Coupling Culture and Space for the Post-Growth

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Abstract

This study explores why there is a fundamental need to integrate cultural, urban, and spatial planning. We also argue for a stronger linkage of degrowth with cultural and spatial studies to achieve urgent developmental transformations. In this study, we aim to highlight three of the most important considerations as possible steps towards various future systemic solutions, considering the historical background on development, ideology, power, culture, city, economy and other relevant policies. 1) The importance of participatory strategies and inclusive approaches in promoting various cultural and urban policies (based on practices as shown in cases) as essential for the future; 2) Embedding degrowth discussions in the fields of space and culture aims to highlight multiple alternative paths that can be taken to address systemic issues; 3) Theories of cultural and urban participation crossed with practise provide a strategic framework to explore possibilities.

Keywords: cultural policy, spatial and urban policy, degrowth, integrative strategies for culture and space

Coupling Culture and Space for the Post-Growth

Starting from the current situation of cultural and spatial treatment and policy, shaped by systemic changes, we will offer alternative theoretical and practical visions of what the future participatory framework for integrated policy should look like.

The chosen approach will highlight innovative solutions relevant to theories of cultural policy, spatial and urban planning, through a coupled debate from the degrowth lens.

With the aim of understanding future realistic utopias and alternative possibilities, spatial analysis and urban theories, will allow a deeper critical analysis of the relationship between the culture (content and intervention), environment and space (physical, industrial heritage, natural resources, and revitalization).

The in-depth critical examination of the nexus of interdependence between culture, space, environment and economy is reinforced by the theoretical-activist orientation of degrowth. Critical analysis of economic growth and its associated destruction is presented in terms of its negative impact on key sectors of society, culture, space, and the environment.

This research opens two main research questions:

1) Why is it important for cultural and spatial policies to seek their place in the postulates of degrowth theory in the face of today's crises?

2) Why is it important to see a different economic knowledge and policy for the post-gorwth? How can a deeper intersectoral and interdepartmental connection be made possible? In other words, in what ways do practical action and reflection on cultural and spatial participatory practice (outside of cultural policy) contribute to a more equitable management of the public sphere and goods?

The chosen cases are suitable for the comparative analysis of cultural brownfield practices (Magacin in Kraljevića Marka in Belgrade and Pogon in Zagreb). Thus, these examples complete the given theoretical frameworks and problematic research questions. Finally, considering the previous work, we suggest that it is necessary to think strategically about the modeling of different system solutions with the

aim of establishing fairer management of the public sphere and goods.

Degrowth Contributions for the Needed Post-Growth Transition

Degrowth clearly points out that the roots of the current systemic crisis are rooted in economically unbalanced imperialist and colonial legacies. The starting point of degrowth, as a transdisciplinary theory, is to understand current conditions in order to propose the desired transformation. As such degrwth is seen as both diagnostic and prognostic proposal. It has more than one hundred definitions with main elements: democracy, equity, equality, justice, wellbeing – within planetary limits.

Degrowth calls for abundance rather than scarcity by advocating for a more equitable distribution of available resources and the strengthening of public and common goods (Latouche, 2014; D'Alisa et al., 2014, Hickel, 2019). It is a missile and a subversive word, because its linguistic constructruction is a growth negation. The meaning of degrowth does not imply decay, but rather looks for ways to slow growth and mitigate the destruction. It seeks the political, policy, practical, theoretical ways to meet the downscaling of production and consumption, as empowered democratically led processes, to release the environmental preasures in sustainable, just and equitable ways that meets the wellbeing for all. It aims to challenge the prevailing perspective because it is wrong (Hickel, 2021). Degrowth is a theoretical, practical, and activist movement. It is a decolonial, contemporary movement for radical systemic change. The main idea is to decolonize mainstream economic theory and practice based on endless economic growth, which requires addressing the imperialist and colonial legacy of contemporary dystopian societies. Our societies are characterized by the works of epistemic erasures, marginalization, and exploitation of cultural, natural, and living heritage. Degrowth motivates us to create new values, meanings, flags, symbols and regions of meaningful imagination to counteract mental and practical legacies of modernism, cartesian philosophy and colonialism – in contemporary system of capitalism.

