

MIGRATION FACTORS OF RURAL INHABITANTS LIVING IN THE INNER PERIPHERY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC. A CASE STUDY OF THE MICRO-REGION BYSTRICE NAD PERNŠTEJNEM

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Abstract: The paper deals with the migration factors (push and pull factors) defined and evaluated according to a questionnaire survey conducted among inhabitants (aged 18–30 years) of Bystrice nad Pernštejnem micro-region, situated in the inner periphery of the Czech Republic. Emigration leads to ageing and depopulation of rural areas. Leavers are mainly young and educated people representing the hope and prospect for the micro-region. Push factors are centrifugal factors, which make or motivate migrants to leave their native villages. Pull factors motivate migrants in their effort to move to certain target towns or regions. Young residents in the region miss more opportunities of entertainment, culture and sports, and subsequently also an offer of skilled jobs. They would also like to become independent, which is often easier in larger towns. Cities are attractive for young people by a wider range of entertainment, culture and sports (the strongest pull factor), by higher salaries and jobs that are more prestigious. Attractive for respondents is also the urban style of living, which provides greater anonymity.

Key Words: migration, push and pull factors, inner periphery, employment

INTRODUCTION

Rural areas currently feature a distinct phenomenon of young people leaving for larger towns both for education and for jobs. Willingness to change residence decreases with the increasing age and this is why the issue relates mostly to young persons. Departure of highly qualified young people has a negative impact on the development of rural areas. Living conditions in rural areas are considerably more challenging than in the cities, the more so in the peripheral regions. This has to do also with the problem of lower employment, particularly of females, school leavers and underprivileged population. Possibilities of using services are limited in dependence on the distance from towns. At the same time, young people are the only prospect for rural areas if we wish to stop their ageing and depopulation. The analysis of factors supporting/preventing the migration of young people to towns was conducted in the administrative district of Bystrice nad Pernštejnem municipality with extended powers (MEP) in the Vysočina administrative region.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Bystrice nad Pernštejnem is a town located in the district of Žďár nad Sázavou, in the eastern part of the Vysočina Region. It represents a municipality with extended powers and its administrative district includes 39 communities, which corresponds to average in the Region. The administrative district of Bystrice nad Pernštejnem neighbours with the South Moravian (Jihomoravský) Region in the east, in the north-west it has a short border with the Pardubice (Pardubický) Region, in the west it neighbours with communities of the administrative district Nové Město na Moravě, and in the south with communities of the administrative district Velké Meziříčí. To the date of 1 January 2015, the official population of the town amounted to 8 343 persons, with the number of inhabitants slightly falling every year; for example in 2013, the population amounted to 8 822 (Czech Statistical Office 2016). The town Bystrice nad Pernštejnem has about 40% of the population of the administrative district. In 2015, the

age index (the number of people aged 65 and over per 100 youths under age 15) was 136.7 and unemployment in the same year reached 8.25%. Balance of migration and total population growth in individual administrative districts of municipalities with extended powers in the district of Žďár nad Sázavou in 2014 are shown in Figure 1. Balance of migration for 2015 was -43 and total population growth/loss was -41. The micro-region of Bystřice nad Pernštejnem can be characterized as an inner periphery in the Czech Republic. Emigrating from peripheral rural areas are mainly young and educated people who are lacking most good job opportunities as well as social and cultural contacts (Venhorst et al. 2010). With abundant nature and cultural monuments, the micro-region of Bystřice nad Perštejnem has a sound potential for the development of tourism.

Musil and Müller (2008) dealt with peripheries in connection with possible social exclusion. Most dictionaries explain the term periphery generally as "something on the edge". In the narrower sense, periphery means a marginal zone. In sociology, the meaning of periphery was until recently connected only with the outskirts of cities. In the contemporary sense, it has been considerably extended for use in sociology, political science and geography. The essence of the concept consists in discerning the economic and also the social space into the core and the periphery. Inner peripheries of the Czech Republic are usually continuous territories situated on the edges of metropolitan regions and on edges of the catchment areas of regional centres. They are characterized by high shares of residents working in agriculture and by low population density. These primary features bring about a relatively low education level of the local population, high proportion of commuters for work outside the community, low share of persons working in the tertiary sector, low percentage of foreigners in the population or low level of technical infrastructure.

