

Transformation in East German Tourism - Inevitably Path-dependent? The Case of the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Spas

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The spa business in Eastern Germany has gone through radical changes since the late 1980s from a solely state-planned and organized form of tourism to market-driven tourism. It is often argued that the economic transformations in Central and Eastern Europe can be characterized as path dependent. According to this understanding, the development of the transformation is strongly dependent on the structures of the past system. However, especially Eastern Germany can be called a near text book example of the “big bang” reform of a planned economy, with the changes in the legal and institutional sector as well as price adjustments being achieved almost over night.

The presentation gives a short introduction into the former GDR spa system and its present state. It considers different facets such as human resources and institutional settings, which have influenced the development of the spas in the past decade and analyses their path-dependency. For a further insight, the presentation will look closer at the development of the three spas Bad Sülze, Ahlbeck and Heringsdorf, each of them an archetype model for non-path-dependency. The three examples represent role models for the possible development of spas in Eastern Germany.