



Gentrified Arterial Roads as a Phenomenon for Urban Transformation. A Critical Observation of Gentrification Processes Based on an Upcoming Inner District in Vienna

Yvonne FRANZ, PHD. Student
University of Vienna, Austria
yvonne.franz@univie.ac.at

Processes of gentrification are undoubtedly important driving forces for urban transformation. These processes can be observed predominately in attractive areas of inner districts which are among others characterized by an attractive building stock (e.g. former industrial buildings that are useable for loft-living or buildings from the founding period) or a convenient connection to public private transfer. The character of gentrification differs in every city, because the process depends mainly on local government, housing policies and economic conditions. On the one hand, exclusion among local, mostly low-income and therefore highly vulnerable population can be observed in gentrified areas of US-American cities, where the tough forces of a free market economy rules. On the other hand, gentrification processes in European cities run more weakly and gentle although even in Europe examples of displacement can be found.

Despite all differences, a special form of gentrification concerning its spatial development can be found: Gentrified arterial roads in inner districts. Based on studies in Vienna, a trend towards “linear upgrading” along main roads can be identified. A diverse mix of cultural and retail supply is completed by a vibrant gastronomy. The question comes up why gentrification does not only arise in limited neighborhoods or around “urban germ cells” like marketplaces or parks, but also along main roads? Who are the relevant actors and who or what came first: Pioneers who belongs to some sort of creative class (FLORIDA, 2005) or “urban chic” that predominately occurs because of “boutiquing” (ZUKIN, 2009, p. 47)? Does public investments follow private or vice versa? Which role plays this kind of gentrification for urban transformation?

The Gumpendorfer Straße in the 6th district of Vienna has been chosen as a case study to elaborate previous questions. This important main street seems to be some kind of model for a “linear process” of gentrification. The different phases of gentrification can be observed in a clear succession and it is recognizable that the centre-facing stretch of the road is highly gentrified, whereas the periphery-facing stretch suffers from bad structure, high vacancy rates and inconvenient noise pollution. The central part of the Gumpendorfer Straße is characterized by a high dynamic in private and public investments. At this place it is particularly interesting, how far the gentrification process has been enabled endogenously or exogenously and how further gentrification potential can be estimated. Additional research will elaborate eventual “spill-over” effects from gentrified stretches of the road to until now un-gentrified stretches.

Additionally to a comprehensive literature research, the study will provide a balanced mix of quantitative and qualitative methods which includes on the one hand basic statistical analysis of the specific neighborhood. These results will be enriched by expert interviews and it will be attempt to visualize relevant data by using cartographic methods.

KEY WORDS: Gentrification; urban transformation; creative class; social inclusion and displacement.