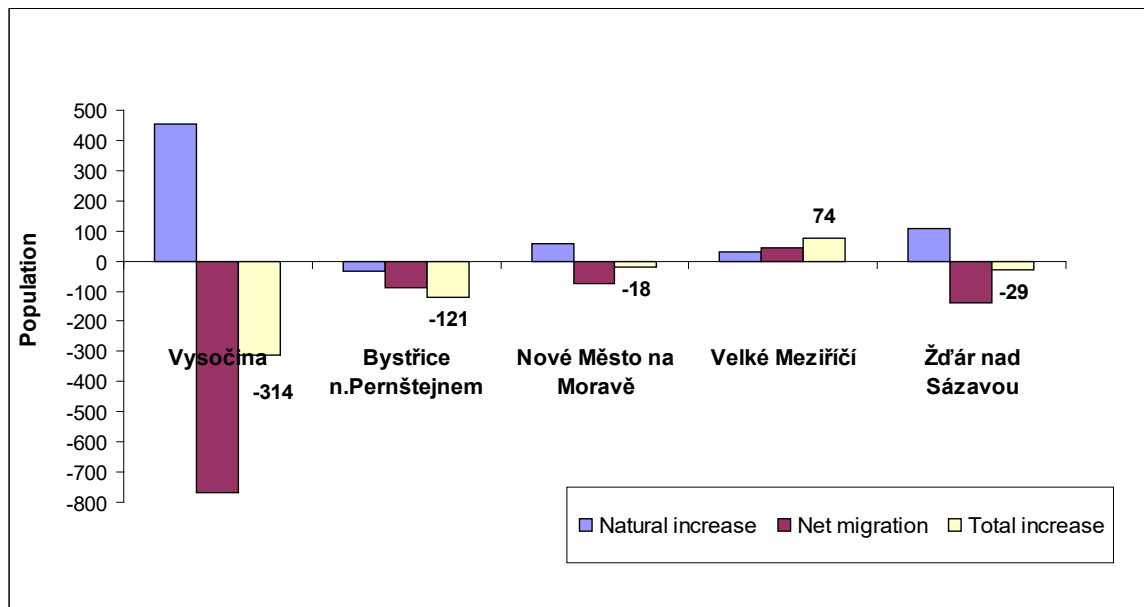
A great part of the economically active population in Bystřice nad Pernštejnem works in industries with problematic prospects for retraining. Compensation for jobs lost in connection with the closure of uranium mines in Rožná was sought firstly in the localization of new industries. However, the town could hardly compete with other regions featuring better transport infrastructure and traffic connections. In spite of this obvious disadvantage, it succeeded in having attracted several new enterprises (Vaishar et al. 2002). The location of plants of some other companies is currently negotiated. However, there are concerns that newly created jobs will require less skilled labour and will be remunerated by low wages.

Migration of young people is often explained in media as personal self-fulfilment or inevitable movement (Nugin 2014). Changes in the migration behaviour of population are affected by mutual preferences of the population and characteristics (conditions: pull and push factors) in the target and source areas of migration. Since these conditions are evaluated primarily in dependence on the life cycle of households and individuals, general changes in the society relating to population ageing, diversification of life styles and changes in the character of housing and work play a significant role, too (Ouředníček et al. 2013).

The research objective was to define so-called push and pull factors inciting young people to leave the countryside. Push factors are centrifugal and force or motivate the migrants to leave their native community (e.g. unemployment, poor quality of life etc.). Pull factors lead the migrants to the effort to move to certain target towns or regions (Dorigo and Tobler 1983). Nevertheless, there are also factors, which "hold" many residents in their original homes, e.g. family background, social ties with friends and acquaintances, asset situation, habit and adjustment to life in the countryside etc. If we could define such influences, we would be able to issue specific recommendations and measures leading to their enhancement and to subsequent maintaining the population in rural areas.

The research was conducted in the first half of the year 2016. We studied statistic databases of the Czech Statistical Office and based on the study, we established the migration growth and total population growth in the concerned area. In order to assess the push and pull factors, we conducted a questionnaire survey with young people up to 30 years. The most abundant group of respondents consisted of students from secondary schools in Bystřice nad Pernštejnem because this social group stands only before the decision-making as to rooting in the region or mobility. Other groups included university students and graduates, leavers from higher vocational schools, employees etc. The questionnaires were distributed both by the classic form and electronically via the Survio.com web interface.

