

Panelstories: Ethnography of Space (Re)production at Černý Most Modernist Housing Estate.

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Abstract:

The dissertation focuses on spatial environment of socialist modernist housing estates. Based on data collected during a 10year long fieldwork in multiple modernist housing locations, it explores dominant ways of spatial (re)production of Černý Most housing estate in Prague. Thanks to its ownership and ethnic structure Černý Most represents an ideal fieldwork site where both long term and contemporary phenomena resulting from the post-socialist transformation can be detected, described and analysed.

After 1989, former socialist modernist cities have undergone a plethora of political, economical and social changes and disruptions. These changes continuously uncover an ongoing interaction between the initial egalitarian and collectivist heritage of the housing estate as well as its ambiguous and fragmented property structure. Spaces of the estates are continuously (re)produced through various manifestations of actors' territorial claims. The spatial changeability is best described by Henri Lefebvre's notion of socio-material (re)production of space and his widely used concept of spatial triad (Lefebvre 1991). Transformation of housing estates is therefore (re)produced through (in)visible territorial claims (Mubi Brighenti, Kärholm 2020) that originate in the interplay between a features of spatial triad – spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces. This theoretical framework allows for a disclosure of the structure of housing estate's ambiguity on multiple levels – through its public and expert representations, maintenance and development regimes of its public spaces and through the changing relations between private and public ownership, non-ownership and quasi-ownership. This theoretical conceptualization enables a demonstration of who, what, how and why is spatially dominant, privileged or marginalized within the housing estates. It becomes clear that the main reason why socialist modernist cities were not fully transformed into capitalist spaces lies in their hybrid structure that is constantly affected by the egalitarian and collectivist origins of its physical space.