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# Global Amenity Migration

Transforming Rural  
Culture, Economy & Landscape

Edited by

Laurence A.G. Moss & Romella S. Glorioso

The New Ecology Press  
Kaslo, British Columbia, Canada Port Townsend, Washington, USA

2014

# The Czech Migration for Amenities

*Michael Bartoš, Drahomira Kušová, Jan Těšitel & Laurence A.G. Moss*

## Introduction

In the following pages, we set out to provide a brief overview of the historical roots and particular forms that may be subsumed under the concept of amenity migration in the context of the contemporary Czech Republic, and report on the present state of amenity migration in the country. In doing so we focus on sociological aspects of this phenomenon and the movement of Czech citizens.

Amenity migration (*Moss, 2006; Moss et al., 2009*) is a growing global phenomenon. It represents a specific type of migration, one which is not primarily motivated by economic prosperity, but rather brought about by rendering more valuable the natural and/or socio-cultural attributes of a destination area or place, and typically flows from metropolitan to rural areas. This phenomenon has been strongly supported by the spread and relative accessibility of mass information technologies (*Glorioso, 1999*). As with other kinds of migration, it can lead to changes in the spatial distribution of human activities in the territories where it occurs.

It is possible to identify two key factors causing amenity migration. In some instances, amenity migrants are motivated by the opportunity to live in what they perceive to be a better natural environment (thus the term *natural amenities*), while in other cases, amenity migrants are motivated by socio-cultural specifics of the new place of residence (and so, *cultural amenities*). The existence of both in one location is also in evidence, such as in the case of Santa Fe, New Mexico (*Glorioso & Moss, 2006; Chapter 3, this volume*), and Mineral de Pozos, Mexico (*Chapter 21, this volume*).

Thus the condition of an area's natural and/or cultural environments usually plays a primary role in an amenity migrant's decision to relocate. Given this, rural and mountainous regions or towns with strong *genius loci*, or special sense of place, have a potentially competitive advantage as desirable destinations; their economic, social, cultural, and natural resources may lend themselves particularly well to cultural co-modification and the (re)valorization of place (*Jenkins & Oliver, 2001; Kušová et al., 2008*). Under specific conditions, this strong sense of place may become one of the key societal driving forces determining the socio-economic development of a given place, local or more regional.

Czech scientific terminology has not yet created an equivalent of the term *amenity migration*. Certainly some aspects of the term exhibit characteristics identified with the *second home* phenomenon (*Bičík et al., 2001; Novotná, 2004*). Czech geographers and sociologists from the second half of the last century have significantly considered this subject (*Vágner & Fialová, 2004*). And, urban dwellers moving voluntarily to rural areas, attracted particularly

by natural amenities, have been investigated by Librová (1994, 2003). She focused on describing changes connected with the migrants' new ways of living, and of problems emerging as they attempt to integrate with local communities and economies.

It was in the late 1990s that research on Czech amenity migration, defined along the lines of Moss' construct (1994), was first undertaken. Principally Glorioso (1999) carried this out while working at the Czech Academy of Sciences, Institute of Landscape Ecology (ILE). Her work focused on the Šumava, a mountainous rural area in the southern part of the Czech Republic. At the same time, other ILE-based researchers undertook complementary research focusing on tourism development in the same area, their work first published in the same volume as Glorioso's (Godde *et al.*, 1999). Taken together, this research described a region being rapidly influenced by tourism, and underscores the definite beginnings of amenity migration. Since then, the term and concept "amenity migration" has been gradually developed and increasingly used among Czech researchers (Bartoš & Kušová, 2005; Bartoš *et al.*, 2007, 2008, 2009; Kopp & Novotná, 2008). During 2007-2010, a research project that set out to better understand and describe the role amenity migration may play in the development of rural areas in the Republic marked a major step forward in the field (Bartoš *et al.*, 2011).

## Amenity migration in the Czech Republic: A historical sketch

### The earlier history of amenity migration in Middle Europe

Most rulers of medieval Middle Europe may be considered as temporary amenity migrants, spending the better part of their summers in residences surrounded by forests and wilderness, places where they could rest and devote themselves to entertaining and hunting. The Central European nobility often used their rural residences for similar purposes, and did little to conceal the purpose of these "second homes". For example, the castle located in the Šumava foothills, shown in Figure 17.1, is called *Kratochvíle*, which means "amusement" in English.

