From convergence to fragmentation: uneven regional development, industrial restructuring, and the ‘transition to capitalism’ in Slovakia

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Abstract. The transition from the state socialist model of development to one based upon a form of market capitalism is being met with a profound restructuring of the space-economies of Central and East European societies. This paper is an examination of the experience of this ‘transition’ in Slovakia. It is argued that, whereas a process of regional convergence took place under state socialism, we are presently witnessing the regional economic fragmentation of the Slovak economy. New forms of regional uneven development result from the combined effects of the collapse of the national economy, the globalisation and marketisation of economic life, and the interaction between local economic and industrial structures and strategies. By focusing upon the comparative dimensions of change in different regions we can begin to unpick some of the causal mechanisms underlying this trajectory of fragmentation. Of particular importance are the uneven development of new firm formation, foreign direct investment, and the expansion of trade with capitalist markets. The author examines the ability of regions in Slovakia to engage in these dual processes of marketisation and globalisation and finds that integration into the capitalist world economy is highly uneven.

Introduction
The industrial and regional structures of Central and Eastern Europe are currently undergoing a profound transformation (CEC, 1992). Economic structures and modes of integration established under state socialism are being transformed by a number of processes which together constitute the attempt to engineer a ‘transition to capitalism’ (the introduction of market competition, opening to foreign investment and global markets, the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and privatisation, to name just a few. Effectively, the ‘transition’ represents a combined marketisation and globalisation of economic life. Although a vast literature concerned with assessing the impacts of these changes at national levels has been produced (for example, see Aghevli et al, 1992; Gelb and Gray, 1991; Kemme, 1991; Winiecki, 1994), only recently has there emerged a concern for the regional dimensions of economic change (Baláž, 1995; Capek and Sazama, 1993; Cséfalvay, 1994; Hajdú and Horváth, 1994; Kopačka, 1994; Nemes Nagy, 1994; OECD, 1992; Pavlínek, 1996; Sadler and Swain, 1994; Smith, 1994b).

In the context of Slovakia—where the differential nature of regional economic change was one of the key issues in the breakup of the former federal republic—little work has assessed the subnational dynamics and implications of the transition

(1) I want to problematise the present changes occurring in Slovakia as being seen as a smooth transition to market capitalism as most observers have argued (Fukuyama, 1989). The trajectory of change, while exhibiting clear instances of capitalisation (particularly marketisation and foreign investment), remains unclear (see Smith, 1994a; 1994b).
However, like other Central and East European (CEE) economies, the ‘transition’ in Slovakia is producing new forms of uneven regional development, suggesting that the twin processes of marketisation and globalisation produce profoundly fragmented patterns of development. This is not to argue that Slovakia is necessarily a representative case of regional economic change in CEE. Indeed, as Stark (1992) has shown in the context of privatisation, there is a high degree of national path-dependence in the ‘transition’, leading to a complex mosaic of national and regional pathways. Slovakia has, however, been seen as less ‘successful’ in achieving a rapid ‘transition to capitalism’ than many of its neighbours (CEC, 1993; Fisher, 1993; Schwartz et al, 1994; Slay, 1994; Winiecki, 1994). This has been the result of a number of factors beyond the scope of this paper. However, the Slovak experience does raise a number of important issues relevant to the ‘transition’. In particular, in this paper I focus upon the uneven development of the ‘transition’ based upon industrial restructuring strategies dominated by foreign investment, SME development, and Western export-led growth which are common throughout the region. I examine three main processes which are leading to the regional economic fragmentation of Slovakia. The first is the way in which local economic structures created under state socialism are able to sustain levels of economic development during a period of relatively rapid marketisation and globalisation. It is argued that the ability of regional economies to restructure is crucially linked to the different pathways adopted towards regional convergence under state socialism. The second process involves the way in which particular local economic structures are giving rise to distinct forms of local class practices—the emergence of mercantilist fractions and a small-scale entrepreneurial class—which have local implications for development. Here it is argued that the ‘transition’ is not only concerned with the transformation of industry, but is crucially tied to the transformation of the social relations which structure the actions of firms and other actors. The third set of issues questions the degree to which closer integration with the West through export-led growth and foreign direct investment (FDI) is able to sustain universally dynamic patterns of regional economic growth. I focus primarily upon change in the industrial sphere because industrialisation was the major dynamic of the state socialist model and contemporary regional economies are mainly being affected by changes in the industrial sector.

In presenting a critical view of contemporary change in Slovakia I am not arguing for a return to the state socialist development model. Indeed, in order to understand contemporary developments it is necessary to be highly critical of the form that regional convergence took under state socialism. However, regional economic fragmentation is not merely the result of the failure of the state socialist economy to respond to contemporary market conditions. The very nature that the ‘transition’ is taking needs to be problematised. It has created a zero-sum game in which regions win and lose on the basis of the ability of their existing economic structures and the particular strategies developed post-1989 to compete for scarce resources. It is the nature of the zero-sum game and the strategies that emerge from it which need to be challenged.\(^{(3)}\)

\(^{(2)}\) Some of the debate over the need to divide the former federal republic was concerned with the effects of what was perceived as ‘Pragocentrism’ on Slovak regions. For example, the question of armaments industry conversion had always been highly politicised. Support for the nationalist-populist agenda of Vladimir Mečiar was high in areas with concentrations of armaments production that were being differentially affected by the ‘transition’. The debate remained, however, one over national control, rather than a recognition that a profound regional fragmentation was occurring (Kiss, 1993; Smith, 1994a; 1994b).

