REGENERATION, GENTRIFICATION AND AGEING: PERCEPTIONS OF OLDER INNER CITY RESIDENTS

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Mix-method research

- Qualitative research:
  - 31 in-depth interviews with residents of central parts of three biggest Czech cities – Prague, Brno and Ostrava in 2010, aged from 62 to 95 yrs, 21 women and 12 men interviewed
  - 7 focus groups in these cities in 2010
  - Follow-up interviews in 2012
Prague - 1,289,000 inhabitants, capital city, relatively dense historical city centre and surrounding areas population 65+ (2008) – 16% in historical centre, 19% in inner city

„Global city“

Source: http://www.stopin-prague.com/apartment-na-kozacce.acc
Prague - Vinohrady

Source: http://www.stopin-prague.com/apartment-na-kozacce.acc
**Brno**

- **Brno** - 405,000 inhabitants – historical city centre rebuilt in the beginning of the century, population 65+ (2008) – 18% in historical centre, 22% in inner city
- „City of students“

**Jaselská street**

![Jaselská street](image.png)
Ostrava

- Ostrava - 343 000 inhabitants, polycentric region of a relatively low density, 65+ (2010) 15.6% of overall population
- „Empty post-industrial city“
Gentrification concept

- Renovation, renewal, renaissance – politically more neutral concepts
- Gentrification – critical theory approach
  - Social and spatial injustice
  - Class differentiation
  - Cultural change, cultural hegemony and dominance
- Postmodern gentrification hypothesis – urban livability

„An economic and social process whereby private capital (real estate firms, developers) and individual homeowners and renters reinvest in fiscally neglected neighbourhoods through housing rehabilitation, loft conversions, and the construction of new housing stocks. Unlike urban renewal, gentrification is a gradual process, occurring one building or block at a time, slowly reconfiguring the neighborhood landscape of consumption and residence by displacing poor and working-class residents unable to afford to live in ’revitalized’ neighbourhoods with rising rents, property taxes, and new business catering to an upscale clientele.“ (Gina Perez 2004: 139, in Japonica Brown-Saracino 2010:13)
Gentrification in post-socialist context – housing as a key factor

- „Niches“ or isles of gentrification – streets or individual houses
- Restitutions of nationalized housing stocks
- Privatization
  - Individual inhabitants
  - Cooperatives
  - Homeowners associations
- Rent deregulation
  responsibility delegated to the municipal level

Source: Brno Architecture Manual
http://www.bam.brno.cz
Gentrification in narratives

- Concepts of renewal and gentrification are interconnected
- Class-related perceptions ➞ heterogeneity
- Changes are interpreted in the broader context of life experience - generation

“Well the houses are old, but beautiful and they are being renovated. A lot, a lot of people became owners and they really took care of the houses. So I think that things are getting better now, but, well, it is expensive. The city and the district too are thriving, I have to say. But, I don’t know how to say that... it is not for all of us, someone can profit from it more then the other.”
Gentrification in narratives

- Change of the function from residential to commercial
- Gentrification brings „the others“ to the neighbourhood
  - New neighbours
  - Gentrifiers – wealthy immigrants, students
  - Immigrants (workers, retailers)
  - Politicians
  - Ethnic minorities

“Well nearby, there is one house where foreigners are living in, mainly, and the rents are really high. And the building on the corner here, there are many offices there. Number ten is full of offices, there are too flats left, so they can spend the rest of their life there, but in spite of them, there are only offices. But it used to be flats. Everything was sold out or is private here.”
Indistinctivness of gentrification

- Isles, niches of gentrification (Sýkora), streets, blocks
- Class, gender and age (young-old/old-old) differences in the perception of the process
- Gentrification:
  - Increasing the pace of changes in an urban setting
  - Brings the strangers into the well known social environment
  - Brings the fear of displacement
  - Challenges the mobility and transportation systems that can compensate the negative effects of the dynamic change
- Importance of the stability in terms of the sense of order (not the rigidity)
- **Power** (ability to control) versus powerlessness
- Gentrification as a part of spatial governance and local politics (Brno)
“Well, I have been living in this house for seventy years and now I don’t know anyone from here, we have only new people here” … „We are the last ones here...“

Thank you for your attention.