



# **COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SMALL TOWNS AND RURAL REGIONS IN EUROPE**

**JIŘÍ JEŽEK A LUKÁŠ KAŇKA (ed.)**

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**“COMPETITIVENESS OF THE SMALL TOWNS IN CZECH REPUBLIC”**



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## Small towns attractiveness for living, working and doing business. Case study the Czech Republic

Jiří Ježek

### Introduction, aim and methodology

During the last years small towns problem has become not only in the Czech Republic a topic of many discussions where not only academics (sociologists, urban planners, geographers and economists), but also politicians take part in. The aim of this paper is to introduce international professional community with a sum up of results of the extensive empirical research of inhabitants of the Czech Republic which took place in a period 2007 – 2010 within the project “Competitiveness of small towns in the Czech Republic”, which is financed from the resources of the Ministry of regional development of the Czech Republic.

The paper results from a representative questionnaire investigation of the Czech Republic inhabitants, which took place in a year 2007, and where 1889 people were inquired.

### Small town

What is a term “small town” all about? It is quite difficult to define the term. Usually it is defined as a settlement which is a transformation between a rural and an urban type of the settlement. The European conference about small rural towns which was organized in a year 2005 in Austrian Retz showed that a size determination of the small towns is different in particular European Union countries. The conference participants agreed only on an upper size limit of the small towns – 20 thousand inhabitants. E.g. Agnieszka Kwiatek-Soltys states that “a small town is a seat of the urban type with less than 20 thousand inhabitants; it forms a very heterogeneous set from a point of view of the size as well as from a point of view of demographic development and functions they hold in the settlement system”. Other precise characteristics of the small towns can be minimum population density (70 inhabitants/ha) or maximum 15 % of economically active inhabitants in agriculture.

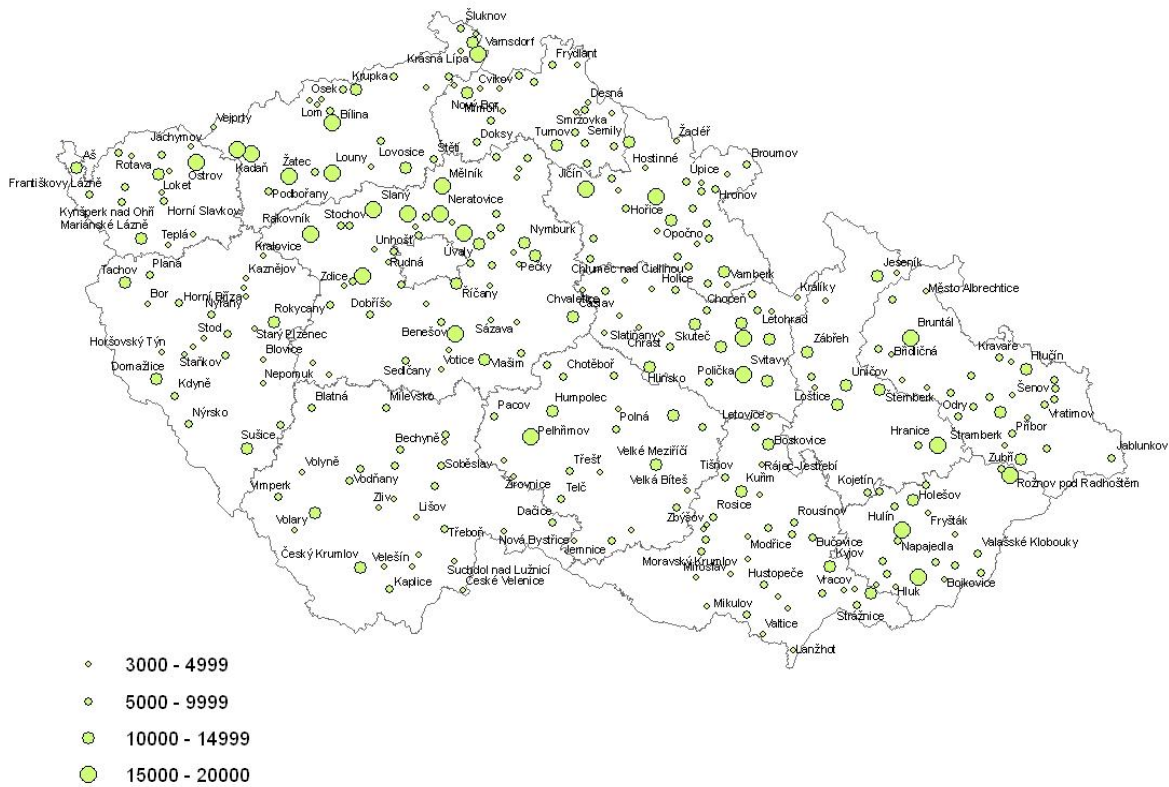
In the Czech Republic the small towns are considered the settlements with 3 – 20 thousand inhabitants. In 2010 there were 336 small towns in the Czech Republic with approximately 2,4 million inhabitants (23,2 % of inhabitants).

**Table 1: Size categories of the small towns in the Czech Republic**

Size category	Number of towns
3 000 – 4 999	127
5 000 – 9 999	13
10 000 – 14 999	46
15 000 – 20 000	24

*Source: Czech Statistical Office, Prague 2010*

**Figure 1: Small towns in the Czech Republic**

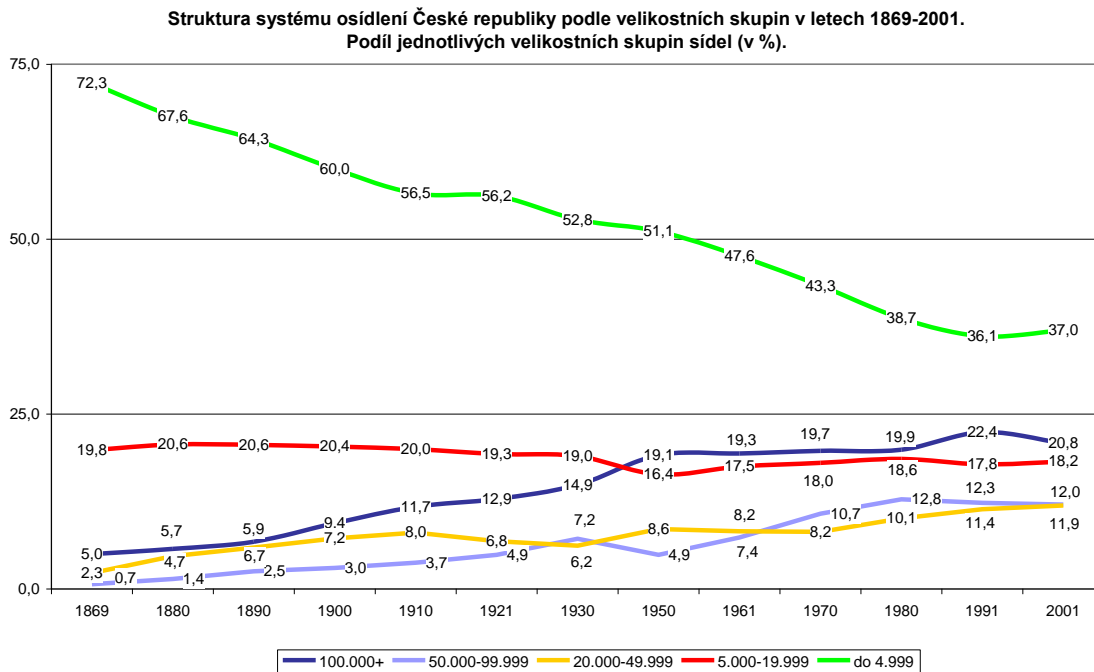


*Source: Czech Statistical Office, Prague 2010*

## **Development of the small towns in the Czech Republic from the long-term perspective number of the population development in a period 1869 – 2001**

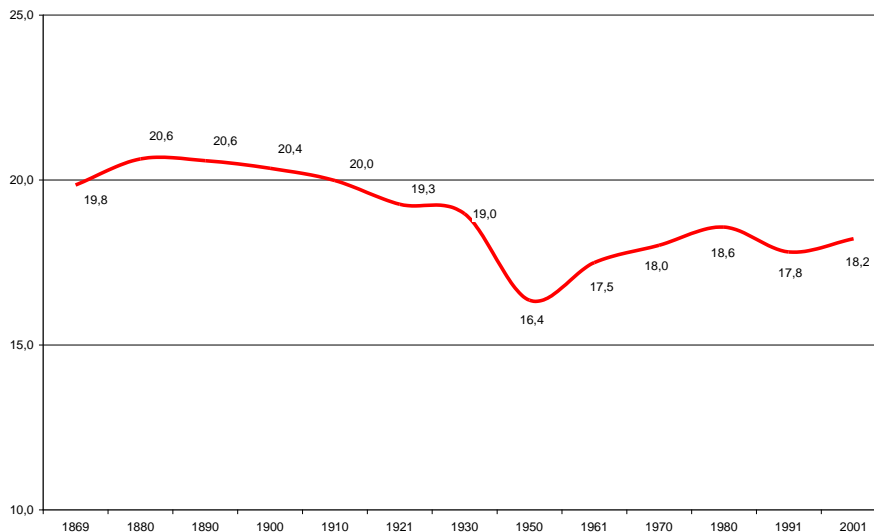
The long-term development of the settlement system of the Czech Republic is characterized by a decrease of the population in rural settlements and in the smallest towns; on the other hand the population in big cities (more than 100 thousands inhabitants) and in middle size towns (20 – 50 thousand inhabitants) has increased. If we have a look at the category of the small towns, it keeps a relatively stable position. A number of inhabitants living in this size category of the settlements have stayed almost constant, so the small towns can be specified as a stability element especially in a case of the rural settlement system.

**Figure 2: Structure of the settlement system of the Czech Republic according to the size categories in years 1869 – 2001 (in %).**



Source: Historical lexicon of municipalities of the Czech Republic 1869-2005. Czech Statistical Office, Prague 2006

**Figure 3: Development of a share of the small towns in a total number of inhabitants of the Czech Republic in a period 1869 – 2001 (in %)**



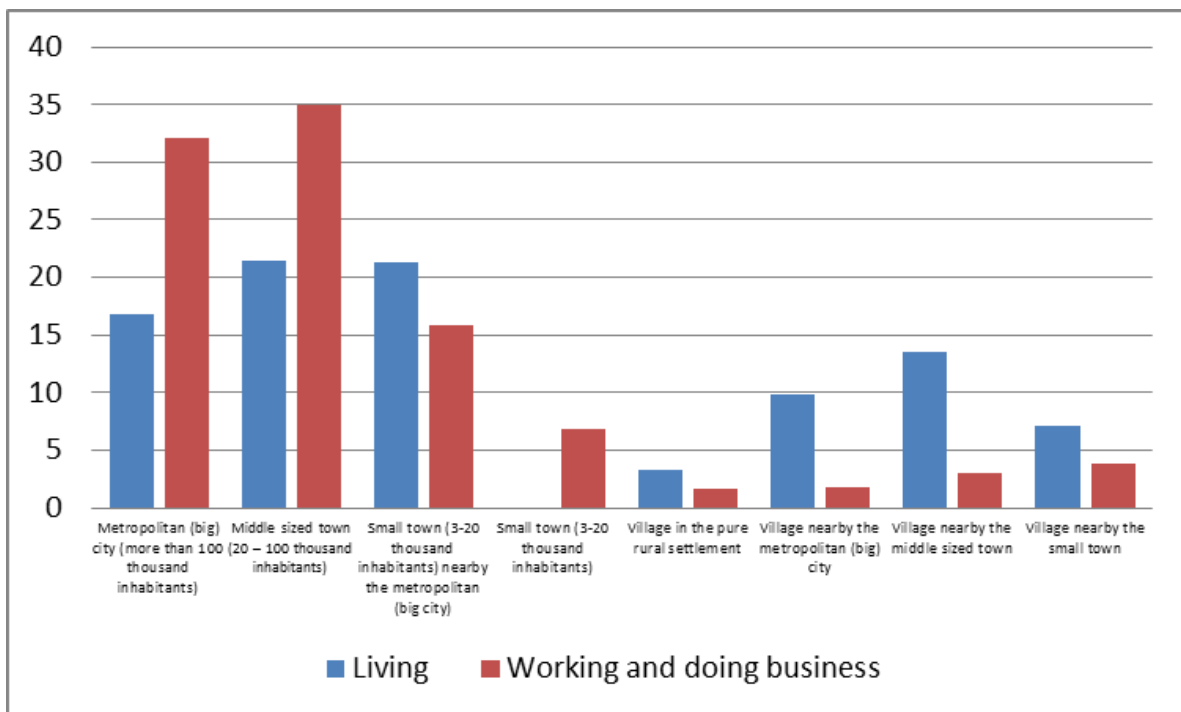
Source: Historical lexicon of municipalities of the Czech Republic 1869-2005. Czech Statistical Office, Prague 2006

## Ideal place for living, working and doing business on the basis of a questionnaire investigation of the Czech Republic inhabitants

### Ideal place for living

What are the Czech Republic inhabitants' ideas about the ideal place for living and working? The most preferred places for living (in a case of the interviewees' free decision possibility) are the settlements of a rural character (villages). That were the answers of more than 1/3 people inquired (33,7 %). At the same time most of them would prefer the village nearby the middle sized town (13,5 %) or the metropolitan (big) city (9,8 %). Only 7,1 % of people inquired mentioned a village nearby the small town as the ideal place for living, and only 3,3 % mentioned the village in the pure rural settlement.

**Figure 4: Ideal place for living, working and doing business from the point of view of the Czech Republic inhabitants. Ratio of answers is in %.**



*Source: Own survey, 2008, n = 1889 people inquired*

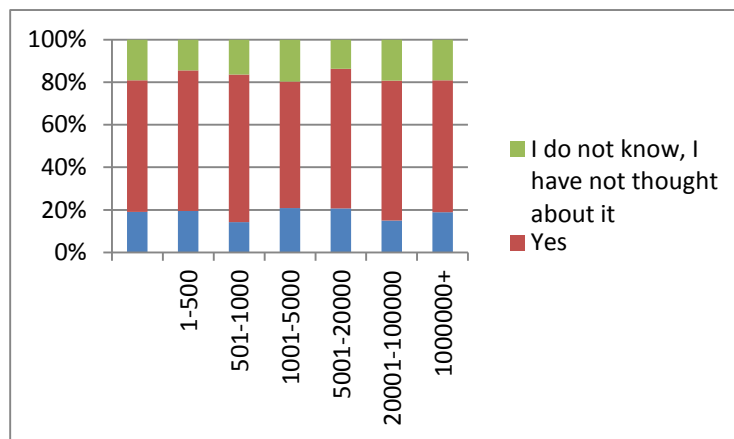
21,5 % of the inhabitants of the Czech Republic prefers as the ideal place for living the middle sized town (20 – 100 thousand inhabitants) and 16,7 % prefers metropolitan (big) city. The small towns as the ideal places for living are preferred by 28 % of inhabitants of the Czech Republic.

The empirical research destroyed a hypothesis that the people in the case of their free decision possibility would prefer rather metropolitan (big) cities or the middle sized towns and that the small towns will not have the perspective in the future. On the contrary, the research showed that the Czech Republic inhabitants have significantly different ideas about their ideal place for living and that the small places play the significant and doubtless role.

## Settlement system stability – do the inhabitants want to stay in the place of the current permanent residence?

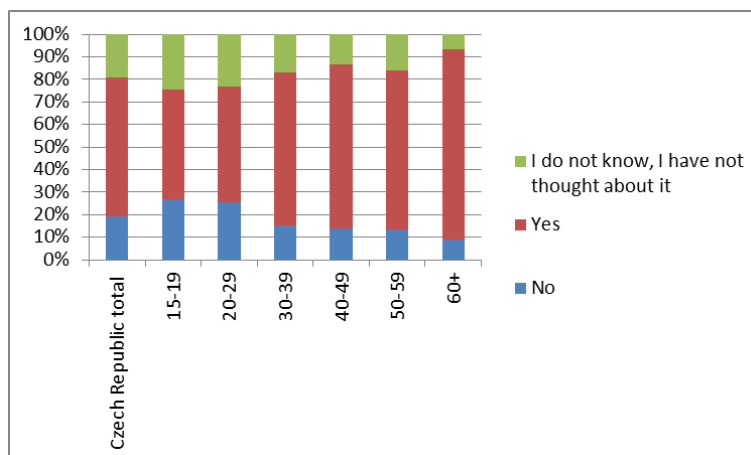
The research also showed that almost 2/3 of people inquired – the Czech Republic inhabitants are satisfied with their current permanent residence, so they do not suppose that they would remove to the other place. It was the opinion of 61,7 % of people inquired. Approximately every fifth inquired person thinks that he will not enthrone in his town. Approximately the same ratio of the people inquired stated that they had not thought about such the question or they did not know the answer. The most unsatisfied people were the young people. As it is showed in the figure 5, the size of the place of their current permanent residence does not influence a lot their readiness for migration. It is a proof of not only generally indicated low migration measure of the Czech Republic inhabitants, but also a relative stability of the current settlement system.

**Figure 5: Answers responses: Would you like to enthrone in the place of your current permanent residence? According to the size of the place of their current permanent residence (in %)**



Source: Own survey, 2008, n = 1889 people inquired

**Figure 6: Answers responses: Would you like to enthrone in the place of your current permanent residence? According to the inquired persons' age reached (in %)**



Source: Own survey, 2008, n = 1889 people inquired



## **Ideal place for working and doing business**

The results of the empirical research show that almost 2/3 of inhabitants of the Czech Republic have the idea of the ideal place for working and doing business connected with the middle sized town (20 – 100 thousand inhabitants) or the metropolitan (big) city. The small town would prefer “only” 22,6 % of inquired people (mostly the small town nearby the big city).

The middle sized towns and metropolitan (big) towns are preferred mostly by young people, people with higher education and the inhabitants of the middle sized towns and metropolitan (big) cities. Especially the inhabitants of the metropolitan (big) cities and middle sized towns can not imagine to work or do business in the smaller sized town.

The small towns as the places for working and doing business are preferred mainly by the inhabitants who live there, older people and seniors and people more often than not with primary or secondary education.

The research showed that the imagination about the ideal place for working and doing business is much more crystallized and is to the benefit of rather bigger towns.

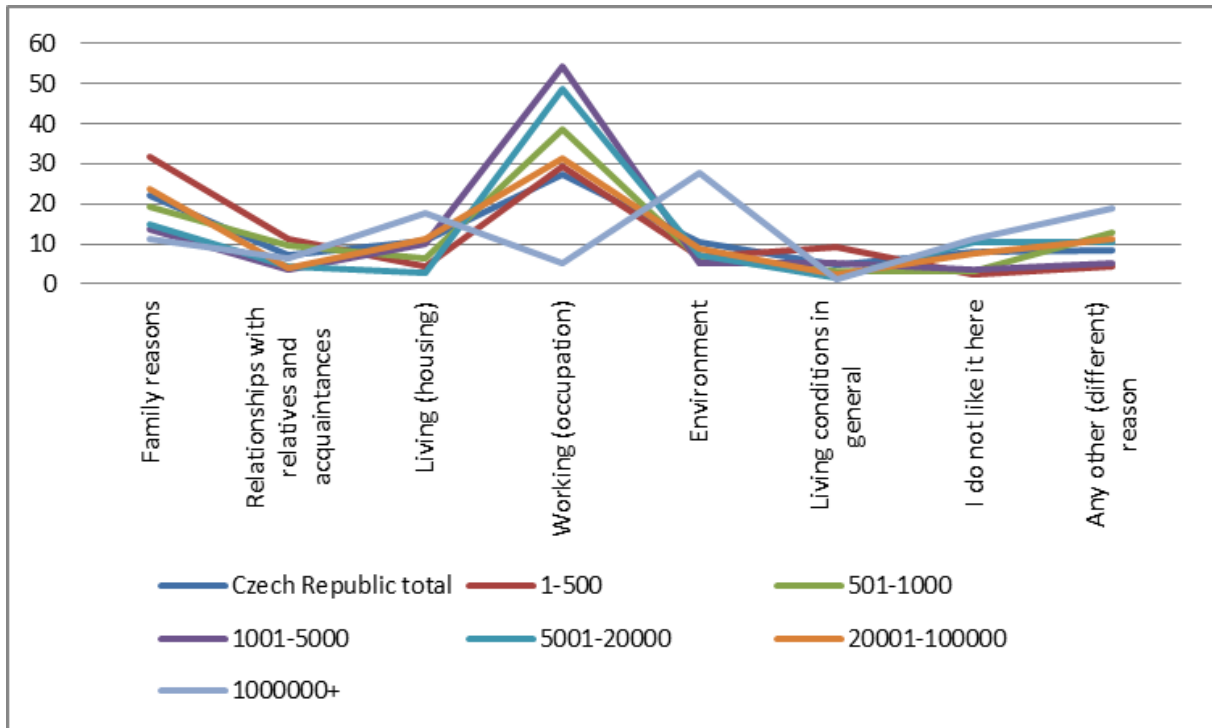
## **Migration motives**

The research showed that the Czech Republic inhabitants have different reasons for a potential removal or a change of their permanent residence. The most important role between them plays a place of work factor (occupation) – 27,5 % answers. The next are family reasons (22,3 %), quality of living (10,7 %) and environmental quality (10,5 %). These factors form approximately 3/4 of the factors.

The place of work (occupation) as the most significant incentive of the removal was stated by the inhabitants of bigger municipalities and the small towns. The inhabitants of the small municipalities and the small towns mentioned the place of work as the most important incentive of their potential removal.

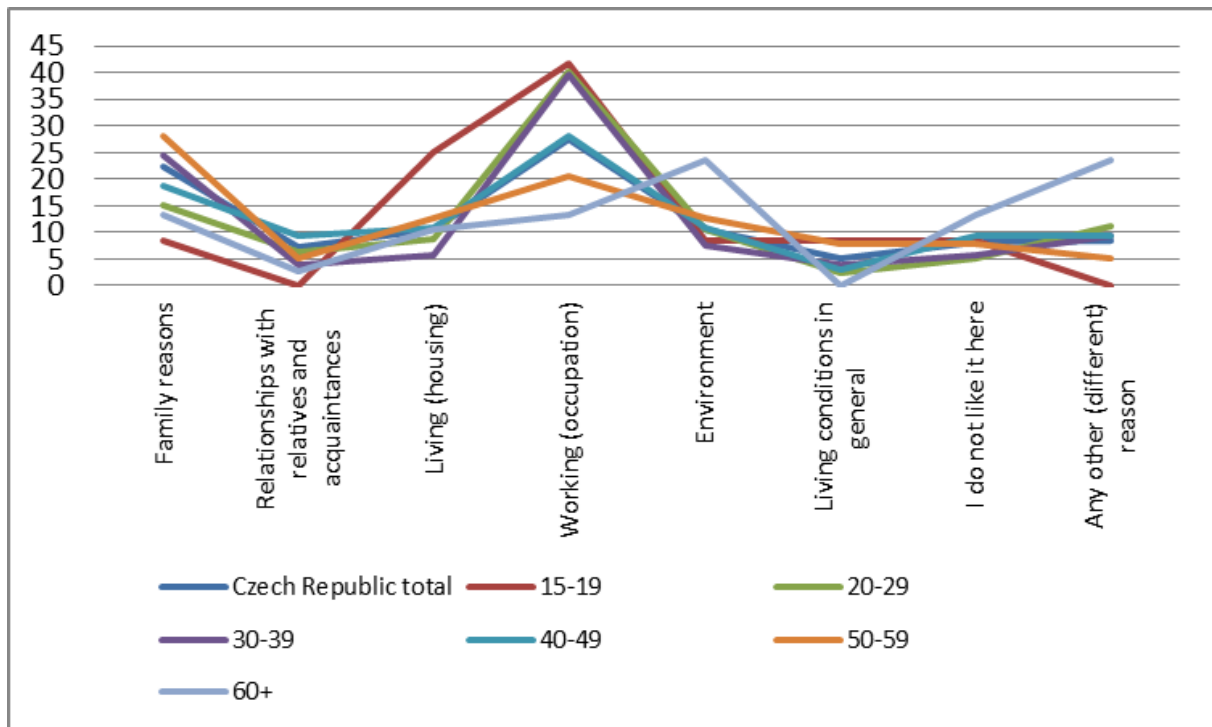
The work is the most important reason to remove especially in a case of young people and the people of the middle age (middle age generation). After the 40-ties this reason significantly comes down. On the other hand the age is the reason why the family factor, environmental factor and the “do not like it here” factor come up.

**Figure 7: Reasons for the potential removal depending on the size of the place of the permanent residence. Ratio of answers is in %.**



Source: Own survey, 2008, n = 1889 people inquired

**Figure 8: Reasons for the potential removing depending on the age of the people inquired. Ratio of answers is in %.**



Source: Own survey, 2008, n = 1889 people inquired

## Summary and conclusion

The empirical research showed that the inhabitants in the Czech Republic perceive the small towns relatively in a positive way, mostly from a point of view of their living. The small towns are frequently labelled as “pleasantly small”, “scenic”, “suburban” and “attractive for living”. On the contrary they are perceived as “more often than not stagnant”, “far-off”, “living their own lives” and also “less attractive for working and doing business”. The research proved that the small towns keep their unsubstitutable place in the Czech Republic settlement system and that it is possible to expect their more likely positive development. The most significant problems can be expected in the small towns, which are situated in peripheral locations, especially in so called internal peripheries on the boundaries between single regions, which have been confronted with emigration since 80-ties of the last century. In despite of the mentioned above, it is necessary to deal with the topic of the small towns also in the future, and to help them to provide their future. Not only because they make up the significant part of the Czech identity.

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# **Das Leitbild einer „intelligenten Schrumpfung“ für Klein- und Mittelstädte – eine Frage der Vernunft- und Überzeugungskraft?**

**Jörg Maier**

## **1. Ausgangsbedingungen**

### **1.1 Herausforderungen und Chancen der Stadtentwicklung in Klein- und Mittelstädten**

Klein- und Mittelstädte waren in der Vergangenheit als Gegenstück zu den Großstädten häufig das Beispiel für solide, wenn auch bescheidene Entwicklungen; Ausdruck für Stabilität aber auch Beharrungsvermögen in traditionellen Strukturen. Seit dem Paradigmenwechsel der Regionalpolitik in der Schweiz Anfang des neuen Jahrhunderts in Richtung Marktwirtschaft und infolgedessen dem Auf- und Ausbau der Metropolregionen ist es auch notwendig, die Leitbilder der Entwicklung von Klein- und Mittelstädten in besonderem Maße zu überprüfen.

Wie derzeit für die Gebietskategorie ländlicher Räume gilt auch für die Typologie der Klein- und Mittelstädte, dass es sich hier nicht um eine homogene Gruppe in bezug auf Entwicklungen und Strukturen handelt, haben diese doch je nach historischer Entwicklung, Lage sowie Wirtschafts- und Arbeitsmarktstruktur sehr unterschiedliche Ausgangsbedingungen bzw. Herausforderungen. So befinden sich wachsende und schrumpfende Städte nicht nur im gesamten Raum, sondern auch kleinräumig sehr oft eng beieinander.<sup>1</sup>

Dabei ist wichtig festzustellen, dass die Siedlungsstruktur in Deutschland ausgesprochen dezentral angelegt ist, leben doch fast 70 % der Deutschen außerhalb der Großstädte und mehr als 75 % aller Gemeinden haben weniger als 5000 Einwohner. Ebenso ist der überwiegende Teil der ca. 3,5 Mio. Unternehmen/Betriebe in kleinen Gemeinden, Klein- und Mittelstädten lokalisiert. Die Herausforderungen sind besonders auf die Wirtschaftskraft und Infrastrukturausstattung, die Stärkung des sozialen Zusammenhangs, die Stärkung der Innenstädte und Ortskerne, die Sicherung der Mobilität und Erreichbarkeit und die Förderung des Städtebaus ausgerichtet. Sie gilt es wahrzunehmen in der Auseinandersetzung mit dem wachsenden Interesse der Metropolregionen und deren Kernstädten.

Wie gestaltet sich dies in der aktuellen Entwicklung einer insgesamt schrumpfenden Bevölkerung?

