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Zagreb

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ABSTRACT

Urban planning, renewal and their actors are always closely connected with the sociopolitical changes and therefore the transitional post-socialist Croatia provides an interesting context for the analysis of spatial changes. This paper is a comparative study of urban transformations in Croatia (the City of Zagreb) in three important time periods: (a) socialism in the 1970s and the 1980s, (b) period during and immediately after the Homeland War and the beginning of transition from 1990 to 2000 and (c) period since 2000 and the acceleration of processes which started in the previous period. These periods of time have been chosen because of major changes in the socio-political system and consequently in spatial planning and management. Also in each of them we can observe the changing power of different types of actors and the appearance of new actors. The main aspects of urban planning are determined as well as the power of various urban actors throughout each period. Since 1990 and especially since 2000 urban planning has been given little attention in Zagreb resulting in the disappearance of system or method and thus in sporadic, random building.

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Introduction

Post-socialist Croatia is a country in transition, facing various changes in both the social and spatial structure. This paper aims to present the changes in urban policy that have occurred in the City of Zagreb, focusing upon processes of urban renewal and regeneration. It examines the differences in town planning, management of space and the position of urban actors in three time periods: (a) 1970–1990, (b) 1990–2000 and (c) since 2000.

Bassand's (2001) taxonomy of urban actors has been applied: (1) professionals—architects, engineers, urban planners, sociologists, geographers, art historians, (2) economic actors – large corporations, land owners, banks, (3) political actors – political leaders, political parties, (4) citizens and civil society organizations. This division of actors is appropriate for both past and present-day Zagreb, which witnessed substantial changes in decision-making processes and power relations among various actors, the rising influence of economic actors (property investors) and the diminishing power of the state. In this transition towards neo-liberal capitalism, which in Croatia takes on the characteristics of “wild capitalism”, economic actors driven by materialistic values instigate unplanned, random building, while professionals and civil actors lose power. Each actor's importance is different in the three periods which have been chosen, because of major changes caused

by (a) the passage from socialism to capitalism, (b) globalization trends, (c) the disappearance of urban planning and (d) activities and structure of urban actors. We aim to show how urban planning processes, their dynamics, character and importance have changed, along with a special emphasis on the present-day situation.¹

Urban renewal in the Croatian context

In the develop economies, urban renewal emerged in the 1960s and the 1970s and was connected with the movement for the preservation and reconstruction of historical heritage (Čaldarović, 1989). Preservation efforts were dedicated to protecting and enhancing historical districts and those landmarks which gave towns their historical, architectural and cultural values. In the former Republic of Yugoslavia, urban renewal started after the Second World War when most towns were renovated and reconstructed.

¹ This paper is a modified and amended part of the doctoral thesis entitled *The influence of social actors on urban renewal and transformations in Zagreb since 2000*, defended on 21st July 2012 at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. Urban changes in Croatia's capital city are analyzed and compared in the period of socialism, in the 1990s (Homeland War) and since 2000. We do not aim to make a comparison with other Croatian towns (Dubrovnik, Split, Pula, Rijeka, Osijek) which have also undergone significant changes. This is the subject of some future research as well as the comparison between Croatia and other post-socialist countries in transition and their capital cities (Ljubljana, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Sofia or Prague). That research will look at differences and similarities in urban planning and spatial transformations after the fall of socialism.

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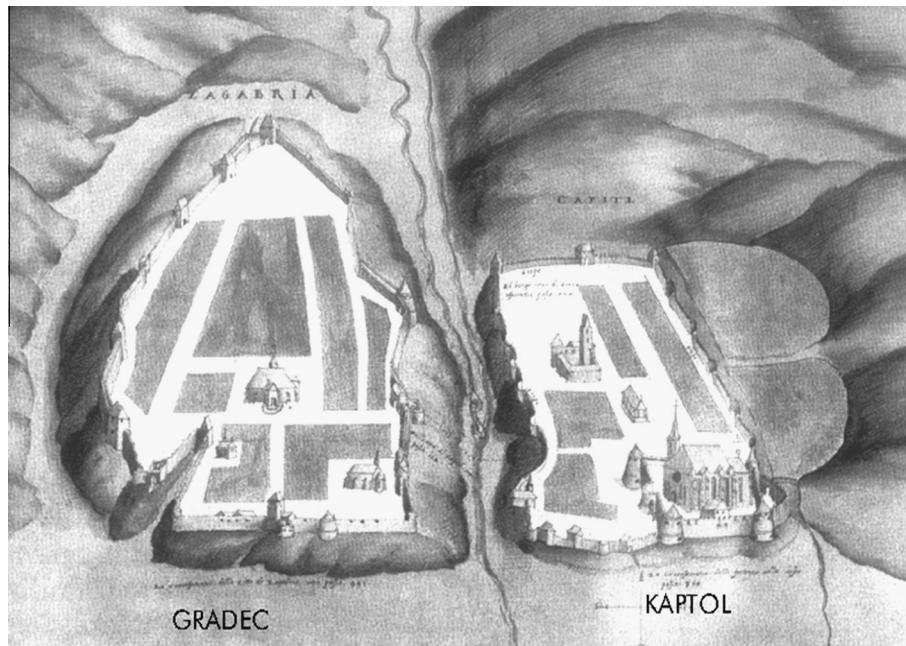


