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## QUESTIONS ON HIERARCHICAL CHANGE IN URBAN SYSTEMS IN EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE

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How would be the hierarchy of urban systems changed by the post communist systems? The paper deals with this question of the main importance for the future of the territorial restructuring in ECE, in two aspects:

First, the current change is prospected at the national level of each urban system: there is no important change expected due to constraints as demographic decrease and economic crisis; transportation improvement and administrative change are delayed. Significant changes could appear only on peripheral towns, underlying the factor of "geographical situation".

Second, the future of urban hierarchy is observed facing the geopolitical change and upgrowing of politically independent states. The importance of capital cities is reinforced but on a globally lower hierarchical level; even if the selection between the capital cities, as shown by international congresses location, advantages Budapest, no evident challenger occurs among the "happy few" cities competing for the international metropolitan status.

To conclude, the paradigm of convergence between western and eastern urban systems does not seem convenient.

**Key words:** Urban System, Capital City, Hierarchical System, State, National System, Internationalisation Process

When Eastern Europe underwent major changes in 1989, it was clearly hoped that the countries concerned would develop in line with Western standards. Indeed, no Eastern European country had reached the very high level of urbanisation common to most Western European countries and even the largest cities in the region did not exceed a population of 2.5 million. Out of a total 120 million inhabitants (in the 8 countries situated between the European Community and the former USSR), less than 14 million people lived in cities with a population of 1 million or more - the type of "metropolis" usually considered as a node in contemporary social systems<sup>1</sup>. How were these countries to reach Western levels? And why? Which of the values in the Western model did they wish to adopt?

I would like to make some comments on the very broad issue of "Restructuring urban systems in Eastern and Central Europe" and raise a few questions in reference to the hierarchical changes that are likely to take place in urban systems. I am convinced that any immediate changes will be qualitative ones that take place within towns, on a micro rather than on a macro-level. However, the strength of interactions between these two levels is such that the macro-level must not be overlooked.

The form that urban changes will take is necessarily dependent upon both the nature of the urban dynamics previously at work and the objectives of the new

system that have emerged since 1989. In short, urban changes still depend, and will continue to do so, on 3 functional factors:

1 - International opening, i.e. the economic opening to the world market; political opening as a result of the disappearance of political borders; human opening and the natural and cultural mobility that this has incurred.

2 - The industrial crisis and the recomposition/relocation of the productive pattern, closely interrelated with the emergence of certain towns as tertiary towns and service centres - of productive services as well as utility services.

3 - The end of a centrally planned state system with its more or less unique decision-making centre and the end of administrative command and exclusively governmental assistance; the revival of local/regional initiative and of an individual entrepreneurial system.

These three elementary factors are at the basis of the changes that have taken place in the people living in towns, in the function of these towns and in the regional seats of power.

Based on these assumptions, I am focusing my paper on hierarchical modifications. A number of converging considerations combine to emphasise the importance of this issue. Because the hierarchical principle served as the practical tool of the entire socialist system, the fact that it has now been at least partially replaced is symptomatic of the direction changes will take. The current urban hierarchical changes are to a certain extent connected to essentially geopolitical changes - the construction of a new Europe and the emergence of new decision-making areas. They are closely linked to the highly specific social and economic conditions prevalent in Eastern-central Europe at the moment. But taken in a wider perspective, the subject of urban systems and their hierarchical forms offers a rich theoretical framework that can provide enlightenment as to what will happen in the future although the present period probably represents a turning point in an urbanisation process in which structural hierarchies could be substituted by more diversified urban patterns (connection trends and networks).

I will present my comments under two headings:

- 1 - Changes in national urban systems (as a result of the disappearance of the former socialist systems)
- 2 - The effects on the urban hierarchies involved in the geopolitical changes.

## **I - Changes in National Urban Systems**

Previous studies have shown the extent to which the *urban national level* is significant in the structure of the urban pattern and how the concept of "urban system" is more apt than that of "urban network" to express the many interdependencies that exist between cities. In the former Eastern Europe, the term "national level" is appropriate since geopolitical conditions imposed national confinement. The concept "urban system" is less appropriate than it is for Western

towns because interdependencies and multilateral flows existing between cities were limited. If we are to formulate a hypothesis on developments in the near future, we must first examine the situation that was bequeathed by the socialist regime.