### **1.2 Die regional unterschiedliche Entwicklung der Klein- und Mittelstädte in Deutschland, Bayern und Oberfranken**

Die Bevölkerungsentwicklung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland hat bis 2002 leicht zugenommen, danach ist sie etwa bis 2007 leicht rückläufig gewesen (82,2 Mio. Menschen 2007).<sup>2</sup> Ende 2007 lebten 30,5 % in 77 Großstädten, 1989, also fast 20 Jahre zuvor waren es 31,7 %, eine Folge der Suburbanisierungsprozesse. Die Zahl der Menschen in den

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<sup>1</sup> Portz, N., Stadtentwicklung in Mittel- und Kleinstädten: Chancen und Herausforderungen, in: vhw FWS3/Mai-Juni 2011, S. 115-118

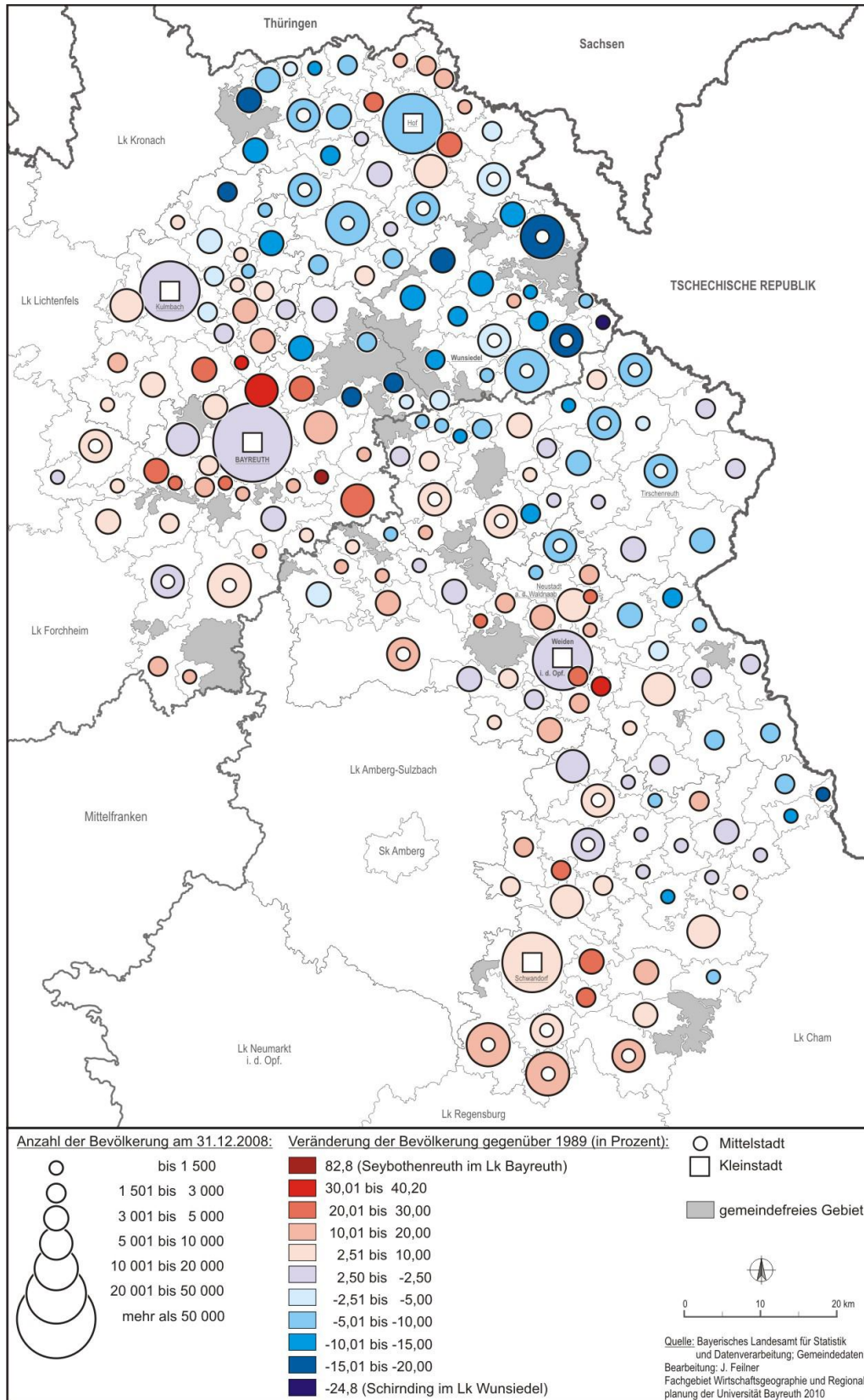
<sup>2</sup> Bundesministerium für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung, Bevölkerungsentwicklung nach Siedlungsform in Bundesländern – Stadtforschung, Informationen, Bonn 2009

671 Mittelstädten hat im ersten Dezennium des neuen Jahrhunderts am stärksten abgenommen und erreichten 2007 einen Anteil von 28,4 %. Die stärksten Gewinne an Bevölkerung besaßen demgegenüber die 628 Kleinstädte und wiesen 2007 11,9 % der Bevölkerung auf.

In Bayern verliefen diese Trends zwar ähnlich, jedoch abgeschwächer, etwa mit einem Anstieg der Bevölkerung in Großstädten ab 1998 und leichter Abnahme der Bevölkerung in Klein- und Mittelstädten außerhalb der Stadtregionen.

In Oberfranken zeigte sich dieser Trend noch ausgeprägter, wiesen doch alle Klein- und Mittelstädte, mit Ausnahme der Stadt Bayreuth (73.000 Einwohner, wachsende Universität) leichte bis erhebliche Bevölkerungsverluste auf. Besonders gravierend ist das Bild der abnehmenden Bevölkerung in den Landkreisen Hof und Wunsiedel im Fichtelgebirge zu registrieren, mit Rückgängen in einzelnen Gemeinden zwischen 10 – 12 % zwischen 1998 und 2008.

**Karte 1: Bevölkerungsentwicklung im Grenzraum von Oberfranken und nördlicher Oberpfalz zwischen 1989 - 2008**



Wie gehen wir nun in der Stadtentwicklungspolitik mit diesen Ergebnissen um?

## **2. Konzepte der Stadt- und Regionalpolitik zum Thema**

### **2.1 Klassische Konzepte**

Die klassischen Konzepte der Regionalpolitik sind auf stetiges Wachstum hin ausgerichtet. Dabei geht es in erster Linie um die Verteilung von quantitativen Zuwächsen, insbesondere von Bevölkerung und Arbeitsplätzen. Die unter diesem wachstumsorientierten Paradigma entwickelten Instrumente sind auf die ordnungsorientierte Steuerung der Flächennutzung, der Neuerschließung von Flächen und den Ausbau von Infrastruktur hin ausgerichtet<sup>3</sup>.

Die klassische Regionalpolitik hat ihren Schwerpunkt der Regionalförderung auf Infrastrukturinvestitionen und räumlich differenzierte Investitionsanreize gelegt. Die Infrastrukturinvestitionen sind ein Instrument zur Förderung wirtschaftlich zurückbleibender Regionen. Diese Investitionen der öffentlichen Hand sollen Anreize für den privaten Sektor schaffen und Unternehmensansiedlungen fördern<sup>4</sup>. Diese Idee der „Zündungsfunktion“ von Infrastrukturinvestitionen hat in einer Phase von hohem wirtschaftlichem Wachstum auch durchaus funktioniert. Öffentliche Infrastrukturinvestitionen zur Beeinflussung von Standortentscheidungen von Unternehmen sowie räumlich differenzierte Investitionsanreize haben sich ohne extensives Wachstum aber als wirkungslos erwiesen.

### **2.2 Das Konzept intelligenter Schrumpfung**

Sinn und Zweck einer nachhaltigen Regionalpolitik kann es deshalb nicht sein, ungezielt Mittel in mittel- und langfristig schrumpfende Räume zu investieren. Die Gegenposition zur traditionellen Infrastrukturpolitik der Regionalpolitik ist die endogene Politik. Diese endogene Politik zeichnet sich vor allem durch Praktiken wie Moderation, Mediation und regionseigene Konzepte aus. Endogene Ansätze forcieren die Ausschöpfung regionseigener Potentiale. Regionen sind dabei als selbstständige und selbstorganisierte Einheiten zu verstehen. Hemmfaktor bei diesem endogenen Ansatz ist jedoch eine eingeschränkte Handlungsfähigkeit aufgrund sehr begrenzter finanzieller Mittel.

Unter den aktuellen Rahmenbedingungen der Regionalpolitik, die einen aktiven und nachhaltigen Umgang mit dem Thema Schrumpfung erfordern, scheint es deshalb zielführend einen Mittelweg zwischen traditioneller Infrastrukturpolitik und rein endogenen Ansätzen zu finden. Einen Ansatzpunkt hierzu liefert das unter anderem von Haimayer in den 90er Jahren entwickelte Konzept des „intelligenten Tourismus“<sup>5</sup> für den Raum Tirol. Im Zentrum dieses Konzepts stehen das Erkennen von Entwicklungstrends sowie der Einklang von Naturschutz und regionaler Wertschöpfung. Begriffe wie Partizipation, Nachhaltigkeit und endogene Regionalentwicklung finden seit Langem ihre Anwendung im regionalpolitischen Sprachgebrauch. Doch trotz dieser Jahrzehnte langen Diskussion einer nachhaltigen, regionalen Entwicklung fanden die nötigen Praktiken nur langsam ihren Eingang in die Praxis. Man kann sagen, dass die beschriebenen Leitbilder, ökologische und auf Partizipation beruhende Ansätze heute in der Praxis angekommen sind und tatsächlich umgesetzt werden. Nötig waren und sind dafür Umdenkprozesse sowohl in der privaten Wirtschaft als auch bei der öffentlichen Hand. Positive Beispiele hierfür sind die Bund-Länder-Programme

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<sup>3</sup> Müller, B. (2003): Regionalentwicklung unter Schrumpfungsbedingungen, S. 28-42, in: RuR, H., H. 1-2/2003

<sup>4</sup> Bodenhöfer, H.-J., Rodiga-Lassing, P. (2007): Paradigmenwechsel der Regionalpolitik – Das Beispiel Kärnten, S. 76-95, in: Kärnter Jahrbuch für Politik 2007, Anderwald, K., Filmaier, P., Hren, K. (Hg.)

<sup>5</sup> Haimayer, P. (1989): Intelligenter Tourismus – Eine Chance für die Zukunft, S. 23-27, in: Schriftenreihe der Hypobank Innsbruck 3

Stadtumbau Ost und West sowie die Soziale Stadt. Diese Programme konnten aufgrund ihres innovativen, regionalen, partizipativen und ökologischen Ansatzes in den letzten Jahren Erfolge verbuchen, wenn es darum geht, intelligent, das heißt in diesem Fall flexibel und nachhaltig, mit Herausforderungen wie Schrumpfung und Strukturwandel umzugehen. Diese regionale Regionalpolitik wird zwar vom Bund maßgeblich finanziert, die inhaltliche Ausgestaltung findet jedoch lokal bzw. regional statt.

Der **Begriff „intelligent“** ist deshalb im Weiteren zu verstehen als:

- Nachhaltig (Dreiklang von ökologisch, ökonomisch und sozial),
- lokal und regional (Bürgerbeteiligung, orientiert an den tatsächlichen Bedürfnissen des Raumes und der Bevölkerung),
- innovativ (zukunftsweisende Konzepte, z. B. Wohlfühlregion),
- kreativ (Raum neu in Wert setzen, Lebensqualität erhalten und steigern).

Laut dem Raumordnungsbericht 2005 muss der Paradigmenwechsel von Wachstum zu Schrumpfung nachhaltig vollzogen werden. Dabei ist es wichtig den Blick auf das Vorhandene, die effiziente Nutzung von Beständen, Erbringung von Anpassungsleistungen und Bewahrung von Tragfähigkeit in der Region zu lenken. Für den Umgang mit dem demographischen Wandel und der Schrumpfung wurden folgende Aufgaben herausgearbeitet<sup>6</sup>:

- „Sicherung einer angemessenen Infrastruktur in dünn besiedelten ländlichen Räumen mit starkem Bevölkerungsrückgang;
- Stadtumbau mit dem Ziel, schrumpfende Städte fit für die Zukunft zu machen, eine neue „Qualitätsoffensive“ für den Raum Stadt zu schaffen;
- Anpassungsleistungen im Bereich der öffentlichen Daseinsvorsorge, insbesondere in den Bereichen Bildung, Gesundheit, Wohnen und Verkehr;
- Aktivierung der wirtschaftlichen und gesellschaftlichen Potenziale einer alternden Gesellschaft, d. h. Alterung auch als Chance für Wachstum, Beschäftigung und gesellschaftliche Entwicklung sehen;
- Verbesserung der Wohn- und Lebensqualität für ältere Menschen, Kinder und Familien;
- Förderung der Integration von Einwohnern mit Migrationshintergrund vor allem vor Ort, in den Städten“.

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<sup>6</sup> ROB 2005, Raumordnungsprognose 2020/2050, S. 14



### **3. Denkbare Konsequenzen der „intelligenten Schrumpfung“ im Rahmen einer integrierten Stadtentwicklungspolitik**

In Verbindung mit dem demographischen Wandel und dem Handlungsbedarf in schrumpfenden Räumen heißt dies, dass eine aktive, offene und nachhaltige Gestaltung der Schrumpfung an Stelle von einem Beharren auf Wachstum nötig ist.

#### **Lokaler/regionaler Ansatz und Rahmensteuerung**

Die Folgen der Schrumpfung zeigen sich vor allem auf lokaler Ebene. In erster Linie haben die einzelnen Kommunen die Konsequenzen, das bedeutet die finanziellen Lasten und den infrastrukturellen Umbau zu tragen. Eine rein kommunale Betrachtungsweise würde jedoch zu kurz greifen, um den aktuellen Herausforderungen nachhaltig zu begegnen. Deshalb ist gerade die regionale Ebene gefragt, wenn es darum geht, über strategische Konzepte günstigere Rahmenbedingungen zur Bewältigung von Schrumpfungsprozessen und kleinräumigen Wachstums-Schrumpfungs-Disparitäten zu schaffen sowie konkrete interkommunale Planungen zu fördern. Jede Region muss dabei ihren eigenen Weg finden, wenn es darum geht, sich langfristig tragfähige Strukturen aufzubauen. Neben der kommunalen und regionalen Ausgestaltung von Schrumpfungskonzepten ist jedoch eine Unterstützung von Seiten des Staates unabdingbar. Das Thema Schrumpfung ist auf kleinräumiger, lokaler und regionaler Ebene in Form einer ganz konkreten Umsetzung, als auch als universale Herausforderung für alle Städte und Regionen zu begreifen. Müller schlägt deshalb eine „anreizorientierte Mehrebenen-Steuerung“ vor. Das bedeutet eine Rahmensteuerung „von oben“ und eine Koordination „von unten“. Zur Rahmensteuerung von „oben“ gehört das Festlegen von Qualitätskriterien für Pläne und Programme sowie die wettbewerbsorientierte Vergabe von Fördermitteln durch den Staat. Als Steuerung von „unten“ dienen beispielsweise integrierte Entwicklungskonzepte, in denen regionale Akteure ihre Prioritäten für die räumliche Entwicklung und den schrumpfungsbedingten Handlungsbedarf selbst bestimmen können.

#### **Notwendigkeit von räumlich differenzierten Strategien**

Die Entwicklungsdynamik von großen Stadtregionen macht deutlich, dass die Vorstellung einer universalen Schrumpfung nicht zutreffend ist. Wie bereits angesprochen wurde, herrscht in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis auf kleinräumigster Ebene ein Nebeneinander von Wachstum, Stagnation und Schrumpfung vor. Die Annahme der Schrumpfung als Universalparadigma und der Rückbau als alleiniges Leitmotiv würden damit ebenso kurz greifen, wie die allgemeine Ausrichtung der räumlichen Entwicklungspolitik auf Wachstumsziele in den 70ern und 80ern<sup>7</sup>. Mit anderen Worten soll dies heißen, dass räumlich differenzierte Strategien notwendig sind, um den unterschiedlichen Ansprüchen des Raums zu entsprechen.

Intelligente Schrumpfung soll in diesem Zusammenhang bedeuten, dass für jede Region ein eigener Weg gefunden werden muss, der sich nicht an einem eindimensionalen, pauschalisierenden Leitbild von Wachstum oder Schrumpfung orientiert. Überlegte und nachhaltige Strategien sind der Kerngedanke einer intelligenten Schrumpfung.

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<sup>7</sup> Hesse, M. (2003): Schrumpfung – im Kopf?, S. 9-10, in: IRS aktuell, Nr. 40, Juli 2003

## **Stärkere Umsetzungsorientierung der Planung**

Um diese Aufgaben erfüllen zu können, müssen zukunftsfähige Konzepte entwickelt und regionale Kräfte gebündelt werden. Dabei geht es vor allem um eine weitere Stärkung der Umsetzungsorientierung des regionalpolitischen Instrumentariums. Das heißt, die Entwicklung der Regionalplanung zu einer Arbeitsgruppe (Task Force) für Regionalentwicklung sollte weiter vorangetrieben werden, um beispielsweise mit flexiblen, informellen Instrumenten auf die veränderten Rahmenbedingungen eingehen zu können.

## **Anpassung als Chance begreifen**

Ein intelligenter Umgang mit der Herausforderung Schrumpfung ist maßgeblich von der Akzeptanz der zukünftigen Schrumpfungprozesse abhängig.

Eine Umfrage von Küpper beschäftigte sich mit unterschiedlichen Handlungsansätzen bei der Reaktion auf den demographischen Wandel. Dabei kam heraus, dass die häufigsten Maßnahmen ein „Gegensteuern“ gegen demographische Veränderungen implizieren. Zu diesen Maßnahmen gehören zum Beispiel der weitere Infrastrukturausbau, Baulandausweisung, Verbesserung der Kinderbetreuung sowie die Förderung zur Schaffung von Arbeitsplätzen. Seltener hingegen finden Maßnahmen zur notwendigen „Anpassung“ Anwendung. Anpassungsmaßnahmen sind beispielsweise die Abstimmung der Infrastrukturen auf weniger Nutzer, die Schaffung von Angeboten für Ältere sowie die Anpassung des Wohnungsbestandes. Der Handlungsansatz, die räumlichen Strukturen an die neuen Anforderungen des demographischen Wandels anzugleichen, spielt somit in der Regionalpolitik immer noch eine untergeordnete Rolle. Nach Küpper wird das Negativthema „Schrumpfung“ meist vermieden. Die Fallstudie hat gezeigt, dass kommunale Akteure immer noch auf einen weiteren Ausbau der Infrastruktur zur Attraktivitätssteigerung im Sinne einer Wachstumsstrategie fixiert sind. Mögliche Ansatzpunkte liegen hier in der Schaffung eines richtigen Problembewusstseins sowie der Entwicklung von konkreten Maßnahmen durch die regionalen Akteure<sup>8</sup>.

Der Satz „*Intelligentes Schrumpfen ist geordnetes Schrumpfen*“<sup>9</sup> macht deutlich, dass zukünftige Schrumpfungprozesse aktiv gestaltet werden müssen, um zu einem intelligenten Lösungsweg zu kommen. Das bedeutet, dass die Regionalpolitik die Aufgabe hat, die Regionen zu motivieren und sie dabei zu unterstützen, neue Wege zu gehen. Dabei muss ein positiver Umgang mit dem Thema Schrumpfung gefunden und individuelle, regionseigene Konzepte entwickelt werden. Ergebnis muss aber vor allem die tatsächliche Umsetzung dieser Konzepte sein.

## **Paradigma der schlanken Stadt**

Der positive Umgang mit dem Thema Schrumpfung war auch die Intension des Paradigmas der „schlanken“ Stadt. Wie Kunzmann treffend feststellt, gibt es praktisch keine Region oder

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<sup>8</sup> Küpper, P. (2010): Regionale Handlungsansätze bei der Reaktion auf den Demographischen Wandel in dünn besiedelten, peripheren Räumen, S 3-11, in: Vielfalt des Demographischen Wandels. Eine Herausforderung für Stadt und Land, DGD/BBR-Dezembertagung 2009, BBSR im BBR (Hg.)

<sup>9</sup> Vesper, M. (2003): Stadtumbau West: Intelligent schrumpfen in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Beitrag einer Tagung vom 27. November 2003, Ministerium für Städtebau und Wohnen, Kultur und Sport des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen

Stadt, die eine „Strategie des geplanten Schlankwerdens“<sup>10</sup> entwickelt und wirklich umsetzt. Zwar gibt es einige Bemühungen und Zielsetzungen, jedoch münden diese nicht in eine konsequente Umsetzung. Revitalisierungsstrategien im Ruhrgebiet, wie der IBA EmscherPark, enthalten zwar Elemente eines Gesundshrumpfens, diese „klugen Bescheidenheitsvisionen“ lassen sich aber auch in dieser Region politisch nicht durchsetzen. Eben an dieser Problematik versucht die Vorstellung einer „schlanken Stadt“ oder „smart decline“ anzusetzen. Der Begriff Schrumpfung ist in der Regel negativ besetzt und wird von politischen Vertretern nur ungern verwendet. Die Idee der lean city ist es deshalb, der negativen Wahrnehmung von Stadtschrumpfung ein positives Modell städtischer Entwicklung entgegenzusetzen. Nur durch die Vermittlung positiver Werte können die notwendigen Anpassungsmaßnahmen auf Zuspruch und Unterstützung von Seiten der Politik und der Gesellschaft stoßen. „Der langwierige und mühsame Prozess der Verschlankeung wäre dann mit smart decline besser charakterisiert, weil er die Cleverness und Klugheit der Akteure bezeichnet, die diese Abmagerungsprozesse steuern“. Aufbauend auf diesen Begrifflichkeiten vertritt Kunzmann somit eine „proaktive Strategie des Schlankwerdens“. Dahinter steckt eine Stadtentwicklung, die es ermöglicht, auf den Potenzialen, die sich aus den Problemen des Strukturwandels und der Schrumpfung ergeben, aufzubauen.

**Diese städtische Politik der Verschlankeung beruht auch vier Prinzipien:**

1. Wiedernutzung von Brachen und restriktive Stadterweiterung
2. Bei der Thematik Revitalisierung von Brachflächen kann inzwischen auf zahlreiche gute Erfahrungen zurückgegriffen werden. Diese Wiedernutzung von Brachflächen sollte verknüpft werden mit einer restriktiveren Handhabung der Inanspruchnahme bislang unbebauter Freiflächen.
3. Qualitätsoffensive des Stadtumbaus
4. Im Zuge einer Verschlankeung der Stadt sollte vermehrt auf architektonische Qualität gesetzt werden um die Standortattraktivität zu erhöhen. Vor allem eine anspruchsvolle Freiraumgestaltung schafft Lebensqualität in einzelnen Stadtquartieren.
5. Entwicklung von integrierten Wissensquartieren
6. Hochschulen sind für Städte nicht nur wichtige Arbeitgeber, sondern vor allem Anziehungspunkt junger, qualifizierter Menschen. Darüber hinaus ist auch den Folgeeinrichtungen und Wirkungen große Bedeutung beizumessen. Hochschulbezogene Dienstleistungen, ausgelagerte Institute, Gründungsaktivitäten, eine große Nachfrage auf dem städtischen Wohnungsmarkt und die Nutzung der städtischen Infrastruktur sind nur einige Punkte. Ziel einer Stadt muss es deshalb auch sein, diese jungen Haushalte auch nach dem Studium zu halten. Besondere Aufmerksamkeit sollte deshalb den wissensbasierten Bereichen zukommen.
7. Förderung ethnischer Ökonomien

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<sup>10</sup> Kunzmann, K. (2003): Die schlanke Stadt: „Smart Decline“ als regionale Entwicklungsstrategie für altindustrialisierte Regionen, S. 43-45, in: Stadtumbau West: Intelligent schrumpfen in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Beitrag einer Tagung vom 27. November 2003, Ministerium für Städtebau und Wohnen, Kultur und Sport des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen

8. Ethnische Ökonomien führen in der Regel zu lebendigen Stadtquartieren und zu einer funktionalen wie kulturellen Mischung. Betriebe der ethnischen Ökonomie sind ein lokales Wirtschaftspotenzial und sollten von Seiten der Stadt mehr Unterstützung erfahren. Eine selbsttragende Entwicklung dieser Kleinbetriebe sollte ermöglicht und Hemmnisse abgebaut werden.

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# Mobility and lifestyle of small town inhabitants

Vladimir Drozg

## Abstract

The paper deals with the question how does the place of residence influence mobility and how is mobility part of daily activities of the population in small and big towns of Slovenia. For better explanation of the question four types of lifestyle has been defined: from very mobile with a wide home-range to less mobile with the small home-range. It can be seen that there is no big difference in mobility of inhabitants of small and big towns.

**Key words:** Mobility, small town, life style, Slovenia

## 1 Introduction

How do small towns differ from larger ones? What makes them different? An economic geographer would in such case think of the volume and type of functions; an urban geographer about typology of objects and ground plan forms; while a social geographer might think about the lifestyle. Anyway, how does the way of life in small towns really differ from larger towns? And how can one instrumentalize such differences, translate them into an empirical form and make them readable?

The term “small town” was first used for towns of a certain size, measured with the number of inhabitants and the respective level of centralization (Vrišer 1969). In Slovenia, small towns are those that have less than 15,000 inhabitants. The content of this term has changed until today; small towns now offer a specific residential environment and a limited number of urban functions. They are primarily places of employment, usually with one economic activity or factory only; they serve as centres of provision and services, but with a limited offer of goods and services. What makes them different from larger towns is the number of activities, which is much more limited in smaller towns than in larger ones; we thus believe that a part of small town inhabitants fulfills their daily needs outside of their place of residence for objective and subjective reasons; objective because there is a limited availability of work places and other activities; and subjective because small towns provide a limited offer of goods and services that majority of inhabitants needs daily or occasionally. For a certain part of small town inhabitants, a more limited number of urban activities thus serve as “mobility generator”. On the other hand, a limited number of urban activities could also cause a lower level of mobility for a certain part of small town inhabitants.

This contribution thus wants to show mobility as an element of lifestyle for small town inhabitants. Mobility of inhabitants of larger towns was used for reference, as we believe there are differences in mobility of inhabitants of small or large towns. The following questions were asked: are small town inhabitants more mobile? Do they travel more and more often than the inhabitants of large towns? What is their main reason for travelling? Is the structure of travel (purpose, frequency, type of transport, time of travel) different in the case of small town inhabitants as compared to large towns? How does larger or smaller mobility of small town inhabitants relate to social characteristics?

## 2 Lifestyle and mobility

Mobility is becoming a very important feature of a modern lifestyle. We travel ever more frequently and to places further away, for which more time and money are needed. A higher level of mobility is definitely a consequence of dispersion of settlement and dispersion of social activities in the area; thus objective circumstances which introduce mobility as a form of adjusting to conditions in the environment, are seen as objective necessity. However, there is also the subjective moment that influences the larger level of mobility. The characteristics of an urban lifestyle include fulfilling the needs at different places, not only in the place of residence. The reason for this type of mobility is more subjective than objective; thus to a certain extent the reflection of lifestyle. One therefore needs to differentiate between mobility, related to fulfilling the existential needs (such as daily commute) and mobility, related to fulfilling other needs that are reflected in lifestyle.

Lifestyle is a “relatively stable, whole and routine way of human performance” (Burzan 2005, 105). Sociologists see lifestyle as a consequence of individual’s social characteristics. However, we cannot attribute all forms of daily performance only to social characteristics, such as social, material and cultural capital, as described by P. Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1978). Instead, it is believed that a part of individual’s daily life depends on the place of residence and other locations, where the individuals fulfil their needs. The crucial word in this case is “mobility”, because it means two things: 1) the ability of covering distance in space and 2) journeys or the structure of covered ways. The first characteristic is objective as it mostly does not depend on the individual but rather traffic infrastructure and network. It shows as accessibility of location and the final destination. The second lists how often an individual leaves home, the distance, covered in one day (the whole journey as well as partial trips); the frequency of journey, choice of vehicle and what is perhaps most important; the purpose of the journey. We believe the latter being a reflection of the individual’s lifestyle, because the mobility structure partly stands for personal choice and not only as a consequence of objective circumstances. The most common purpose of travel depends on the individual (excluding commuting), so does the choice on the distance, covered by such journey. This includes the term “home-range” that can also be seen as an element of lifestyle and consequently mobility. It marks an area, working area, “lifestyle area” within which the individual frequently moves (Pohl 2009, 63). The size of such “home-range” is definitely an element of lifestyle, because it to a certain extent depends on the choice of the individual regarding where to fulfil his/her needs.

## 3 Work method

How does one judge if small town inhabitants are more mobile than inhabitants of large towns? What are the indexes that show differences in mobility? We compared the travelling habits of people with similar social characteristics yet with different places of residence; namely in seven small towns and two large towns. We selected towns, located in the same cultural-geographical area and those that can be found in the system of central towns with the same level of centralisation. This enabled us to neutralize the different level of social and economic development, as well as different living habits that might be a consequence of the cultural environment. Data was obtained from interviews with 341 persons, asked about time, place, purpose and duration of travel as well as type of transportation on a certain working day in the week. The questionnaire included 255 active inhabitants from Ptuj, Ormož, Slovenska Bistrica, Lenart, Radlje ob Dravi, Slovenske Konjice and Žalec, as well as 86 inhabitants from Maribor and Celje. A more detailed interview was conducted with

31 people, providing more detailed data on their travelling habits. The applied method shows several imperfections; the most important being the size of the sample. One cannot say for sure, that the sample, used for the survey, can be seen as relevant. However, we noticed the answers becoming more and more similar, which make us believe that we have found “the average”. The second imperfection or deficiency is the selection of relevant indexes. No clear answer was found in literature to the question of whether it was possible to compare mobility only within the socially homogenous group of inhabitants (such as among youngsters or elderly) or within social characteristic. Experience from existing surveys shows the most relevant factors being those that influence the level of mobility; namely age and education (Otte, 2008). Given that one goal of the survey was also to analyse the level of mobility in relation to social characteristics, the decision was made to include a larger number of indexes, even though this makes the results more general.

#### 4 Mobility of small town and large town inhabitants

The following mobility indexes were considered: the number of journeys, the distance, time of travel and the type of transport. The following text presents some findings about the mobility of inhabitants in small and large towns.

##### *Average number of journeys*

There are more inhabitants of smaller towns that show a lesser number of journeys than their counterparts in large towns. This makes us conclude that mobility of inhabitants, measured with the number of journeys in smaller towns seems to be smaller than in larger towns. The largest share of inhabitants in smaller town makes 4 or 5 journeys per day; while this number goes up to 6-8 journeys per day in large towns. We have also considered partial-journeys.

**Table 1: The average number of journeys, performed in three days (in %)**

	Up to 3	4 - 5	6 - 8	9 and more
Small towns (N = 255)	15	48	31	7
Large towns (N = 86)	11	47	35	6

##### *The total distance of performed journeys*

Data on the distance of covered journeys shows that the inhabitants of small towns travel more to shorter and longer destinations than inhabitants of large towns. This can be partly explained through the proximity of activities that seem to be the most frequent destination (such as distance from the shop) and with the longer distance to the regional (employment) centre. The biggest part of small town inhabitants makes 6-8 km daily, while the biggest part of large-town inhabitants makes 9-30 km daily.

**Table 2: Average total distance of journeys, performed in one day (in %)**

	Up to 5 km	6 – 8 km	9 – 12 km	13 – 30 km	31 km and more
Small town	9	38	20	7	26
Large town	5	14	26	36	19

##### *Average time, spent in travel in one day*

Only those were considered who used a motorized vehicle for travel (car or public transportation). Given that the time of all daily journeys was considered, the values seem to be quite large at first glance. This shows that there are more inhabitants in small towns that spend

less time in travel than in case of large town inhabitants. The latter coincides with data on shorter journeys. A larger part of inhabitants that need the most time for daily travel falls onto several partial journeys, linked to transporting children to school and to children's afternoon activities.

