

The future of the European city in the West and the East

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The Eurometropolis is a new power, challenging the supranational role of Brussels. The territories of influence of such Eurometropolises extend outside individual nations. In federal systems they may be part of state organization, elsewhere they create networks of competition and co-operation, and have started to develop independent politics.

New spatial perspectives

It is a historical coincidence that the French scholar R. Brunet¹ analysed the functions of 165 agglomerations in the EEC in 1989, just before the fall of the Iron Curtain. The book presenting his findings, entitled *Les Villes Europeennes*, became very popular, due largely to Brunet's creation of a sort of geodesign making use of such handy terms as 'megalopolis' and 'sunbelt', denoting large spatial categories with which we are already familiar from North America (cf. Figure 1).

Europe's megalopolis comprises the cluster of metropolises from London in the north via the axis formed by the Rhine to Milan, and the sunbelt stretches along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea from Spain (with Barcelona as a focus) via Southern France to the plain bisected by the Po in Northern Italy.

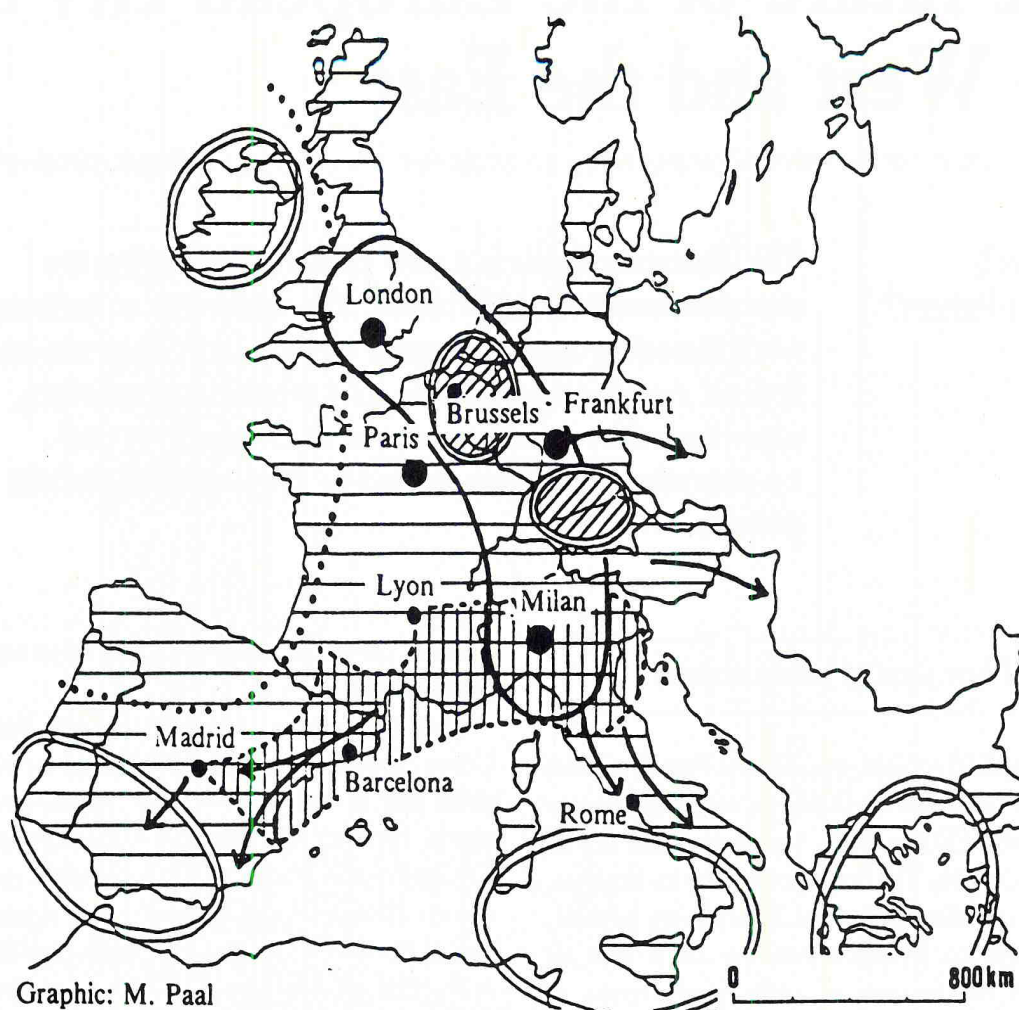
This concept is based on a new geopolitical determinism that has, however, not been properly thought through. Its importance for locational decisions of international concerns, in a period of intensified competition between the metropolises for new investors, should by no means be underrated. It is a fascinating instance of a time-lag in the perception of changes in political conditions that this 'banana'-concept not only still pervades geographical publications, but keeps invading

those of the social sciences and even international management.

