

Soviet Summer Home Settlements in Residential Suburbanisation

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In many countries summer or weekend homes for urban residents are located within accessible distances from major cities. This article analyses the role of these settlements in the metropolitan housing market in the Tallinn metropolitan area, Estonia, which has inherited large summer home colonies (dacha settlements) around the city from the Soviet period. Based on Summer Home Areas Surveys in 2002 and 2007 we analyze the transformation of dacha settlements into permanent residential areas. We compare these settlements with new post-1991 suburban settlements around Tallinn. The analysis reveals the diversity of the former seasonally used dacha settlements. First, they attract new residential housing construction and play therefore an essential role in the ongoing suburbanisation process. Second, they offer alternative affordable dwelling for less affluent people. Third, a large part of summer homes are still used for recreational and gardening purposes and some of them have been renovated to serve as modern second homes of urban dwellers.

Keywords: summer home settlements, residential suburbanisation, Soviet legacy, Tallinn metropolitan area

Socialist past and diverse futures: differentiation of ‘small hobby gardens’ in Szeged, Hungary

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In the 20th century a new urban place was appeared in Hungarian settlements' space structure, called small hobby gardens. They had primarily an agricultural function and they lay in the border of the cities and towns. Their owners used there plots produced vegetables, fruits and other crops for self-supporting. They lived elsewhere in the cities and towns but not in the gardens because there was a building prohibition in these zones during the socialism.

Changes have noticed during the last two decades since the change of the regime. In the 1990's the building prohibition in the mentioned zones was ended. New laws were introduced about building and land use which were completed with the orders of local government. The small hobby gardens appeared at the housing market. Recently these gardens are very different in their functions. We can find here plots with living, economy, tourism etc. functions. Social differentiation has increased in the zone of the small hobby gardens.

The research focuses on the Hungarian city Szeged. In the last two decades the characteristics of the rural-urban fringe (especially the ‘small hobby gardens’ zone) of Szeged was started to difference. The aim of the study is to answer two main questions about the changes. How did a homogenous place became heterogeneous during the post-socialist transition? And what was the motivation of the differentiation with special regard to the housing market and the regulation?

Post-socialist post-suburbia? Growth machine and the emergence of ‘edge city’ in the metropolitan context of Moscow

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To what extent do the ideas of ‘edge city’, ‘post-suburbia’ and associated models of urban growth apply in the transition economy case? The paper considers the politics and practice of urban development and place-making in the periphery of Moscow, based on the case of Khimki, a former off-limits satellite city serving the requirements of the Soviet military-industrial complex and more recently a booming area featuring many new retail and office developments, as well as housing projects. The forces and ideologies driving the growth of Khimki, the relationship between different actors, and the relevance of the Soviet material and cultural legacies are considered. The paper argues that while the case of Khimki shares many facets and controversies as depicted by the concepts of ‘edge city’ and ‘(suburban) growth machine’, it is still a distinctive mutation of these. Particularly, it is ‘placelessness’ that must be added to the conceptualisation of rapid urban growth in the context of post-Soviet Khimki. The placelessness, or the lack of purposeful place-making strategies by the growth coalitions, arises from a number of factors, including highly speculative development practices, a little interest of local businesses to influence the shape of wider urban development beyond their immediate control, and local government’s retreat to standardised planning requirements and to a capricious allocation of developable land as opposed to visionary urban planning and development strategies. Thus, growth in Khimki is fuelled by a spontaneous variety of opportunistic profit-making initiatives that are characterised by short-termism and are essentially disconnected from ‘local’ city, at the same time as government maintains a passive laissez-faire pro-growth approach. This type of ‘growth machine’, while destroying Khimki’s ‘thick’ Soviet-era industrial identity, makes the city into an increasingly fragmented and ‘thin’ site of rapid capital accumulation. It is yet to be seen whether the cooling-down of the real estate market in Moscow combined with a growing demand for new urban infrastructure and emerging residents’ movements will re-structure the modes of governing urban growth in peripheral places such as Khimki more in line with proactive place-focused post-suburban politics.

Suburbanisation of housing between Shrinkage and Growth – a Comparison of five Urban Regions in Central and Eastern Europe

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After liberalisation of housing policy in the former socialist countries new ideals of housing and living have appeared. In Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in Western Europe, the suburbs have been increasingly taken into account by the population when making locational decisions on where to live. In an incredibly dynamic process, new communities have been mushrooming, widely scattered throughout the area and often in an uncoordinated fashion since the early 1990th.

Observing identical or similar phenomena within the peripheral areas of most of the Eastern European cities, it evokes the question: Are there also identical processes behind? Do the same or different factors stimulate suburbanization? Different empirical studies have shown that levels of suburban residential growth and scopes of actors can differ quite widely among countries and urban regions.

Within the framework of an international project dealing with the explanation of new or persistent patterns of social differentiation in CEE urban regions one of the investigated neighbourhoods are selected suburban areas in St. Petersburg, Budapest, Sofia, Vilnius and Leipzig.

In order to identify images and ideals that can lead or strengthen polarization or fragmentation of urban structures several actors, experts and households, were asked about the preferences, images and ideals of areas and housing. Living in green suburbia seems to be very popular in the investigated case study areas. These areas do have the best image among all kinds of neighborhoods, although in Leipzig a stop of suburbanization process and a decline of population have been observed for the last few years! The results are raising questions regarding social and residential mobility for the whole city. Is Suburbia experiencing a wave of immigration? What kind of people are moving to Suburbia? What common or different processes and trends can be observed in Central and Eastern Europe?