**Table 3: Average time, spent for daily journeys (in %)**

	Up to 60 min	61 – 90 min	91 – 120 min	120 min and more
Small town	47	23	21	9
Large town	42	28	19	11

### *Type of transportation for daily commute to work*

This data was somewhat expected, but shows a relatively unsuitable and high level of dependence on personal cars in small (where there is no public transportation) as well as large towns.

**Table 4: The use of personal car and public transport for daily commuting (in %)**

	Car	Public transport
Small town	88	12
Large town	71	29

### *Mobility of inhabitants in relation to the purpose of travel*

We tried to find the most common purpose of travel while considering the average number of all journeys, also partial ones, counted in three days of the week. There is no deviation in the order of travel purpose when comparing small town and large town inhabitants; one can only find differences in the ratio. Inhabitants of small towns travel more frequently because of purchasing provisions and getting to work; and less because of social contacts, recreation and culture.

**Table 5: Share of departures related to purpose (in %)**

	Work	Provisioning	Recreation	Social contacts	Education and culture
Small town	56	24	4	13	3
Large town	54	21	5	15	5

The reasons for visiting other larger town are similar. The largest share of inhabitants of small and large towns travel to large towns because of work, followed by getting provisions, social contacts and culture.

**Table 6: The most common reasons for visiting other (large) towns (in %)**

	Work	Provisioning	Recreation	Social contacts	Education and culture
Small town	23	37	0	27	23
Large town	15	42	0	26	17

The next table talks about lifestyle, too. Inhabitants of smaller towns travel to larger towns more often than inhabitants of larger towns, visiting other large towns. We believe this to be linked to a limited volume of activities in smaller towns, or the disparity between the needs (lifestyle) of inhabitants and the offer of services in small towns.



**Table 7: The frequency of visiting other (large) town (in %)**

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly
Small town	18	28	40	14
Large town	10	14	29	47

***The time of last arrival home***

For this question, the age group of 20-64 years old was used. This indicator does not tell much about mobility but rather about the lifestyle. Do we make more journeys in the afternoon or in the evenings? This corresponds with individual's involvement in the working and living environment. The majority of small town inhabitants spend evenings at home, similar to inhabitants of large towns, only that the share of the latter is a little lower.

**Table 8: The time of last arrival home (in%)**

	Before 6pm	Between 6 and 8pm	Between 8 and 10 pm	After 10om
Small town	33	48	11	8
Large town	31	44	16	9

**5 Lifestyles according to mobility (of respondents)**

Lifestyles were defined by two indexes, “the number of departures from home and the number of partial daily trips” and “distance, covered from home to the most remote location of journey”. Four lifestyles were defined on the basis of this:

- Very mobile with a large radius: a person of this type leaves home at least twice daily and makes at least three partial trips. He or she travels a minimum of 10km daily. This means that he/she spends more than 20 minutes daily travelling.
- Less mobile with a small radius: the person with such lifestyle leaves home only once daily, when making two partial trips. The covered distance is shorter than 10 km which means that this person spends approximately 20 minutes travelling daily.
- Very mobile with small radius: a person with this lifestyle leaves home at least three times daily, performing at least 2 partial trips but of shorter distance, usually amounting to less than 10km. This person spends at least 20 minutes travelling daily.
- Less mobile with a large radius: a person with this lifestyle leaves home twice or less daily, while at the same time performing at least three partial trips of at least 10km, spending more than 20 minutes in traffic.

**Table 9: Lifestyles and indexes**

Lifestyle	Number of daily departures	Travelled distance	Time in traffic
Very mobile with large radius	Several (3 and more)	large (10 km and more)	More than 20 min
Less mobile with small radius	Few (1 or 2)	little (to 10 km)	to 20 min
Very mobile with small radius	Several (3 and more)	little (to 10 km)	to 20 min
Less mobile with large radius	Few (1 or 2)	large (10 and more)	More than 20 min

Values that determine the individual lifestyle are mean values of all answers. The latter can be seen as methodological deficiency, because travelled distances in towns are shorter than in the urbanized rural areas - even though we are only talking about a mobile lifestyle, we could assign a less mobile lifestyle to a certain person. We thus considered two different indicators for distance and time, spent for travelling in the case of small and big town.

#### *Lifestyle of small town inhabitants regarding mobility*

One of the central questions in this analysis is whether the small town inhabitants are more mobile than the inhabitants of large towns? One would expect to find more mobility in smaller towns because one can only fulfil certain needs in large towns. On the other hand, it is very likely that due to size and bigger dispersion of activities, the inhabitants of large towns need more time and more frequent travel for fulfilling their needs. Results show the share of mobile lifestyle in large towns being bigger than in small towns, even though differences don't seem to be very large. They are larger in the length of the journey than in their frequency, which can be explained as a result of general mobility; daily migrants in the case of small towns; and migrants in regional or suburban settlements. Small towns show a predominance of a less mobile lifestyle, where one should also mention that the share of inhabitants, living a less mobile lifestyle is found in a larger radius than in case of large towns.

**Table 10: Location of residence regarding lifestyle (in %).**

Lifestyle	Small town	Large town
Very mobile with a large radius	14	17
Less mobile with a small radius	31	30
Very mobile with a small radius	28	29
Less mobile with a large radius	27	24

#### *Lifestyle of small town inhabitants regarding gender*

When looking at gender, there are hardly any differences between lifestyle of people, living in small or large towns. Large towns show slightly larger numbers in mobility of women, which

can be linked to a larger share of partial journeys, made by women in large towns. It needs to be explained that only the active part of the population was considered.

**Table 11: Gender of respondents according to lifestyle (in %).**

Lifestyle	Small town		Large town	
	m	ž	m	ž
Very mobile with a large radius	54	46	49	51
Less mobile with a small radius	56	44	55	45
Very mobile with a small radius	48	52	44	56
Less mobile with a large radius	57	43	54	46

### *Lifestyle of small town inhabitants according to their age*

Age is according to many lifestyle researchers one of the most relevant indexes (Spellenberg 2007, 190), which is also proven by this survey. When considering age, comparison of mobility in small and large towns does not differ much, even though differences matter in individual age categories. Mobility among the young population differs a lot, but we link this to the daily commute to the place of education. Mobility of mid-life agers in small and large towns tends to be quite similar. The older population tends to be more mobile in large towns than in small towns.

**Table 12: Age of respondents according to lifestyle (in %).**

Lifestyle	Small town			Large town		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Very mobile with a large radius	44	33	23	42	37	21
Less mobile with a small radius	20	24	56	22	31	47
Very mobile with a small radius	31	49	20	35	39	26
Less mobile with a large radius	43	38	19	41	38	21

1=20 to 44 years old, 2= 45 to 64 years old, 3= 64 years and older

### *Lifestyle of small town inhabitants considering activity*

Activity and lifestyle are closely linked. There are large differences within the group of the active population in terms of mobility even if one doesn't consider the part of the population that is supported by somebody else (people in retirement). The most mobile tend to be private entrepreneurs, the least mobile public servants. Differences, related to the place of residence are mainly the consequence of daily commute; mobility in the category "other employees" in the urbanised countryside and suburbs is thus bigger than in towns that provide working places in vicinity.

**Table 13: Activity of respondents according to lifestyle (in %)**

Lifestyle	Small town				Large town			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Very mobile with a large radius	38	30	18	14	40	26	23	11
Less mobile with a small radius	21	19	35	25	23	21	34	22
Very mobile with a small radius	18	29	24	29	24	22	26	28
Less mobile with a large radius	20	38	24	18	19	39	27	15

1=private entrepreneurs, 2=other employees, 3=public servants, 4=people in retirement

## 6 Conclusions

One can make the following conclusions on mobility and lifestyle of small town inhabitants out of the presented material: mobility of small town inhabitants does not differ much from mobility of people, living in large towns, even though data shows on average a slightly smaller share in case of small towns. Furthermore, the share of mobile lifestyles within the inhabitants of large towns tends to be larger than in case of small town inhabitants. These results show the place of residence as a relevant element of lifestyle. A more detailed comparison of lifestyles of individuals with equal social characteristics but in different places of residence shows their lifestyle to be determined by distance from centres of provision and employment, which shows especially in time, spent in traffic on a daily level. We believe this to be a result of connectivity between social and physical features, confirmed by space as a relevant element or modifier of the social sphere. Lifestyle is an intertwinement of social factors and place of residence.

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# **The Role of Health Tourism in the Hungarian Small and Medium Sized Towns**

**János Csapó, Antal Aubert, Gergely Marton**

## **Introduction**

One of Hungary's leading tourism products is health tourism which plays a highlighted role in the life of numerous settlements. The product itself can practically be found in the complete area of the country – apart from the mountainous and hilly areas – creating a really high quality natural resource for Hungary. Based on this phenomenon, health tourism is one of the most important factors and priority for the tourism industry of Hungary and especially for its tourism development in the past and the future as well.

The aim and major objective of our work is to provide a comprehensive picture on Hungary's health tourism, further on position this tourism product in the Hungarian settlement structure especially concentrating on the small and medium sized towns. We also would like to analyse whether the development of this tourism product could really provide a real economic perspective and an economic outbreak point or not, since usually spa developments are handled as a “redeemer” for tourism development which in numerous cases led to the total bankruptcy of the investing settlement.

We also would like to present such a classification which deals with the Hungarian small and medium sized towns from the point of view of health tourism.

## **Methodology**

During our researches we used both primary and seconder methods as well, which were harmonised during the analysis process.

Out of the primary sources we would like to highlight the database created by the authors concerning all the settlements of Hungary, which projects 20 factors from the point of view of tourism to each settlements (more than 3000). Concerning its methodology it represents the supply and demand factors in a 50-50% basis. Among the applied indicators we find the guestflow statistics, the number of service providers considered in tourism, the attractions connected to the given settlements, the National Parks, and the spas and climatic medical places on the different levels. The basic data was taken from the qualifier organisations, the Central Statistical Office, the Regional Marketing Directorates and from the primary surveys. Totalling the indicators of the database with mathematical and statistical methods the positions of the given settlements considering tourism can easily be determined and further on their correlation to each other can be highlighted as well.

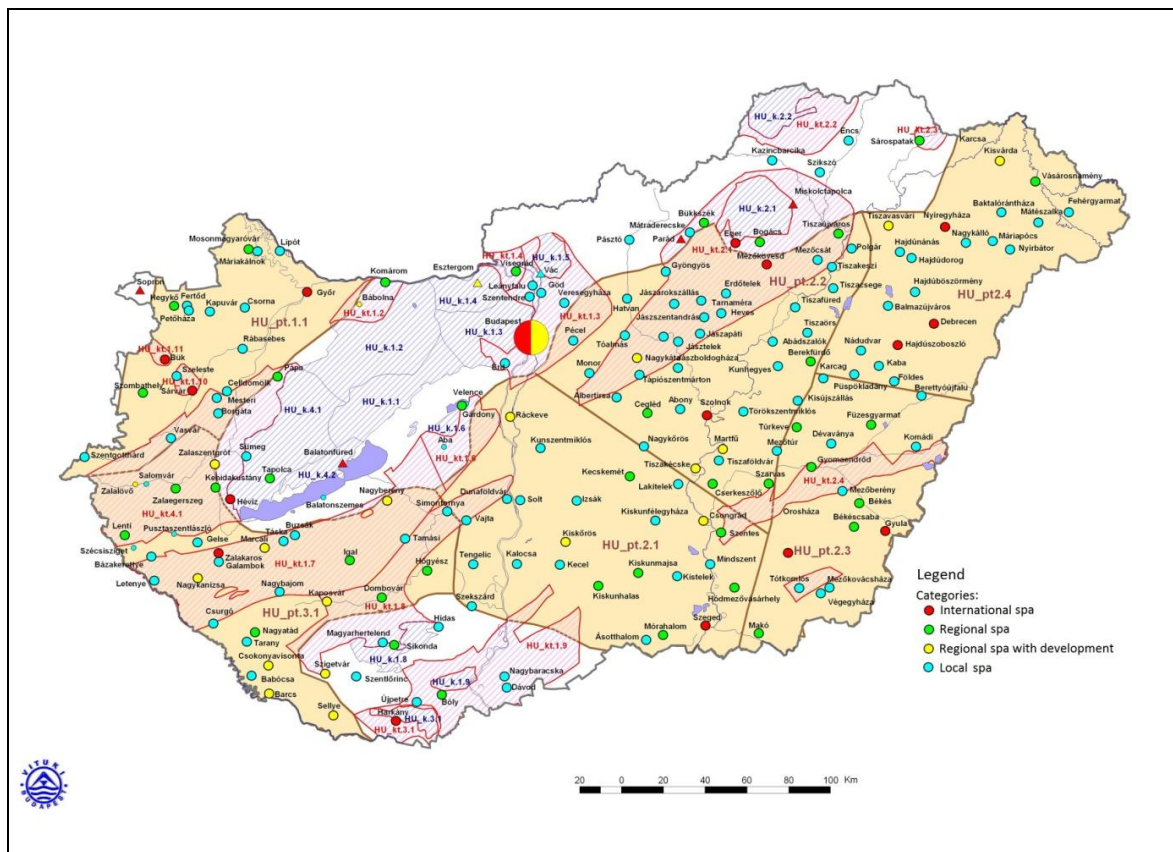
From the seconder methods we should mention the former health tourism professional literature mainly from the Hungarian tourism experts, primarily focusing on the publications dealing with urbanisation issues, towns and town standardisations.

According to our point of view the results achieved are capable to demonstrate the impacts of tourism in the advancement and development of the Hungarian settlement system.

## The Overall Positions and State of the Hungarian Health Tourism

The attractions and endowments of health tourism in Hungary are outstanding in a worldwide perspective as well: the allocation of the Carpathian Basin, the high values of the geothermic gradient and the quality of the host rock all contribute to its outstanding positions (AUBERT A. – CSAPÓ J. 2004; MICHALKÓ, G. – RÁTZ, T. 2010). As ÁCS, P. and LACZKÓ, T. (2008b) states Hungary is the 5<sup>th</sup> most important country in the world with medical and thermal water resources. As a consequence of the mentioned physical geographical factors more than 80% of the total area of Hungary is capable for health tourism investments and developments supplying nearly 1300 thermal springs out of which the qualified medical waters are 147 altogether (ÁCS P. and LACZKÓ T. 2008a) which is utilised by 56 medical hotels and 70 qualified medical spas (OGYFI 2008). Due to this phenomenon the number of settlements with spas is prominently high (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1: The spatial allocation of spas in Hungary



Source: VITUKI, 2005

According to the most recent surveys the number of the spas in Hungary exceeds 180 which is again a prominent value even in the international perspective. Based on their services, quality, size and attractiveness – according to their importance – the spas can be classified into international, national/regional and local categories. (ORSZÁGOS EGÉSZSÉGTURIZMUS FEJLESZTÉSI STRATÉGIA (NATIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY), 2007).

The certain spas show huge alterations in Hungary concerning their supply and infrastructural background from the classic spas with only one pool to the aquaparks providing numerous and different kinds of pools with experience elements. Further on the certain units are not

bounded to a minimum or a maximum settlement size since the spa itself does not necessarily mean an elementary settling factor when creating the tourism product or during its development.

When analysing the health tourism product, according to ÁCS, P. and LACZKÓ, T. (2008a), health tourism disposes numerous advantages compared to other branches of tourism which of course will play an important role in the tourism industry of the analysed small and medium sized towns as well:

- The negative effect of seasonality prevails much less;
- The average length of stay is longer;
- The capacity utilisation of commercial and private accommodations is better or higher;
- The tourism expenditure and so the receipts are 30-35% higher than at other areas or products of tourism.

### **Past and Recent Development Stages of the Hungarian Health Tourism**

From the point of view of developments Hungarian health tourism – and within that more exactly the spa culture – possesses of rich historical traditions: among others we have to highlight Aquincum (and some other spas as well) from the Roman Ages, the spas established by the Turkish or the spa developments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which were focusing mainly on the spas of Buda at that time.

During the socialist era numerous developments and investments were carried out – not considering now their rational or irrational basis – which decisively founded the country's present health tourism basis. We also have to mention that the majority of these spas are still functioning.

After the change of the regime practically the development of health tourism became a priority only after the Millennium. Nevertheless the certain periods approach the tourism product and its development from different approaches but all of them is characterised by the fact that they defined health tourism only from a peripheric perspective.

The investments were carried out first with national support and later on by European Union funds which can be classified into 4 major periods:

- The first Széchenyi Plan, carried out from 2001-2003, supported 71 investments with 36 billion HUF, 120 million euros. This support contained development only from the national budget. The most important factor for the developments was the regional development perspectives of the investments.
- Within the framework of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Development Plan (2004-2006) the investments were carried out with EU support but this time the approach for the developments has changed since the earlier sectoral and product centred developments were taken over by the spatially oriented ones. Within the framework of the developments – among other – the monument spas of Budapest have been renewed. (AUBERT, A. – CSAPÓ, J. 2006)

- Following this period the health tourism developments belonged to the New Hungary Development Plan (NDP II) which were also supported by EU sources and were also concentrating on spatially oriented principles.
- At present the New Széchenyi Plan (the re-interpreted NDP II with new priorities) is in effect which appoints the development priority from a more complex perspective as health industry but here we have to state that the present plan mainly concentrates on the services development.

The effects of the passed off and present health tourism developments are rather differentiated both from the economic or tourism perspective. Numerous new spas were established, the branch was modernised, the commercial and private accommodations were also established but on the other hand in many cases as a result of the not so adequate planning process or the abrupt market processes we can also highlight numerous negative processes. We classify to this category the contention to the guests within settlements in a small geographical proximity, or that the local governments often became bankrupt due to the “over-investments” or the frequent change of the owners derived from the wrong decisions taken by the managements of the health tourism units.

### **The Role of Health Tourism in the Small and Medium Sized Towns**

The relation and interaction system of health tourism – and within this tourism product the different kinds of spas – is multiple. Numerous settlement geography researches and town standardisations attribute an outstanding role for the analysed tourism product its impacts on towns:

- Among the functional town types of BELUSZKY, P. (2004) we can find the category of the so called “Holiday or spa towns”. During its characterisation the author describes tourism as almost the only function for town development and as an example, among other, he highlights Hévíz.
- PIRISI G. (2009) in his standardisation created decidedly to small towns as a sub category of the so called “economic centres” mentions the spa towns which possess well described statistical indexes as well (significant number of guest nights, high employment in tourism, strong non-profit activity).
- The raison d’être of the featured town class is also strengthened by the work of PIRISI G. and TRÓCSÁNYI A. (2011) dealing with town development in which they characterise as a “colouring element” the appearance of this type of towns in the Hungarian town structure.
- Analysing the settlement shaping processes BELUSZKY, P. and SIKOS T. T. (1982, 2008) also highlights that the cluster formation function of those villages and spa settlements which possess an important tourism background have been so accentuated that it resulted in an independent settlement type (the research categorised 38 parishes of 4 clusters to this category). They also stress that in the case of settlements grouped into other settlement categories, the tourism function, rural tourism and recreational role is present as well. In the recent years many of these settlements achieved the town rank due to their tourism functions and so now they have become small sized towns (Gárdony, Hévíz, Harkány, Velence).

Concerning the historical dynamics of the town network, the tourism function due to Keszthely and Siófok appears in the 1970s, then, between 1971-1985 it receives a significant emphasis in the agglomeration spaces (recreational function) so with Balatonfüred there were



altogether 3 town rank settlements promoting the organisation of the tourism function (GYENIZSE P. – LOVÁSZ GY. – TÓTH J. 2011).

In the two decades after the change of the regime when town pronounce gathered way much faster than earlier, the number of spa towns advances to 12 along Lake Balaton and in the agglomeration rings and settlement aggregations further small towns were born with recreational functions (Lajosmizse, Mórahalom, Rácvkeve, Mezőkövesd).

Out of the health tourism centres numerous settlements have reached the criteria to become towns (Hévíz, Zalakaros, Hajdúszoboszló) which indicate the acknowledgement of the town developing impacts of tourism as well.

According to the upper mentioned reasons, the *raison d'être* of the settlements with health tourism functions is out of question however it does not appear as an absolute characteristic in all settlements having such type of service background. *Table 1* summarizes the basic quantitative indicators of the Hungarian settlement structure and the health tourism product indicating this strong correlation system.

**Table 1: The number of Hungarian spas in relation to the settlement network**

<b>Hungary</b>	<b>No.</b>
Number of settlements	3175
Number of towns	328
Number of spas	181
Number of spas in towns	139
Number of spas in small and medium sized towns	134

*Source: Based on CSO data by MARTON, G. 2011*

## **Standardisation Criteria of the Reviewed Towns**

In order to determine the importance and role of health tourism within the scope of the small and medium sized towns of Hungary we determined 4 major types of criteria in the following order from the point of view of:

1. Demand;
2. Supply;
3. Attraction zone;
4. Function of the town.

This next chapter intends to thoroughly analyse the detailed characteristics of the provided perspectives providing a standardisation method as well in terms of the characterisation of towns with a certain dominance or importance of health tourism.

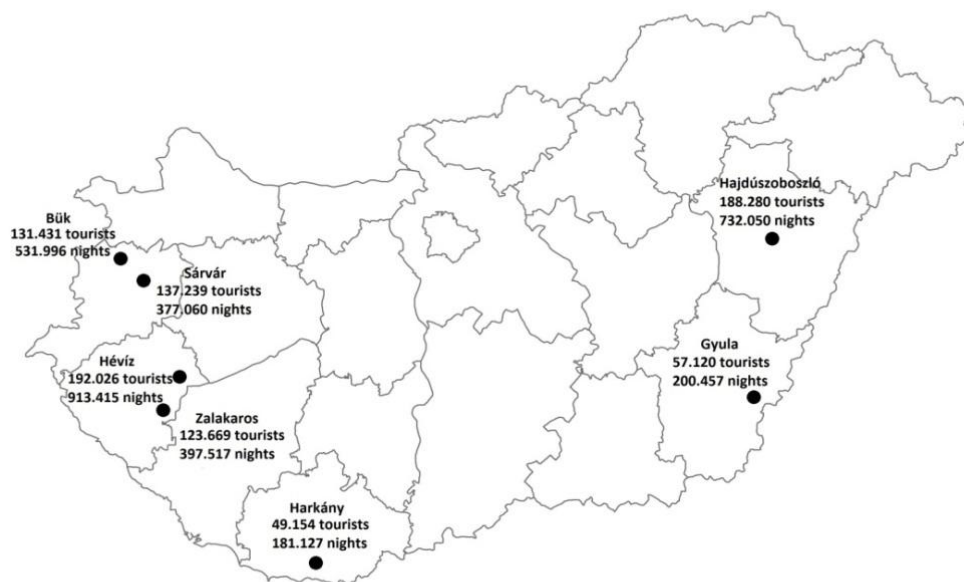
### **1. Demand**

In order to investigate the demand side of health tourism concerning the small and medium sized towns of Hungary we have to state that it can be quite problematic since there are really huge differences on the demand side concerning guest flow. Towns with the smallest guestflow have only around 5000 guests/season (e.g. Sellye) while such towns as Hévíz produced 192 026 guests/season in 2010.

So the spatial differences are quite significant within the country but in general we can state that the territorial differences are not characteristic of certain parts of Hungary, it is more connected to the amount of guestflow realised in the analysed cities.

The demand can be derived from various aspects such as accessibility, infrastructure, service quality and the spatial allocation of the town as well. For spatial allocation Harkány provides a perfect example since after the civilian war on the Balkans broke out – due to its bordering allocation – the formerly realised 2 million guests soon fell back to 500 000 and this number even nowadays unable to reach 650 000 persons/season. This negative external situation caused an almost 20 years long fall back for the spa and for the town as well from which Harkány is unable to change so far.

**Figure 2: Hungarian Spa Towns With Significant Guest Flow (Dynamic Spas) (indicated with number of tourists and nights spent)**



Source: Based on CSO data, ed. by MARTON, G. (2011)

## 2. Supply

According to the vast variety and supply of health tourism the International Spa Association differentiates between different kinds of spas, such as club spas, cruise ship spas, destination spas, medical spas, mineral springs spas, and resort or hotel spas. The association defines spa as “places devoted to overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit.” <http://www.experienceispa.com/spa-goers/spa-101/types-of-spas/>

Of course according to their physical resources, characteristics of the water, the infrastructure or the services etc. we can differentiate between a great amount of supply in Hungary as well. So the major groups of spas according to the major and primary characteristics are:

- Curative or medical spas
- Wellness spas
- Monument spas (rich historical heritage)
- Mixed supply

When analysing the types of spas we can also consider the so called aquaparks, cave spas and experience spas as well.

It is also worth mentioning that in 2009 11% of the guests were coming to any commercial accommodation with the aim of health tourism motivation. With a health tourism purpose 43% of the guests went to medical hotels and around 20% to wellness hotels.

The analysed spas have a great variety and huge alterations concerning their infrastructural and services background which of course significantly will affect their guestflow as well. (MICHALKÓ, G. – RÁTZ, T. – IRIMIÁS, A. 2009; MICHALKÓ, G. – RÁTZ, T. – TÓTH, G. – KINCSES, A. 2009)

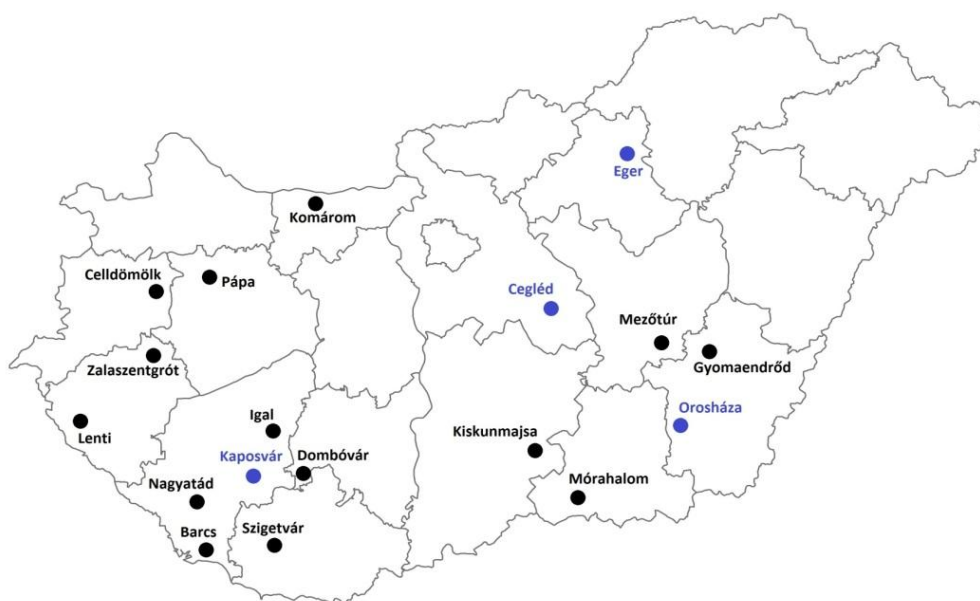
When analysing the types of spas we have to highlight that in Hungary we differentiate a special group of spas called monument spas which obviously possess and protect a rich historical and cultural heritage and values. In 2009 altogether 7 of these spas were situated in Budapest (Széchenyi, Rudas, Rác, Király, Gellért, Lukács, Császár) and 7 in the countryside (Gyula, Szeged, Nyíregyháza, Székesfehérvár, Balf, Eger, Abony).

Hereby we also like to add that considering the western regions of Hungary the supply is outstandingly supported – besides the domestic supply – by the guestflow or inbound tourism from Western Europe (mainly Austria and Germany) remunerating – apart from the geographical proximity – the recent developments of these spas (Bük, Sárvár, Zalakaros). These spas are so to say filtering the possible guestflow from moving or traveling to any other parts of Hungary for health tourism reasons or motivations.

### **3. Attraction zone**

According to their attraction zone we differentiate between spas of international, regional and local level or importance. Out of the 181 spas Hungary possesses 11 international spas such as Bük, Harkány, Hajdúszoboszló, Hévíz or Zalakaros, 52 regional spas such as Igal, Kaposvár, Orosháza, Mezőkövesd or Siklós and 71 local spas such as Abádszalók , Hajdunánás, Hatvan, Sellye and Vác.

In the eastern parts of the country – Gyula, Hajdúszoboszló, Orosháza, Gyomaendrőd – the indicators of guestflow, besides the strong internal supply, realises a significant amount of cross border visitors mainly from Romania but from Slovakia and Poland as well.

**Figure 3. The Spatial Allocation of the Most Attractive Regional Spas of Hungary**

Source: Ed. by Marton, G. (2011)

Of course the attraction zone very much determine and effect the amount of guestflow as well so the international spas attract the most tourists while the local spas have the smallest amount of visitors per year. It is also worth mentioning that concerning in the rank of the towns and cities of Hungary attracting both domestic and foreign visitors the spa towns (Hajdúszoboszló, Hévíz, Zalakaros and Bük) possess favourable positions.

**Table 2. The most visited Hungarian towns and cities by domestic and foreign visitors (spa towns indicated with bold letter) (number of guest nights, 1000 person)**

DOMESTIC	FOREIGN	TOTAL
<b>Budapest</b> (843)	<b>Budapest</b> (5 216)	<b>Budapest</b> (6 060)
<b>Hajdúszoboszló</b> (534)	<b>Hévíz</b> (600)	<b>Hévíz</b> (934)
Sopron (370)	<b>Bük</b> (365)	<b>Hajdúszoboszló</b> (779)
Siófok (358)	<b>Hajdúszoboszló</b> (245)	<b>Bük</b> (666)
<b>Hévíz</b> (334)	Siófok (224)	Siófok (583)
<b>Zalakaros</b> (319)	Balatonfüred (212)	Balatonfüred (459)
<b>Bük</b> (300)	<b>Sárvár</b> (205)	Sopron (455)
Balatonfüred (247)	Győr (133)	<b>Zalakaros</b> (414)
<b>Eger</b> (212)	<b>Zalakaros</b> (94)	<b>Sárvár</b> (388)
<b>Gyula</b> (197)	Sopron (85)	Eger (285)

Source: Based on Magyar Turizmus Zrt. Turizmus Magyarországon 2010 ed. by Csapó, J. (2011)

#### 4. Function of the city

According to the function of the city we differentiated two groups, namely those towns which have tourism as a monofunction in their economy (monofunctional spa towns) and those towns which have a complex supply out of which tourism plays an important role of course. *“In monofunctional spa towns health tourism is undoubtedly the catalyst of development, while in multifunctional settlements health spa facilities are among the synergic factor that contribute to economic development in general and tourism development in particular.”* (based on SMITH, M. and PUCZKÓ, L. 2009 MICHALKÓ, G. and RÁTZ, T. 2010 p. 2.)

