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Does urban structure matter? Contemporary capitalism in a post-socialist city

Contemporary capitalism could be defined as 'cognitive', 'financial' and 'communicative'. What is common for all these three adjectives is a relation of information and knowledge to its production, transmutation and exchange. Therefore, information and knowledge seem to be crucial aspects of contemporary capitalism and – in general - current socio-cultural environment. Therefore we cannot discuss radical changes in forms of urban settlements at the end of 20th and beginning of 21st century outside this 'information obsessive' context.

According to professor Bjorn Asheim there are three types of knowledge important in modern capitalistic system: analytic, synthetic and symbolic. Analytic knowledge is related to 'pure science', synthetic knowledge is related to 'experimental/engineering' science, symbolic knowledge is related to the culture (broadly defined). Only one of them – symbolic knowledge - needs cities to be produced. Analytic knowledge could be produced easily in research institutes (more like Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo in Canada than MIT in Boston), synthetic knowledge could be produced in industrial clusters (located in or out of the metropolitan areas). Only symbolic knowledge needs New York or London to be produced and exchanged. Global City idea could be right stressing importance of big cities in contemporary capitalism, however it seems that cognitive/financial/communicative capitalism needs only parts of them - like London's City and New York's Wall Street, but it does not need the whole cities themselves.

The starting point to analyse the current situation and potential evolution of post-socialist European cities should be to define relationship between different modes of knowledge production/exchange and socio-spatial structures of these cities.

This paper will use Riga as a case study using language tension between Russian and Latvian as an extreme version of communicative capitalism's impact on post-socialist city.

Key words: cognitive capitalism, financial capitalism, communicative capitalism, post-socialist city, Riga, socio-spatial urban structure