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The relevance of “Western” theoretical concepts for investigations of the margins of post-socialist cities: the case of Prague

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ABSTRACT
The exceptional dynamics of urban change in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries sparked an almost immediate revitalization of urban studies during the 1990s. In academia, this interest implied an urgent need to make use of theoretical concepts that would inform the description and interpretation of observed new social and spatial phenomena and processes. Consequently, developmentalism – the belief in the realignment of former socialist cities to their Western counterparts and in the gradual “correction” of their socialist character – became the dominant paradigm of urban studies throughout the 1990s in most CEE countries. A strong confidence in the explanatory and predictive function of theoretical concepts that functioned well in Western cities was typical of this period. However, more than two decades of post-socialist urban research have led to the recognition of the limited utility of some imported Western concepts. This paper documents these trends using the example of the outer areas of Czech (post-socialist) cities, which, having been shaped by socialist planning practice for decades, convinced many CEE urban scholars of the need to seek alternative theoretical concepts. It is hoped that this may create fertile ground for new ideas, which would be then exported as a part of wider and internationally more relevant urban theory.

Introduction
One of the most remarkable trends in the field of social geography in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries since 1989 has been an unprecedented flourishing of urban geography. This can be illustrated by the growing number of scientific projects, international conferences, publications, and citations dealing with CEE (Kubeš 2013; Sjöberg 2014) in the field of urban geography.2 Among the most visible results are the publications and conferences originating from
international cooperation within the Cities after Transition (CAT) network, established following the Inaugural Nordic Geographers Meeting in Lund, Sweden, in 2005. A series of thematic issues of international journals, which resulted from the subsequent bi-annual “CAT-ferences” (Borén and Gentile 2007; Gentile, Tammaru, and van Kempen 2012; Bernt, Gentile, and Marcińczak 2015; Ouředníček and Pospíšilová, forthcoming; and of course this issue of Eurasian Geography and Economics), as well as several edited volumes on various urban topics (Sýkora and Stanilov 2014; Tammaru et al. 2016), play an important role in this development. In the case of the former Czechoslovakia, the reappearance of urban geography in the academic curriculum even during the 1990s and the growing demand for urban applied research from various stakeholders are examples of this trend.

There were several reasons for this upswing of urban geography in Czechia in particular. First, there were the exceptional dynamics of urban change and the concentration of political, economic, and societal transformation processes in urban centers in the CEE countries, which induced a demand for urban research. Second, and as a consequence of the first reason, urban studies offer a relatively good theoretical base on the general aspects of the transformation because the most important changes took place within the metropolitan regions of the CEE countries. Third, urban studies were not included in the core of geographical research under socialism, which was characterized by research into settlement geography rather than internal urban structures and processes. Thus, a considerable research gap generated a demand for urban studies while sustaining a growing interest among students pursuing their graduate degrees. Fourth, the newly opened borders also opened up the academic environment, strongly increasing accessibility to foreign literature, facilitating attendance at international conferences, and enabling collaborative research among scholars based in the East and West, which was almost impossible under socialism (Ferenčuhová 2016). Fifth, especially within Czech academia, the sociologists who had dominant positions within urban studies were able – unlike the geographers – to publish abroad (Musil 1968, 1987; Matějů, Večerník, and Jeřábek 1979; Musil and Ryšavý 1983). Since 1989, these scholars have reoriented their research toward “big” (often non-spatial) topics closely related to the new societal transformations (democracy, elections, governance). This development opened up a significant realm of urban studies to social geography, emphasizing the so called “new socio-spatial differentiation” (Ouředníček and Temelová 2011); that is, processes which were not present (or studied) under socialism, including suburbanization (Ouředníček 2007; Špačková and Ouředníček 2012), inner city revitalization (Temelová 2007), gentrification (Sýkora 2005), homelessness (Temelová et al. 2015), counterurbanization (Šimon 2012), and reurbanization (Ouředníček, Šimon, and Kopečná 2015).