### I - 1. Urban tendencies during the socialist period

Urban growth was formerly based on two socialist principles:

- to treat all cities as equal regardless of size, except for the capital which was the command centre
- to disperse urban/industrial centres all over the national territory in order to give rural populations "spatial justice" in the urban process. The result was *an apparent higher level of homogenisation inside each national urban system and greater similarity between the various urban systems.*

Because both of these principles and the methodological approach used to describe urban hierarchical structures have already been amply described (the "rank-size rule" and the CHRISTALLER model), I will simply discuss the results of their application.

Evolutions in the rank-size distribution in certain countries (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania) give an indication of the manner in which socialist urbanisation has (or has not) brought about significant changes in hierarchical structures.

a) Each national urban system has kept the general form of its rank-size distribution throughout the entire XXth century, a phenomenon also observed in certain non-socialist countries. This strong inertia - or is it constancy? - in the distribution of towns indicates that there is a gap between the perception of changes and hidden structural tendencies. For instance:

- the outstanding predominance of Budapest, partly due to its previous historical function as capital of the extensive Kingdom of Hungary in the Habsburg Empire, has remained unchanged. Despite a limited (applied with leniency) number of residence permits granted, other factors influencing concentration occurred during the socialist period;

- on the contrary, Prague shows no particular predominance. The lack of political function before Independence in 1918 and, more importantly, the fact that it belonged to the Bohemian settlement system specifically characterised by very high densities of small and medium-sized towns, explains the weak hierarchical trends. The apparent conformity with the model proposed by the socialist system could be misinterpreted if the historical trend is not taken into account. The same historical interpretation is valid for the low predominance of Warsaw, inherited from the Polish Partition period.

b) Nevertheless, it is evident that during the socialist period *a secondary change in hierarchical design* occurred, visible in the more horizontal overall pattern of development of medium-sized towns: *medium-sized towns* of similar size are *more*

*numerous than would be expected in terms of the "rank-size rule".* These were, in fact, the administrative seats of the new districts created by the Administrative Reforms that took place in the late 60s and early 70s. When these towns were vested with their new administrative functions, they were given specific grants for equipment, services, housing etc. and because of this they underwent accelerated urban growth at the expense of other towns. When considered in this context, it can be seen that no specific phenomena account for their growth. But because of the centrally planned economic system and because economic control was in the same hands as and subordinate to political control, *the urban administrative pattern provides the key to the profound changes* that took place over a relatively short period of time (less than 25 years). Although the phenomenon was more spectacular in Romania, the very same process occurred in all of the Eastern European countries and has generally been recognised as an inherent source of difficulties. In Bulgaria, early administrative reforms have resulted in today's high level of rural depopulation.

In other words, the planned administrative and urban political system played a major role in creating a hierarchical structure composed of a series of steps rather than of a more regular rank-size hierarchical distribution. This highlights the difference between imposed and free territorial relations and their effects on the hierarchical organisation of space, between "forced" and "spontaneous" hierarchy or, to be more precise, "stochastic" hierarchy. Even though the major incentives that form the *Christallerian model* (and optimise behaviour in a market economy) were lacking in the socialist system, it is, in fact, *prevalent throughout*.

c) Syntheses of statistics in the form of graphs comparing urban growth in Western and Eastern countries from 1950 to 1990 highlight the differences between the two parts of Europe: low growth and limited differences between size-categories in Western European towns; rapid growth and marked differences in Eastern Europe, with growth in certain of the major towns being restrained and others being propelled to the forefront.

