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# Urban green infrastructure and effects of greening policy in post-soviet cities

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## Abstract

Political and economic transition after 1989 brought fundamental change to post-socialist cities, their people and to urban nature, too. This change embraces an improvement of air and water pollution, a renaturation of water courses in parts of the cities, but also more attention to urban greenspaces as places for physical and mental recreation, aesthetics, urban history and biocultural diversity. Particularly when cities underwent periods of population decline and shrinkage which was quite typical for the 1990s and 2000s, urban brown- and greyfield sites have been transformed into new parks, gardens and interim use open spaces. Urban gardening started to become fashionable among young urbanites as well as other forms of guerilla gardening and community activism. Traditional allotment gardens and summer cottages came under pressure by those new uses. Faced by recent reurbanization after shrinkage, many post-socialist European cities experience a sort of balancing act between regrowth, new construction and infill-development on the one hand and the preservation and enhancement of greenspaces and green infrastructure on the other. Especially when looking at newly increasing air pollution by car traffic and related health problems, green has a specific and important role as nature-based solution against pollutants and respiratory diseases. The paper will discuss issues of green infrastructure development, governance and implementation (including obstacles) under post-socialist conditions at the local level. It will illustrate its arguments by case studies from Leipzig (Germany), Łódź (Poland) and Archangelsk (Russia). It will highlight current state, change and future prospects of greenspace (forests, parks, semi-natural areas, reused brownfield sites) and green infrastructure (gardens, cemeteries, pocket parks, green roofs, and green walls) in post-socialist cities. The case studies focus on specific greenspaces (parks, wetlands, community gardens) and will analyse them against the overall green infrastructure management in the respective cities as well as concerning the way green infrastructure is governed, managed and used by a broad range of actors involving state, civil, social and economic stakeholders.

**Keywords:** Urban green infrastructure, urban green space, post, socialist cities, Leipzig, Łódź, Archangelsk

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