

**The Effect of Strategic Planning on Urban Governing  
Arrangements:  
The Politics of Developmental Planning in Budapest and Warsaw**

By

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A Doctoral Dissertation

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## Abstract

Systemic reforms towards free-market democracy in the 1990s produced a radically new context and challenges for the former socialist cities of Central Eastern Europe. New local public leaders, for the first time democratically elected, lacked experience in running a fragmented capitalist city. The basic interest behind undertaking research on the politics of urban planning in the large post-socialist cities of Central eastern Europe was to understand what drives institutional change in such an urban political milieu. The thesis uses the approach of the shift from local government to local governance in order to position post-socialist cities on the map of the discipline of urban politics. It suggests an approach to comparative urban governance through studying various structure of governing arrangements.

The thesis explores the claim that strategic planning is an opportunity for transitional cities to move faster towards effective urban governance on the example of the cities of Budapest and Warsaw. The link between the institution building *aspect* of strategic planning and the effective institution building *nature* of governance processes is explored by focusing on the 'effectiveness' concern and 'public participation' concern that feature in both urban governance and urban planning literature. The thesis explores the effects of political deliberations during the strategic planning processes in Budapest and Warsaw since 1990 on the urban governing arrangements initially characterised as local government rather than governance.

The comparative analysis of two cases shows that strategic planning processes have had little effect on the development of governance relations since the beginning of the transition. No change in the initial governing arrangement towards a form of governance relations was detected. Two case studies demonstrate the consolidation of the already existing governing arrangement through consolidation of the political elite consisting of local politicians, a number of public officials and external planning experts contracted out by city authorities. No evidence shows either a shift towards greater involvement of collective interest groups, be they business or civil sector-related, or towards greater participation of citizens in the policy-making processes.

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