The fore-mentioned conclusions raise questions as to the nature of the urban growth that took place during the socialist period. Did a specific form of urbanisation exist or did it not exist under the socialist regime in Eastern Europe? This may seem a purely philosophical question, nevertheless it calls for study. It has been the subject of much discussion, only too often influenced by the political beliefs or national experience of the observer. Whilst Eastern-central specialists consider that the meaning of urbanisation in their countries has the same historical roots and has followed the same trends as in Western Europe, Western specialists are more interested in highlighting differences between their own urbanisation and that of the former socialist countries. (It should be mentioned that, in fact, this question applies more to intra-urban aspects than to interurban ones.). Only future evolutions can bring any sort of answer as to whether the socialist experience has simply been one specific urban stage in a long urbanisation history, or whether it has been strong enough to irremediably alter urban trends. The answer will probably differ from one country to another, depending on the level of urbanisation that existed in the country

at the outset of the socialist process (40% in Czechoslovakia, 22% in Bulgaria and Romania) and on the future changes that will take place in surrounding urban densities.

However, as it is generally accepted that the urban structure changes very slowly, we must consider the time-scale as being of equal importance to the space-scale in our discussion on the restructuring of urban systems in Eastern-central Europe.

## **I - 2. General context in which national urban change will take place**

*In my opinion, only limited changes will occur to shape new patterns within national urban systems over the next few years, despite the huge global geopolitical transitions that have recently taken place. Transition is a very complex phenomenon and many of the forecasts made in 1990 have yet to be confirmed. However, concrete observations will undoubtedly be presented on this issue before the end of the present session, particularly in reference to Berlin. Although some radical changes have occurred in institutions, most of the changes capable of modifying the dynamics of interdependence between towns and altering the hierarchies have not yet come into effect. Administrative reforms and new administrative patterns are forever being discussed but have not yet become a reality, except in the German New Lander. Moreover, essential functional and technical changes in the large industrial structures are still way behind those which have taken place elsewhere, regardless of the institutional changes that have already taken place.*

*Economic crises and the lack of financial support have crippled initiative and outweighed the positive effects of the stimulation of urban growth and interurban mobility, although in some cases urbanisation due to pauperisation has appeared. Despite what changing statistics may lead us to believe, the marked mobility between cities registered since 1990 is more often than not simply due to a change in regulations at the District Registrar's office. The seemingly large variations in certain towns should be interpreted with caution.*

Mobility for the most part is due to the influx of foreign professionals and to the arrival of emigrants from the CEI and refugees from ex-Yugoslavia. The forecast return of urban populations to rural areas in counteraction to the excessive urbanisation and increase in urban unemployment has not occurred; unemployment is, of course, higher in the rural areas because of the de-collectivisation process than in the cities where the industrial process has been retarded.

The *low demographic growth* (and, in certain cases, demographic decrease) is no longer a stimulating factor, though an excess of agricultural manpower in a few areas does still provide a source of emigrants to towns. Moreover, the present crisis has emphasised a general decrease in the birth-rate.

The major change will tend towards a re-composition between towns. Historical experience gained at the time of the Industrial Revolution has shown how difficult it is to alter the industrial pattern of urbanisation. It should be remembered that the

socialist regime's preference for a general distribution of medium-sized industrial towns was not only ideological, it was also a concrete answer and a means of adapting to the poor transport infrastructure available as well as a way of reducing the cost of providing an elementary urban infrastructure. Though these conditions still exist, from our point of view there are nowadays several factors preventing a rapid change in the relative position of towns from taking place:

1) *the lack of a rapid transport system between the majority of towns*, i.e. the lack of "space/time shortness" that endows easily-reached towns with an asset that can distort and accentuate the normal hierarchical structure;

2) *the new (hypothetical) administrative reform which has selected a smaller set of regional administrative towns* (a most important point here will be the new legislation making each town financially autonomous);

3) *the introduction of new information technology* (fax, E-mail etc.). Though apparently such tools do not contribute to a better regional integration of towns, whether owned by private people, companies or institutions they still serve to create interconnections on an international and intercontinental level.

### **I - 3. The peripheries of national urban systems**

Although the socialist system purposely restricted growth in traditional regional cities, they have nevertheless retained certain of their former advantages. They continue to attract tourists as academic, cultural and historical centres and it is in these cities that we find the "elite social class" necessary to ensure a metropolitan renewal. The part played by these towns in the political events leading to and immediately following the fall of the Berlin Wall could perhaps be interpreted as a symbol of the permanent role of the elite social power. However, nowadays "geographical situation" in terms not only of national and international urban patterns but also in international flow and proximity to international (and more importantly, Western) boundaries is an important element in new metropolitan trends. Peripheral towns therefore have a natural advantage over nationally central ones (such as Poznan, Gyor, Timisoara).