When we take into consideration the towns with the determining importance of tourism, we have to see that the tourism function totally determines the image of the city, its economy, the employment structure, the real estate characteristics and the related services background as well. As an example to this group we can mention Hévíz, Harkány, Bük or Hajdúszoboszló.

In those towns which have a more complex economical and services background the spa plays only a partial role in the economy of the city for different reasons: in Kaposvár and Győr the spa plays as a supplementary tourism service, Szigetvár is a historical city with spa functions as well, Barcs is a border city with spa functions as well and Komló is a (former) industrial profile town with spa functions in Sikonda which is part of the town's outskirts.

#### Conclusion

Our paper tried to introduce and survey the role of health tourism in the Hungarian small and medium sized towns with a special attention on emphasizing the role of this tourism product in the Hungarian tourism market on a spatial and timely basis as well.

During the research process we determined the concept of the small and medium sized towns and based on these results we carried out standardisation and classification groups of small and medium sized Hungarian towns which are involved in health tourism on different levels.

Although from a geographical point of view the spa function is present in a determining amount of settlements (villages, towns and cities) of Hungary but the developments of the last decade and also depending from the geographical allocation their competitiveness was strongly diversified.

The formation of the guest flow (guestflow of the spas, number of guest nights) confirms that the in the western and eastern regions of Hungary and particularly in the bordering areas the western and eastern oriented international guest flow renewed its activity while in the central parts of the country the dominance of the domestic visitors have remained.

However the great number of spa developments and the relative geographical distance (or proximity) doubts the competitiveness of all the spas and their sustainability as well, but the research of this phenomenon would be the task of another survey.

We have to stress that in a certain proportion of the analysed towns health tourism plays an important but not determining role so its development should also be handled as this tourism product is one of the branches promoting local economy and local population and not the one and only.

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# The Characteristics of Tourism in the Small Towns of Baranya County

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## Abstract

Baranya County (Hungary) boasts over numerous famous, nationally and even internationally respected sights that can partly be found in the small towns with a common historical background, i.e. they are all connected to the Ottoman/Turkish occupation. Therefore, the characteristics of their tourism, as well as their future plans reflect and largely rely on this heritage.

**Key words:** small towns, Baranya County, Turkish occupation, thematic route, thermal spa, castles, accommodation types

## 1. Introduction

The authors' primary motivation was to enhance former researches investigating the tourism forms of small towns (e.g. the appearance and role of ethnic minorities in the tourism sector – GELÁNYI, N. – GINZER, M. 2011.), as well as to introduce the role and importance of the concerned three small towns (namely Mohács, Siklós and Szigetvár), both on national and international level. The similarities and differences between the towns should also reveal the possible future trends and development directions each town could follow and adjust itself. The central issue of the study deals with the question, whether these towns are capable of applying their potential in tourism (historical heritage) or not.

The utilized methods include the analysis of statistics (primarily that provided by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, KSH), the scientific literature/publications, as well as the homepages of the concerned towns and associations (involving event charts, photographs, maps etc.).

## 2. Statistical-theoretical background

The target area (Baranya County) lies in the Southern Transdanubian region, the central position is taken by the Mecsek Hill and Pécs, the county seat. (The investigated three small towns /Mohács, Siklós and Szigetvár/ are marked with a circle in *Figure 1.*)

The natural borders of the county are represented primarily by rivers (the Danube in the east, the Drava in the south). The region unites several ethnic minorities (mainly German, Croatian, Serbian and Gipsy people), therefore it has got an outstanding cultural variedness. As far as tourism is concerned, among the Hungarian towns counting the most foreign visitors/tourist, there is only one to be found in the concerned area (Harkány), and the destinations of the min. 2-day tours do not include Southern Transdanubia at all!



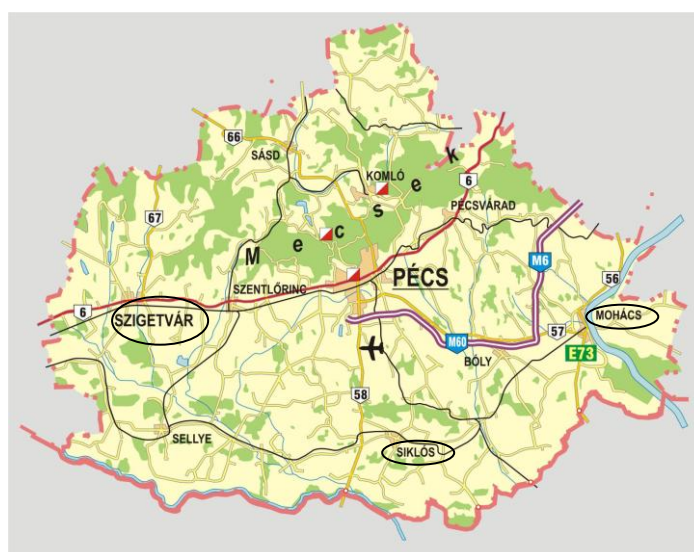
**Figure 1: Part of the Southern Transdanubian region together with the concerned small towns of Mohács, Siklós and Szigetvár**



Source: based on the publication of the Hungarian National Board of Tourism, ed. by GELÁNYI, N. 2011.

The characteristics of tourism are marked by the prominence of seasonality, i.e. the high season (spring and summer) is remarkably busy, though programmes are organized whole-year-round. This seasonality is counterbalanced by the different cultures (folklore) present in the county. Since every settlement type is represented in tourism (from the tiniest village to the county seat), a complex background for tourism came into being, uniting and combining e.g. rural tourism, gastronomy, folk customs, handicrafts, dance events etc.

Regarding the general data about the investigated small towns, they are to be found on the peripheries of the county (see Figure 1.), Mohács and Siklós lie relatively near to the Croatian border. The accessibility map of the target area (see Figure 2.) reveals the fact that the concerned towns are approximately in the same distance from Pécs (ca. 30-40 km away from the county seat). While Mohács can easily be reached by road (highway M6), Szigetvár is rather affected by the railway line heading towards the capital, Siklós is the nearest town to the airport of Pogány (operated only seasonally).

**Figure 2: The accessibility of the target area**

Source: <http://wmoc2011.hu/bulletinhun>

The general statistics of the small towns are displayed in *Table 1.*, and were provided by the KSH from year 2011. Mohács has got the highest population; Siklós and Szigetvár are approximately on the same level. The reproduction rate and the domestic migration show a slight decrease, except for Szigetvár. The retired population takes nearly one third, while the children under 14 ca. 10-14% of the towns' inhabitants. The registered unemployed represent ca. 8%, Mohács having the largest proportion. The ethnic groups (data from the last census in 2001) consist of the Germans, Croatians, Gypsies and the Serbians, their ratio vary between 0.01 and 9.6%. The service sector plays an important role in all of the towns (ca. 60%), while the number of enterprises/1000 inhabitants takes a relatively high value (ca. 65%).

**Table 1: General data about the analysed small towns (2011)**

<i>Aspects</i>	<i>Mohács</i>	<i>Siklós</i>	<i>Szigetvár</i>
Population	18,884 inh.	9,732 inh.	10,868 inh.
Reproduction	-0.2%	-0.7%	-0.8%
Domestic migration	-0.4%	-0.4%	+0.3%
Retired population	31%	33%	34%
Registered unemployed	9%	7.7%	8.4%
Children under 14	11%	14%	11%
Ethnic groups (in 2001*)	Germans 9.6% Croatians 4.7% Gypsies 2.4% Serbians 0.6%	Croatians 3% Germans 2.1% Gypsies 0.01%	Gypsies 2% Croatians and Germans 0.7%
Proportion of the service s.	65%	58%	59%
Enterprises/1000 inhabit.	62	67	60

\* date of the last census, Source: based on KSH data, edited by Gelányi, N. 2011.

The official information about the tourism of Mohács and Szigetvár reveal a rather mixed structure (*see Table 2*). The reason for Siklós' absence from the table is that the official classification and regulation of the KSH does not consider elements of a given unit below the number of two, i.e. if there is only a single hotel in a given settlement, the Office does simply ignore it. Nevertheless, the homepages of the towns ensure insight into the various types of available accommodations.

**Table 2. Information about the presence of tourism in Mohács and Szigetvár (2010)**

<i>Aspects</i>	<i>Mohács</i>	<i>Szigetvár</i>
Guest flow at commercial accommodations	6,859	8,815
- foreign guests	2,269	774
- domestic guests	4,590	8041
General length of stay at commercial accommodations	2 nights	3.1 nights
- foreign guests	2.4 nights	3 nights
- domestic guests	1.8 nights	3.1 nights
Capacity of commercial accommodations	228 beds	451 beds

*Source: based on KSH data, edited by Gelányi, N. 2011.*

As can be seen in *Table 2.*, the commercial accommodations have a larger turnover in the case of Szigetvár (primarily due to its thermal bath and the larger accommodation capacity), and the proportion of domestic guests also play a more important role than in Mohács. Although there are differences between the general length of stay, the numbers are more or less in accordance with the national standards. Regarding the capacity of commercial accommodations, Szigetvár has got the double number of beds than Mohács.

### 3. Contrastive analysis of the small towns

As mentioned above, the concerned three small towns are united on the basis of their *history*, since they were remarkable places of the battles fought between the Ottoman and Hungarian armies during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The remaining traditions, buildings, sculptures etc. enable this heritage to become an essential part of tourism.

Therefore, the most prominent *sights* in these towns reflect their close relationship with the Turkish presence, as it is shown in *Table 3*. Some buildings are remnants of the original (the castles), some have been reconstructed and modernized (e.g. Ali pasha's Djami in Szigetvár), while some premises only remind us on the events of the past (e.g. Historical Memorial Church in Mohács). The novel sights, i.e. the thermal baths in Siklós and Szigetvár indicate the general aim to provide additional leisure time facilities and to find new target groups for tourism, i.e. moving from the classical cultural and heritage tourism towards spa, medical and – in the case of Mohács – active tourism.

**Table 3. The most prominent sights in the concerned towns**

<i>Mohács</i>	<i>Siklós</i>	<i>Szigetvár</i>
The “Busó House”	Siklós Castle (cultural centre)	Szigetvár Castle
Various handicrafts (e.g. pottery and wood-carving)	The Malkocs Bej Mosque/Djami	Suleiman Sultan’s Mosque/Djami
Council House	Catholic churches	Council House
Danube-Drava National Park (River Danube)	Thermal Spa	Ali pasha’s Djami (today Catholic church)
Water Mill		Park of the Hungarian-Turkish Friendship
National Memorial Site		Thermal Spa
Historical Memorial Church		
Dorottya Kanizsai Museum		

Source: based on the homepages of the towns edited by Gelányi, N. 2011.

The *events* being organized in the towns represent the manifold ethnic structure of the region on the one hand; and the Turkish heritage on the other (see *Table 4.*). The ethnic minorities’ play the most important role in Mohács, where the “cultural fusion” of four ethnicities takes place. As the list of events shows, folk dance festivals are present in every town, while the harvest and wine festivals are organized only in Mohács and Siklós, which are the centres of traditional wine-growing regions.

Each town has got its own event remembering the past, though the internationally known Busó carnival of Mohács is the most prominent among them. The first carnival dates back to 1867, and welcomes ca. 50,000 visitors annually (BENEDEK, M. – STARK, J. 2009). Further to this, it is the sixth best known, and third most popular festival in Hungary (SULYOK, J. 2010), and is member of the UNESCO World Heritage list since 2009.

Unfortunately, the open-air musicals in Siklós and Szigetvár were organized only twice, due to the economic crisis the performances have been prolonged for an uncertain period of time.

**Table 4. The most famous events of the towns partly linked to the Turkish heritage**

<i>Mohács</i>	<i>Siklós</i>	<i>Szigetvár</i>
Busó carnival	Folk dance festivals	Folk festivals
Folk dance festivals	Harvest and Wine festival	“Zrínyi Miklós” Days and open-air musical
Croatian Bean Cooking Festival	“The Captain of the Tenkes” open-air musical	
Harvest and Wine festival		
St. John of Nepomuk Festival		

Source: based on the homepages of the towns edited by Gelányi, N. 2011.

Regarding the *accommodation types* and their capacity, *Table 5.* gives us a general overview. The structure of accommodations reflects the prominence of guest houses and pensions. The hotels have only one or two representatives in each town; their category varies between two and three stars. The joined maximum capacity takes the highest number in Szigetvár (*see Table 2.*), which is due to the relatively high number of tourist visiting the thermal bath all-year-round. Mohács lacks far behind the potential demand: visitors of the Busó carnival

belong primarily to the inhabitants of the vicinity (i.e. neighbouring counties), therefore the majority of tourists belong to the one-day trippers.

**Table 5. The available types of accommodation and their capacity (2011)**

	<i>Mohács</i>	<i>Siklós</i>	<i>Szigetvár</i>
Hotel (2 and 3 star category)	2 (142 beds)	1 (56 beds)	2 (96 beds)
Guest house/pension	10	10	1
Youth hostel	1	1	-
Camping	1	-	-
Other	1	-	-

*Source: based on the homepages of the towns, edited by Gelányi, N. 2011.*

The *structure of guest flow* in the concerned cities shows a quite unique picture, since the settlements are primarily visited by pupils (within the frameworks of school class excursions) and elder pensioners coming from Germany and/or Austria. This special situation is due to the fact that the towns are famous for their history and historical buildings, and they also have thermal baths that attract people looking for natural remedy. The only exception is Mohács, where the so-called “paprika tours” take place. This kind of tour is part of an organized holiday, and happens like the following: basically German pensioners arrive by ship at Mohács, they rush through the town, travel to the county seat, Pécs by bus, they make a short sightseeing with a tour guide, then travel to Kalocsa, look at the Paprika Museum, and finally embark at the Danube’s riverside. Unfortunately, the whole tour brings nearly no income to the service suppliers in Mohács, since the guests even have their lunch on the board of the ship... Professionals claim, it would be much more profitable, if the Busó Carnival took place in the summer, when most of the tourists arrive in Mohács – but of course, one cannot move a traditional, season-bound event to another date.

Regarding the *origin of tourists*, the domestic guests are dominant in each town (with Szigetvár’s leading position), and the number of foreign guests is outstanding in Szigetvár (mainly guests from Croatia). The towns had an important role around the 1990s, since the nearby Croatian border enabled Croatian citizens to generate a remarkable shopping tourism that has been completely stopped at the time of the Balkan Civil Wars. Nevertheless, the traditional guests returned after the crisis, though their motivation is directed towards the thermal spas, and not to the shops. Another fact is, that many Turkish tourists visit these towns, especially the National Historical Memorial Site (Mohács-Sátorhely) and the Park of the Hungarian-Turkish Friendship (Szigetvár). The construction of the latter was initiated and supported by the Turkish Republic, and it commemorates not only the huge battle and the death of Suleiman, but also accommodates the enemies’ sculptures right next to each other.

In general, SZABÓ, G. (2006) claims that the majority of guests visiting Baranya County prefer Pécs and its closest vicinity – including even Siklós, being part of the renowned wine-growing region. Mohács and Szigetvár would be unable to maintain their tourism (wine, gastronomy, active, spa and cultural tourism) without the presence of the county seat.

#### **4. Developments and further plans in tourism**

Considering the economic processes and the political targets of the last decade, there were some initiations also affecting the tourism sector in the concerned three small towns. In the period 2004-2006, the sources of investments were provided by the National Development Plan (the Hungarian abbreviation is NFT) and the Széchenyi Plan. The priorities included

among others the development of spas, accommodations, health tourism and attractions. Within these frameworks, the hotel and spa in Szigetvár was improved, as well as its castle and castle museum was reconstructed (AUBERT, A. 2006).

Nowadays, the National Tourism Development Strategy (2005-2013) focuses on the constructive partnerships between the individual suppliers and tourism organizations/managements (AUBERT, A./ET AL./ 2007).

As a consequence of this, the new Széchenyi Plan – together with European Union funds and the Norwegian Fund – made it possible to realise some new improvements in the concerned area:

✚ **Mohács** (Picture 1)

- *New Reception Building* at the National Historical Memorial Site (crown-shaped reception building with café and exhibitions)
- *Water tourism base* by the riverside of the Danube (new places for mooring, watercraft and bicycle rental; extension and renewal of the promenade)
- Developments in *wine tourism* in Szőlőhegy (reconstruction of cellars, city vault and events square)

**Picture 1. New developments in Mohács**



Source: [www.siklos-mohacs.hu](http://www.siklos-mohacs.hu)

✚ **Siklós** (Picture 2)

- *Cultural Centre of Siklós Castle* (comprehensive renovation of the historic downtown, visitor centre)
- *Thermal Spa* (new competitor of the nearby Harkány Medical Spa)
- *Siklós Card* (supports local enterprises)

Picture 2. New developments in Siklós



Source: [www.siklos-mohacs.hu](http://www.siklos-mohacs.hu); [www.siklos.hu](http://www.siklos.hu)

✚ **Szigetvár** (Picture 3)

- Reconstruction and development of the *Thermal Spa*
- *Tourism Cluster of Southern Transdanubian Castles and Mansions* (guaranteed programmes for families) (FUCKÓ, H. 2011)

Picture 3. New developments in Szigetvár



Source: [www.szigetvar.hu](http://www.szigetvar.hu)

There is a new project being started in 2011 that aims at the creation of an “Ottoman occupation cultural route”, i.e. a thematic route between Mohács and Siklós. The initiation received more than 1.2 billion HUF subsidy, and unites the historic sights of the two towns already listed above (see *Picture 4*). The target of the cooperation is to produce complex package tours based on the historical heritage and the natural environment along the Siklós-Mohács axis (NAGY, É. 2011). The range of traditional activities (wine and cultural tourism, gastronomy) is going to be enhanced with different kinds of active tourism (especially in the area of the Danube-Drava National Park).

**Picture 4. The area and the official logo of the thematic route between Mohács and Siklós**

Source: [www.siklos-mohacs.hu](http://www.siklos-mohacs.hu)

## 5. Summary

The three concerned towns in Baranya County (Mohács, Siklós, Szigetvár) are to be found on the periphery of the region, with their service sector relying largely on tourism. Though the historical heritage provides a stable basis for both national and international interest, there are fundamental deficiencies to be solved (AUBERT, A. – BERKI M. – HEGEDŰS, V. – SZABÓ, G. 2007): because of the low capacity of accommodations, the infrastructure needs further development; additional services and programmes should be combined into complex packages and sold to a larger target group; a higher level of cooperation and management should be achieved with more efficiency; the programmes should emphasize the multicultural and natural endowments of the concerned area. Their tourism “operated on the small scale” has got the potential to become a reliable part of the service sector, and is capable of a constant development. Hopefully, the projects realized in the future will maintain and strengthen their unique characteristics, and ensure a modern way of introducing their image.

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# **The role of the spas in the less developed regions in Slovenia – case study: Moravske Toplice Spa**

**Uroš Horvat**

## **Abstract**

Author presents the role of health resorts for the development of less development areas in Slovenia. Health resorts are one of the oldest kinds of tourist resorts and started to develop in Slovenia already in 18th centuries. Later, the health resorts became centres of highly qualified medical rehabilitation based on using of thermal or mineral water and modern medical treatments. The so called classical health resorts prevailed in Slovenia until the mid-1980s. The beginning of the 1990s marked an important turnabout in the development of health resorts in Slovenia. With the construction of modern facilities, some of health resorts have started to use thermal water for fun and “experience” in the so called “thermal water parks”, which are open throughout the year. The reorientation to mass tourism, based on recreation, healthy lifestyle, wellness etc., as well as spending of holidays in various types of accommodation have significantly increased the number of tourist visits in the so called recreation health resorts. These are usually located in less developed areas of the country, which means their importance is even greater for the employment of the inhabitants and the spatial and functional development of rural areas. In the end of the article (in the case study) the author is orientated especially on the development of the health resort in the Moravske Toplice spa (in NE Slovenia).

**Key words:** tourism, health resort, spa, less developed areas, Slovenia.

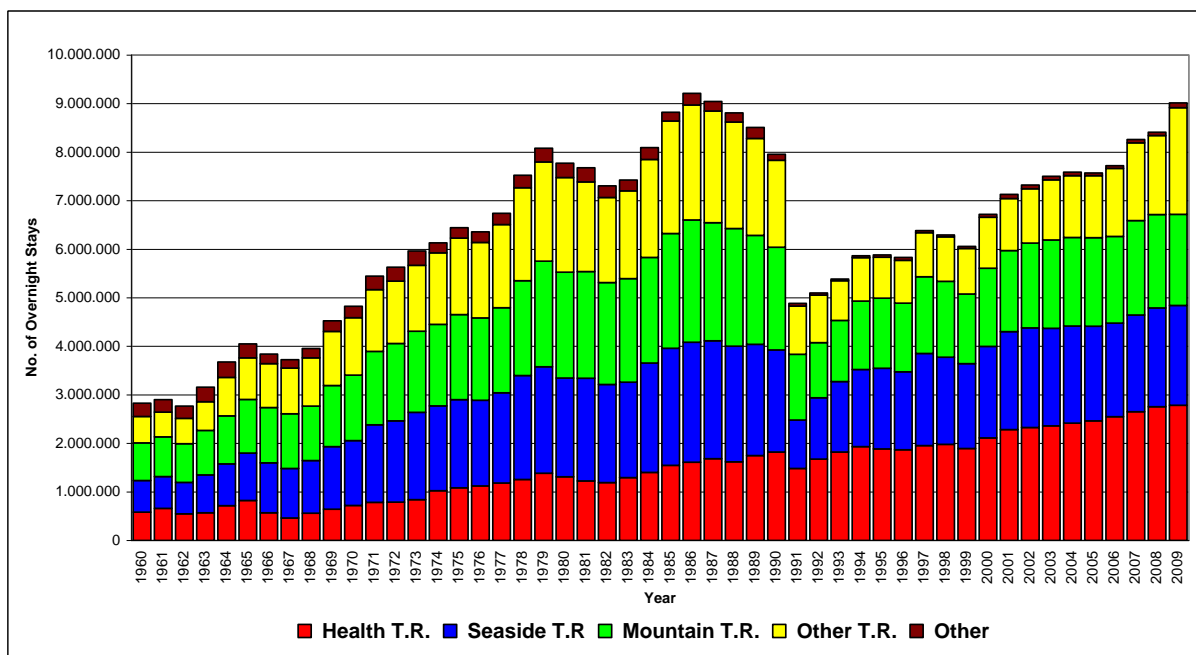
## **1. Tourist development in Slovenia and its spas**

The tourist travels developed on the territory of the present-day Slovenia at the beginning of the 19th century. Among the early forms of tourism were visits to the karst phenomena and some spas. In the middle of the 19th century the railway between Vienna and Trieste made Slovenia much more accessible to visitors from cities of the Austria-Hungary monarchy. The railway to the west part of the country facilitated development of mountain tourism. The seaside tourism began to develop as early as the 19th century, but reached a more intensive phase in the beginning of the 20th century. In addition, in the period between WW I and WW II tourists were interested also in taking short trips around the country (Kresal 1996).

The early 1960s represent a new stage in the development of modern tourism in Slovenia. The state promoted the modernization of the existing and construction of new tourist facilities. It also supported modernization of transport infrastructure. This was a period when started heavy transit flow of tourists from Western and Northern Europe towards the Croatian coast and forward to South-Eastern Europe. The relaxation of formalities at entry points to Yugoslavia helped as well, so in that period Slovenia became an important international tourist destination. The share of foreign tourists grew very rapidly; up to 47% (the majority of foreign tourists came from Germany, Austria and Italy). In addition to single destinations at the seaside and in spas, we see a development of winter sports tourism, business and congress tourism in the cities, and rural tourism in the countryside. Tourist visits reaches its peak in Slovenia in mid-1980s with over 9.2 million overnight stays.

First half of the 1990s is a period of great changes in tourist flows, caused by the war on the Balkans that resulted in the breakup of former Yugoslavia. As a result of that changes Slovenia experienced worst times in modern tourist industry's history ever (Horvat 2005). That was the period of only 5 million overnight stays per year on average, which was less than in the period prior to year 1973. A major factor that also contributed to the low number of visitors was a drastic drop in the number of tourists from former Yugoslav republics. Their share, which was over 30% of all overnight stays in Slovenia in the 1970s and 1980s, dropped to only 6% in the 1990s (Horvat 2008). The stabilization of the political situation in the Balkans after the year 2000 signifies a renewed growth of tourism in Slovenia. In 2008 the number of tourists exceeds 3 million, and overnight stays exceeds 9.3 million, which is for the first time higher than in year 1986. Most tourists come from the neighboring countries (for the first time the country with the highest number of overnight stays is Italy, which is followed by Germany and Austria), but more and more tourists come to Slovenia also from more distant countries (GB, The Netherlands, Russia, etc.). The new direction of tourist development in Slovenia is based on the development of the following kinds of tourism: health and wellness tourism, coastal tourism, mountainous tourism, countryside tourism, business and congress tourism, cultural tourism, casino and entertainment tourism, ecological tourism, recreation tourism, adventure tourism, transit and excursion tourism.

**Fig. 1: Number of Overnight Stays per Type of Tourist Resort, Slovenia 1960-2009.**



Source: Horvat 2008, <http://www.stat.si>

Vacation travels of tourists have been oriented particularly to four mayor tourist destination areas in Slovenia: to the Sub-Mediterranean (seaside) region, to the Alpine (mountain) region, to the health resorts (spas) of Eastern Slovenia, and to the mayor towns (other tourist resorts). Spas are one of the oldest kinds of tourist resorts and started to develop in Slovenia already in 18th and in the beginning of 19th century. They had developed around the springs of thermal and mineral water, mostly in the eastern part of the country. The world known health resort in Slovenia is Rogaška Slatina spa with over 400 years of tradition (its mineral water is unique in Europe in terms of the magnesium content, and in 19th century was served at the imperial court in Vienna and the papal court in the Vatican). After the WW II, several new springs of

thermal and mineral water were made fit for use through geologic drill holes, thus the area of spas was expanded to several new locations.

Health and spa resorts in Slovenia were after the WW II primarily intended for the so called “social” tourism, and only after mid-1960s they started to be included into the international tourist offer more intensely. They became centers of highly qualified medical rehabilitation centers, based on the use of natural remedies and modern medical treatments. The so called “classical health resorts” prevailed in Slovenia until the mid-1980s.

The beginning of the 1990s marked an important turnabout in the development of the spas in Slovenia. With the construction of modern swimming pools, some spas have started to use thermal water for recreation and fun. The so called “thermal water parks” have emerged with in-door and out-door pools which are open throughout the year. The reorientation into mass tourism, based on recreation, healthy lifestyle, wellness, etc., as well as spending of holidays in various types of accommodation, have significantly increased the tourist visits in the so called “recreational health resorts”. In the mid-1980s the Rogaška Slatina spa was the leading health resort in Slovenia (380,000 overnight stays), but with the faster development of other health resorts its significance began to decline. Such alterations in the development policy of some Slovenian health resorts, which are oriented mostly into recreational, had a great impact on the fact that Rogaška Slatina (with its emphasis on the medical-preventive services) was in the mid-1990s overtaken by other health resorts (Horvat, 2008). In 2009, the most important health resort was the Čateške Toplice spa (it was also the third largest tourist resort in Slovenia), followed by the Moravske Toplice spa and the Terme Olimia spa in Podčetrtek (Tab.1).

**Tab.1: Top-ten Most Important Tourist Resorts in Slovenia, 1971, 1986, 2009.**

	1971		1986		2009	
	Tourist Resort	Overnight Stays	Tourist Resort	Overnight Stays	Tourist Resort	Overnight Stays
1.	Portorož <sup>2</sup>	821.353	Portorož <sup>2</sup>	1.452.399	Portorož <sup>2</sup>	931.598
2.	Ljubljana <sup>4</sup>	501.646	Ljubljana <sup>4</sup>	723.901	Ljubljana <sup>4</sup>	670.758
3.	Bled <sup>3</sup>	464.102	Bled <sup>3</sup>	662.258	Čateške Toplice <sup>1</sup>	621.193
4.	Rogaška Slatina <sup>1</sup>	240.591	Kranjska Gora <sup>3</sup>	507.792	Bled <sup>3</sup>	475.910
5.	Bohinj <sup>3</sup>	213.688	Rogaška Slatina <sup>1</sup>	383.525	Moravske Toplice <sup>1</sup>	468.770
6.	Izola <sup>2</sup>	198.026	Izola <sup>2</sup>	305.489	Izola <sup>2</sup>	356.079
7.	Piran <sup>2</sup>	184.036	Bohinj <sup>3</sup>	304.416	Podčetrtek <sup>1</sup>	346.111
8.	Koper <sup>2</sup>	172.341	Čateške Toplice <sup>1</sup>	267.925	Kranjska Gora <sup>3</sup>	326.213
9.	Maribor <sup>4</sup>	169.078	Ankaran <sup>2</sup>	245.999	Rogaška Slatina <sup>1</sup>	263.695
10.	Ankaran <sup>2</sup>	154.473	Maribor <sup>4</sup>	194.619	Ankaran <sup>2</sup>	252.410
	Slovenia	5.443.561	Slovenia	9.213.434	Slovenia	9.013.773
	% 1.-10.	57,3	% 1.-10.	54,8	% 1.-10.	52,3

Source: <http://www.stat.si>

Note (Type of Tourist Resort): 1 - Health T.R., 2 - Seaside T.R., 3 - Mountain T.R., 4 - Other T.R. and mayor towns.

