

Theoretical issues of local population and social policy in ‘shrinking’ cities – some findings from Bratislava

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Introduction

There is no doubt that population development is one of the main factors of urban development today, especially in qualitative terms. The demographic development and population growth of European cities as such is more or less well documented. It is not surprising that urban shrinkage, as one of the frequent issues of current urban population development is debated in growing number of scientific studies. They focus on particular phenomena, as well as key determinants of such changes. It is clear that besides considerable spatial differentiation, many European cities experience population loss, and substantial part of them is facing population ageing. Despite such demographic challenges, only a few cities have explicitly defined strategies until now (see for example *Dublin Population and Housing Strategy*, *Sheffield First Strategy for an Ageing Population*)¹. It is quite usual that cities incorporate simple demographic analysis into their strategic development documents. What is missing, the vision whether and in which way local institutions will actively influence future demographic development of the city. What is the wished and what is the ‘ideal’ population number? Is there any opportunity to achieve this number? What is the acceptable age structure and to what extent are these issues relevant within the context of quality of human and social capital?

We leave aside that in many cities the decrease of population is mainly the consequence of suburbanisation. It does not mean deurbanisation, when the city is declining because of city formation processes and loosing its position in the urban system. Bratislava is the prototype for such a case. It has undergone exceptional eco-

¹ <http://www.dublin.ie/devplan/>,
<http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/council-meetings/cabinet/agendas-2006/agenda-26th-april/ageing-population-strategy>

conomic growth, successful social transformation, rather divergent comparing to the other regions of the country. Urban shrinking in the case of Bratislava means something different, compared to the notion of Häußerman and Siebel in 1988 (Großman *et al.* 2008) who analysed the case of old industrial cities in Western Germany. In Bratislava immediately when the final stage of less intensive suburbanisation started an increase of population was registered in 2005–2008. Even more, Bratislava did not show oversupply of empty apartments, as it was the case in East German cities during the 1990s. As Maas indicated in 2007 (Großman *et al.* 2008), the decrease of population in the case of Brno does not mean that the city can be directly included into the category of shrinking cities. This is also the case in Bratislava. In this paper we present the causes of population decrease in Bratislava in details. We suppose that Bratislava is typical for East Central European cities where suburbanization and reurbanization processes have been taking place simultaneously after 1989, and due to intensive immigration flows (combined with suburbanisation) the decrease of population has already stopped (Bleha & Popjaková 2007).

In the case of Bratislava we cannot talk about deurbanisation process previously so typical for North-American and West-European cities. According to our opinion, larger East Central European metropolises have all experienced positive qualitative development and catching up with “old” West-European metropolises with respect the functioning of the housing market, housing and job supply and the quality of life. Nevertheless, former state-socialist metropolises bear the burden of demographic character, which we address in the first section of the paper focusing on population policy.

We have no ambition to provide exhaustive ontological analyses about the factors influencing urban development processes. At the level of cities, the best solution is to combine approaches developed within demography, population studies, urban geography, urban planning and urban economics. However, such multidisciplinary approach is not frequently applied in the literature. Very often narrow, demographically oriented approach prevails in these studies, without incorporating the wider social, economic, urban planning etc. aspects. One of the main aims of this contribution is to integrate at least some of these approaches. We emphasise here two aspects, both having been rather applied in character.

As we declared earlier, the first focus of discussion concerns the concept of local population policy. Although population policy at the national level is often the matter of professional debate, we think that there is a need to distinguish different spatial scales at which population policies could be performed. They necessarily differ in their scope, the population affected, the efficiency and character of policy tools. We try to illustrate on the case of Bratislava, how the current age structure of the city may influence future development trends. The population decline of cities is often seen as the result of wider demographic processes at the national scale. Although we

accept that urban development is a complicated process, influenced by many factors, the demographic development is a key segment in shaping the overall development of cities. The demographic structure of population also belongs to the key factors that influence the internal spatial structure of cities. Without sustainable demographic development, the development of cities and urban districts is at risk.

In this respect, there is a need to deal with local population policy from theoretical and methodological point of view. It means that we should focus on strategies providing continuation of sustainable demographic growth, or at least its stabilisation, or eventually to slow down the decline of population to the smallest possible level. We also should not forget to take into account important qualitative aspects (e.g. human, cultural capital). We have to add, that demographic development can be either the cause, or the outcome of urban shrinkage, or eventually at the same time both. If purely demographic causes lead to economic decline, finally such decline also has feed back to the demography of the city (e.g. increased migration). There is a question, if cities like Bratislava (with massive suburbanisation and with massive demographic ageing) can achieve more significant population growth in mid-term perspective (20–30 years).

The demographic development has also direct impact on social policy at the local level. Therefore, the second part of this contribution focuses on the transformation of social policy in Bratislava. In this respect the growing pressure and demand for social services resulting from socio-demographic changes has primary importance. We attempt to analyze the current situation in Bratislava and its responses to indicated future population prospects. The most developed field with regards age specific social policy is elderly care. Besides basic characteristics of activities in this field, the key question is to what extent regional and local governments are prepared to combat problems resulting from the permanently growing number of elderly. In addition to policy approaches prepared at the regional and city-wide level, we also address the problems of the most aged city quarter – Staré Mesto (Old City).