The revitalization of urban studies during the 1990s and the emergence of new processes of urban transformation imply an urgent need to make use of theoretical concepts that would inform the description of the new phenomena and processes observed, providing a satisfactory explanation of the present, and tools
to predict the possible future development of these processes. The main objective of this paper is to add a typically geographical perspective by discussing the relevance and applicability of selected theoretical concepts on different geographical scales and for different parts (zones) of post-socialist cities. As we will see, there are major differences in the applicability of theoretical concepts, be it at the level of the national urban systems or within the internal structure of individual cities. This will be documented based on the example of Czech cities, and Prague in particular. Special attention will be paid to the margins, or outer areas of Czech (post-socialist) cities, which, having been shaped by socialist planning practice for decades, convinced many urban scholars of the need to seek alternative theoretical concepts (Šmídová 2012; Špaček 2012; Temelová and Slezáková 2014; Grossmann, Kabisch, and Kabisch 2015). This trend toward seeking alternative concepts and explanations is not limited to studies of the post-socialist city, but rather reflects an increasing sensitivity to the experience of “ordinary cities” across the globe (Robinson 2006; Edensor and Jayne 2012).

The paper begins with a discussion of Western hegemony and the developmental approach in CEE urban research, which is aimed at sharpening the research question. Two geographical perspectives on urban research are then added as a specific contribution to a differentiated approach to the study of CEE cities. The main part of the paper is focused on the margins of post-socialist cities and important differences between post-socialist and Western cities, where the limited relevance of Western theoretical concepts can be demonstrated. The article concludes with a discussion of the role of the transfer of theoretical knowledge from Western literature and the possible contribution of CEE urban studies to wider international theory.

**Western hegemony and the developmental approach in CEE urban studies**

The need for an appropriate explanatory and predictive basis within post-socialist urban geography, coupled with the newly opened borders, the rejection of the socialist past, and the admiration of everything Western, have created ideal conditions for an uncritical implantation of Western theoretical concepts, for the westernization of the spoken language in general, and in academic vocabulary in particular. Soon after the Velvet Revolution (the non-violent takeover in Czechoslovakia) authoritative Western textbooks emerged in our libraries, among them the third edition of *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Johnston, Gregory, and Smith 1994), which still serves as the basic “bible” for students of social geography. The latest edition (Gregory et al. 2009) illustrates the dominance or even hegemony of Anglo-American perspectives and terminology by the very unbalanced proportions of the contributors by institutional affiliation (see Table 1). Thus, 97% of the dictionary’s contributors, and a comparable share of the top-level knowledge these contributors represent, are based in three dominant states, and none are
from post-socialist countries. Within urban studies there is an additional textbook that is widely used in Czechia (Knox and Pinch 2010). In the introductory chapter of *Urban Social Geography*, the authors stress the principal differences between European and North American cities and want to “guard against cultural myopia” (5). Unfortunately, it then completely overlooks developments in the post-socialist countries, as the only topic discussed within the book is the inflow of Polish workers to UK towns and cities. As a result of the concomitant widespread usage of Western terminology and theory, Czech geographers began looking for processes such as gentrification, urban sprawl, and segregation in our cities, and we began comparing the development of Czech cities with their Western counterparts. Typical of this was the empirical verification of Western theoretical concepts within Czech cities. A similar empiricism was present elsewhere in post-socialist urban research and has been widely criticized for its lack of a comparative perspective and investigation of isolated case studies (Wiest 2012; Sjöberg 2014).

Timár (2004, 536) offers evidence of several types of Western hegemony in academic life and argues that this hegemony “may also contribute to the preservation of the already dominant empiricism, and delay the launch of the process of working out theories that are valid for the circumstances here and able to interpret post-socialism.” Moreover, the direct comparison with the Western world supported the submissive position of feeling behind the West not only in the economic and social standard of living, but also in terms of the quality of research output (Ferenčuhová 2012, 71). In the literature, many so called rectification processes, which would transform “wrong” socialist developments back into the “right” capitalist or market-oriented trajectories were typical during the 1990s (Dostál and Hampl 1994; Musil 2002). An infinite confidence in the explanatory and predictive function of theoretical concepts that functioned well in Western cities still survives in many respects today.

In a country report on the development of social geography in Czechia, the Czech geographers Hampl, Dostál, and Drbohlav (2007, 478) claim that “post-1989 Czech socio-geographical research has primarily been catching up with current trends in international research” and conclude that “in view of the development of other social sciences, human geography occupies a marginal position” (483). Slavomíra Ferenčuhová (2012) described this approach as a form of developmentalism—the belief in the realignment of socialist cities to their Western counterparts, and in the gradual “correction” of socialist development— as one of the
dominant paradigms of urban studies during the entire 1990s within the CEE countries. This developmentalism and catching up approach (Ferenčuhová 2012) have consequently raised the question of whether or not post-socialist urban research can contribute to the development of international knowledge in urban studies (Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008; Jauhiainen 2009; Grubbauer 2012; Sjöberg 2014; Ferenčuhová 2016). Similarly, the main question raised by the editors of this issue is, how could or should research on post-socialist cities be able to export ideas outside the CEE countries (cf. Sjöberg 2014)? We can start to contribute to this question with the less ambitious but more useful effort to improve our own urban research by asking: What theoretical concepts and research methods might explain and predict the development of spatial patterns and processes within the margins of CEE cities?

Geographical perspectives on post-socialist urban research

To further refine this research question, here I add two spatial (geographical) perspectives. First, the spatial scale of urban research; that is, whether we focus on the national settlement system or on individual cities. Secondly, the differentiation of urban spatial structure; that is, which parts of the metropolitan region we want to study. These specifications can bring new light into the classical debate about differences and similarities between Western and post-socialist cities, which are consequently important for the selection of theoretical concepts and research methods.

When discussing urban development at the level of the entire settlement system, we can trace many common features of urban systems development in both the western and eastern parts of Europe. We can follow the idea of Musil (1977) that modern urbanization is a universal process that forms settlement systems in all developed countries in a very similar way (see also, Enyedi 1996). Long-term historically rooted processes such as the establishment of the settlement system, industrialization, and urbanization are similar in both Western and Eastern Europe. These processes formed Czech cities even before the division of the continent into a bi-polar region. Consequently, settlement structures are largely comparable between Western and post-socialist cities (Timár and Váradi 2001). Therefore, the general development of the settlement system is often studied in a similar way, using for example stage theories of urban development (van den Berg et al. 1982) or differential urbanization (Geyer and Kontuly 1993; Geyer 1996).

The various historical stages of urban development have brought successive waves of urban growth. Urbanization processes formed specific zones arranged more or less concentrically away from the city core to the periphery. Considering the developmental approach, Wiest (2012, 834) sees a specifically concentric model as a kind of urban prototype and the reduction of comparative research to the “question of how a certain case study relates to the supposed prototype” and criticizes many post-socialist scholars for using this concentric model. It is indeed
paradoxical that the concentric zones used in Prague were inspired not by Burgess, but by a study of Antonín Boháč, who used five concentric zones for a thorough analysis of the internal structure of Prague two years before Burgess's chapter presenting this often-cited model was published (Boháč 1923; Burgess 1925). Consequently, the concentric zonal model was employed as a useful generalization of the development of urban zones in Prague during the pre-socialist, socialist, and post-socialist periods, and should not be seen simply as a Western concept (Boháč 1923; Moscheles 1937; Musil 1968; Ouředníček and Temelová 2009).

Using this idealized model of concentric zones for Prague, we can distinguish between zones established sequentially during the medieval era, industrialization, the first half of twentieth century, under socialism, and during the transformation era. Although urban structures were modified in all parts of the city under socialism, their historical layers remained fairly stable. Physical and functional structure and to a considerable degree also the division of the city into “attractive” and “less attractive quarters” within the pre-war delimitation of Greater Prague remained more or less the same. From research conducted in Prague, we can argue that 40 years of socialism were not able to overlay the physical structure and morphology of the pre-socialist (medieval, industrial) city, nor in many respects the social status of pre-socialist city (Špačková, Pospíšilová, and Ouředníček, forthcoming). The most remarkable imprint of the socialist planners on the pre-war internal structure of Prague was transport construction, including three underground lines and the realization of the north-south highway (magistrala) through the city center. However, there was almost no new construction within the inner city except for several smaller housing estates built during the 1960s and very limited investment in the existing (pre-war) housing stock.

Immediately after the Velvet Revolution, urban scholars began predicting the transformation of socialist urban structures (Musil 1991), and concepts such as commercialization, gentrification, and urban regeneration were widely discussed. Even if these processes of inner city transformation in the CEE countries show partial differences from Western cities (Gentile and Marcińczak 2014; Grossmann et al. 2011), we would say that imported Western concepts quite successfully explain and also predict development in these parts of post-socialist metropolitan regions. It is admirable that Jiří Musil predicted all the main changes of Prague’s internal structure during the early 1990s: expansion of the city center, commercialization (Musil 1991), and later also the gentrification of selected inner city neighborhoods (Musil 1993, 902). All these processes to some extent started to transform Prague’s urban structure, but not all predictions based on Western theory materialized. Musil (1991, 35) influenced by the social ecology of the Chicago school, predicted that a “new transition zone will emerge in the territory of older residential quarters from the nineteenth century” with deteriorating parts of inner city neighborhoods. This did not happen, as small-scale privatization, restitution of housing stock, revitalization, and rent regulation significantly deflected the degradation of inner city neighborhoods in Prague (Sýkora 2005; Temelová 2007).
The new processes of touristification, gentrification, revitalization, and commercialization have created a similar environment within the inner city of Prague, as in many Western European cities. The physical structure of inner city Prague survived the socialist period without significant changes, and small-scale privatization and restitution processes have also contributed to the re-establishment of the functional structure of inner city neighborhoods based on market prices. However, considering the developmental concept, I would argue that it was not an imitation of the contemporary processes and policies imported from Western Europe, but rather the re-establishment of some features of the previous functioning of the pre-socialist city, which were similar to the development of Western cities until the first half of the twentieth century (Temelová et al. 2015). This is explicitly commented on by Musil (2005, 2), who describes the socio-spatial changes of post-socialist cities as

... a kind of reconstruction, restructuration processes. The existing structure and fabric of these cities is relatively successfully assimilating the shocks of societal transformations. To a large extent these Central European cities are returning back to their past; that is, to their pre-socialist social ecology. We can thus speak about a kind of urban rectification processes. They are concerned mainly with the socio-spatial structure of the older i.e. pre-war and inner city zones.

It is clear that this is a quite different type of rectification process than the core ideas of the developmental approach described above, where there is no ideological/political discourse and it is historical path-dependency that plays the crucial role in explanation.

**Housing estates: social housing, privatization, and segregation**

Significant differences between Western Europe and CEE can be found in the development of outer parts of metropolitan regions during the second half of the twentieth century. There were similarities in de-concentration processes, and the construction of large residential complexes of multi-story tenement houses was similar in many European countries on both sides of the former Iron Curtain (Szelényi 1996; Stanilov 2007). The extent of housing estates, the allocation of new housing, forms of ownership, and the consequent social and demographic structure of households were substantially different in these new parts of metropolitan regions. I argue that these areas and their origins and development under socialism led to a specific physical and social environment that has no parallel in Western Europe, and consequently it is difficult to employ traditional Western theoretical concepts in these cases. This can be shown from the examples of three mutually interconnected topics discussed for housing estates: the housing estate as social housing, privatization, and segregation. It can be seen from the perspective of the developmental approach elaborated above and the experience from some Western cities in the following simplified way: if social housing located in the large pre-fab housing estates is privatized, it gradually becomes segregated.
with limited public sector control over future development. In contrast, there was the forecast by Musil (1991, 35), who already in 1991 predicted that “the estates will be ‘humanized’ by additional constructions, changes in shapes and by other aesthetical and functional improvements.” Failures of the three imported concepts for the specific context of Prague’s housing estates are illustrated below.

In Czechoslovakia, the so-called Complex Housing Construction Policy gave preference to the housing needs of younger families with children, and in Prague also to some selected professions important for the national or city’s economy and administration. During the two successive enlargements in 1968 and 1974, a total 60 surrounding municipalities were incorporated into the administrative territory of Prague, mostly as land reserves for the development of industrial companies and new housing construction. Then, two rings of housing estates were created in Prague during the 1950s–1990s (some of them within the former built-up area but mostly as greenfield development on incorporated areas; see Fig. 1). According to the 1991 Population Census, 43% of Prague’s population lived in housing estates by the end of the socialist period (Špačková, Pospíšilová, and Ouředníček, forthcoming). In the early 1990s, this concentration made any radical solution of “housing estate problems,” such as demolition, practically impossible. The main question for planners and politicians was, what should we do with the housing estates?

**Figure 1.** Prague’s housing estates. Source: SÚRM, cartographic processing by Jiří Nemeškal.
Considering the specific position, structure, and extent of socialist housing estates, any inspiration for practical solutions or predictions of the future development from Western cities was problematic. It is very important to stress that socialist housing estates – in contrast to those in many Western European cities – were not, and still mostly are not, social housing neighborhoods, even if this is still not widely accepted in the West. The post-socialist housing estates are socially far more mixed than those in Western Europe and the United States (Eskinasi 1995; van Kempen et al. 2005; Kährk and Tammaru 2010). Musterd and van Kempen (2007, 313) use “social-rented dwellings” as a general term for housing estates, while in Prague and many other post-socialist cities the housing estate stock is neither social nor, as a consequence of privatization, predominantly rental (see below). The over-representation of younger, more educated, and white collar workers on Prague’s housing estates was well described during the 1970s (Matějů, Večerník, and Jeřábek 1979).

Virtually immediately after the Velvet Revolution, we can find the common rhetoric of the dark future of housing estates in CEE countries, including threads of new segregation, physical and social degradation, and falling prices and rents (Maier 2003). The risk of ghettoization and massive out-migration was described elsewhere during the 1990s (Szelenyi 1996; Wießner 1999). The dangers of privatization with consequent limitation of state and municipal control over the future development of housing estates and the impact of privatization on subsequent degradation of the physical and social environment were predicted. Eskinasi (1995) argued on the basis of research conducted in Prague that the introduction of the free market could encourage an increasing residential segregation and some neighborhoods may develop into “ghettos” of lower-income groups. The risks of privatization and growing segregation were among the commonly predicted problems of the future housing estate development.

It is surprising that there is still a prevailing discourse that the benefits of privatization – for example, privatization of more spacious or better located dwellings – were distributed unfairly, again mainly into the hands of better-off people who were privileged under socialism (Gentile and Marcińczak 2014). Although this may be true in many CEE cities, this model can be perceived quite differently for Prague in relation to various housing types: the best housing located in villa quarters was paradoxically owner-occupied throughout the socialist era, so these people mostly gained nothing from privatization, and the same is true for the rest of the housing stock allocated in family houses of various quality within the outer city and periphery (which together house 26% of the population in Prague). Tenement houses of the city center and inner city (31% of population) were mostly restituted, which is the symbolic process of rectification described above and was an effort by the state to remedy past unfairness. The percentage of restituted houses in tenement house districts in the inner city of Prague varies between 65 and 75% (Sýkora 1996). The quality of tenement apartments was highly variable, ranging from neglected apartments in working class quarters, like Žižkov and Karlín, to
more spacious and comfortable ones in Vinohrady and Podolí. In fact, those who gained the most were people who privatized housing estate apartments for significantly lower than market prices, but no serious analysis could confirm that these people belong to privileged strata of Prague’s population. Of course, they obtained apartments under socialism, but they make up 43% of Prague’s citizens and not some select privileged minority. Moreover, according to research into socioeconomic status, the population of housing estates was and is rather “average” (Špačková, Pospíšilová, and Ouředníček, forthcoming). Considering the size and location of these apartments, they are rather smaller and less central than the majority of other housing in Prague.

Thus, the housing reform that transferred apartments to sitting tenants, as in other countries in transition (Lux 2003; Murie et al. 2005), had a surprising positive effect on housing estates areas in Prague. Among the conditions that characterize the situation of housing estates in Prague were a good geographic location (mostly with good accessibility to the center by subway), a much higher proportion of housing estates in total housing stock, a tradition of living in tenement houses, an enduring social mix, private investment (often illegal) during socialism (Maier 2003), and also cultural qualities and symbolic attachment of the housing estate population (Špaček 2012). In addition, massive state support during the early 2000s led to substantial improvement of the physical state of panel houses and public spaces within the estates (c.f. Grossmann, Kabisch, and Kabisch 2015 for Leipzig). In Prague, one more specific condition plays an important role, which is the relatively decentralized self-government in the 57 city districts. Although the rather chaotic development of this decentralized self-government during the early 1990s caused some problems and it is rather fragmented, in the case of those districts made up of housing estates, the autonomous self-government can manage problems relating to specific conditions in these areas. This autonomy, especially in the case of the large “towns” (South Town, South-Western Town) creates a kind of local identity with their own elected representatives and mayors, offices, policies (their own housing policy and rules of privatization), emblems, flags, local newspapers, and sport clubs.

Increasing out-migration and segregation of housing estate neighborhoods in Prague is then far from a reality. Even if a proportion of the population move from apartments to suburban housing (Ouředníček 2007), the high price of housing estate apartments functions as a barrier to the in-migration of lower status people. Privatization of the housing stock led to stabilization of the estates’ residents. The relative stability and below-average rates of out-migration in comparison with other parts of Prague can be confirmed using migration characteristics (see Table 2). Among the six types of residential areas, housing estates display the lowest in-migration and net migration rates and the second-lowest gross migration (fluctuation). Today, inhabitants of Prague’s high-rise panel-built neighborhoods, including the elderly, are mostly owner-occupiers, the residential attractiveness of Prague’s housing estates is relatively high, and the majority of people are satisfied
with their current residences and do not intend to move away from Prague’s housing estates (Temelová et al. 2011; Temelová and Slezáková 2014; see also Grossmann, Kabisch, and Kabisch 2015; Herfert, Neugebauer, and Smigiel 2013; Kährik and Tammaru 2010). All these empirical analyses are in contrast with the conclusions of a comparative study by Musterd and van Kempen (2007, 326), who “find the highest share of unsatisfied trapped residents in Eastern Europe.” The difference may have resulted from the fact that Czechia did not participate in the RESTATE project and maybe also from the specific situation in Prague, which differs from other cities in Czechia and is by no means a typical example of housing estate development. So when we add another geographical factor; that is, regional differentiation of the quality and development of housing estates, it is clear that in the specific context outside the capital city, the situation is very different. The socioeconomic and ethnic status of new migrants to the city is highly dependent on the overall economic situation of the city and surrounding region, which creates highly variable housing prices. This means that in considering regionally sensitive forecasts of future development of particular housing estates, both local and regional views of housing estate differentiation can be a crucial lens through which we should see various trajectories of housing estate development in the CEE countries (Temelová et al. 2011).

New residential mix and mobility

When we admit that selected explanations and predictions based on Western experiences have limited relevance within the post-socialist context, what approaches can be then used for research into such a unique post-socialist social environment as the housing estates?

First, it has been confirmed empirically on several occasions that socio-spatial poverty traps are mainly generated at the level of particular houses or blocks of houses in the form of fine-grained spatial patterns in Prague (Ouředníček et al. 2016; Špačková, Pospíšilová, and Ouředníček, forthcoming), other Czech cities (Temelová et al. 2011), and CEE cities (Marcińczak and Sagan 2011; Grossmann, Kabisch, and Kabisch 2015). The previous greater homogeneity of larger spatial units (cadasters) or housing types has disappeared with the post-socialist transformations. Instead of segregation of quarters and neighborhoods, there are pockets of poverty, individual houses, or even households – a social mix that could also perceived as socio-spatial polarization on a micro-level. In addition to the already observed high variability of socioeconomic indicators (Ouředníček et al. 2016), we also confirmed this fine-grained structure in the case of demographic and ethnic status (Špačková, Pospíšilová, and Ouředníček, forthcoming). These structures are produced by new socio-spatial processes, which are driven predominantly by the better-off population, that have taken place in the previously least attractive localities. This is the case in all parts of Prague, as we can document the gentrification of working class neighborhoods within the inner city, new development
within the housing estates and outer city, and suburbanization of formerly lower status peripheral parts (Sýkora 2005; Ouředníček 2007; Kährik et al. 2015; Špačková, Pospíšilová, and Ouředníček, forthcoming). As a result, very different populations often live side by side (young and old, low and high social status, Czechs and foreigners), and it is symptomatic of Prague that people are willing and able to live in such mixed neighborhoods. However, these results suggest that research into Prague’s spatial patterns should preferably be carried out on the level of most detailed spatial units and that an interpretation of research results based on higher geographical levels should be cautious (Špačková, Pospíšilová, and Ouředníček, forthcoming). Mixed socio-spatial structure on the level of quarters or neighborhoods can in fact hide polarization between different localities, as already illustrated in the case of Prague (Ouředníček 2007), Bucharest (Marcińczak et al. 2014), or Riga (Krišjāne, Bērziņš, and Kratovitš 2016). Consequently, to measure such specific socio-spatial differentiation or segregation, we definitely need some improvement of older methods, especially considering the micro-geographical approach, and we also need to try to detect city users who have escaped statistical evidence for various reasons (see below).

One question that I find interesting is, why do different social and ethnic groups live together in Czech cities? Although there is no empirical material, I would argue that the lower tendency to social segregation and separation results from several interconnected factors which differ from the Western context. Among these are the much lower rate of in-migration, different sources of in-migration and international migration with ethnically and economically closer areas, and cultures which then produce less social distance and more common behavior, life style, and housing preferences. The majority population is not fundamentally more affluent than in-migrants, as some of them came from the West and some from the East and they mostly do not belong to any specific homogenous socioeconomic stratum. The indigenous Czech people sit in between these differentiated populations with a lesser social distance either to higher or lower status migrants. The process of segregation is consequently much slower, and the mixing of different social, economic, and ethnic groups in integration processes is easier than in Western cities (Přidalová and Ouředníček, forthcoming). This is of course the case of foreigners (immigrants), while social distance to Roma people (as in all European countries; see Burjanek 2001) is much greater. Segregation of Roma is the major social problem within certain Czech cities, especially in deindustrialized regions with high unemployment (Čada 2015).11

Second, one more characteristic of contemporary cities must be added, which is the increase in spatial mobility and blurred boundaries between different types of mobility. Investigation of mobility instead of residential differentiation, and processes of movement and migration, instead of a sedentarist approach, could be useful for a thorough recognition of contemporary urban processes and change (Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007). This makes it significantly more difficult to distinguish between various forms of mobility/residence not just within the CEE cities but generally in the developed world. Even if Prague's housing estates are generally
quite mono-functional and today also very stable residential areas (see Table 2), there are several problematic issues which further differentiate the structure of resident households: a growing number of privatized apartments are no longer occupied by their owners, but rented (sometimes legally, sometimes not) to different groups of residents – students, guest workers, and other tenants. A significant proportion of newly constructed apartments (in-fills in vacant spaces) are inhabited by foreigners. A good example is the Hůrka locality in Prague’s South-Western Town housing estate where there is a high proportion of Russians and other foreigners. They are mostly owners of apartments but sometimes rent them to other people or sometimes use them only for half of the year. Přidalová and Ouředníček (forthcoming) describe this type of residency at the edge of tourism, migration, and long-distance commuting. Another quite mobile segment of the population is students of Prague’s universities, for whom shared apartments are cheaper than university dormitories.

This is in line with contemporary CEE urban research, where various types of transitory urbanites (Grossmann et al. 2011; Haase, Grossmann, and Steinführer 2012) were confirmed for inner city areas. It is a question whether the transitory urbanites concept would also be useful for housing estates, while many empirical results have confirmed that estates can serve as the start of a housing career, as a springboard, or a new zone in transition (Musterd and van Kempen 2007; Temelová et al. 2011). It is not without interest that empirical studies focusing on the transitive and fluid character of contemporary cities are (also with a greater theoretical contribution from Western geography and sociology) quite well equipped by the methodological apparatus that originated in the CEE countries. Beside the already discussed concept of transitory urbanites, it is worth mentioning alternatives to classical methods of measuring residential segregation in the case of the Estonian school of mobile positioning (Ahas et al. 2010; Järv et al. 2014; Silm and Ahas 2014 and many others). These empirically tested concepts could be applied within CEE cities but also exported and used independently from the post-socialist context.

## Conclusion

To be fair, it should be admitted that the transfer of theoretical knowledge from the Western literature has established an etalon which was used as reference base

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of residential area</th>
<th>In-migration</th>
<th>Out-migration</th>
<th>Gross migration</th>
<th>Net migration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical core</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>137.6</td>
<td>−6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenement houses</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>150.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villa quarters</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>112.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class houses</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>124.3</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing estates</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>106.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban periphery</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>104.6</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prague total</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>126.1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Values for housing estates are in bold. Source: Czech Statistical Office (2011).
for the explanation of processes in the post-socialist cities. Without this transfer, inspiration, and help from our “Western” colleagues, we would not have been able to revitalize CEE urban studies so quickly. However, such an adaptation of a substantial amount of new knowledge must be carried out carefully; that is, from a geographical perspective differently for specific parts of the settlement system and selected quarters of metropolitan regions, where it has sufficient power to explain and predict features and processes of urban change or stability. I argued that the theoretical concepts and methods imported from the West are more or less acceptable and useful for investigating the character and development stages of the whole settlement system (Musil 1977; Enyedi 1996), and then for those parts of metropolitan regions that developed during the prevailing portion of European urban history; that is, the whole period of pre-socialist medieval and industrial development. There, rectification processes (Dostál and Hampl 1994; Musil 2002) have occurred not according to the Western model, but rather as a return to the former trajectories of pre-socialist development, which were not deflected to any significant degree by the 40 years of socialism.

Contrary to the critics of post-socialist urban empiricism (Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008; Wiest 2012), we should not be afraid that empirical research would disqualify post-socialist urban research. As Musil (2005, 2) states,

> there is no doubt that the analysis of transformation of the physical fabric, of the institutional structures, urban governance, municipal economies, life styles and even population structures in post-socialist cities can become an important part of forward looking European urban research. Especially in our efforts to detect the general features of the urban.

When we adopt this perspective, knowledge of these general features of urbanization processes would be incomplete if they exclude an area more than half of Europe. Moreover, we should not concentrate only on “export policy” (Sjöberg 2014) and overlook the impact of empirical research and theoretical generalization for post-socialist research itself.

Within the scope of inductive theory building, geography can bring a differential, scalar perspective to the comparison of various hierarchical levels of global and national settlement systems to analyses of the internal structure of the city. We have seen that comparative analyses of metropolitan regions, individual neighborhoods, and localities offer differentiated spaces for imported theories. When we accept that the outer reaches of our cities are indeed so different that they have no parallel in Western cities (and consequently in Western theories) we can then – on the basis of careful empirical research – possibly inductively develop new concepts which could enrich internationally viable theoretical knowledge. Perhaps this novelty will originate from the investigation of a very typical post-socialist urban environment (i.e. housing estates), where tension between traditional Western concepts and post-socialist reality may create fertile ground for new ideas, which would be then exported as a part of wider and internationally more relevant urban theory.
Notes

1. The year 1989 with the fall of Iron Curtain between Eastern and Western Europe and Velvet revolution in Czechoslovakia is the benchmark year for the end of socialism.
2. Kubeš (2013) has collected 186 articles focused on post-socialist transformation published in international journals with an impact factor over 0.5 and illustrated significant growth in their number during the period 1990–2012.
3. CAT-ferences are the colloquial name for the bi-annual conferences held under the auspices of the CAT network. The event’s technical name is the International Urban Geographies of Post-Communist States Conference.
4. There were some efforts again rather in comparisons of settlement systems than internal urban structures. The most influential was research which described phases of urban development also using empirical findings from selected European socialist countries (van den Berg et al. 1982).
5. The author is well aware of the heterogeneity of both Western and Eastern European countries and metropolitan regions in particular. The terms “Western” and “West” are used as an analytical tool, generalized for the processes and urban structures located behind the former Iron Curtain. This kind of generalization is very common within the discipline (cf. Weber’s occidental city, 1958; White’s The West European City, 1984; or the edited volume by Musterd and Ostendorf 1998) and I believe also well understandable in this context.
6. We can use the definition from the 5th edition of The Dictionary: “Hegemony is the dissemination of the values and cultural practices of the elite in such a way that they become unquestioned” (Flint 2009, 327).
7. Musil (2002) notes that the term “rectification” was used for the first time by the French historian François Furet during his speech in Prague in 1990 to describe changes after the collapse of communist regimes in Central Europe.
8. The developmental concept was described in a wider context by Robinson (2006).
9. According to an annual survey by the Ministry for Regional Development and Institute for Planning and Development, there were 43% of municipal houses in 1991 and 8% in 2011 in the capital city of Prague. In 2011, 18% of municipal apartments remained in the ownership of municipalities (city parts or Prague itself), while in Brno, 53% and in Ústí nad Labem, the figure was only 2% (Burdová et al. 2012), as privatization has continued up to the present with approximately 5% of municipal housing not privatized in 2016.
10. RESTATE was an international project of 10 European countries “Restructuring Large-scale Housing Estates in European Cities: Good Practices and New Visions for Sustainable Neighborhoods and Cities.” More information available on http://restate.geo.uu.nl/.
11. However, the analysis of socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic confirmed ethnic heterogenization also within formerly Roma localities, so the mechanisms of segregation are based on economic rather than ethnic principles (Čada 2015).
12. The sedentarist approach sees residential differentiation, stability, and place as normal rather than mobility and change (Sheller and Urry 2006).

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