The relatively rustic origins of the Czech nation were largely forced upon it through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century command emigration, re-Catholization, and discrimination against Czech nobility at the hands of the Habsburg elite. When the new Czech nation began to emerge during the so-called era of "National Resurrection" in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it was a movement closely aligned with a distinctly Czech rural lifestyle.

By the 1870s, we begin to see the first wave of Czech townspeople returning to their ancestral rural roots for holidays and vacations. Newly arrived urbanites looking for a place to relax, to unwind from the hustle and bustle of the city, a place to renew their spirits, would rent an appropriate dwelling from local, small farmers. It was usually a mutually advantageous arrangement: the new arrivals were able to refresh body and soul, while in addition to being paid, the farmers learned details of the nationalistic movements that were driving the



Figure 17.1. 16<sup>th</sup> century Czech summer castle, “Amusement”. Photograph: Michael Bartoš, March 2008.

move toward a new Czech nation. This practice of urban Czechs renting summer homes in the countryside remained common until the end of World War II, when changing conditions triggered new leisure schemes.

The above “proto-amenity migration” (*Glorioso, 1999*) may be considered the beginnings of Czech amenity migration.

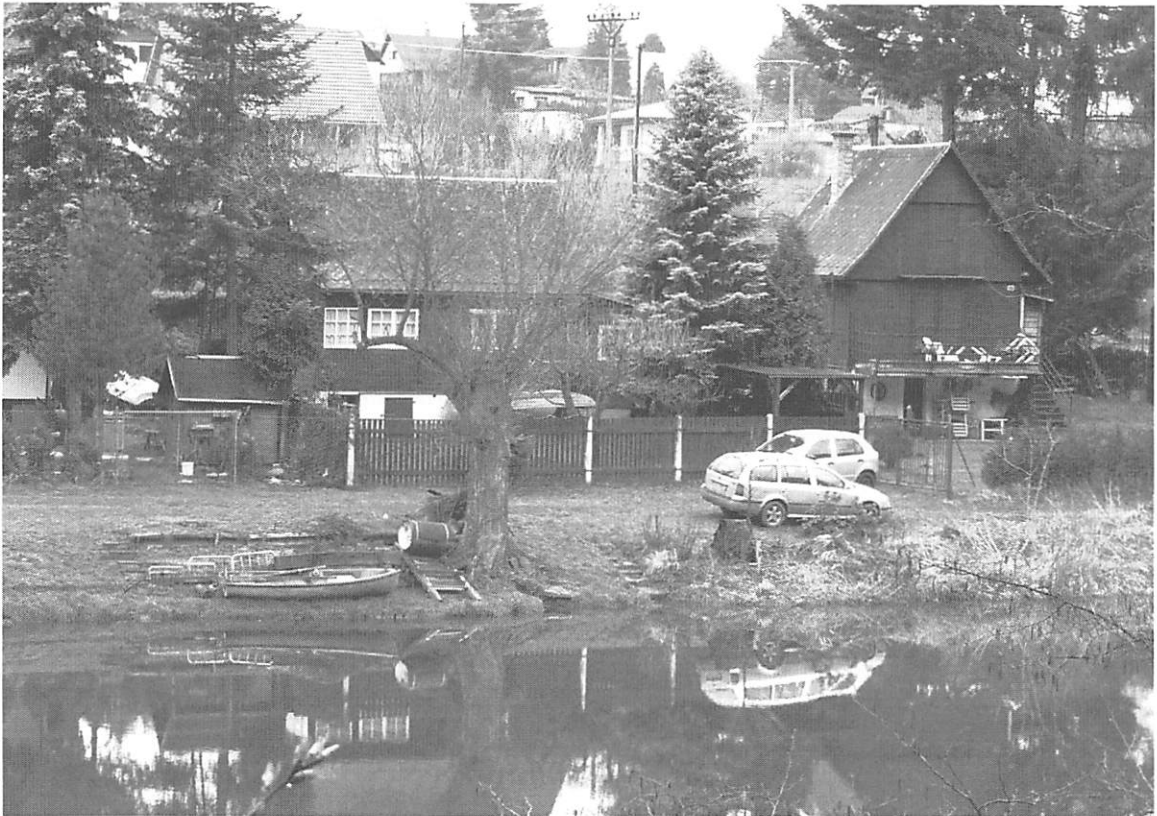
## The early 20<sup>th</sup> century

The industrialization of Czech society that began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century brought with it a rapid growth in the absolute number and relative share of urban dwellers in the country. At the same time a return-to-nature movement became popular; those city dwellers who could, flocked to rural areas to hunt, fish, and spend summers far from the noise and smoke that marked the brave new age the country had entered. This mass recreational exploitation of rural areas by city types was recognized in the Czech literature, for example Honzík (*1965*) referred to it as “escape from the city”. Over the ensuing years, as the urban environment has become “less habitable” and the possibility of leaving it, temporally, economically, and physically became increasingly within reach of a significant number of people, this movement from urban to rural grew.