It symbolizes decolonization in practice and theory. By seeing and deeply understanding the invisible voices of life (human and non-human), it enables us to develop and shift new knowledge based on positionalities, convivial, endogenous, unseen and un-offered pluriverse worlds. Degrowth provides ideas for political and structural transformation based on feedback loops with existing desired practices – to dismantle the injustices, unfairness and inequalities in the duality of the capitalist world.

Why is the Degrowth Critique of Capitalism Important for the Future of Culture, Space and Place Coupling?

By making nature and people the primary means to ensure its endless growth, capitalism went through methamorphosis while still holding its colonial essence. There are numerous clear connections between the destruction of vital spheres of (human and non-human) life, and economic growth. The quest for alternative structural and economic frameworks is closely linked to the new integrated cultural and spatial strategies that are needed – as they capture the vividnes of planetary relations. These relations shine with value creation that goes far beyond profit orientation.

A degrowth-oriented critique of the globalized economic mainstream politics and knowledge intend to draw attention to the problems that affect not only the economy, but all other spheres as well. The culmination of neoliberal ruin has been reached through the application of economic logic, knowledge, measures, instruments and policies to all other essential spheres of life such as culture, society, ecology and space.

Positionalities are hijacked by modern capitalism, which also suppresses basic (non)human rights, the right to culture, sense of belonging and identity of the place. Humans and their way of living are inseparable from the place, and as such space and the environment. The man-made part of the environment reminds us of that human civilization co-exists in a natural environment and continuously shapes it. By changing the space, the interrelated

processes simultaneously shape people's sense of belonging to a through their identity. Real knowledge, the material place, reflected and non-material aspects of culture, and nature are transformed, forgotten, suppressed and marginalized through processes of epistemic erasures and injustices – to meet a universal globalized order.

The greater the negative impacts (in terms of environmental degradation, wastedisposal, mining, etc.), the more likely they are to occur in marginalized communities. Therefore, it is not possible to understand any of these issues separatably, such as analyzing environmental challenges, without including social, cultural, and identity issues in place and space (Gačić & Mićović, 2018, p. 422). As Escobar noted, environmental conflicts are not only ecological in nature, as activists seem to use their contestation to follow the broader issues related to place and their identity (Escobar, 2008). There are also disparities in access to environmental goods and services. Angeluovska and Martínez Alier (2014) pointed out that these inequalities are particularly visible in peripheral urban settlements, which tend to have poor environments and services such as green spaces, street cleaning, and garbage collection, while we althier and or whiter communities enjoy environmental privileges. Here, the exclusion of environmental rights or privileges as racialized or class depended.

By following the patterns of the negative externalities appearing due to the work of economy by havin strong effects on society, culture, space, and the environment, it leads to the deeper understanding of extremely unbalanced and harmful outcomes (Rava, 2017, p. 318). This puts an urgent requirement to seek creation of critical and decolonized knowledge based on insights for future public and political practices (Kočović De Santo, 2022, 2022a, 2023, 2023a) towards a pluriverse visions (Kothari et al, 2018). The key is to understand how the system works in which the capitalist logic is normalized in traditionally nonprofit fields such as culture and other socially significant issues. Kisic and Tomka's research identify and explains systemic constraints such as discourses and

practices of measuring economic impact, precarity, and austerity in the cultural sector by calling for post-capitalist cultural policy considerations. The growing trend favors profitable creative industries, privatization of public resources, and increasing commodification of cultural experiences (Kisic & Tomka, 2021).

In other words, decolonized economic theory which has been developing over several decades, offers some hope and relief. It shows how mainstream economics can be purged of neoclassical economic dogma in (political) practice. Mainstream economics has been shown in many cases to be harmful to society, culture, human and non-human life, by enclosuring our access to essentially important spheres.