\(^{(3)}\) See Dunford (1994) for a discussion of liberal responses to the crisis in Western Europe through globalisation and deregulation as constituting a zero-sum game.
The geography of regional inequality in contemporary Slovakia

The Slovak space-economy is today characterised by high levels of uneven development which, given that industrialisation was the motor of growth in the state socialist economy, reflect the ability of existing regional industrial structures to respond to the impacts of globalisation and marketisation. Estimated average national per capita gross domestic product (GDP) for 1993 was 60,938 Sk (US$2031).\(^4\) Estimated purchasing power parity per capita GDP is said to have dropped from 32.4% of the US level in 1987 to 24.3% in 1992 (World Bank, 1994). However, recently published preliminary data for regional GDP suggest that there is significant regional variation from these national figures (figure 1). For example, the poorest region—the rural hinterland of Košice (Košice-vidiek)—recorded a per capita GDP of only 18,944 Sk or US$631 (31% of national average per capita GDP). The wealthiest region, Bratislava, recorded a figure of 243,688 Sk or US$8,123 (about four times the national average). Beyond these two extremes, there are only four regions which record an above average per capita GDP, while nine regions figure below half of the national average. The regions that record above average per capita GDP are those of the metropolitan cores of Bratislava, Košice, and Trnava (the latter is effectively part of the economic hinterland of Bratislava), and the large chemical producing region of Humenné which has received significant levels of foreign investment. Those regions which record close to average GDP figures (not

![Figure 1. Regional per capita GDP, 1993 (source: HRVSR, 1993).](image-url)

\(^4\) It is estimated that per capita GDP in 1990 was 51,778 Sk (ŠÚSR, 1993a). In comparative terms the 1993 figure places Slovakia in the World Bank’s category of middle-income economies, alongside Costa Rica, Turkey, Iran, and Panama (World Bank, 1994). The US$ figure for 1993 assumes an exchange rate of 30 Sk = US$1.
more than 25% below average) are a diverse set of industrialised and moderately diversified regional economies, running west–east through the country.

Those areas with between 25% and 50% below national average per capita GDP are a group of eighteen regions where industrial restructuring has had a generally negative impact upon economic life. The top half of these regions are highly industrialised regions, including the armaments producing centres of Martin, Považská Bystrica, and Dubnica nad Váhom (Smith, 1994a; 1994b), along with more diversified regional economies such as Liptovský Mikuláš and Žilina. At the lower end of this group are about eight regions characterised by branch plant economies—resulting from late industrialisation during the 1970s—and peripheral agricultural economies. Economic decline and rising levels of unemployment are well established and the future for many in these areas does not look bright. Finally, there are the poorest regions (with between 25% and 49.9% of the national GDP figure). These include some of the most peripheral 'problem regions' in Slovakia where both industrial and agricultural production have slumped and unemployment rates are well above average, rising to as high as 23.3% in Spišská Nová Ves in 1993. This contemporary picture suggests a high degree of regional fragmentation. However, it needs to be contextualised within the general tendency towards regional economic convergence during the 1948–89 period. In the following section I highlight the main dimensions of industrialisation and regional convergence.

Regional economic convergence and industrialisation under state socialism

Industrialisation has been the key to the expansion and decline of CEE economies in the postwar period. The postwar economic programmes of state socialism in Central and Eastern Europe were explicitly oriented towards the eradication of the regional inequalities arising from the earlier ‘transition to capitalism’, and the modernisation of national economies through extensive industrialisation (see Smith, 1994a). The former Czechoslovakia was no exception, although the national economy was characterised by a relatively well-industrialised west in the Czech Lands and a marginalised, largely rural, and unevenly industrialised east in Slovakia. An extensive pathway to industrial and economic development was established which was specifically oriented toward a heavy industry base as a way of forcing the ‘backward’ rural economies into the 20th century (Smith, 1994a; 1994b). One of the central principles of the plan was the “socialist industrialisation of Slovakia” (Vysoká škola ekonomická, 1963, page 138) based on the principles of the ‘Košice programme’ which aimed to bring the Czech and Slovak ‘nations’ closer through cultural and economic integration (Pavlínek, 1996; Průcha et al, 1974; Široky, 1953). In this sense, the programme was a typical Leninist reaction to the nationalities problem. Regional industrialisation thus became the main characteristic of regional policy that was to inform virtually all regional development planning from 1948 through to 1989. Heavy industrialisation became the leading edge of this regional development programme, and nearly 30% of total investment was directed to Slovak regional development in the first Five Year Plan. Alongside the industrialisation of ‘backward’ regions came the provision of improved housing, health care, and education facilities (Musil, 1980). The provision of housing and health care, and social and cultural facilities were invariably attached to dominant local enterprises which created de facto company towns (Ilner, 1992; Myant, 1992; Smith, 1994b).

(5) National average unemployment in 1993 was 14.4%.