The existence of different forms of this “escape”, mainly for weekends or holidays, differs with social groups in accordance with their level of education, age, and/or material wealth. It was not only members of the upper and middle classes who desired to leave the city, so too did the working class. For example the “tramping movement” was very much

an activity pursued by those with modest means. This movement started on the outskirts of large and/or industrial Czech cities, such as Prague, Plzen, Brno and Ostrava. The number of simple cottages that sprang up as a result of this wave of urban to rural movement, mainly to river canyons and on rocky slopes, rapidly increased between the two world wars. Many young men returning from WWI, deeply affected by their intense wartime experiences in nature, found exclusively urban life too constricting. The “tramping movement” provided these men with the connection to the natural world they craved.

The phenomenon of cottage ownership emerged around the time of World War I, influenced by the tramping ideology, and became even more pronounced after World War II, reaching its apex in the 1970s and 1980s.



*Figure 17.2. Example of second home cottages at the periphery of towns.* Photograph: Michael Bartoš, March 2008.

In the period between these wars the economic prosperity enjoyed by a portion of the urban population, coupled with the effort to promote a certain way of life, contributed to the trend of building recreational cottages and villas for the wealthy, mainly in the most valuable localities in terms of both the perceived quality of the natural environment and accessibility to urban comforts and conveniences. To own a substantial second home in the country became

a symbol of middle and upper class social status at the time; a positional good. Owning a rural second home was however popular in general among Czechs, which was perhaps different from most developed countries. While a second home in a desirable part of the rural Czech lands became a status symbol for the wealthy, for others of lesser means, the motivation for acquiring, however modest, a second home in a rural setting was rooted rather more in ideology or philosophy, as exhibited in the tramping movement. Rustic, simple, self-built cottages were the norm among this group. Thus, while the dwellings and settings may have been substantially different, the fact remains that a strong desire to live, at least part-time, in or near nature cut across social and economic class lines.

## World War II to 1989 in the Czech lands

During the period from the end of World War II to the late 1950s, conditions were generally unfavourable for second home development. There was effectively no second home construction during the war, and in its wake most recreational areas were occupied by the military. The ensuing decade was one of contrast. On the one hand the post-war evacuation of German-speaking home owners created a glut of empty homes, while on the other, impediments to second home ownership at this time abounded, ranging from a flagging economy and weak currency to a lack of access to some international border areas for national security reasons.

By the late in 1950s and well into the 1960s, an improving economy, more leisure time and fewer political restrictions led to a burgeoning in second home ownership, bolstered by the availability of homes vacated in mountainous border regions, and the aforementioned empty homes of their former German-speaking owners. The need to resettle certain border areas (mainly in relatively inaccessible alpine areas) and the general availability of empty farmhouses and smaller family houses in attractive localities, considerably facilitated the acquisition of second homes during this period.

These second residences were different from the pre-World War II log cabin and hut settlements. The latter were built solely for recreation, while these “new” second homes had been originally built as permanent residences, many with workshops and farm buildings. These were typically larger homes situated on substantial plots of land. While some pre-war recreational homes, especially the villas of the wealthy, were also large, they were built only for leisure purposes.

During the decades of 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the development of second homes was influenced by the depopulation of small towns in the country, as younger inhabitants of these small municipalities moved to larger centres in search of employment. Homes located in alpine and sub-alpine environments in particular were attractive targets for urbanites interested in a second residence, their substantial construction allowing stays at any time of year, regardless of season or weather. The acquisition of these sorts of properties occurred on a large-scale during this period, fueled in part by a desire on the part of many urban Czechs to

exchange, however briefly, their lives as city dwellers in a Communist state, for an existence as “simple rural townspeople”.