This perspective, focusing on the European Union, should be extended. It should be borne in mind that as early as 1991 the association agreements between the European Community and Czechoslovakia (today's Czech Republic and Slovakia), Hungary, and Poland were signed, and that in April 1992, at the First Eurailspeed Meeting of the European ministers of transport, decisions were made that considered the integration of the railway systems in Europe's east. A network of high-speed railway lines are to link the Eurometropolises and regional metropolises (cf. Figure 2). In this concept, two branches of high-speed systems flank the megalopolis and, simultaneously, distance themselves from it. The western one centres on the Chunnel and the new large Paris traffic junction, with a series of high-speed lines originating from here and serving France and the Iberian Peninsula, thus strengthening France's position and, simultaneously, that of Europe's Atlantic Coast. The eastern branch is to connect cities in Central Europe and links Hamburg, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Bratislava, and Budapest. At present its continuation to Belgrade and Istanbul is uncertain.

A triad of metropolises, Vienna, Budapest and Prague, have entered the competition of Eurocities as newcomers, and they compete for the primary allocation of international enterprises. There might be a division of functions between them, especially between Vienna and Budapest, as the latter is now the southeastern outlier of the western world.

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|---|------------------|---|----------------|
|  | Megalopolis |  | Sunbelt |
|  | Attractive areas |  | Atlantic Coast |
|  | Expansion |  | Periphery |

Figure 1. Megalopolis and sunbelt in western Europe. *Source:* Reference 3, p. 157.

Thus, association agreements and Eurailspeed plans clearly separate the inner, western zone of the formerly communist countries, namely Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Slovenia, from those in the outer zone, Romania, Bulgaria, the other former Yugoslav republics, Ukraine and Belorussia. Only the inner zone of Eastern Central Europe will be referred to in this discussion.

From Figure 2 one can easily deduce the new perspective now necessary. When, almost simultaneously, the EU was created on the one hand

and, on the other, the large-scale 'political and geographical experiment' of a bisected Europe was ended, new spatial prerequisites for cities and city systems came into being. Spatial perception, until then, had centred on a differentiation between north and south; now that between west and east must be added.

Although it is by no means certain that a 'United States of Europe' will exist some day, the United States of America offers itself for comparison.