Practically speaking, it seems to me that by studying and analysing the mesh of new university centres that have sprung up in every country we can develop a convenient albeit partial framework for studying the "urban milieu", potential for innovation and competitive behaviour.

## II - Geopolitical Changes, International Opening and Urban Hierarchies

*Today's political map of Europe* certainly shows unexpected, though understandable, changes: political phenomena play a less determining role than other social phenomena, which are more dependent upon premeditated and economic contexts. Instead of 8 states, there are now 12 states<sup>2</sup>, and Democratic Germany has disappeared. This means that there are five new political capitals<sup>3</sup> plus Berlin, the capital of reunified Germany. This represents a major change in the national and European urban pattern. Let us examine some of the consequences.

### II - 1. Hierarchical importance of capital cities reinforced in a globally lower hierarchical system

When we consider the evolutions that have taken place in Western Europe, spatial links appear to have been broken up rather than joined. If we set aside the federal model and choose to examine unitary models instead, it becomes obvious that today's patterns are strongly influenced by *ethno-auto referenced national identity* based on social behaviour and common cultural values rather than on other functional objectives.

It is generally accepted (though perhaps regrettably) that the territorial identification process provides the strongest factual support for a global feeling of national identity; the capital city plays a very prominent role in this respect, both from a practical and symbolic point of view. These 5 new capital cities will therefore be attributed all the most specialised and valuable functions, services etc. (intercity railways already link some of them) and will be placed on an international level, at least on diplomatic issues. This means that within the respective state territories, capital cities will enter a new, qualitative, "maturation" phase at the expense of other towns (mainly those in a demographic non-growth phase). Predominance phenomena will be reinforced and, in the case of cities such as Bratislava, Zagreb and Skopje which are located at the boundary of state territory, predominance will develop in a totally eccentric position.

But what type of predominance will result? When expressed in a "first town:second town" ratio, predominance has generally only been moderately reinforced (approx. to a value of 2, i.e. the population of the capital is twice that of the second town), though the ratio is more marked in Macedonia and Croatia (value of 4, 6 respectively). The state territories of both Prague and Belgrade have been reduced, yet their predominance has been reinforced. The powerful movement of national identification that accelerated the territorial break up has, paradoxically, strengthened the hierarchical structure within all states, even though it now operates on a reduced (Prague and Belgrade) or very limited potential national population: the 5 new states each have a population of between 2 and 5.3 million inhabitants<sup>4</sup>.



Table 1 Capitals and Second Towns in East Central Europe in 1993

	Total population 1990-1992 (million people)	Urban population 1930 1990 (percentage)	Town population 1990-1992 (million people)	Percentage of total population 1990-1992 (percentage)	SECOND TOWN	Town population 1990-1992 (million people)	Percentage of total population 1990-1992 (percentage)	Macrocephalie Index (First town/ second town) 1993 1980	
<i>States without political change</i>									
POLAND	38,2	32%	1,6	4%	Upper silesian conurbation	2,5	6,54%		
HUNGARY	10,4	33%	2,02	19%	BUDAPEST	0,2	1,92%	10	
RUMANIA	22,7	21%	2,06	9%	BUCAREST	0,35	1,54%	5,8	
BULGARIA	9	22%	1,1	12%	SOFIA	0,34	3,78%	3	
ALBANIA	3,3	12%	0,3	9%	TIRANA				
<i>State-Territory reduced after 1989</i>									
CZECH REPUBLIC	10,4	75%	1,21	12%	PRAHA	0,39	3,75%	3,1	
NEW YUGOSLAVIA	10,4	45%	1,6	15%	BELGRAD	0,26	2,50%	6,1	
<i>New states</i>									
SLOVAKIA	5,3	69%	0,44	8%	BRATISLAVA	0,23	4,34%	1,9	
SLOVENIA	1,96	49%	0,32	16%	LJUBLIANA	0,15	7,65%	2,1	
CROATIA	4,8	51%	0,93	19%	ZAGREB	0,2	4,17%	4,65	
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA	4,36	34%	0,52	12%	SARAJEVO	0,2	4,59%	2,6	
CROATIA	2,03	54%	0,56	28%	SKOPJE	0,12	5,91%	4,6	

