Urbanization and Territorial Polarization in East Central Europe

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Setting the scene: why urbanization?

- Increasing role of cities in the global economy (‘City-regions are today functioning as the basic motors of the global economy’ Scott 2001);
- Competitiveness of regions depends very much on the competitiveness of their cities;
- New forms of mobility and spatial interactions;
- Growing socio-economic disparities among people and weakening social cohesion in urban societies;
- Environmental damages caused by informal urbanization;
- Lack of policy responses to challenges caused by the neo-liberal state;
Questions to be focused on

• How has urbanization in a spatial sense developed in ECE countries before and after 1990?
• How has the post-socialist transition effected urban development?
• Is there a convergence with Western Europe in term of urbanization after 1990?
Theoretical framework I.

• ‘underurbanisation’ theory
Theoretical framework II.

• ‘socialist city’ concept

Theoretical framework III.

• Convergence-divergence dilemma
• Convergence with the West (are terms and concepts applied in the western literature applicable in ECE?)
• Convergence within the region (can we speak of a universal model? Is there a post-socialist city?).
Urbanization prior to 1945

- Industrialization and modern urbanization was belated and distorted in ECE;
- Huge differences within the region:
  - Highly urbanized areas (e.g. Saxony, Thuringia, Bohemia, Silesia)
  - Less urbanized areas (Eastern Poland, Slovakia, Eastern Hungary, Transylvania)
  - Hardly urbanized areas (the Balkan States)
Novi Pazar - Serbia
Freiberg - Saxony
Features of urbanization before 1990

- strong state intervention in urban and regional development (top-down model)
- forced urbanization – dynamic growth of cities and urban population
SOCIALIST NEW TOWNS IN EAST CENTRAL EUROPE
Features of urbanization before 1990

• strong state intervention in urban and regional development (top-down model)

• forced urbanization – dynamic growth of cities and urban population

• increasing differences between towns and villages

• declining growth rates over time

• levelling out of urban ratios within the region
Annual growth of urban population in East Central Europe (1950-1990)
Framework conditions of urbanization after 1990

• Return to local governance;
• Privatization of land and property;
• Market based allocation of investments, services etc.;
• Economic restructuring;
• New life-style (housing, work, leisure);
• Growing income differences;
Theoretical framework

• ‘multiple transformations’ theory
  – In the short term: basic principles of political and economic organizations;
  – In the medium term: habits, behaviour and cultural norms;
  – In the long term: urban morphology, land use, segregation etc.;
Urbanization after 1990

• Zero urbanization;

• Urban ratios have been decreasing or stagnating despite legal intervention in urbanization (i.e. designation of new cities: RO 260→320, HU 166→346);

• Mass exodus of people from cities, unprecedented vitality of the peri-urban zone;
Urban dynamics in Europe
1990-2008

Growing cities
Stagnating cities
Shrinking cities

Source: Haase et al. 2013
Balance of migration in Hungary (1980-2014)

The big wave of suburbanisation

Budapest  Cities  Villages
Population dynamics in Hungary

1990-2001

2001-2011

Source: Census, KSH
Residential sprawl
Commercial sprawl

KEROX (Hungarian) - Sóskút

IBIDEN (Japanese) - Dunaharaszti
Urban sprawl around Budapest since 1990

LEGEND
- Built-up areas after 1990
- Built-up areas in 1990
Environmental and social conflicts of urban sprawl
Residential development on former arable land (land conversion)
Changes of arable land in total land use 1990-2012

Over 25% decrease
10-25% decrease
1-10% decrease
Stagnation
Growth
„The sunny islands”
Distruption of the environment

Illegal landfills

Harmful tourism
Number of commuters in the Budapest Metropolitan Region (2001-2011)

Total number of commuters:
- 2001: 275104
- 2011: 380357

Commuters from the agglomeration to Budapest:
- 2001: 174196
- 2011: 225518
Traditional pattern of commuting
New spatial pattern of commuting
And the costs of increasing mobility
Strengthening socio-economic segregation
Segregation indices of occupational groups in five post-socialist capital cities (2001)

1 - Managers, 2 - Professionals, 3 - Technicians, 4 - Clerks, 5 - Sellers, 6 - Industrial workers, 7 - Machine operators, 8 - Unskilled workers, 9 - Unemployed
Local pattern of social segregation (2011)

- **High status** (MAN+PROF > 50%)
- **Low status** (IND+MOP+UNSK > 30%)
Upgrading neighbourhoods
...and downgrading
Limitations of concepts developed in ‘Western’ urban studies
Middle-Ferencváros
Gentrification in Middle-Ferencváros

- Rent-gap Ø
- Landlords Ø
- Value-gap (!)
- Pioneers Ø
- Gentries (?)
- Invasion-succession Ø
Some conclusions

• Fast return to the global trends of urbanization (convergence)

• Increasing differentiation within urban regions;

• Weak planning control → unlimited urban sprawl and deterioration of natural environment;

• Growing income differences have been translated to new patterns of segregation
Thank you for your attention