(6) The Czech Lands contained between approximately 60% and 78% of Austrian industrial production and Czechoslovakia was the twelfth most industrialised economy in the world in the early 1960s (Pavlínek, 1996).
Regional economic convergence between Slovakia and the Czech Lands

This model of development led to important transformations in the Slovak space economy in the postwar period. Like other state socialist economies in Central and Eastern Europe (Koropeckyj, 1972; Zaniewski, 1992) there has been a marked convergence in regional economic performance in Slovakia. This has, of course, been underlain with a number of structural and environmental problems that are only now emerging in their full significance (Carter, 1987). Most work has tended to focus on the degree to which the inequalities between the Czech Lands and Slovakia were reduced in the period after 1948 (Capek and Sazama, 1993; Pavlinek, 1996; Wolchik, 1983). There is general agreement that there has been a large-scale equalisation in levels of economic development between these two macroregions. Interrepublic convergence occurred at a fairly rapid pace until the 1970s at which time the level of national income produced and gross industrial output in Slovakia were approaching the relative proportion of population (Capek and Sazama, 1993; Pavlinek, 1996) (table 1).

Table 1. Changes in Slovakia's share of selected economic indicators for Czechoslovakia, 1937–89 (source: adapted from Capek and Sazama, 1993, page 216).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National income produced</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross industrial output</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour productivity index</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The figures are percentage shares, except for the labour productivity index, where the index for the Czech Lands is 100.

There was, however, a levelling-off of the rate of closure of the development gap in the 1970s and 1980s. This reflected the emerging exhaustion of the extensive model of development. Indeed, the relatively small differences in labour productivity by 1989 between the two major regions of Czechoslovakia suggest that the earlier period of expanding the means and relations of state socialist production had come to an end, albeit that there was a general failure to intensify production fully in both parts of the former Czechoslovakia. (7) Crucially, this was linked to the erosion of economic performance. The 1970s and 1980s saw a steady decline in national rates of growth, which reflected the inability of the economy to intensify. Detailed GDP or net material product (NMP) (8) data at the regional level have only recently (since 1993) been collected and published. However, data presented in figure 2 suggest that, not only has there been a significant increase in the relative proportion of industrial employment in Slovakia, but that, according to Koropeckyj (1972), this can be taken to indicate a significant increase in regional NMP in Slovakia. The equalisation of industrial employment has been long term and sustained. The emerging exhaustion of this model of expansion is evident by the late

(7) See Kosaf (1987) for a discussion of the need for intensification in the national economy. Altvater (1993) argues that the failure to intensify was one of the major causes of the economic slowdown and eventual collapse of state socialism.

(8) NMP differs from the more commonly used indicator of GDP, in the West. NMP measures the value of physical outputs minus physical inputs in the ‘productive sector’ only. GDP includes so-called ‘nonproductive sectors’ such as services. For a discussion of the measurement of NMP relative to GDP see the World Bank’s project results for Eastern Europe and the former USSR in Marer (1985), and for Czechoslovakia see Havlík and Levčik (1985).
1970s and into the 1980s when average annual rates of industrial employment growth had declined significantly. Clearly, a profound transformation in the nature of the Slovak economy occurred centring on state-led industrial transformation (Kopačka, 1994).

The process of convergence was the result of a number of factors (Capek and Sazama, 1993; Pavlínek, 1996). The most important of these were the differential levels of investment between the Czech Lands and Slovakia. The Slovak share of investment received tended to exceed the share of national income produced (Pavlínek, 1996) (compare table 1 and table 2). Differential levels of investment had an important effect upon growth rates in these regional economies. Table 3 shows that the sustained levels of higher investment in Slovakia produced higher growth rates than in the Czech Lands. Even when relative decline in growth rates occurred from the mid-1970s, the level of decline was lower in Slovakia than in the Czech Lands as investment priorities remained focused on the less developed areas.

![Employment change in Slovakia, 1948–88](source: elaborated from Štatistická ročenka ŠÚSR, various dates).

![Total investment in the Czech Lands and Slovakia, 1951–89](source: Bálek, 1991).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Czech Lands</th>
<th>% of total</th>
<th>Slovakia</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951–60</td>
<td>205 309</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>87 702</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961–70</td>
<td>404 221</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>192 788</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971–80</td>
<td>886 692</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>451 745</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981–89</td>
<td>987 635</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>506 844</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951–89</td>
<td>2483 857</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>1239 079</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

na not available.
Uneven regional development in Slovakia


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of republic national product invested</th>
<th>Average annual percentage rate of growth of national product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Slovak Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951–55</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956–60</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961–65</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966–70</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971–75</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976–80</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981–86</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regional convergence within Slovakia

By 1970 a regional structure had been established with concentrations of industry in much of western and central Slovakia (excluding the southern, agricultural districts(9)). This concentration of industrial employment was part of the expansion of Slovakia's industrial sector combined with the industrialisation of many districts which previously had only limited industrial activity. Eastern Slovak districts and those located along the southern border with Hungary remained dominated by agriculture. However, during the period 1970–85 the highest levels of industrial employment growth were found in many of these more peripheral regions (figure 3). Many districts along the southern border and the most peripheral eastern areas saw high levels of industrial growth (Mládek, 1990), which reflected the further expansion of the extensive model of industrialisation. Although high growth rates could have been attributable to the relatively low starting points that the more peripheral

Figure 3. Regional industrial employment change, 1970–85 (source: Štatistická ročenka ŠÚSR, various years).

