



NEW POST-SOCIALIST CITY:
COMPETITIVE AND ATTRACTIVE

ReNewTown

Newsletter



**CENTRAL
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Dear reader, we are very pleased to release the 12th issue of the ReNewTown project newsletter.

ReNewTown creates a platform for discussing urban regeneration problems in a perspective wider than research carried out for individual projects. It focuses on the most interesting urban regeneration examples in countries involved in the project: Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Germany.

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Interview with Magdalena Wątorska-Dec, urban revitalisation expert and ReNewTown project creator



The ReNewTown project developed many tools that are to assist the revitalisation process of post-socialist cities and districts. Which among project results are the most important in your opinion and why?

While preparing the application form for funding for a consortium of eight institutions under the name of ReNewTown project, my goal was to plan the work in such a way as to involve the entire partnership in the search of valuable initiatives and good practices in six key areas of research (development of cultural and social offer, improvement of the quality of public spaces between blocks of flats, entrepreneurship development, new functions for post-socialist buildings, reinforcement of local identity, improved quality and appearance of buildings and settlements). This resulted in the creation of databases, while additional important information was obtained during market research in 10 cities and districts. At the same time, the execution plans for 4 pilot investments materialized and in my opinion the investments are the most important results of the project. Their shape and current implementation status was affected by the experience acquired while creating databases and conducting market research. Study visits played also an important role in the project. As a partnership, we conducted nine such visits.

Pilot actions, on one hand, involved the highest number of residents from local communities in four cities. On the other hand, they are a living testimony of the ReNewTown project. Two projects: ArtZona in Nowa Huta (Kraków, Poland), and the Museum of Socialist Curiosities in Hnúšťa (Slovakia) acquired funds for further investments: in the first case - general

renovation of the core of the building, design and renovation of the façade; and in the second case - renovation of façade of the intended museum building. During implementation, the investment in Velenje attracted plenty of media attention due to personal involvement of former President of Slovenia, whereas the Centre for SMEs in the district of Prague 11 in Czech Republic is slowly gaining recognition and appreciation on the local market.

What were the main success and failure factors of the implemented pilot investments? What practical knowledge about the implementation of such projects was developed in the course of the ReNewTown project?

The most important success factor are the involved and passionate people. These include four teams performing pilot investments, and their leaders deserve special attention. Thankfully, we did not record any failures, but some of the original objectives required updating in the course of the project. This applied mainly to changes in location of the Centre for SMEs in Prague. In the case of Velenje, the idea to engage volunteers seemed easy to implement on paper, but it proved to be extremely challenging in the preparatory period (mobilization of volunteers, training before earthworks). The idea of using the local community in the collection of exhibits, documents, furniture for the museum unexpectedly sparked the need to conduct 10 thematic workshops for residents of Hnúšťa. The activity of ArtZona in Nowa Huta grew to a previously unforeseen scale - not only in terms of investment, but above all in terms of the multiplicity of ideas for contests, activities, meetings and workshops



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for residents of Nowa Huta. Currently, the place is teeming with life every day and has become an important cultural centre of Kraków. Practical knowledge and extensive experience were described by local leaders in the Handbook of Models. "Post-Socialist City: A Role Model for Urban Revitalisation in the 21st Century" (edited by I. Ograjenšek). I also recommend Transnational Manual for Urban Revitalisation "ENGAGE. Brighter Future in Your Hands" (authors: P. Hlaváček and M. Cingl). The document contains tips and advice, as well as an illustrative scenario of how to plan and implement urban renewal projects.

Can post-socialist cities and districts be competitive and attractive? What actions should be taken to achieve this goal?

Changes that has been taking place in Warsaw districts over the past four years reinforce my belief that they can be attractive places to live, work and rest. It is mainly due to the existence of extensive green areas surrounding blocks of flats and the possibility to complement the building developments with new and attractive infrastructure, such as sports facilities. A perfect example is the Warsaw's Ursynów district, where the residents highly appreciate the numerous green areas, bike paths, playgrounds and access to services. It is immediately reflected in the relatively high housing prices in the area.

I also believe in the growing involvement of residents in shaping their environment through, for example, participatory (social) budgets, which are becoming increasingly common in Poland and Europe. Apparently, the first such budget in the world was introduced by Brazilian city of Porto Alegre in 1989, and in Poland - by Sopot in 2011. During the ReNewTown project we tried to work out a vision for the development of post-socialist cities. Interesting approach was presented in "Transnational Development Strategy for the post-socialist cities of Central Europe" (Grzegorz Węclawowicz, 2013).

Is the knowledge that we now have in the field of post-socialist urban revitalisation sufficient? Do you see the prospects for further research and future projects of similar content?