Fig. 1. Gradec and Kaptol. Source: <http://www.os-granesina-zg.skole.hr/zagreb.html>.

However, urban renewal is not only about city centers but suburban areas as well (Giddens, 2007). It is not only about reconstruction but also about meeting the citizens' needs (Rada, 1999), improving the quality of life and housing, bringing people together and implementing their own ideas about their environment. Renewal efforts employ different approaches—economic, social or entrepreneurial approach (Rada, 1999). Economic approaches focus on investment and profit, the social approach on people's benefits (Bailey & Robertson, 1997), while the entrepreneurial approach combines both (Rada, 1999). Some other authors (Simms & Allen, 1996; Smith, 1996) also place emphasis on the role of the local community and local enterprise in the process of urban renewal, assuming they know their priorities best.

Many cities have made their short or long-term urban revitalization and renewal plans. There are many documented examples of urban renewal (Barcelona, London, Paris, Rotterdam) where combined efforts and activities of all actors have resulted in the enhancement of environmental and life quality. This has not been the case in Zagreb. In Croatia urban renewal was defined only in the Master plan made by the Institute for Spatial Planning in 2007. The following measures were to be taken: insertion of new buildings into built-up areas (densification); rehabilitation of the existing urban fabric; development of unbuilt areas; improvement of the urban network and communications, especially public transport; improvement of urban development and city space management; city regeneration: buying private land for residential developments and city facilities, buying land close to important city projects (roads, streets, light rail) or buildings financed from the budget, buying land by the Sava river; protection of historical and natural heritage: refurbishment of the city core and other parts of the city important for its identity.² However, "The City of Zagreb Master plan gives general measures for renovation of certain areas but those are only recommendations which need further development and concretization" (Jakovčić, 2006).

In this paper, an historical-comparative method has been used. In such research, past events are studied using social scientific methods in order to come up with results and answers related to

present-day events, situations and problems. Public and private documented sources are consulted, and official documents, historical accounts, answers from interviews collected (Schutt, 2006). This research has focused on the City of Zagreb and those registered spatial changes throughout different time periods (Haydu, 1998). We explain the structure of events in time and our cases are time periods. Some authors (Stryker, 2007) point out the importance of events in a certain period of time regarding various actors and the consequences of their activities. In this sense the historical-comparative method is valuable to our research because the critical analysis of actors and their activities in spatial changes is one of the main goals of this paper.

A brief history of Zagreb

Zagreb's story begins with the two medieval settlements situated on the neighboring hills, Gradec and Kaptol, divided by the Medveščak stream. Gradec was populated by worldly tradesmen and craftsmen while Kaptol was a thriving canonical settlement (today the site of Zagreb's cathedral) (see Fig. 1).

In 1094 the name Zagreb was mentioned for the first time when the Zagreb Diocese was founded on Kaptol. The second historical event was a royal charter (the Golden Bull) given by King Bela IV to Gradec in 1242 which declared it a free royal city.³ In the following centuries of Turkish onslaughts on Europe, Zagreb was under constant threat as important border fortress. When the Ottoman Turks' threat receded in mid 17th century, renewal started and Gradec and Kaptol changed their appearance.³ Old houses were pulled down and new palaces, monasteries and churches were built. Crafts, trade, land all contributed to the wealth of the city. Affluent aristocratic families, royal officials, church dignitaries and rich traders from Europe moved to Zagreb. Schools and hospitals were opened, first parks and then country houses were built.³ The town spread beyond its medieval boundaries and became the administrative, economic and cultural center of Croatia. In 1850 when Gradec and Kaptol with their surrounding settlements became a single administrative unit, the development of a new central European city

² Source: https://e-uprava.apis-it.hr/gup/downloads/gup_8-09+11-09.pdf.

³ Source: <http://www.geografija.hr/clanci/print-verzija/352/crtice-o-zagrebu.htm>.

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