(9) Districts or okresy were the basic administrative and territorial unit in the former Czechoslovakia.
regions exhibited, there is a clear indication that regional industrial growth was increasingly concentrated in these areas. As resources for extensive industrialisation had become utilised in ‘core’ areas in the west (particularly relatively immobile labour because of tight housing markets) the process shifted to those areas that had been largely untouched by industrialisation. In some of these newly industrialised regions the form that industrial penetration often took was through the establishment of branch plant economies connected to integrated networks within industrial associations.\(^{(10)}\)

By the second half of the 1980s, however, a crisis in this pathway to convergence was emerging as the number of employees in industry declined (−0.33% for Slovakia as a whole). Yet, industrial employment decline was very uneven. At the broadest level, industrial employment growth continued in the less industrialised east and saw its greatest reduction in the more industrialised west. Average annual percentage growth rates were 0.15 for eastern Slovakia, −0.20 for central Slovakia, and −0.76 for western Slovakia. Industrial production decline was also evident by the late 1980s. This was most marked in regions in central and western Slovakia, particularly those dominated by heavy engineering (figure 4). Much of the growth in industrial production that did occur during this period was located in southern and eastern districts, particularly in marginal areas on the northeast border with Poland. For example, in the nine least industrialised regions during the late 1980s relative gross industrial output as a percentage of Slovakia’s total industrial output increased from 4.5% in 1985 to 5.4% in 1989, whereas for the nine most industrialised regions it declined from 47.1% to 44% in the same period (table 4).

The process of industrial-led regional economic convergence therefore emerged from the extensive model of development in two main stages. The first was an expansion of the industrial structures of a set of core regions largely in western and central Slovakia between 1948 and the early 1970s. This process was, to a large

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\(^{(10)}\) See Jeffries (1993) for a discussion of industrial associations, and Smith (1994b) for an analysis of branch structures in the heavy engineering and armaments sectors.
extent, based upon the expansion of heavy engineering sectors and, in certain localities, armaments production. The second stage, which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, represented a relative slowdown in levels of extensive industrial development, particularly as labour absorption in industry became exhausted in the most 'developed' districts. Concomitant with this was an expansion of the extensive model to more marginal areas. The integration of the whole of the Slovak space-economy into the state socialist industrial model represented a consolidation of regional convergence. However, the further expansion of the extensive model to the most peripheral areas failed to provide the dynamism that it had in the 1950s and 1960s.

The result of these processes were divergent sets of pathways to regional development under state socialism. First, there was an early industrialisation of metropolitan and formerly agricultural areas in the 1950s and 1960s which created a westerly core of industrial regional economies. Second, more peripheral rural economies were integrated later into the industrial economy largely through branch plant industrialisation in peripheries during the 1970s and 1980s. Third, rural peripheries in the south and the east, based upon agricultural production and very limited industrial output, were maintained. These particular pathways suggest that state socialist development was itself an uneven process, creating a distinct spatial division of labour, within the general context of regional convergence. In the following section I examine the extent to which these regional economic structures are able to survive in the zero-sum conditions of the 1990s.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1985</th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>Index of change, 1985-89</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nine most industrialised districts</td>
<td>129747350</td>
<td>137484020</td>
<td>+105.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine least industrialised districts</td>
<td>12257550</td>
<td>16742580</td>
<td>+136.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regional economic fragmentation and the 'transition to capitalism'
The key theme in the first five years of transition from state socialism has been national economic collapse. Output in different economic sectors between 1988 and 1993 all registered declines. Agricultural output declined by 30%, industrial output by 15%, and the service sector contracted by 27%.(11) This collapse has also been geographically uneven, resulting ultimately in the rise of a particular brand of Slovak populist nationalism. In this section I chart these developments, first by briefly examining the dimensions of national economic collapse, and then by considering the regional implications of marketisation and globalisation for the Slovak space-economy.

The collapse of state socialism and integration into global and European markets were felt differentially between the two republics of the former Czechoslovakia. The structure of the Slovak economy, with its relative concentration of heavy engineering and armaments production and its firm integration into former Council for

(11) Recently published data for 1994 suggest that there may be an emerging turnaround in the economy with positive growth rates in several branches, including industry (Prosnan, 1995).
Mutual Economic Assistance markets, meant that, with the marketisation of the economy, the introduction of ‘hard budget constraints’ (Kornai, 1992) and the collapse of eastern markets (Smith, 1995), the effects of the ‘transition to capitalism’ were felt more strongly than in the Czech Lands. In 1991, GDP dropped by 16.4% in Slovakia compared with 14.4% in the Czech Republic (Pavlinek, 1996; UNIDO, 1992). In addition, industrial production saw differential levels of decline with a greater concentration in Slovakia as the heavy, less diversified industrial base had difficulty in sustaining itself with the combined loss of markets and the opening of industry to the international law of value. For example, between 1990 and 1991 gross industrial output declined by 19.7% in the Czech Republic, compared with 24.7% in Slovakia (Pavlinek, 1996; UNIDO, 1992). Slovak industrial production continued to fall in 1991 by 25%, by 14% in 1992, and by 11% in 1993. One of the main results of this uneven collapse, particularly in the industrial sector, was a much higher level of unemployment in Slovakia. By the end of 1992 unemployment had reached 11% in Slovakia, whereas in the Czech Republic it remained relatively low at 5% (Fogel and Etchevery, 1994). This uneven economic collapse led to increasing calls in Slovakia for greater economic control to be lodged in Bratislava rather than Prague, and by the beginning of 1993 the former Czechoslovakia ceased to exist. Yet, what has tended to be overlooked in discussions of the breakup is the relatively high degree of regional fragmentation emerging within Slovakia, both before and after division, at the same time as there was an active project of constructing a Slovak populist-nationalism to legitimise the federal split.

