

Annegret Haase, Katrin Großmann, Dieter Rink

(Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ, Leipzig; Germany)

Pathways of residential change in postsocialist second-order cities: comparing neighbourhood trajectories

Second-order cities form according to Patrick Le Galès the ‘backbone’ of the urban network in Europe. In the postsocialist countries of East Central Europe, these cities have undergone fundamental changes during the last two decades with respect to their built structures, housing market and socioeconomic make-up of their population. Intra-urban differences have increased and are mirrored by strengthened patterns of socio-spatial segregation and diverging pathways of particular districts or neighbourhoods of the cities. Although there are a number of studies on postsocialist second-order cities, there is still a lack of comparative analyses that focus on the ‘endogenous differences’ between these cities, their local settings and the impact of context factors.

This paper looks at pathways of residential change in different neighbourhoods of postsocialist second-order cities in a cross-national perspective. It analyses pathways of urban neighbourhoods in Leipzig (Germany), Łódź (Poland) and Brno (Czech Republic). The focus will be a twofold comparative one: On the one hand, we compare three different local settings in three national contexts. On the other hand, we compare pathways of different types of urban neighbourhoods: we deal with inner-city districts and those in the outer area that are characterized by large housing estates.

We conceptualize residential change as the process that occurs through the interplay of people, places, local contexts and society leading to constantly changing residential patterns that is small-scale clusters of interrelated social and physical characteristics. It has two dimensions: the residents and their residence which are influenced by intermediary structures such as the housing market, existing patterns of socio-spatial segregation etc.

Set against this background, we focus for the purpose of this paper on two questions: How does residential change emerge in different urban neighbourhoods in postsocialist second-order cities, and what shapes its trajectory? And: What is the specific of residential change in second-order cities in contrast to capital cities or metropolises? To answer these questions, we provide empirical evidence for the three cities mentioned above stemming from different international research projects from the period 2002-2009. We will argue, among others, that the pathways of residential change in different types of neighbourhoods relate much more to the interplay of the specific local context as well as given framework conditions (‘intermediary structures’) than to particular types of districts and built fabric or existing housing preferences of different residential groups.

Key words: residential change, second-order cities, postsocialism, Leipzig, Łódź, Brno