

Graduation Plan

Personal information	
Name	J. Taraba
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Studio		
Name / Theme	Design of the urban fabrics	
Main mentor	Claudiu Forgaci	Urban design
Second mentor	Arie Romein	Creativity-led regeneration
Argumentation of choice of the studio	<p>In my thesis, I examine how the post-socialist transition affected the urban fabric of the city of Budapest and its society and how its negative consequences can be reduced with the help of creativity-led regeneration.</p> <p>The studio of Urban fabrics combines the aspects of the physical urban environment (form, scales, density, networks) and its psychological, social, cultural, ecological, managerial and economic structures during the design process. As I study the relations between the existing urban fabric and the economic/social processes of the city, this studio was an ideal choice. Furthermore, this year the studio focuses more on the demographic changes, the density and intensity of the urban fabric. This is also compatible with my topic because I aim for regeneration through creativity, which can only be achieved in vital and dense environments. Therefore the thesis will include the description of how it can be achieved.</p>	

Graduation project	
Title of the graduation project	<p>Regeneration through creativity</p> <p>Dynamics of a post-socialist, Eastern European society and the possibilities of a creativity-led regeneration in Budapest</p>
Goal	
Location:	Budapest
The posed problem,	<p>In Budapest, the capital of Hungary, the negative spatial trends following the post-socialist transition have further strengthened since the era change in 1989. These consequences are present due to the very fast transition from a Socialist to a Neoliberal economy. During the short period of the era change, the society and the urban fabric of post-socialist nations and cities did not have the time to fully get accustomed to the</p>

	<p>capitalist principles of life. Therefore, the negative spatial and social signs of capitalism (gentrification, suburbanisation, growing segregation) together with the inherited characteristics of post-socialist societies (high level of corruption, low public participation, lack of confidence in institutions) degrades people's right to the city and their accessibility to urban life (Lefebvre, 1968). The signs of these tendencies in Hungary are more prominent than in Western Europe because the elapsed time simply has not been enough to develop counteractions. Here urban life is only a commodity, even more so than in Western European countries where the development of countermeasures happened in a longer period and was supported by a society which got used to capitalist principles and was aware of its negative effects. It is therefore obvious that if these inherited, post-socialist consequences are not addressed they will continue to grow larger.</p> <p>The thesis addresses these negative trends through answering the question that how the spatial and social consequences of the post-socialist transition can be reduced in the city of Budapest.</p>
research questions and	<p>The main research questions:</p> <p>How the negative spatial and societal consequences of the post-socialist transition can be regenerated through creativity-led urbanism ideas?</p> <p>Sub-research questions:</p> <p>Post-socialist city</p> <p>What are the long-term institutional, societal and spatial consequences of the post-socialist transition?</p> <p>Why is it important to reduce these consequences?</p> <p>Urban morphology</p> <p>What are the spatial consequences of the post-socialist transition in the typical zones of the urban fabric?</p> <p>How the social consequences of the post-socialist transition represented spatially?</p> <p>Where are the locations in Budapest to achieve the aim of the project?</p> <p>Creativity-led regeneration</p> <p>How can creativity-led regeneration help in post-socialist cities?</p> <p>What type of environment can support creativity in public spaces?</p> <p>What qualities are present for creativity-led regeneration in the test location?</p> <p>Through what process can creativity-led regeneration specific to the post-</p>

	<p>socialist context be achieved?</p> <p>What design principles can help to achieve the ideal creative environment in the test location?</p> <p>How to measure the successfulness of the proposed process?</p> <p>To what extent the proposed process and interventions transferable to other cities?</p>
<p>design assignment in which these result.</p>	<p>Instead of tackling the multiple layers of the post-socialist consequences individually, the thesis develops a holistic approach, where urban design can create social change. The idea that urban transformation can be a tool to achieve wider effects on the societal and later-on, on the institutional level have been described in several books in the academic literature. (de la Peña et al., Design as Democracy.). A similar idea is represented in Lefebvre's vision about the right to the city (1968). He proposes that the transformation of urban spaces should be controlled not only by the state or by the capitalist principles, which affects social interactions and equal access to resources in the city negatively, but by the inhabitants of these spaces.</p> <p>To achieve the desired urban and social transformation, the toolbox of the creativity-led regeneration is used because this concept uses human capital, the people of the city to influence their environment. Furthermore, this type of regeneration is especially applicable in cities with an industrial past or where big economic changes happened and as a consequence, the urban environment is less attractive (Landry, 2012). Besides, creativity-led regeneration has the potential to increase public participation and social involvement in the development of the urban fabric (Kay, 2000). Creativity, especially art can empower people with new social and economic skills. Therefore, it is an ideal approach to overcome the growing spatial consequences of the post-socialist transition in Budapest while also increasing public participation.</p> <p>In the thesis, a test location is chosen where the toolbox of creativity-led regeneration is used to design a flexible development framework which demonstrates how a creative milieu can be achieved. Because public participation and community involvement plays an important role in the process, the proposed design framework will not be a blueprint of an exact urban design, but it will incorporate enough flexibility that the opinion of the public participants can be included in the final design later on.</p> <p>Furthermore, a proposed organizational setup will be also designed by identifying the stakeholders to understand what is possible in the context of the post-socialist city.</p>