Cultural Brownfields as a Participatory Model of Urban Regeneration

Urban regeneration is a complex process. Its main components are physical, social, environmental, sociological and economic (Vaništa Lazarević, 2010). The basic goal is to respond to the current challenges of urban life, aiming to address the concerns of critical urban functions of regeneration. It particularary focuses on social cohesion and diversity, which play an essential role in this process (Vaništa Lazarević, 2010).

Brownfield regeneration is a method that contributes to the preservation of the environment. The principles of conversion and reuse of abandoned structures have become a widely accepted paradigm for dealing with urban heritage. However, the concept of brownfields is relatively new. According to Colomb, brownfields are the most obvious expression of industrial decline in cities worldwide and can be interpreted as the legacy of an unwanted past (Colomb, 2012). Authors Andres and Grésillon (2013) defined creative brownfields (which emerge as a culture-led regeneration process) as cultural and creative spaces created through temporary urban practices. They argue that the development of creative brownfields can take two paths: 1) as integrated into cultural and urban policies and thus included in the regeneration process,

resulting in a more conventional cultural and creative space (formal creative districts), or 2) they disappear (are repurposed) as a result of insurmountable conflicts with other actors (local authorities, owners, local communities, etc.) and their inability to repurpose them appropriately (Nedučin & Krklješ, 2022).

By investigating the patterns of brownfields development, it is crucial to discuss their management logic in more detail. First, according to Andrés (2011), the top-down logic often leads to a traditional cultural facility in a regenerated brownfield site. However, these risks becoming counterproductive for informal cultural outbreaks, while they can be interpreted as loss of autonomy (independence) from formal cultural institutions. Second, temporary cultural activities (bottom-up logic) tend to address social issues more often, as brownfields are seen as a niche in the real estate market open to the implementation of non-commercial civil society projects (Bosák et al., 2019).

Magdziak (2019) identified temporary urban practices of urban space activation as activity catalysts or space activators, which are tiny urban interventions at minimal cost (Magdziak, 2019). They are considered a low-cost approach to revitalizing spaces, especially in difficult economic and social situations. The space activator is often created within a specific local community rather than a predetermined framework. Without financial support, abandoned industrial, commercial, and residential buildings, unused urban land, unprotected yards, and public facilities can be transformed into attractive and usable places thanks to urban catalysts (Magdziak, 2019).

In the last decade, theoretical discourse on temporary urban practices has focused on the ideas of the do-it-yourself philosophy in the city. Several scholars (Douglas, 2011; Iveson, 2013; Lyndon, 2012) emphasized how the implementation of various temporary interventions in urban environments stimulates discourse and inspires long-term improvements to urban structures. Temporary urban practices are creative adaptations and improvisations in space. They are initiated by non-profit groups of actors with

limited financial resources and political power. Author Mara Ferreri sees temporary urban practices through the prism of the temporary city (Bishop & Williams, 2012). It is a new form of spatial action and communicative-collaborative relations (Čukić, 2016).

Temporary urban practices based on activist actions and community needs

Existential insecurity, especially among young people, is forcing various organizations and individuals to seek sectors beyond the established social framework to find new options and ways to balance material and social values (Bishop & Williams, 2012). Through temporary urban activities, it can be shown that many individuals are willing to act to fulfill their wants and needs (Lyndon, 2012; Iveson, 2013). In modern society, these actors have different social (and political) power, influence, and equal opportunities to use spatial resources. The association of diverse individuals to create new spaces manifests itself in new forms of work, self-organization, temporary structures, and activities (Oswalt et al., 2013).