## **2. Spas and their importance for the development of less developed areas in Slovenia**

Slovenians' spas are mostly located in less developed areas in the north-eastern and eastern part of Slovenia. For that reason is their importance even greater for the employment of the inhabitants and for the spatial and functional development of rural areas. Among the most direct effects of tourist development is the employment in sectors that are directly related to tourism and hospitality, but on the other hand this also stimulated other non-agrarian activities and contributed a lot to the development of those areas. There is also a close interconnection between the economic and demographic development. The large economic power of settlements with spas constantly attracted people. The surplus of positions caused also intensive daily migration of workforce. It has a favorable influence on the structure of active population as well as on the age-structure of population in the surrounding settlements as well. At the same time it prevented an increase in emigration from the peripheral and relatively less developed regions.

In the past, two types of tourist health resorts (spas) were developed in Slovenia (Horvat 2010):

1. The older spas, which had mostly started to develop in the 19th century, are nowadays mostly local multifunctional urban centers. Great economic power of health tourism created there several working posts and attracted population, so the former, mostly agrarian settlements, growth to small and middle towns with developed central functions. In that type we could include spas in following settlements in Slovenia: Rogaška Slatina, Radenci, Laško, Dolenjske Toplice. Tourism was the first non-agrarian activity in the settlement and other non-agrarian activities joined only at a later stage, including industry (as in Rogaška Slatina, Laško, etc.). Owing to their better infrastructure, such tourist places become more attractive for the placing of other urban activities and for the expansion of residential areas. The absolute number of tourism-related work posts in this settlements is high, but owing to the multifunctional economic development, these represent a relatively low share, which is in some cases only a bit more than 10%. On the other hand, multifunctional economic development with the intertwining of tourism and industry may also have negative effects in such areas. There is a possibility of ecological problems caused by industry, which clashes with the expectations of those who want to preserve the cultural landscape for attracting tourists. There is also a possibility of conflicting interests in terms of land-use, and consequently limitations may be imposed with regard to the expansion of individual activities. Finally, a greater variety of employment possibilities may result in a lack of willingness among the local population to work in tourism.

Case-study Rogaška Slatina: From a once typically tourist site and one of the most important in Slovenia, Rogaška Slatina, after WW II, developed into a multifunctional urban center (with over 5,000 inhabitants and 2,000 working posts), in which industry took over the role of the dominating economic factor, while tourism became just one of the economic activities closely linked to health and the central tourist zone of the town (Horvat, 2001).

2. On the other hand in Slovenia developed also so called monostructured tourist resorts, such as Terme Olimia in Podčetrtek, Čateške Toplice, Moravske Toplice, where spas are mostly developed after WW II. Nowadays these settlements represent small local centers (with apx. lower than 1,000 residents) with developed central functions for their less developed agrarian surroundings. They are almost entirely dependent on the dynamics of tourist turnover,

changes in tourist flows and various trends shaping tourist demand. In addition, this monostructured centers offer also little choice to their residents in terms of employment (especially those with higher education).

### 3. Case study: Moravske Toplice spa

Moravske Toplice is a small settlement and tourist resort (spa) in north-eastern Slovenia; 7 km from Murska Sobota. Its development is mostly based on the use of thermal mineral water, which was found in 1960, when they drilled for oil. Until that period, the settlement was typical agrarian settlement (with around 500 inhabitants in 100 households in year 1961), while the small share of the non-agrarian population has been employed in the near regional centre Murska Sobota. With the development of the spa, settlement began to develop intensively and slowly take over the role of an employment center in this part of Prekmurje region, which is characterized by depopulation and exceptionally high proportion of agrarian population (Horvat, 2009). For the reason of high economic and spatial development, the settlement in year 1994 (in the period of the reform of local self-government in Slovenia) became the center of the newly created municipality Moravske Toplice.

**Fig.2: Location of the Moravske Toplice Spa.**



Source: <http://www.slovinsko.cz/wellness-lazne-moravske-toplice>

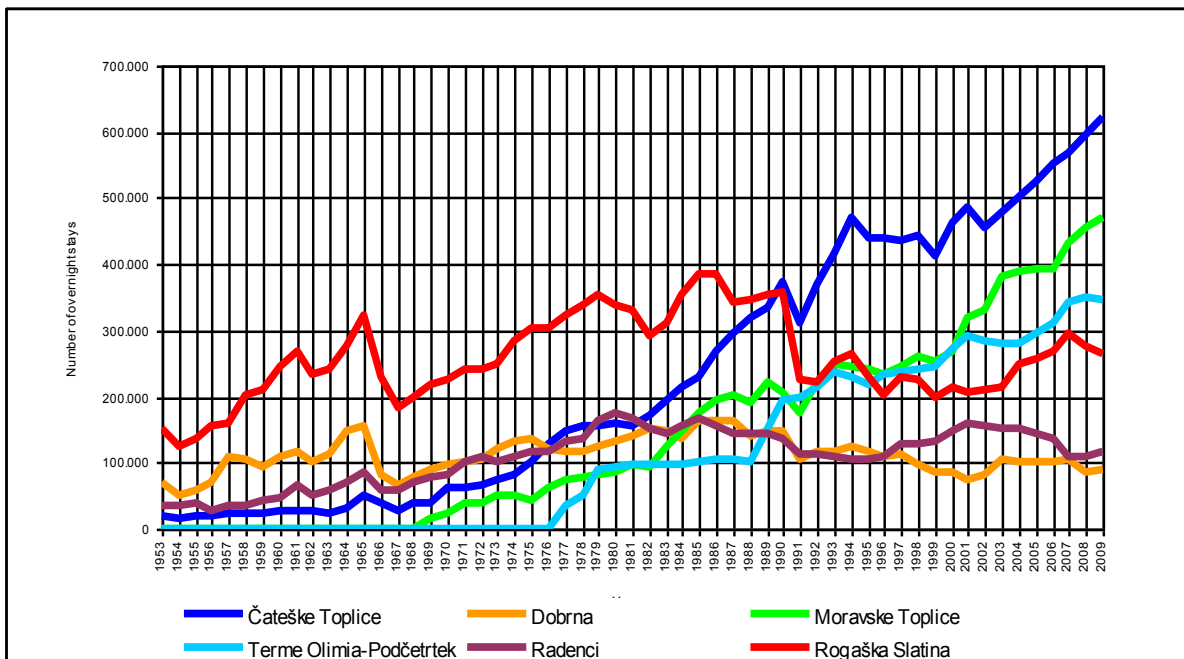
According to the development of accommodation facilities and the dynamic of tourist visits, we can define the following phases of development of tourist resort in Moravske Toplice:

1. The period between 1960 and 1981 - is the period of beginning of the development of tourist destination, which at the time not had the status of the spa. In the beginning there was only a swimming pool, which used the thermal mineral water with a temperature of 65 – 73 °C. During the period, they built several pools, restaurant, campground, bungalow buildings and indoor swimming pool, with which the season extended to the whole year. In 1970, there were about 400 tourist beds, most of them in the campsite and in the private accommodations (rented rooms, dwellings). Domestic visitors were mainly daily excursion guests. Between stationary hosts dominated tourists from Austria (in 1970 they represented

about 60% of guests). Between Graz and Moravske Toplice was set up even a regular bus line.

2. The period between 1982 and 2004 - is the period with intensive development, and the resort got the status of spa. In the beginning was part of company in a spa in Radenci, but after 1990 has been an independent company. During the period, in the spa complex (southern of the regional road) has been built two large hotels (Termal, Ajda) and apartment complex (Prekmurska vas). Tourist activity has spread throughout the settlement; also to the part which is northern of the regional road. Outside the central resort complex was built several private boarding houses and inns and after 2000 new hotel Vivat. This has greatly increased the accommodation facilities. In 2005 was there about 2.400 tourist beds (including about 700 in hotels, 560 in apartments, 500 in campsite and 420 in private boarding houses). They built a new swimming pool complex (thermal water park) Terme 3000 and a golf course. The orientation into mass tourism, based on recreation, healthy lifestyle, wellness, etc., has significantly increased the tourist visits in the resort. By the number of tourist overnight stays Moravske Toplice spa becomes the second most important spa resort in the country and the fifth most important tourist destination in Slovenia (with around 300,000 overnight stays in 2000).

**Fig.3: Number of Overnight Stays in the Most Important Health Resorts in Slovenia, 1953-2009.**

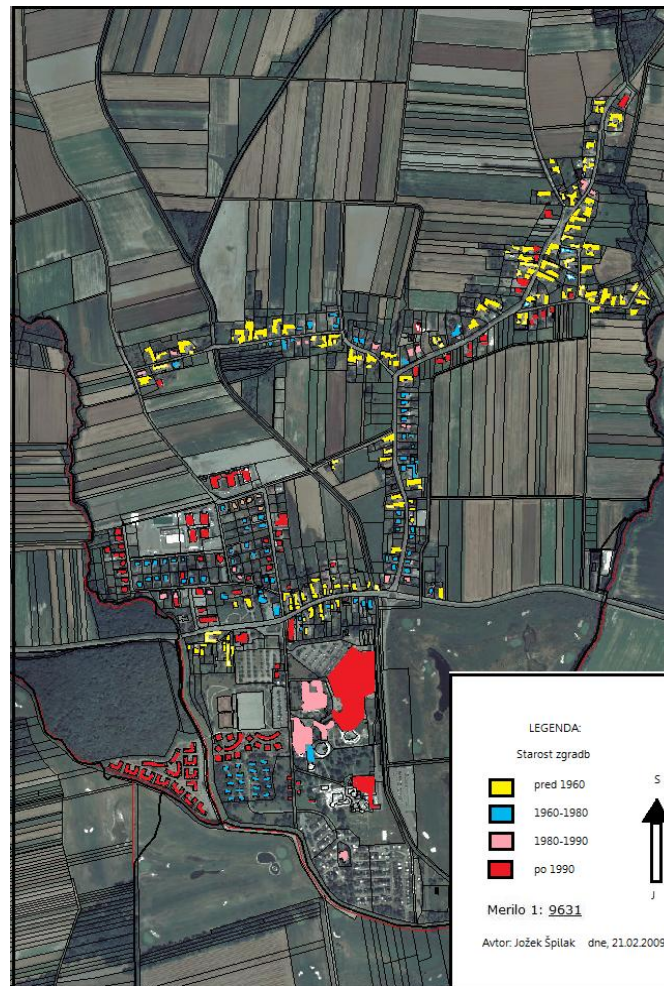


Source: Horvat 2010, <http://www.stat.si>

3. The period after 2004 - in this period the spa reaches the highest stage of development. In 2004 was overtaken by Slovenian company Sava Hotels & Resorts (<http://www.sava-hotels-resorts.com>), which owns all health resorts in north-eastern Slovenia. Company vision is to become a leading partner in the field of tourism in Slovenia. With the acquisition of several spas creates a single brand and build on its image at home and abroad. By building a 5\* hotel (Livada Prestige) increased quality of tourist offer in the Moravske Toplice spa. Number of tourist beds increased to 2.750 beds (including about 1.160 in hotels, 780 in apartments and 500 in the campsite). A large number of beds in private boarding houses (apartments, rented rooms) show the importance of income from tourism in the private sector outside the central area of the spa complex. In 2009 in the settlement was registered around 470,000 overnight

stays, of which 42% belonged to foreign tourists (68.5% of them came from Austria). With the construction of motorway, connecting Maribor and Lendava (within the V. transport corridor between Venice, Budapest and Kiev) in 2008, the accessibility of the Moravske Toplice spa even increased.

**Fig.4: Buildings in Settlement Moravske Toplice by the Period of Construction.**



*Source: Špilak 2009.*

Note: Mayor tourist zone is situated southern of the regional road; some private accommodations and one hotel are also northern of it.

Direct effects of the development of the health tourism in Moravske Toplice spa are not limited only to the central spa complex with hotels, apartment complex (dwellings), campsite, thermal water park (Spa 3000) and the golf course. In parallel with its development, tourist activity has spread to the entire settlement area (Hotel Vivat, private boarding houses, etc.), where evolved a number of service activities that are more or less connected with the tourism and hospitality.



**Fig.5: Mayor Tourist Zone in Moravske Toplice Spa in Year 2010.**



Source: <http://www.sava-hotels-resorts.com/si/destinacije/moravske>

Directly and/or indirectly are with the tourist activity linked majority of jobs in the settlement. Most of them are in the sector of tourism, hospitality, trade and various services. In the first phase of the development of the resort, there have been created mostly only seasonal jobs, but after (with the construction of hotels and apartment complex) more and more jobs offered stable employment. In 2009 there were only in the hospitality and tourism sector about 500 working posts. Tourists have also used different services in hairdressing salons, kiosks, souvenir shops, bike rental, etc., which offers additional jobs. This influenced to the fact that Moravske Toplice is one of the few settlements in the region where the majority of local people are employed in the settlement of residence, and on the same time it is also very important working center for daily migration or workers from the entire region. It is of course necessary to draw attention also to the fact, that jobs in tourism demand especially the labor force with lower education, so tourism does not directly bring substantial added value. The spa staff is dominated by semi-skilled and skilled workers.

Among the economic effects should be also pointed out the large volume of investments. In 2006, when they built a new hotel, the investments in the municipality of Moravske Toplice amounted around € 2.500/capita, which was equivalent to the state average. In the last period, the amount of investments decreased to € 1,000/capita, however, the municipality of Moravske Toplice still belongs to the one third of municipalities in Slovenia with the highest value of investments per capita ([www.stat.si](http://www.stat.si)). Economic development and investments have led to an increase in living standard of population, and at the same time also affecting the increase in property prices and real-estate in the surrounding of the spa complex (Špilak, 2009).

**Tab.2: Selected Socio-economic Data.**

	Settlement Moravske Toplice	Other settlements in the municipality Mor.Toplice	Municipality Moravske Toplice	Region Pomurje	Slovenia
No. of population, 2011	735	5,248	5,983	119,145	2,050,189
Index of change in the No. of population, 2002-2011	102.2	96.6	97.3	98.6	104.4
Average age of population, 2011 (year)	43.3	-	43.9	42.9	41.7
Percentage of older population (65+), 2011	17.4	18.9	18.7	17.5	16.5
Density of population per km <sup>2</sup> , 2011	85.4	-	41.4	89.1	101.1
Births per 1000 population, 2010	-	-	6.7	8.8	10.9
Deaths per 1000 population, 2010	-	-	12.2	11.0	9.1
Natural increase per 1000 population, 2010	-	-	-5.5	-2.3	1.8
Net migration rate with abroad per 1000 population, 2010	-	-	-0.8	-0.7	-0.1
Net migration rate per 1000 population, 2010	-	-	-2.7	-3.2	1.6
Percentage of active population in agriculture, 2007	-	-	27.8	14.0	4.9
Rate of unemployment (%), 2009	-	-	15.3	15.9	9.1
Brutto investments per capita (€), 2009	-	-	1,001	1,149	2,564

Source: <http://www.stat.si>

Tourism also influenced on demographic changes in the settlement. In contrast to the predominantly agrarian surrounding, Moravske Toplice has a constant population growth. In 1966 there lived 520 residents, in 2002 719 residents and in 2011 735 residents). More favorable than in surrounding, is also the age-index of population, which has value of 128 in 2011, while the value for the municipality is 150 (national average is 116). In the less developed municipalities which are bordering the municipality of Moravske Toplice (especially in the northern part of the Goričko), the demographic situation and the depopulation is much more critical (in comparison with the national average) (Horvat, 2009).

Today, Moravske Toplice is one of the most important tourist resorts in Slovenia (the second most important spa resort in the country and the fifth most important tourist destination in Slovenia). Despite the high tourism intensity (about 640 tourist nights/population), the resorts environment is relatively well preserved, although there are already emerging some pressures on the environment, resulting from the development of mass tourism. However, visitors to the spa still the most appreciate a relatively peaceful environment, especially around the settlement, which offers untouched nature and numerous recreational opportunities (for hiking, biking, etc.), and a rich cultural heritage, homemade crafts and the local cuisine. In addition, with the high-quality of tourist offer in spa complex, this is the basis for further development of the resort and the settlement of Moravske toplice.

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## **Regional preferences of Slovak universities in rural and urban settlements**

**Viliam Lauko, Daniel Gurňák, Ladislav Tolmáči, František Križan**

### **Abstract**

The paper is focused on four basic hypotheses according to rural and urban settlements and preferences of Slovak universities within them. These are: (i) Direct dependence between the size of university, the number of their students, and its dominance in the region; (ii) Dependence between type of university and the commuting region; (iii) Dependence between commuting region of internal students from rural and urban settlements to private schools and (iv) The dependence of commuting regions for external students to private universities. While the first hypothesis was not approved, the remaining three were approved with some additional comments.

**Keywords:** Geography of Education, universities, rural and urban settlements

### **Introduction**

A declared priority of all governments is education or in the broader context education, science and research. This is relevant universally and not only in Slovakia. Although political representatives present the importance of education as long-term economic growth and reduction in social inequalities the reality is quite different. The topic of education has become an object of political debate, where in many cases the economic, social and spatial aspects of the question are not taken into account, or they are even distorted. Although this is constantly under debate in multidisciplinary discussions, it remains only a marginal topic in Geography. Schools can be regarded as the centre of everyday life organization for many families, and this model significantly affects certain social activities, nevertheless Geography of Education is still not generally accepted as a recognized subdiscipline of human geography (Collins and Coleman 2008, p. 282). We may agree with the statement of C. Thiem (2009, p. 154), while the decade before the resources of literature on the issue Geography of Education were fragmentary, episodic and limited<sup>11</sup> it is currently gaining increasing interest.

Considerable disproportions exist at all education levels in the school network. Competition between educational institutions takes place mainly at secondary school level and universities. As stated in R. Lowry (2004), U. S. public universities faced with competition and other universities rely heavily on state subsidies, which produce a lower number of graduates in any given year. Although the number of graduates is one of many indicators analyzing university schools, it is one of the most important indicators in Slovakia, because there is still no recognized direct correlation between the quality of the university schools and application possibilities available in practice. Therefore, in a competitive environment, this leads to formation of disparities between schools. In university education, we can regionalize some tendencies, where some schools have a regional impact and others have a national effect (cf. Gurňák et al. 2011).

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<sup>11</sup> Although P. Hooloway et al. (2010) pointed to the older works from the seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which arose within the International Geographical Society (IGU) in the working group "Geography of Education", they confirmed the increased interest in the issue of geographers in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Inequalities in the access to education and the accessibility of schools within the meaning that “everyone wants to have access to a good education and therefore to a good school”, can be viewed as distortions. Such distortions are important because of changes in the structure of services and education, and also because of interactions between spatial models indicating the pupils’ and their families’ demand for quality educational and social characteristics (Hamnett and Butler 2011, p. 4). In this context, geographical location is a key aspect in understanding the impact of decisions on the school system (Gorard et al. 2003, p. 112). This applies to the residential location which has a significant impact on school choice especially when the quality of schools varies (Bagley et al. 2001, Gordon and Monastiriotis 2007).

The aim of this paper is to evaluate rural and urban students’ preferences for places at universities in Slovakia. These school preferences were analyzed by the number of students enrolled at university, based on the following hypotheses:

- (i.) Direct dependence between the size of university the number of its students and its dominance in the region;
- (ii.) Dependence between type of university and the commuting region;
- (iii.) Dependence between commuting region of internal students from rural and urban settlements to private schools;
- (iv.) Dependence of commuting regions of external students into private universities.

### Regional preferences in rural settlements

Students at Slovak universities who resided in rural settlements represented 45.3% of all students in the 2010/2011 academic year (Table 1). Certain differences can be observed in relationship to the form of study. Although external students exhibited a larger proportion, this share does not exceed 50%. Relationships can also be observed in the degree of urbanization.

**Table 1. Regional preferences of universities in Slovakia by students in the academic year 2010/2011**

Settlements	Internal students		External students		Total	
	abs.	[%]	abs.	[%]	abs.	[%]
Urban	79 021	55,3	37 988	53,5	117 009	54,7
Rural	63 811	44,7	32 984	46,5	96 795	45,3
Total	142 832	66,8	70 972	33,2	213 804	100,0

*Source: Database of the Ministry of Education (2011).*

From a spatial perspective, our analysis was conducted separately for internal students and external students (Fig. 1 and 2). Public universities have the dominant percentage of internal students who come from the Slovak countryside (Fig. 1). It should be noted that there are evident disparities between public universities and this same spatial relationship. A total of 11 public universities, amounting to more than half, have dominance in some region. However, only one university’s dominance was confirmed to be over 50% of all students in selected regions. This is the university in Žilina (ZU ZAU), which has a dominant share of internal students from rural districts of Kysucké Nové Mesto (65%) and Žilina (52%), and

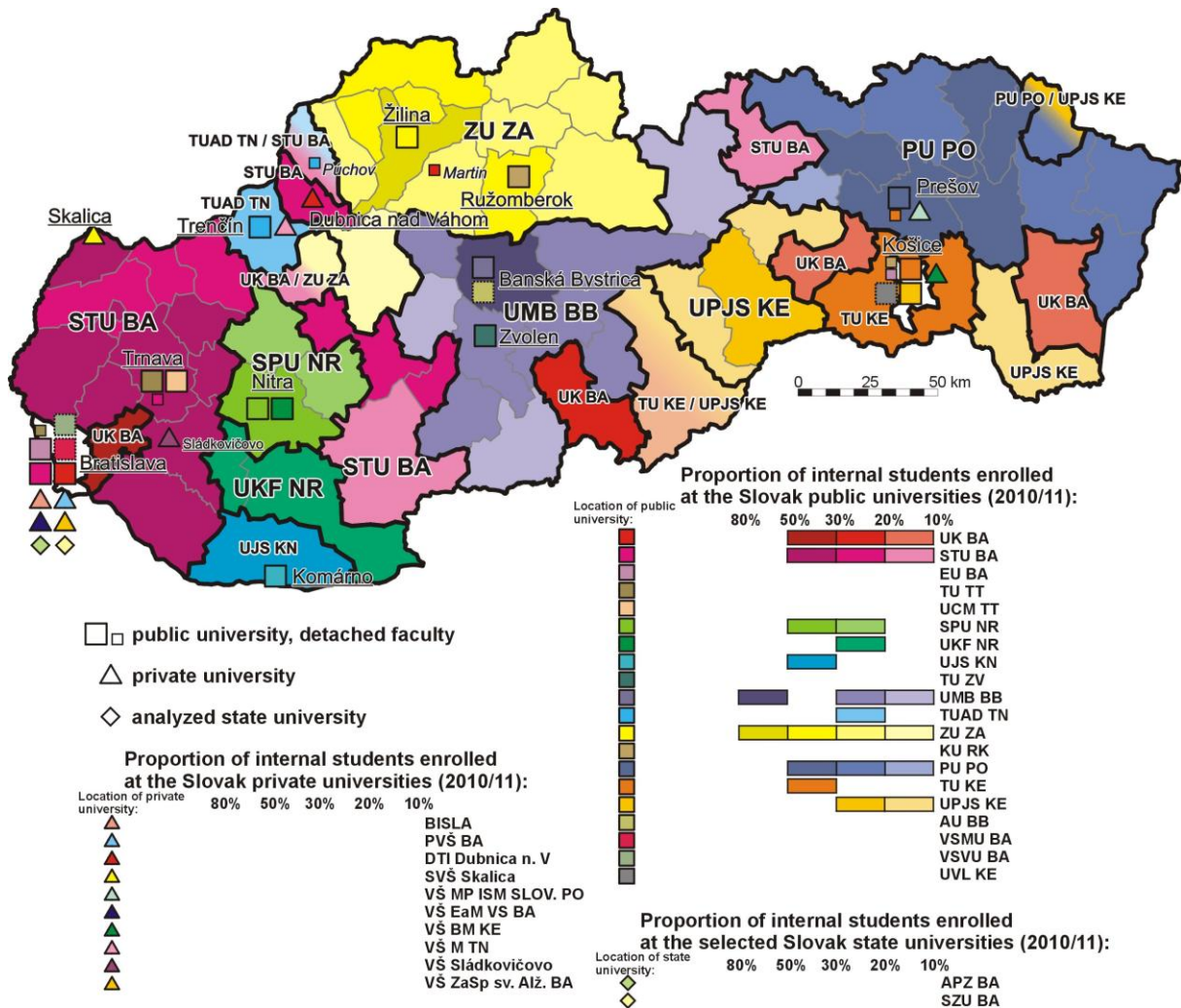
also a significant preference in the districts of Ružomberok 20%, Tvrdošín 18%) and adjacent regions.

The high proportion of 30-50% of internal students from rural areas in this region attend the other public universities of UK BA, STU BA, SPU NR, UJS KN, PU PO and TU KE. Most of these schools dominate the region around the area of university centre. Only in UK BA and also STU BA can we detect a relationship with greater distance and dominance in the eastern Slovak districts of Kežmarok Gelnica and Michalovce or in the central Slovak area of Lučenec. Regions close to facilities in the university centres maintained the largest share of the total number of students.

It is clear that competition exists between universities in Slovakia, and this is also reflected in internal students from rural areas. The most obvious “fight” between schools occurs in eastern Slovakia, where UPJŠ KE TU KE and PU PO compete for students, and other universities such as UK BA come into play.

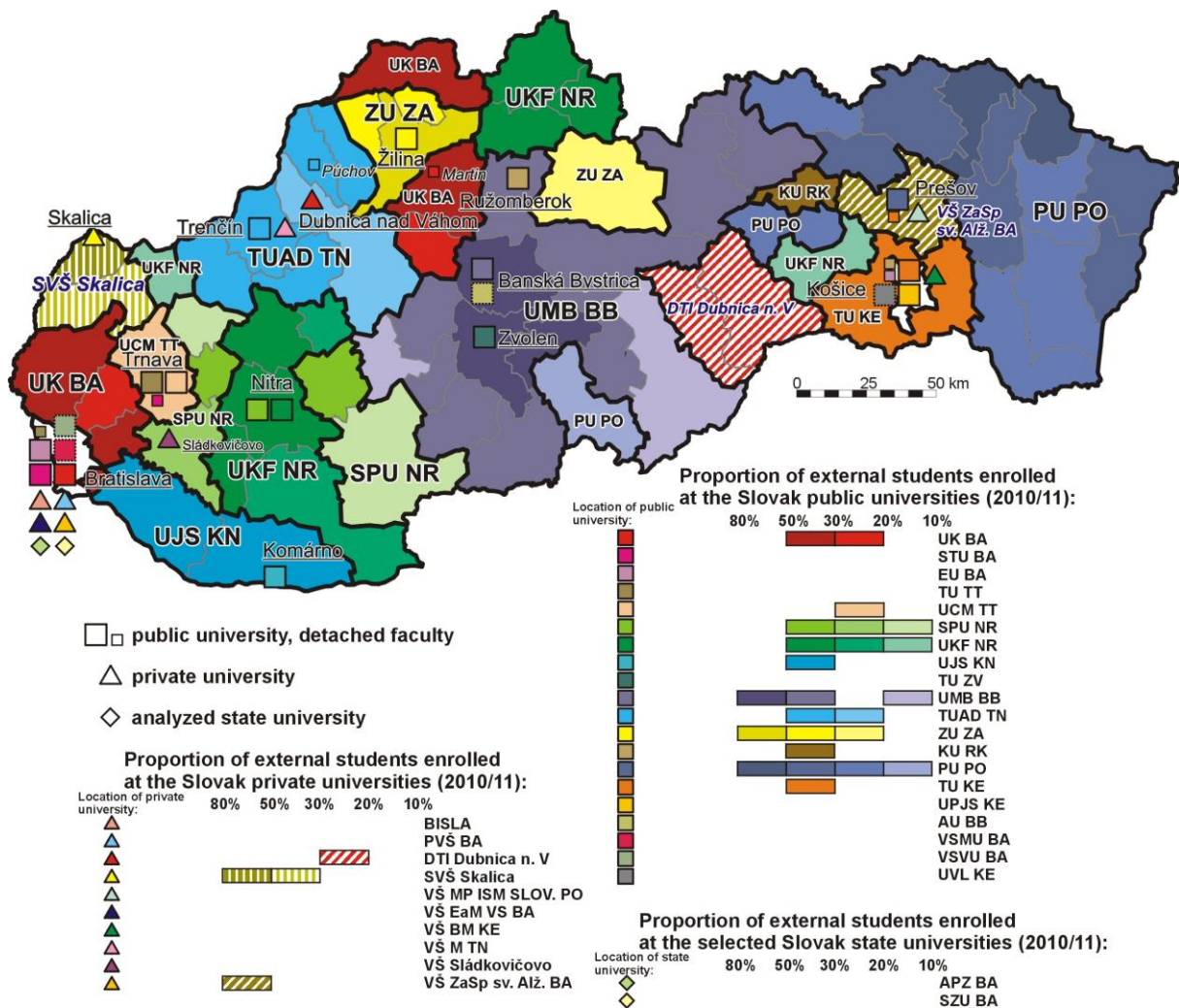
In attempting verification of hypotheses number (i), it can be concluded that a strong relationship between the type of school attendance and the regions has not been established. As an example, the Technical University in Zvolen (TU ZV) focused mainly on rural areas, and in one region it recorded more than 2% share of the total registered internal students from rural areas. It should be noted that this is a technical university with higher preferences for students from the city. In the Slovak University of Agriculture (SUA NR), the same dependence was reflected for western Slovakia. While some districts exhibited a dominant position (Nitra → 44% Gold 27% → Moravec, Topoľčany → 26%; Sala → 20%), a high proportion was identified in other regions of eastern and central Slovakia based on agricultural production. In general, therefore, we can conclude that the increased attendance of students from rural areas internal to SPU DB is associated with increasing distance to the school and its regional influence.

Figure 1: Preference of universities in Slovakia by internal students from rural settlements.



There are quite apparent differences in external students at Slovak universities from rural settlements, as shown in Figure 2 compared to those in Figure 1. The first major difference is the dominance in regions and in private universities. This confirms the hypothesis of the existence of dependence on the time taken for students to commute to private colleges. As an example, the Central College in Skalica (CST Skalica) strongly dominates the district around the centre of the university (Skalica → 58%), but to a lesser degree Senica has 37%. This is a university with significant regional impact. Another trend is seen in Dubnica Institute of Technology in Dubnica (DTI FC n. V). This college has a significant share of students in the region and its centre (Ilava → 16% Nove Mesto nad Vahom → 15%), but it also has a dominant position in remote regions (Revúca → 28% → 27% Rožňava the exact → 21%). This can be explained by the detached offices and branches of this university. A specific case is recognizable in the University of Health and Social Work St. Elizabeth (University of St. ZASP. Alž. BA). This has the most numerous detached workplaces strategically located throughout Slovakia. These are Nové Zámky, Žilina, Prešov, Košice, Rožňava, Piešťany, Michalovce, Banská Bystrica, Bardejov Trstená, Spišská Nová Ves, Partizánske and Skalica, Meanwhile some cities, such as Žilina, have more of these branches. This is the reason for the dominance of this university in the Prešov district with 62%, at the expense of PU PO.

