

Institutional isomorphism vs. the free market

DANA BENCIKOVA – DAVID COLE

A pure capitalist society is predicated on neoclassic theory. This theory is based on the rational expectation that people try to maximize their utility and firms try to maximize their profits while everybody does this based on the available information. In other words, people know what they want, they will try to do their best to achieve their desires with the minimum amount of effort, and at the same time companies will try to make the most amount of money from their customers. However, this theory ignores the influences of non-market institutions on society. People do make decisions that can be counter-productive to themselves, to society, and to future generation. The answer to what drives people to make those decisions lies in their social and cultural background and can be looked at from psychological point of view. In our research we are trying to find out what preferences young people have concerning their future careers and determine reasons for those choices. Based on a survey conducted among students of Faculty of Economics, our paper demonstrates how certain institutions become so strong that the entity itself becomes more important than the task the institution was originally purported to serve.

Keywords: embeddedness, Mathew effect, over-socialized conception of man

1. Introduction

In our hyper-competitive world we can assume that people are motivated by their self-interest. This self-interest is rooted in neo-classic theory which states that people have rational preferences among outcomes, individuals maximize utility and firms maximize profits and people act independently on the basis of full and relevant information (*Weintraub 2002*). If this situation was true, more people would be making decisions that would result in greater access to material gains. In other words, people would choose occupations and places to live that would give them more money, thus entitling that person to a greater stature based on income.

Economists and human beings in general desire predictability, i.e. ups and downs should follow the path of a near-perfect sine wave. Decisions should be made on rational outcomes. Unfortunately, this rarely happens. The following antidote illustrates the point.

One day, during a conference, a high level education official was extolling the values of higher education and its absolute necessity in life when a tenured university professor asked: “If that were true, then why does my plumber make so much more money than me?” One could ask: if plumbers were so highly paid, then why does nobody want to be one?

It needs to be noted that there is no such thing as a pure free market. Non-market influences need to be considered. These influences usually reside in the established institutions of a society, such as government, church, family, and culture. If the theoretical pure free market existed, people would make more rational choices based on Darwinist principles, i.e. survival of the fittest. In today’s society it is not only important to be successful; it is also important to be successful within the institution.

Our theoretical plumber may be making a lot of money. With this money he would be able to afford a higher living standard that could afford him the higher status. Unfortunately for him, the fact that he is a plumber keeps him in a lower ranking because of the perceived lower ranking in society. Money and material gains have only a limited effect on status.

In Slovakia, as in all other post-socialist countries under the influence of the former Soviet Union, the common worker was given a strategic place in society. Workers were given

top status. The collapse and utter abandonment of this model in 1989 was so extreme that a schism developed between old and new. The old way was bad and should be shunned while the new ways to success can be found in concepts from the west.

2. Embeddedness and post-transitional states

All individuals in a society have certain allegiance or cultural expectation to society. In former social, aka communist, times, the allegiance was often enforced by fiat or decree. This extreme form of socialism meant that society had a broad-based level of inclusiveness. In other words, most people were in the same boat together. Some extreme forms of free-market systems have a much looser alliance with the state as a whole. This leads to stratification in society where the members break down into exclusive groups. Each group feels less beholden to other groups in society. For example, those who live in gated communities have less sympathy for those outside of these communities.

This can be described as societal embeddedness. The concept of embeddedness, championed by Mark *Granovetter* (1985), states that we are embedded in our society and thus are compelled to do its bidding. He went on to describe a condition in which non-market societies are less embedded than the market oriented ones, e.g. members become embedded in the market-oriented society, not the social ones. Broad-based embeddedness has given way to a more focused, more limited embeddedness with stronger ties to the environment in which they belong. As society becomes more embedded into the market oriented structure, people become more sensitive to the views of others. Those outside of this embedded society are looked upon with disdain.

The sensitivity to others was addressed in Sociologist David *Wrong's* book *The Oversocialized Conception of Man* (1999). He stressed that people are “overwhelmingly sensitive to the opinions of others and thus are obedient to the norms and dictates of society” (*Wrong* 1999). This sensitivity leads us to achieve a perceived higher status, not necessarily money. Our theoretical plumber remains unloved even though he is successful and performs a necessary duty to society.

In the transitional economies of central Europe, a condition had risen where the actors in society are torn between two systems: one that promoted a broader concept of society and the other that promoted a tiered system based on higher status. This has led to the abuse of the institutions on the broader level in order to achieve a higher tier in the neo-classic sense; a classic utilitarian approach. This condition resembles the parable illustrated in *Garret Hardin's* *Tragedy of the Commons* (1968). In this story, ranchers all share a common plot of land upon which to graze or feed their livestock. Since no one controls access to this land, it is in everyone's self-interest to over-exploit this freely available resource without protecting its sustainability. In the end, the pasture is completely destroyed and thus benefiting no one.

The dual embeddedness creates a condition where institutions rooted in the former socialist system are exploited to the point of collapse by the new vanguards of the free market. Yet, this same social network is expected to be there anytime it is needed. Loyalty to established institutions is weak.

3. The weak links between citizenship and country

Nationalism is often associated with racial tendencies and xenophobic notions however there has been no good single definition as to what is “nationalism.” This term is often used to describe a range of negative attributes and often given to people who are considered, in one way or the other, lower class and in Europe, white. Because of Europe's torrid history of negative events that cumulated with World War II, it was seen that the path forward for a harmonious Europe was to greatly reduce the concept of individual nationhood. As political

scientist George Will (2010) noted, "... since WW II, European elites have been convinced that the continent's nearly fatal disease was nationalism, the cure for which must be the steady weakening of nationalities ...". On the other hand, the EU government has a dual purpose of both promoting national identity and European unity making it difficult to define what appropriate nationalism is. Is patriotism a good thing or is it only for the blindly ignorant?

The wide differences in pay between east and west compel citizens from the East to seek material gains in the west. The high tech economies of Western Europe need a supply of labor to perform menial task. Before the collapse of the iron curtain this labor force was grudgingly supplied by people from Islamic or African backgrounds. Then, in 1989, all of this changed within the blink of an eye as the iron curtain collapsed. So unexpected was this change that no one could imagine that this was even possible. Suddenly, a new source of labor could be obtained, a source that had three common factors: being white, European, and good looking. The latter of these factors cannot be dismissed as trivialness of aesthetic qualities, though hardly discussed, is one of the most important aspects to acceptance. Never before have immigrants been greeted with such open arms.

This acceptance of immigration along with its promotion by the EU governing body has in fact turned citizens of Central Europe into free agents. For the purpose of this paper we can define a free agent as a person who feels little to no loyalty to society either on a local, national, or even a family level. The free agents look to maximize their own utility for themselves and maybe for the immediate family. They have no qualms with receiving benefits from the public but feel no loyalty to give back to society unless, again, it is maximizing their utility. Consider the following conflicts in Slovakia:

Table 1. Free agent conflicts in Slovakia (text table)

Entitlement	Conflict
A person gets a free education from the state.	Yet, the person goes to another country to work and earn a higher wage than at home, denying the home nation the fruits of the education
A person working in another country does not pay into the social insurance in his home country.	Yet, it is expected that the grandparents still get a pension and people with special needs, i.e. the handicapped, get their care.
A person receives inherited property from parents or grandparent.	Yet, he feels no need to maintain the property and there is little incentive to divest the property
A person can work on special contracts where legally no social insurance is collected.	Yet, he fully expects a pension upon retirement
The capital city is expected to be the showcase of the nation and the seat of prestigious government jobs.	Yet, this showcasing causes a transfer of wealth from all parts of the nation to the capital city.

Source: own construction

4. The importance of status

With the change from socialism to capitalism came a change in the notion of status. The cold war was a contest of ideas especially in Europe. Communism did not die in a hail of bullets but through utter humiliation with the victors being the west, and thus the new paradigm for living is based on western concepts of success. This includes big cars, houses, typical family arrangements, and white collared or service oriented jobs.

With communist mentality, the images of success can be found in the factory. Tall chimneys and smokestacks dotted the country with symbols of production. Most of these symbols today lay in total ruin; a reminder to all in the local community of the failure of their mission. The pride of craftsman was replaced with the concept of cunning. There is a

perception that “dirt” is evil. With technology, the perception is that modern industrialized nations are built on “clean” jobs. Financial services surpass manufacturing. We began to lose our fascination with the way things were getting made and instead focused on the way things are getting bought (Rowe 2010). Thus the new institutions and high status are clean jobs which are mostly found in the big cities. The hallmark of success is a white shirt and a tie. In other words, selling, buying, and financing things is more important than creating and making things. A work bias has been created on the idea that desk jobs are superior to trades jobs. Status is not on what you create but how you finance it.

5. The isomorphic institutionalization of the desk job

The view of work today has become myopic with only one type of work being considered. With young adults in University training this work tends to focus on desk jobs and office work environments; the “desk jockey.” Thus the concept of work has changed into a form of institutional isomorphism; a process where one institution becomes so strong, all other institutions evolve and adopt the same strategy (*Dimaggio–Powell* 1983).

In all societies, there has always been tension between blue-collar and white-collar workers as which provides the better form of utility, i.e. which would provide the greatest form of satisfaction. The white-collar worker has always had the upper-hand through higher status and cleaner environments, but the unwritten rule was that white collar workers needed a certain higher cerebral finesse in order to succeed. In other words, the white-collar workers had to be smarter. As Eastern Europeans looked westward for insight, inspiration came in the form of the steel and glass churches of western culture; Wall Street and Canary Wharf for finance, Brussels for Government, Prague and Bratislava as gatekeeper cities to capital, i.e. money. So big were the opportunities that most anyone could find a starting point for climbing the ladder of success; or so it was thought.