I think that after the last programming period for 2007-2014, we have in Europe an extensive written theoretical and practical knowledge in a variety of formats and languages. My dream is to implement a project which would involve training teams planning investments similar to those realized under ReNewTown by the leaders of our pilot investments. Next, these teams would develop business plans and implement new investments on their basis with the possibility of receiving EU co-financing. Patrons and mentors of these investments would be present local investment leaders under the ReNewTown project with the support of experts appointed to carry out the tasks involved.

What contribution did the project make to the debate about the revitalisation and improvement of the competitiveness of post-socialist cities?

I have a feeling that the ReNewTown project brought the circles of practitioners and researchers closer in the process of working together on issues related to the revitalisation and improvement of life of local communities. In this way, the ReNewTown project significantly contributed to the investment processes in cities through greater sensitivity to the arguments and different perceptions of problems in both groups.





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The ReNewTown Final Conference in Ljubljana

The ReNewTown Final Conference took place on 11 - 12 February 2014 at the Faculty of Economics of University of Ljubljana (FELU) in Slovenia. The conference was held under the patronage of the third President (2007-2012) of the Republic of Slovenia, Dr. Danilo Türk. It was attended by international experts in urban regeneration, specializing both in practical and scientific issues.

The Conference provided a broader perspective on the competitiveness and attractiveness of post-socialist cities in Central and Eastern Europe. Participants focused on new economic and social functions of post-socialist buildings, public spaces and facilities, taking into account their diversity value, well-being of residents and future sustainability challenges.

One of the most important issues discussed during the conference was the diversity of the economic, political and social context in selected post-socialist cities of Central Europe, presenting also the problem of transferring good practices and projects. The conference was successful in establishing a forum for academic researchers, urban planners and decision-makers, enabling them to exchange knowledge, experience and know-how. After the conference, special issues of *Geographia Polonica*, *Economic and Business Review* and *Akademija MM* will be published. More information at: <http://konference.ef.uni-lj.si/renewtown/>





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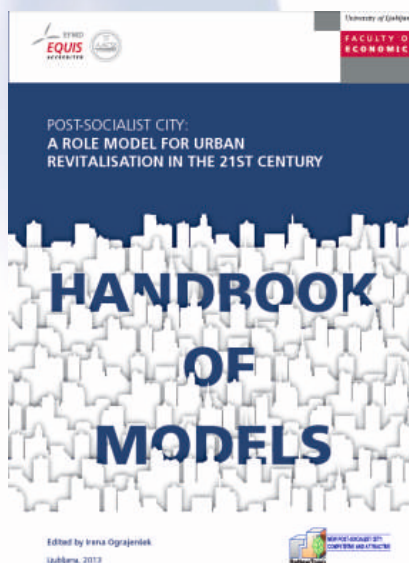
Main ReNewTown project outcomes

I. PUBLICATIONS



Transnational Development Strategy for the post-socialist cities of Central Europe (author: prof. Grzegorz Węclawowicz)

The post-socialist heritage of Central and Eastern Europe cities has become a source of many economic, social and even infrastructural constraints and problems for future development. The Transnational Development Strategy aims at contributing to a new way of thinking about urban governance, management practices and strategic planning in urban and intra-urban areas. We focus on changes in social and living conditions – particularly on improvements and methods of translating good practices used in individual cases into developmental strategies that could be applied in wider international urban environments of the post-socialist European countries.



Post-socialist city: a role model for urban revitalisation in the 21st century (edited by Irena Ograjenšek)

This Handbook of Models contains numerous examples of recognised methods for implementing revitalisation models, applied in practice in Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia along with valuable conclusions. The examples are presented by people directly involved in implementing the models in their communities. They describe positive aspects of their achievements, but also consider different alternative approaches to the projects.

Transnational Manual for Urban Revitalisation “ENGAGE. Brighter Future in Your Hands” (authors: Petr Hlaváček and Miroslav Cingl)



The ReNewTown Project presents a practical view on methods that may be used to improve the living conditions in post-socialist urban areas and to discover their potential. The Transnational Manual is dedicated for local residents, as it describes examples of local activities in areas affected by post-socialist infrastructural problems. The manual presents the best projects successfully implemented throughout the Central Europe.

<http://www.renewtown.eu/documents.html>



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II. Four pilot actions in four countries: Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and Czech Republic



ARTzona in Kraków

The ARTzona pilot investment in Nowa Huta (the largest post-socialist district in Kraków) is a modern open space project providing the opportunity to organise various cultural and social events, accessible to the local community and local institutions.

■ **€190.00 of additional funds gained for further investments**

<http://www.renewtown.eu/artzona-krakow.html>



Modern recreational area between the blocks of flats in Velenje

The pilot project in Velenje achieved two main goals:

- Creating a multi-functional public space designed for users in all age groups,
- Strengthening the local community by facilitating the intergenerational and multicultural dialogue and increasing the involvement of residents in taking care of their neighbourhood.