After 'Les Annuaire nationaux'

*When we examine the relationship between political status and degree of urban predominance, it is evident that two phenomena occur concurrently: a federal political system with a low predominance in the corresponding urban system (predominance index of less than 2 or 3) and a unitary political system with a high predominance in the corresponding urban system (index of predominance greater than 6). A similar relationship can be seen in Western Europe. However, only the federal states of Eastern Europe have not survived the shock of 1989 and the end of the Communist Party dictatorship (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the USSR). Here, one borders on the rather obscure connections that exist between urban systems and ethno-political entities. A realistic study of the federal status of both Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia shows that both countries have evolved politically towards acknowledging their national-ethnic diversity and managing it autonomously, i.e. by means of an association rather than separation (somewhat like the EU). Nevertheless, regardless of which dynamic federal process is at work (associative or separative) the relationship with the urban system is clear: there is lower urban aggregation/concentration and a lesser degree of urban predominance in a federal system than in a unitary (or imperial) model.*

This issue is not a purely philosophical one, particularly in the case of Berlin. Will Berlin be able to revive its pre-war predominance, as certain people seem to think, when it assumes capital status in a federal system rather than in an imperial one? And who would wish to see that? Is it really desirable?

It is not certain that the capitals of states which escaped political change - Poland, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria - will be at an advantage in the new international pattern of capitals. Although each of these capitals has a population of between one and two million inhabitants, they will all fare differently in the new international pattern, since the determining factors will be geographical situation and geopolitical context.

## **II - 2. The example of international congresses**

In order to estimate the international status of Eastern-central cities at the beginning of the transition and assess the possible advantages they inherited from the socialist period, we made an analysis of the location of international congresses held over the past twenty years<sup>5</sup>. We chose this as our index of high international centrality, because international congresses call for a high level of internationally famous specialists, accessibility, accommodation etc.

Results of this analysis are particularly interesting though not totally unexpected:

a - during the socialist period, international congresses held in Eastern Europe totalled just 20% of the overall number that took place in Western Europe and were mainly concentrated along the western border, which corresponds to the medieval limit of urban culture,

Table 2 International Congress in East central Europe 1973-1992

COUNTRY	FIRST TOWN		SECOND TOWN	
	Number of congress	Number percentage of congress	Number	percentage of congress
Poland	305			
	WARSAW	175	CRACOVIA	33
	WARSAW	42	CRACOVIA	10
1973-1989	305	57%		11%
1987-1990	85	49%		12%
1990-1992	55	45%		13%
Hungary				
	BUDAPEST	342		
	BUDAPEST	98		
1973-1989	408	84%		
1987-1990	121	81%		
1990-1992	139	87%		
Czecho-Slovakia				
	PRAHA	228	BRATISLAVA	29
	PRAHA	62	BRATISLAVA	8
1973-1989	328	70%		9%
1987-1990	98	63%		8%
Bulgaria				
	SOFIA	66	VARNA	57
	SOFIA	29	VARNA	11
1973-1989	136	49%		42%
1987-1990	45	64%		24%
1990-1992	20	65%		10%
Yugoslavia				
	BELGRAD	78	DUBROVNIK	72
	BELGRAD	17	ZAGREB	17
1973-1989	314	25%		23%
1987-1990	92	18%		18%
1990-1992				
Rumania				
	BUCAREST	69		
	BUCAREST	5		
1973-1989	78	88%		
1987-1990	6	83%		
1990-1992	9	44%		