Process

Method description

The post-socialist city

The used method is synthesizing literature about the topic to identify the spatial, social and institutional consequences of the era change. By doing so, the context of post-socialist, Eastern European countries is understood and all the consequences of the transition from a Socialist to a Neoliberal economy are listed. To give adequate answers to any design challenge, it is necessary to have a deep understanding of the spatial, social and institutional context in which the design operates. In this thesis, the post-socialist context requires an even deeper understanding, because it makes circumstances more complex than in Western European countries. Therefore, during the design process, the context of the post-socialist city is taken into consideration with every step and the identified consequences work as regulators to evaluate the authenticity of the design.

Urban morphology

By identifying the different zones of the urban fabric, the spatial distribution of the post-socialist consequences is observed. This is done by using GIS mapping and analyses of the municipality of Budapest. The spatial consequences are mapped by analysing where and what has changed in the urban fabric since 1989, while the social consequences are understood by transforming demographic changes into maps, which demonstrates the effects. These maps confirm growing inequalities, gentrification and inefficient urban growth. By comparing spatial demographics of the city and the spatial distribution of the remnants of the socialist era, the test location for the design is located. Here the spatial qualities and social demographics are mapped more in detail to understand the potentials of the location for creativity-led regeneration.

Creativity-led regeneration

By synthesizing literature about creativity-led regeneration, it is understood why it is especially applicable in post-socialist cities. By doing so, the necessary qualities of creative spaces are collected, which form the goals what the design aims to achieve. In this thesis, a process is designed on the test location by identifying the stakeholders and examining case studies, to understand what can be possible in the context of the post-socialist city. After this, a flexible framework will be designed, which helps to achieve the described creative milieu. The successfulness of the regeneration is evaluated by setting up a quantitative framework to measure the creative potential of locations and by evaluating the transferability of the principles to other locations.

Literature and general practical preference

The most important literature for the thesis:

Balázs, P., European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Bozóki, A., Catrina, Ș., Gotseva, A., Horvath, J., Limani, D., Radu, B., Simon, Á., Szele, Á., Tófalvi, Z., & Perlaky-Tóth, K. (2015). 25 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain: The state of integration of East and West in the European Union. Publications Office of the European Union. <http://dx.publications.europa.eu/10.2777/75613>

de la Peña, D., Allen, D. J., Hester, R. T., Hou, J., Lawson, L. L., & McNally, M. J. (Eds.). (2017). Design as Democracy. Island Press/Center for Resource Economics. <https://doi.org/10.5822/978-1-61091-848-0>

Glăveanu, V. P. (Ed.). (2016). The Palgrave Handbook of Creativity and Culture Research. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Johnson, S. (2011). Where good ideas come from: The natural history of innovation (1. paperback ed). Riverhead Books.

Kay, A. (2000). Art and community development: The role the arts have in regenerating communities. *Community Development Journal*, 35(4), 414–424. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/35.4.414>

Kiss, D. (2018). *Modeling Post-Socialist Urbanization The Case of Budapest*.

Knudsen, B., Florida, R., Gates, G., & Stolarick, K. (2007). *Urban Density, Creativity and Innovation*.

Landry, C. (2012). *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*. Taylor and Francis. <http://grail.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=430126>

Lefebvre, H. (1968). *Le Droit à la ville [The Right to the City]* (E. Kofman & E. Lebas, Trans.).

Lydon, M., Garcia, A., & Duany, A. (2015). *Tactical urbanism: Short-term action for long-term change*. Island Press.

Stanilov, K. (2007). *The post-socialist city: Urban form and space transformations in Central and Eastern Europe after socialism* (K. Stanilov, Ed.). Springer.