The goal of various interventions in public spaces is to stimulate critical thinking and create a discourse that is communicated through artistic improvisations and changes (in space). In the case of political demonstrations, this leads to long-term changes in social and physical space. According to Bishop and Williams (2012), forms of performative action, site-specific works, and participatory forms of cultural and social participation form methods for appropriating public urban spaces (Bishop & Williams, 2012). Informal associations aimed at experimental action outside of institutional settings, manifested in the practices of performers, artists, and cultural practitioners, can be understood as temporary urban practices in the service of alternative cultures and countercultures (Bishop & Williams, 2012). Counterculture and alternative culture are social and cultural phenomena that refer to otherness in an artistic, cultural, social, or political sense. The concept of a creative

alternative emerged in the 1960s as part of a radical social movement, initially approached by artists and intellectuals with minimal expectations from the State (Dragićević-Šešić, 2012, p.17).

The alternative culture we are discussing develops in constant interaction, negotiation with its own, but also with other forms and practices, both cultural and artistic, as well as with broader social actions and interpretations. As a result, from the perspective of current cultural politics, it should be viewed as a distinct field rather than something that exists and just opposes (Višnić, 2008).

Examples of Cultural Brownfield Practices – Magacin in Kraljevića Marka in Belgrade and Pogon – Zagreb Centerfo Independent Culture and Youth

The following criteria were used to select examples of cultural brownfield practices:

1) Both examples are in the most developed downtown parts of the cities in the former Yugoslavia (Belgrade and Zagreb), which underwent comparable urban development during the socialist era.

2) They were developed in industry buildings positioned along rivers shaped by different urban practices.

3) Today these places exhibit alternative forms of self-institutionalization.

Magacin in Kraljevića Marka

It is necessary to contextualize the activation of the Savamala cultural district, which includes the former Nolit publishing company warehouse where Magacin was established, in order to comprehend the intricate process of the independent cultural center Magacin's emergence in Kraljevića Marka.

The amphitheatre on the Sava River, located between Savamala and Gazela Bridge, was the subject of various urban planning ideas that were never realised in the past decades (Petrović-Balubdžić, 2017). In

the 1970s, the concept of preserving this part of the city for a later time and more appropriate use, such as the construction of an opera house, museums, galleries and similar elements of public interest, emerged before the expansion of housing construction at that time (Stojanović, 2018).

Since the 1930s, a railroad line has separated Savamala and the Sava Amphitheatre from the Sava River (Vuksanović-Macura, 2015), preventing future urbanisation of this urban area. However, the rich architectural history of Savamala as well as its central location attracted various autonomous artistic and cultural groups. As a result, this part of the city was devastated for decades, attracting the attention of the general and expert audience. The Magacin Cultural Centre was the first cultural organization that moved into an abandoned warehouse in the Savamala neighbourhood in 2007 (Jocić, 2020).

Table 1 shows the background facts for the development of Savamala and the Sava 'Amphitheater' and the efforts that contributed to the area's cultural renewal. Based on the graphic representation (Figure 1.) We could conclude that the development of the urban planning project "Belgrade Waterfront," which has been actively implemented since 2014, cancelled the protection of this region from excessive home building. The mentioned protection principle was important for the last fifty years in urban policies and practice).

In June 2007, the Magacin Cultural Center was launched at Kraljevića Marka 4 to 8 street as an alternative cultural center to prepare and present exhibitions, stages, panels, films, education, and other independent cultural programs (Milosavljević, 2015). However, even after twelve years, its legal status remained unresolved, as the municipality did not fulfill the promise to return the space, which had been unused for years, to the independent scene.

Cultural centre Dom omladine Belgrade was the formal legal administrator of the space on behalf of the owner – the city of Belgrade, while the independent commission of organizations was

