

Learning from recovering medium-sized European cities

The Case of Pirmasens

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Empirical Evidence

- City careers of six middle-sized cities in peripheralised regions (Stadtkarrieren in peripherisierten Räumen); Jan 09 – Dec 11
- *Research Cooperation:* IRS – Leibniz-Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning and ILS – Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development
- *Overall research question:*
 - What are peripheralisation processes doing to the cities under study? How are they perceived by local stakeholders?
 - How do peripheralisation processes shape local scope for action?
 - How are local policy makers dealing with peripheralisation processes?



Pirmasens

- Mono-industrialised agglomeration; dominated for decades by a single industry (shoe production)
- Withdrawal of American military forces 1995-1999
- Peripheralisation processes since the 1970s; „crisis“ mid of the 1990s



Peripheralisation in Pirmasens since the 1970s

Out-migration	Outmigration especially of young and highly-qualified
Disconnection (ambivalent)	<i>Economically:</i> Growing competition; demise of the shoe industry's growth and success model; domestic shoe manufacturers off-shoring their production <i>Infrastructurally:</i> Even in times of economic centrality (Germany's leading shoe-producing city in the 1920s, 1950s, 1960s), Pirmasens remained peripheral and was by-passed by main national transportation systems
Dependency (ambivalent)	<i>Politically:</i> Dependency on external funding sources for local key projects <i>Economically:</i> Pre-dominance of family-owned SMEs
Stigmatisation	Supra-local and local media focussing on negative images

Local governance in Pirmasens

- From government to governance by partnership (1990 - 2000)
- Business representatives investing considerable time and money (city marketing, social commitment, financial investment into the city)
- Strategic governance: Vision of „Pirmasens 2010“, city master plan produced 1995
- Strategy of building on its own strengths and potentials (eg. building upon Pirmasens' core competence towards a shoe competence cluster)
- Selective approach when accessing national or supra-national funding programmes (based on priorities set in the local context by vision “Pirmasens 2010” and city master plan)

Characteristics of the local strategic approach

- Dealing with structural change as a collective local project of local economic and political elites
- Mobilisation of endogeneous resources for regaining autonomy and scope for action
- Consistency of strategy-building over the last 15 years in Pirmasens, involvement of private business in urban development

Outlook

First signs of success in dealing with structural change now being registered by experts (not by local population however)

e.g. Positive work place development,
2006-2010: +5.2%