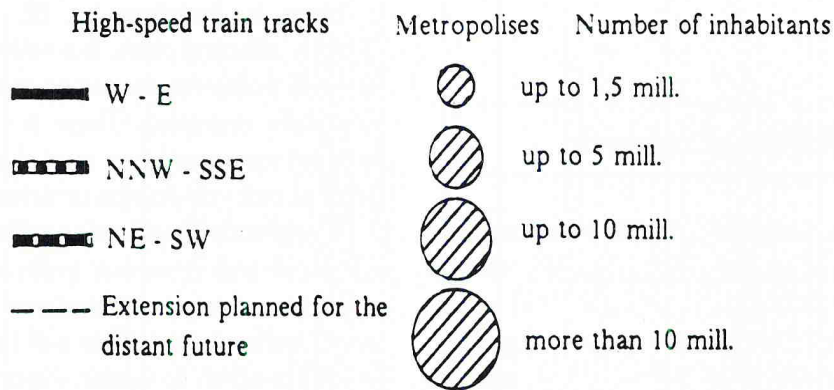
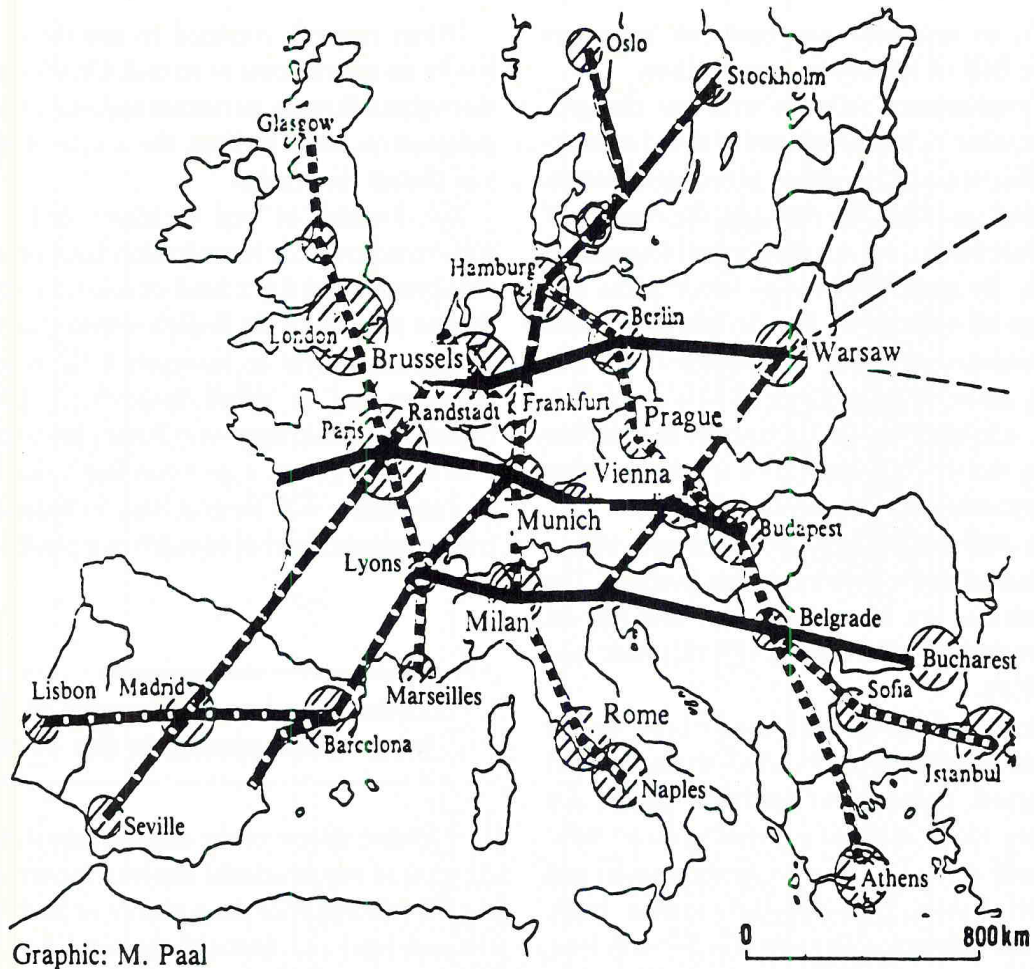


Figure 2. PanEuropean high-speed railways and metropolitan system. Source: Reference 3, p. 159.

New trends in research

Against the background of this geopolitical change, with the field of interest now including the whole continent of Europe, new trends can be observed in research.

Neo-liberalism is the basis for a new paradigm

that refers to the competition between cities and problems of politics, economics and business administration, treating cities as entrepreneurs. Moreover the interface between private enterprises and city authorities is considered with regard to public-private partnerships.

Traditionally, urban research was research into large cities. Now it is reduced to metropolitan

research, as economic concentration processes limit the field of interest to metropolises.

The predominant research style has changed, cities are taken as individuals and analysed statistically. In this way a large number of new perspectives are opened up. Thus, for example, the concept of curriculum studies was adopted from biographical research. By analogy with the career paths and prospects of individuals, the development paths and prospects of cities are analysed. In this context, the heuristic principle of 'rise and fall' is applied, and modified as the growth and decline of cities, but the large variety of strategies makes systematic scientific statements difficult.

These new perspectives are combined with a renaissance of analyses of interurban systems. The social sciences are most active there and rely on the perspectives of Fordism, Postfordism and Neofordism.

Intrametropolitan research used to rest on the theory of polarization, which has attained a sort of canonical paradigm of textbook quality for explaining socioeconomic patterns in large cities. It is clearly a product of the capitalist social and economic system, and therefore cannot really explain the different conditions prevailing in large metropolises in social welfare states, and it does not provide any solutions for reducing potential conflicts.

Deficits of research

Political events come thick and fast and trigger a destabilization of research. Consequently, there is a considerable lack of pertinent data, but results are in high demand and must be presented quickly. Accordingly, a rather pseudo-scientific research style has developed, with scientific networks of a fairly rudimentary character being employed.

Although European data banks do exist on countries and regions, there are none on cities, and no urban statistics are provided within the framework of EUROSTAT.

There are no comparative empirical studies of European cities, not even of sectors of economy and society. Often, case studies are decided subjectively and chosen on the basis of intensive personal contacts in an informal information network.

Urban research confined to specific countries has by no means come to an end. On the contrary, throughout Europe, persistent regional or national perspectives tend to limit the scope of findings and distort the results.

The downfall of 'real socialism' and a world-wide trend towards liberalization have opened up new possibilities for a kind of scientific colonization on the part of the English-speaking countries. In any case, there is, however, both in political economy and in urban research, a deficit of theories for the change-over from plan to market.