After 'Annuaire des congrès internationaux' and works of C. ROZENBLAT and N. MAZEK

b - the monopolisation of certain capitals was greater in Eastern than in Western Europe (60% versus less than 50%). This illustrates the paradox of socialist urbanisation, which limited the growth of capital cities but accorded them the exclusive right to foreign contact,

c - the map of congresses reflects the hierarchy-type of each national urban system: predominance is at its greatest in Budapest. The international integration of the Hungarian capital is also observed in its share of foreign investment and joint ventures. In Poland, the low predominance of Warsaw is reflected in the number of congresses held in other regional metropolises,

But in the previous federal systems of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia we see the contrary effect: Prague was the site of the majority of congresses despite the status of Bratislava; Belgrade was little used in spite of its status as federal capital.

d - in the 3 transition years (1990-91-92)<sup>6</sup>, the number of congresses held in Hungary and more especially in Budapest (80 to 86%) increased, thereby emphasising even further its international profile. However the number of congresses held in Poland decreased (less than 1/3) and the trend towards regional distribution was confirmed (only 45 to 50% in Warsaw). Poznan, Cracovie, Wroclaw and Gdansk all gained in importance. In Bulgaria, there was a marked decrease (1/2). Unfortunately, we lack data on Czechoslovakia.

This example is a concrete feature of a more general trend towards international opening and it raises question about the metropolisation of the "lucky few" cities that managed to emerge in the top hierarchical level.

### **II - 3. International metropolisation tendencies**

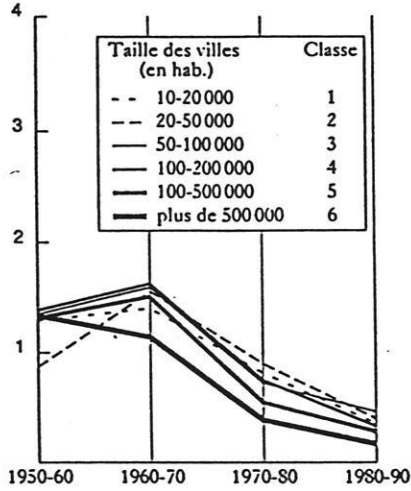
In light of today's so-called "information society", the modified structure of the world system and the consequences of over-metropolisation, the question of spatial hierarchy between towns must be reformulated. Until recently Christallerian-type urban hierarchies had provided the optimal solution for the problem of distance, but now the information age has "deleted" distances and reinforced ties. This in turn has favoured the development of a new hierarchical system founded on fewer of the large metropolises that serve as node-centres within more diversified segmented urban networks.

How can we imagine the re-entry of major Eastern-central European cities into global Europe and onto the rapidly growing international competitive scene?

- *Do they have all of the essential attributes of metropolises?* Only the six largest capitals (and the Polish Silesian conurbation) that have populations of one million or more inhabitants are really large enough. Moreover, international equipment (international airports, rapid continental transport systems, international economic services etc.) is still lacking, the potential of their demographic hinterland is only moderate, their economic profile is too industrial and their cosmopolitan society too weak - in fact, this is the element that offers the greatest contrast with the pre-war

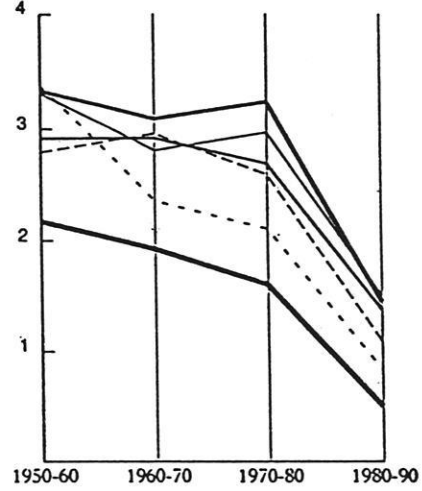
Figure 1

Taux de variation  
 moyen annuel (%)