Figure 2: Preference of universities in Slovakia by external students from rural settlements.



The effect of detached workplaces also occurs with other universities. UKF NR is dominant in the north of Slovakia (Dolný Kubín, Námestovo) and in the district of Tvrdošín (47%), where the status of this college is dominant in the centre of the university (Nitra → 43%). This is also relevant for the other universities of UK BA, PU PO, UKF NR, and it should be noted that the database for some universities is incomplete, and therefore it can be distorted, as in KU RK.

Another identifiable trend is the focus of schools on external study and this is most evident for TUAD TN. While for internal students it shows a dominant position in one district (centre of university), the dominance for external students is recorded in 7 districts with a proportion of approximately 30-50% of all students.

### Regional preferences in urban settlements

The preference of Slovak universities for internal students from cities is documented in Figure 3. Similar to the case for internal students coming from rural areas (Fig. 1), this also does not show private universities' dominance in the same region. Eleven public universities have dominant influence on a different scale. The spatial mosaic of TU KE significantly affects Eastern Slovakian, figures with its dominance in 24 districts across the Košice and Prešov

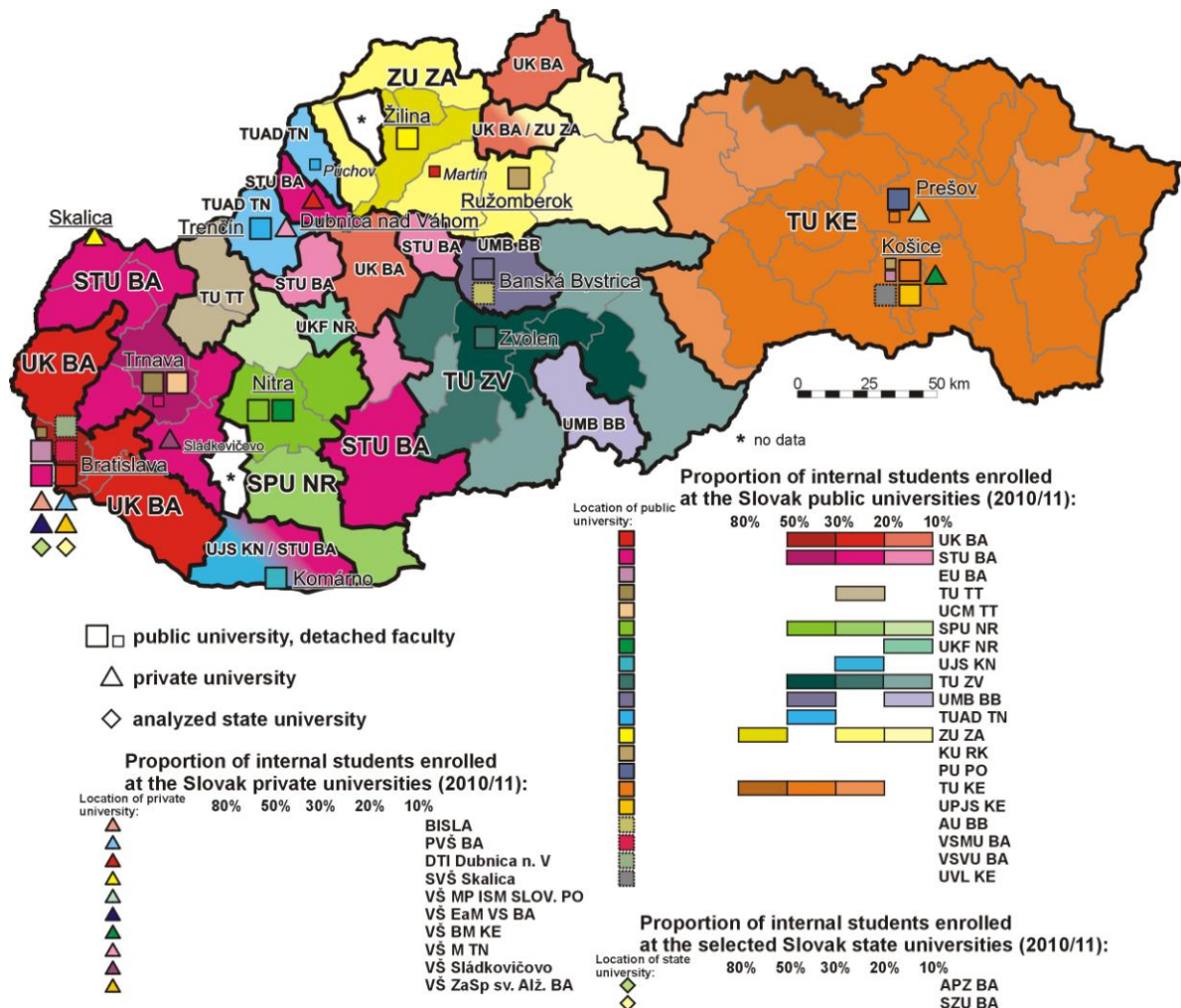


regions. In some districts this proportion exceeds 50% (Rožňava → 58% districts of Košice → 58% Stará Ľubovňa → 53%). While internal students mostly attend PU PO or the field branches of other universities in this region, internal students from the city in this region mainly focus on the technical University of Košice, TU KE. In addition, PU PO has a dominant position for internal students of the city in both regions. On the other hand, STU in western Slovakia lost its dominant regions, particularly due to the influence of UK BA.

The fact that internal students visit more Technical University in Zvolen (TU ZV) and SPU NR is partially in conflict with the hypothesis of dependence between the type of school attendance and regions. TU ZV as dominant for internal university students did not appear in either district, and in the case of internal students from the city it dominates 9 districts. We should seek the answer why, in answer that they prefer engineering sciences. Less dramatically increased the spatial dominance of SPU NR from 3 districts to 4 districts.

The preferences of Slovak universities by internal students as dominating in districts Piešťany (21%) and Senica (19%) occurs Trenčianska Univerzita TU TT. Although in the school centre district in Trnava its share reaches 26% of the STU BA (measured by the number of students), has a dominant position in the district of Trnava just STU BA. We can also observe a certain correlation between school size and number of students dominating in the region, which confirms the set hypothesis.

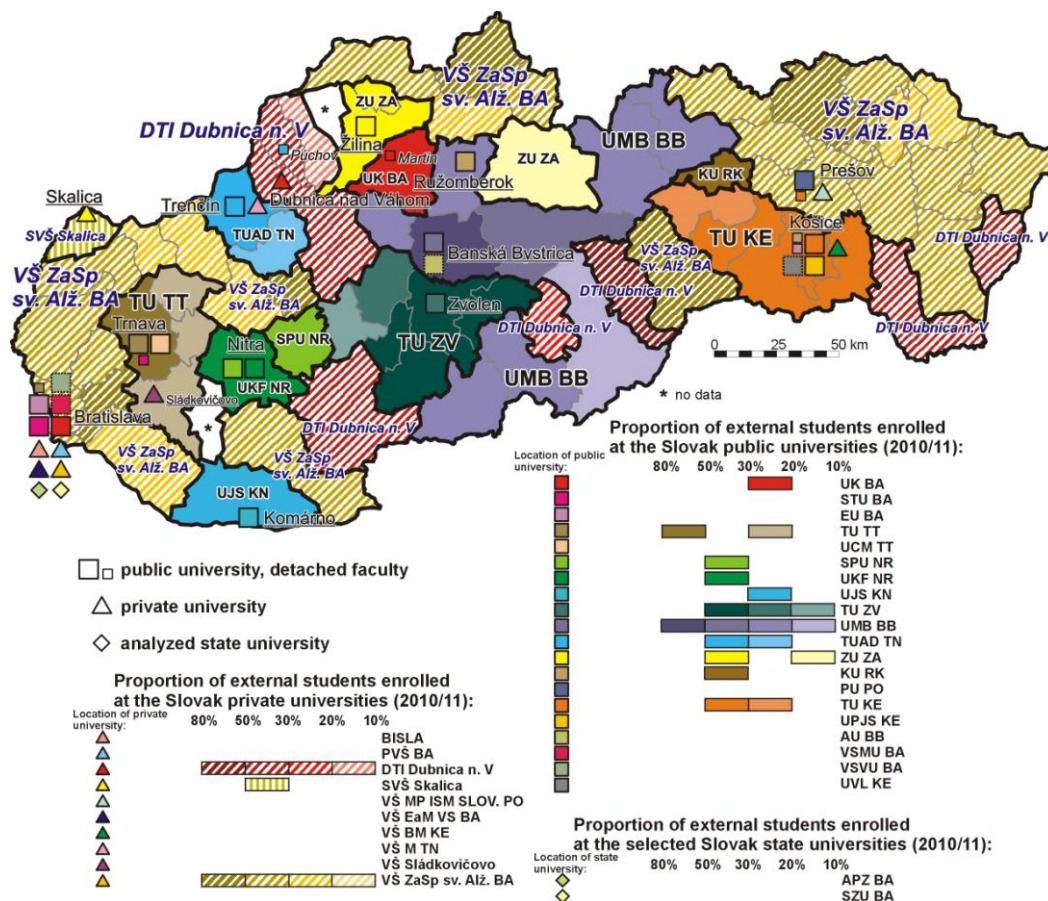
Figure 3: Preference of universities in Slovakia by internal students from urban settlements. (Note: for the cities in Šaľa and Bytča district data are not available.)



When comparing the preferences of external students at Slovak universities coming from rural areas (Fig. 2) and centres (Fig. 4) are clear few trends. Private schools play an important role in the external form of study, as well as, in the case of students residing in rural areas. Three of them (DTI Dubnica n. V, SVŠ Skalica, VŠ ZaSp Alž. BA) have dominant position in selected regions of Slovakia. More than 50% of all students from districts attend two universities (DTI Dubnica n. V, VŠ ZaSp Alž. BA). Clear is the spatial coverage of the largest private university VŠ ZaSp Alž. BA, which through its detached departments are equally distributed throughout the territory of Slovakia. It provides supplementary education for more specialization in particular bachelor's degree. Externally-focused courses at this college dominate in 27 districts (37.5%). DTI Dubnica n. V. is dominant only in external study. Overall it dominates in 9 districts, not only around the centre of the university, but also in remote regions. SVŠ Skalica dominates the district headquarters of the university. Private schools in Slovakia dominate 51.4% of districts for external students from cities.

Preference of public universities by external students from the cities are significantly different from the internal preferences of students from the cities. The most significant changes can be identified in the case of UMB BB, the university dominated just in two districts, but the external already in 9 districts. The expansion of the influence of school was in the cases TU TT (from 2 to 4 districts), respectively. KU RK. This college may have greater dominance, but incomplete data does not allow deeper analysis. On the other hand, for a number of public schools it is typical they lose their dominant regions. The most significant decrease has been recorded in TU KE, ZU ZA, UK BA and TU ZV. STU BA external study even do not dominate in any region.

Figure 4: Preference of universities in Slovakia by external students from urban settlements. (Note: for the cities in Šaľa and Bytča district data are not available.)



## Conclusion

The paper analyzed the preferences of universities in Slovakia by internal and external students from rural and urban settlements. It analyzed four examples: (a) the preference of internal students from rural settlements, (b) the preferences of external students from rural environment (c) the internal students from the cities, (d) the external students from outside the city. The result of analysis is expressed on set of four maps (Fig. 1-4) characterizing the spatial aspect of the problem with trying to prove or disprove the hypothesis set:

- (i.) There is a correlation between school size (given by number of students) and its dominance in the region. This hypothesis was confirmed. Preferences of universities in the area are strongly influence also by other factors (accessibility, financial issues, school type, intensity of study, etc.). In many cases there is a concentration of students in an area with no significant spatial expansion. As an example, the SVŠ Skalica in which the number of (external) students is as in medium-size university. However, they are concentrated in the surroundings of the college. Another example is TU KE (internal students from the cities).
- (ii.) There is a dependence between the type of school attendance and regions. The paper identified a greater preference for technical colleges and urban students on one hand, and greater preference for natural and agricultural sciences students from rural areas on the other hand.
- (iii.) There is a correlation between attendance of student to private universities from cities. When comparing the preferences of external students from urban and rural environment we can conclude that urban students give stronger preference to private schools than students from rural areas. However, for internal students such dependence was observed in terms of the dominant region of a private school.
- (iv.) Is there a relationship between the external students and the size of the regions of private university? As in the case of external students from rural areas, in the case of external students from the cities it was confirmed a strong dominance of private universities. From the point of view of distance and diverse landscape it is more variable for external students, while in the total number there dominate private colleges. In this context, we can express that the hypothesis of dependence between the external students attending private universities was approved.

The education is clearly influenced by additional spatial attributes and external factors. Among them are policy-making legislative changes or the policy public administration. We may stress the notion that Geography of Education has a special role in further research [education] and political progress (Taylor 2001, p. 380).

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### List of abbreviations of names of universities and colleges

**Abbreviation: Public universities:**

<b>AU BB</b>	Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica
<b>EU BA</b>	University of Economics in Bratislava
<b>KU RK</b>	Catholic University in Ružomberok
<b>PU PO</b>	University of Prešov
<b>SPU NR</b>	Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra
<b>STU BA</b>	Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava
<b>TU KE</b>	Technical University in Košice
<b>TU TT</b>	University of Trnava
<b>TU ZV</b>	Technical University in Zvolen
<b>TUAD TN</b>	Alexander Dubček University of Trenčín
<b>UCM TT</b>	University of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
<b>UJS KN</b>	J. Selye University in Komárno
<b>UK BA</b>	Comenius University in Bratislava
<b>UKF NR</b>	Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra
<b>UMB BB</b>	Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica
<b>UPJS KE</b>	Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice
<b>UVL KE</b>	University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Košice
<b>VSMU BA</b>	Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava

<b>VSVU BA</b> <b>ZU ZA</b>	Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava Žilina University
	<b>State universities:</b>
<b>APZ BA</b> <b>SZU BA</b>	Police Academy in Bratislava* Slovak Health Care University in Bratislava
	<b>Private universities and colleges:</b>
<b>BISLA</b>	Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts
<b>DTI Dubnica</b> <b>n. V</b>	Dubnica Technology Institute in Dubnica nad Váhom*
<b>PVŠ BA</b>	Pan European University in Bratislava*
<b>SVŠ Skalica</b>	Central European College in Skalica
<b>VŠ BM KE</b>	College of Security Management in Košice
<b>VŠ EaM VS</b> <b>BA</b>	College of Public Administration Economics and Management in Bratislava
<b>VŠ M TN</b>	College of Management / City University in Trenčín
<b>VŠ MP ISM</b>	College of International Business in Prešov
<b>SLOV. PO</b> <b>VŠ</b> <b>Sládkovičovo</b>	College in Sládkovičovo*
<b>VŠ ZaSp sv.</b> <b>Alž. BA</b>	St.Elizabeth College of Health and Social sciences

Source: <http://office.studyin.sk/universities/>, \*unofficial translation of the name of school

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# **Slovak universities and their preferences depending on the size of cities**

**Daniel Gurňák, Viliam Lauko, František Križan, Ladislav Tolmáči**

## **Abstract**

This paper is an introduction to the Geography of Education, with special attention to the preferences of Slovak Universities and their regions of influence from the point of view of preferences dependent on the size of the cities where they are located.

The paper investigates the hypothesis, that: “There is a direct correlation between the size of the city as a university centre and the size of the attendance region”. It has been analyzed and documented with special maps depicting the regions of their influence. In general, this hypothesis was approved, but with some additional remarks.

**Keywords:** Geography of Education, university education, regions of influence, preferences of universities

## **1 Introduction**

According to T. Butler and Ch. Hamnett (2007), there are several reasons that make the Geography of Education interesting. One of these is that there exists a class and ethnically based residential segregation and differentiation. In this context, there are disparities in providing funding in the following circumstances (1) schools granted by self-government including foundations for state and non-state schools, (2) in structural differences such as the condition of school buildings and equipping schools with teaching materials, and (3) in educational matters including the number of teachers per pupil and the number of students in a classroom and (4) other relevant services. Additionally, the concentration of certain social and ethnic population groups in different regions produces generalized differences which can be associated with increasing social exclusion and regional disparities. This discussion can then lead to a general differentiation between regional schools which are at the forefront of what can be considered as satisfactory and appropriate education and schools that lack these basic fundamentals. In this context, some regions can be identified as "winners" and others as "losers" in terms of the educational function of the region.

It can not be forgotten that education, and especially higher education, is associated with gaining a higher income and providing greater opportunities to enter the labor market (Harmon et al. 2003, Sianesi and Van Reenen 2003, Wößmann 2008). Therefore, in terms of achieved educational level, education can be considered an economic entity, especially in terms of efficient investment. Regions with a greater concentration of higher educational institutions have lower unemployment rates, and they also have increased positive figures in other selected socio-economic indicators.

In the past two decades, the Slovak Republic has overcome the redistribution of educational institutions, and education in general. The role of the state in this context, of course has priority, but the liberalization of the education market has brought new impetus, including the status of the private sector and the individual choices of students. This transition from etatism to neo-liberalism, in which the State also plays important role (institutional and legislative

roles, is characteristic not only of Slovakia, but also of other post-socialist countries (cf. Schwarz 1993, Silo, 2010). In this sense, geography and space can be considered as means for rationalization and justification of the de facto re-allocation of resources from the relatively advantaged entities to relatively disadvantaged (Hamnett and Butler 2011, p. 19-21).

The aim of this paper is to assess the preferences of higher educational institutions in Slovakia according to city size. Therefore, the following hypothesis was established: “There is a direct correlation between the size of the city as the centre of universities and the size of the region from which it draws its attendance”.

## 2 Analysis

Methodologically, this paper is based on previous works by this team of authors (Gurňák et al. 2009, 2010, 2011, Lauko et al. 2011, 2011b, 2011c). All the data is derived from the database of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. It is a set of data for each university, which is updated annually. Individual universities process the data independently, and therefore there may be some disharmony. For example, the Catholic University in Ružomberok does not register the residence of their students except in the faculty of Theology. Some selected private schools act similarly. Data concerning the number of students enrolled in university internal and external studies during the 2010/2011 academic year was used herein.

The Centres of Universities in Slovakia are typically in cities, and these cities were divided into three categories: (i) small cities (ii) medium-sized cities (iii) metropolises (Table 1).

**Table 1: Classification of universities according the size of cities in which they are located**

City as a center of university	Small cities	Medium-sized cities	Metropolises
Bratislava			+
Košice			+
Trnava		+	
Nitra		+	
Trenčín		+	
Žilina		+	
Banská Bystrica		+	
Prešov		+	
Dubnica nad Váhom	+		
Skalica	+		
Sládkovičovo	+		
Komárno	+		
Zvolen	+		
Ružomberok	+		

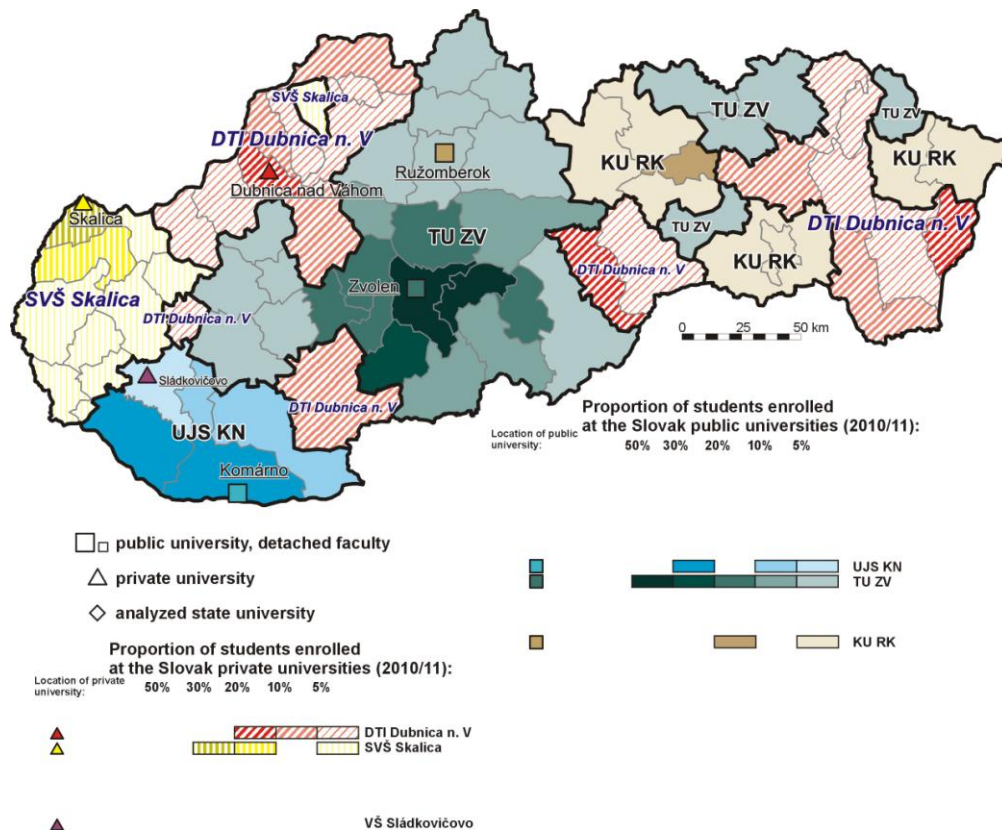
The analysis was conducted on two levels: (a) the preference of individual universities according to city size, (b) the preference of all universities according to the size of the city in which they are located.

## 2.1 Preferences of universities located in small cities

The category of small cities, as centres of university level education, includes cities with universities or university branches. These cities with their population in brackets, are: Dubnica nad Váhom (25,000), Komárno (8,100), Ružomberok (29,600 ) Skalica (15,000), Sládkovičovo (5,700) and Zvolen (42,400). Except for Dubnica nad Váhom and Sládkovičovo they are also district centres.

The spatial preferences of students enrolled at the universities (Fig. 1) show some specifics. On the basis of description of preferences, there are three groups of universities. The first group includes those without dominant influence. Sládkovičovo is one example and its attendance regions are mainly located to the west of Bratislava compared to its university headquarters. However data from this university to the Ministry of education has been incomplete, thus perhaps distorting the attendance region. The second group is represented by schools which have a regional scope and Skalica SVŠ has certain features of this type. Although dominant regions close to the university centre generally prevail, an exception is the Bytča district which is quite dominant. A more typical example is UJS Komárno, around which the regions are spatially coherent, with the university at its centre. The third group of schools consists of those which are spatially discontinuous from the dominant influence. These schools have a supra-regional influence, rather than only a regional one. In this group are: Zvolenská TU, KU Ružomberok and DTI FC n. V. It is possible to explain their spatial influence in two ways. They may either be the actual commuting centre of the university's region or else their dominance in the more remote areas is linked to university branch sites. It is impossible to analyze them in further depth because of the incomplete records of student numbers submitted by detached branches such as institutes and consultancy and training centres.

Figure 1: Preferences of individual universities in Slovakia located in small cities.

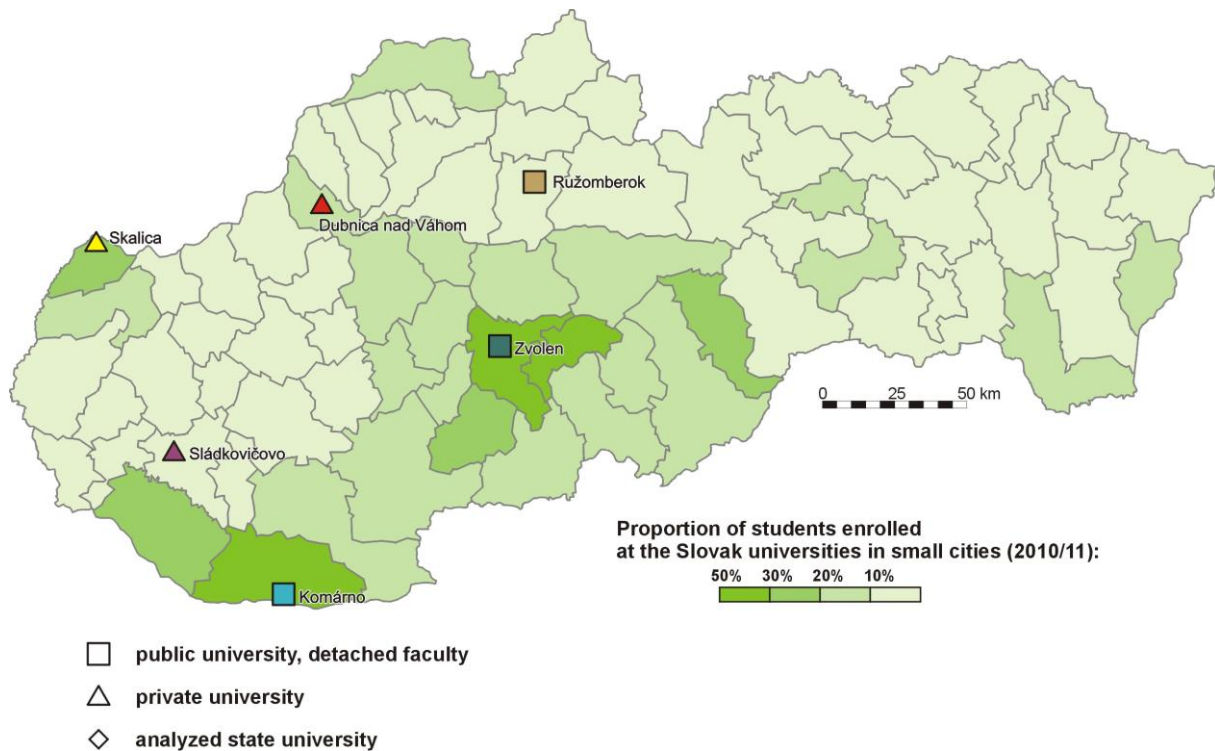




Assessment of preferences of all universities in small cities may indicate a regional or supra-regional nature in preferences. (Fig. 2). Most universities in small towns have a regional character, such as those located in Skalica, Komárno and Dubnica nad Váhom. The largest proportion of students commutes to these schools from around the university's central area and its nearby region. According to submitted records, the universities in Ružomberok and Sládkovičovo do not belong to regional-type schools, although according to empirical knowledge they would normally fall into this category. However, Zvolen and Dubnica nad Váhom Universities can be regarded as having a supra-regional nature. Explanations for this characterization can be found in the school's city size and in the specific role of these universities in Slovakia, emanating from their unique courses. The analysis has also confirmed a lower proportion of students enrolled at these universities with some individual cases not even exceeding 50 % of average enrolment.

It should also be noted that Eastern Slovakia lacks a university in the small-city category. This absence is overcome to some extent by detached offices in all their formats and by schools categorized as representing medium cities and metropolises.

**Figure 2: Preferences of all universities in Slovakia located in small cities.**



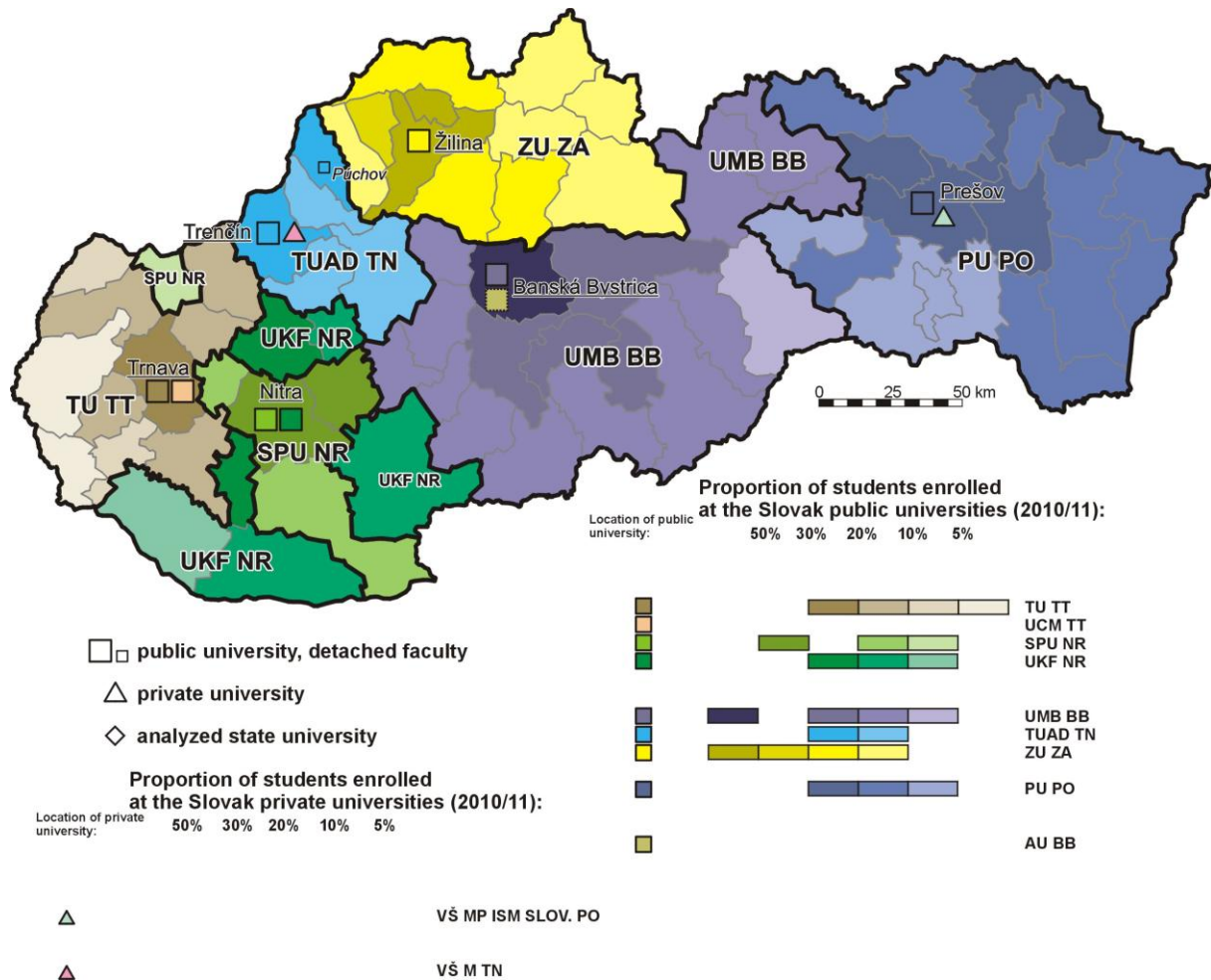
## 2.2 Preferences of universities located in medium-sized cities

The category of medium-sized cities as centres of university education include the following cities: Banská Bystrica (80,000), Nitra (83,700), Prešov (91,200) Trenčín (56,500), Trnava (67,600) and Žilina (85,200). In this paper medium-sized cities are equivalent to provincial capitals. This categorization falls outside the domain of Bratislava and Košice, which are the two largest cities in Slovakia.

