Scientific objectives

The objective of this project is a comprehensive and diligent empirical research on housing affordability in urban Poland and its changes over the last two decades (2006 - 2023). The time-frame that we adopt in this project is explicitly designed to reflect a long-cycle of HA development, and to capture effects of the contemporary black-swan events of the Covid19 outbreak and Russian-Ukraine war 2022 on housing affordability in Poland. Housing affordability (HA) can be very broadly defined as households' ability to access and obtain decent housing without experiencing unwarranted financial hardship. We intend to investigate housing affordability at three distinctive spatial scales: household, intra-urban (spatial differences within metropolitan regions), and inter-urban (differences across cities). The basic assumption of this project is that housing affordability has been declining in Poland for the last two decades. However, we assume that the pace and scale of the decline in housing affordability have been sensitive to socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of households, and to the demographic, functional and economic profiles of cities. Importantly, we also assume that the evolution of local housing affordability patterns is not spatially homogenous, but it hinges on geography within metropolitan areas.

Significance of the project

Housing inequality is one of the central topics in urban studies, and in the social sciences more broadly. It is also one of the most significant and visible aspects of socioeconomic inequality. Housing affordability has attracted extensive research interest in recent years, particularly since the Global Financial Crisis in 2008. Irrespective of the continuous scholarly attention that the issue of housing affordability has received over the last decades, there still are theoretical and empirical gaps to be addressed: 1) cases from beyond the English speaking world have largely been absent, and it has even been argued that explanations of urban housing affordability patterns and their changes demonstrate a strong Anglo-Saxon bias; 2) the great majority of empirical studies on housing affordability focus on interurban differences in affordability levels, thus ignoring the issue of intra-urban patterns and their evolution over time; 3) the effects of global (the Covid19 pandemic) and regional (Russian-Ukraine war 2022) black-swan events on affordability levels are yet to be discerned. Accordingly, we believe that our project is innovative and novel in three ways. First, the project offers a comprehensive and systemic analysis of rental and ownership affordability across several spatial scales from micro (households) to macro (differences among cities). Second, we shift attention to urban areas in Central Eastern Europe, a region that, so far, has been largely absent in the scholarly debate on urban affordability crisis. Third, the project's time frame of two decades is designed not only to illustrate a long-term cycle of housing affordability development, but also to capture the effects of the most recent black-swan events. We believe that our endeavor to fill-in the existing gaps in urban housing affordability research with cases from Poland should not only provide fresh and telling insights into the debate on the current global urban housing affordability crisis, but also open new pathways to investigate local (intra-urban) patterns of affordability.

Research methodology

The proposed project rests on methodological triangulation as strategy of data collection and analysis. More specifically, referring to the scope and aims of the project, the methods we plan to use divide into two main groups: 1) quantitative methods of longitudinal and cross sectional multivariate analysis; 2) qualitative methods - in-depth research interviews with key urban stakeholders from public and private sectors, supplemented by an extensive review of policy documents, and media and newspapers reports.

The planned analysis of housing affordability in Poland requires zone level data (e.g. information from land and mortgage register courts on real estate transactions aggregated to spatial units) and individual level data (e,g, information on individuals and households from *Household Budget Surveys*).