



NEW POST-SOCIALIST CITY:
COMPETITIVE AND ATTRACTIVE

ReNewTown

Newsletter



**CENTRAL
EUROPE**
COOPERATING FOR SUCCESS.



EUROPEAN UNION
EUROPEAN REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT FUND

Dear reader, we are very pleased to release the seventh issue of the ReNewTown project newsletter. The current issue introduces key facts about the project and its current implementation. 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:

RENOVATION OF A PUBLIC SPACE IN VELENJE WAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

We present the recently completed ReNewTown pilot investment aimed at creating a multi-functional public space in the Velenje housing estate (constructed in the 1970s). It was implemented with the active participation of residents of the housing estate. The most interesting feature of this project was the participation of volunteers in construction.

INTERNATIONAL SURVEY ON LARGE HOUSING ESTATES

Research areas were located in five countries and ten cities in Central Europe which are characterized by the high share of building stock built during the socialist period. The main objective of this study was to gain knowledge regarding life quality of inhabitants and the main problems of the selected locations. Another goal of the survey was to identify development opportunities that could help increase attractiveness for the local people or contribute to removal of development obstacles.

THREE INTERESTING INITIATIVES CONCERNING SOCIALIST URBAN HERITAGE

The initiatives focus on socialist architecture and urban planning which together constitute a valuable source of knowledge in the development and revitalization of urban areas built during the socialist period in Central Europe.

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA, FACULTY OF ECONOMICS (FELU)

We profile University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Economics (FELU) - a national leader and an internationally recognized education and research institution in the areas of business and economics. FELU's key competences in the framework of the ReNewTown project include methodology development for successful urban regeneration.

THE RENEWTOWN DATABASES

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

RENOVATION OF A PUBLIC SPACE IN VELENJE WAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

Renovation of the public space in a housing estate in Velenje is one of four pilot investments financed within the ReNewTown project. ReNewTown pilot investments were planned to be model solutions for typical problems of urban areas built during the socialist period in Central Europe. The overall aim of all four investments is to improve living conditions of inhabitants by applying innovative and effective action which may be an example to follow in other post-socialist cities of Central Europe.



Before implementation, the pilot investment area in Velenje was a poorly maintained children's playground located between blocks of flats on Koželjskega street in the local community of Gorica (one of the multicultural parts of the city). The public space is 3,386 m² and is surrounded by six residential blocks.

The socialist era is commonly stigmatized and any positive aspects of the period are usually ignored. One of the social values rooted in the socialist period of Velenje's development was voluntary work for the solidarity and sake of the community. The city of Velenje was excessively developed in the 1950s and 1960s - both the infrastructure and administrative and housing units in the city were built with the help of volunteers.



The basic concept of the ReNewTown pilot project developed in Velenje was to take advantage of this socialist tradition and based on it, to involve inhabitants in the revitalization process. Thus, the ReNewTown pilot project has two main goals:

- Creation of a multi-functional public space catering to the needs of all generations
- Strengthen the local community by facilitating the intergenerational and multicultural dialogue and increase the involvement of citizens in taking care of their place of residence



The project was preceded by consultations and a survey with inhabitants examining how the public spaces should be developed and inhabitants' willingness to participate as volunteers in the revitalization project. The survey covered 39% of the housing estate's residents. Based on the survey, the most important information obtained is that as much as 71 % of the respondents are willing to voluntarily assist in the implementation of the pilot action. The survey results showed that people are mainly interested in construction of the playground (74% of responses), followed by space for sport and recreation (14%), the park (11%) and others facilities (1%).

The pilot project was started in summer of 2012. The materials needed to complete the project were financed by the ReNewTown project from the ERDF. Physical work on the construction was mainly done by volunteers. From July 9-13, 64 volunteers accomplished 1,567 hours of work to make their neighborhood a nicer and friendlier place to live. The project was supported with 38,500 EUR from EU funds.



The opening ceremony was attended by the president of Slovenia, Danilo Türk. The event attracted the interest of both local and national media. The president highlighted the importance of intergenerational solidarity at different levels, including housing estates, which gives citizens hope for their present and future well-being. He stressed that Slovenia has a good tradition of solidarity, which includes the enthusiasm experienced after the Second World War. Velenje has become and still remains a symbol of solidarity and a strong will to build a future together.