■ **1.567 hours of voluntary work provided by locals**

<http://www.renewtown.eu/renovation-velenje.html>

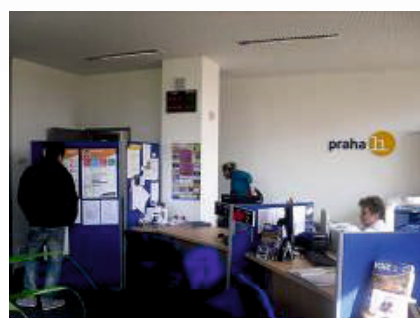


Museum of Socialist Curiosities in Hnúšťa

The museum is a permanent exhibition presenting conditions of everyday life during the socialist era in Hnúšťa and in the surrounding region. The exhibition presents a three bedroom apartment from the socialist period. It is furnished with many items typical for these times (e.g. furniture, telephone, books, etc.). The kitchen is equipped with old fridge, coffee maker and other devices. The children's room is full of toys, children magazines and books from the socialist times, while the living-room with a TV-set and a functional radio receiver completes the picture.

■ **500 exhibits collected**

<http://www.renewtown.eu/museum-hnusta.html>



Centre for SMEs in Prague

The main objective of this pilot action is to create a "Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises". The Centre aims at presenting alternative options for using post-socialist public buildings in a modern way and at finding their new functions. At the same time it draws the attention of local entrepreneurs and stakeholders to these options, underlining their potential in creating places attractive and important for districts with socialist heritage.

■ **150 entrepreneurs addressed and cooperating with the Centre**

<http://www.renewtown.eu/smes-prague.html>



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III. Good practices and initiatives described in online database reached 148 records

The basic idea of the ReNewTown project is to use the experience and knowledge gained in similar initiatives (current and completed within the last 20 years) in order to develop knowledge and tools supporting the revitalization of post-socialist urban areas in Central Europe. One of the key results of the project (in line with its basic idea) is the development of three databases: good practices, initiatives, and experts – concerning the regeneration of urban areas built during a socialist period. The databases of good practices and initiatives include 132 cases from 13 Central European countries and 69 cities.

- initiatives: <http://www.renewtown.eu/initiatives.html>
- good practices: <http://www.renewtown.eu/good-practices.html>
- experts: <http://www.renewtown.eu/experts.html>

IV. Website and movie about ReNewTown

The screenshot shows the ReNewTown website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links: Home, Conference!, Databases, Project, Partners, Pilot actions, Press Room, Contact, and PPs' area. The main content area is titled 'What to do with the socialist cities in Central and Eastern Europe?'. It contains text about the project's goals and a video player showing 'ReNewTown: 4 pilot investments in 4 countries'. The video player has a play button and a progress bar. On the left side, there is a sidebar with 'Databases' (Good practices, Initiatives, Experts), a 'Newsletter' sign-up form, and logos for the Central Europe Programme and the European Union.

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Home | Conference! | Databases | Project | Partners | Pilot actions | Press Room | Contact | PPs' area

Databases

- Good practices
- Initiatives
- Experts

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CENTRAL EUROPE Programme co-financed
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What to do with the socialist cities in Central and Eastern Europe?

The last twenty years of political, social and economic development, has brought in general substantial modernization and improvements of the living conditions in urban areas. Over 300 million people in CEE live in areas impacted by socialist era. Close to 2/3 of them lives in cities and towns often with districts created and fast developing in socialist period. This is the case of Krakow in Poland, Prague and Ústí nad Labem in Czech Republic, Velenje in Slovenia and Hnusta in Slovak Republic.

ReNewTown project ("New post-socialist city: Competitive and Attractive") focuses on reducing the disparities in the quality of urban environment (defined as public spaces between blocks of flats and public buildings in industrial districts) of the post socialist cities. The proposed four **investments** in particular cities, and its assessment, will contribute to the partial solution of local problems.

ReNewTown: 4 pilot investments in 4 countries

www.renewtown.eu



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V. Brochures and flyers



Brochure on market research & good practices (PL, EN, CZ, SI, SK)



Brochure on Handbook of Models



Brochure on transnational development strategy

<http://www.renewtown.eu/brochures.html>



14 flyers on ReNewTown project, presenting different topics:

- Pilot investments in Hnúšťa, Praga, Kraków and Velenje,
- Transnational Manual for Urban Revitalisation,
- Key messages of the Project,
- Aims and methodology of the Project.

<http://www.renewtown.eu/flyers.html>



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PROJECT SUMMARY

ReNewTown is the acronym of an international project entitled “New post-socialist city: Competitive and Attractive”, which was carried out over a period of 3 years (April 2011 – March 2014). The project was funded by the Central Europe Programme, an EU programme that encourages cooperation among the countries of Central Europe in order to improve their innovativeness, accessibility and natural environment. It also aims at increasing the competitiveness and attractiveness of their cities and regions. The programme is financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

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ReNewTown partnership during the trip in Kraków