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FROM POST-SOCIALISM TOWARDS POST-NEOLIBERALISM? CHALLENGES AND CONTRADICTIONS OF PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE IN NEW NEOLIBERAL CITIES

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ABSTRACT

Post-socialist countries have been trying to find a new balance for their urban governance and planning systems, which has spanned several periods of institutional restructuring. In many of these countries financial resources, as well as planning and policy-making authority, have been strongly decentralised, reducing metropolitan planning to broad strategic documents. Being financially self-supporting, many of these municipalities have adopted opportunity-driven and property-led planning approaches. While the cities of post-socialism have been going through this neoliberal transformation process driven by market-led dynamics, neoliberalism seems ‘not what it used to be’ (Peck, 2010: 106). Post-neoliberalism does not necessarily refer to a new era, but rather ‘a new perspective on social, political, and economic transformations, on shifting terrains of social struggles and compromises, taking place on different scales, in various contexts and by different actors’ (Brand and Sekler, 2009: 6). The urban policies of this stage of neoliberalism are defined as a search for conciliation between competitiveness goals and the provision of collective goods, and ensuring social cohesion for pacifying the reactions towards competitiveness policies (Loopmans and Dirckx, 2011:100). However, it is not an easy task. Many ‘experienced’ neoliberal cities have been facing challenges and trying to find the equilibrium between competitiveness and cohesion goals. Within this framework, this keynote will address the challenges and contradictions of planning and governance that new neoliberal cities face in this stage of neoliberalism.