Guidelines for the Perfect Inner City? Empirical Evidence of a New Wave of Reurbanisation in East German Cities Using an Interdisciplinary Indicator Set

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we analyse the appropriateness of an indicator set for the observation of inner-city reurbanisation processes which gain more importance throughout Europe. Reurbanisation is conceptualised here as a process of long-term stabilisation of inner-city areas by both a readiness of present residents to stay and an influx of new residents. Recent research evidence across Europe underscores that reurbanisation depends much on local settings of institutional, socio-economic, infrastructural and environmental factors. To get a broader picture of its evidence, progress and local specifics and to provide practitioners with knowledge how to stabilise the inner city, reurbanisation needs to be observed in a long-term way. The complex character of reurbanisation sets new challenges for monitoring approaches and indicator-based tools.

Therefore, we have analysed the demands and prerequisites for monitoring inner-urban reurbanisation processes with particular respect to the complex reality of current household-related inner-urban changes in Eastern German cities. Starting from a number of new requirements that reurbanisation sets up for a long-term observation of inner-city reurbanisation we introduce a set of 20 indicators with demographic and household focus. For the city of Leipzig, Eastern Germany, the evidence of the indicators was tested by means of small-scale municipal data for all urban districts and time series from 1992–2005.

Cross-referencing our findings, the following conclusions could be made:

- First, it became clear through evidence that previous monitoring approaches did not fully apply for reurbanisation as a complex development. This complexity is especially evident because of the close interplay of reurbanisation with demographic and household shifts and the related altering housing preferences that need to be considered.
- Second, according to these aforementioned specifics, the indicator set is based on demographic indicators. It further incorporates additional ones to monitor a more complete picture of what is reurbanisation. In particular, the approach presented here meets the specifics of reurbanisation in a primarily qualitative understanding.

- Third, for the chosen example of Leipzig, the baseline indicators and the whole set passed the statistical test and confirmed the assumptions made before for reurbanisation-sensitiveness of inner-city districts in Leipzig. The indicator set seems to be appropriate to monitor reverse disurbanization, too.
- Fourth, hitherto results demand for the application for other local contexts, a feedback expert discussion of the indicator set by results from statistical tests and, in addition, a clustering, ranking and cross-comparison of dependent indicators.

Key Words: reurbanisation, indicators, neighbourhoods