## Post-1989: Continuity and change

The altered political situation after the country’s “Velvet Revolution” of 1989, and with it phenomena such as the possibility of owning a private business, and a general expansion in the forms self-realization might take, led to a decline in second home ownership (see Table 17.1). Today, about 26% of Prague households, and those with their principal residences in the country’s regional centres have access to a cottage or farmhouse as a second home. Post-1989 there was a commonly held opinion that the second home phenomenon was tainted, inextricably linked with pre-1989 totalitarian society. Subsequent research has proven this a myth (Bičik *et al.*, 2001). Many homes used as second residences were renovated for year-round usage after 1990, yet most continue to be used primarily for recreational purposes, either for the owner or as a vacation rental (Vágner & Fialová, 2004).

	1930	1945	1980	1990	2000
<b>Number of individual second houses in rural &amp; mountainous areas</b>	23,000	40,000	200,000	450,000	500,000
<b>From this (estimated in %)</b>					
<b>cottages</b>	100%	97%	85%	70%	50%
<b>old farmhouses</b>	0%	3%	15%	30%	50%

Table 17.1. Number of individual second homes in rural & alpine areas in the Czech Republic.  
Source: Bičik *et al.*, 2001; housing statistics, 2001; estimation, 2008.

New types of amenity migrants emerged after 1989. Previously, the term “amenity migrant” could only be applied to Czechs. While Czechs of above average wealth continue to amenity migrate within the country, during the last two decades, foreign amenity seekers, mostly from more economically developed countries, have been settling in the Czech Republic, attracted by its natural and cultural amenities. This is facilitated by the country’s transformation into an open, democratic society, one that allows amenity migrants from abroad and more generally is causing a rapid increase in international migration (Drbohlav, 2002). Also, in many cases foreign amenity migrants enjoy a substantially higher income than most Czechs, making second home purchases in the Republic appear something of a bargain, often augmented by favourable exchange rates.

Both foreign and domestic migrants for amenity since 1989 have tended to be young and skilled, with no personal historical connection with their destinations. The type and level of contact these more recent migrants tend to have with host communities are quite different



than was the case with earlier, almost exclusively domestic amenity migrants. This latest wave is often socio-economically differentiated from host communities; new migrants typically do not require local assistance to function. Increasing numbers of these recent arrivals appear to plan to stay in their new homes permanently. Among these are pensioners, who, with their fixed incomes, are attracted to the lower cost of living offered in the areas where their rural second homes are found. Also among this post 1989 group it is common to find people engaged in the tourism sector, thanks to proximity to environments that attract tourists. As well, there is opportunity for an improved quality of life.

## Key factors influencing current amenity migration in the Czech Republic

The above outlines the relationship between second home ownership and amenity migration in the Czech Republic. It is only in the last 25 years that one begins to see a more permanent type of amenity migrant emerge here. The Czech Republic is a small country, usually making it practicable to use a second home on a year-round basis. For example, the distance from the nation's capital, Prague, located in the middle of the country, to most of the mountain ranges that ring its borders is at most 160 km, or about a 2-hour automobile drive. While a tendency for Czechs with deep local roots to be reluctant to change their permanent residence is a definite factor, still, permanent migration in these areas so quickly reached from the country's metropolitan area, has been relatively uncommon. This is largely because of the relatively short distances involved, bolstered by good accessibility by standard transport. This ease of access also appears to be an important factor in the predominance of intermittent amenity migration, or second home ownership in other high amenity European areas, such as in much of the Alps (*Perlik, 2006; Chapters 6 & 14, this volume*), and Norway (*Flognfeldt, 2006; Chapters 15 & 16, this volume*).

The typically lower quality and quantity of services in Czech mountain areas in comparison with those found in the country's urban centres (schools and healthcare facilities, no shopping malls, limited cultural activities, as well as reduced employment opportunities), are all potentially negative factors in the context of amenity migration. In addition, accessibility is constrained by the need to own at least one automobile, and, particularly in alpine areas, snow. Compared with the relative convenience of living in an urban centre, life in the mountains may be viewed as difficult. Despite these drawbacks there appears to be an increase in permanent amenity migrants in almost all the mountainous regions of the Czech Republic. As anticipated, our current amenity migration research indicates that, as more globally, the rapid spread and use in the Czech lands of new communication and information technologies is an important contributing factor.