Regional industrial change
Industrial decline has been experienced primarily as a shedding of industrial labour—for example, an annual average change of −9% has been experienced between 1989 and 1993 (calculated from ŠÚSR, 1993a; 1993c)—alongside a fall in industrial production of between −3.4% in 1990 and −13.7% in 1992 (Zlacky et al, 1994). Industrial decline has, however, been experienced unevenly. Some regions have seen a decline both of industrial labour and of production—suggesting an emerging process of deindustrialisation—but in other areas the process has been less severe. Whereas emerging deindustrialisation suggests a collapse of the industrial sector and regions that became highly dependent on the industrial base, rationalisation represents intensification of forms of industrial accumulation. The extent to which a rationalisation is occurring is difficult to document given the near-universal decline of industrial production across all regions. It is likely that the greatest degree of industrial rationalisation is to be found in enterprises with foreign investment where new work practices and technology have been introduced.

Losses in industrial production between 1992 and 1993 have been felt most strongly in the branch plant economies of the north (Dolný Kubín and Čadca) and south (Veľký Krtíš and Rimavská Sobota), the specialised regional economies of Martin, Topoľčany, and Zvolen, and some of the more peripheral southern and

(12) In some areas of the Czech Republic, such as Prague, there was a labour shortage as the national capital was able to forge ahead in its pathway to full-scale global integration as a Central European capital (Sýkora, 1993).
(13) I do not have space to explore the complex dimensions of the division of the former federal republic. This has, however, been well documented elsewhere (Capek and Sazama, 1993; Pavlinek, 1996).
(14) Martin and Zvolen specialised in armaments production and heavy engineering. Topoľčany has large concentrations of mining and shoe production.
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eastern agricultural areas such as Dunajská Streda, and Svidnik (figure 5).\(^{(15)}\) Industrial production decline has also been experienced in Bratislava. However, this has been outweighed by growth in a host of other activities (mainly in the trade and service sectors) which mean that the capital's position as a metropolitan core has maintained the high level of GDP growth in comparison with other regions. Between 1991 and 1992, and 1992 and 1993 the number of regions which saw an expansion of industrial production declined dramatically from six (Humenné, Nitra, Rimavska Sobota, Senica, Spišská Nová Ves, and Trnava) to one (Komárno). The claim that the end of 1992 saw the emergence of a turnaround in economic decline (Zlacky et al, 1994) must therefore be questioned. Indeed, what we may be witnessing is a near nationwide collapse of the economy resulting from a collapse of market integration as former CMEA, federal, and domestic markets contract, and the system of enterprise regulation and supplier networks disintegrates leading to an emergence of a secondary debt crisis in which several of the fifty largest enterprises are seeing large losses (for a more detailed analysis, see Chajdiak and Kvetko, 1994).

Figure 5. Index of regional change in industrial production, 1992–93 (source: calculated from data provided by ŠÚSR, 1994).

Regional employment decline has occurred in combination with falls in production. The national annual average rate of industrial employment decline between 1989 and 1993 was $-8.85\%$. Industrial employment decline affected all regions. The shedding of industrial labour has therefore been one of the major reactions to productivity slowdown. Industrial employment change is, however, unevenly experienced. Deindustrialisation is emerging where industrial employment decline is combined with large drops in industrial production (figure 6). This is most apparent in the rural peripheries around Bratislava, a central band of highly industrialised monostructures and branch plant economies, and an easterly group of peripheral regional economies. Most of the limited employment decline is found in the westerly core of the most industrialised and diversified economies, such as Trenčín, Senica, and Liptovský Mikuláš.

\(^{(15)}\) Data on industrial production of comparable quality at the district level are only available for 1992 and 1993. It should be recognised that this period covers the break-up of the federal state and so may include some additional industrial dislocations resulting from this process.
Unemployment has been one of the clear results of industrial decline (figure 7). Unemployment is also tied to restructuring and decline in the agricultural sector, but most labour shedding has occurred in industry (HRVSR, 1993). In 1993, all regions saw an increase in unemployment. Two regions stand out as having below 10% unemployment rates—Bratislava and Trenčín. These two regional economies have been able to diversify to the extent that labour absorption has occurred through the growth of an SME sector, particularly (in the case of Bratislava) in the service sector. The most serious unemployment problems are currently found in some of the most peripheral areas in the south, north, and east, in which there is little opportunity for diversification of employment, and regional economies are either stagnating or declining.

Figure 6. Deindustrialisation in the 1990s.

