

## **Internal Migration after Communism: Spatial Population Dynamics in the Czech Republic, 1989-2007**

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### **Long Abstract**

It is generally recognised that socialist and capitalist political economies generated different spatial population dynamics and settlement structures. In capitalist countries private ownership, retail price competition, and decentralisation into local governance were the main factors shaping urbanisation and other forms of spatial arrangements. Socialist spatial arrangements, on the other hand, were mainly formed by collective ownership, the centrally planned allocation of development funds, and centralised decision-making (Andrusz et al., 1996). The transitions towards liberal democracy and market economy in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) from 1989 have significantly affected spatial population dynamics. This opens the possibility to compare long-term capitalist residential arrangements with the emerging post-communist ones in order to understand similarities and path dependencies.

Internal migration is the main vehicle of spatial population dynamics in developed countries. It drives spatial differences in demographic structure and social composition. It is also one of the determining factors of spatial differentiation in economic prosperity, housing construction and land use. It is therefore important to study the character of internal migration (its volume, structure and direction) as well as its determinants and driving forces. Most of the research on determinants of internal migration focuses on longstanding liberal market democracies (Champion, 1994, Partridge et al. 2008, Korpi et al. 2010, Wulf et al. 2010 ), but it is hard to find studies on internal migration in CEE countries.

Urban areas are the main hubs of the economic and social transformation. In the CEE countries the most dynamic changes in internal migration in the last two decades happened in the out-migration from urban areas. Macro- and micro-economic changes have led on the one hand to strengthening of agglomeration power of some urban centres, and on the other to the stagnation or even decline of urban areas with low restructuring capacity (Hampl 2005, Blažek, Csank 2007). Not only did the urban hierarchy change; restructuring within urban agglomerations also took place. While some studies focus on urban restructuring in post-communism (Andrusz et al. 1996, Sýkora, 1999, Musil 1993) or on alterations in settlement hierarchy (Hampl and Kühnl, 1993, Strubelt and Gorzelak 2008), very few studies focus on patterns and drivers of internal migrations. They mainly offer descriptive analysis of the structure and counts of migrants, without providing rigorous analysis of the determinants of migration.

This paper aims to understand the patterns and drivers of internal migration in the post-communist transformation context with special attention to the Czech Republic. We strive to understand how the intensity of the processes of urbanization, suburbanization and metropolitan out-migration changed in

the post-communist context and whether we can compare them to the spatial processes in developed countries (Europe, Australia, North America). Furthermore we aim to investigate whether Czech urban-out-migration is driven primarily by social or life cycle position, and to understand the role of characteristics of municipality of origin and destination in the volume and direction of migration flows.

We work with self-defined spatial categories based on commuting intensities of the economically active population. This allows us to define metropolitan areas with their suburban hinterlands and non-metropolitan areas, whereas all officially defined administrative units fail to provide such a distinction. We conduct the analysis on migration data from population registers that consist of a full-sample dataset of individual migrants who changed their permanent residence to another municipality in the Czech Republic in 2004 and include information on migrants' sex, age and level of education. Level of education serves as a good proxy for social status of migrants. In combination with a very fine geographical scale of analysis (municipalities) we assess the impact of migration on possible socio-spatial polarization. To determine the role of municipal characteristics we use a wide range of data on socio-economic characteristics of municipalities such as poverty rate, unemployment, real estate prices, proportion of non-built up areas or young-old age ratio. We use the method of gravity regression modeling to analyse the impact of socio-economic variables on migration flows of different socio-demographic groups of migrants.

Our main findings indicate that internal migration during the second decade of post-communist transformation was characterised by a growing proportion of migrants toward suburban areas, which have become a dominant migration destination. Suburbanisation has become dominant not only around the capital city, Prague, but also around other Czech cities and towns. Non-metropolitan areas gained population by net migration as well, although the gains were relatively modest. The dispersal processes started only from the mid-1990s. Before, the net migration gains happened solely in cities and towns. The demographic and social profile of internal migrants varies by migration destination. More educated and young adults (mainly aged 20-29) migrate more frequently than others. Their destinations is most often Prague or regional capitals. The choice to leave urban cores for suburban areas is more prevalent among higher educated than among less educated Czechs. This is particularly true among those in younger age between 20 and 44. However, all in all the Czech population remains relatively little mobile and these new trends in internal migration have got so far modest impact on alteration of demographic structures or socio-spatial inequalities. Czechs tend to be *conservative commuters*: they commute to work and stick to the homes they own. Since the Czech Republic is a relatively small country, commuting can replace migration much more easily than in larger countries.

Researchers who have studied internal migration in other CEE countries generally agree that the transition towards market capitalism has brought population dispersal as a new phenomenon after steady urban population concentration in previous decades. However, the classical motivations of deconcentration known from Western Europe and USA seem to be only a partial explanation of these processes (Kupiszewski 2005, Szelenyi 1996, Brown and Schafft, 2002, Brown et al. 2005). In countries strongly hit by the economic restructuring at the first decade of the transformation such as Poland, Romania, or Hungary, 'Western-style' suburbanisation co-exists with economically motivated rural migration and a return to subsistence agriculture (Kok and Kovacs, 1999). In all CEE regions throughout

the 1990s, suburbanisation seemed to be a rather marginal phenomenon concerning mainly the richest individuals. Our study of the recent trends in Czech spatial population dynamics reveals a modest but undeniable convergence towards spatial processes of agglomeration and dispersal common in all longstanding capitalist societies.

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