The care for elderly population is an interesting field that has undergone substantial changes within last decade in Slovakia. It has significantly influenced the decentralisation of power to regional and local levels in more stages since the year 2002. Further changes are supported by the adoption of a new act on social services provision by the Slovak Parliament in 2008 (Act No. 448/2008). These developments express large efforts to reorganise and upgrade social services provision in Slovakia. Today the elderly care system of Slovakia shares many features comparable to experiences and approaches applied in the western countries, for example Belgium (Arnaert *et al.* 2005), or the Netherlands (Van Den Heuvel 1997). These changes in the last decade have been taking place according to western experiences, and they include the improvement of standards in service delivery, introducing well working plurality to service provision (public, non-profit, for-profit providers), as well as per-

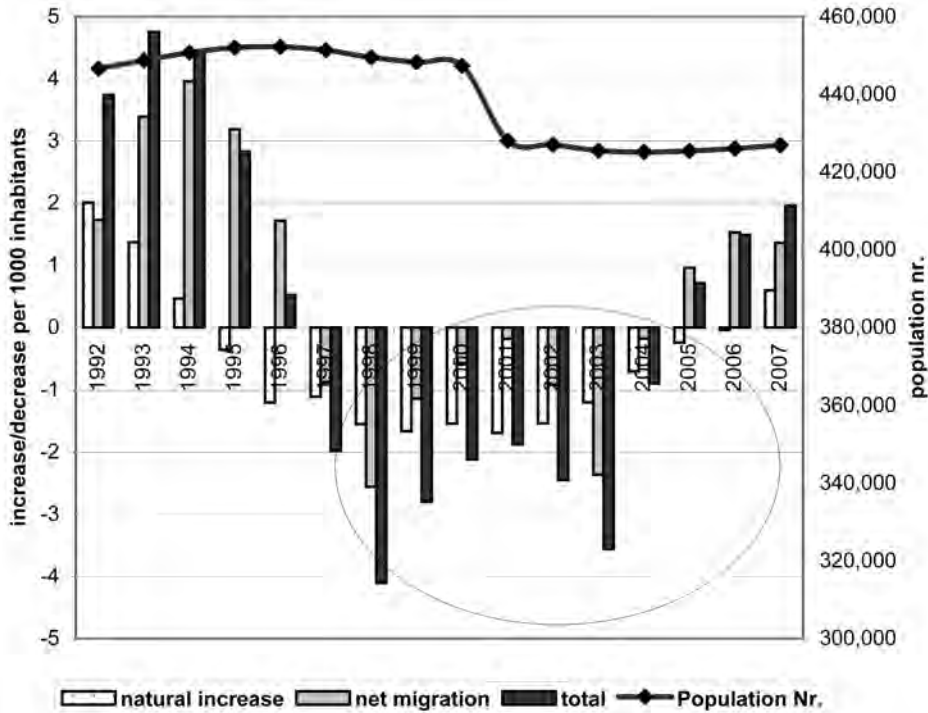
manent search for more efficient delivery of services. The spirit of current legislation and praxis of social services providing elderly care in Slovakia includes the visions to go closer to each elderly person, respect individual needs and prefer to take care for them in their 'natural environment', preferably in their own apartments/homes. Elderly care should be authentically local, provided in/by the local government where the person has been living; in local community she/he is familiar. It means much greater attention to in-home based care and more 'field work', as it is usual in many other countries (e.g. in Sweden) (Johansson 1997).

Selected features of demographic development in Bratislava

Bratislava underwent substantial changes in its demographic profile after 1989. This concerns especially fertility. The total fertility rate decreased very quickly after the political changes to the value below one child per one woman (while 1.3 is the level of the lowest-low fertility) and the number of newly born children decreased every year. Bratislava's population was pioneering as far as delayed births are concerned. On the other hand, the growth of fertility rates during the period 2002–2007 in Bratislava was higher than the dynamics of other Slovakian cities. Life expectancy is also sharply increasing due to improving quality of life. As a consequence, the population of Bratislava may become the oldest within Slovakia in the future; nevertheless, it will be still below the average of 'Old' EU–15 countries. *Figure 1* demonstrates the main elements of population dynamics in Bratislava. We can see the turning point around the year 1995, when the decrease in fertility rate combined with migration losses resulted in a total annual decrease of 2–4%. We should keep in mind that Bratislava had never faced population decrease in the 20th century. This decrease was the outcome of more factors acting simultaneously together.

As the most important factor, we should mention the start of suburbanization (firstly in the Slovak context) after 1995. Most of the rural settlements located in its hinterland were sharply gaining from migration outflows from Bratislava. Suburbanisation was combined with the already mentioned lowering levels of fertility, although the numerous baby boom generation from the 1970s (the so-called 'Husak's children', named after the then Czechoslovak president) achieved reproduction age. We can also observe a turn in the trend after 2005. The decrease of population number stopped and population growth started again. According to our opinion, it was the result of the weakening of suburbanization and the recuperation of births of women born in the 1970s. It seems that Bratislava's population is developing into the right direction. However, it is only illusion, as we indicate later when providing main features of the population forecast.

FIGURE 1 Population change in Bratislava during 1992–2007



More or less independently, in relation to demographic development, other urban processes are also taking place in Bratislava so typical for transforming cities (e.g. revitalisation, de-industrialisation). Slovak geographers have paid great attention to these processes in the scientific literature (e.g. Buček 2006; Ira 2003; Ondoš & Káčerová 2007). One of the typical processes is the large scale housing and commercial development that started after 2000. A few years later, around 2005, features of ‘over-heating’ emerged on the real estate market. More and more development projects had megalomaniac character within the urban context of Bratislava. The financial crisis of 2008 only confirmed it. New apartments' sale decreased, many of them remained empty and pressure for lower prices became very strong. Luxurious apartments built by large developers became almost unsaleable after the crisis, while a few months before they had been offered for close to the top European prices. We consider housing market as one of the leading factors that influence migration, including internal residential migration within the city boundaries. Oversupply of housing, exceeding the demand, can easily lead to the decrease of housing prices. Under such conditions, those living in Bratislava have better opportunity to buy apartments (despite less available mortgages because of economic crisis).

Nevertheless, housing development also has negative features. We can mention the increase of housing density in previously attractive urban spaces, illegal building practices, increasing troubles with parking. Similar problems can also be found in many other East Central European metropolises.

As far as migration within Slovakia is concerned, climate does not play an important role as it was pointed out by American and West-European authors (Graves 1980; Bosker & Marlet 2006). The most important motivation factor in migration is the availability of jobs and partners' relations (following the partner). We emphasise this especially when taking into account the increase in regional disparities. In his recent analysis Korec (2005) pointed out the extreme position of Bratislava in this respect. It is the only region in Slovakia that close to the level of the EU-27 average of GDP per capita (81%, Bratislava region, 2006), but highly above the level of EU-27 average of GDP per capita in PPS (148%, Bratislava region, 2006). It is understandable that high unemployment especially in East- and South-Slovakia regions generates search for work of their inhabitants in Bratislava. Here wages are also substantially higher², but on the other hand, housing rents, or new housing prices are higher as well (in general 20–30% higher compared to other large Slovak cities).

Population policy – discussed, controversial, but needed

Fertility and migration will predominantly jointly influence the population development of Bratislava in the future. The forecast elaborated by Bleha and Vaňo (2008) supposes that total fertility will grow to the level of 1.4 in Bratislava. However, it is remarkably below the expected Slovak average (1.6 and more) and it is below the critical value of 1.5, as indicated e.g. by McDonald (2006). At the same time, it is deeply below the replacement level requiring two children per mother. Such development generates long-term non-sustainability of natural increase. We can only add that such situation prevails in the majority of European cities, not mentioning similar indices at the regional and national levels.

The question is, if European cities should attempt to intervene in their demographic development by means of direct or indirect measures. Within this context, we adopted Lutz (2007) division on adaptation and mitigation policies. Adaptation

² According to Mercedes agency research (www.merces.sk) a young working person below 24 years earns in Bratislava 686 EUR on average, while in the rest of the country only about 600 EUR. The difference is much higher in the case of older age groups. Working person in the category of 35–44 years earns in Bratislava 74% more than in North-East Slovakia. It is the result of the structure, quality and value added of working places, as well as the structure of local economy.

policies are those that try only to adjust to (unchangeable) population development. On the reverse, the mitigation policies attempt to influence existing population development. Nevertheless, there are also tools (presented later) that can be perceived as adaptive and mitigating at the same time. There is a wide range of population policy definitions and understandings. With regards the scope of problem understanding, they can be divided into three basic groups.

The narrowest understanding considers population policies as pro-fertility (anti-fertility) policies. The population policies of former state-socialist countries, or the one child policy, can be included in this type. Although the majority of demographers perceive such approach as too narrow, most of the contributions related to this field focus on fertility and the possibility to influence it. At the same time, these types of measures face the most intensive criticism. Most of the definitions understand population policy in wider sense. A ‘medium wide’ understanding is provided by Bleha & Vaňo (2007). They understand population policy as “*conscious process aimed at long-term direct influence of population reproduction finally shaping age structure*”. Pavlík (2008) has similar opinion and describes population policy as “*activity which is aimed at influence on population change*”. The most extensive understanding takes into account measures focusing not only on influencing various aspects of demographic processes, like balance of migration or population number, but also focusing on the improvement and development of human capital in a wider sense.

Although population ageing is irreversible, we have to discuss issues concerning pro-fertility measures within the framework of a more narrow population policy understanding. Is there a chance for local decision makers to influence very low fertility rates in cities? Are similar measures more or less efficient if applied at the national, regional or local levels? Finally, should the aims of population policy be the same at the local level as in the national level? These are questions to which, no sufficient conceptual attention has been paid until now. We can apply mitigation or adaptation policies at each of these levels (national, regional, local). The question is what the final effect of these measures should be?

The sufficient (growing, not decreasing) population number had been the primary aim of population policies implemented until the second half of the 20th century. In this period, the governments of developed countries (if they believed demographers) were already reconciled with the decrease of population number. For example, Slovakia will loose about 8–12% of its population in the forthcoming 30–40 years, as it is outlined in available national population forecasts. More or less the whole Europe will be loosing population according to UN and EUROSTAT forecasts. Anyway, for such a small country as Slovakia, it is more or less indifferent, if it has 4.8 or 5 million inhabitants. Population number is a much more sensitive issue in global scale. The weight of such countries like India will depend not only on the ‘quality’ of its development, but hand in hand, on its population size.

It is also clear that population decrease will also be typical for regions at NUTS II, III and IV levels. However, if population forecast predicting population decline is introduced to the mayor of a certain city, he or she is usually not willing to accept it as a pure fact (population forecast is normally part of the local development strategies, or development plans). From a psychological point of view diminishing city is perceived differently than the diminishing region. It is also true from practical point of view, that cities that loose population have also worse image, loose incomes e.g. from taxes etc. Therefore, we explicitly consider population number as one of the main population policy objectives at the local level. The second one is of course population ageing where the concept is normally 'as slow as possible'. Decision makers rather accept the fact that the number and share of their population will be growing, although they are often not fully aware, what will be the consequences of such development e.g. for their local budget. For example, cities became remarkably younger compared to rural settlements thanks to intensive urbanisation in Slovakia until 1989. However, in the last couple of years average age in cities already exceeded the average age values of the countryside. The population of rural settlements increases while urban population decreases. The average age in cities and in rural settlements was 33.8 and 36.2 respectively in 1989, while in 2007 it was already 38.2 and 37.7 respectively.

We can conclude that while declining population number needs not to be considered as an urgent threat at the national level in countries like Slovakia, it must be taken more seriously at the local level. On the contrary, demographic ageing can be considered as a serious problem at the local, regional, national, but even supra-national level.

Pro-fertility policy in cities – is this a topic?

As we already mentioned above, pro-fertility policy means narrow understanding of population policy of mitigating character, but most of the demographers are focusing precisely on fertility in population studies. There is a strong discussion dealing with efficiency of these measures in the European context. Gauthier (2008) noted that it is difficult to measure efficiency of pro-natality policies (and in his contribution from 2007 offer complex review of the relevant literature). He summarised that most of the studies found influence on total fertility rate increase at the level of 0.05–0.2. The value of 0.2 can be considered as the top level from the point of view of efficiency. At the same time, it is a value relevant for demographic growth increase.

Turning back to the case of Bratislava the question arises: is there any potential tool that could increase the total fertility rate of women? It is questionable if such tool exists. If yes, it certainly must be a mixture of tools, as it is outlined by Pailhé

et al. (2008) in the case of France and its long-term tradition of population policies. Bocuzzo *et al.* (2008) concluding the experiences of an Italian region, proved that the influence of a single direct measure (for example bonus at birth) is low and it can influence more the less educated women and higher order births. This is not the case in Bratislava. Here the share of population with university education is three times higher than the national average. It seems to be clear that in the case of large cities the focus should be more on other, more indirect measures. Women in these cities have higher level of economic activity, they are more emancipated, and opportunity costs they calculate are much higher.

The same is valid for fitting together the family and working life, what can be understood potentially as a very efficient tool in general. As such, it will be more interesting for women with above average earnings living in large cities. Taking into account the classification of Hakim (2003), further developed by Vitali *et al.* (2007), the share of career-oriented women is higher, according to all indices, compared to family oriented or adaptive women in cities like Bratislava. More intensive delay of births among women in Bratislava and the current intensive recuperation of these women in the age of 30 years plus, can be considered as certain indirect evidence. In any case, measures that help in suitable combination of working and family life, measures that serve in building baby friendly city image can influence the fertility of these women. As McDonald (2004) noted, following the rational choice theory we should attempt to increase the threshold of psychological contribution of children, respectively, and reduce economic costs of children. The decision of the city of Vienna to introduce pre-school care free of charge can be perceived as psychological step and at the same time as measure reducing indirect costs. It means the reduction of loss of income related to motherhood, which is higher in large cities. This can be relevant, if we imagine that in Bratislava as well as in other Central and Eastern European countries, the income situation is not so good and the loss of women's income during maternity can be dramatic.

Bleha & Vaňo (2007) consider support of housing as one of the most important population policy tools. Bratislava as the capital city of Slovakia has had substantially higher apartment prices compared to other large cities in the country. Even more, housing prices in the city were in absolute terms comparable or even higher than in Vienna, or Prague. From this reason, despite easy accessibility to mortgages (before the financial crisis), the access to housing was very difficult for local inhabitants. The price of a two room apartment outside the city centre climbed to 100 000 EUR, when the average monthly wage in the city was only 943 EUR (2008, Statistical Office of the SR). The average wage in Slovakia was 723 EUR (2008), but housing prices were much lower on the countryside. For example, apartment prices more or less exceeded 100 000 EUR in less attractive parts of Bratislava in September 2008, while at the same time, it was only 80 000 EUR directly in the city

centre of Košice, the second largest Slovak city (according to the real estate portal <http://www.cenynehnutelnosti.com/info.html>).

Age structure effect – overlooked but important

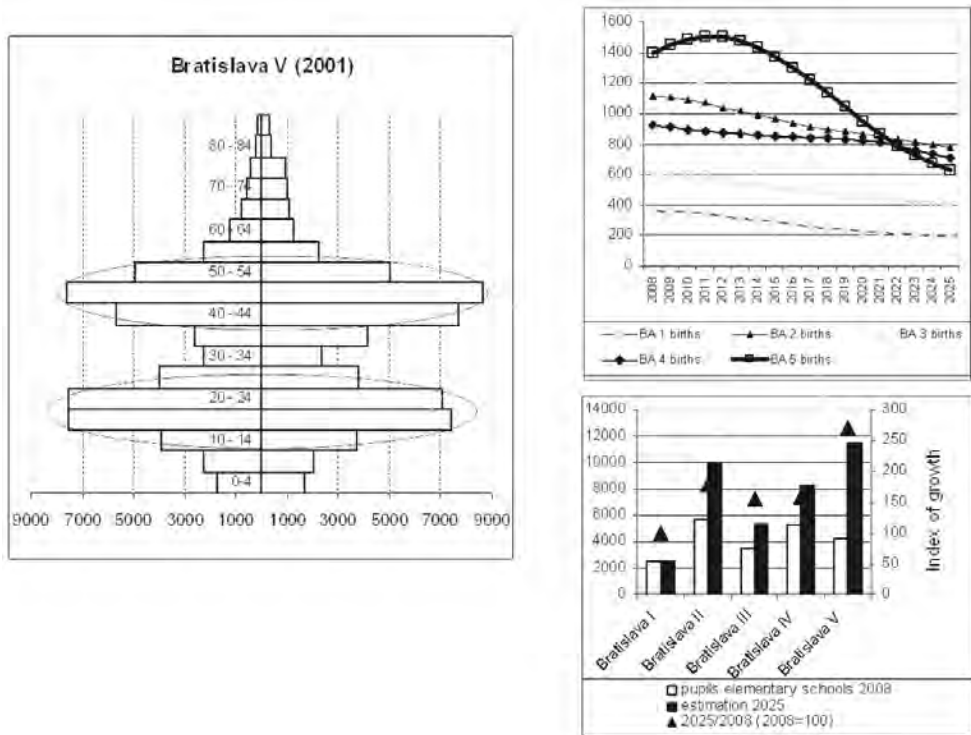
The majority of studies dealing with urban development consider population number as one of the crucial indicators. However, the population number can be very misleading indicator, as we will demonstrate on the case of Bratislava. If we leave aside migration, the natural population change alone can influence the population number of a city very substantially. It has a natural effect of the so-called age-structural momentum, or age-structural transition (Adioetomo *et al.* 2006). It is evident to a large extent in Bratislava. An extremely unbalanced age structure causes more oscillations. Differently numerous cohorts enter into retirement age, and differently numerous cohorts leave by deaths. Unequally numerous cohorts of expectant mothers have different number of children at stable fertility which establishes unbalanced age structure also for the future. For example, there is working strengthened effect of recuperation at present in Bratislava. It concerns the generation of women aged 30 and more, born in the period, when about 100 thousand children were born annually in Slovakia. However, in about five to ten years cohorts of the transformation period from the 1990s will be giving birth, who are about 50 thousand per year. The oscillating number of children causes problem for planning the school system.

On the other hand, increasing number of elderly people generate specific problems including not only lack of homes for elderly, but the capacity of cemeteries as well (acute lack of grave places is a specific problem in Bratislava at present). This will be further exacerbated by numerous generations of the 'socialist era' who migrated to Bratislava and will enter the retirement age soon. From this point of view it seems that stable and about 2.1 children per woman fertility rate can not be a suitable population policy objective in cities like Bratislava. More suitable could be the stable number of born children. This objective is not possible to achieve by actual tools. As it is clear from population forecast, despite expected fertility increase, Bratislava will face the decrease of newly born children (ageing from below). However, in cumulative way, the number of children will increase significantly compared to the current situation. To be realistic, it is almost impossible to reach balanced age structure in short term perspective. The same is true for migration. The productive migrants that expand and improve human capital and ease pension burden, become older as well. The permanent flow of young productive people, with higher fertility rate at the scale of a city is impossible.

The link between age structure and population dynamics in post-socialist cities is well demonstrated on *Figure 2*. It is especially district Bratislava V (which can be iden-

tified as city quarter Petržalka) where the age structure was formed by large scale and intense migration in the 1970s and 80s when the housing estate was developed. In the 1990s a rapid decrease of births and afterwards school age pupils could be registered. Nowadays, the situation is changing again rapidly. Numerous cohorts with higher fertility will increase the number of school children 2.5 times higher until 2025, although local government closed many school facilities during the ‘depression’ in demand in the 1990s. However, in long-term perspective, we can expect again a decrease in the number of pupils when less numerous cohorts reach fertile age after 2025.

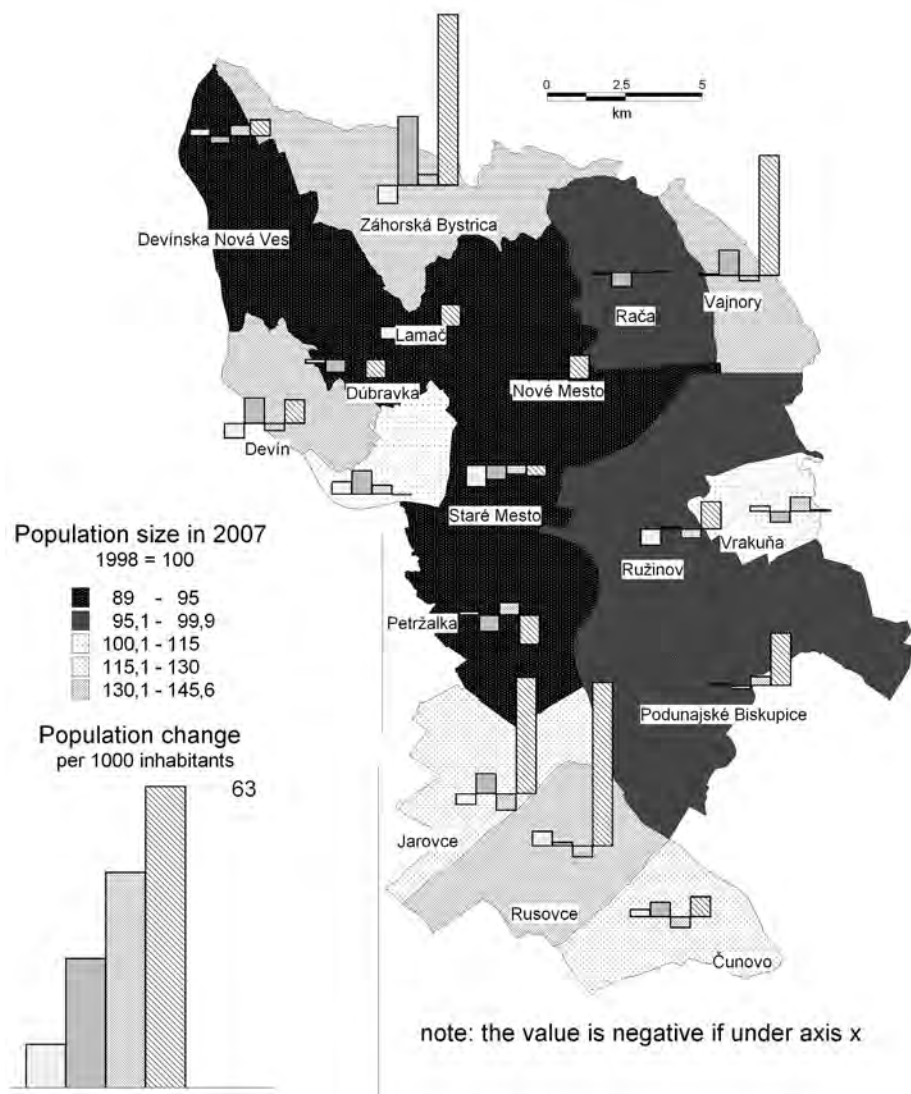
FIGURE 2 *Linkages between age structure and population dynamics in Bratislava*



Figures 2 and 3 also show substantial spatial differences within the city. For example, the core of the city – Stare Mesto (Old Town) is demographically the oldest within Bratislava. It has almost eight times higher ageing index than some peripheral city quarters. The name of the city quarter ‘Old Town’ is fully accurate. According to population forecast, the average age will be here almost 50 years in 2025, and there will be two and a half retired persons per one child. The number of oldest old (85 years and more) will increase at about 80%. The numerous generations of migrants that came to the city 30–40 years ago play the main role in such development.

The population number of districts in Bratislava vary extensively as well. Certain city quarters lost almost 10% of population within the last ten years, while in other quarters the population number increased by about 30–45%. The main reason behind such development is migration. Some city quarters received more that 50 new inhabitants per 1000 inhabitants, while others are intensively losing their population via migration. There is a big migration flow of inhabitants moving outside the city, as

FIGURE 3 Population change according to Bratislava districts 1998–2007



well as to the suburban zone and the wider metropolitan area. There are also quarters that have already critically increased housing density at least in certain part of their territory. Due to population increase in peripheral quarters there are difficulties in Bratislava with public and private transport services as well.

If we turn back to our main question, whether the population number is a suitable indicator for urban development in such city like Bratislava: the answer is yes, and no. Diminishing number of inhabitants clearly documents 'shrinking', but the factor behind such development can not only be the decline in fertility, or sharp migration decrease. In fact, it can also be the result of transition of differently numerous age groups to higher age. Realistically, Bratislava is evidently progressing, its development can be characterised by construction boom, above average GDP per capita in PPP, increasing quality of life, growing number of workplaces, long term fertility growth, positive values of balance of migration. Despite such positive features, Bratislava can hardly achieve half a million of population. It could only happen, if total fertility rate would approach 2.0 and migration surplus would be doubled, compared to calculations of current forecasts. Nevertheless, its spatial development has also its own limits.

General framework of elderly care services in Slovakia

In the last ten years, elderly care has changed substantially in Slovakia. The main changes have been related to decentralisation accompanied by transfer of power, as well as allocation of resources to regional and local self-governments. In fact, this process is still not finished yet. The latest legislation adopted in 2008, transferred competence and power to self-governments to prepare them for more demanding activities. Nevertheless, gradual transfer of power and new experiences verified their capability in this field. In addition to direct care provision, self governments are also expected to work out their strategies, implement community planning and consider steps needed to cope successfully with future needs in this field.

Elderly care has attracted large scale attention in Slovakia in recent years. It achieved significant position in the socio-economic system, comparable to position of such policies in other countries, e.g. the Netherlands, as mentioned by Van den Heuvel (1997). Social affairs in general are one of the main issues of the current social-democratic government (led by Smer). The best evidence of special attention paid to elderly people is the so-called 'Christmas contribution', extra payment distributed with the pension before Christmas. At the highest level elderly care is organised by the Ministry of Work, Social Affairs and Family. A special horizontal body is the Council of the Government for Elderly, combining representatives of several ministries and social partners. The current ruling political elite is very active in

addressing needs of old people in both conceptual as well as legislation aspects. New legislation concerning social services (Act No. 448/2008) has extensively improved the existing framework and practices of social services (and not only elderly care), clarified many new fields of action, defined its own role in regulation of this field, defined the role of other actors as well, including regional and local self-governments, non-profit or for profit organisations active in elderly care. The long-term strategy of the Ministry towards elderly people defined regularly monitored National Programme for Protection of Elderly (1999). Here many innovations can be found, partly already introduced in legislation. The effort of the Ministry follows experiences of many countries with already well-developed elderly care, not mentioning the EU agenda on social affairs.

The transfer of power in several stages from central state administration to regional and local self-governments is a long-term process. During the 1990s elderly care was formally outside the competence of local self-governments (regional self-governments did not exist). Local governments could only decide on their own voluntary actions or support of non-profit and private care providers (residential, non-residential day care). In the period of 2002–2004 as part of the public administration reform the first 'package' of power and competence was transferred to local (nursing day care and related administration) and regional self-governments (e.g. residential facilities). More extensive competence and provision of social care services (including elderly care) has been transferred to local governments since 2009, accompanied by more rules and requirements. Among them we can find university education for social workers, or specialised secondary education for nursing staff. They should also improve planning of service provision and facility building. Local self-governments are now also responsible for evaluation of elderly needs from both health (by specialised medical doctors) and social aspects (by social workers). There are firm time limits for decision-making and taking actions under various circumstances. Technological shift is demonstrated by the use of monitoring and signalling telecommunication technologies in social care. Regional and local self-governments prepare and adopt community plan of social services (including elderly) on their territory.

The responsibility of local and regional governments covers the maintenance of facilities of residential care within social service provision. It is the case of more residential forms that are managed at regional level, e.g. houses for elderly, short-term elderly care facilities, nursing day care services. On the other hand, local self-governments provide wide range of other services within the residential facilities as well as within the in-home care system. Among them, for example meal provision, nursing, clothing, transport services, advisory, visiting and search activity, accompanying person, free time activities, healthy way of life, cultural life. This transfer of elderly care also generates new type of financial pressure if citizens (family) are not able to

cover the care of their relatives. This is an issue especially for municipalities with higher share of elderly. Such costs are only partly taken into account by tax incomes. Five percent of PIT yield (shared tax) allocated to local self-governments is distributed according to the number of citizens aged 62 and above.

The multilevel and pluralistic elderly care in Bratislava

The most typical feature of elderly care in Bratislava is its multilevel and pluralistic character. Three types of self-governments participate in provision and administration of elderly care – regional, city-wide and city quarters. Direct providers of care include entities from public, non-governmental non-profit as well as private for profit oriented organisations. Nevertheless, it is the local level with strongest power and the most influential activity in this field. Following the latest changes, the role of private and non-profit NGOs will probably diminish. All activities clearly reflect the increasing role of social policy oriented on elderly care in Bratislava and attempt for more elaborated and professional approach.

Regional self-government has specific role in coordinating and integrating activities within its territory. It should be mentioned that Bratislava region has slightly more than 600 000 inhabitants and covers the city of Bratislava and three surrounding districts. Besides regional self-government and city-wide self-government, there are 89 self-governments in municipalities and city quarters, and in addition to that there are also 39 other non-state entities providing social services within the region. The first regional development concept focusing on social services appeared already in 2003 (we must note that regional self-government started to work in Slovakia only in 2002). Large scale community planning in this sphere was started in 2006. As far as direct care provision is concerned, the regional self-government is focusing predominantly on long-term residential care, including elderly with various disabilities. In 2007 only 16 social service facilities were managed by the self-governing region as such, of which five are houses/pensions for elderly (Bratislava Self-governing Region, 2008). There are 135 facilities for elderly operating in the territory of the region serving almost ten thousand senior inhabitants (*Table 1*).

The most frequent form of facilities is the club for seniors (27 in Bratislava). They also serve the highest share of elderly population. The second most developed network of facilities deals with meal provision (canteens, e.g. 24 in Bratislava). Terrain in-house services are provided by 29 municipalities and city quarters, mostly by non-public providers (19 of them). Residential care provides 14 houses/pensions for almost 1500 elderly. Transport services are provided by municipalities and they are only partially developed. At the end of 2007 about 1800 elderly persons were on the waiting lists for residential places.

TABLE 1 *Elderly care in Bratislava region in 2007*

type	Number of facilities managed by regional and local self-governments	Number of clients
Clubs of elderly	52	4797
Canteen	36	3083
In-house day care services	29	382
Homes and pensions for elderly	14	1444
Transport services (not only for elderly)	4	259
	135	9965

Source: Bratislava self-governing region, 2008

Bratislava city-wide self-government is also an important player in elderly care. In this case, an insight into the model of financing is also worthwhile. In 2008 Bratislava financed seven residential centres and five day care nursing centres. The capacity of residential facilities established and maintained by the city-wide self-government is 1058 persons. Total expenditure on seniors was 210.5 million SKK in the same year (87% of total city-wide social expenditures, app. 7 million EUR). This was 3.6% of the total expenditure of the city (in 2007 it was 3.3%). Detailed analysis of 2008 data shows that there were in principle three sources contributing to the total costs – state, city-wide self-government as such and (elderly) citizens (or their family members). State provided 65.3 million SKK, citizens 65.3 million SKK (including app. 2.9 mil SKK of donations, not only for seniors), while Bratislava city wide self-government provided almost 80 million SKK. There were also investments for elderly facilities at the scale of 10.5 million SKK (out of that 1.2 mil SKK was provided by the state). However, looking at the annual planned budget for the coming years reveals a growing attention to this issue, as well as reaction on ageing in the city.

One of the city quarters where population development has already forced politicians to deal with the problem of ageing is the city quarter Staré Mesto (Old Town). It is one of the city quarters already aware of the threats of future population development in the field of elderly care. This central city quarter with 41 thousand inhabitants in 2007 and covering also the historical core of the city faces the most pressing situation in term of ageing. Besides the growing number and share of elderly, the composition of elderly population is also different, with higher share of smaller households and less intensive family links. It reflects influence of specific family and household characteristics typical for large cities.

As Johansson (1997) pointed out, demographic trends, along with migration, urbanization and broken families put certain limits on informal support system. It means more pressure on official elderly care in this city quarter. According to available forecasts, the growth in share of elderly population is significant. While there

was only 19.5% of population in the age of 65+ in 2007, there is a modest increase projected for 2012 (20.9%), but this share can achieve 26.7% in the year of 2020 (City Quarter Bratislava Staré Mesto, 2008). Thus, it is not surprising that representatives of the city quarter, as well as the city quarter office, is analysing the forecast very carefully. Now we can already observe quite a long-term effort and initiatives expressed in policy documents, like the *Proposal of the concept of social services development in city quarter Bratislava Staré Mesto* (2008). However, we should take into account that the first policy document was formulated in this city quarter already in 1999 (but the general framework changed substantially since that time). In addition, more strategy based documents, operation and short-term documents were adopted by the city quarter council, for example the *Goals and priorities in social policy in city quarter Staré Mesto – Annual action plan for 2009* (2009). The city quarter's administration knows the situation of elderly in the district very well and it is preparing adequate measures and decisions.

The elderly care in the city quarter Staré Mesto is very diverse. It documents well working plurality in service providers. Senior inhabitants can use services provided by actors from all sectors, and they can use them not only on the territory of the city quarter. For example, there is a large diversity in residential care providers. Such facilities address e.g. specific religious groups (administered by main churches), or more solvent clients. There were four residential homes for elderly, of which only one is managed by the city quarter self-government, together with six day care services centres (2 of them are non-state providers). According to documents of the city, in 2007 234 clients were involved in terrain services (210 citizens of Staré Mesto), 217 clients in residential services (139 from Staré Mesto), 365 clients used clubs (all local citizens) and 394 clients were involved in meal provision (312 from Staré Mesto) (City Quarter Bratislava Stare Mesto self-government, 2008). There were 233 seniors waiting for place in residential facilities outside Staré Mesto.

Conclusions

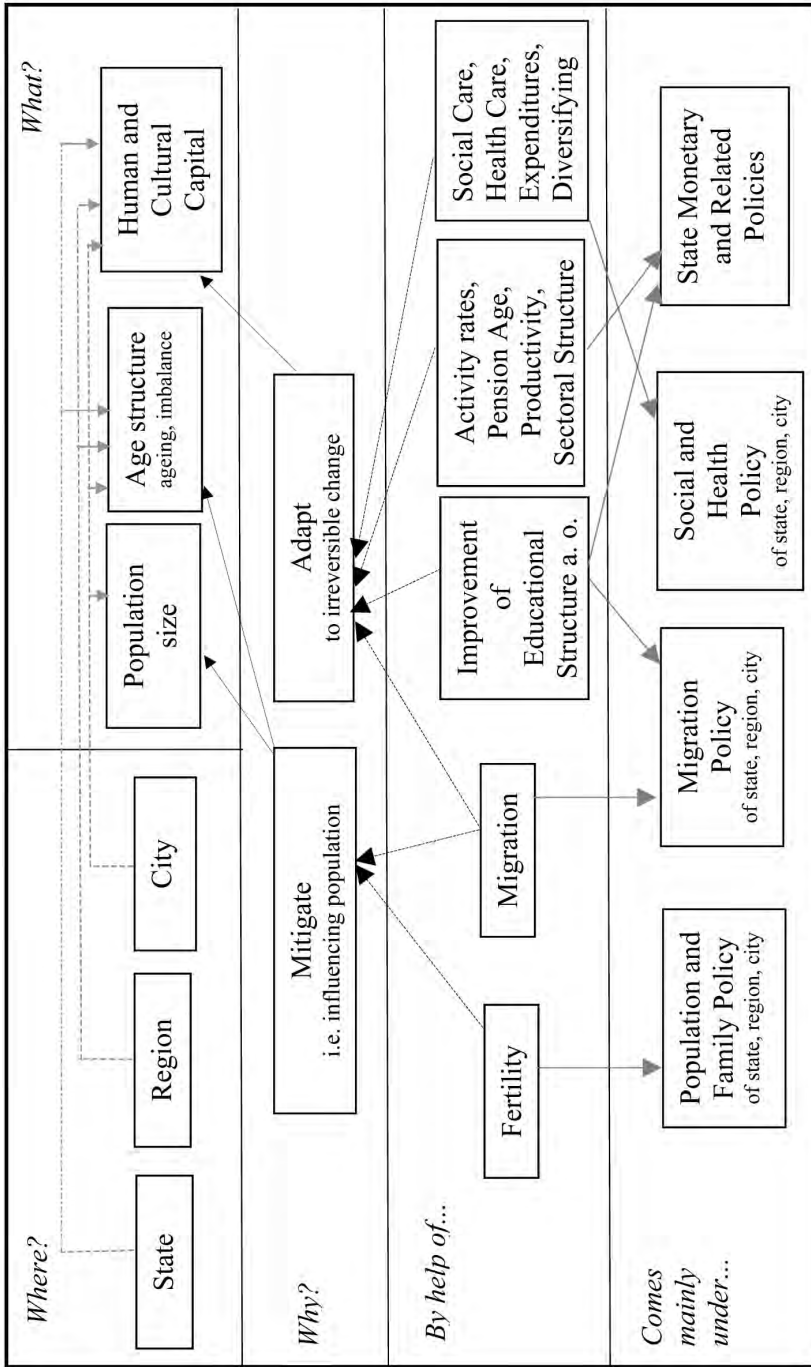
Local population and social policies have become very frequent issues within at least the last decade. It reflects the widespread turn of public attention towards decentralisation of political power and expansion of processes described as shrinking of or ageing in cities (especially in Western Europe and the United States). It is not surprising that these processes are considered to be important not only in Western Europe, but after certain time shift also in East Central Europe. Nevertheless, cities in this region have their own distinguished development features that should be analysed and converted into specific measures in policies focusing on local population and social development, including elderly care as one of the most sensitive fields.

We can find various revitalisation visions addressing local population policy, based mostly on new economic approaches. However, already Audirac (2007) revealed certain level of utopianism among them. Many solutions applicable within the framework of US cities will be useful in East Central Europe after a few decades, after a certain period of time. It should not be forgotten that analogue situations do not necessarily happen in this region. We can observe that many effects of post-socialist urban transformation confirm differences compared to the development in western cities, still reflecting specific features of socialist development. This has been described well for example by Mykhenko & Turok (2007). They emphasise the role of under-urbanisation of (post-) socialist cities that we could also label as an extensive urbanisation resulting from unbalanced development of industry, urban infrastructure and housing construction. The future development of post-socialist cities requires economic growth, adequate transport system (these cities were not adopted on 'transformation' boom in car use), better architecture on the one side. On the other hand, cities also need acceptable population development, which is inevitable for their sustainable future. We should move further away from the simple, although logical, use of demographic indicators (as population number, or migration) in explaining urban growth or decline in the region. We also should not forget to consider deeper demographic causes that are behind the decrease of population in cities that are clearly developing well according to other signs. It is inevitable in such cases to integrate different approaches coming mostly from demography, geography, urban economics and planning.

We think that social and population policy at the local level belongs to the top challenges in countries of the former Eastern Bloc. Cities have become quickly old and social care networks did not develop so well, as in Western Europe, although it is improving rapidly as it was demonstrated on the example of Bratislava. Although cities are aware of demographic tendencies, only minor part of them has defined explicit strategy, how to cope with the related issues. The scheme presented on *Figure 4* tries to link systematically its various aspects – scale, policy subject, methods, purpose (mitigating, adaptive) and concrete tools – of course in a reduced form. Local population policy has its own specific features, especially in the case of urban population that has to be taken into account.

The nature and organisation of elderly care in Slovakia substantially changed within the last decade. Simultaneously with the decentralisation of political power, elderly care has attracted much larger attention among self-governments and local people. It started to become much more competitive field of interest compared to other local sectoral policies (similar shift we can see e.g. in the case of education). Already since the transfer of power, we can observe active and responsible approaches accompanied by more investments, increased personal and professional capacities.

FIGURE 4 Simplified scheme of the population-related issues in cities, regions and states



Last years the introduction of new bodies has been typical (e.g. advisory boards, within Local Councils) and new policy documents have been elaborated within regional and local self-governments. Greater attention has paid to community planning in this field. Concluding from our experiences in Bratislava it is not surprising that those city quarters are the most active that expect large scale ageing, for example Staré Mesto and Petržalka. These quarters with already pressing or expected high share of elderly people mobilise professional capacities, elaborate longer-term policies and develop sets of measures for implementation. Further improvements have been generated by the new legislation valid since 2009. Local governments should adapt the new law within a few years. First months were accompanied by certain unclearness, clarification of various actors' roles and difficulties with immediate response. To meet the new requirements local governments will face lack of resources (partly caused by reduced local income during economic crisis), more expensive services for clients, as well as need for investment to older, as well as new facilities.

Besides the positive features that we could observe in the last years, there are still some problems in elderly care. The most frequently mentioned problem is the absence of 24 hours day care. Lack of facilities for specific clients – e.g. homeless, those suffering specific diseases – is also a grave problem. The implementation of monitoring and signalling telecommunication facilities is also to be solved. Low salaries in social services cause lack of staff, fluctuation in personnel, accompanied by insufficient training. Previous quite extensive scope of possibilities for selection of care providers according to confession, costs, type of care, or additional services has changed too. The relatively extensive sovereignty of citizens in selection of facilities was also reduced by the latest legislation. In the future local self-governments and public sector facilities will play much larger role.

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**Challenges of Ageing
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