Figure 7. Regional unemployment, 1993 (source: ŠÚSR, 1993c, page 6).
To summarise, then, industrial restructuring, marketisation, and globalisation appear to be producing the most negative effects in many of the most recently industrialised regions with branch plant economies which have seen a collapse of the system of industrial association integration in the last five years. Regions with high levels of dependency upon heavy industry, particularly in the engineering and armaments sectors, have also been affected negatively. Given this picture of profound yet uneven decline, what are the processes underlying regional economic change during marketisation? In the following sections I focus on three main issues—the role of new firm formation and SMEs, the role of FDI, and the creation of new forms of market integration. All three have been highlighted by the national government as key mechanisms in the transformation of the economy (Ministerstvo hospodársťa Slovenskej republiky, 1994; NADSME, 1994). SME development and FDI have additionally been identified as central to the formulation of regional development policy (Balážová and Valent, 1995; NADSME, 1995). The development of export-led growth in key enterprises also has de facto regional effects as credits are provided to exporting firms. Are processes operating in these three spheres able to pull regions out of decline or do they deepen the fragmentation process?

New firm formation, SMEs, and regional development

One of the central components of economic policy and the focus of a large proportion of foreign economic assistance (16) has been in the creation of a base of new, private SMEs (Trend 1994e; 1994f; NADSME, 1994; 1995). By the end of 1992 there were 305287 private entrepreneurs operating in the Slovak economy (SÚSR, 1993b). Nearly all (287138) of these organisations consisted of unregistered self-employed people; 233149 of which employed only one person (Brhel, 1994) (table 5). The largest number (approximately 41%) were small-scale, often self-employed persons involved in trading, business services, repairs, or speculative real.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enterprise size (number of employees)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner only</td>
<td>233149</td>
<td>81.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>53959</td>
<td>18.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-49</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>287138</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ‘Entrepreneurs' refers to the legal classification of single, self-employed owners. Other, more formalised legal forms, such as limited companies and joint-stock companies, are not included in these figures.

(16) 43.4% (ECU 7.2 million) of European Union PHARE assistance in 1991 was designated for the development of SMEs, and 36.8% (ECU 7.0 million) in 1993 (Trend 1994b).

(17) Recently, more critical views of the emphasis on SMEs in economic and regional policy have begun to emerge in the Slovak press. For example, the general director of Júhoslovenské celuložky a papierné, a.s. Štúrovo, a large paper and pulp enterprise in southern Slovakia, recently argued that “the absence of a homogenous state economic policy concerning all economic entities—private as well as state, big as well as small—pits people against each other. This is why I do not like all the proclamations concerning the support given to small and medium sized businesses. In all economies there are small, middle-sized and large firms. It is not a good situation when a company receives special treatment only because it is not large” (quoted in Trend 1994d, author’s translation).
estate activities. However, partly because of the difficult national economic situation and a host of legislative and bureaucratic problems new firm formation declined between 1993 and 1994 by 2.3% (calculated from ŠÚSR, 1994). This decline was concentrated in about half of the regions of Slovakia.

This suggests that we need to question the degree to which the emerging SME sector provides an alternative to the relative high levels of development of parts of the existing industrial economy. The concentration of new SMEs in the 'service' sector suggests that low-capital start-up activities have been favoured, often focused on the consolidation of the informal networks of former enterprise managers to exploit trade and business service opportunities (Smith, 1994b). The development of this form of mercantilist economy highlights the degree to which rents are being recycled rather than produced in the postcommunist world—"the source of profits is based on trade, speculation, or even extortion rather than the transformation of production" (Burawoy and Krotov, 1993, page 65). Furthermore, the labour-market impacts of SMEs seem to be limited. Recent data from the National Agency for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (NADSME, 1994; 1995) indicate that, of the 395 firms created through government programmes between 1993 and 1994, only 2282 jobs were created at a time when national employment levels fell by 35,000. In addition, a recent government report (HRVSR, 1993) has suggested that the capacity of SMEs to 'absorb' surplus labour is highly uneven and reflects the regional uneveness of new firm start-ups. Figure 8 indicates the difference between the rate of new firm formation (the percentage of self-employed persons per 100 economically active persons) and regional unemployment rates. Clearly, there is a profound east-west division in the ability of new firm formation to absorb surplus labour (with the exception of the metropolitan area of Košice in the east that has a relatively diversified local economy and reflects the ability of metropolitan areas to withstand national economic collapse, and Stará L'ubovňa in the north which has a high rate of new firm formation because of a small economically active population).

Figure 8. Regional new firm formation and the absorption of 'surplus labour' (source: HRVSR, 1993).
At a more refined spatial scale, a small group of largely metropolitan regional economies emerge as those where new firm formation is having a positive effect on unemployment (Bratislava and its rural hinterland, Senica, Trenčín, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, and Košice). This reflects a number of processes. First, there is the increasing concentration and centralisation of economic dynamism in the Bratislava region and its hinterland stretching northwards towards Trenčín. These regional economies benefit from a strategic location to the Czech, Hungarian, and Austrian border regions providing trade opportunities. Second, it reflects the ability of metropolitan regional economies to diversify their economic bases through SME development, while other regional economies based on smaller settlements are increasingly left behind in this process of transformation. Third, it reflects the almost complete marginalisation of much of the Slovak space-economy which suffers from high levels of unemployment and few economic opportunities for new firms.