In summary then, a quantum leap—that has yet to materialize—will be necessary in order to pass from a national level of research to a pan-European one.

Future trends and changes in the inter-urban system in the West

The relative retreat of the nation-states due to the creation of supranational levels of government in the EU will influence the positions of leading cities through legal and financial measures and, in the long run, it can be expected that the national settlement systems will become more similar.

There is, however, no EU political system directly affecting cities, but only one for regions. As with politics in the nation-states, EU politics is sectorally organized. There is no integration of sectoral measures being carried out, either on the level of cities or on that of urban regions.

World-wide liberalization will cause a separation of social and economic politics and a stepwise abolition of some institutions characteristic of social welfare states. This will further inter-urban and intra-urban economic disparities and segregation processes.

Exogenous forces behind the rise and fall of metropolises become more accentuated. City ranks tend to change continuously, and this is true of higher strata than ever before; even the leading cities fall victim to instability.

The hierarchy of continental metropolises, based on the growth of the quaternary sector, is increasingly dissociated from the consumer-oriented national system of central places. The regional systems of central places have entered a phase of destabilization, the differences between

the hierarchical levels are increasing, some levels are eliminated, certain cities sink to lower ones.

Small towns tend to be passed over by the new developments, although this depends on the regional level of development. In the long run, they will retain their position only when being included in metropolitan regions, or through public investments, or through special attractions for the leisure society and post-industrial lifestyles.

The separation of locations into those for labour and leisure societies results in important spatial effects, such as the growth of leisure cities and cultural cities, the emergence and growth of tourist areas and retirement settlements in attractive peripheries, as well as the location of second homes in small towns and urban regions in enlarged metropolitan areas.

The take-off of knowledge-based industries and the development of technopolises depend on agglomeration economies, but the future extent of job relocation in electronic data processing to peripheral zones cannot be assessed as yet.

International migration, the formation of new social groups coinciding with ethnic divisions in the labour market, and segregation processes in the housing market are so far to be observed mainly in Western and Central Europe. Thus, the question arises of whether a pluralism of cultures and ethnic groups will, in the end, be characteristic of Europe's metropolises.

The effects of the segmentation of the markets in the East

In post-communist countries, older, persistent structures re-emerged once the homogenizing effects of the communist system had been removed. The changeover from plan to market and, thus, the privatization of real estate, dwellings and enterprises, was managed according to different national strategies.

(1) One of the most important consequences of liberalization consists of the *privatization of the real estate market*. The importance of capital created in this way for the development of the national economies cannot be overestimated. There definitely are parallels to the repealing of feudal rights and the change in marketable properties in the liberal

revolution of the 19th century. In the very same way new class boundaries are being defined, not only on the basis of incomes but on that of the value of real estate owned as well.

Thus, a new wave of proletarianization emerges in post-communism, both in urban and in rural areas. There are haves and have-nots again, and housing classes comparable to those in Western cities are formed in the segmentation process of the housing market.

Urban planners will be confronted with new problems created by the privatization process affecting land and buildings. Very soon there will be a dispute over the extent of privatization of former public property and the minimum amount of real estate needed by urban authorities for urban development planning and projects with public-private partnership.

In Western Central Europe, planning authorities are faced by the dilemma of having to represent either the interests of the local population or those of foreign investors; in Eastern Central Europe and Eastern Europe this problem is virulent in the leading cities, mainly as they were reached by the internationalization of the real estate market in a very short time.

Because of the insufficient supply of well-equipped modern offices in the first phase of the development of a real estate market, exorbitant rents are asked for, and actually paid, for office premises by large international enterprises who wish to be represented in such leading cities as Prague or Budapest.

The table listing office rents in Western and Eastern European cities (cf. Table 1) shows that they were already higher in Moscow than in London or Paris in 1993, that the highest rents paid in Warsaw exceeded those in Frankfurt or Berlin, that office rents in Prague equalled those in Munich and were higher than in Milan or Budapest (which had drawn level with Hamburg). In 1992 this even reached the capitals of newly created small countries, such as Ljubljana in Slovenia or Bratislava in Slovakia, which were comparable with those in Vienna's most favourable locations.

As production and capital are being internationalized, large financial institutions tend to acquire real estate, considered as high-grade investments or portfolio investments in the leading cities of the Eastern countries, and will profit from the transfer politics of international financial markets.

