

The aim of the project

The project aims at investigating the role of art in the transformation of post-industrial cities in the post-Soviet countries on the basis of four cases: Wächterhäuser Initiative in Leipzig (Germany), the SPOT project in Košice (Slovakia), and Lodz Underground in Lodz (Poland). The main goal of the project is to describe city as a complex form of organization and mobilization, as well as to determine the influence of spatial arrangement of urban landscape on the social relations and the identity of city dwellers as performance, which may be formed also by means of artistic activity. The methodology and discourse employed to tackle these phenomena – different from the commonly accepted understanding of city transformation as an administered, planned process of bringing urban areas out of crisis – enables a description of artistic activities as a form of stimulating the city life.

What research will be undertaken in the project providing a description of the four analyzed cases in which art has plays a key role in remodeling urban everyday life constitute the core of the conducted research. The activities present in post-industrial Central European cities which host no major political or economic institutions – the cities in which the place of once booming industry remained empty, with no projects to fill this void – are also taken into consideration. Each identified issue is investigated in all analyzed locations. A set of such issues shall be identified during a series of research trips. The rationale behind the planned research trips is to collect information in the form of interviews, carry out photographic documentation on the site, and verify data relating to selected activities on the basis of other sources available. The phenomena occurring in the city will be described from a pre-selected perspective on the basis of the collected data.

The reasons for embarking on the subject matter

The project is a valuable contribution from the point of view of Art Studies, as the above-mentioned artistic activities have not yet been elaborated on by means of the adopted methodology. The selected cases seem particularly interesting due to the complexity of the processes involved and their effects. They have been chosen on the basis of available scientific literature and journalistic writing, as well as previous visits to the investigated cities, or as a result of direct contact with artists and organizers operating in these areas. All cases differ in terms of the types of their artistic activities: from architecture, to site-specific actions, to artistic activity with the participation of local communities. What they have in common, however, is that they were aimed at remodeling the daily life of crisis-stricken urban sphere. The outlook on these processes proposed in the project may enrich the debate on the general direction of remodeling cities, and prove useful to researchers, urban activists, local authorities, and other agents dealing with revitalization.