The regional implications of foreign direct investment

Alongside the development of SMEs, the role of foreign capital has been seen as central in the restructuring of central and east European economies (for overviews, see Dunning, 1993; Michalak, 1993; Murphy, 1992). Within Slovakia, FDI has also been seen as a way of overcoming high levels of regional unemployment in the more peripheral areas (Balážová and Valent, 1995). To what extent does FDI add to the process of fragmentation? Although there have been notable cases of important FDI projects (table 6), the impact of FDI is somewhat limited. This is in part because of the relatively low levels of FDI directed to Slovakia. For example, total FDI in the first quarter of 1994 amounted to 11.5 milliard Sk (US$383.3 million). The largest sectoral concentration of foreign investment is in trading and finance activities (approximately 4.3 milliard Sk (calculated from ŠÚSR, 1994, page A7)), and the majority is received from Austria and Germany (table 7). Because of this sectoral concentration and the dominance of a few, large, projects profound regional concentrations of FDI exist, which limits the impacts of FDI as a regional strategy to get out of crisis (figure 9). For example, 54.4% of FDI is located in Bratislava, largely in the Volkswagen investment in Bratislavské automobilové závody (BAZ) and a host of banking and financial investments including L'udová banka from

### Table 6. Major foreign direct investment projects (source: adapted from Balážová and Valent, 1995).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Country of source</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Investment Sk (million)</th>
<th>Investment US$ (million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chemlon-Rhône Poulenc</td>
<td>Humenné</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Chemicals</td>
<td>1678.4</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAZ-Volkswagen</td>
<td>Bratislava</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Automobiles</td>
<td>960.0</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior-K-Mart</td>
<td>Bratislava</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Retailing</td>
<td>995.0</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermas</td>
<td>Slovenská Lúpča</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>774.0</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figaro-Jacobs Suchard</td>
<td>Bratislava</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Confectionary</td>
<td>462.0</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mölnycke</td>
<td>Gemerksá Hórka</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Medical supplies</td>
<td>380.0</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palma-Henkel</td>
<td>Bratislava</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Soap powder</td>
<td>346.0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calex-Samsung</td>
<td>Bratislava</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Refrigerators</td>
<td>323.0</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L'udová banka</td>
<td>Bratislava</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>300.0</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(18) Approximately US$100 million of FDI was received in 1993, placing Slovakia far below the other three members of the Visegrad Four (for a more detailed analysis of FDI, see CEC, 1994).
Austria. Other significant and highly concentrated investments are found in Poprad (7.8% of total FDI) in the Whirlpool investment in Tatramat, in Humenné (7.1% of total FDI) located in the Chemlon chemical works with French investment, and Nitra (4.6% of FDI) in the Samsun–Calex project. However, most regions have received only limited investment and many (particularly those in the most peripheral eastern and southern areas) have close to none.

The regional pattern of FDI suggests that global integration through opening to foreign capital reinforces the contemporary disparities found in the Slovak space-economy. The concentration of investment in a few ‘elite’ projects suggests that enterprise restructuring will be limited outside of those regions where investment is located. FDI clearly focuses upon the more diversified metropolitan economies (Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Košice) where demand is greater and in regions with identifiably dynamic industrial sectors (Humenné, Poprad, Nitra) which provide low-cost production sites for Western investors.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of source</th>
<th>Investment (Sk million)</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>2691</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2406</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>1492</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1144</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. Regional distribution of foreign direct investment, 1994 (source: ŠÚSR, 1994, table 47).
Uneven regional development in Slovakia

Global market integration and regional change

Given the collapse of the domestic market and the disintegration of the CMEA structures of export integration, to what extent is export-led growth and integration into new, Western markets a panacea for industrial change and sustainable regional economic growth? The Slovak Economics Ministry has prioritised the creation of a trade profile which emphasises trade with the West, particularly the European Union, EFTA, and G7 countries (following from the Europe Agreement), while at the same time developing trade structures with the Visegrad Four (Bartl, 1994).

Data for 1993 and the first half of 1994 indicate that there was an increase in trade of about 16.1% (Trend 1994a), although Slovakia was running a trade deficit of 59.3 billion Sk (US$197.6 thousand million) (13.8% higher than 1993). Just under 40% of exports were to the Czech Republic. Slovakia has also seen a profound shift in its patterns of trade to the West. By 1990, trade with the West had reached approximately 50% of total trade, whereas in 1989 the figure was 37% (EIU, 1993). Trade with the European Union in 1993 accounted for 22.3% of the total, 12.7% with Russia, and 7.7% with EFTA members (Trend 1994c). The most important trade partner had, by the end of 1992, become Germany which accounted for 59% of total European Union trade and 28% of total trade, although this figure had dropped to 13.2% of the total in 1993 (Trend 1994c) which reflected ongoing recession in German markets. In addition, trade with Eastern countries (excluding the former Soviet Union) declined from 86786 million Kčs in 1989 to 73434 million Kčs in 1992. Total trade with the former USSR remained fairly stable, although exports saw a marked drop (calculated from ŠUSR, 1993c, page 565).