Table 1 Office rents in Western and Eastern European cities in 1993

	Price (ECU/sqm/year)	
	Western Europe	Eastern Europe
		Moscow 580
Paris (most favourable locations)	545	
London (West End)	545	
		Warsaw 490
Frankfurt	460	
London (City)	445	
Berlin	430	
		Prague 365
Munich	365	
London (suburbs)	340	
Milan	335	
Paris (suburbs)	335	
Düsseldorf	335	
Hamburg	305	
		Budapest 305
Madrid	255	
Brussels	250	
Barcelona	240	
Vienna	220	*Sofia
Dublin	215	*Ljubljana
Amsterdam	180	
Rotterdam	130	
Antwerp	120	*Bratislava

1 ECU = 1.2 \$

Source: *Quarterly Investment Report, The European Property Market*. Jones Lang Wooton.

* Cf. Table 3 in Lichtenberger (1993).

Moreover, links to high-speed railway networks and the extension of international electronic data processing networks into the inner zone of the post-communist countries will, initially, strengthen the top position these capitals holds in transport and communications.

(2) *Privatization of formerly state-owned dwellings* follows different national models. Therefore, the term 'privatization' is applied to different phenomena. Let me present two examples only: while the ideology of the American housing market—surprisingly enough—found its way to the Czech Republic, the concepts of social welfare states were adopted in Hungary—thus either the former house owners or the tenants are favoured. Differences in privatization politics in the housing market will, of course, influence the distribution of property

and, thus, the social structure. In principle the segmentation of the housing markets in post-communist countries is taking place against the background of a changed framework of financial and political-administrative conditions, with a cutback of central structures in favour of local ones. It follows that, in practice, Budapest's districts have their own individual strategies when privatizing the formerly state-owned flats, which now are their property. In this context it should be noted that social scientists in Budapest are already severely criticizing privatization as they have become aware of a marked segregation of the population according to age groups and incomes.

(3) The *restructuring of the labour market* with the cutbacks in, and closing down of, industrial enterprises led to a massive loss of workplaces. Redundancy rates are, however, quite different in the individual countries (3% to 15% in 1993).

Whereas the metropolises of Western Europe have to cope with an increase in redundancy and growing numbers of permanently unemployed people—there are maximum redundancy rates in the Southern European metropolises—conditions in labour markets are generally much more favourable in the leading cities of the post-communist states than in the rest of those countries. This is especially true of Prague, where there even is a surplus of job openings. This paradox is due to the fact that internationalization and tertiarization do not only counterbalance the cutback in state-owned industrial or other enterprises but create a considerable number of new jobs.² The capitals are innovation centres for the transition in the labour markets. Only in the capitals will the quaternary sector be developed fast with the help of foreign capital, and only then will a larger proportion of the workforce get a chance to choose specific career paths and make their education and skills a marketable asset.

When projecting these statements concerning the markets on to the settlement system, one realizes both the special position of the leading cities and the reverse trend in the labour and housing markets in the rank-size structure of the settlement system from medium-sized cities to rural areas (cf. Figure 3).

The massive decrease in the number of jobs available due to deindustrialization and a complete collapse of branches of industry affects industrial

	Real estate market	Labour market	Housing market
Primate cities	Internationalization, office buildings	Tertiarization little redundancy	Privatization of state-owned dwellings increasing housing shortage
Medium-sized towns	—	Top-down increasing demand for jobs due to processes of deindustrialization	Top-down increasing proportion of owner-occupied single-family houses. Decreasing demand for housing
Small towns	—		
Rural areas	—		
Industrial areas	—	High redundancy rates closing-down of enterprises	Problems with company flats

Figure 3. Real estate, labour and housing markets in the hierarchy of the settlement system.

areas, medium-sized and small cities; rural areas are also hit because the surplus of workers in the agricultural *sovkhozes* are made redundant. In the wake of these developments, redundancy keeps spreading alarmingly quickly over large areas—and there is a surplus of privately owned single-family houses in these settlement areas that might have some exchangeable value, but—at present—no real market value at all.

Intra-metropolitan processes

There are two important factors polarizing and destabilizing—at least to some extent—the internal structures of metropolises in Western and Central Europe: first, international financial assets and, secondly, the immigration of foreigners. On the other hand the public sector still constitutes a stabilizing power by providing ‘protected segments’ in the real estate, housing and labour markets (cf. Figure 4).

(1) International financial markets greatly influence economic competition between metropolises. The

internationalization of the real estate market affects the housing market through gentrification processes, construction of residential estates for the very rich etc. Foreign investments into businesses and the creation of new top jobs tend to lead to superimposition on society of a class of international managers. Their demand for luxurious housing pushes rents up in the housing market. Vertical segregation develops in the city centres of cities such as Paris or Vienna. Penthouses are constructed, partly sponsored by public funds, as sorts of private observation terraces for elites, among them many foreigners.

(2) The immigration of foreign population and labour force is seen as a specifically European problem. In this context we should compare the situation with that in the USA: there, the 1991 census registered 24% foreign population, altogether 65 million people, at the same time there were only 16 million in the EU! In the USA, the central cities of the Metropolitan Areas have become multiethnic areas in which blacks, hispanics and Eastasians account for the majority of the inhabitants. In Europe, the Benelux-cities Brussels and Antwerp have already surpassed the 30%

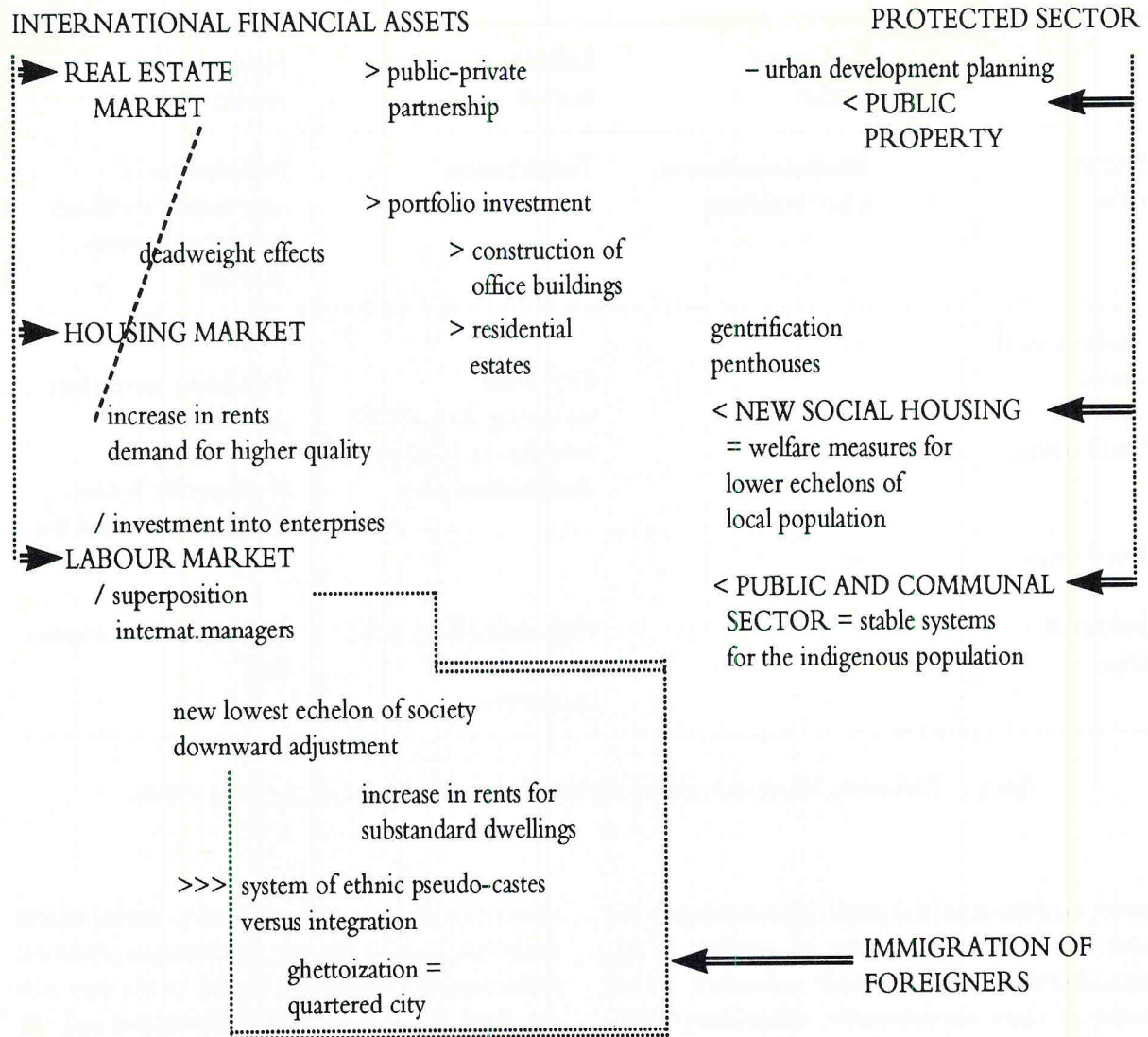


Figure 4. Internationalization versus protected sector in the intra-metropolitan system.

line, in Vienna the ratio of foreigners is estimated at 24%.

It can be taken for granted that the globalization of the economy will bring a globalization of migration in its wake. The migration of guest-workers was only a first stage in a migration process that will be followed by new waves of immigrants because of the demand for unskilled personnel. While the migration from east to west within Europe involves a comparatively small number of people—far fewer than had been anticipated immediately after the fall of the Iron Curtain—there will be a mass influx from other continents, from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Vienna poses an example for the internationalization of migrations after the fundamental political changes of the early 1990s.

The housing and labour markets are affected in

different ways. With respect to the housing market, foreign immigrants belonging to the lowest rungs of society make transitory use of buildings in very bad repair in inner cities, in the blocks of substandard housing and provisional structures in the urban fringe. When social housing was made available to immigrants in some countries, such as the Federal Republic of Germany, conflicts with the indigenous lower classes were not reduced but aggravated.

In the labour market, an ethnic segmentation is being formed due to the immigration of foreigners. The three groups referred to above differ considerably: guestworkers that were contracted in order to fill blue collar workers' jobs in industry, new immigrants from Eastern Central Europe who partly do work not declared for tax and a series of ethnic 'castes' that are partly organized in a rent

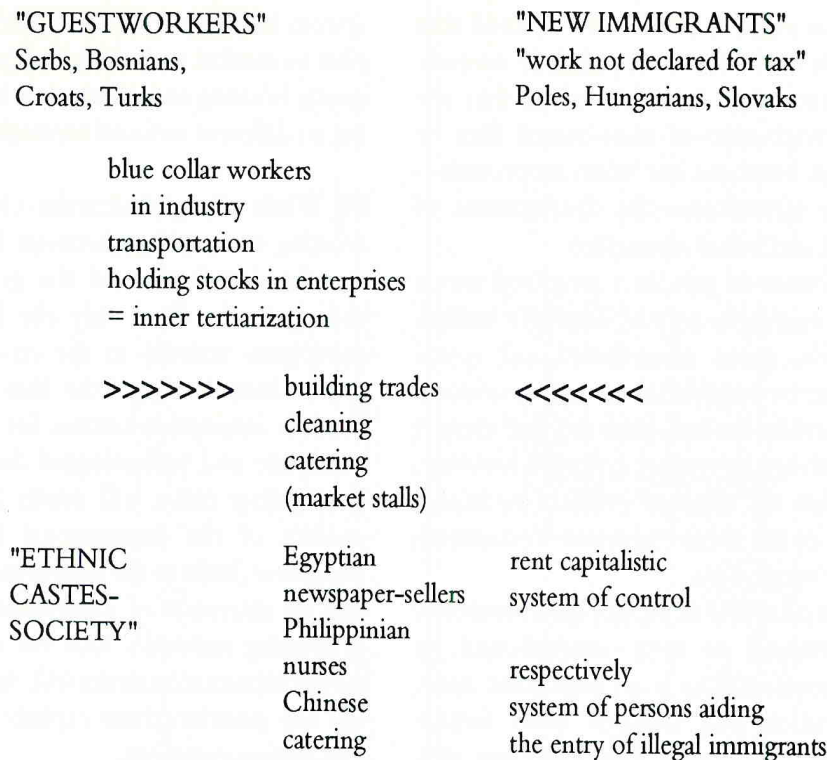


Figure 5. The formation of 'pseudo-castes' and ethnic castes in the Vienna labour market.

capitalistic way (cf. Figure 5). It cannot be prognosticated yet whether, and to what extent, such 'pseudo-castes' will, in the medium-term, be integrated into the labour force of the metropolis or whether they are going to persist for a longer period as a distinct feature of the multi-ethnic labour markets developing in the Eurometropolises.

The integration of a great number of multi-ethnic immigrants will be the measure of testing the inner strength of European democracies—and this test will be all the more difficult as this new international migration takes place in a period in which social politics are gradually separated from economic politics, due to widespread neo-liberal tendencies in the EU countries. The social overhead will suffer severe cutbacks in the near future and the indigenous citizens will be faced with the problem of having to share a decreasing supply of social services and public goods with a growing number of foreign immigrants. At the same time, new phenomena of a social disorganization of the post-industrial urban society (high redundancy rates, formation of an underclass, homelessness, growing numbers of outlaws and outcasts) are emerging and spreading despite countermeasures. Although these phenomena are nowhere in Europe as grievous as in the USA the tendency towards a

destabilization of the existing order and accepted norms must not be underrated.

(3) What chance does the public sector have for counteracting segregation, 'ghettoization' and increasing disparities? In principle, the public sector is a stabilizing agent with respect to the quality of life of the population. Things are different with regard to such shared tasks in the USA, where the social and technical infrastructure is mostly provided by private sector enterprises.

It is the increasing supply of international financial assets that necessitates a renewed discussion on the communal real estate politics that used to be one of the main issues in party conflicts all the time.

Until now, the housing market in European cities was organized on the principles of national and local housing policies. Accordingly, the volume of new social housing was markedly reduced over the past decade, and the funding of buildings mainly gave way to subsidies for individuals. Although public housing still has a welfare function for the lower classes, large sections of the middle classes (among the inhabitants of metropolitan areas) have also profited from it, especially in the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, and also in

Austria. In this context it should be noted that social scientists in Budapest are already severely criticising privatization and demanding that the process of privatization of state-owned flats be stopped, unless measures are taken to prevent—by subsidizing individuals—the development of marked spatial and social disparities.

A wide spectrum of jobs in a protected sector of the labour market is part of Europe's welfare tradition. Thus, many educational and social institutions can be considered as such resources. Quite rightly, critics have pointed out that there is often a waste of such resources. It should, however, be stressed that an efficient public educational system is one of the most important instruments for a society's integration.

Whether the efficiency of the European economy should be retained or even strengthened by fostering the metropolises is an important issue, and so, education and research must remain central matters. Quite apart from this, new processes of economic concentration will trigger a new social issue.

The minimization of social conflicts and social justice were cornerstones of the social welfare tradition in Europe, and thus the phenomena of social disorganization did not quickly spread. Hopefully, the European metropolises can be spared a development similar to that in the USA by a careful consideration of the necessary limitations of the abandonment of the benefits of social welfare policies.

Summary

Let us summarise the most important phenomena:

- (1) The—demolished—Iron Curtain's position will remain noticeable and make itself felt well into the next millennium in the physical and socio-economic structures of urban and rural areas where Western and Eastern Europe meet.
- (2) While unification makes progress in the EU there will be individual national solutions in the post-communist countries as to settlement, development, housing and labour markets. There, older, persistent structures re-emerged in the cities once the homogenizing effects of the communist system had been removed. The changeover from plan to market and, thus, the privatization of real estate, housing and enterprises is managed according to different national strategies.
- (3) While the globalization of the economy is creating competition between large metropolises for the distribution of the growing quaternary sector, in the East only the leading cities will participate actively in the co-operation of, and competition between, the Eurometropolises and become innovation centres for new international economic and technological developments. Only the leading cities will profit from the transfer politics of the international financial markets. Moreover, links to the high-speed railway networks and an extension of international electronic data processing networks into the inner zone of the post-communist countries will, first of all, strengthen the top position these capitals hold in transport and communications.
- (4) The later the respective post-communist countries participate in European integration, the longer will the special position of their leading cities be prolonged.
- (4) Liberalization will cause a separation of social and economic politics in the EU and trigger intra-urban and inter-urban segregation processes. Similar processes will take place in the post-communist countries due to privatization processes, and the drastic reduction and privatization of the social services which have already started.
- (5) In Eastern Europe there will be no development analogous to that in the West, but many processes will be accelerated, such as: a take-off of an international real estate market; an overspill of technological progress in transportation and communication infrastructures; joint ventures relying on the possibility of dumping will negatively affect Western countries; and an increase in the national unemployment rates and social disorganization (homelessness, drug abuse, criminality etc.) in the metropolises.
- (6) In the West, the Metropolitan System is increasingly dissociated from the national systems, which have entered a phase of destabilization. Small towns tend to be passed over by the new developments. In the countries that had a planned

economy the lower rank central places have already been eliminated to a large extent.

(7) The separation of locations for labour and leisure will continue in the West, furthering the growth of leisure and cultural cities, tourist areas and retirement settlements. The formation of second home regions surrounding large cities, especially the national metropolises, is much more marked in the formerly socialist countries than in most countries in Western Europe, and they will retain their importance.

(8) In the large cities in Eastern Europe a new plutocratic upper class is coming into existence, while the formation of a Western-type middle class society has no model in the past and is, therefore, improbable in the immediate future. Haves and have-nots will be even more polarized than in Western social welfare states. Traditional social patterns of cities will re-emerge and become more accentuated. It is to be expected that a 'one-third society' will develop, while two thirds of the society will have to cope with the risks of a market economy and might fall victim to a 'new poverty'.

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