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# THE DYNAMICS OF YOUTH MOBILITY PATTERNS IN EAST GERMANY

Prof. Dr. Klaus Friedrich\*†<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther Universität (MLU) – D-06099 Halle, Germany

## Abstract

With the opening of the inner-German boundaries in 1989 and the following upheavals in numerous sectors of life in East Germany also the general conditions for spatial mobility were redefined. Thus, the consequences of the transformation as well as the demographic change moved to the foreground of public interest. Population decline, outmigration and aging initially affected urban, suburban and rural areas in the East German federal states very strongly however at different times. They induced a development "in time-lapse", which differs fundamentally from the West German situation.

Particularly affected were the migrations of young adults, who have changed their extent and the areas of origin and destination several times within 2.5 decades after unification. This presentation considers the prominent patterns of these processes, the central motivations and drivers of the respective groups of persons involved, as well as the spatial impacts for the regions of origin and destination in East Germany in three phases: (1) The period of East-West migration; (2) the period of demographic erosion of rural areas and (3) the period of reurbanization.

A special focus will be given to the rural regions which are continuously affected by multiple challenges of youth migration until today. Result of strong age- and sex-selective outmigration since 1990 are uneven sex ratios as pronounced surpluses of men in the age group 18–35. Difficult structural conditions, especially the situation on the labor market as well as the continuously high work-orientation of East German women are important determinants of these unbalanced mobility in an economically weak environment.

As result of this development, the East German countryside is unique in Europe in two respects: (1) the spatial and numerical extent of the overrepresentation of young men and (2) the missing equalization of sex ratio imbalances for groups in the age of forming a family. Both factors might accelerate the downward spiral in which shrinking rural areas are often affected by such a brain drain. Due to this policy strategies are necessary to face this outflow of knowledge, labor power and demographic regeneration potential. The aim of the presentation is to investigate the concepts of youth-oriented regional development that have been established by the East German federal states in order to win the target group "youth" as a stabilizing factor in regional development.

**Keywords:** youth mobility, East Germany, migration, brain drain, rural areas

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\*Speaker

†Corresponding author: klaus.friedrich@geo.uni-halle.de