



Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca

Faculty of Geography

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DOCTORAL THESIS

**POLARISATION AND PERIPHERALISATION PROCESSES:
DRIVING FORCE AND OUTCOME OF TERRITORIAL MOBILITY
IN POST-SOCIALIST ROMANIA**

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Abstract

The post-socialist transition from a centralised to a market economy has affected the spatial configuration in countries of Central Eastern Europe by re-widening the gap between cores and peripheries at a regional scale. The present thesis focuses on one of the mechanisms of core-periphery relations, that of territorial mobility, in light of increasing polarisation and peripheralisation. The aim is twofold. First, to show how core-periphery disparities influence mobility flows by offering different levels of structural advantages. Second, to exemplify how various social groups can add to these advantages by choosing their place of residence and work.

The thesis focuses on the settlements of Romania's North-West Region. First, a quantitative census data analysis is employed to map post-socialist flows of internal migration, commuting and short-term international migration, categorising the places of origin and destination in terms of regional cores and peripheries. Second, qualitative interviews taken with public officials and local inhabitants of peripheralised settlements show how different forms of mobility are employed as reactions to different effects of peripheralisation, and how they together affect the local development strategies of those settlements.

The results show that as peripheralised places are struggling with structural disadvantages, such as low levels of income, lack of investments and shrinkage, those with the possibility to leave might do so, hence diminishing the available human capital. As a result, the differentiated life chances between residents of core areas and of peripheries support the reproduction and enhancement of socio-spatial inequalities.

Keywords

polarisation; peripheralisation; core-periphery dependency; local development; internal migration; international migration; commuting

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