local people often feel disregarded as they were not involved in the discussions, and they may also feel that the new structure does not conform to their needs.

■ Finding new functions for post-socialistic structures

Many buildings from the socialist era have lost their original function. If no new use can be found for them, the structures fall into disrepair and create a certain type of brownfield right in the centre of towns.



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An interview with Professor Grzegorz Węclawowicz, PhD, an expert on urban revitalization

Can we still talk about post-socialist cities nearly 2.5 decades after the political transformation?

The post-socialist city is still visible in a physical form. The social and economic relations reflecting those times are visible in the physical form of an urban area. Housing estates built in the socialist era will not disappear from the landscape of European cities any time soon, but they will have slightly different functions. Small M3s [two-room flats for 3 residents] and M4s [three-room flats for 4 residents] may be changed by adapting them for a smaller number of people. Such flats may not be attractive for families, as originally planned, but for young and mobile people who have not started their own families yet.

The content of the post-socialist cities has changed; the typical architectural and space planning forms are partly modified by new housing and service investments. The densification of housing and adding new service functions are particularly noticeable. However, people, as well as social and economic relationships, are changing much faster and in this respect it is much more difficult to notice the remainders of a post-socialist city today.

What are the key success factors in the revitalization of post-socialist cities and districts?

The main success factor is a varied and competitive economic base ensuring jobs for city dwellers, the location and the local community. If the urban dwellers represents a high level of economic culture and cooperation, is well-educated and open to change, it can quickly adapt to changes in the political and economic environment. For me, Poznań is a typical example of a city where the local community has played an important role in the success of the transformation of the city. In cities such as Warsaw, Gdańsk, Kosice and Velenje the local communities have also contributed to the success of the cities, but these cities have also benefited from a favourable location and administrative conditions.



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What contribution may the ReNewTown project make to the debate about the revitalization and improvement of the competitiveness of post-socialist cities?

The project has demonstrated that an atomized society in post-socialist districts and cities can be involved in the development programs on a voluntary basis. Voluntarism is a very valuable form of social participation, but in the conditions of democracy and with civil society being created today, it is very unpopular. Urban communities of the younger generation have been raised to become more focused on market principles.

It is important to ensure genuine public participation that can be achieved only by guaranteeing the actual impact of local communities on matters relating to their environment. To do this, you need participation in decision-making process and the proper flow of information. Local communities should also be involved in developing strategies. Our strategy is prepared by the external 'experts' and only aims to provide tools, knowledge and 'technology'. However, the real strategy should be developed by the interested residents, in the same way as planting a lawn by neighbours themselves means that they take care of it and do not let anyone destroy it.

Is it possible to develop a single strategy for all post-socialist cities? Who is the Strategy addressed to?

The local situations of cities are of course significantly varied. Thus it is possible to develop a general strategy including general guidelines, relationships and lines of action. The main factor in the success of a strategy is the existence of a civil society, so a proper social capital. Knowledge society is not possible without the formation of a civil society.

The Strategy is aimed at all those who are interested in local development and the future of their city. Local authorities and various local interest groups may be the recipients. The Strategy is a concept of thinking about the future of post-socialist cities.

Adopting a stance on the views included in this document is intended to assist in the development and making appropriate strategic choices, but also to forge some type of strategic thinking about the future of a city. The key issue for the implementation of the Strategy is its institutionalization. Thus some groups of people should be responsible for its implementation. The support for the implementation of the Strategy of various local communities, interest groups and political consensus are also important. If these conditions are met, we may reduce the negative impact of the term of office of the state and local government on the realization of long-term policies.



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Which of the actions proposed in the Strategy do you consider essential for the development and improvement of the competitiveness of post-socialist cities?

I think that it is the access to knowledge and information. The public should have an access to information about the consequences of some actions, but also about the consequences of desisting from them. Knowledge of good practice in various European cities is especially important in this respect. Knowledge of the positive effects of taking such actions and the conditions in which they have produced the desired results can be crucial for development. Another important factor is public consultation. Not just apparent consultation, which is a formal requirement, but real partner consultations taking into account the opinions of various backgrounds. Real consultation should even allow radical changes in the project's assumptions.

Do you think that the EU should support the revitalization and development of post-socialist cities more strongly?

The European Union should make a more selective choice with a good script for sustainability of solutions that are funded in the long term. Otherwise, resources are wasted. The main problem is the selection of criteria for financial support, be it economic efficiency or social equity. In practice, in spatial economy these approaches are usually exclusive. Only populist politicians try to combine these two approaches.

What do you think is the post-socialist city today? What examples could you give?

A good example is Nowa Huta in Poland. The future of this area, which today is an administrative district of Krakow, is very much uncertain. In many cities there are also large housing estates, the so-called patronage settlements, which were built for workers of certain industries. There are also medium-sized cities to which great housing estates were added, such as Tarnobrzeg, Plock, Puławy.

The most successful post-socialist cities are those which have been best prepared to function in a free market economy are the most successful. That is those which have had various economic functions. Those cities in which industries have offered products with significant market value are also successful. Plock with its industry related to the processing of crude oil is a good example. However, many industrially mono-functional cities or those where there has been insufficient demand for their dominant branch of production, found themselves in a very difficult economic and social situation.





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RENEWED POST-SOCIALIST CITY: COMPETITIVE AND ATTRACTIVE

Final ReNewTown Project Conference

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Economics, February 11th and 12th, 2014

The conference aims to provide broader perspective on the competitiveness and attractiveness of post-socialist cities in Central and Eastern Europe by creating a forum for exchange between academic researchers, urban planners and decision-makers dealing with these issues. The main themes of discussion are:

1. New economic and social functions of post-socialist buildings, public spaces, estates and/or districts
2. Identity of, and differentiation among, post-socialist urban settlements
3. Values, well-being and sustainability challenge in post-socialist urban settlements

Both, scholars and practitioners are welcome to take a part. There is no registration fee, and the Organizing Committee is not covering any cost of travel & accommodation.



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THE RENEWTOWN DATABASES

The basic idea of the ReNewTown project is to take advantage of the experience and knowledge of related current and past initiatives from the last 20 years and, based on this, to develop knowledge and tools to support the revitalization of post-socialist urban areas in the cities of Central Europe. One of the key results of the project (in line with the basic idea) is the development of three databases: good practices, initiatives, and experts in the field of regeneration of urban areas built during a socialist period. The databases of good practices and initiatives include 148 cases from 13 Central European countries and 69 cities.

PROJECT SUMMARY

RenewTown project 'New post-socialist city: Competitive and Attractive' is funded under Central Europe Programme and runs from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2014.

ReNewTown partnership consists of eight public institutions from Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. It will result in four pilot actions implemented in Nowa Huta in Krakow (ArtZona - popular venue for cultural and social events), Jižní Město in Prague (Centre for SMEs), Velenje (Renovation of a public space into a modern recreation area between

blocks of flats) and Hnůšťa (Museum of Socialist Curiosities). The lead partner is Polish Academy of Sciences, Stanisław Leszczycki Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization

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Locations of good practices and initiatives included in RNT databases



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