delegated by the city based on a public competition selected six organizations with a right to use the Magacin Cultural Center for two years (Stanica Servis for Contemporary Dance, Walking Theory – TkH, NKA – Independent Cultural Association, ProArtOrg, Rende and SEEcult.org). However, no contracts were ever signed with specific groups (Milosavljević, 2015). The organizations in the Magacin Cultural Center were asked to vacate their premises at the end of 2014. The groups using the center at the time asked the Association of the Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia to intervene and help avert the eviction. Since then, the association NKSS (Nezavisna kulturna scena Srbije) has been representing Magacin and advocating for the center's status as an independent cultural and meeting space. After a public discussion, a new model was developed based on the principles of an open calendar and the sharing of resources. With the introduction of the open calendar concept, the number of users grew. At the same time, development began in the area of the current practice/workshop in the basement of Kraljevića Marka 6 (Milosavljević, 2015). In this sense, the use of the MKM based on the principle of the open calendar and the public competition model is an innovative solution that enables the cultural diversity of programs and actors, the strengthening of the mediation function of such spaces and the creation of a platform for the exchange of ideas and artistic visions.

Pogon – Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth

Pogon represents the first example (in the Republic of Croatia) of a hybrid cultural institution that was founded based on a public-civil partnership. It was launched in the space complex of the former factory "Jedinstvo'" in Zagreb (Figure 2.) as a result of a long-term negotiation process conducted between the city administration and of Zagreb organizations operating in the non-governmental sector (Vidović, 2014).

According to the author Ana Žuvela (2018), the first challenges for the independent cultural scene actors date back to the nineties

of the last century. The scarcity of spatial resources resulted from the circumstances of a complex institutional and traditional cultural system that resisted (and continues to resist) modernization (Žuvela, 2018). The participatory approach became evident in 2005 during the municipal elections in Zagreb, when independent cultural groups formed a network to fight for space for their work through the development and presentation of cultural and artistic activities. The gathered groups defended public space (Table 2.) against deterioration. They required from the city administration the abandoned spaces of the former factory in the city centre for the establishment of the open a centre (Žuvela, 2018).

Since the political option, which took over the administration of the city, committed to fulfill the measures agreed in the declaration, in 2005 the abandoned industrial complex "Badel-Gorica" and the old municipal slaughterhouse "Zagrepčanka" were allowed to be used during the ten-day event "Operation: City". The event organizers were associations and the city of Zagreb representatives. The Committee of the Centre for Independent Culture and Youth was established, as a mixed committee in which the City of Zagreb and the associations who initiated the process became co-founders. The first task of this committee was to establish the Centre for Independent Culture and Youth, which would use the industrial complex "Badel-Gorica" (Višnić, 2008).

Shortly after these activities, the space was abandoned and the industrial complex "Badel-Gorica" was privatized. A period of administrative blockade and lack of political will followed (Višnić, 2008). Dissatisfied with the flow of the situation, the initiative went public in 2006 under the official name "Right to the City". It started with direct and sharp criticism of the city administration. After many years of campaigning, lobbying and negotiations on the subsequent use of the factory complex "Jedinstvo", at the end of 2008 the city council finally accepted the proposal of the city administration to establish an institution. The agreement on the establishment of a facility was signed between the mayor and

representatives of the association, thus completing the public-civil partnership.

Conclusion

The practices of the actors, especially performers, artists and cultural workers in Magacin and Pogon, can be characterized as practices of alternative culture and counterculture through informal associations aimed at experimental action outside the institutional framework. If we add to this complex socio-economic and political context of the countries (the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Croatia), analyzed examples show how the public institutions at the city level have not defined how they shall support the extra-institutional cultural sector.

According to shown cases, their practices and policies, we could propose a cultural-spatial strategy for independent scene. Such a strategy shall operate as a hybrid type of temporary urban practice with ambiguous support for an independent cultural scene. However, we can argue that this situation is also about integrating cultural and urban practices. As such it represents a new partnership strategy betweent culture and space policis that leads to re-thinking of modeling new systemic solutions to both the brownfield problem and the problem of the autonomous cultural scene's demand for spaces.