Similar to the small cities category shown in Figure 1, it is possible to divide medium-sized city universities into two groups (Figure 3). The first group consists of regional universities, such as the university in Trenčín (TUAD TN).. The dominant preferences of university

students here come from five counties adjacent to the seat of the university, and the dominance of this school exceeds a 30 % share within this region. It is also noteworthy that this city provides both a public and private University, which can be related to regional level preferences. The University of Žilina (ZA ZU) is also interesting, in that its preferences are concentrated around the university centre with a share of more than 50 %. Despite the specific role of this university, it can still be evaluated according to its preferences as a regional type school, and thus it represents a school at the interface of the regional and sub-regional type. Prešov University (PU PO) appears almost identical according to preferences, although it has a larger spatial radius. The share of this university is the strongest in its surrounds, especially in terms of its background. On the other hand, while the dominance of PU PO is far less than that of more western schools, which have competition from other universities, it has clear dominance over the more eastern schools. However in neither case does its dominance exceed 30 %. Its background can be found in the sphere of influence of a stronger centre within the category of large-city universities such as Košice.

Figure 3: Preferences of individual universities in Slovakia located in medium-sized cities.



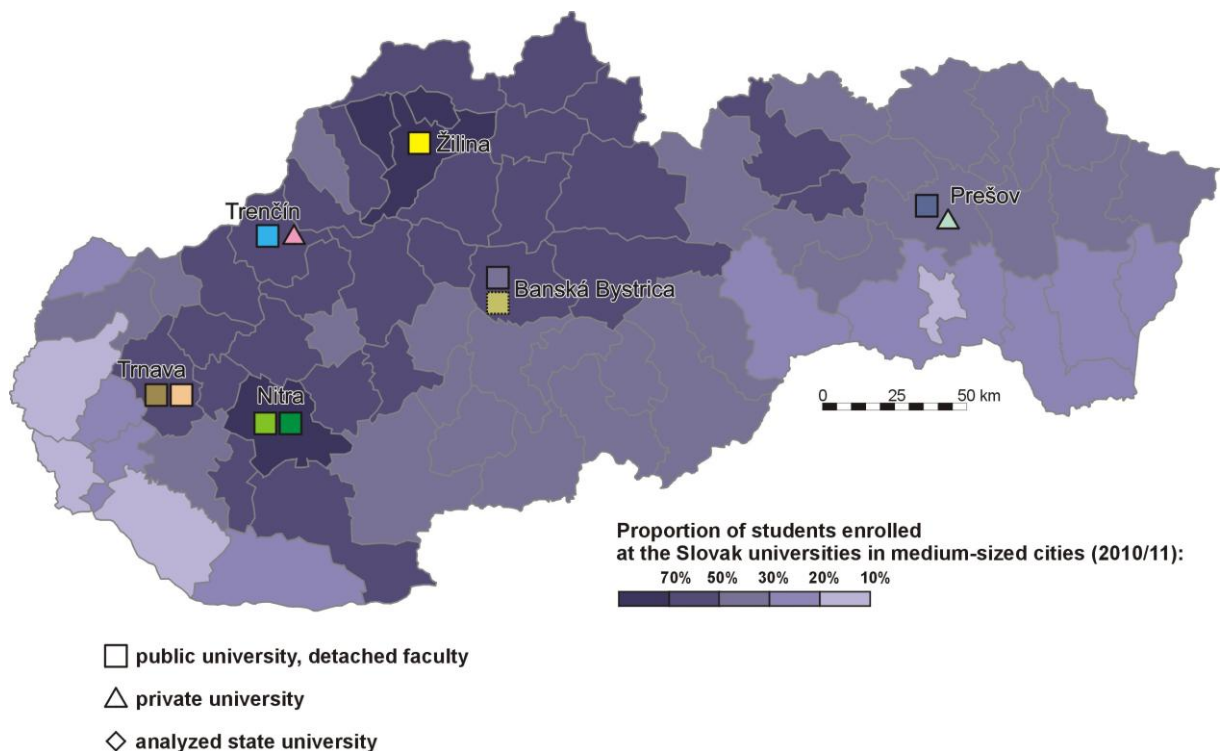
Other schools may be considered as trans-regional. The Banská Bystrica University (BB UMB) makes a significant impact with its dominant influence in distant districts belonging to other regions. This is despite the less favorable access available to the BB UMB. The preferences of this university can be partly explained by the strong patriotism of the university centre, which dominates with over 50 % of enrolled students. Another such university is the University of Trnava in Trnava (TU TT), which dominates the region around the university

centre, and especially areas to the west and north of it. This university is the only centre in the category of medium-sized cities located in the Bratislava region, Although this categorization and dominant influence may be explained by Trnava's accessibility, its share is always less than 10 %, and usually approximately 5 %, due to its proximity to the largest university education centres located in Bratislava. Meanwhile, although the university in Nitra does not enjoy a spatially compact nature, both the UKF NR and SPU NR vie for dominance in this region, despite their different focus.

Where-ever there are two schools located in the one area, both schools can not have dominant preferences, but this does occur however in the special case of Nitra. This is mainly due to individual school's different nature and focus. Examples are found in the unique nature of BB AU and also in schools which are publicly or privately owned. However, here public universities predominate. In the context of the ARRA Agency's annual report of 2010 concerning Higher Education Quality Evaluation based on multiple indicators, the preference for the University of St. Cyril and Method in Trnava (UCM TT) can also be evaluated. This university recorded attendances relative to a dominant region in the categorization of cities.

The map containing all universities in the category of medium-sized cities confirms many previous statements (Fig. 4). It can be concluded that the university preferences are not affected by the number of universities in the city. Žilina and Prešov can be utilized for comparative purposes. Žilina with one school appears to be a more dominant regional centre than Prešov which has two universities. In analyzing the preferences of all universities, we can assume a strong influence for the higher ranked centres of Bratislava and Košice in Western and Eastern Slovakia. Additionally, preferences for universities located in medium-sized cities in Southern Slovakia remain at relatively low levels. This may be due to the influence of the lower Zvolen regional centre and also to the presence of Bratislava and Košice which enjoy a higher-order of preferences. Additionally, the radius of regions with preferences of medium-sized cities is generally larger than the radius of small cities (Fig. 2).

**Figure 4: Preferences of all universities in Slovakia located in medium-sized cities.**

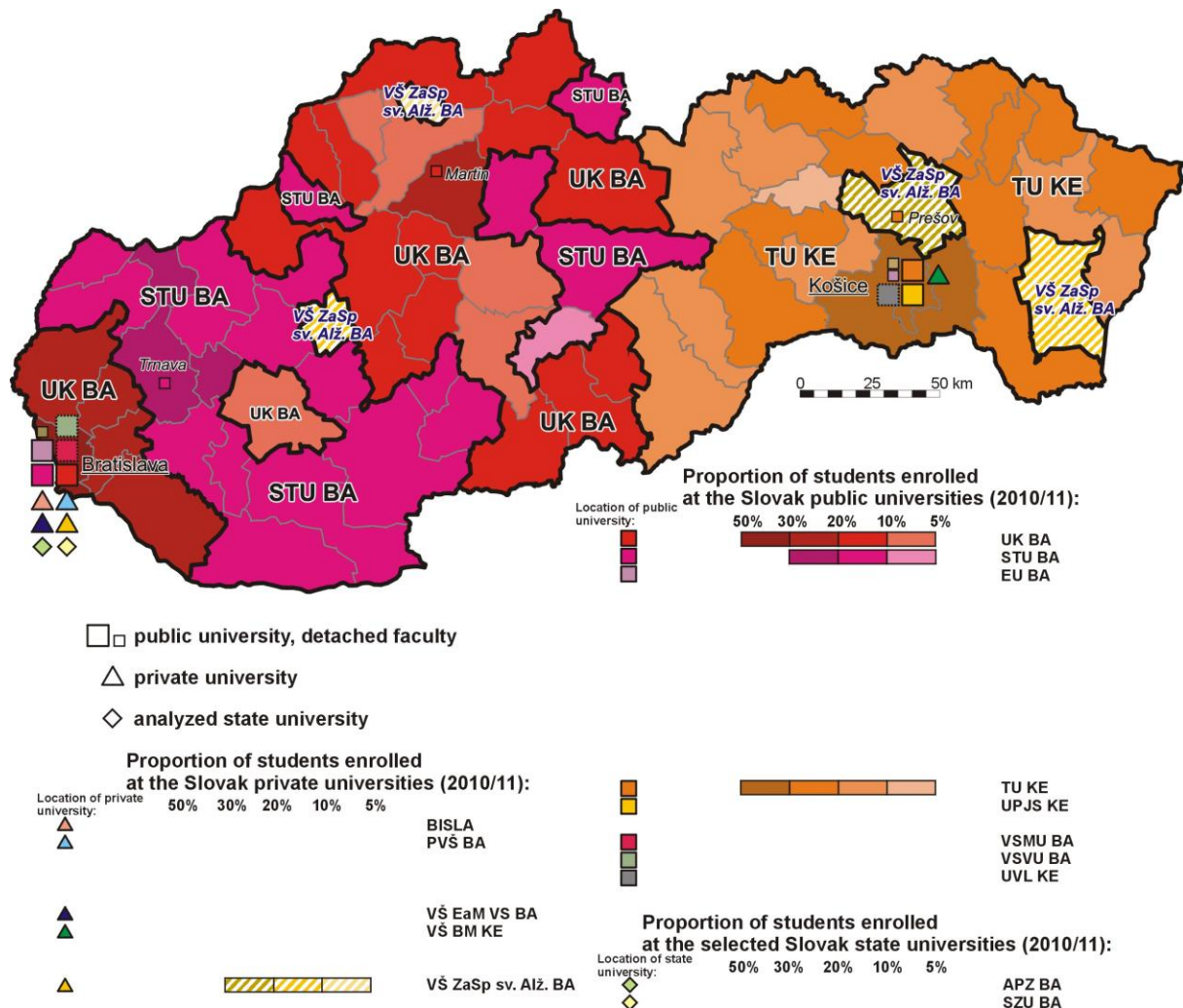


### 2.3 Preferences of universities located in metropolises

The two cities of Bratislava, with a population of 431,000, and Košice with 233,900 are the only centres of university education in the category of metropolises. Although there are several universities of different nature and purpose in both cities, Bratislava is regarded as the centre of university education at the national level. It has the most varied composition of schools of all other towns in Slovakia, containing five public, four private and two state universities. In Košice there are three public and one private high school. Some universities, also including those in Bratislava, have detached branches in the form of separate faculties.

Preferences for universities in Bratislava and Košice are documented in Figure 5. Private schools are specially notable here, compared to the other city categories. A dominant share of private university education occurs only in the Bratislavan university centre of VŠ ZaSp sv. Alž. BA. It should be noted that even when the students are registered in Bratislava, they are mainly students of detached workplaces of those regions, which resulted in the dominance of Bratislava in the far eastern part of the Republic, rather than in regions adjacent to the second centre of Košice. Study programs offered by this university, which are registered as mandatory education for some professions, play a significant role in the preferences of this private school.

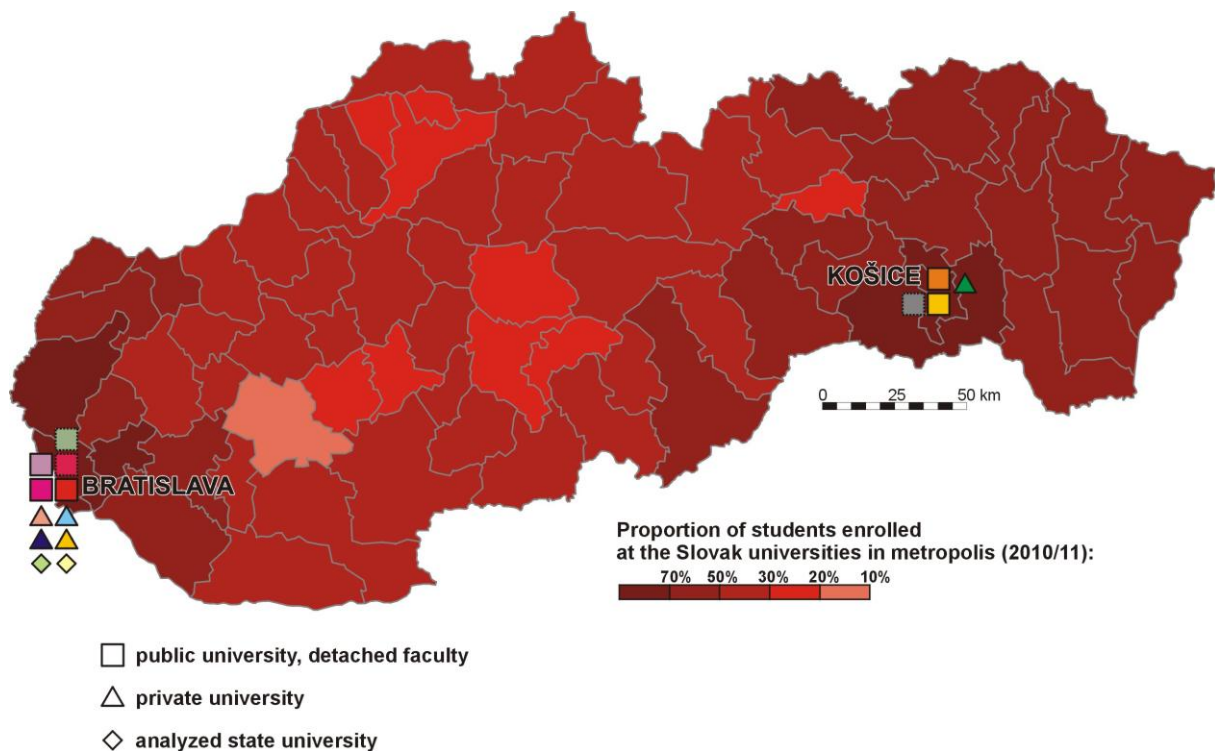
Figure 5: Preferences of individual universities in Slovakia located in metropolises.



Bratislava heads the total number of dominant regions with 51 dominant districts at 70.8 % of all universities in Košice, only TU KE dominated, so that the remaining Košice universities can be considered regional type schools. Meanwhile, it was also noted that the analysis of schools with low numbers of students results in significant distortion. An example is the University of Veterinary Medicine in Košice (UVM KE), which despite its national stature as the only veterinary school in Slovakia, does not dominate any region according to student numbers. Only the following three universities from Bratislava were dominant; the private VŠ ZaSp sv. Alž. BA and the two public universities of The Comenius University (UK BA) and the Slovak Technical University (STU BA). The dominance of public schools with mosaic structure is typical for western and central Slovakia, with a significant impact on spatial arrangement attributed to the detached offices of universities in Trnava and Martin. In general, the impact of UK BA and STU BA is proportionately equal with 23:22 dominant regions. Their similar balance and the strong competition from the universities in other categories of cities indicate the proportion of students. This did not exceed 50 % in even one case.

The overall preference of all universities in Slovakia in the category of metropolises shows significant spatial dominance in almost the entire territory of Slovakia (Figure 6). More than 70 % share of the students is typical for all university centres, and this is similar to results for medium-sized and small cities. On the other hand, preferences for these schools are predominantly up to 50 % with a minimum of 30 % for the rest of the country. Exceptions are selected university education centres in medium-sized cities which are recognized as regional capitals. These are the cities of Nitra, Banská Bystrica and Žilina. In this case we can assume a greater preference of hierarchically smaller university towns, as is clearly evident in these medium-size cities.

**Figure 6: Preferences of all universities in Slovakia located in metropolises.**

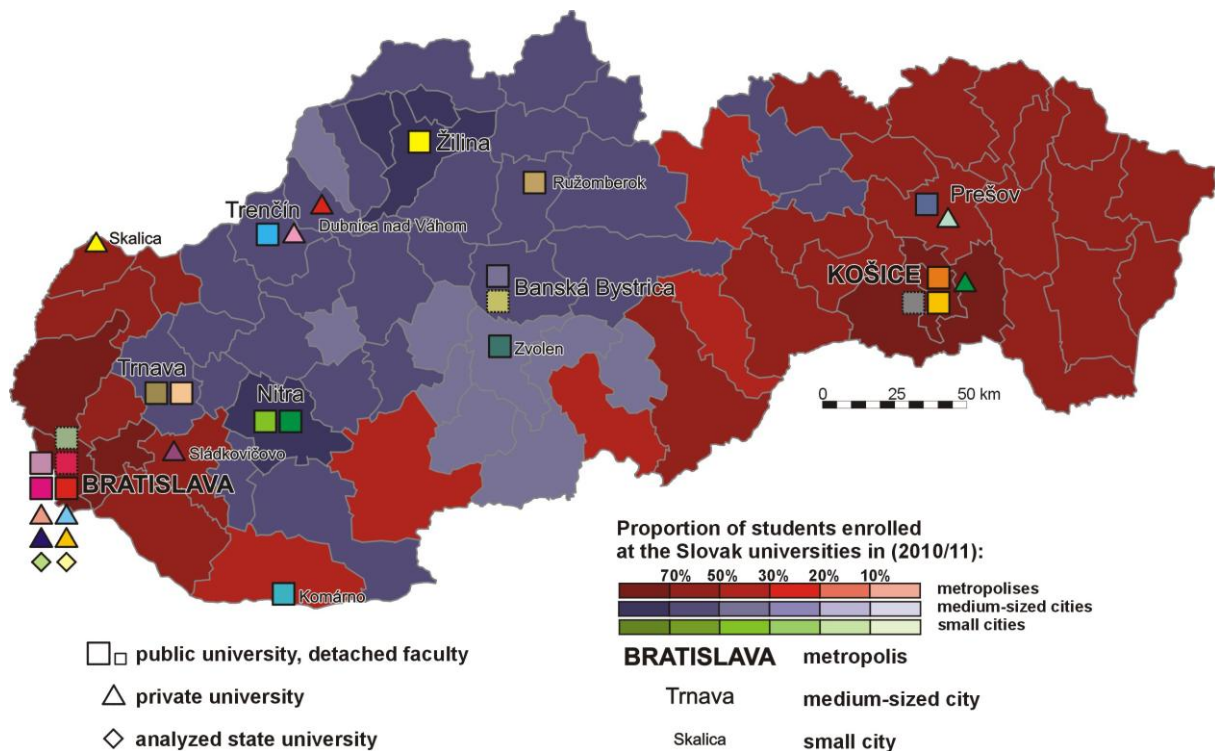


### 3 Conclusions

Although transformational trends in education have been most dynamic in the post-transition period, the spatial aspect of education in Slovak geography has not been addressed (Gurňák et al. 2011). This is one of the reasons why comparison of the results of this analysis in time and space is extremely difficult, and conclusions must be based on the current situation which can be distorted in some cases (due to insufficient data reported by some schools).

Verification of the hypothesis tested herein has shown that there is a direct correlation between the size of the city as the centre of universities and the size of the attendance region, which can be based on a synthetic view of the preferences of all universities in all categories of cities (Fig. 7). Although this hypothesis was confirmed, there still existed special cases in locations where there were universities with unique functions, and also in regions with a much higher variability of university types and sizes regardless of, the size of the cities involved.

**Figure 7: Preferences of all universities in Slovakia located in cities from each category.**



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# **Kleinstädte unter dem Druck geplanter Gebietsreformen (am Beispiel der Steiermark)**

**Walter Zsilincsar**

## **Abstract**

Small communities and towns in Austria suffer increasingly from the present monetary crisis in and outside the Euro-zone. This puts local, regional, and national governments under pressure demanding from them proposals and strategies for the solution of the various fiscal and administrative problems. The paper discusses possible ways out of the crisis by the example of the Austrian province of Styria. Among them a special attention is directed to the fusion of communities and/or inter-communal cooperation as a means to reduce financial loads and make administration more efficient and cost-saving. The reaction of the politicians and population affected is rather mixed and frequently depends among other factors (tradition, history, cultural identity, economic potentials, etc.) largely on local political party attitudes. A comprehensive analysis of relevant print-media articles, personal interviews with mayors and contributions in the internet rounds up the article.

**Key Words:** Kleinstadt, Gebietsreform, Gemeindefusion, Verwaltungsvereinfachung, Einsparungspotenzial, Regionalaspekt

## **Einleitung**

Seit Jahren wird in Österreich und insbesondere in den Bundesländern um eine Gebietsreform und Verwaltungsvereinfachung gerungen, bisher ohne sichtbaren Erfolg. Erst seit der Weltfinanzkrise 2008 und den nachfolgenden Turbulenzen auf den nationalen und internationalen Finanzmärkten, die sich schmerzlich auf die Wirtschaft, den Arbeitsmarkt und das Sozialsystem – von der jeweils betroffenen Bevölkerung auch in deren Rolle als Stimmvolk ganz abgesehen – niederschlug, scheint die Politik wachgerüttelt worden zu sein. Eine zuvor als unerreichbares Wunschdenken betrachtete Sach- und Konsenspolitik hat inzwischen in der Steiermark Platz gegriffen und ist es wert, etwas genauer unter die Lupe genommen zu werden.

Im Folgenden soll überwiegend anhand von Zeitungsberichten, Internet und Interviews das Problem von Gebietsreformen und der Verwaltungsvereinfachung am Beispiel des Bundeslandes Steiermark dargelegt werden. Dadurch möchte der Vf. den angesprochenen Themenkreis von einer reinen wissenschaftlichen Analyse abheben und stattdessen den Aspekt der tagespolitischen Diskussion in den Medien, unter den betroffenen Landes- und Kommunalpolitikern sowie in der politisch engagierten Bevölkerung in den Vordergrund rücken.

Parteiliches Hick-Hack, Profilierungssucht einzelner Landes- und Kommunalpolitiker, das bis zum Ende des heurigen Jahrhunderts und teilweise noch heute beobachtbare sog. „Ortskaiserum“ langdienender Bürgermeister, Lobbyismus, politische Einflussnahme von Kammern, Verbänden und Vereinen bis hin zu korruptionsverdächtigen Vorgängen verschiedenster Art waren und sind zum Teil heute noch unliebsame Begleitmusik in der Bundes-, Landes- und Kommunalpolitik Österreichs.

Auch wenn davon ausgegangen werden kann, dass Gemeinde- und Verwaltungsreformen keinen zwingenden Bezug zur Gemeindegröße aufweisen, so zielen sie doch eher auf die kleinen und kleinsten Verwaltungseinheiten ab. Unter diesen sind es wieder die kleinen Städte mit meist unter 110.000 Einwohnern (von denen es in der Steiermark 2011 lediglich 80 gibt) welche besonders unter ihren vorgegebenen Strukturen und den daraus resultierenden Problemen der Kommunalhaushaltsgebarung leiden. Welches sind die brennendsten Fragen, die wichtigsten Themenkreise mit denen Kleinstädte heute konfrontiert sind und bei deren Lösung immer häufiger und vehementer als „Rettungsanker“ das Schlagwort der „Gebietsreform“, zumeist als Gemeindefusionen verstanden, ins Treffen geführt wird. Für die einen war sie DAS Heilmittel für den Weg aus der Verwaltungskrise, hoch gelobt, für die anderen ist sie schlichtweg die Ursache für ein zukünftiges Desaster. „Die einen“ sind in der Regel Kleinkommunen, die sich von anderen fiskalische, verwaltungstechnische und raumordnungspolitische Verbesserungen erwarten, „die anderen“ fürchten um Pfründe, Eigenständigkeit, Macht- oder Identitätsverlust, etc., selbst wenn sich diese Ängste oft nach außen hinter dem Schlagwort des Verlustes der Bürgernähe verstecken. Freilich kann letzteres Argument nicht ganz so einfach vom Tisch gewischt werden. Das belegen Eingemeindungen von Stadtrandgemeinden in große Kernstädte, wo zentral gesteuertes urbanes Wachstum alte ländliche (Rest-) Strukturen und damit baulich-architektonische Identitäten oft bis zur Unkenntlichkeit überwuchert.

Das Beispiel Graz liefert hierfür ein beredtes Zeugnis. Durch die Schaffung von Groß-Graz im Jahr 1938 versechsfachte sich die Fläche des Stadtgebietes. Die Einwohnerzahl stieg auf 261.540 (2011). Mit einem Schlag wurden aus ehemaligen selbstständigen Gemeinden samt ihren Katastralgemeinden Grazer Stadtbezirke gemacht. Dennoch hat sich vor allem unter der älteren Bevölkerung dieser ehemaligen Randgemeinden so etwas wie „Heimatgefühl“, „Gemeindeidentität“ erhalten, die bis zur in die Gegenwart tradierten Brauchtumpflege (Maibaum aufstellen, -umschneiden, Sonnwend-, Osterfeuer, Advent- und Bauermärkte, etc.) bzw. einem lebendigen lokalen Vereinswesen (Musik- und Gesangsvereine, Theater- und Jugendgruppen, Sportvereine, etc.) reicht.

Mit dem Wegsterben dieser älteren Gemeindebürger und dem Zuzug ortsfremder, heute vor allem ausländischer, zum Teil aus anderen Kulturkreisen stammender Bevölkerungsschichten lösen sich solche traditionelle Strukturen immer mehr auf. Es kann sich aber unter der Zuzugsbevölkerung ein Identität stiftendes Verhalten entwickeln, wie es Soziologen immer wieder nachweisen.

Die in die Diskussion um Gemeindefusionen oder Eingemeindungen als negative Folgewirkung eingebrachte Warnung vor einer soziokulturellen Aushöhlung in den eingemeindeten Kommunen ist eher emotional denn rational begründet. Sie unterliegt nicht nur von Fall zu Fall erheblichen qualitativen Schwankungen, sondern im weit höheren Maße dem Faktor Zeit, dh. dem Generationenwandel.

Doch nun zurück zum Kernthema: Wie sehen Politiker, Bürger und Medien die gegenwärtige Diskussion um den Weiterbestand der Kleingemeinden, zu denen hierzu Lande auch viele Kleinstädte gehören.

## **Diskussionsauslöser**

Als wichtigster Grund für das gegenwärtige in Österreich leidenschaftlich und medienpräsent diskutierte Thema muss in erster Linie die prekäre Finanzsituation vieler Kommunen angesehen werden.

Allein in der Steiermark mussten im Jahre 2010 200 von insgesamt 542 Gemeinden negativ budgetieren, wobei der finanzielle Druck stetig zunimmt. Dafür zeichnet auch der Umstand verantwortlich, dass dieses Bundesland allein 39% aller österreichischen Kleinstgemeinden beherbergt ([http://www.sommergipfel.at/steiermark/struktur-](http://www.sommergipfel.at/steiermark/struktur-reform/2833978/neue-wege-des-miteinanders.22.9.2011)

[reform/2833978/neue-wege-des-miteinanders.22.9.2011](http://www.sommergipfel.at/steiermark/struktur-reform/2833978/neue-wege-des-miteinanders.22.9.2011)). Folglich soll bis 2013 eine tief greifende Gemeindestrukturreform Platz greifen. Diese wurde schon vor mehreren Jahren mittels des „REGIONEXT“-Projektes vorbereitet. Dabei sollte jede Gemeinde ihre eigenen Stärken und Schwächen definieren. Außerdem erstellt die Landesabteilung für Landes- und Gemeindeentwicklung kleinregionale Entwicklungskonzepte, um die Kleinregionalpotenziale gemeindegrenzüberschreitend zu analysieren.

Obwohl viele Bürgermeister innerlich dem Thema Gemeindefusionierung oder zumindest einer Kooperation aufgeschlossen gegenüberstehen, sind die Positionen in der öffentlichen Diskussion nach wie vor verhärtet. Schuld daran haben in erster Linie parteitaktische, wahlarithmetische, persönlichkeitsorientierte, finanzpolitische, raumordnungsbezogene und bisweilen auch populistische Überlegungen.

Neben der Diskussion um die künftige Finanzierbarkeit öffentlicher Ausgaben in zu kleinen Landgemeinden und Kleinstädten wird von den Befürwortern von Gemeindezusammenlegungen und -kooperationen die erhoffte Verwaltungsvereinfachung thematisiert.

Unter dem Motto „Wir wollen die Steiermark neu ordnen“ (Kleine Zeitung, Graz, 16.9.2011) diskutieren gegenwärtig der Landeshauptmann der Steiermark (SPÖ: Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreich) und sein Stellvertreter (ÖVP: Österreichische Volkspartei) Reformen im Bereich der Landesverwaltung. Ziel ist eine Verbesserung für die betroffenen Bürger und nicht bloß die Zerschlagung bestehender Verwaltungsstrukturen. Das erste konkrete Vorhaben in diese Richtung ist die mit Jänner 2012 in Kraft getretene Fusionierung der beiden obersteirischen Bezirke Judenburg und Knittelfeld zum neuen Bezirk Murtal. Der neue Bezirk wird 74.078 Einwohner auf einer Fläche von 1.676 m<sup>2</sup> beheimaten. Bisher lebten im Bezirk Judenburg 48.218 Einwohner (2001), im Bezirk Knittelfeld 29.525 Einwohner (2001).

