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Social Geographical Research of Ethnic Minorities in Berlin

Main Findings of the PhD Dissertation

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INTRODUCTION AND AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

In recent times, the states of Europe have encountered several social and economic problems which strongly determine the further progresses of the whole continent. Since the Second World War, shortage of labour force in the developed countries of Europe has resulted in persistent immigration causing the fundamental reason of countless social tensions, which have recently affected all West European states. As the main pull factor for the immigrant minorities has been the work opportunities, the ethnic groups have settled down in the urban spaces and hence the conflicts have grown most passionate in the cities.

My dissertation focuses on the ethnic minorities in the cities, presenting the problems of Berlin as a case study. My aim is twofold: *on one hand I study the spatial and social-economic standing of the minorities in Berlin, on the other I both question the possibility of applying well established methods in researches and have some reflections on the limits of understanding "social reality"*.

Firstly, relying on quantitative data, I analyse the spatial as well as the social-economic characteristics of the five (Turkish, Vietnamese, Polish, former Soviet, former Yugoslavian) groups chosen. I have selected these five groups because they own different features in terms of their migratory motivation, of their relationships with the German states or of their social and cultural distances towards the host society and they have settled down in Berlin due to diverse processes. I am trying to answer the questions: *To what extent has the ethnic pattern of the two divisions of the city changed in the more than twenty years since 1992? How do the differences between the eastern and western part determine the spatial trends of the settlement of the different communities? In the next step I analyse the correlation between the spatial distribution of the minorities and both the social-economic conditions and the characteristics of the labour market. Furthermore, I not only scrutinise the demographic features that the minorities present in contrast with the whole of the society but I also examine the trends they have shown since the reunification of Berlin.*

In the second part of my thesis I deal with an epistemological problem: although the analyses presented satisfy the requirements of scientific inquiry and have produced original results as well, there are several factors in the research which appear as evidence but strongly influence the outcomes. *I investigate how the applied spatial partitioning, the scale chosen, the characteristics of the data recording or the personality of the researcher influences the pursuit which aims at understanding reality.*

Besides the vulnerable theoretical embeddedness, the problem of (Hungarian) social geographical research is the lack of the complexity as far as methodology and different approaches are concerned. In his paper, Trevor Barnes (BARNES, T. J. 2009) argues for the linking of quantitative analysis and critical outlook, which is not just a possible line but the approach by which deeper scientific analysis can be carried out. *In the last chapter of my work, by means of the critical approach, I have made an attempt at the presentation of the representation of the Vietnamese minority in Berlin. My choice has fallen on this group because the picture, which took shape by the statistical analyses, is controversial in many aspects. Relying on the theory according to which media has the power of constituting reality, I have studied daily newspapers in order to give a more sophisticated explanation of the changes in their status. By doing so, I do not only describe the representation of a group and reveal the relationship of a minority and a host society in a more sophisticated way but I also look into the epistemological questions of the social geographical researches.*

APPLIED METHODOLOGY

Methodically, my work leans on two pillars: the elaboration and analyses of quantitative data and the evaluation of the results of the qualitative research.

In the first half of my thesis, I have carried out an analyses based on statistical databases and mathematical-statistical methods, which is typical in the Hungarian ethnic researches. First, I have examined the spatial processes of the minorities chosen. Second, I have exploited the results revealed at the presentation of the demographic, social and economic characteristics of the groups in question.

For the description of the ethnic pattern I have used statistical data from 1992 and 2010 regarding the foreign population. They present the *number of the foreign people by their citizenship* on the level of the LOR (Lebensweltlich orientierte Räume) regional division (447 sections). These data contain the number of foreign people who are registered as residents of Berlin by the responsible authorities. Besides these, I have had statistics since 2007 which have classified *people by their migratory background*. Foreigners and German citizens of foreign origin belong to this category. It is important to examine the problem along these factors because as soon as foreign residents obtain German citizenship they will no longer be regarded as “foreigners” but it does not mean that along with their citizenship they change their identity as well and that they are integrated to the society of the city in a complex way.

In the period I am concerned with, it is defined by the German legislation who can, from a statistical point of view, be regarded as German citizen after acquiring the citizenship (HOFFMANN, H. 2004). Consequently, for the description of the changes in the ethnic pattern, I have applied a third dataset which, on a yearly basis, shows *the number of people obtaining German citizenship* by their nationality. So, I was provided with the opportunity to explain the spatial structural changes caused by the foreigners, who were not included in other datasets. Besides the elaboration of the specialised literature and the mapping of the spatial data, I have used the methods of the statistical analysis. I have scrutinised the effects of segregation on the different ethnic groups – to do so I have applied the segregation and dissimilation indexes.

On the maps, I have represented the LOR sections as well as the districts but instead of the current situation I have used the regionalisation before 2001. It was essential because whilst in 1992 there were 23 districts in Berlin, after the reform in 2001 the civil service defined 12 units. Owing to the reorganisation, new districts which are made up from western and eastern areas of the city came into existence – in respect of my research the exact separation of the two divisions play a crucial role (HÄUSSERMANN, H. – KAPPHAN, A. 2002).

Following the presentation of the spatial changes, I have researched into the demographical structure (age, sex, size of the households) and the position on the labour market (employment, qualification) of the groups in question. The applied data stem from the micro censuses, which survey yearly 1% of the whole population of Berlin.