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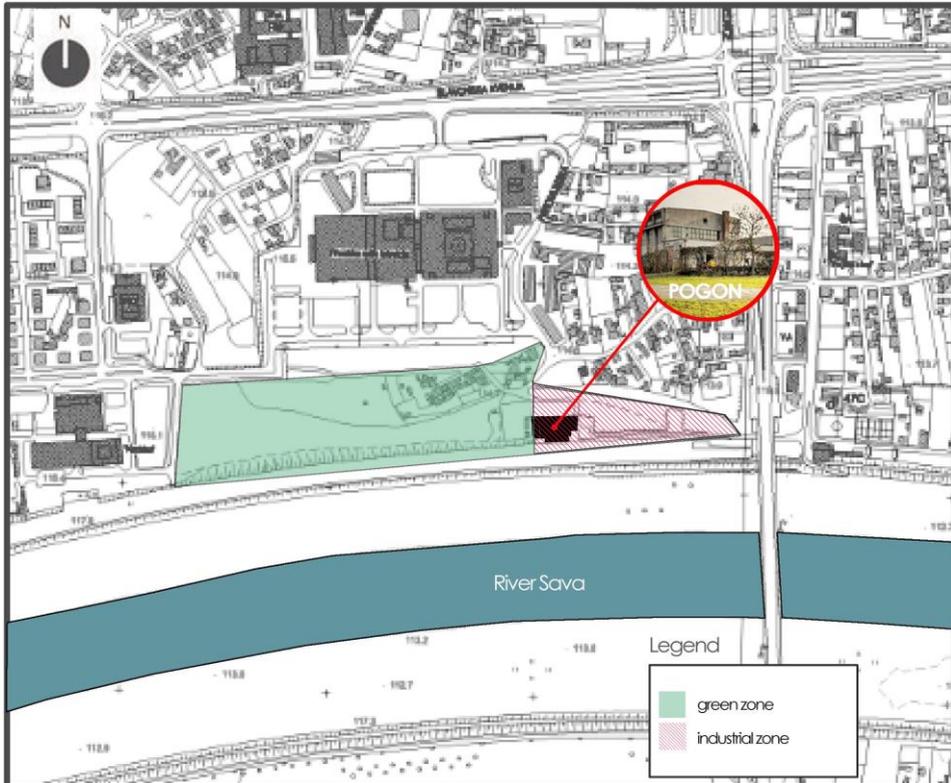
Appendix

Figure 1

Transformation of Savamala neighbourhood before and after urban regeneration
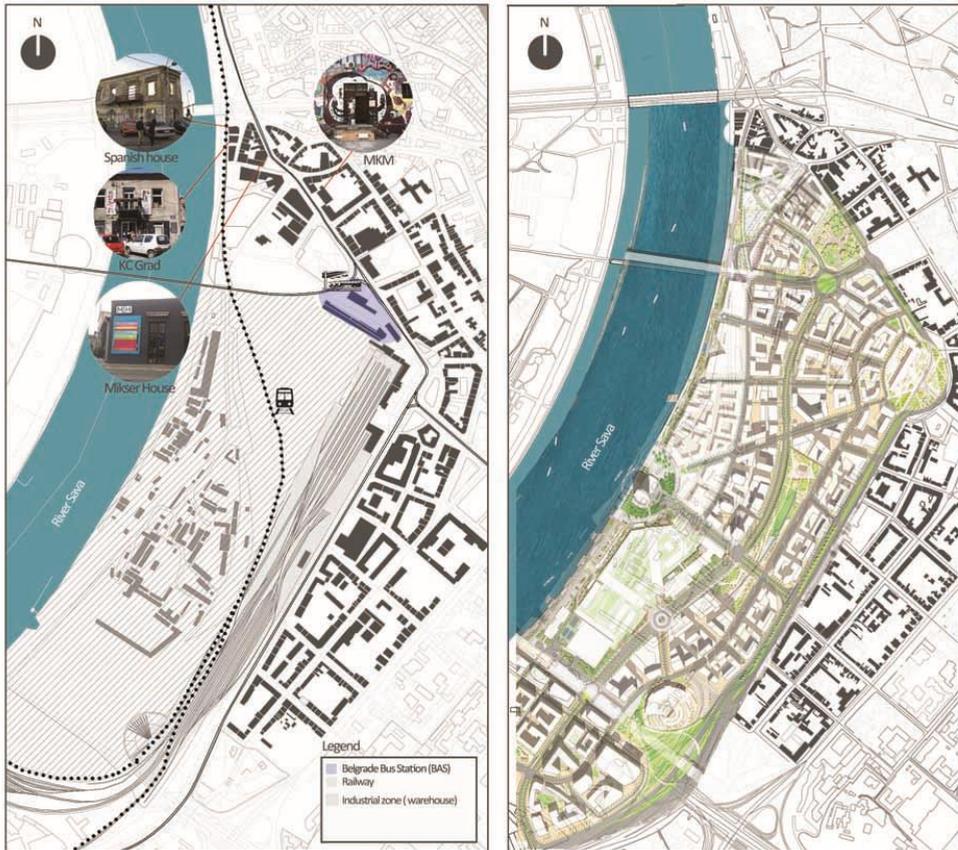
Note. Made by the authors.

