

Regeneration and gentrification of historic districts. The case of Poland

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After the fall of the socialist regime, cities in Central and Eastern Europe experienced a systemic transformation that was significantly influenced by internationalization and globalization. As a result, the regeneration occurring here differs significantly from the process taking place in Western Europe (Temelova 2009; Kaczmarek & Marcinczak 2013). The main initiator of regeneration activities are local authorities, which prepare and then implement regeneration programs (Ciesiółka, Gunko, Pivovar, 2020). The initiatives undertaken most often relate to centrally located historic districts. More than 55% of regeneration areas in cities in Poland are located in downtown areas (GUS). They are highly technically degraded, and are also a place where social problems accumulate. Gentrification, which is initiated by private tenement owners, coincides with the regeneration process. However, it only applies to those parts of the city center that have the potential to attract new middle-class residents. Both processes contribute to the improvement of the technical condition of buildings and public space, and as a result, to the reconstruction of the urban heritage. While regeneration is usually perceived as a process of positive change, gentrification evokes the opposite feelings (Ciesiółka, Maćkiewicz, 2020).

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In this article, the authors contrast the opinions of various actors about the relationship between regeneration and gentrification that intertwine in historic districts of Polish cities. Particular emphasis is on linking these processes with the former character and historic fabric of the districts. An original methodological approach is used in the study, following the Mixed-Methods Research concept (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It involved desk research analysis supported by qualitative content analysis. Using this methodology, it was possible to analyze urban regeneration programs and information provided by the local authorities of Poznań in reports on regeneration programs and projects in the years 2006–2017. Questionnaire research was subsequently conducted among randomly selected adult inhabitants of the regenerated areas. Finally, individual in-depth interviews were conducted with nine individuals representing different social groups, whose aim was to obtain qualitative data related to the results of questionnaire surveys. Therefore, the paper will attempt to assess the social and spatial effects but also public participation in regeneration and gentrification processes in historic districts. Particular attention is also paid to the issue of the impact of spatial planning on the processes of regeneration and gentrification.

The city of Poznań, which is considered a precursor of regeneration in Poland, was chosen as a case study. Since 2006, six urban regeneration programs have been developed there. The outcome of these initiatives may be considered unsatisfactory. Plans related to improving the condition of buildings and land development were implemented successfully, albeit arousing some criticism in terms of architecture and urban planning, while those related to enhancing the living situation of people inhabiting the regenerated areas were unsuccessful. Urban regeneration resulted in the gentrification of all districts in the city center and

no social benefits were obtained.

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