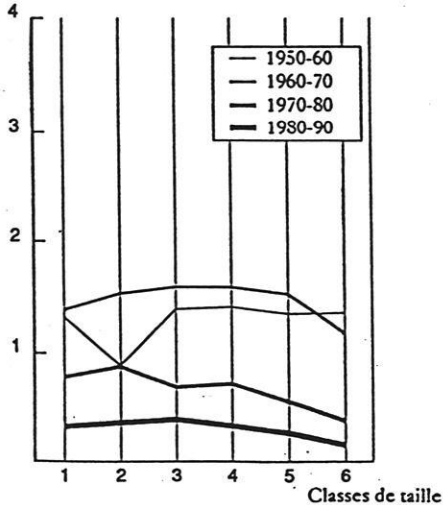
Europe occidentale

Taux de variation  
 moyen annuel (%)

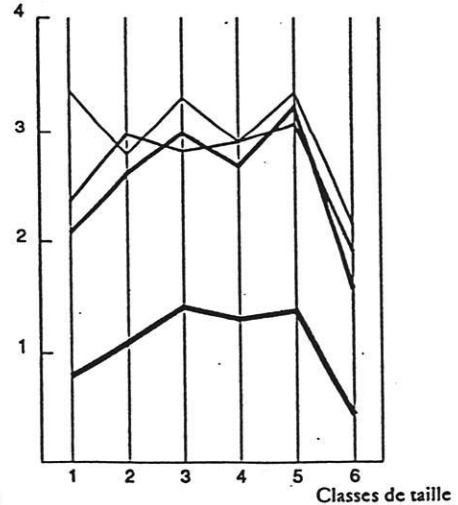


Europe de l'Est

Taux de variation  
 moyen annuel (%)

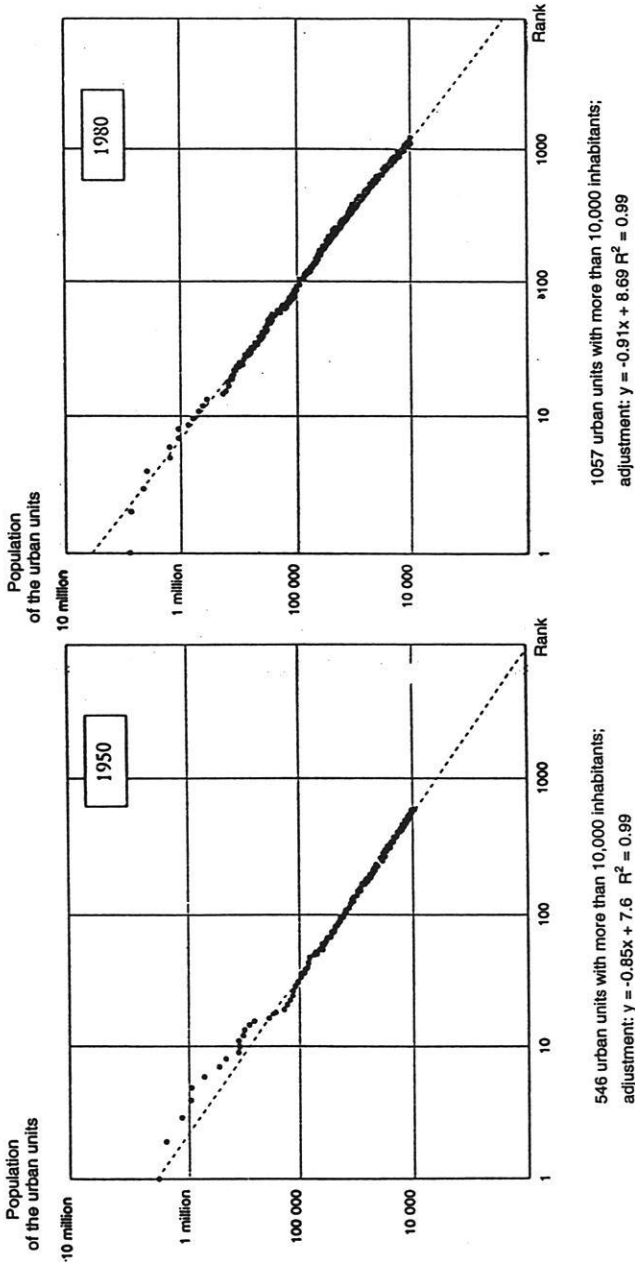


Taux de variation  
 moyen annuel (%)



Source F. Moriconi, Geopolis 1994

Figure 2 Rank and Size of Towns in Eastern Europe (except CEI)  
(Rang et Taille des Villes en Europe Orientale (CEI exclue))



Source F. Moriconi, Geopolis 1994

urban societies. (Given the circumstances, it is easy to understand why they compete so vigorously for international investments to improve transport and communications systems.)