Figure 2

Position of cultural center Pogon

Note. Made by the authors.

Table 1

Timeline of the development of the Sava Amphitheater

Year/opening of the institution and realisation of the project	Urban and cultural regeneration
2007. / Magacin in Kraljevića Marka	multifunctional spaces in which exhibitions, debates, concerts, conferences, and workshops are held.
2009. / Culture Center Grad – KC Grad	multifunctional spaces in which exhibitions, debates, concerts, conferences, and workshops are held.
2010. / "Urban Incubator: Belgrade" – Goethe Institute	The project's goal was to revive the Savamala area and draw public attention to the importance of this city district. The result is the Spanish House (former customs office, warehouse and museum) which has become an exhibition space.
2013. / Mikser House	Multifunctional cultural space in an adapted warehouse.
2014. / Masterplan project Belgrade Waterfront	A renovated building of the former Belgrade Cooperative and Master Plan Project is presented.

Note. Made by the authors.

Tabela 2

Timeline of the development of practices in Zagreb

Year / Name of the action	The result
2005. / "Operation: City"	Permitted use of the abandoned industrial complex "Badel-Gorica" and the old city slaughterhouse "Zagrepčanka"
2006. / "Right to the City"	General criticism of city authorities' decisions
2008. / "Jedinstvo"	formation of Pogon in the former factory "Jedinstvo"

Note. Made by the authors.

Sparivanje sfera kulture i prostora za post-rast promišljanja

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Sažetak

Ovo istraživanje ima za cilj da ukaže na razloge zbog kojih postoji fundamentalna potreba za integrativnim pristupima, u pre svega kulturnom, urbanom i prostornom planiranju i razvoju. Takođe, zalažemo se i ukazujemo na značaj uspostavljanja čvršćih veza odrast teorije, sa kulturnim i prostornim studijama, kako bi se postigle hitne razvojne transformacije. U ovom istraživanju cilj nam je da istaknemo tri najvažnija razmatranja, kroz koje ćemo oslikati moguće korake ka različitim budućim sistemskim rešenjima, uzimajući u obzir istorijsku pozadinu razvoja, ideologije, moći, kulture, grada, privrede i drugih relevantnih politika. 1) Važnost participativnih strategija i inkluzivnih pristupa u promovisanju različitih kulturnih i urbanih politika (zasnovanih na praksi kao što je prikazano u slučajevima) kao od suštinskog značaja za budućnost; 2) Ugrađivanje odrast diskusija u oblastima prostora i kulture, ima za cilj da istakne više (alternativnih) puteva kojima se može pristupiti u rešavanju sistemskih pitanja i izazova; 3) Teorije kulturne i urbane participacije ukrštene sa praksom pružaju strateški okvir.

Ključne reči: kulturna politika, prostorna i urbana politika, odrast, integrativne strategije za kulturu i prostor