Sýkora, L., & Bouzarovski, S. (2012). Multiple Transformations: Conceptualising the Post-communist Urban Transition. *Urban Studies*, 49(1), 43–60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098010397402>

Reflection

1. What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?
2. What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional and scientific framework.

1.

As I have described in the argumentation of my studio choice, the Urban Fabrics studio focuses on the physical urban environment and its psychological, social, cultural, ecological, managerial and economic structures. As I study the relations between the existing urban fabric and the economic/social processes of the city, my master thesis contributes to the knowledge in this field. This year the studio puts special focus on the density of the urban fabric. This topic is also represented in my thesis because an essential element of the creative milieu is density and diversity, therefore the proposed design framework will include these ideas.

The track of urbanism combines urban design with the social, economic, cultural and political aspects of the design location. In my thesis, I use similar ideas with combining the aspects of urban design with social, economic and institutional development of the post-socialist region. To achieve this, I use all the tools provided by earlier courses in the master track.

The master program of MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences combines social sciences with design,

technology and engineering. The thesis also blends social sciences with urban design to achieve better integration of the final design.

2.

Social relevance:

There are inherited characteristics of a post-socialist society which often pulls it back in social and urban development. According to my hypothesis, these characteristics can be reduced with the help of urban design. Therefore, the project has an important role to regenerate unused or underused areas in the city of Budapest and to show how to achieve higher public participation.

Since the era change, the rehabilitation of the parts of the city which were the most affected by the post-socialist transition, has only been considered in the context of the improvement of the prefabricated apartment blocks and in the forms of small, first aid-like measures. There is a lack of larger scale and more conceptual ideas to rehabilitate and integrate these zones into the urban fabric, therefore the design framework and the process described in the thesis can be used to promote such development concepts in the municipalities.

Furthermore, the thesis also describes why increasing public participation has great importance in post-socialist countries. It explains that weak civil society (typical for post-socialist countries) can not fully play its part in the democratic system because low public participation undermines the legitimacy of civil groups. Therefore, they are less able to influence policy-making processes, to protect just spatial development and people's right to the city, or to raise their voices in decisions which further increases the vulnerability of democratic institutions (Balázs et al., 2015). Accordingly, in the thesis, the spatial and social consequences of the era change are specifically addressed through creativity-led regeneration. By supporting the development and regeneration of the spatial remnants of the post-socialist transition through creativity, urban design can form people's thinking, making them more open-minded, thus more critical, involved in the community and more aware of their environment. This way, urban design is capable to tackle the spatial and the social consequences of the post-socialist transition at the same time.

Professional relevance:

In the thesis, the post-socialist consequences are addressed. These are highly complex and effected all the layers of the institutions, the society and the economy. To achieve successful proposals in any design project, it is important to know the context the design operates in. In the post-socialist context, however, it is indispensable, because of the complexity and interdependence of characteristics. Therefore, urban designers who operate in post-socialist countries need to be aware of these circumstances.

All these spatial processes described in the thesis are also present in Western Europe or North America as well. The difference is in the pace of the change because in the post-socialist countries the institutional transition happened in a couple of months, and the first spatial consequences also started to develop in a decade, while in other countries these spatial processes were more gradual and without the dramatic institutional and social changes. Therefore, the knowledge obtained in the Western European countries by managing urban growth since the end of World War II can be used by the urban designers of Eastern European countries. These experiences, however, need to be adjusted to the specific post-socialist context.

Scientific relevance:

The academic collection of writings about the post-socialist urban development of Eastern European cities often focuses on policy formation and its successfulness after the era change. However, there is a lot less research on the actual design steps, which can be taken for the regeneration of these cities. Often successful cases are used as

examples to describe what can be achieved. In my thesis, I collect several possible design tools and examine their transferability, which can help in the regeneration processes of other cities and it can contribute to developing academic knowledge in this field. Furthermore, I propose an organizational setup and a process, which again can serve as an example to achieve regeneration in cities with similar challenges.

Creativity-led regeneration in academic writing is often described as a top-down process. In my thesis, however, I argue that the post-socialist context requires a different method. Furthermore, the differentiation between the Western and post-socialist type of regeneration is necessary. By doing so, the typical post-socialist characteristics inherited from the past can be considered in the regeneration process, because these characteristics can heavily influence the successfulness of such attempts. Although this need for differentiation between creativity-led regeneration in Western Europe and the possibilities of such development in the post-socialist context has been recognized, there is only a few research about this topic. Therefore, my thesis can contribute to understanding the similarities and differences between the Western and Eastern European type of creativity-led regeneration.