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RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPERS AND POST-SOCIALIST URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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ABSTRACT

Real estate developers (re-)emerged as new actors in Central and Eastern European cities after the collapse of socialism. Since the early 1990s the role of developers in urban transformation has risen enormously across cities in the CEE region along with globalization and integration processes into the structural context of the EU.

Shopping malls and office towers are amongst the most spectacular cases of urban transformation through developers. Nevertheless, the lion's share of new property developments is made of housing projects. These new residential buildings often stand in stark contrast to housing estates built in the socialist era. The impacts of new housing for post-socialist cities is manifold, including amongst others the following phenomena: densification of the urban tissue; modernization of urban space; new housing choice; gentrification; spatial segregation processes; gated communities; suburbanization; socio-spatial fragmentation and polarization.

The development of the primary residential markets of twelve Central and Eastern European capital cities has been researched over the past seven years. Reflections upon urban housing market dynamics and its spatial implications are displayed in case studies of Prague, Bucharest, Sofia, Bratislava and Warsaw as well as selected secondary cities in Poland. Particular emphasis is placed on the partially uncontrolled urbanization process in Warsaw.