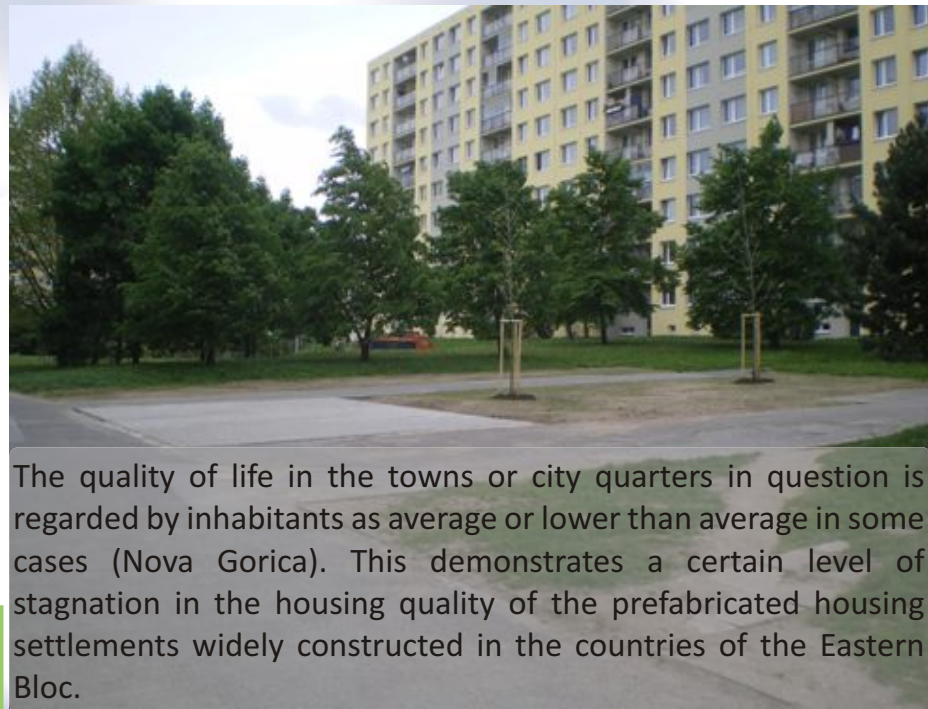
The help of volunteers in the implementation of the ReNewTown pilot project in Velenje continued the spirit of volunteering and presented it to Slovenia and Europe as an example of good practice.

Local Coordinator:

Municipality of Velenje, contact: marko.govek@velenje.si

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES FROM THE RENEWTOWN MARKET RESEARCH

The ReNewTown market research was based on interviews with inhabitants in selected Central European cities characterized by the high share of building stock built during the socialist period (table). The interviews were conducted with three target groups: local people, local business operators, and representatives of institutions and organizations from the local government, public and NGO sector. The target groups were interviewed on quality of life, public spaces and buildings in the towns or city quarters in question, and also reviewed the activities of the local government and made statements regarding the latest problems with living in these locations. Another goal of the survey was to identify development opportunities that could help increase attractiveness for the local people or contribute to removal of development obstacles.



The quality of life in the towns or city quarters in question is regarded by inhabitants as average or lower than average in some cases (Nova Gorica). This demonstrates a certain level of stagnation in the housing quality of the prefabricated housing settlements widely constructed in the countries of the Eastern Bloc.

| Country | City/Town |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Czech Republic | Chomutov |
| | Ústí nad Labem |
| Germany | Cottbus |
| | Karlsruhe |
| Poland | Kraków |
| | Warszawa |
| Slovakia | Hnúšťa |
| | Rimavská Sobota |
| Slovenia | Nova Gorica |
| | Velenje |

Table: Cities in which the study was conducted



During the era of socialism, living in newly developed housing settlements showed a higher social level than today with the competition of possibilities of new individual development or development within the developer's projects that are adopted more to higher quality requirements for the housing level.

According to inhabitants, the main problems related to living in city quarters are the low number of parking places and damaged or unkempt public spaces. In individual case studies, these problems were found to be compounded by an increased risk of socially pathological phenomena including vandalism and drug abuse, as well as an above-average crime rate resulting in a decreased feeling of safety in these locations.



The summary of drafts of the highest priorities shows that the public administration and other stakeholders should focus on:

- lessening social disparity in these city quarters,
- continuation of processes of regeneration of housing settlements and public spaces; many activities such as extension and improvement of the quality of spaces for the leisure time of different age groups can be performed,
- increasing the number of parking spaces,
- support for construction of bike paths and improvement of traffic services,
- defining space for organization of social and cultural activities and the provision of regular cleaning of public spaces.

The local people connect an improvement in quality of life in the prefabricated housing settlements with improved safety in these locations. They also attribute importance to the quality of public spaces and often propose construction of bike paths and pavements and construction of new parking places.



