

Werk

Titel: Managing and marketing of urban development and urban life

Untertitel: proceedings of the IGU-Commission on "Urban Development and Urban Life", Berlin, August 15 to 20, 1994

Jahr: 1994

Kollektion: fid.geo

Signatur: XX

Digitalisiert: Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen

Werk Id: PPN1030505985

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OPAC: <http://opac.sub.uni-goettingen.de/DB=1/PPN?PPN=1030505985>

LOG Id: LOG_0019

LOG Titel: Change in the urban structure in the Five New Länder: the example of Eisenach

LOG Typ: article

Übergeordnetes Werk

Werk Id: PPN1030494754

PURL: <http://resolver.sub.uni-goettingen.de/purl?PPN1030494754>

OPAC: <http://opac.sub.uni-goettingen.de/DB=1/PPN?PPN=1030494754>

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CHANGE IN THE URBAN STRUCTURE IN THE FIVE NEW LÄNDER: THE EXAMPLE OF EISENACH

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The poster presents some results of an ongoing project to monitor the changes in the urban system in eastern Germany since 1990 at the example of Eisenach.

I. Introduction

Since 1990, several cities in the former GDR have been investigated, to observe the development of the former east German urban system after the unification of the two Germanys.

The example of the medieval city of Eisenach, which is presented here, has been the subject of two sample questionnaires in the context of field studies in urban planning in 1991 and 1993 by the urban research group of the Geography Department at the Free University Berlin. The long term aim of the project is to monitor the ongoing urban restructuring process in the five New Länder. The change of Eisenach's medieval core, from a city shaped for the last 45 years by socialist urban planning to a newly emerging capitalist city, defined by its supply of high order goods and services in the core, will be demonstrated.

II. Study Area

Eisenach, an old regional municipal centre, is located in Thuringia at the western end of the line Gera - Jena - Weimar - Erfurt - Gotha - Eisenach, approximately 25 km from the former inner German border. This line of regional centres is connected with a relatively good developed railroad and Autobahn connection. The distance to Erfurt, the capital of Thuringia, is approximately 50 km.

Eisenach was founded around the year 1150. It is a historically famous place: Martin Luther resided at the nearby Wartburg; Johann Sebastian Bach was born here. For some centuries Eisenach served as the residence of the Thuringian rulers. In 1852 Eisenach had a population of 10,817. Then, in a dramatic growth, the population rose to 31,580 in 1900 and to 50,464 in 1939. From the 1950s to the 1970s Eisenach's population oscillated around 50,000. In December 1991 only 44,266 inhabitants were counted.

In the period of the industrial revolution several branches of the metal processing industries developed. The "Gründerzeit" was determined by a very fast economic

growth that was combined with a very strong increase of population. The first car manufacturing plant in Eisenach was established in 1898. Since the 1930s the car industry became the most important economical factor in this region and has been till today. Steps in this development were a BMW manufacturing plant in the 1930s and 40s, the East German Wartburg plant after WW II and since 1991 the technologically most modern car manufacturing plant in Europe by Opel (General Motors).

III. Analysis

In 1991 and 1993 two sample questionnaires regarding 700 buildings in the medieval core of Eisenach have been conducted. The questions focused on the usage of the buildings, the architectonic types and the current conditions of the buildings. Building use was differentiated in 123 types of commercial and non-commercial use. For display and analysis reasons, these classes were aggregated into a hierarchy of goods and services of different order. The architectonic types were separated by the age of the building and the constructional type. The building conditions were evaluated and divided into five categories.

In the following results of a comparative analysis of the 1991 and the 1993 data will be presented.

Changes in the commercial structure of the medieval core of Eisenach from 1991 to 1993:

- overall slight increase in the supply of goods and services
- increase of businesses with goods and services of higher order in the main shopping areas (central places)
- a majority of supply with goods and services of a relatively low centrality remain in the most central places of the inner city
- depletion in the supply of goods and services in the outer parts of the medieval core
- decline of commercial building use in construction areas in the south and in the periphery of the medieval core
- increase in the intensity of commercial building use due to the creation of service centres - e.g. clustering of offices of lawyers and physicians

A hierarchy of the supply with goods and services has not yet been established. Tendencies towards the establishment of a central place hierarchy and thus the development from a socialist city to a capitalistic city can be detected. A sign for this development is an increased supply of higher order goods (non-daily demand).

An uprising of new service centres, where different complementing services are clustered together in the same house, e.g. pharmacies and physicians etc., can be observed in the 1993 questionnaire.

Building conditions in the medieval core of Eisenach from 1991 to 1993:

- overall slight improvement of the building conditions
- good building conditions in the main shopping areas due to the commercial use of these buildings
- buildings in peripheral areas of the medieval core remain in very bad conditions
- only a relatively small number of buildings have been renovated or restored in the periphery of the medieval core
- improvement of building conditions along the main connecting roads
- attempts to restore the medieval building substance can be detected
- ongoing demolition process for buildings beyond restoration

The socialist inner city was characterised by a lack of functions. This policy and the general deficiency of funds prevented necessary investments to stop the decay of a lot of the half-timbered houses, characterising the medieval core of Eisenach. With the restructuring process, starting in 1990, functions shifted to the old city core. With the help of private and public investment the valuable medieval building substance, that is characteristic for Eisenach, is currently being restored.

Percentage of vacancies in the medieval core of Eisenach from 1991 to 1993:

- increase in the highest class of vacancy due to an increase in not useable buildings
- increase of vacancies in the southern parts of Eisenach's medieval city core, the current centre of the restoration process
- increase of vacancies in areas currently under-going road construction due to non or only limited access for customers

Many different reasons for the increasing number of vacancies in the core of Eisenach can be identified. First of all, the overall economical situation. The effects of the current recession are strongest in the former GDR. These effects are enhanced by the shut-down of a lot of unsuccessful enterprises, started in 1990. A more local reason for the vacancies can be seen in the restructuring process in Eisenach. The building activities in the city core limit the accessibility of businesses for customers. The difference between the rate of vacancies in already restored parts of the city and parts that are currently in this process are evident.

IV. Conclusions

The example of Eisenach demonstrates some of the current developments and problems in the evolution and emerging of a new urban structure in the eastern parts of Germany.

The issues illustrated here are not only to be seen in the urban context of Eisenach, but also in respect of Eisenach's regional role in the urban hierarchy. Smaller towns like Eschwege, just on the other side of the former border between East and West, are currently much more important and much more attractive for customers than Eisenach, although its population is only half that of Eisenach. It can be hypothesised that Eisenach will sooner or later reach the status of the dominating centre in this region.

Further research and the constant monitoring of the urban restructuring process in Eisenach will give future insights into the development of the new urban system in the five New Länder.