

Centrality and central places in contemporary urban discourse

Thesis

In 1962 Thomas Samuel Kuhn described transformation of the scientific paradigm as a linear process, i.e. how new paradigm replaces the old one.¹ Regardless other facts, this state has become invalid for (urban) geography with respect to “grand theories” criticism. In recent decades inner space of cities has been widely discussed by many authors and this discussion is still open in contemporary geography. Different approaches to urban centrality are accepted. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to capture changes in the understanding of central locations (in everyday life). The thesis should consist of different sources and different views of the same. City centre, in my opinion, can be understood as the object of long duration which (can) serve as the discourse change indicator.

Paper n. 1 (work in progress)

The paper aims to take a closer critical look at the production, perception and representation of centrality within the urban time-space. I try to argue that contemporary (not exclusively post-socialist) city centres need to be considered as a set of earlier historic layers. New nodalities replacing the previous ones, thus, city centre is in this sense variegated entity, which can serve as an indicator of transitions of whole city. The centrality should be therefore understood in its wider sense. Centres, in contemporary geography, are mainly discussed by two approaches. In short:

- Firstly, can be reminded morphology concerned approach – focuses on places (physical structure) like squares, main streets etc.;
- Second approach base on „nodes“, where emphasis is mainly on flows and functions, i. e. gathering places, traffic nodes etc.

Indeed, main idea is to ask in the paper slightly different: Is centrality in (post) city dynamic or stable in time? In meaning of short-time period (day, week, weekend x instead of long duration cores). Methodology is based on quantitative evaluation of cell phone data (time-rhythmicity based approach).

Paper n. 2 (work in progress)

Firstly, this article will rather have historical character. Polycentricity is relatively new (urban) paradigm interconnected with emergence of suburbia in US (after 1945). In fact, also paradigm of monocentricity is not so old how it seems.

¹ We use simplification here

Secondly named paradigm is related especially to industrial cities - a simplified and abstract model of the city. Mentioned descriptions of the cities are nowadays taken for granted, therefore the framing research question could be formulated as: How was the centrality interpreted and perceived in the Middle Ages? Is it just a question of what we nowadays call "historical core"? Thus, main task of second paper is to understand centrality in paradigm (spatial memories, everyday symbolism) and configuration of the medieval city. For this article will be used the 15th century chronicles written by „citizen“ of Prague in sense of qualitative research. These sources reflect important events, places, actions, etc.

Related literature

GOETZ, A. (2013): Suburban Sprawl or Urban Centres: Tensions and Contradictions of Smart Growth Approaches in Denver, Colorado. *Urban Studies*, 50 (11), s. 2178–2195.

KOTUS, J. (2006): Changes in the spatial structure of a large Polish city – The case of Poznan. *Cities*, 23, p. 364-381.

STAVRIDES, S. (2013): Contested urban rhythms: from the industrial city to the post-industrial urban archipelago. *The Sociological Review*, 61, p. 34–50.

SZELENYI, I. (1996): Cities under socialism – and after. In: ANDRUSZ, G., HARLOE, M., SZELENYI, I. eds.: Cities after socialism. Urban and Cities after Socialism: Urban and Regional Change and Conflict in Post-socialist Societies. Blackwell, Oxford, s. 286–336.

SOJA, E., W. (2011): Beyond Postmetropolis. *Urban Geography*, 32 (4), p. 451–469.

WARF, B. (2009): From surfaces to networks. In: Warf, Barney –Arias, Santa (edd.): The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives. London, p. 59–76.

And more.