In the second part of my dissertation I have applied the critical approaches and the qualitative leverages in order to point out the incompleteness of the researches and to make my study more complex with the adaptation of different methods. I have sought for the following answers: how makes appearance the spatial and the social-economic situation in the society of the city, which was revealed by statistical analyses, if I supplement my research with diverse methods and approaches. The theories of *social constructivism* as well as the *content- and the discourse analysis* give the theoretical fundamentals of this part of my thesis. I have narrowed down my research to a single minority group, and setting out from the concept which defines media as an actor in the creation of the reality (KEPPLER, A. 2005), I have analysed the representation of the Vietnamese population of Berlin in the most significant daily newspapers (Berliner Zeitung, Der Tagesspiegel). For that I have defined and encoded a sample by strait considerations (VIDRA ZS. – VARGHA L. 2010), and on one hand I have analysed this database by quantitative methods, on the other hand by qualitative

approach, I have described the changes in the most significant discourses of the prospected time period (1993-2010).

With the juxtaposition of the twofold approaches and methods, I have proposed not only the accurate presentation of the situation and the reality of the minorities in question but I also want to point out that reflectivity is not just a possible position in researches but an absolutely required attitude on the way towards a trustworthy piece of work.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 1) On the basis of the literature referred to in my dissertation on one hand, I have surveyed the former approaches of ethnic researches on cities on the other hand I have pointed out the basic discrepancies between the Nord-American/West-European and the Hungarian researches. After that I have summarised the different approaches focusing on the minorities of Berlin and have positioned my work among them.
 - In my thesis I have applied a *comparative approach to describe the spatial as well as social and economic condition* of certain minorities, which have *different migratory background* (“native” groups on ethnically mixed territories, former guest workers, refugees), and I have interconnected my results.
 - It has been of special importance to me to apply different approaches through the integration of which I have been able to give a deeper insight into the ethnic developments of Berlin. *So the statistical assessment along with the analysis of daily newspapers is not just a new approach in the literature but it could be a relevant orientation for the Hungarian social geography as well.*
- 2) The work has reviewed the spatial changes of the minorities living in Berlin since the reunification of the city.
 - The specific story of the city determines the spatial pattern of the individual minorities. The groups, which have either been present for a longer period of time in the life of the city (Polish, former Soviet) or have characteristically immigrated in masses since the ‘90s (former Yugoslavian), demonstrate freer spatial settlement. Though the division can be observed in their case the tendency points to a different direction in comparison to the other groups.

- The recent spatial processes of the minorities, which have settled down in a politically, socially and economically divided city (Turkish, Vietnamese) are determined primarily by the spatial formation evolved by the early '90s. Thus the present processes fit into this picture as well. *It is a crucial feature that whereas the spatial closeness of the Turkish, Polish, former Soviet and Yugoslavian minorities have been dissolved during the last twenty years, the Vietnamese community is the only one, which is situated in the largest distance not only from the host society, but from the other groups as well.*
- 3) By the analyses of official statistics, the dissertation has answered the question: *What sort of correlation can be defined between the extent of spatial and social-economic segregation of the individual groups?*
- I have described the distance of the individual minorities from the host society by a tree-component complex index (spatial situation, demographical force, and economic force). On that basis, the Turkish community owns the less prosperous values: since the reunification it has been seceded not only from the whole society, but from all of the examined groups as well. The other four minorities show a more balanced picture: till the end of the '90s there was a noticeable oncoming towards the values of the German residents but since the beginning of the third millennium there has been a growing distance towards the host society and a convergence to the other minorities.
 - The index has been recreated in the wise that the spatial component has not been taken into consideration. Compared to the former index, crucial change has taken place in respect of the Vietnamese. As long as the spatial and the social-economic situation of most of the examined groups shows similar tendencies, *though strong spatial separation is peculiar to the Vietnamese, this community shows intensive approach towards the host society along the social and economic dimensions. For the deeper understanding of this duality, I have narrowed down my research to the Vietnamese minority in the second half of my thesis.*
- 4) Following the analyses of the official statistics and leaning on the theories of the *social constructivism and the critical approach* I have examined the factors which are usually regarded as evidence in the researches, but which can take a determinative effect on the results.
- By that reason on one hand I have dealt with the questions of *scale and regionalisation*, on the other hand I have analysed the results of the ways of *data*

recording. As a consequence of the topic of my dissertation, I have considered it important to touch upon the effect of the character and the attitude of the *researcher* as well.

- 5) As a consequence of my former results in the last chapter of my thesis *I have focused my study on the Vietnamese community of Berlin, and I have revealed the changes in their representation*.
- By the methods of the *qualitative and quantitative content analyses* I have examined on one hand the representation (for example: sex, age, profession) of the persons who appear in the articles of my sample, on the other hand I have introduced the most important discourses related to the minority: *(I) Trade of cigarette, black market, and mafia; (II) Sending home and deportation; (III) Victim role; (IV) Education, culture and arts*.
 - The difference between the two centuries has been outlined sharply: In the '90s the members of the community turned up principally in negative roles (for example: illegal trade, illegal residence, violent acts). Since the millennium, not only this discourse has become more unstressed, but the successes in education and culture, as well as the introduction of private stories and courses of life have got increasingly dominant.

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See full list of publications here:

<https://vm.mtmt.hu//search/slist.php?lang=0&AuthorID=10032662>

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