In der langen Vorlaufdiskussion formierten sich Gegner und Befürworter mit teils sehr kontroversen Argumenten. Dabei stellte sich insbesondere auch seitens der Ablehnungsfront oftmals heraus, dass viele der vorgebrachten Argumente, wie zB. die Verwaltungsreform führe nur zu einer neuen Zentralisierung, zur Installierung bürgerferner Verwaltungsstrukturen, zu regionalem Identitätsverlust, zu einer weiteren Schwächung der Peripherie, etc. einfach aus dem Mangel an rechtzeitiger, umfassender, vor allem an plausibler Vorinformation der Bürger resultieren.

Die Befürworter sprechen dagegen davon, dass der Verzicht auf Gewohntes, der Gewinn von Neuem, eine Aufwertung des Lebensraumes bedeuten kann.

Es ist vornehmlich der finanzielle Druck, welcher auf den Gemeinden lastet, der die Debatte um Gemeindezusammenlegungen anheizt. Laut Wiener Zeitung vom Dezember 2011 besitzen von den insg. 2.357 Kommunen Österreichs mehr als 1.000 keinen finanziellen Spielraum mehr. Über ein Viertel aller Gemeinden haben unter 1.000 Einwohner, was die Verwaltungseffizienz und eine ausgewogene Haushaltsgebarung deutlich in Frage stellt. Äußerst kritisch wird es allerdings in Kleinstgemeinden mit weniger als 500 Einwohnern. Obwohl es zwischen 1970 und 1980 zB. in den Bundesländern Niederösterreich und

Burgenland zu mehreren Gemeindefusionen kam, blieb die Zahl der Gemeinden hoch ([http://www.wienerzeitung.at/\\_em\\_ems/](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/_em_ems/))

Globals/print.php?em\_ssc=LCwsLA=&em\_ent ... vom 22.9.2011, Tab.1 Zahl der Gemeinden 1965 und 1998 „Wenn 2 Bettler reich heiraten“).

Zwar ist die Lage in den größeren Verwaltungseinheiten mit mehr als 1.000 Einwohnern zu denen die meisten österreichischen Kleinstädte zählen, etwas besser, namhafte Einsparungsmöglichkeiten ortet man beim Österreichischen Städte- und Gemeindebund hingegen nicht. Größere Kommunen können zwar oft qualitativ hochwertige kommunalpolitische Leistungen anbieten, tendieren aber auch zu Ineffizienz und überbordender Bürokratie. Viele Doppelgleisigkeiten gibt es beispielsweise bei der Wasser- und Energieversorgung, bei der Abwasser- und Müllentsorgung, bei den Straßen-, Rettungs- und Feuerwehrdiensten, bei Kindergärten oder in den Verwaltungseinrichtungen selbst (Sekretariate, Amtsdienststellen, etc.).

Da sich in den Wohlstandsjahrzehnten des zu Ende gehenden 20. Jhts. auch um die österreichischen Kleinstädte – insbesondere trifft dies auf die Bezirkshauptorte zu – kleine „Speckgürtel“ in deren Nachbargemeinden herauszubilden beginnen, mehrten sich die Stimmen, die an den Kommunaleinnahmen der boomenden Umgebungsgemeinden mitpartizipieren wollten. Die Argumente für dieses Begehren sind einleuchtend und bekannt: zu geringes Flächenangebot in den Zentralorten, gegenseitiges kommunales Dumping beim Anlocken von Investoren, wobei die Randgemeinden mit großzügigen und kostengünstigen Freiflächen, mit zeitlich begrenzter Minderung bzw. Befreiung von Kommunalabgaben, mit großzügiger Bereitstellung von Infrastruktur (Wegenetz, Wasser, Kanal, Energie, etc.), bei potenziellen Auslandsinvestoren zB. sogar mit Erleichterungen beim Erlangen der österreichischen Staatsbürgerschaft lockten.

Die Kernstädte beklagten dagegen den Kaufkraftabfluss aus ihren Innenstädten, sinkende Einnahmen bei wachsenden Ausgaben, unlauteren Wettbewerb, usw.

Was lag also näher, als die Diskussion um die Gemeindefusionen neu anzufachen. Es sollen daher in der Folge die häufigsten „FÜR“ und „WIDER“ gegenübergestellt werden.

## **Argumente für kommunale Gebietsreformen**

Zu den aktuellen Vorreitern der Gemeindefusion zählt zweifellos das Bundesland Steiermark, wo es nach katastrophalen Wahlschlägen für die beiden Großparteien, den den Landeshauptmann stellenden Sozialdemokraten und der österreichischen Volkspartei zu einer neuen, sogenannten „Reformpartnerschaft“ gekommen ist.

Bis zum Wahljahr 2015 möchte das Land deutlich weniger Gemeinden zählen, wenn nötig mit Druck von oben. Erst unlängst musste das Land für die obersteirische Kleinstadt Fohnsdorf wegen deren Zahlungsunfähigkeit den Bürgermeister seines Amtes entheben und vorübergehend einen Regierungskommissär einsetzen. Bei der notwendig gewordenen Neuwahl des Gemeinderates im September 2011 konnte der nun mit einer Namensliste kandidierende Ex-Bürgermeister trotz deutlicher Stimmeneinbußen neuerlich die absolute Mehrheit erzielen.

Die Rechtsgrundlage für eine freiwillige Gemeindefusion ist ein positiver Gemeinderatsbeschluss und die bescheidweise Zustimmung der Landesregierung. Das Land

kann aber auch bei Vorliegen eines öffentlichen Interesses von sich aus per Gesetz Gemeinden zusammenlegen (<http://www.kleinezeitung.at/steiermark/graz/graz28368>)

62/fragen-buerger-wohin-wollen ... vom 22.9.2011). In jedem Fall sollen jedoch die betroffenen Bürger nach ihrer Meinung befragt werden. Im Streitfall können sich gegen ihren Willen fusionierte Gemeinden an den Verfassungsgerichtshof wenden.

In der Praxis geht eine freiwillige Gebietsreform rasch über die Bühne. Sie würde kaum mehr als 8 Wochen dauern, sofern die erforderlichen Gemeinderatsbeschlüsse und Genehmigungen durch das Land zügig erfolgen.

C. Gigler (2011) unterstreicht in einem Kommentar in der Kleinen Zeitung (<http://sommertag.at/steiermark/strukturreform/2833978/neue-wege-des-miteinander> ... vom 22.9.2011 „Der neue Weg des Miteinanders“) die Notwendigkeit, dass Gemeinden ihre Bedürfnisse und Möglichkeiten hinterfragen.

„Viele Bürgermeister sind innerlich bereit für einen großen Schritt“ glaubt C. Gigler, weil viele Gemeinden ihre hohen Infrastrukturausgaben nicht mehr alleine berappen können, weil die personellen Grundlagen den vielen neuen, vor allem juristischen Herausforderungen nicht länger gerecht werden, weil Land und Bund den Gemeinden zusätzliche Auf- und Ausgaben übertragen (Pflege, Kindergarten, Asylwesen, ...) und weil nicht zuletzt im Zuge des „Stabilitätspaktes“ zwischen Bund, Ländern und Gemeinden von letzteren einschneidende Spar- bzw. Budgetplanungen eingefordert werden.

Gerade der auf allen politischen Ebenen der EU und nicht nur in der Eurozone spürbare und unausweichliche Zwang zum Sparen und zu tiefgreifenden Reformen ist es, der in vielen kleinen Städten die Schutzdämme vor einer Infragestellung kommunaler Integrität, territorialer Unverletzlichkeit und tradierter Identität aufzuweichen, ja gänzlich in Frage zu stellen beginnt.

Die steirische Landespolitik bekräftigt in diesem Zusammenhang unisono ihre Bürgernähe. Sie reagiert da wohl auf eine jüngste Exklusiv-Umfrage in der Kleinen Zeitung Graz, 19.9.2011 nach der sich 39% der Steirer gegen Gemeindezusammenlegungen aussprachen. Andererseits macht eine Aussage des Steiermärkischen Landtagspräsidenten: „Keiner macht mir weis, dass 100 Gemeinden weniger höhere Kosten bedeuten als 100 Gemeinden mehr“ klar, in welche Richtung die Landespolitik denkt. Die Spitzenpolitiker des Landes präzisierten auch, dass sie mit ihrem Reformvorhaben scheitern würden, „wenn es im Jahr 2015 noch ein Loch im Landesbudget gibt“ (Kleine Zeitung, Graz, 19.9.2011).

Dazu passt ein Kommentar von J. Kübeck in der Kleinen Zeitung, Graz, vom 19.9.2011 („Die Paarläufer“), in dem der Autor festhält, dass der Landeshauptmann und sein Stellvertreter bis vor einem Jahr die Chefs von Parteien waren, welche die jeweils andere als erbitterten Gegner verstanden und entsprechend behandelten. Die neue Kooperation funktioniert, doch werden die zu überwindenden Hürden immer größer, vor allem dort, wo es um die Zukunft der kleinen und kleinsten Gemeinden bzw. Städte geht. Es zeigt sich jedoch, dass die größten Widerstände gegen Reformen nie im rationalen, sondern im emotionalen Bereich aufgebaut werden.

Was aber in Österreich gerade heftig diskutiert wird, ist etwa in Frankreich, Slowenien oder in Deutschland seit langem Praxis. So agiert die Stadt Straßburg, etwas größer als die steirische Landeshauptstadt Graz (300.000 Ew.) seit 1966 in einem Verbund mit 28 Gemeinden. Die

Vorteile dieses kommunalen Verbundes für alle Beteiligten liegen auf der Hand: sie wirken sich durchwegs positiv auf die städtische Infrastruktur, auf den ÖPNV, auf Wohnungsbau, Wirtschaftsleistung, Stadtentwicklung und Flächenwidmung- bzw. Zonierungsplanung aus. Die Kernstadt punktet insbesondere auf den Gebieten Kultur, Bildung, Soziales oder Sport (H. Andrej, „Vorteile“ Kleine Zeitung, Graz, 20.9.2011).

Effizienzgewinne, bessere Personalausstattung und Leistungsfähigkeit werden auch in Deutschland am Beispiel von Rheinland-Pfalz als Positiva von Gemeinde-zusammenlegungen hervorgehoben. Die Möglichkeiten dadurch die kritische Lage vieler Klein- und Kleinststädte zu verbessern, dürfen nicht übersehen werden. Direkte Bürgerbeteiligung, zeitliche Flexibilität und Anreizprämien stehen lt. dem deutschen Evaluierungsexperten A. Piesker im Mittelpunkt der Zusammenlegungsvorhaben (Kleine Zeitung, Graz, 20.10.2011, „Deutschland als Vorbild“).

Die Evaluierung jüngster Gemeindefusionierungen in Rheinland-Pfalz deckte aber auch einige von deren Schwächen auf, wie den Verlust der Bürgernähe, wirtschaftliche Probleme oder die Schwächung der Ehrenamtlichkeit bzw. Zunahme der Anonymität als Folge abrupt steigender Einwohnerzahlen und Flächenwachstums.

Dies leitet zu einer komprimierten Betrachtung möglicher negativer Auswirkungen von Gebietsreformen über und zwar wie diese von Politikern, Bürgern oder Journalisten gesehen werden.

### **Argumente gegen kommunale Gebietsreformen**

Wenn es also durchaus positive Stimmen zu einer Stärkung vor allem finanz- und strukturschwacher Kleinstädte und –gemeinden durch Gebietsreformen gibt, überwiegen - zumindest nach außen - Vorbehalte oder Ablehnung und zwar nicht nur bei den betroffenen Kommunalpolitikern, sondern auch bei den Bürgern. In der Leserbriefrubrik der Kleinen Zeitung, Graz, 25.11.2011 heißt es unter dem Titel „Jeder bleibt lieber in seinem Dorf“, dass die geplanten Gemeindefusionen auf Skepsis stoßen. Logischerweise ist ein Bürgermeister einer kleinen Gemeinde im Hintertreffen gegenüber dem, der sie schluckt. Mit wenigen Ausnahmen, so wird befürchtet, wird folglich ein betroffener Bürgermeister „zwecks Befriedigung seiner persönlichen Eitelkeit“ unter dem Vorwand, die Bevölkerung sei dagegen, immer gegen den Zusammenschluss seiner Gemeinde stimmen. Dies trifft vor allem auf die mittlerweile um viele Bezirksstädte herum entstandenen Speckgürtelgemeinden zu (vgl. W. Zsilincsar, 2005).

Das Thema Gemeindefusion ist zweifellos sehr emotional. Auch wenn sich für den einzelnen Bürger nach außen nicht viel ändert, bleibt die Bindung an die Heimatgemeinde gerade in Kleinstädten in der Regel groß und es besteht die Befürchtung, sie könnte mit dem Verlust der Gemeindeidentität verloren gehen. Zu dem geht die Angst um, dass die Kleingemeinden von denen doch viele, wenn schon nicht positiv, so zumindest doch ausgeglichen bilanzieren, vor allem deswegen geschluckt werden sollen, um zur Sanierung der Großen beizutragen. Die Folge wäre, dass in den Randgemeinden nur mehr das Nötigste getan wird, argumentieren besorgte Bürger. Darüber hinaus wird die propagierte Ersparnis durch Wegfall von Verwaltungsposten in eingemeindeten Kommunen als marginal eingestuft. „Viele Einsparungsmöglichkeiten gibt es nur am Papier, die werden nicht stattfinden“ äußert sich dazu der Bürgermeister der 4.413-Seelen-Gemeinde Hart bei Graz (Kleine Zeitung, Graz, 20.9.2011). Sorgen bereitet einem Teil der Bevölkerung auch die Frage, wer für sie dann der Ansprechpartner in der nicht mehr eigenständigen Altgemeinde ist.

Die durch die Fusionsdebatte ausgelöste Nervosität ist nicht nur bei vielen Bürgern, sondern auch bei den Kommunalpolitikern zu spüren. Als Hauptursache dafür wird der Informationsmangel seitens des Landes Steiermark angesehen. Dieses hat zwar die Kriterien für Gemeindefusionen definiert, aber noch nicht festgelegt, wo und wie konkret sie stattfinden sollen.

Folgende Kriterien des Landes gelten für mögliche Fusionierungen:

- ein in sich geschlossenes Siedlungsgebiet
- ein leistungsfähiges Kommunalwesen
- die Verbesserung der Gemeindestruktur
- die Zugehörigkeit von Ortsteilen zur Gemeinde
- die Entfernung der Ortsteile zum Gemeindezentrum

(Kleine Zeitung, Graz, 20.9.2011 „Ortschefs zittern vor Hitzendorf“).

Noch sind die ob. zit. Zielvorgaben zu schwammig formuliert, lassen zu viele Fragen offen, sodass dzt. niemand weiß, was bzw. wie es wirklich kommt. Unter der Hand wird daher viel spekuliert. Für die einen sind Zusammenlegungen noch viel zu früh, für andere sind sie praktisch schon Realität. Eine erste Gemeindefusion wurde jüngst zwischen der südsteirischen Bezirkshauptstadt Leibnitz (2011: 7.796 Einwohner) und ihrer Nachbargemeinde Kaindorf a. d. Sulm (2011: 2.548 Einwohner) vereinbart (vgl. auch W. Zsilincsar, 2006). Bis 2014 soll eine Fusion ausgearbeitet und die Großgemeinde als neues Zentrum zwischen Graz und Maribor etabliert werden. Die Leibnitzer Nachbargemeinden Wagner und Gralla sind indes skeptisch. Sie befürchten Kaufkraft- und Funktionsverluste. Vor allem Gralla ortet Nachteile für sein regionales Einkaufszentrum (Kleine Zeitung, Graz, 29.11.2011 „Gemeindereform kommt in Fahrt“). Konkrete Pläne gibt es auch bei einigen Gemeinden in den Bezirken Graz-Umgebung, Murau, Voitsberg oder Hartberg.

Die geplanten Gebietsreformen in der Steiermark bleiben nicht nur kommunal - sondern in erster Linie auch parteipolitischer Zankapfel. So startete etwa die Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) nach einer Bürgermeisterkonferenz Ende September 2011 in Leoben eine Kampagne gegen Zwangszusammenlegungen (Kleine Zeitung, Graz, 27.9.2011, „Gemeindereform bleibt ein Zankapfel“). Anders als der Speckgürtel um Graz leiden obersteirische Stadtgemeinden – die meisten haben unter 10.000 Einwohner – unter einem massiven Bevölkerungsschwund in ihren Randgemeinden. Die Stadt Mariazell beispielsweise verlor zwischen 1991 und 2001 ca. 11% ihrer Bewohner. Eisenerz schrumpfte gar zwischen 1951 (12.948 Einwohner) und 2011 (5.948 Einwohner) um 8.000 Bewohner oder minus 62%.

Die Landespolitik beruhigt indes. „Es wird kein Drüberfahren geben“, wird der Landeshauptmann in der Kleinen Zeitung (Graz, 16.10.2011, „Wir wollen die Steiermark neu ordnen“) zitiert. Für seinen Stellvertreter ist im Zusammenhang mit kommunalen Gebietsreformen klar „Echte Reformen tun weh“ (Kleine Zeitung, Graz, w.o.). Es sei offenkundig, dass sich der Bürgermeister einer Kleingemeinde nicht selbst abschaffen wolle, dennoch müsse auch für Gemeindefusionen gelten, dass Priorität haben sollte, was der Bevölkerung am besten diene. An dieser Politikeraussage hegt der Vf. allerdings leichte Zweifel. Was für regionale Zusammenschlüsse gelte, führt der Landeshauptmannstellvertreter

aus, nämlich „die Heimat in der Region zu halten, muss auch auf kommunaler Ebene gelten“ (s.o.).

Viele steirische Bürgermeister fürchten einen neuerlichen kommunalen Kahlschlag wie in den 1970er Jahren, als die Zahl der Gemeinden von 1.004 auf 563 reduziert wurde (Kleine Zeitung, Graz, 23.9.2011, „Es wird kein Drüberfahren geben“).

Der konkrete Zeitplan für die Gemeindestrukturreform sieht vor, dass die Gemeinden bis 31.1.2012 selbst Vorschläge einbringen können, während parallel dazu das Land auf Beamtenebene ein eigenes Konzept erarbeitet. Darauf folgt von Anfang Februar bis Ende September 2012 eine Verhandlungsphase. Dort sollen von regionalen Verhandlungsteams die einzelnen Vorschläge diskutiert und in Einklang gebracht werden. Erst dann sollen jene Entscheidungen getroffen werden, die „die Gemeinden für die nächsten 70 Jahre fit machen“ (Kleine Zeitung, Graz, 23.9.2011, s.o.).

Derzeit herrsche allerdings ein Klima des Misstrauens in der Gemeindereform-debatte, konstatiert J. Kübeck in einem Hintergrundartikel der Kleinen Zeitung vom 24.9.2011 mit dem Titel „Auch die Bürgermeister müssen Reife zeigen“. Fast jede 2. steirische Gemeinde leidet unter massiven Budgetproblemen, welche zwei Drittel der Bedarfszuweisungen verschlingen. Dadurch bleibt zuwenig Geld für Wirtschafts- und Sozialimpulse.

Es sind immer wieder die Medien, die uns daran erinnern, dass Politik auch in der Demokratie letztlich ein Geschäft ist. So schreibt J. Kübeck (Kleine Zeitung, Graz, 28.10.2011) unter der Überschrift „Letztes Geschenk des Landes an Bürgermeister“ dass der Verdacht aufkommt, die rot-schwarze Sanierungspartnerschaft, die bei der Gemeindereform den Bürgermeistern viel zumutet, mache den (Noch-) Bürgermeistern quasi ein letztes Geschenk, wenn sie zB. REGIONEXT-Verbänden ermöglicht, für bestimmte Aufgaben Firmen zu gründen. Damit wird die Haftung der Gemeindefunktionäre in diesen GmbHs beschränkt. Weiters wird die bei Regionalplanern sehr umstrittene „Auffüllung“ von unbebautem Land zwischen bebauten Grundstücken erleichtert. Die Bürgermeister wollen diesen ihren Wunsch freilich nicht als weitere Zersiedelung, sondern als Verdichtung sehen.

Durch diese und weitere Aufweichungen im Steiermärkischen Raumordnungsgesetz, so wird von Kritikern vermutet, will sich das Land die Zustimmung zu seiner Gebiets- und Verwaltungsreform sichern.

## **Bürgermeistermeinungen zu Gemeindefusionen**

Unter dem Motto „Ihre Meinung zählt“ hat der Österreichische Gemeindebund Bürgermeister zu einer Stellungnahme zum Thema Gemeindefusionen gebeten (<https://www.kommunalnet.at/default.aspx?menuonr=0&defailonr=59004> „Gemeinde-Fusion: Was sagen Bürgermeister/Innen dazu?“, 22.9.2011). Die Ergebnisse dieser Umfrage werden im Anschluss auszugsweise und kommentarlos als Abschluss dieses Beitrages wiedergegeben.



- Meggenhofen** "Das vernünftige Miteinander zwischen großen Betrieben (Städte) und mittleren bis kleinen Betrieben (Gemeinden) stärkt die Struktur und sichert den Lebensraum der Menschen in Österreich. Einseitige Verlagerungen führen zu Schieflage und ziehen nicht kalkulierbare Veränderungen mit sich. Nahversorgung erfreut sich einer neuen Förderkultur auch durch die Wirtschaft. Gemeinde ist Nahversorgung, erst durch den Verlust wird dies sichtbar!"
- LAbg. Bgm. Maximilian Hiegelsberger**
- Übelbach** "Die Mitgleidsgemeinden des Wirtschaftsverbandes Region Übelbachtal in der Steiermark (vier Gemeinden) haben zusammen ca. 8.400 EinwohnerInnen. Insgesamt haben diese vier Gemeinden 15 InnendienstmitarbeiterInnen. Nachbargemeinden und andere steirische Gemeinden mit bis zu 2.000 EinwohnerInnen weniger haben bis zu 14 MitarbeiterInnen mehr! Gemeindezusammenlegungen helfen nicht unweigerlich Kosten ? können aber von Fall zu Fall durchaus Sinn machen."
- Bgm. Markus Windisch**
- Erl** "Wenn es Verwaltungseinheiten gibt, die sich dieser Problematik wirklich annehmen, dann sind es die Gemeinden. Eine Zusammenlegung von Gemeinde würde genau diese lokalen Bemühungen konterkarieren. Je größer eine Verwaltungseinheit wird, umso mehr wichtige Details für die Lebensqualität der Bürger bleiben auf der Strecke."
- Bgm. Georg Aicher-Hechenberger**
- Pötting** "Gerade kleine Einheiten sind sehr effektiv und effizient und gerade durch die Überschaubarkeit ist der Spargedanke dort besonders gut ausgeprägt. Zusammenlegung ist somit der völlig falsche Weg! Zusammenarbeit dagegen muss auch für uns Bürgermeister in den nächsten Jahren noch mehr als bisher ein Thema werden mit dem wir uns beschäftigen und wo wir die vielen guten Ideen, die es dazu gibt, auch umsetzen."
- Bgm. Peter Oberlehner**

Lech am  
Arlberg

Bgm. Ludwig  
Muxel

"Die Gemeinde Lech ist bereits seit einigen Jahren mit einigen Gemeinden des Kloostertales und mit Warth in einer Baurechtsverwaltung. Diese Zusammenarbeit arbeitet zur Zufriedenheit aller Gemeinden. Es ermöglicht den beteiligten Gemeinden eine professionelle Erledigung und Bearbeitung der Bauagenden und gewährleistet die Selbstständigkeit jeder einzelnen Gemeinde. Ansprechpartner ist der jeweilige Bürgermeister bzw. Gemeinde und damit bürgernah, bearbeitet werden die Bauakten vom Bauamt und dem Gemeindejuristen in der Gemeinde Lech. Wir brauchen nicht mehr Gemeindezusammenlegungen sondern mehr Zusammenarbeit über die Kirchtürme hinweg."

Strasshof an  
der Nordbahn

Bgm. Ludwig  
Deltl

"Grundsätzlich halte ich überhaupt nichts von Gemeindezusammenlegungen. Betrachtet man aber den Bereich der kommunalen Zusammenarbeit, dann macht hier natürlich eine Art der Gemeindezusammenarbeit schon Sinn, vor allem wenn man die finanzielle Situation der Gemeinden kennt. Es wird in Zukunft durchaus nötig sein, um die Aufgaben einer Gemeinde zu bewältigen, gemeindeübergreifende Zusammenarbeit zu fördern, beispielsweise im Bereich Bauhof und Feuerwehr. Diese Zusammenarbeit ist ja auch schon jetzt in vielen Bereichen wie Wasserversorgung, Kanal und Müll in Form von Gemeindeverbänden gegeben und funktioniert bestens und vor allem finanziell leistbar."

Seekirchen  
a.W.

Bgm. Monika  
Schwaiger

"Man sollte unterscheiden zwischen Zusammenlegung und Kooperation von Gemeinden. Während die Zusammenlegung zweier Gemeinden zu Identifikationsverlust der BürgerInnen führen kann, ist die Kooperation zwischen Gemeinden ? wie durch bei den bewährten Regionalverbänden ? eine Chance. Durch Bündelung der Kräfte können Projekte oft leichter realisiert werden als von einer Gemeinde alleine."

Abschließend mögen einige ausgewählte Titel von Medienbeiträgen zum Thema „Gebietsreform“ bzw. „Gemeindefusion“ die Aktualität und Brisanz der angeschnittenen Problematik unterstreichen.

16 | STEIERMARK-THEMA

# „Wir wollen die Steiermark neu ordnen“

Reformen seien ein schmerzhafter Prozess, so Voves und Schützenhöfer.

Kleine Zeitung 26.2011 POLITIK | 5

# Gemeinden sollen leichter kooperieren

Initiative des Bundesrates für neues Gesetz.

KLEINE ZEITUNG  
DONNERSTAG, 13. OKTOBER 2011

## „Gemeinden

Der politische Reformkurs mit den geplanten Zusammenlegungen von Gemeinden heizt die Stimmung auf dem Land an. Die Kommunalvertreter sehen sich unter Druck.

*„Zusammenlegungen sind kein Allheilmittel. Wenn wir aber überleben wollen, führt kein Weg daran vorbei.“*

Bernd Rosenberger

KLEINE ZEITUNG  
DONNERSTAG, 13. OKTOBER 2011

ST

## sind finanziell hilflos“

Leichter kooperieren

KLEINE ZEITUNG  
DONNERSTAG, 29. SEPTEMBER 2011

## 44 Millionen aus Gemeindereform

Voves nennt Sparpotenzial. Heute letzte Konferenz.

**GRAZ.** Zum dritten und vorerst letzten Mal trommelt die Landes Spitze die Bürgermeister zusammen: In der Hügellandhalle in St. Margarethen/Raab will man heute Abend die süd- und oststeirischen Ortschefs auf die Gemeindereform einschwören. Laut Landeshauptmann Franz Voves (SP) könnte eine Reform etwa fünf Prozent im Verwaltungs- und Betriebsbereich einsparen: Bei Gesamtausgaben von 883 Millionen Euro (Stand 2009) sind das umgerechnet 44 Millionen.

Zur Praxis: Die Regierung gab letzte Woche 4,3 Millionen an Bedarfszuweisungen für 63 Gemeinden in 15 Bezirken frei. Bei 43 von 63 Gemeinden (68 Prozent) dienen diese Mittel einzig dazu, um Löcher zu stopfen.

22.09.2011 15:25 | Meine Presse | Merkliste 0

Politik Wirtschaft **Panorama** Kultur Tech Sport Leben Bildung Wissenschaft Gesundheit Recht Spectrum Meinung

### Verwaltungsreform: Industrie fordert Gemeindefusionen

04.02.2010 | 18:54 | GEORGIA HEIBHART, CLAUDIA LASLEP UND FLAVIS HOTI FR (Die Presse)

Die 2357 Gemeinden Österreichs werden von der Politik als Hort der lokalen Verwurzelung verteidigt. Die Industriellenvereinigung dagegen sieht enormes Einsparungspotenzial und macht Druck in Sachen Verwaltungsreform.



Zuletzt aktualisiert: 17.09.2011 um 18:34 Uhr [\(Kommentare\)](#)

## Modelle gegen das Kirchturmdenken

Nächste Woche will die Landesregierung die künftige Struktur der steirischen Gemeinden präsentieren. Wie könnten die Auswirkungen im Bezirk Hartberg aussehen?

Zuletzt aktualisiert: 17.09.2011 um 23:58 Uhr [\(1 Kommentar\)](#)

## Ja zur Kooperation, Nein zur Fusion

Streifzug durch die Gemeinden im Bezirk Liezen: Wo liegen Fusionen auf der Hand, wer arbeitet bereits zusammen, was sind die größten Stolpersteine?

## **Ausblick und Resumee**

Das Land Steiermark hat mittlerweile im Internet die wesentlichen Kriterien für die beabsichtigten Gemeindefusionen veröffentlicht. Diese bergen lt. Th. Rossacher (Kleine Zeitung, Graz, 28.11.2011 „Gemeindefusionen: Nun gibt es Karten“) erheblichen Zündstoff.

Obgleich lt. dem Land vor 2013 keine Entscheidung über Gemeindefusionen fallen soll (2013 finden Landtagswahlen statt) geben die einschlägigen thematischen Karten recht klare Zielvorgaben. Von den geplanten Gebietsreformen sind neben dem Zentralraum Graz vor allem regionale Zentren – in der Regel Kleinstädte – betroffen. Dabei wird ein spezielles Augenmerk auf die natürlichen Grenzen und die Gemeindebudgets (Schuldenstand) gelegt. Daneben sind schmerzliche Eingriffe im Bildungs- und Gesundheitswesen angekündigt. So sollen besonders im Primarschulwesen schlecht frequentierte Standorte aufgelassen, unrentable Spitalsabteilungen in den politischen Bezirken zusammengelegt und weitere Bezirke bzw. Gemeinden fusioniert werden.

Eine zusätzliche Entlastung der Budgets sollen straffere Verwaltungsstrukturen bringen, zB. durch Personalreduktion oder interkommunale Kooperation etwa auf dem Dienstleistungssektor (Schneeräumung, Straßendienste, Wasserversorgung, Feuerwehr, Sport- und Freizeiteinrichtungen, etc.). Hier wird es wohl noch etliche Hürden zu überwinden geben.

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