As young people pursue career paths, they often seek the path of least resistance. The desk jobs in its many forms have appeal to the young as it is seen as the way to achieve the necessities in life. The paths forward to success all lead to the same desk job, thus morphing the status of success. The gleaming towers of the big city with many office workers become the ultimate status symbol. Thus an institutional morphing of work is fully entrenched into the desk job environment.

If this is not immediately achievable, then an alternative can be found through temporary immigration to another country for higher incomes. Not only can more money be obtained, but also language skills, especially in the form of English, can be used as a competitive advantage upon return. Unfortunately for most graduates, the jobs being offered by the host countries are lower skills, leading to a degradation of the skills learned in Universities. A period of “arrested development” occurs, leading to post-adolescent atrophy and indecisiveness at the very time that family planning should begin.

6. The imposition of the public sector

Neoclassic theory states that imbalances should be short lived. A rebalancing based on supply and demand will bring greater rewards to the things that are in short supply. For example: the plumber gets a higher wage for his rare abilities as the office worker’s compensation is deflated as too many workers seek that position, but not all work resides in the private sector. The non-profit motivation of the public sector, i.e. government bureaucracy in its many forms, helps to facilitate the white-collar environment. In other words, rules and regulations tend to beget more rules and regulation creating more white-collar work in gleaming glass towers. In Eastern Countries this creates a symbiotic and parasitic relationship between the capitalist and the government institutions. For example:

- Large corporations tend to locate themselves in capital cities (Bratislava, Prague, Budapest, etc.) in order to get access to the government (especially since the government may be one of the biggest clients).
- Government agencies tend to cluster around the capital since their clients (the large corporations) are also located there.
- The conditions of the big city require rules to help regulate the problems of such a large cluster. These rules are applied uniformly across the country even though they are only necessary in large metropolis. These same rules could be detrimental to smaller cities and rural areas, thus creating a condition where more people will move to the capital.

Bratislava, as a gateway to the rest of the country has become the center of this magnet. As a gateway to capital, it is like the New York City for the nation. As the seat of government, it is like Washington D.C. And as the center for car production, with Volkswagon and Peugeot located close to Bratislava and Kia just up the road in Žilina, it is like Detroit. For such a small country as Slovakia this is too much activity in one location. According to a survey by Mercer, an HR company, Bratislava is the 57th most expensive city in the world, down from the 37th most expensive city last year. Still, young people tend to flock to this area as it is seen as a stepping stone to a rising living standard.

7. The Research

In our research, we wanted to measure the current trend and mind set of young people who are planning their adult lives in the University System in Slovakia. We have conducted two preliminary tests at the Faculty of Economics, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. A series of three studies were performed to measure the students' future intention of migration, family planning, and material acquisition. All tests were in the form of questionnaires, while the first test was a questionnaire that measured the responses to migrating to another country, the second test measured the response to job choices and spending habits in the crucial first few years after graduation and the final test was a measurement of visual responses to various factors in life including where to work, where to live, status, family, and material acquisition. Below we are providing the description of the outcomes in more detail.

7.1. Test 1. Questionnaire about emigration to another country

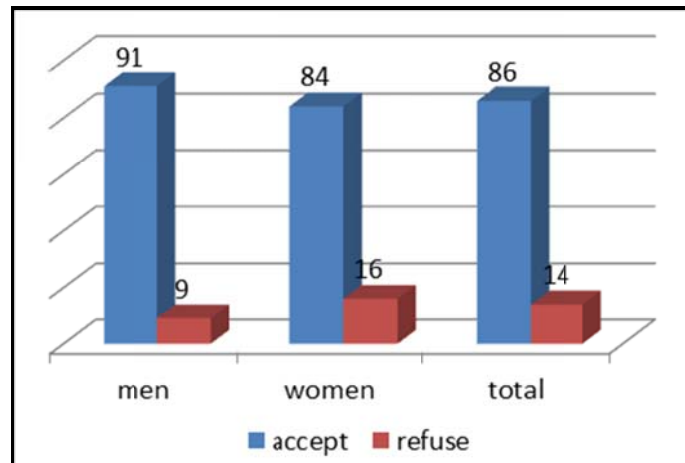
In this section, students were asked questions about immigrating to another country to obtain a favorable advantage over staying in Slovakia. The conditions for the new country became increasingly difficult with each new question. It needs to be noted that the country of choice tends to be both England and Ireland with their easy immigration policy and the use of English as the default language. The following is a report on the outcome. The results for each question are illustrated in the graphs.

Question 1. You have an opportunity for a job in a neighboring Member State of the EU with a higher salary.

- A) You accept it.
- B) You refuse it. You don't want to leave your home country other than for a holiday.

This question measured the likelihood of a student to go to a neighboring country in the EU to earn a higher salary. It had a predictable response since the Czech Republic is next door and the two countries used to be one.

Figure 1. Job in a neighboring country



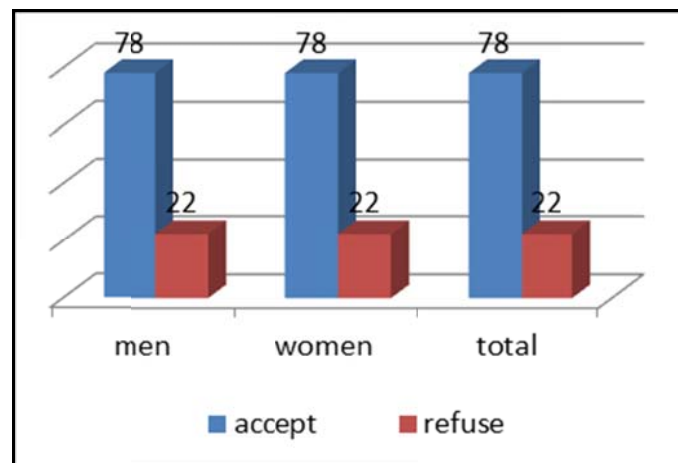
Source: own construction

Question 2. You get a job in your field of study in another Member State of the EU and the salary is higher.

- A) You accept it.
- B) You refuse it. You don't want to leave your home country other than for a holiday.

This question measured the likelihood to go to another country to earn better money than what is available in Slovakia. The high response to emigration indicates the historical institution of migration. Their predecessors were successful in the past; therefore, the new graduates will be successful now. It clearly indicates that moving to another country is perceived as an advantage.

Figure 2. Job in a Member State of the EU



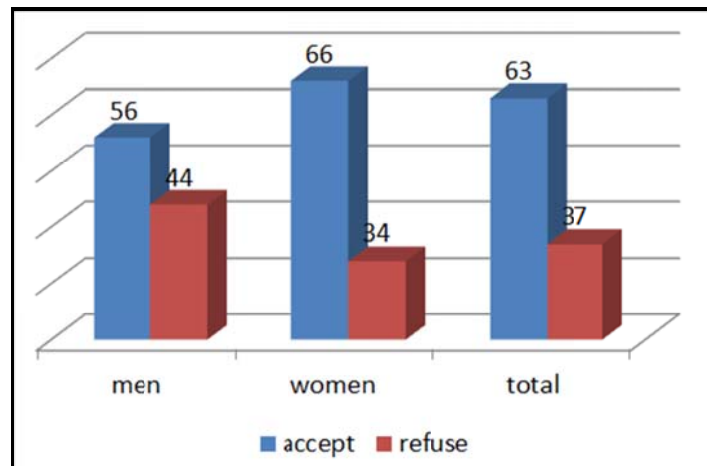
Source: own construction

Question 3. You go to another Member State in the EU and got a low level job that does not pay so well but has a potential for career advancement.

- A) You accept it.
- B) You refuse it. You don't want to leave your home country other than for a holiday.

In this question, the conditions for a job in the new country are not very favorable, but might have future benefits. Still the foreign country is seen to have a distinct advantage over Slovakia, thus 2/3 of the respondents indicated that they would move to the new country.

Figure 3. A low level job in a Member State of the EU



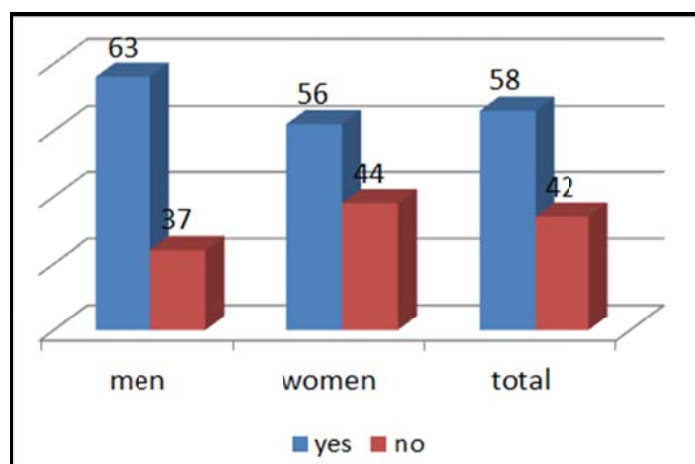
Source: own construction

Question 4. Would you do an entry level job (cleaner, waiter, farm work, au pair) in another country that you would not do in your own country?

- A) Yes, no one will know.
- B) No, I would have done the same job in my own country.

This question demonstrates the importance of status in society. Graduates of university feel that they must get a high level job in their own country. If this is not possible, the opportunity to “hide” in a new country is possible. It is perceived that working in a low-level job in a new country is not a problem especially since it can be used as a way to increase their language skills.

Figure 4. A low level job you would not do in home country



Source: own construction

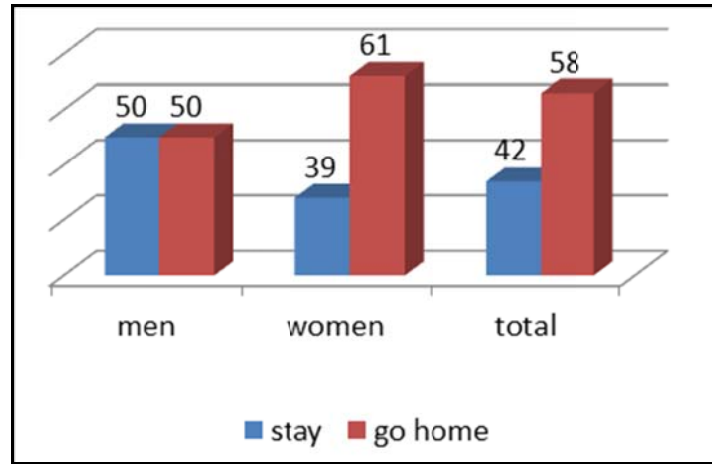
Question 5. After having accepted the job you realize that the costs of living are growing faster than your salary in your new country.

- A) You stay despite the high costs.

B) You go home.

Clearly the intent is to make money in the new country. Yet, still, half of the men would continue to stay in the new country.

Figure 5. High cost of living



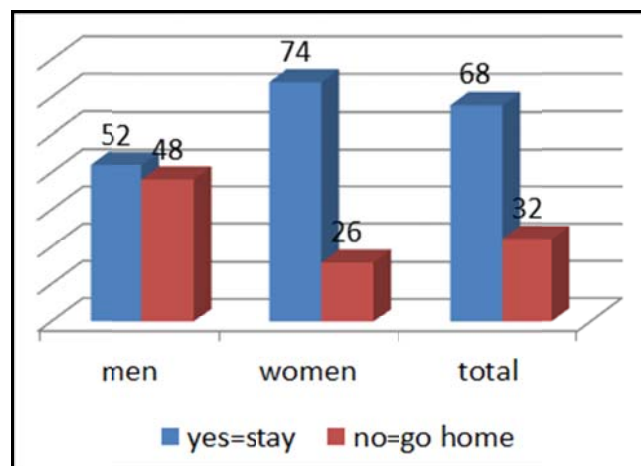
Source: own construction

Question 6. To save money, will you live with five other people in a two room flat?

- A) Yes.
- B) No, I'm going home.

This question demonstrates the willingness to accept less favorable living standards in a new country that would not be tolerated in Slovakia.

Figure 6. Sharing living space



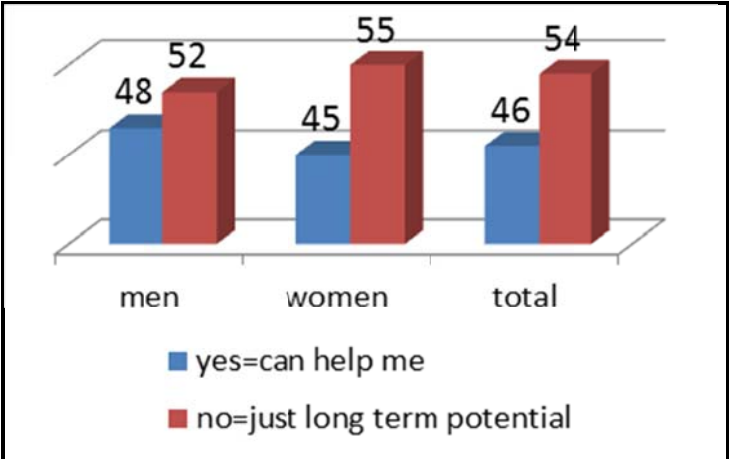
Source: own construction

Question 7. You know that the local opposite sex fancies you.

- A) You decide to have a relationship with a local (you know he/she can improve your position).
- B) You will only date people who have long term potential.

This is the most controversial question in the survey. It deals directly with the matter of physical appearance of being young and desired. It needs to be said that it is no secret that the relative attractiveness of Eastern Europeans is at a high level with both fair skin and low rates of obesity. This question does indicate that students know that relationships can be used to their advantage and that they are aware of the assets of physical attractiveness.

Figure 7. Relationship with a local



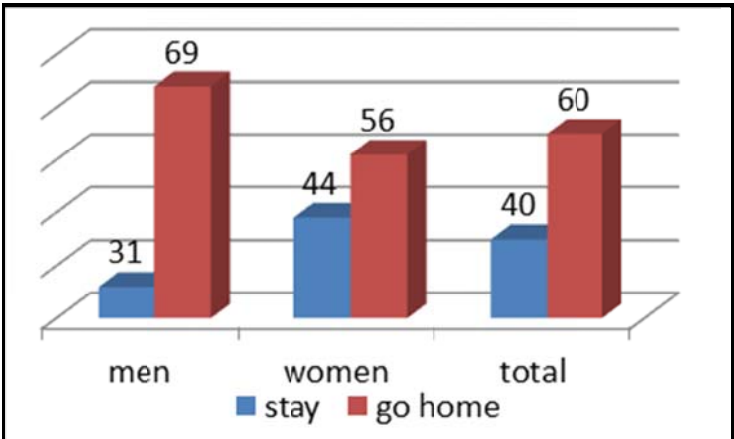
Source: own construction

Question 8. You are making money but you have been living and working like a dog for two years.

- A) You stay.
- B) No, you're going home.

This question brings to bear the notion of working abroad is a short term proposition, almost as if it was a rite of passage. It is a way to get a monetary boost before the more stable adulthood begins. For the students in this survey, many would return home after two years, but it means the start of adulthood in Slovakia has been delayed to an average age of 26-27.

Figure 8. Two years' hard work



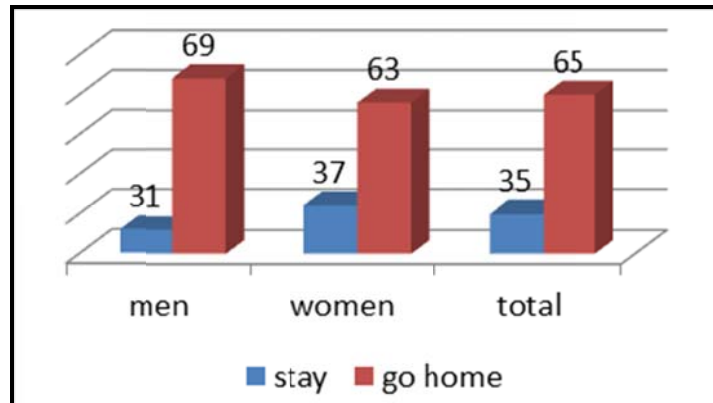
Source: own construction

Question 9. You are making money but you hardly have had time to sleep for four years.

- A) You stay.
- B) No, you're going home.

This question is the same as above, but measuring a four year response instead of two. We can see, that most forays into a foreign country is a short term proposition.

Figure 9. Four years' hard work



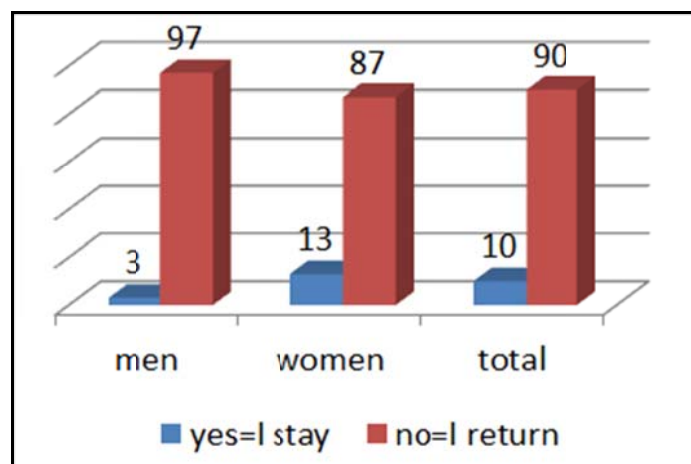
Source: own construction

Question 10. No matter how bad it gets, you are never going back to your own country to live.

- A) Yes.
- B) No.

Obviously, most people are not “gluttons for punishment” with 90% of the students wishing to return to Slovakia under the worst case scenario. However, 13% of the female correspondence indicated that they would stay in this situation. It indicates that some women might see that marriage can be an option for the alleviation of a negative situation. From Slovakia, 25% of all women who immigrated to another country did so for the purpose of contracting a marriage (Divinsky 2007).

Figure 10. Returning – bad conditions



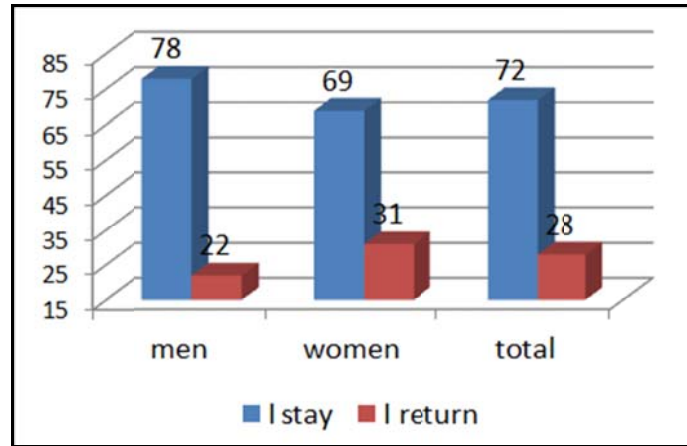
Source: own construction

Question 11. On the other hand, life and opportunities were good to you in your new country.

- A) So, you're staying.
- B) You will return to your home country no matter how good it is.

Under the best-case scenario 72% of the students stated that they would stay in their new country. Though at a young age, personal choices are subject to change over time. This still indicates that Eastern Europe will have a significant challenge with brain-drain in the new future.

Figure 11. Returning – bad conditions



Source: own construction

7.2. Test 2. Questionnaire about living and spending choices

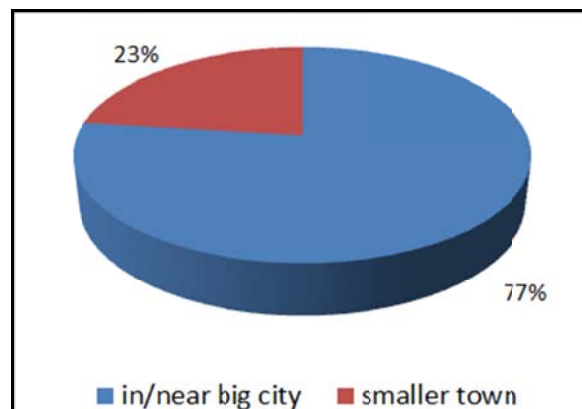
In this section of our questionnaire, students were asked questions about their future preferences. Each question had two possible responses to choose from. As in the previous section, the results are illustrated in the graphs.

Question 1. You have just graduated from the University. You have two options:

- A) Take a job in a big city in or close to Bratislava.
- B) Take a job in a small town/city that pays 25% less and is far away from the big city.

The response to this question was unsurprisingly overwhelming in favor of Bratislava. Again, status is the main reason as high powered jobs are located in the big city. Financially, the better response would be to move to a smaller town far away from the big city. Even at 25% less pay, the differences in the cost of living, especially housing, would result in higher disposable income. This question is predicated on the conditions that jobs are actually available in smaller towns and that people would actually what to do the work.

Figure 12. Location of the first job



Source: own construction

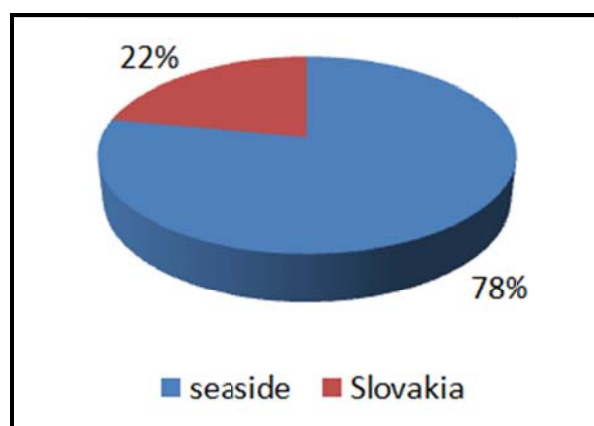
The next 4 questions were designed to measure the tendency to spend money (short termism) versus saving money (long-termism). Each scenario is a likely expense over a crucial time in people's lives; the first 4 to 5 years after graduation.

Question 2. You have been working for 1 year. You decide to take a holiday:

- A) You go on a holiday by the sea such as Croatia.
- B) You take a local holiday in Slovakia.

A first big expense is the holiday. A cheaper option would just be to stay home and enjoy the opportunities in Slovakia. Since it is a small country, many interesting destinations are just a few hours away. However, it can be seen, that the lure of the sea is so much more appealing even if it cost more.

Figure 13. Taking holiday after first year of work



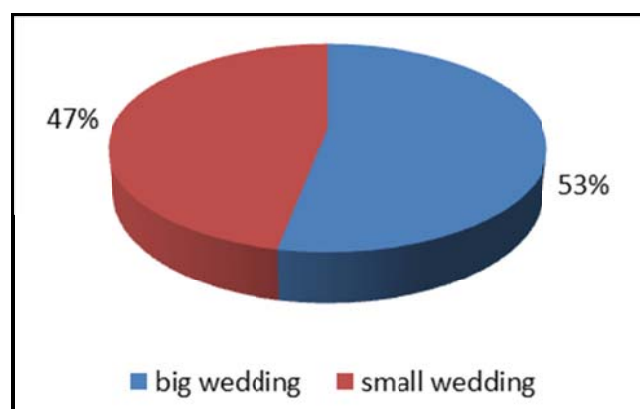
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Question 3. After two years you get married.

- A) You have a big church wedding with a big ceremony.
- B) You go to the court and have a small celebration with close friends.

Marriage often happens shortly after graduation, unless life is interrupted by alternative decisions (such as migrating to another country for work). In Slovakia, there is a significant tradition of large church weddings, no matter the cost. It is interesting to note that men also has a traditional view of marriage with as many men wanting the big ceremony as women.

Figure 14. Wedding ceremony



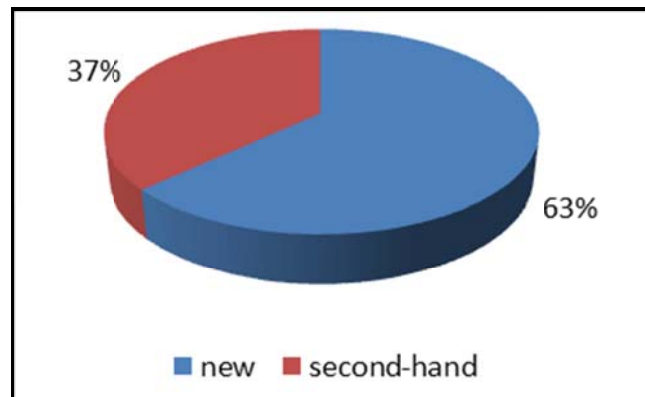
Source: own construction

Question 4. You have rented a flat and need furniture, electronics, and other things to outfit it.

- A) You buy all new things.
- B) You primarily rely on second hand items and donations from your family.

This question measured the tendency to spend disposable income as it is accumulated. Again, students want to make their own lives as soon as possible, putting family planning off to a later date.

Figure 15. Furniture in a rented flat



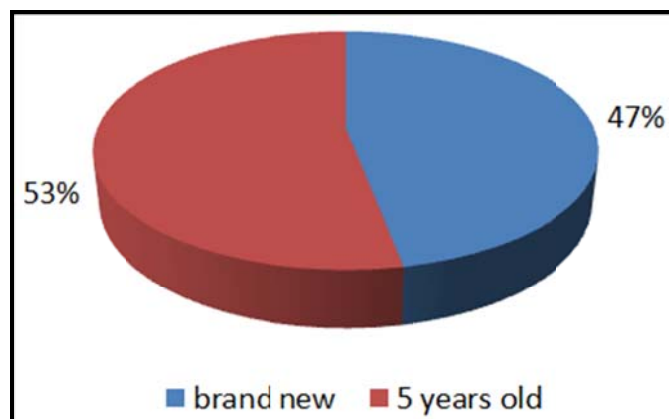
Source: own construction

Question 5. You decide to buy a car.

- A) You buy a mid-level new car.
- B) You buy a 5 year old car.

Obviously a used car is much cheaper than a new car. In this question students do realize that there is a cost disadvantage with buying something new especially with the added cost of insurance. It can be seen, when there is an extreme variation in the cost analysis of a product, students do choose wisely. It needs to be noted that in Eastern European countries, the cost of automobiles are much higher than in other countries.

Figure 16. Buying a car

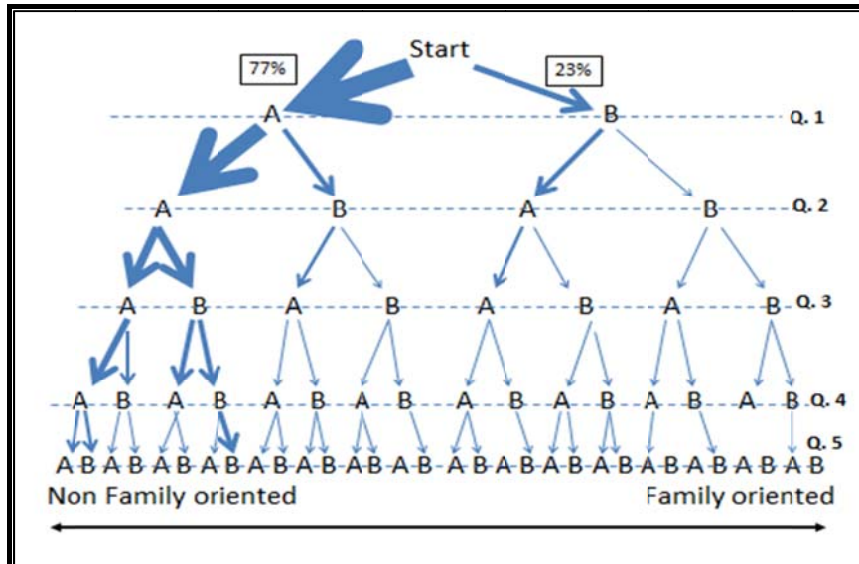


Source: own construction

Families are something that has to be planned. Since birth control has been well established, most people decide to have children when certain preset conditions have been met, especially in the area of material acquisition. The biggest prerequisite to families is the

obtainment of a home. With the cost of flats and houses so prohibitively expensive in Bratislava, it makes parenthood less likely. This is especially true if all purchases tend towards the more expensive option. In the following chart, all outcomes were plotted in a decision pyramid.

Figure 17. Life path pyramid

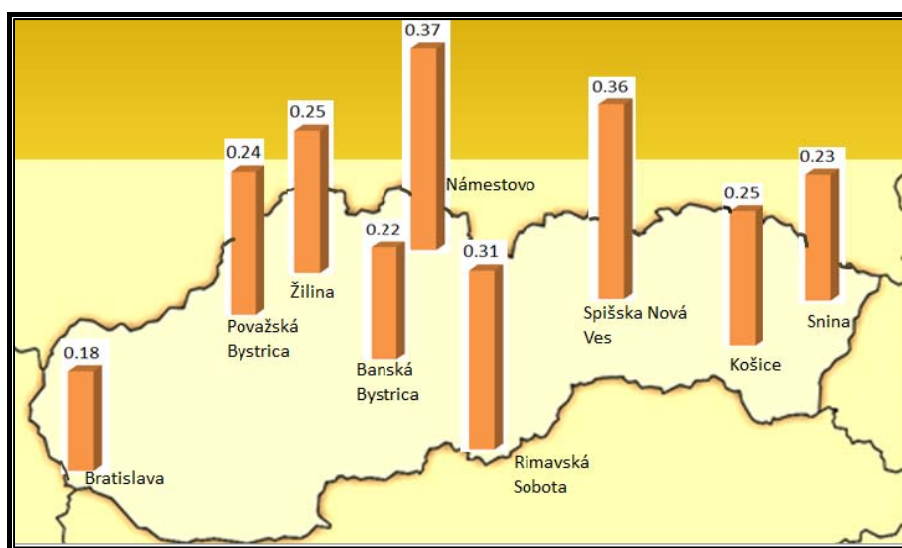


Source: own construction

The arrows indicate, by size, how many people chose short-term immediate gratification over long term saving which would lead to family possibilities. So few students made the choice for the smaller city, it brings into question the future viability of the country.

This notion is supported by demographics. The following bar graph through various locations in Slovakia is the ratio of children age 1–4 to women age 20–40 (how many women in each area have a child age 1–4 as expressed as a percentage). By far, the lowest birthrate is Bratislava with only 18% of productive age women have a child of this age. The highest rate, Namestovo (37%) is a region with relatively stable jobs and housing (Namestovo, is also a region with a relatively low Romany population who tend to have more children.)

Figure 18. Ratio of children



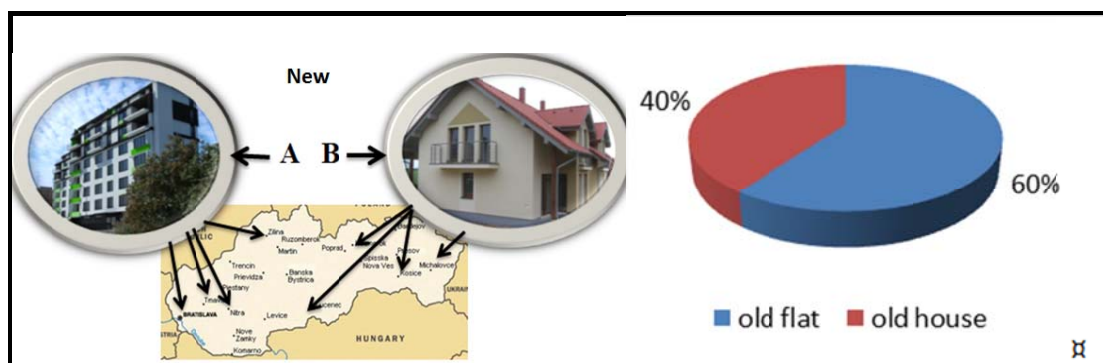
Source: Slovak Statistical Office

7.3. Test 3. Response to visual stimuli about issues relating to questions about where to live, family choices, and job preferences.

The last part of our questionnaire was presented to our respondents to gauge the response of visual stimuli about important matters relating to after graduation choices. If a student is asked where he should begin his career, the most likely outcome will be the dominant location. Visual stimulus could, however, demonstrate an alternative choice. The slides and their results are explained in the following section. Each figure shows the picture as the visual stimulus and the results of the survey in a graph.

First slide. This slide illustrates two choices: to live in East Slovakia in a new house or in a new flat in west Slovakia. The choices in West Slovakia are all growing areas with a booming economy. The choices in East Slovakia are mired in shrinking production and limited opportunities as the young are leaving for opportunities in the west. An added disadvantage is a sizeable Romany population who are mired in poverty. The score indicates that a new house would provide the status needed for living in a disadvantage area.

Figure 19. New flat or house

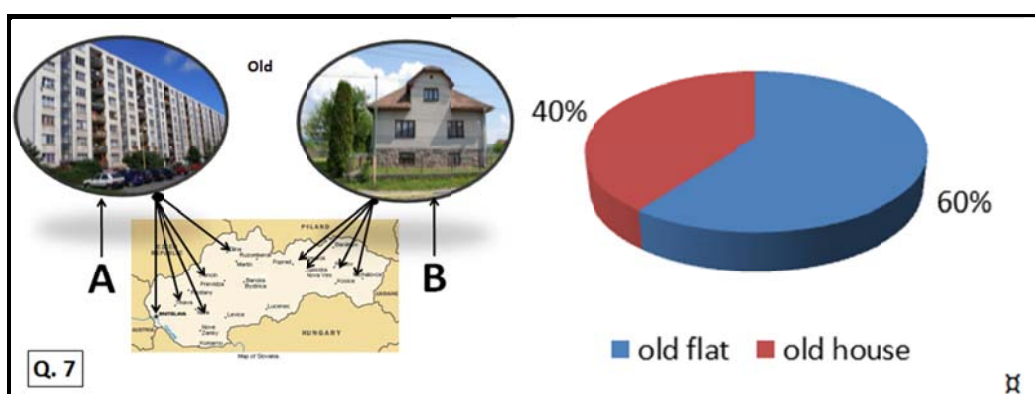


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Second slide. This question is the same as the previous one, but instead of new flats and houses, we have old ones. Interestingly, houses lose their status when they are old, yet old flats are considered viable. A shift of 14% from East to West is significant. This illustrates how difficult it will be to get people interested in the disadvantage part of the country.

Figure 20. Old flat or house

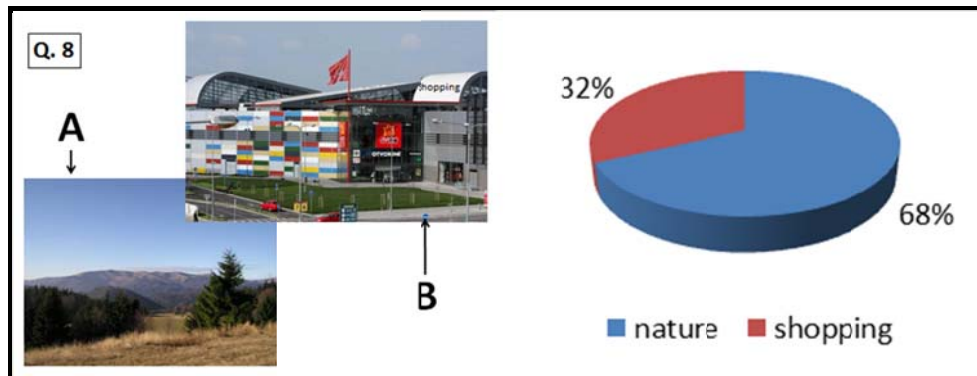


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Third slide. Even though growing metropolitan areas are viewed as a favorable place to work, there is still significant interest in natural settings with shopping taking a backseat to nature, as it is shown in the following graph.

Figure 21. Benefits of a city or nature

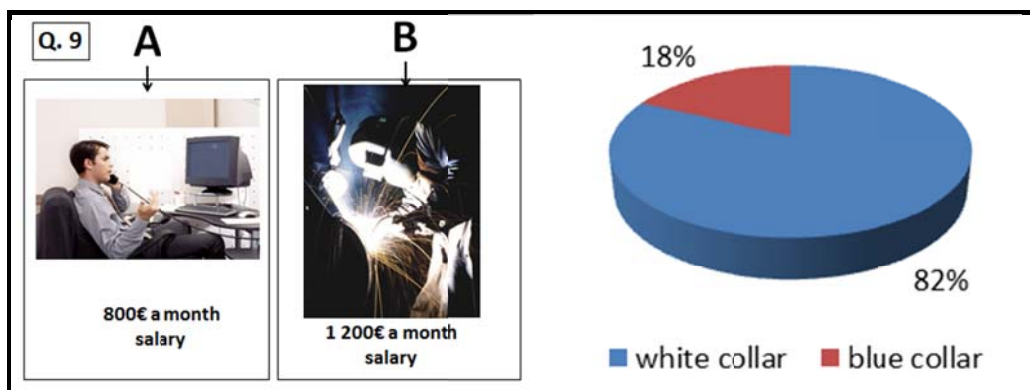


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The next slide was the most controversial in the whole group as 82% of the respondents chose the white collar job over the blue collar one even though there was a 50% pay difference. The women in the class were told to imagine these two men as potential husbands. 84% of the women chose the white-collar worker despite his lower income. The implication here is that there is a huge swath of man oriented jobs that are seen as a disadvantage no matter what the pay is. The status for the male worker is extremely important especially when considering partnerships.

Figure 22. White collar or blue collar – men

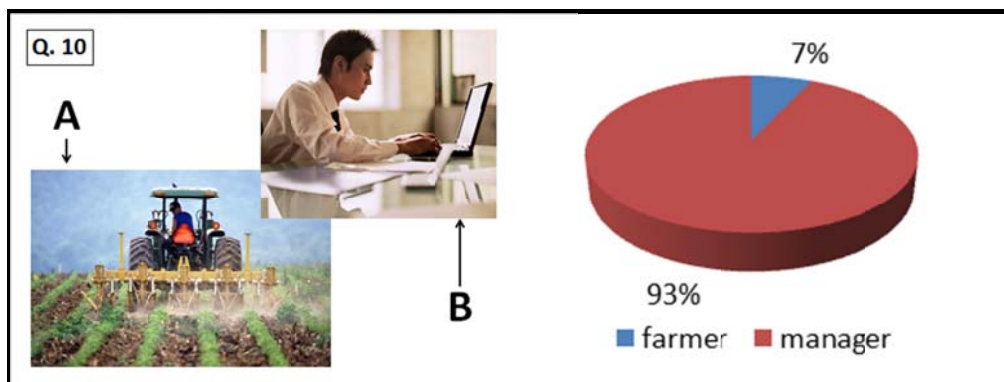


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In Eastern European culture, the lowest status awarded to any one group has to be the farmer. 96% of the women chose the manager job over the farmer. This is despite the fact that the importance of the farmer is greater than the nebulous office worker.

Figure 23. Primary or service sector

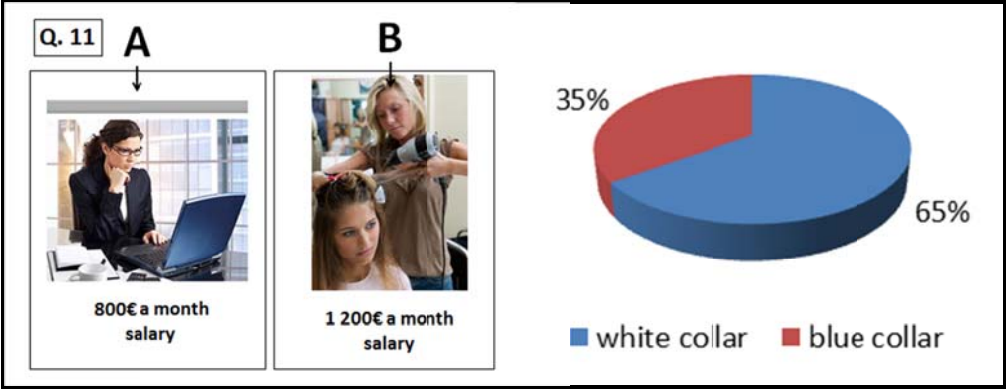


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The next slide was reposed with female jobs and the concept of white collar vs. blue collar. Again most people chose the white collar work even though it paid 50% less. 52% of the men however, chose the blue-collar worker. For men, the status of a woman is less important and thus sees the benefit of the additional income.

Figure 24. White collar or blue collar – women



Source: own source

Source: own construction

From these last three queries, it can be seen that the male blue collar worker has an extreme disadvantage especially in the area of relationships. Economists like the safety of dealing strictly with numbers and figures and are reticent to tackle emotional questions of love and partnership. Women in general attempt to find a partner who has a higher level of status, but this is a losing game as not all men can be engaged in white-collar work. Men in general tend to look for other qualities in women, with aesthetics being at the top of the list. In the past, the quest for partnering was limited to what was available locally, especially under socialism when travel and migration was not permitted. Today, women are not limited by geography and can thus find a wider range of potential partners throughout the world. An example of this “female migration” can be found in Ukraine. Between 1990-2006, about 5 million people left Ukraine for living and working in other countries. The fact that 65% of them were women gave the term “the female face of migration” which has very dangerous consequences for any society such as fertility reduction and family break ups (Kyzyma 2009). As we are beginning to see through the world, that certain professions are also seen as a disadvantage with dangerous consequences for the future. Imagine a society without farmers.

In the next slide, the decision is for a more expensive car or a basic mid-level car plus cash. It is presumed that the two choices are equal in value. Half of the students would choose the higher cost car. It can be seen in Eastern European Countries, the extra status that comes with German luxury cars, black color in particular.

Figure 25. New car or older car and cash

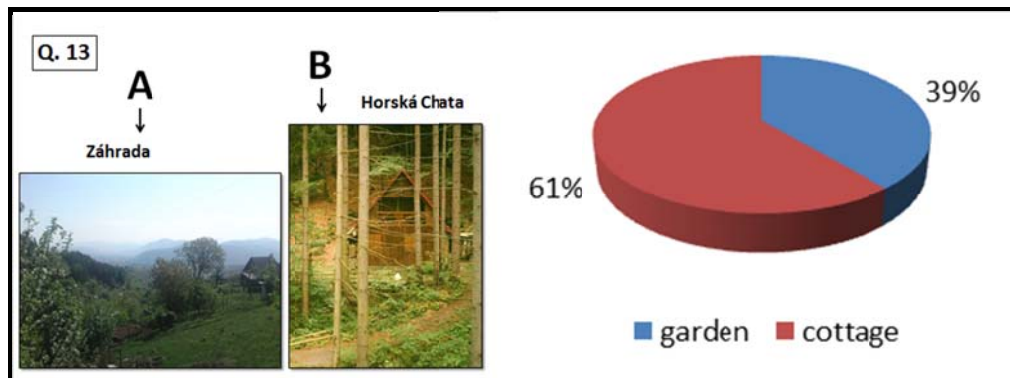


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Socialist society placed a high value on garden plots as they were often the only place that you could do what you wanted. The countryside is also dotted with mountain cottages, often structures that use to be connected with the various workplaces from the socialist system. This slide was design to gauge how much value is placed on property that has some sort of production value such as fruits and vegetables. We can see from the response that most people would prefer leisure time that requires less work.

Figure 26. Active leisure or relax

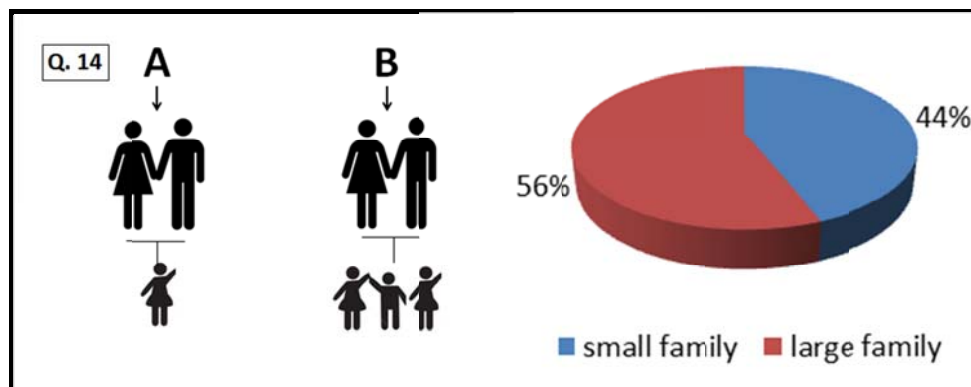


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With the two child option removed, the students were given a choice between one child or three children. It is a positive sign for Slovakia that young people are still family oriented. This is not necessarily the case for some European countries. Germany for example has a birthrate of 1.38 per woman¹. Thirty per cent of German women have not had children, according to European Union statistics from 2005, with the figure rising among female graduates to 40%².

Figure 27. Small or large family



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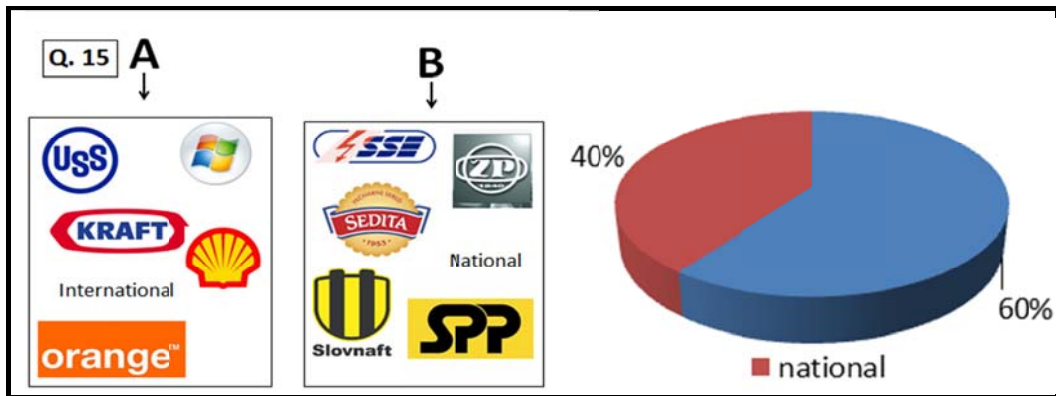
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International companies are preferred over national ones by a good margin. International companies are seen as having higher prestige and very often higher pay or at least the perception of higher pay.

¹ <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,697085,00.html>

² <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/jan/27/germany.lukeharding>

Figure 28. International or national brands

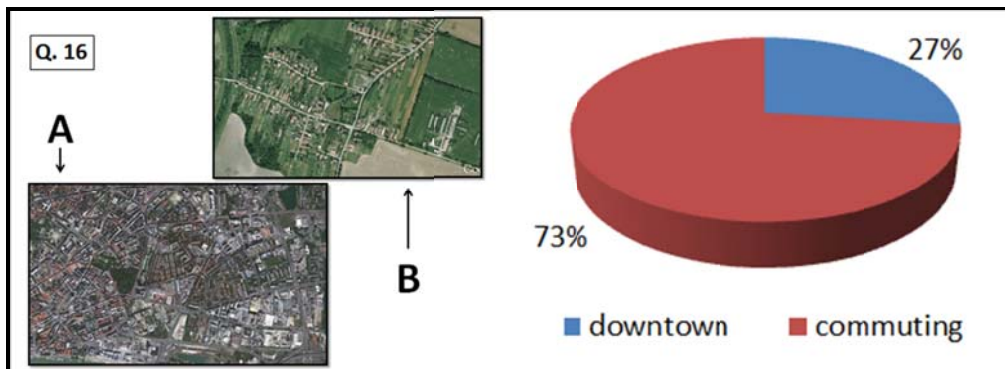


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Even though everyone wants to work in the big city few people want to live there. These two aerial photos illustrate the concept of the metropolis and a very small town. It does beg the question why few people like the farmer when presumably they would be living close to him in a small community, as the results show that 73% of the students pick the community that is surrounded by farm fields. Thus we can see a conflict between needed to go to the metropolitan area to gain employment and a desire for a smaller community. Thus this proves that all is not lost in the disadvantage areas.

Figure 29. Downtown or rural

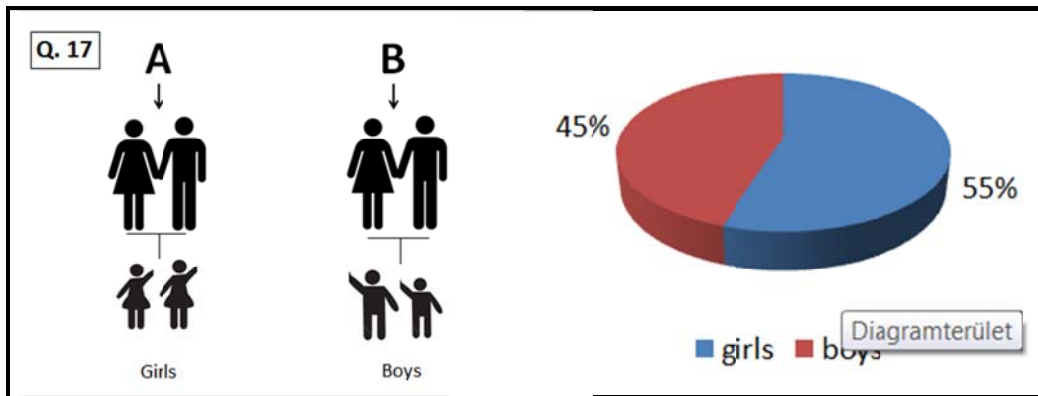


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The choice of wanted two girls or two boys fell along gender lines. Boys tended to want boys while girls tended to want girls. If we refer back to question 9 about blue-collar work, one has to wonder what we intend for our sons to do. As was seen blue-collar labor jobs were seen as lower class, even if it pays more. If, as it is seen, many prefer boys, then what is it we wish for them to do in the future? At least half of all work fall into the blue-collar domain, yet this is work seen as second class.

Figure 30. Girls or boys

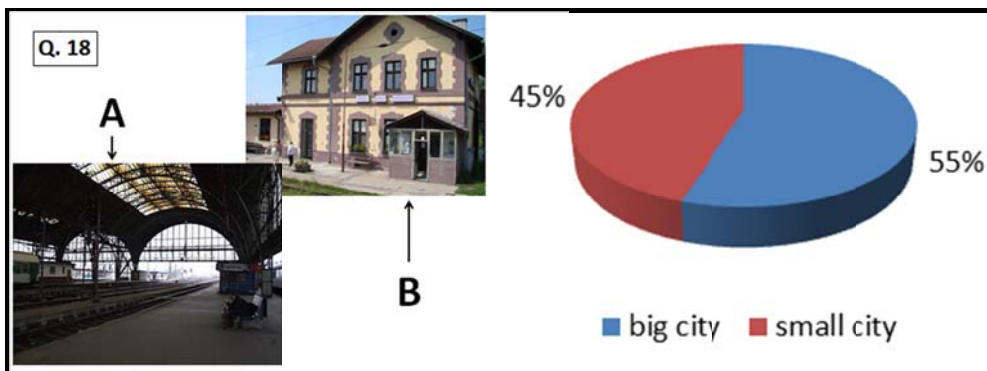


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The big city train station is preferred to the smaller one giving more credence to the idea that students would commute to work in the big city.

Figure 31. Big or small city concept – traveling

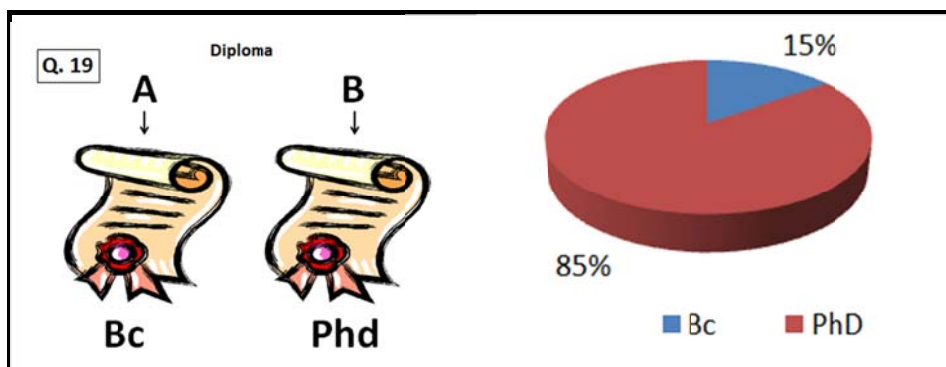


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Students see little value in a bachelor's education. With no option for a master's degree, students overwhelmingly feel that a PhD is necessary (few have any idea what a PhD entails). In the United States, a bit more than one third of students continue to get a Master's or higher degree after obtaining a Bachelor's degree³.

Figure 32. Bachelors or PhD



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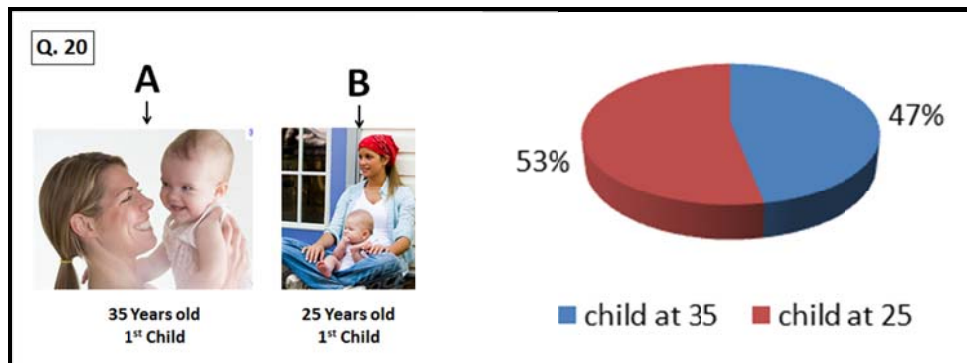
Source: own construction

The following slide indicated that students especially women were willing to have children at an earlier if the opportunity were available. It indicates that there is a willingness

³ US census bureau.

to “get on with life” if things like work and housing and a decent income was available earlier.

Figure 33. First child at 35 or at 25

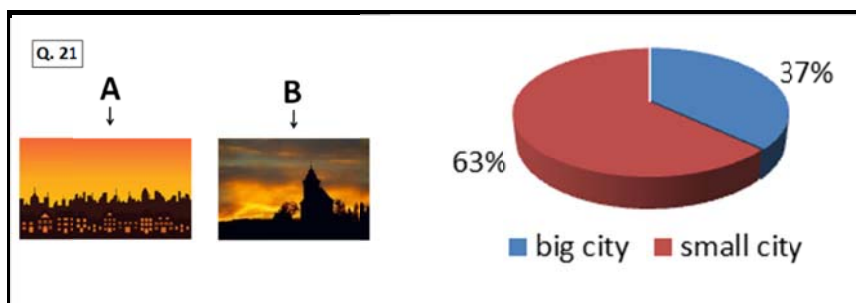


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The pictures in the following slide presented a rather abstract version of big or small city living. Both pictures are sunset silhouettes of structures at twilight. Again, the response reinforces the notion of not wanting to live in the big city.

Figure 34. Big or small city concept – skyline

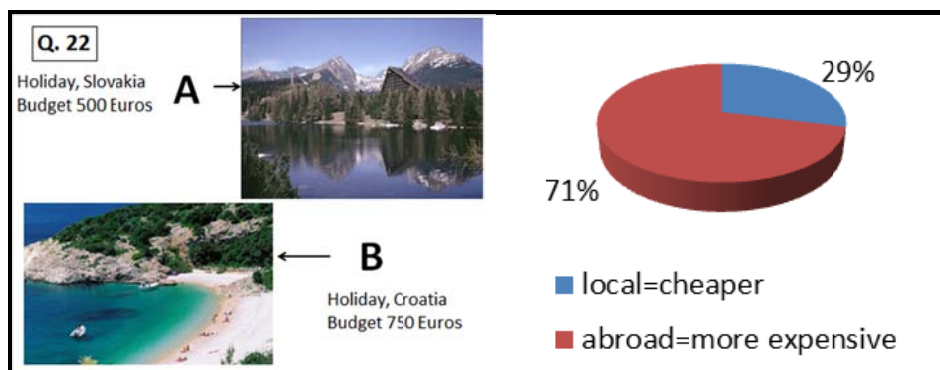


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Just like question one, this picture measured the responses to holidays but this time, it included a price tag. Even with the higher price for the Croatian holiday, it is still vastly preferred over a holiday in Slovakia.

Figure 35. Local holiday or holiday abroad

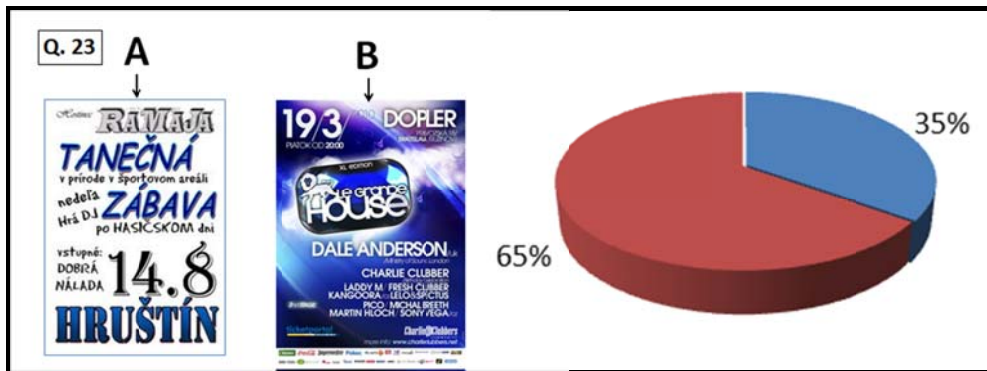


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The two posters in the following figure are advertisements for a dance or disco and they represent some sort of weekend communal entertainment. Picture A represents the small town dance, a dance hall, while picture B represents a big city rave. 65% of our respondents prefer the big city form of entertainment.

Figure 36. Village or city entertainment

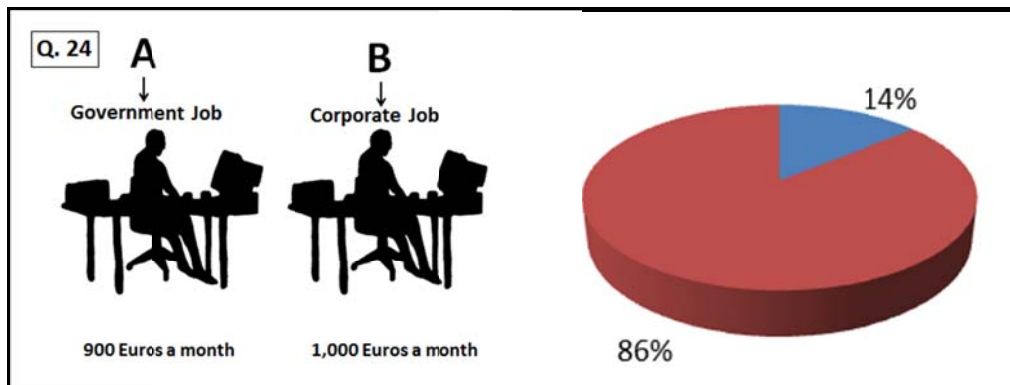


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In Slovakia the corporate job is still king with very few people considering government jobs. Government jobs represent security, but in Slovakia there is a reputation of mediocre pay. Still, in these days of austerity measures for government entities, this response is refreshing because it indicates that the private sector is very much alive in Slovakia.

Figure 37. Government or corporate job

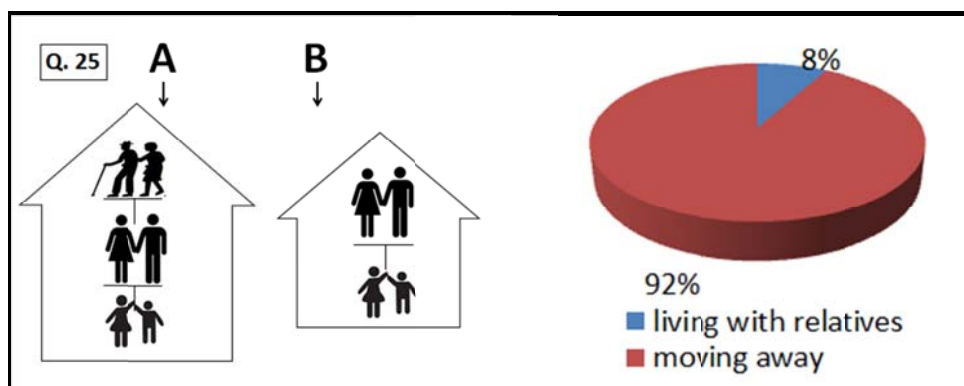


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In the last in the series of slides, the choices were between the generational family and the nuclear family. Just like in Western Europe, very few people would want the generational family. The large homes in the villages are thus an acronym from the past.

Figure 38. Large or immediate family



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Source: own construction

8. Conclusion from the survey results

There are some profound indications from the results of this survey. Because this is just a preliminary survey that was conducted only at one faculty at one university (Economics), it is too soon to indicate a trend; more testing at different places needs to be performed. However, certain indicators of a trend have emerged. They are as follows:

- Adolescent life is being extended. The concept of successful adulthood has been rewritten in such a bounded way; the failure to obtain the “right job” gives the students a reason to hide in either higher education or in a foreign country until such a time that the coveted job appears. Thus students wait too long to move to the next stage in life.
- Students tend to be more speculative than pragmatic. Students will try to obtain jobs and their accompanying status even though these jobs are few and more and more less paid. There is a false notion of “knowledge work” as white collar work can be divided into two camps: Humanities based fields and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and medicine) based fields. Engineering students study the hardest while business students study the least (*Perez-Pena 2011*). There is no shortage of available jobs in STEM based fields, but these subjects require an intense training when compared to humanities based courses. Still, the notion of the lawyer, the banker, and the engineer are on the same level pedestal and the blue collared tradesman is not.
- People want to work in the big city, but they don’t want to live there. It is clear that students don’t want to live in the big city. In Slovakia there is a notion of home living as opposed to living in a flat. The big cities, especially Bratislava, are unable to provide these opportunities. The illusion is that there would be some sort of compromise as they would be able to live in a small town just outside of the big city. If this was to become reality, Bratislava as well as all other Central European capitals will become suburb-ringed metropolis linked by highways.
- People are much more motivated by status than material gains. This is especially true for women. Status is primary; money is secondary. In all societies, there has always been tension between blue-collar and white-collar workers as which provides the better form of utility (i.e. which would provide the greatest form of satisfaction). The white-collar worker has always had the upper-hand through higher status and cleaner environments, but the unwritten rule was that white collar workers needed a certain higher cerebral finesse in order to succeed. In other words, the white-collar workers had to be smarter. As Eastern Europeans looked westward for insight, inspiration came in the form of the steel and glass churches of western culture; Wall Street and Canary Wharf for finance, Brussels for Government, Prague and Bratislava as gatekeeper cities to capital (i.e. money). So big were the opportunities, most anyone could find a starting point for climbing the ladder of success; or so it is thought. It can be said that this concept is breaking down as the supply of white collar wannabes are outstripping the demand.
- Certain groups in society, especially blue-collared men, are socially disadvantaged. The extreme example of this case is the farmer, who has so little respect that few want to take of the profession. This prejudice against the blue-collared man is so strong, that it tears at the fabric of society.
- Students would have the more family oriented lifestyle if the possibilities were there. At least in Slovakia, family orientation still exist and the notion of “just getting on with life” is something students are willing to do, if opportunities were there to make this happen. These opportunities are rooted in obtainment abilities; the prerequisites that are needed for family. These prerequisites include cars, homes, and job security.

As of now the big city is provided job security whereas the small towns and villages can provide the material assets of life. One key to the future viability of the nation would to increase the job security and status for the small towns and disadvantage regions. It is not in the scope of this paper to address how this process should be undertaken, but it needs to be noted that it is not impossible. To illustrate that fact, we have provided the following example: Under the leadership of Sir Michael Lyons', England moved 20,000 civil service jobs out of the center of London to places around the country, starting in 2004. He stated "dispersal of civil servants would also aid the regeneration of some of the country's deprivation black spots and make government less London-centric"⁴.

The biggest threat to many nations in Europe is the lack of family as expressed through demographic statistics. The biggest threat to family is the inability for young people to secure adequate housing at the appropriate age in life.

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⁴ <http://network.civilservicelive.com/pg/pages/view/263318/>