- *What is the make-up of their "urban milieu"?* Do they possess the internal synergy necessary to become autonomous in terms of impetus and dynamism? Long-term development will depend not only on the interaction between global networks and individual cities and between macro and micro-levels, but also on the historical inheritance, cultural background and concrete and provisional urban requirements of each city.

Let us look at two examples:

*Budapest*, with a population of 2.3 million inhabitants, holds the most favourable position in international networks, is the best equipped in international requirements (improved in preparation for the 1995 International Fair) and has an urban elite capable of ensuring its rise in international competition, an elite which has already proved its ability to assume the transition from socialist methods. However, it is situated less than 200 km from Vienna and Bratislava, at the head of a small state (10 million inhabitants) in the Danubian corridor where demography is on the decline and handicapped with connection difficulties within its own territory. Perhaps it is destined to become a world relay centre rather than a middle-European metropolis. Bucharest, with a population of approx. 2.1 million inhabitants and also located within a medium-sized state (23 million inhabitants), is a reasonable distance from other cities of more than 2 million inhabitants (Istanbul 400 km, Kiev 700 km and Budapest 700 km). However, among other things, the firmly entrenched Romanian economic crisis has deteriorated already inadequate urban equipment (water, electricity, sewage networks etc.) and national transport connections (internal flights stopped). Bucharest is therefore unable to promote all of its international/regional advantages and could be affected by a process of "demetropolisation" in today's competitive world.

Hence it seems that no convincing Eastern-central challengers have yet entered an arena that is largely monopolised by the obviously much better equipped West.

To conclude, I would like to enlarge on three points.

1 - The restructuring of urban systems in Eastern-central Europe certainly implies changing from vertical hierarchical systems to more dynamic urban networks in which individual cities will gain greater autonomy in the power of initiative. But by integrating these changes into the former state-built models, the larger cities will be propelled to the fore-front as major stakes in the international competition and thus contribute to creating a more complex and less predictable hierarchical structure.

2 - Eastern-central cities cannot catch up for lost time in the international metropolisation process that is now underway. In fact, the risk is that this process will reinforce the social distance already existing between capital cities and the rest of the countryside as it will be necessarily limited to a very small number of cities - capital cities and those that are better situated in terms of geographical advantages. Will national integration lose out in favour of international integration? Some

countries will be globally weakened by international metropolisation. But border cities such as Berlin, Istanbul and, to a lesser extent, Warsaw will improve their position.

3 - One means of restructuring these urban systems could be to promote the "network of cities" concept that has been experimented in Euro-boundary regions and which would allow for the development of common infrastructures. However, this solution implies that traditional rivalries be forgotten and that local societies be genuinely concerned by the future of their towns. Is this possible in all cases?

Perhaps urban researchers should be encouraged to renew and reinforce empirical and theoretical analyses at the local-level. At present, it seems to be regional rather than urban systems that are at issue.

Lastly, I would like to emphasise the fact that the Western paradigm of convergence does not seem to be geographically applicable here, although it does seem quite possible that Eastern-central Europe will re-enter a global Europe. It must not be forgotten that the European paradigm is a combination of wide geographical diversity and common spiritual values and behavioural standards.

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#### NOTES

1. On the contrary, 50% of the German population live in agglomerations of more than one million inhabitants.
2. The new states are: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Macedonia, Yugoslavia.
3. The five new political capitals: Bratislava, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Skopje.
4. Nevertheless, the reduction of population potential should not be exaggerated, as for a long time the main flows to Prague and Belgrade have been Czech or Serb, rather than from the whole federal territory.
5. This analysis was based on a former study on Western cities, initiated by C. ROSENBLAT and continued by N. MAZEK.
6. For the temporal comparison we have taken into account the periods 1987-88-89 and 1990-91-92.

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