## Current amenity migration research in the Czech Republic

The most recent research focusing on amenity migration in the Czech Republic was undertaken in the context of a project entitled *Amenity migration as an emerging form of global human migration. Its role in socio-economic development of rural areas in the Czech Republic*, financially supported by the Czech Scientific Foundation. This research may be seen as a first attempt to empirically describe this phenomenon in the rural regions of the Czech Republic. Undertaken from 2007 to 2010, the research focuses on the situation in three regions of the country: the Šumava Mountains and foothills, located in along the German border; Třeboňsko and Česká Kanada, close to the Austrian border; and the so called “Inner Periphery West”, near the regional town of Pilsen (Figure 17.3). Each of these regions has specific geographical characteristics, and to a certain extent, each has a unique local economy, including differing levels of amenity migration and tourism development. They are also subject to various systems of nature conservation. All of them are considered to be economically “less efficient”, due in large measure to the heritage of post-WW II political change. Unfinished resettlement in some parts of Šumava and Třeboňsko (including Česká Kanada), due particularly to the evacuation of German-speaking inhabitants after World War II, resulted in empty farmhouses and smaller family homes in attractive and desirable localities. This in turn stimulated the acquisition of second homes in these areas.

The main question we set out to answer was whether current Czech amenity migration to rural, marginal areas, represents a transitory phase in migrants’ lives, given the demographic findings that appear to indicate the attraction of metropolitan areas, in much of Europe is not decreasing.

The nuances of this question, and the accompanying complexity of anticipated answers, coupled with the necessity of dealing with local knowledge, led to the decision to use a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Semi-standardized interviews with key representatives of local communities (mainly town mayors) were initially used to identify particular amenity migrants. From these initial interviews, approximately 120 amenity migrants were identified. The process of identifying respondents was informed by the maximal variety approach, together with that of personal recommendation, known as the “snow ball method” (*Patton, 2001*).

To briefly summarize our key findings, we can report that Czech amenity migrants generally prefer and seek out the natural values of their destination localities rather than cultural amenities (Figure 17.4). Most of the amenity migrants we studied have a higher education, are not especially limited economically, and are creative. As this creativity is often exhibited through their ability to revitalize old rural homesteads, they can be considered as positively contributing to the process of decelerating the depopulation and marginalization of the rural regions they find themselves in (*Bartoš et al., 2008; Kopp & Novotná, 2008*). Although natural factors generally outweighed cultural ones with most amenity migrants in our study, enhanced human relations in the countryside as compared with urban life, were frequently mentioned among factors motivating them to move. Despite this, our analysis indicates that,

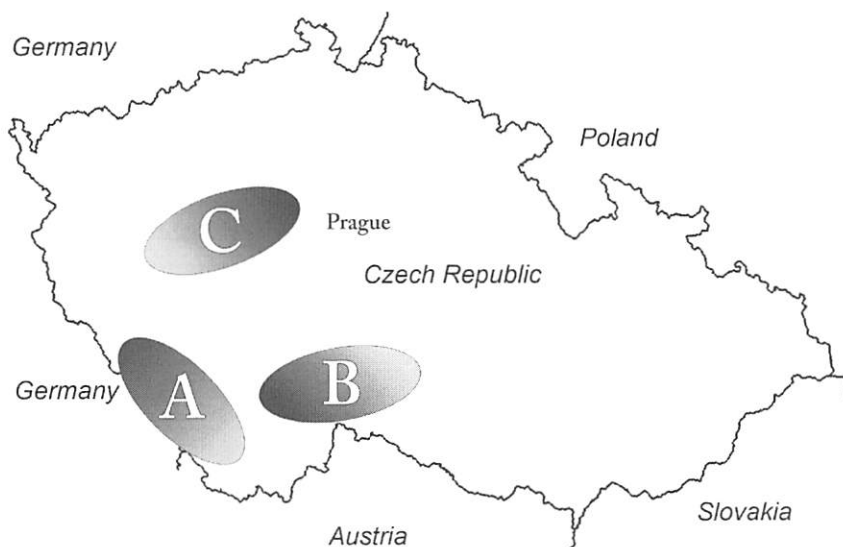


Figure 17.3. A) Šumava Mountains and foothills; B) Třeboňsko (including Česká Kanada; C) Inner Periphery West.

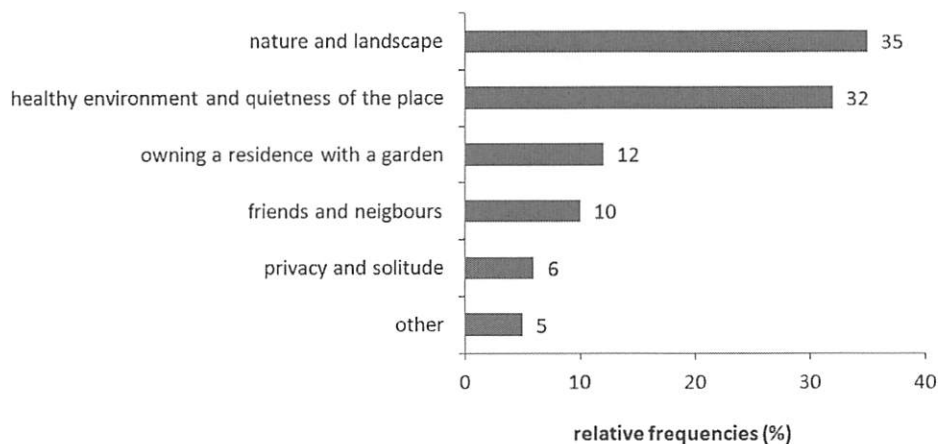


Figure 17.4. Parameters of amenity as perceived by survey respondents.

as a rule, most amenity migrants in our study were neither accepted nor integrated into the local milieu, and typically remained socially isolated, creating “islands of deviation” from local cultural norms (Bartoš *et al.*, 2009).

The significance of “return migration” or “post amenity migration” back to the migrant’s urban origin (Bartoš *et al.*, 2011) is another finding worth noting here. Return-migration can be describe as cyclical, beginning with proto-amenity migration (Glorioso, 1999) turning gradually into the amenity migration phase, which is in turn transforms into a form of post-amenity migration, as amenity migrants leave the rural space they initially moved to. In

this last phase amenity migrants either sell their property, hand it over to their children and return to the city or begin to use their rural property as a regular second home while living more permanently in town.

There are various reasons for this pattern, ranging from a desire to provide better educational and career opportunities for children to the need for enhanced health and social services, services that grow in importance as people age. The very existence of this post-amenity migration occurrence seems to support the hypothesis that amenity migration is a post-modern or late-modern, cyclical part of the lives for some Czechs (see Figure 17.5).

## Some conclusions

In the Czech Republic, amenity migration is closely connected with second home ownership, but recently there has been a change toward the use of second homes as permanent abodes. Leading this move are pensioners, who permanently move to their second homes at least in part for economic reasons, as well as people in the tourism business. There has also been a noticeable increase in the number of amenity migrants from abroad.

The trend toward the use of second homes as permanent residences has effectively halted the depopulation of attractive, and so desirable mountain areas, while less desirable inland rural areas continue to lose population. It remains a challenge to provide the necessary accessibility, infrastructure, and services for the stabilizing areas. Legislative changes regarding taxation are also needed to meet the changing needs of communities that are no longer stagnating.

As with other forms of population migration, amenity migrants can and do have a range of social, economic, and environmental impacts on their rural destinations. Positive effects may include an infusion of economic strengths (including skills, attitudes, and money),

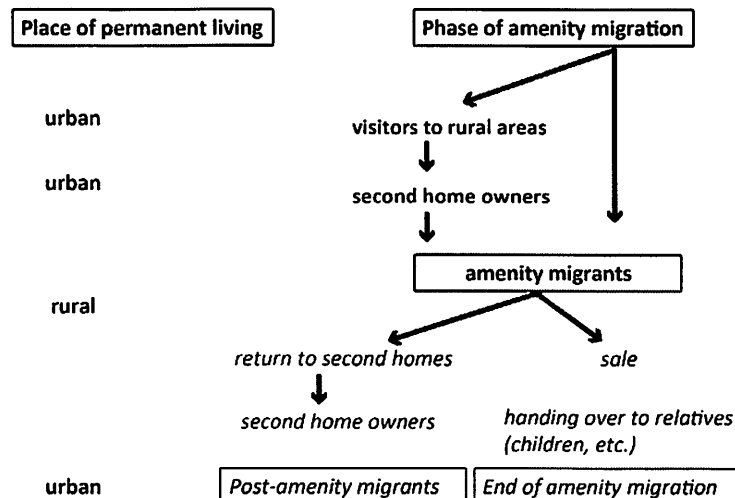


Figure 17.5. