

# Does the Creative Class Live in Large Cities?<sup>1</sup>

ŠTEFAN REHÁK

*University of Economics in Bratislava*  
Dolnozemska cesta 1, 852 19 Bratislava  
Slovak Republic  
stefan.rehak@euba.sk

## Abstract

*Creative cities, an original and attractive concept of urban growth generated a rich debate in the scientific community. The creative class is considered to be a driving force of development and cities should seek to attract and retain it, because where creative workers live, companies locate and this process spurs the urban growth. Cities should focus on activities which create attractive urban life, and promote diversity, openness and tolerance of their urban community. The concept of creative cities undoubtedly suggests new options for addressing urban development, but there is an extensive critical discussion of its validity. The concept of creative class and creative cities from Richard Florida originated from the empirical research in the U.S., and large number of studies have examined whether the same processes works in other economies, especially in the EU countries. This paper aims to explore one of the key processes, on which the concept relies, which is the location of creative class in cities. Using the data from the census of inhabitants in Slovakia (2011) and the internal migration database (1996 – 2011), we analyze the location and migration of the creative class among Slovak cities. Our exploratory analysis shows that Slovakia is specific for a low rate of urbanization, domination of suburbanisation processes, and only limited mobility of creative class. In general, cities in Slovakia have net population loss of creative class and there are only few exceptions. The whole process of spatial distribution of the creative class is heavily dominated by the capital city of Bratislava and its surrounding satellites.*

**Key words:** creative cities, creative class, Slovakia

**JEL Classification:** R23, O15

## 1 Introduction

The concept of creative cities links concepts of creative class, cultural and creative industries with the urban development and urban regeneration topics. Creative individuals and companies become increasingly concentrated in cities (HALL, 2000, FLORIDA, 2002 MARKUSSEN, SHROCK, 2006, LAZARETTI et al., 2008; FRITCH, STEUTZER, 2012) and as pointed out by FLORIDA (2002), the prosperity of cities depends nowadays on their ability to attract and retain creative class. Tolerant (open, diverse, inclusive) cities with rich cultural life and specific urban amenities attract creative class. The concept of creative cities has become an important part of urban development policies, especially large cities in the United States, Australia, and Western Europe (LANDRY, 2008; CLARK, 2004). The question is also whether the same mechanisms which lead to the emergence of creative cities in developed countries works also in small countries with smaller cities or in rural regions outside metropolitan areas.

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency based on the contract APVV-0101-10.

---

## 2 Creative Cities and Creative Class in Different Contexts

Several studies confirmed the proposition creative class concept in other countries. FLORIDA with his colleagues (GERTLER et al. 2002) tested the concept in Canada and Europe (FLORIDA, TINAGLI, 2004). Research has confirmed the link between diversity, openness and migration of creative class. BOSCHMA and FRITSCH (2009) tested the concept in 7 European countries and confirmed that tolerance and openness are closely related to the concentration creative class. However urban amenities such as public infrastructure (health, education) or cultural and recreational infrastructure had negligible effect. On the contrary, they found significant impact of jobs on migration, suggesting that migration mechanisms in Europe differ compared to the US. ASHEIM (2009) points out there are significantly higher competition between the cities in US. Labour mobility in Europe is much lower due to language barriers, institutional differences, and differences in the social security systems. All of these factors significantly affect the location decision of the creative people and the overall rate of migration of the creative class. Not only international but also internal migration in European countries is lower than in the US. European economies are typical for strong links of households with local labour markets, intensive social relations and inflexible real estate markets, and this is especially the case for countries of Eastern Europe (FIDRMUC, 2004). HANSEN and NIEDOMYSL (2009) showed that the migration of creative class in Sweden is not significantly different from the rest of the population. Major inflow of higher educated migrants reached Stockholm and Gothenburg, cities typical for good job opportunities.

The second line of research has examined the validity of the concept in smaller towns and rural areas. Main research questions were: Does the concept of creative cities apply in smaller towns, or is it purely a matter of major cities? Is there any limit in the city size, from which the impact of creative class significantly increases? Finally, could the concept of creative cities be used as a local strategy to overcome the typical problems of cities in lagging regions such as lack of human capital or uncompetitive industrial structure? FLORIDA (2004) himself recognizes that diversity explains the statistical growth of metropolitan regions with populations of over 1 mil. Smaller urban regions benefit more from the classical immigration than the creative class mobility. Similarly, ASHEIM (2009) points out that the analysis in the Nordic countries in Europe have shown the validity of the concept in large regions with large cities (over 100 thousand of inhabitants), while results for less urbanised regions (less than 50 thousands of inhabitants) is less convincing (ANDERSEN - HANSEN - ISAKSEN - RAUNIO 2008 in ASHEIM 2009). Small economies are specific case. LENGYEL and SÁGVÁRI (2011) showed that the capital city plays a much more important role for migration compared to developed economies.

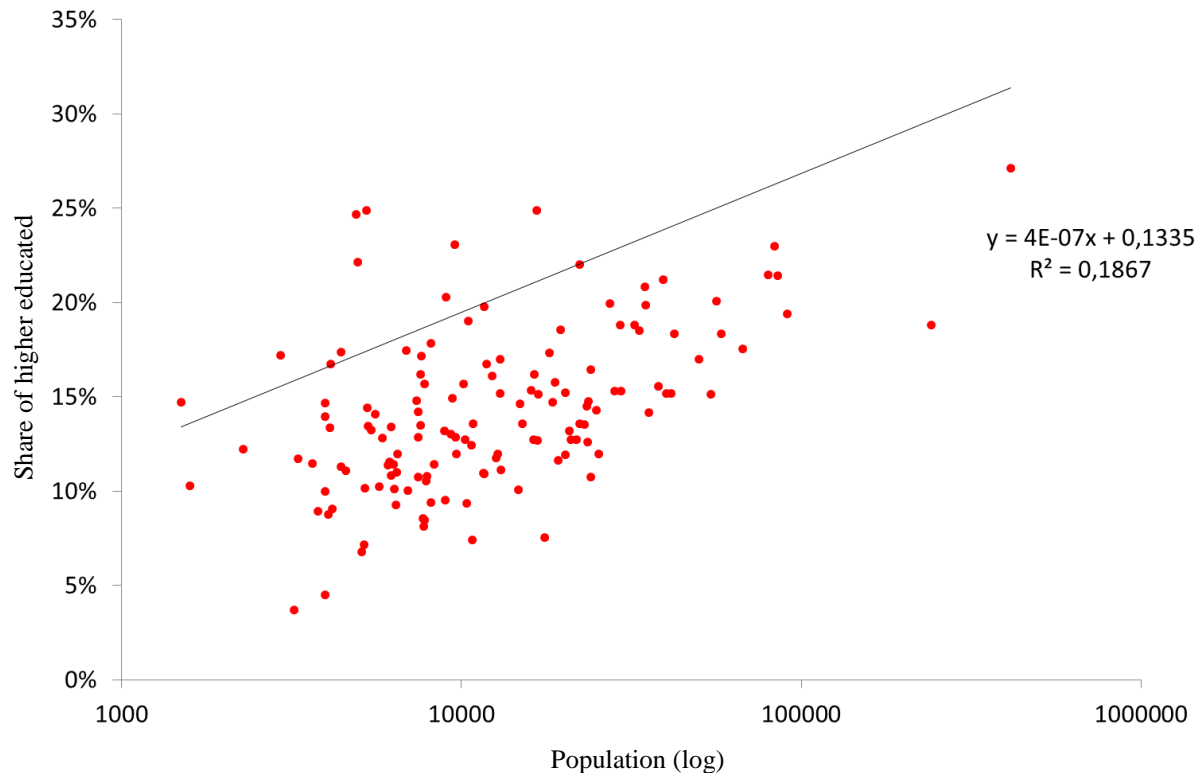
## 3 Analysis of Urbanisation and Migration of Creative Class in Slovakia

The concept of creative cities was developed in a market economy, which size, economic performance, industrial structure, institutional system, but also settlement structure differs substantially from Slovakia. In this paper we will review key aspect of Florida's concept, namely the role of large cities, and creative class migration in Slovakia. We use population data from the Census of inhabitants, apartments and houses from 2011 and data on internal migration from the database of Statistical Office of Slovak Republic. The population with a university degree will be

used as a proxy for creative class. As HANSEN and NIEDOMYSL (2009) pointed out, the correlation between higher education and creative class is very high (correlation coefficient 0.94), and could therefore be used in our analysis as a proxy indicator.

#### *Urbanization and location of the creative class*

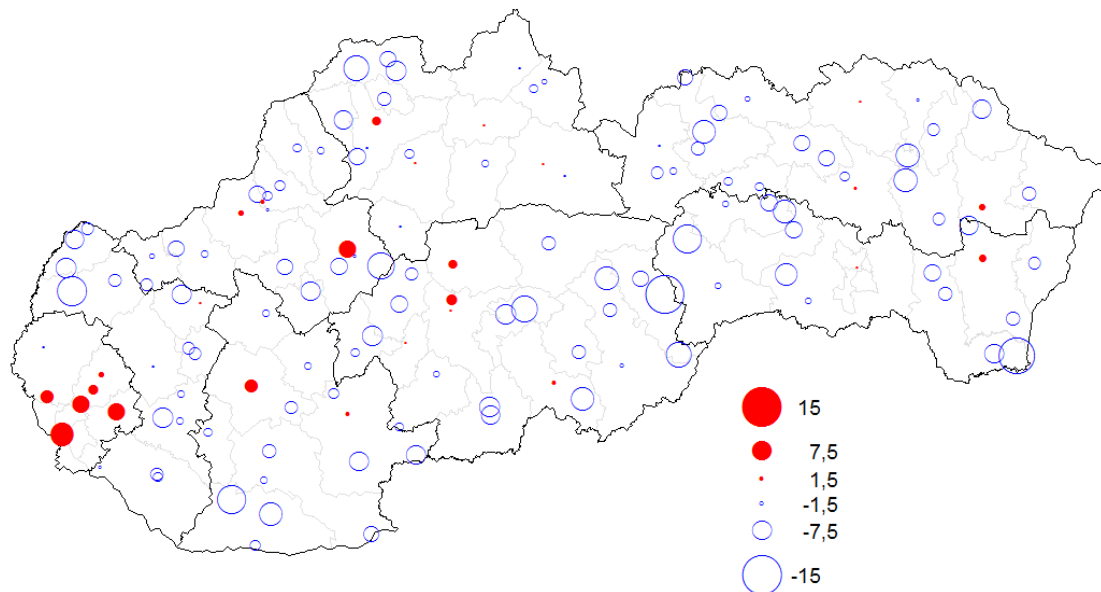
The rate of urbanization in Slovakia reached 54.8%. This is significantly less compared to the Europe (72.7%), and even less than the average in the Eastern Europe (68.9%). In addition, urbanization rate fell by 1.7 percentage points since 1990. Of the 747,968 inhabitants with higher education 71.8% live in cities. This suggests that the urban environment is essential for this group. However, a simple analysis shows, that the relationship between city size and the proportion of the population with higher education is very weak ( $R^2$  0.1867).



**Fig. 1 Relation between city size and share of higher educated population (2011)**

Source: Own processing based on data from the Census, 2011.

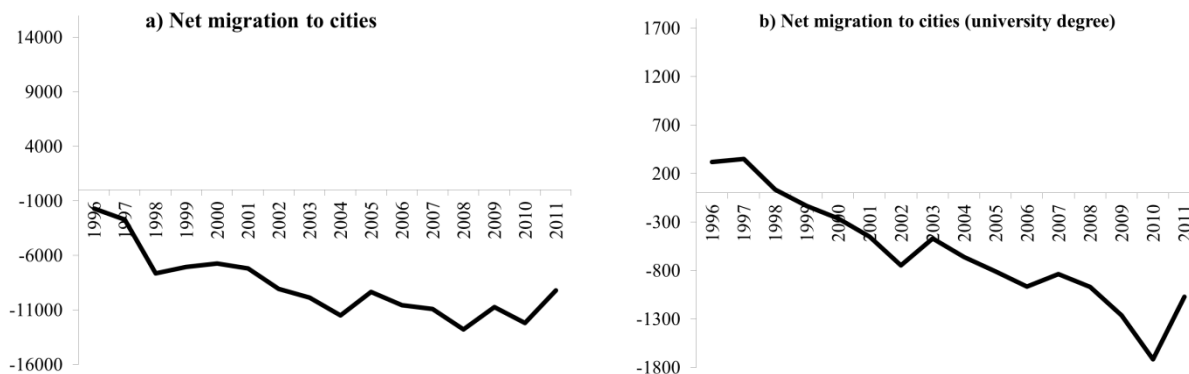
The share of urban population with university degree was 18.14% in 2011. The highest proportion of population with university degree has the city of Bratislava 27.1%. As shown in Map 1, 26 cities have above average share of population with university degree. These are located in the western part of Slovakia - Bratislava, Bojnice, Bratislava, Stupava, Nitra and Bratislava. In the eastern part of Slovakia, the proportion of the population with university degree is mostly below national average.

**Map 1 The share of population with university degree (2011)**

Source: Own processing based on data from the Census, 2011.

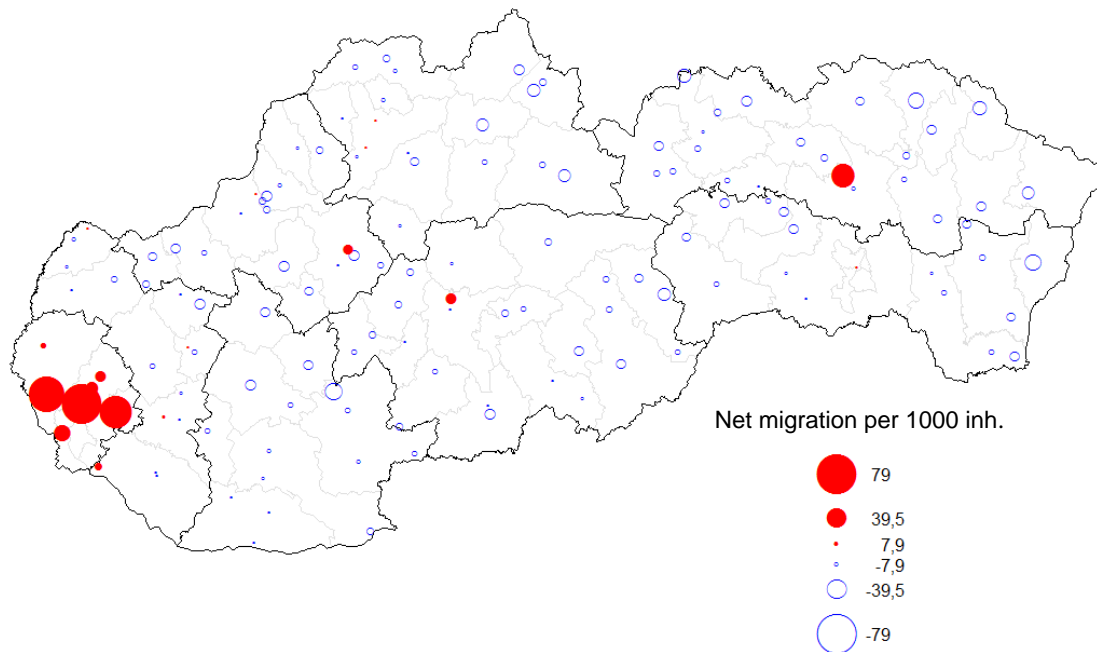
Note. The value of the map shows how many percentage points the share of university educated population higher / lower than the average jobs in the SR (18.14%).

The analysis of internal migration showed that cities as a whole have a negative balance of migration (Figure 2a). This increased fivefold from 1996 to 2011, from minus 1691 to minus 9200. The migration of population with university degree has a downward trend and since 1999 the migration balance is negative. (Figure 2b)

**Fig. 2 Net migration to cities in Slovakia**

Source: own processing on the basis of internal migration database SOSR.

The relationship between the city size and the number of higher educated immigrants per 1,000 population of the city is very weak (correlation coefficient 0.19). Relationship between the city size and net migration of higher educated population per 1000 inhabitants is weak and statistically insignificant (correlation coefficient 0.16).

**Map 2 Net migration of higher educated population in SR (total for the period 1996-2011)**

*Source: own processing on the basis of internal migration database of Statistical Office of SR.*

*Note. The value of the map shows the size of net migration to the city per 1000 inhabitants.*

Among 138 cities, only 18 cities had a positive net migration of university educated population in the period 1996 - 2011. Largest gainers were Bratislava (surplus 13,460), Senec (1071) and Stupava (667). Other cities with a surplus are smaller cities around Bratislava (Šamorín, Sladkovicovo, Bratislava, Malacky, Modra, Pezinok) and small satellites of large cities (Nemsova, Leopoldov, Bojnice, Piestany, Sliach, Veľký Šariš). Among largest cities only Košice (374) and Žilina (164) were gaining migrants. A specific feature is the position of Bratislava, whose share in total migration of higher educated migrants was 29.4%.

## 4 Discussion and Conclusions

The concept of creative class is based on the argument that creative class search for large cities with attractive environment. Urban migration is then the main mechanism of the growth of the cities. The question is whether the same mechanism applies in other countries with different socio-economic and institutional context. It is also a question of whether it applies outside metropolitan regions - in smaller towns and rural areas. Our analysis showed that higher educated population is concentrated around the city of Bratislava. The attractiveness of Bratislava and its surroundings is however based on different arguments compared to the creative class concept. As we discussed earlier (REHÁK, AVETISYAN, 2014) availability of jobs and opportunities for career growth in an economy with high unemployment rates are important factors for migration and it is difficult to assume that the creative class will move to attractive places with limited employment opportunities.

The dominance of Bratislava in the settlement structure in SR could be illustrated by following figures. In 2011 approx. 14.0% of the urban population lived in Bratislava, its share of university-educated urban population was 22.8% and the share on urban migration of university educated people was 37.1%. Approximately 40.7% of companies from high tech industries and 44.6% of companies in the cultural and creative industries (2010) were located in Bratislava. However the position of Bratislava in recent years has slightly weakened in favour for the smaller towns, especially satellites of large cities. These results confirm the research of WOJAN and MCGRANAHAN (2007), who found that the creative class is currently migrating from central cities to the surrounding area.

## References

- ASHEIM, B., 2009: Guest Editorial: Introduction to the Creative Class in European City Regions. *Economic Geography*, Vol. 85 (4), s. 355-362.
- BOSCHMA, R. – FRITSCH, M., 2009: Creative Class and Regional Growth: Empirical Evidence from Seven European Countries. *Economic Geography*, 85(4), s. 391-423.
- CLARK, T., 2004: *The city as an entertainment machine*. Emerald Group Publishing. Amsterdam. ISBN 0-7623-1060.
- FIDRMUC, J., 2004: Migration and regional adjustment to asymmetric shocks in transition economies. *Journal of Comparative Economics*, Vol. 32 (2), s. 230-247.
- FLORIDA, R. – TINAGLI, I., 2004: *Europe in the Creative Age*. Demos. available at <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/EuropeintheCreativeAge2004.pdf> (accessed 5.1.2012)
- FLORIDA, R., 2002a: *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*. Basic Books. ISBN-13: 978-1864032567.
- FLORIDA, R., 2004: Response to Edward Glaeser's review of *The Rise of the Creative Class*. available at <http://creativeclass.com/rfcgdb/articles/ResponsetoGlaeser.pdf> (accessed 5.1.2012).
- FRITSCH, M. – STEUTZER, M., 2012: *The Geography of Creative People in Germany revisited*. Jena Economic Research Papers, No. 2012, 065. available at <https://www.econstor.eu/dspace/bitstream/10419/70193/1/732452147.pdf> (accessed 23.1.2014).
- GERTLER, M. S. et al., 2002: *Competing on Creativity Placing Ontario's Cities in North American Context*. available at <http://www.urban.org/publications/410889.html> (accessed 3.1.2014)
- HALL, P., 2000: *Creative Cities and Economic Development*. *Urban Studies*. Vol. 37 (4), s. 639-649.
- HANSEN, H. – NIEDOMYSL, T., 2009: Migration of the creative class: evidence from Sweden. *Journal of Economic Geography*. Vol. 9, s. 191-206.
- LANDRY, Ch., 2000: *The Creative City*. Earthscan, London. ISBN 1853836133.

- LAZARETTI, L. et al., 2008: Do Creative Industries Cluster? Mapping Creative Local Production Systems in Italy and Spain. *Industry & Innovation*, Vol. 15 (5), s. 549-567.
- LENGYEL, B. – SÁGVÁRI, B., 2011: Creative Occupations and Regional Development in Hungary: Mobility of Talent in a One-centred Transition Economy, *European Planning Studies*, Vol. 19 (12), s. 2073-2093.
- MARKUSSEN, A. – SHROCK, G., 2006: The Artistic Dividend: Urban Artistic Specialization and Economic Development Implications. *Urban Studies*, Vol. 43(10), s. 1661-1686.
- MCGRANAHAN, D. – WOJAN, T., 2007: Recasting the Creative Class to Examine Growth Processes in Rural and Urban Counties. *Regional Studies*, Vol. 41 (2), s. 197-216.
- PETROV, A., 2007: A look beyond metropolis: exploring creative class in the Canadian periphery. *Canadian Journal of Regional Science*, Vol. 30(3), s. 451-474.
- REHÁK, S., AVETISYAN, S., 2014. Mestské výhody a migrácia do miest v SR. *Regionální studia* 2/2014 (in press).