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Going beyond ‘spectacular’ urban change and aggregate data.

Implications for investigating and interpreting post-socialist residential transformations

Annett Steinführer

Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ
Department of Urban and Environmental Sociology



Conceptual theses (1)



Research on post-socialist residential formations needs:

1. To go **beyond 'spectacular' change** of social exclusion and exclusiveness – otherwise it runs the risk of misrepresenting present-day realities in post-socialist cities.

- e.g. gentrification, influx of western foreigners or deprived immigrants, reinvention of former Jewish quarters ...
- pay attention to the social groups 'in-between' the poles of residential segregation => majority of residents live in more heterogeneous, less 'easy-to-coin' neighbourhoods



Conceptual theses (2)



Research on post-socialist residential formations needs:

2. To distrust the story of all-embracing change and dig deeper for **path dependencies, persistencies and re-arrangements.**

- macro- and meso-scale institutional, social, economic change but one side of the coin of post-socialist transition
- versus micro-scale/in situ changes ('immobility'), neighbourhood path dependencies, persistent illegal modes of subletting public housing, socio-spatial re-arrangements of 'de'- and 're'-mixing ...



Conceptual theses (3)



Research on post-socialist residential formations needs:

3. To (continuously) **question theoretical concepts** originally developed in and for other socio-spatial-political contexts.

- e.g. gentrification, polarisation, vulnerability ...
- new concepts – or at least: new contents for established concepts – needed for distinct socio-spatial processes and phenomena (e.g. ‘reurbanisation’ as socio-demographic process or ‘urban shrinkage’ as rapid economic and demographic decline)



Methodological theses (1)



Research on post-socialist residential formations needs:

1. To **question conventional data bases** more critically.

- census data tell only parts of the story (but there are many stories they do *not* tell)
- census data also shape research approaches and questions – but sometimes obstruct the view on the phenomena due to their very logic, rationales, indicators etc.
- incomplete annual records: not everybody registers! (illegal immigrants, highly qualified professionals, students ...)



Methodological theses (2)



Research on post-socialist residential formations needs:

2. To come to terms with **fluidity and flexibility** of present-day realities (actors, neighbourhoods, ...) by more commonly applying mixed-method approaches.

- e.g. households: continuous changes (split ups, rearrangements), but also their self-perception and -definition in sharp contrast with 'households' as defined by the census
- general problems of cross-sectional data vs. dynamics of social structures and processes



Methodological theses (3)



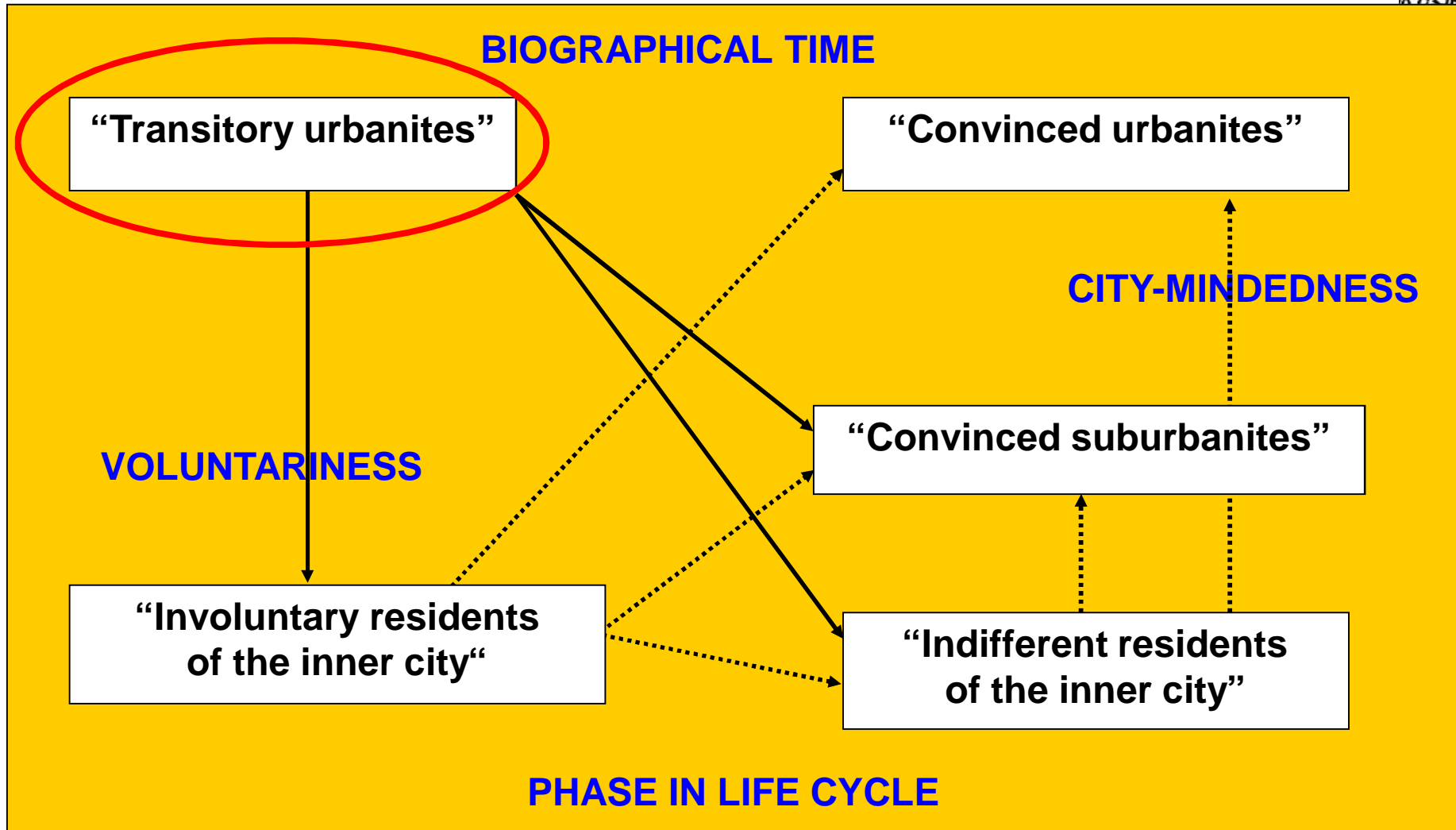
Research on post-socialist residential formations needs:

3. To go **beyond the primate cities** and to investigate second- and third-order cities more systematically – in their differences to as well as their similarities with the respective national metropolises.

- we know so much about Prague, Warsaw, Budapest ... but so little about Ostrava, Katowice, Győr ...
- tacit (or overt) assumption that non-primate cities basically follow the same paths like the capitals – proofs?



Typology of inner-city dwellers with respect to time and motivation



DRAFT (Source: A. Haase et al., eds.: Residential change and demographic challenge, Ashgate 2010)

Implications for future research



- Research on **old, new and re-arranged socio-spatial residential formations in transformation** – rather than ‘in transition’ – needed also further on.
- Necessity for **widening** the conceptual, methodological and geographical **research bases** as well as for more cross-country **comparative** urban and neighbourhood studies.
- Socio-spatial poles just one side of residential segregation – though certainly those deserving most attention. “New socio-spatial formations” good starting point but **open-minded research** needed.



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