

## SUMMARY OF THE Phd THESIS

# Limits and Differences in Revitalisation Process in “Transition” Countries on Example of Lodz and Zagreb, with Special Consideration of Public Space

The image of the city is ever-changing. City fabric evolves with the needs of society. Urban planning and development follow the socio-economic and urban changes, following the progress of society. The work analyses contemporary urban planning policies, particularly in the post-socialist countries, on the example of two chosen case studies, Lodz in Poland and Zagreb in Croatia. The concept of urban regeneration and revitalisation appeared in the Western Europe and the United States of America as early as 1970s, being the direct answer to 20<sup>th</sup> century urban planning concepts, dealing with problems such as deindustrialisation, urban sprawling, bad living conditions etc. However, this concept did not appear in the post-socialist countries at the same time. In the late 1980s, of the 20th century, to communism and socialism started to collapse, which meant the fresh start for countries which were under the regime. Collapse of communist and socialist systems meant the new life of cities, in every possible aspect, social, urban, and economic. After change of political and economic system, post-socialist countries were facing new challenges in all aspects of urban life, having to deal with rapid processes of privatisation, deindustrialisation, decentralisation etc.

Urban regeneration is defined as a many-sided effort including re-valorisation, restoration, reconstruction, modernization, and actions aimed at revival of a district, or a city devastated in various aspects, also economic and social. It is a form of action, being a part of urban policy, effecting the whole life of a city, the action combining respect for the past and local traditions with solving local problems of inhabitants. Furthermore, it is defined as a process aimed at achieving the durability and effectiveness of urban transformations and the elimination of negative phenomena. Its complexity and interdisciplinarity are also emphasized, pointing to the territorial context and the need for broad socialization. This process, which started in the Western societies earlier, was the new concept in new post-socialist countries. In Poland first efforts of revitalisation practices can be followed to the early 2000s, while in Croatia there are still no official documents defining revitalisation as an official urban planning policy. Therefore, due to the difference in historical, socio-economic circumstances and current needs of the cities in transition countries comparing to the Western European and American cities, this work aims to show that Western European and American urban regeneration and revitalisation practices are not fully applicable to the transition countries in Central and Southern Europe. Moreover, this work explores the possibility of creating a model outlining urban regeneration process for post-socialist cities, based on realised ongoing revitalisation practices already realised in some of the post-socialist cities. This model would provide better insight for future practice, than application of Western models, however it would still need to be adapted to local needs and contextualized.

The work is divided in five main parts. First part of the work thoroughly analyses history of urban regeneration processes in Western societies. Following the history of urban planning, particularly urban planning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it aims to find the connection between historical urban

planning policies and their relation to interdisciplinary contemporary concepts such as urban regeneration. This is done through research of six chosen case study examples, from Western Europe and United States. Cities were chosen based on criteria such as their scale, history of development and urban problems which they were and are facing. All chosen examples have similarities in common with main cities of the study, Lodz and Zagreb. Second part of the study explores the connection of public space and urban regeneration. Public space is recognised as main integrating tissue of the city, therefore its role in the urban planning process is crucial. Public spaces had different roles in the city life during history, therefore their shape and image also constantly changes. The work analyses history of public spaces and explores the problems public space faces nowadays, through examples of various cities. Third part of the study is relation of architectural and cultural heritage in the revitalisation process. The interdisciplinarity of revitalisation as the concept, not only allows, but asks for inclusion of different disciplines in creating urban planning policies. Architectural and cultural heritage is important, not only as monument presenting history, but also in defining genius loci of the place. Furthermore, in contemporary society, where sustainability should be one of the most important factors in planning, holistic strategy of urban regeneration, based on redevelopment, preservation and rehabilitation creates the model where conservation, preservation, and adaptation of existing objects in the city fabric is welcomed. Particularly interesting in the aspect of adaptation and preservation are brownfields, large areas of the city, which were once industrial, but after deindustrialisation have lost their purpose and have become degraded, abandoned, and unused. They are often located in the central areas of the city. Experiences have shown that not only they serve as the stamp of the history, showing how life used to look like in the city, but can become nucleus of the new city life, attractive areas, helping in integration of the disintegrated city fabric. Fourth part of the study is focused on analyses of the two chosen cities, Lodz and Zagreb. Cities are analysed according to all previously mentioned aspects: history of urban development, state of the public space nowadays, urban problems which these cities are facing, possible potential of architectural heritage, particularly post-industrial architectural heritage. Existing and realised revitalisation practices and projects are also analysed, with evaluation of their success, to explore the possibility of creating the revitalisation model.

The last part of the study is summary of the whole work, where general concepts of revitalisation are summed up, with the main objectives and possible implementation accentuated. Main barriers and differences in adopting the Western model of urban regeneration in post-socialist countries are presented, as well as the importance of public space and (post-industrial) architectural heritage in the revitalisation process. Conclusions from main case studies, Lodz and Zagreb, are presented and then compared. Both positive and negative points from both cities are accentuated. In comparison, the question of possible implementation of existing revitalisation practices from Lodz to Zagreb are explored, to conclude whether know-how revitalisation model is applicable in other post-socialist countries. It was found that architectural (post-industrial in particular) heritage can be the drive for urban regeneration, as well as the concept which provides the city with unique image and therefore differentiates it in the globalized era. This is not only tool for creating uniqueness as tourist attractiveness, but also creating the palimpsest of history as living, visible museum of history for current and future generations. Also, the research proved that public space is vital in the city fabric, as the connecting tissue which makes the city, regardless of the ways of its use. The existence of quality public spaces is enough, as they can easily adapt to different forms of use. The Western model was found mostly inapplicable in the transition countries. Previous Western revitalisation projects were

resolving the problems in the Western cities, which were for them actual then, with methods and tools known then, in different societies than we live in today. Furthermore, some of the problems, which Western cities were facing and resolving then, still occur in the post-socialist cities. However, while the problems might be similar, they are surrounded by completely different socio-urban and political circumstances nowadays. Furthermore, current important issues which need to be addressed nowadays, such as climate change, were not part of the professional or general discourse then, whilst nowadays being the biggest threat society is facing. Also, uprising of technology and technological revolution in general, not only changed the way we live, work, communicate and spend leisure time, in a sense it changed the way cities function and look like. While Western cities are nowadays tackling these problems, post-socialist cities still did not bridge the gap and solved the problems which Western society was dealing with during the socialist era. Therefore, current Western urban regeneration concepts are far not only lacking in numerous factors when it comes to their application to post-socialist cities but are at the same time far too advanced. At the same time, it was found that experiences from post-socialist cities which are in the process of urban regeneration since the transformation (mostly going from 2000s onwards) can be helpful in forming the model for cities which have not yet started the process. These cities, no matter how different in some respects, also share multiple common problems as well as similar socio-historic circumstances and previous development. There are issues such as inadequate housing conditions, non-maintenance of housing stock, inadequate communal infrastructure, inadequate social and age structure of inhabitants, inactive and degraded areas in the city fabric, brownfields after the deindustrialisation process, gaps and empty plots in the city fabric, particularly in the wider city centre area. That being said, the study points out, through numerous examples from both cities in question, that revitalisation concepts should always be planned and directed to answer to local needs, to further support local communities and businesses, therefore, revitalisation plans need to be contextualised to fit local needs and solve local problems. However, the similarities and shared socio-historic circumstances might allow for implementing the know-how method between different post-socialist cities.