In the future, it will be important for development of these locations that local communities are more involved in the process of planning and decision-making by the local authorities and stakeholders, in order to reach agreement between the involved parties, local government and people, and local business operators. On one hand, reaching a compromise may be a difficult process. On the other hand, it will contribute to increased openness of the development process and satisfaction of local inhabitants and organisations.

THREE INTERESTING INITIATIVES CONCERNING SOCIALIST URBAN HERITAGE

UNFINISHED MODERNISATIONS

THE UNFINISHED MODERNISATIONS PROJECT

Unfinished Modernisations (<http://www.unfinishedmodernisations.net/>) is a collaborative, long-term research platform on architecture and urban planning with the focus on the South-East Europe. The project seeks to identify effective, resilient, and socially responsible models of architecture and urban planning in the socialist Yugoslavia and its successor states. Special attention is paid to critical reevaluation of modernization processes and contextualization of local architectural and urban planning concepts within the international evolution of architectural discourse. While largely unexplored and lacking appropriate interpretation, many of the architectural and urban models created in the region during the socialist times were original and experimental. They could serve as an inspiration for a progressive current practice both within and beyond the regional borders.



THE ATRIUM PROJECT

From wounds of the terrible past, the architectural traces of totalitarian regimes of the 20th century could become an important engine of local development, if they were managed and valorised through a trans-national cultural route (in compliance with the Council of Europe Resolution Nr. 12/07). The Atrium Project (<http://www.atrium-see.eu/>) has been designed to address this still largely unexplored opportunity. Around the new cultural route, new services, and hence new jobs (especially for young people and women) could be created.

THE TRAJEKT PROJECT

Trajekt (<http://trajekt.org/>) is an open media platform for exchange of information on architecture and urbanism – news on events, books, projects, exhibitions, etc. It was established in April 2002. Dissemination of information is free although minimal editorial criteria for publishing have to be fulfilled. The platform regularly reports on activities concerning architecture and buildings from the socialist era and records about quarter of a million visits per year.

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA, FACULTY OF ECONOMICS (FELU)

University of Ljubljana was established in 1919. Its 23 faculties and 3 arts academies boast more than 51,000 students enrolled in 166 undergraduate, 206 graduate, and 21 PhD study programmes.



Faculty of Economics is one of the University of Ljubljana's largest faculties with the permanent staff of 250 employees (teachers, researchers, and support staff). It was established in 1946. Through its activities FELU positioned itself as a national leader and an internationally recognized education and research institution in the area of business and economics. At present, over 6,000 students are enrolled in FELU's undergraduate, graduate, and PhD study programmes. FELU staff carries out over 90 research and advisory projects every year.

FELU's key competences in the framework of the ReNewTown project include methodology development for successful urban regeneration. This is the basis for preparation of the so-called Handbook of Models and Transnational Strategy of Urban Development, which are two core outputs of the ReNewTown project.

ReNewTown team:



Irena Ograjenšek,
ReNewTown Local
Coordinator and
Principal Researcher



Urška Potočnik,
ReNewTown Local
Financial Manager

Other FELU researchers:



Andreja Cirman



Polona Domadenik



Jože Sambt



Katarina Katja Mihelič



Tjaša Redek



Lejla Perviz



Mojca Bavdaž

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 132 cases from 13 Central European countries and 69 cities. The databases contain a large variety of projects using both “soft” and “hard” tools aimed at improving quality of life of urban areas built during a socialist period. An important criterion in good practices and initiatives selection was the holistic and innovative approach. The adopted typology distinguishes the following activities:

- Improved provision of local cultural and social events.
- Improved conditions and quality of public space between blocks of flats.
- Improved support for development of small business operators in the area of blocks of flats.
- Improved attractiveness of architecture of socialist buildings.
- Improved involvement of the local community in events organized in its quarter.
- Identified new functions for structures from the era of socialism (in 1945 - 1989).

www.renewtown.eu



Locations of good practices and initiatives included in RNT databases



The ReNewTown partnership in Hnusta, 2012

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, Jizni Mesto in Prague, Velenje and Hnusta. The lead partner is Polish Academy of Sciences, Stanisław Leszczycki Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization

Total budget: EUR 1.514.061,60

ERDF co-financing: EUR 1.271.020,36

Contact

Project Coordinator: Magdalena Wątorska-Dec, tel: +48226978992, email: decmagda@twarda.pan.pl,

Project website: <http://www.renewtown.eu/>