To what extent is this changing pattern of global market integration a dynamic behind the fragmentation of contemporary regional economies? How far have regions and their industries been able to engage in a model of export-led growth? Detailed statistics on the direction of regional trade are not currently available. However, given that there has been a dramatic increase in trade with the West it is possible to assume that this is a moderately universal process. Various reports in the Slovak economic press support this (Trend 1994a; 1994c). Figure 10 indicates that, within the context of large scale industrial production decline between 1992 and 1993, the integration of local economies into the global economy is somewhat uneven. In areas where there has been a severe production decline (−10% or more of the national average), there is a tendency for export growth also to be negative (particularly in central Slovakia) suggesting that these regional economies have been unable to benefit from the changing patterns and orientation of trade. In the regional economies where industrial production decline has been more moderate (between 0% and 10% below the national average) there are a group of regions, largely in the east, where export-led change is not significant. However, those areas that have seen only limited levels of decline in production (0% to 10% above the national average) and a growth in exports are largely located in the west and those regions elsewhere (such as Poprad, Humenné, Rožňava) where foreign investment and strategic export alliances with foreign firms are creating export opportunities. (19)

Export-led global integration therefore seems to emphasise the process of fragmentation, enabling dynamic enterprises and regional economies to begin to forge a pathway out of the general pattern of decline.

(19) See, for example, reports about export promotion to the West in the Chemlon, Humenné, and Biotika joint ventures with Western countries (Trend 1994a).
Conclusions: divergent regional pathways, metropolitan centres, and peripheries in uneven development

This analysis suggests, then, that there is a set of emerging regional pathways which underlie the contemporary fragmentation of the Slovak space-economy. First, there is a group of metropolitan regional economies which have been able to diversify into SME development, often through the tertiary sector and through the recycling of rents rather than industrial production. Second, there is a set of regions dominated by FDI in which enterprise restructuring and export-led growth is important, but which may begin to exhibit problems arising from dependency upon foreign capital. Third, there is a set of regions in which lower levels of industrial decline and attempts at export-led development are being made, producing an increasing dependency on the global market at a time of global recession. Many of these regions are penetrating foreign markets through relatively cheap products and may become dependent on the comparative advantage of being low-wage, high-skill economies. Fourth, in the west, Bratislava and its hinterland are emerging as the core of the Slovak economy with high growth, a concentration of FDI, and high levels of SME formation, the majority of which is in the trade and services sector. The Bratislava region is clearly integrated into the Vienna economic region and its hinterland (Mojžes and Slímk, 1993; Schneidewind, 1993; Tompá, 1993; Žárska, 1993). This therefore represents a consolidation of economic power in the westerly metropolitan core. Fifth, there is a large group of marginalised and increasingly peripheral regional economies which underwent late industrialisation under state socialism and have found acute difficulties in restructuring under the zero-sum conditions of the 1990s.
Uneven regional development in Slovakia

Clearly the decisions of enterprises and their pathways to change and restructuring, the role of new firms and emerging class forces and patterns of global market integration are some of the most significant strategies currently deployed to engineer the 'transition to capitalism'. Yet, like any process of political-economic transformation it is highly uneven in both space and time (Dunford and Perrons, 1983; Harvey, 1982; Smith, 1984). The divergent pathways are therefore constituted through a combination of existing regional economic structures established under state socialism and the way in which these structures interrelate with the particular restructuring strategies pursued by firms located in these regions. Hitherto, the role of local and regional authorities in strategic change has been marginal because of the highly centralised nature of the local state system and the lack of resources available because of tight fiscal restrictions imposed as part of the IMF structural adjustment programme (Baláž, 1995). Only recently has a more formalised set of proposals for regional policy emerged (Baláž, 1995; HRVSR, 1993). However, the proposed framework is one of adopting 'Western' models of local state entrepreneurialism and place commodification (Harvey, 1989) under systems of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) sponsored by the European Union PHARE programme and regional networks of business advisory centres aiming to assist in new firm formation (Baláž, 1995). A core network of business advisory centres is now established in nine districts. However, initial evidence suggests that the impacts may be limited and the channelling of funds into what is becoming a hegemonic understanding of pathways to regional economic success maybe problematic given the substantial costs involved in the collapse of the large-firm sector. An emphasis on competition for relatively scarce FDI and European Union funding is likely to underline further the increasingly competitive nature of interregional relations in the zero-sum conditions of the 1990s. Strategies of marketisation and global market integration therefore appear to be counterproductive to the process of creating dynamic and competitive regional economies. There can be no doubt that some dynamic regional economies are emerging. But the rules of the zero-sum game of competition for scarce resources and markets is resulting in a profound process of regional differentiation. Regional 'winners' and regional 'losers' are becoming clearly established. Regional fragmentation suggests that we need to challenge unilinear notions of national economic change. More peripheral, late industrialised regions, as well as heavily industrialised engineering and metallurgy areas, have witnessed severe limitations to their abilities to transform existing economic structures into dynamic forms of local capitalism. A recognition of the geographically uneven nature of the 'transition to capitalism' should therefore be a starting point for the construction of counterhegemonic alternatives for pathways out of the collapse of state socialism which begin to forge participatory regional development trajectories both in economic and in political spheres creating a real democratisation of regional life in the postcommunist world.

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(20) The first RDA was established in 1993 in Žilina to co-ordinate FDI, and to develop tourism and SMEs.
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