Figure 1 Population increase in individual administrative districts and total in the Vysočina region, year 2014 (according to Czech Statistical Office 2016)



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire was filled by 92 respondents of whom 65.2% were females and 34.8% males. More than a half of the respondents fell in the age category of 18–19 years, i.e. secondary school students on whom the research was primarily focused. Other respondents were aged 20–30 years.

The strongest push factor is according to the respondents the lack of prestigious/well-paid jobs in rural areas (see Figure 2). The second strongest factor (44.4% of respondents) is the lack of cultural activities and entertainment. The option of moving away from the family, i.e. independence, gained nearly the same number of answers. We also recorded the option "other" represented by the factor of low number of friends in the village. Surprisingly, only a quarter of respondents mentioned the factor of "lower wage". In total, we evaluated six different factors.

The pull factors of migration were examined by asking the following question: "If you plan to live in a big city/medium-sized town, what reasons do you have for that?". Results showed that the strongest factor is "more entertainment, cultural activities and sports". This factor was followed by "better paid job" and "more prestigious job". A quarter of respondents find attractive the urban life style with greater anonymity. The answer "other" was not recorded; the respondents put up with the offered eight options. The results show that it is not only economic reasons that explain for migration. Many people would be able to find a corresponding job in the region but are lacking cultural and leisure time activities. This particularly applies to residents with higher education or people who are socially or culturally committed, artistic and creative people for whom rural regions do not offer a sufficiently diverse array of conditions for existence (Ouředníček et al. 2011).

The question "What reason you have to stay living in the rural area?" brought surprising results. The highest percentage of answers (nearly 75%) mentioned "nature and landscape", and this answer was not favoured in relation to the young generation of residents at creating the questionnaire. However, the "clean environment" related to this answer gained hardly 47%. The remaining respondents were either not convinced about the clean environment in the region or it was not greatly important for them. Other significant factors for the respondents were proximity to family, relatives, friends and acquaintances. The least frequented answers included satisfactory job and habit, which is not surprising because habit in general plays a greater role in older residents and the option of satisfactory job was less frequented since the majority of respondents were students.

Figure 2 Push factors of migration

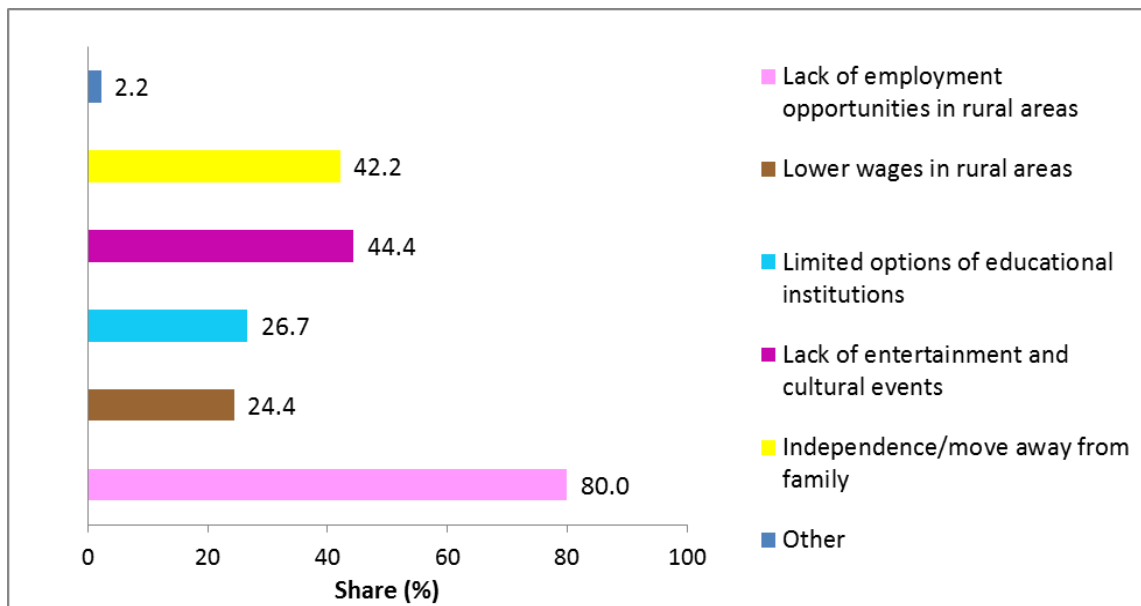
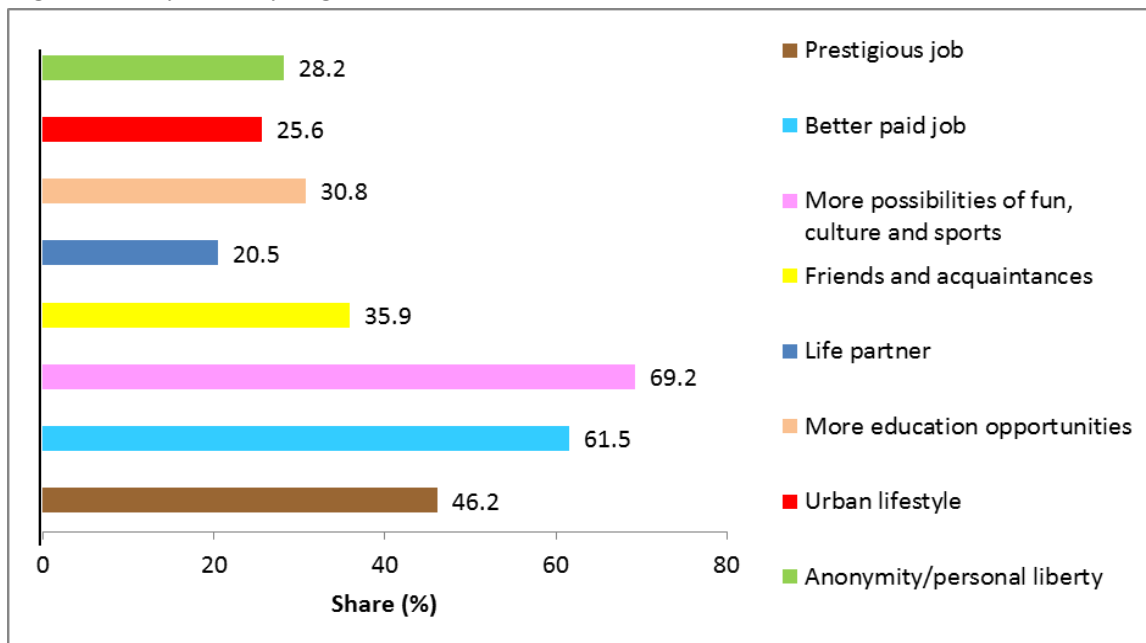


Figure 3 Pull factors of migration



Only 13.7% of respondents were decided to settle down in the town of their current/future university studies (question was targeted onto the secondary and university students). Nevertheless, the option of not settling down there was chosen by 42.5% of respondents, i.e. a considerably larger number. The general question "Would you like to move to a big town (over 100 thousand inhabitants) or a medium-sized town (20–100 thousand inhabitants)?" brought a similar result. A negative response was given by 40.2% of respondents; nearly 30% plan for such a departure mentioning however the option of "temporarily", which is likely relating to their study at university or secondary vocational school (Figure 4). These answers favour the interpretation that more young people have strong ties with their native region and do not long to move into the town, even at the cost of worse position on the labour market. This judgement cannot be considered unambiguous though since young people may frequently change their opinion, the conditions may change or the presented questionnaire cannot cover all eventualities.

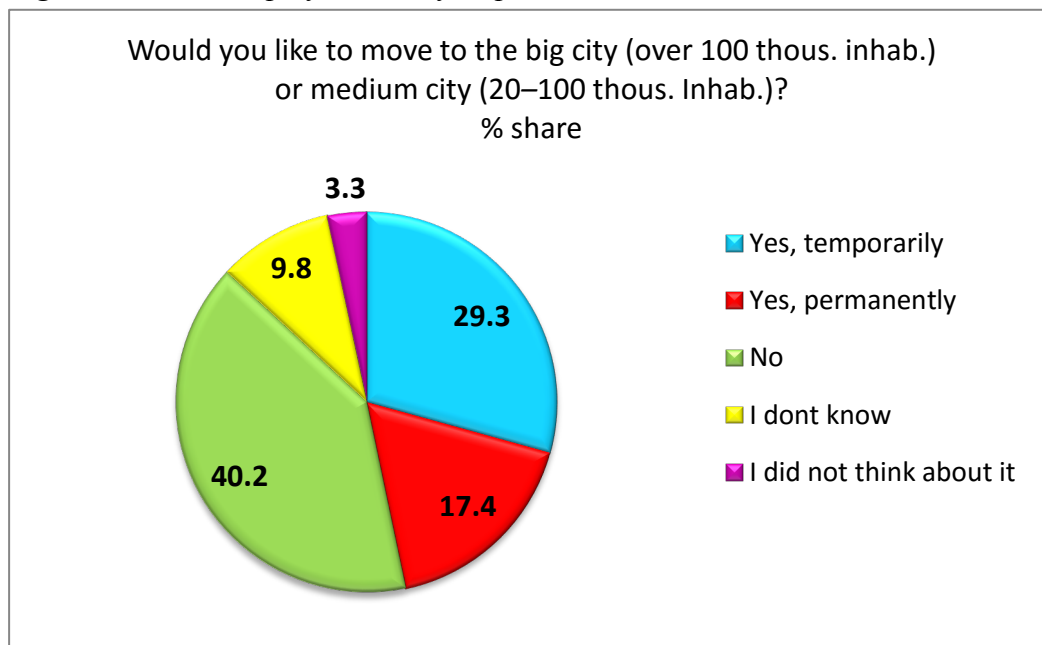
Migration has been and will be present because a part of young people will leave for the town either voluntarily or under the pressure of circumstances such as unemployment, offer of unskilled work etc.

A greater part of the inquired secondary school students prefers the city of Brno for their university studies, which is in the closest distance, readily accessible by traffic, and offers a wide range of schools and study lines. The Moravian metropolis is followed by Prague and popular Olomouc. Some answers mentioned study abroad (Bristol, Cardiff) and Opava, which is more distant in terms of traffic. Regions mentioned by the respondents as most attractive for living were Vysočina, South Moravian (Jihomoravský) Region and Prague, which was expected and corresponds with the above facts.

Willingness to move for work to an unknown town/community is relatively high in the respondents, which is apparently given by their age composition. "Yes" was declared by more than 60% of respondents. However, 33.7% of respondents would choose the option only in extreme cases. On the other hand, "no" was claimed only by 12% of respondents. In general, the willingness of the Czech population to move for work is relatively low and is often replaced by daily and non-daily commuting (Lux and Sunega 2007).

Migration may be caused by material poverty because of unemployment. Globally endangered are females more than males and their situation is worse than that of males also in terms of poverty level (Sundari 2005). The decision-making about moving is however affected not only by the economic factors. Many social, psychological and environmental reasons play a role, too. Important is a limit for acceptance of the load of commuting for work and services. If a majority of young people teeters on the edge of endurance, then the worsening of services and labour market in rural areas would further advance depopulation. However, Ouředníček et al. (2011) maintain that even a slight life quality improvement in rural areas may lead to the stabilization and activation of life even in small villages. As a great issue, they can see the poor traffic accessibility of villages, which did not show at all as a push factor in the results of our questionnaire and hence does not seem essential for young residents. The problem acquires importance rather with senior people. Other push factors mentioned by the authors include the already known "lack of jobs", namely skilled work, and the lack of cultural and leisure time activities and sports. Activities should be directed to the local and micro-regional level in order to activate the local human potential (Ouředníček et al. 2011).

Figure 4 Settlement preferences of respondents



CONCLUSION

The paper presents push and pull factors of migration according to the questionnaire survey conducted in 2016 in the micro-region of Bystrice nad Pernštejnem, which can be characterized as peripheral and depopulating. Emigration leads to the ageing and depopulation of rural areas, which often have to face cumulative circular causality (Myrdal 1957) when the worsening of one factor leads to the worsening of another factor, which again leads to the worsening of the first factor. Leaving are mainly young and educated people who are still not rooted in the region, have no commitments and often can compare life in other localities (towns) and in rural areas from where they come. These people lack more entertainment, cultural activities and sports as well as an offer of skilled work. The issue of emigration from rural regions should be dealt with by the society in order to prevent passivity and the gradual deterioration of living conditions in some regions.

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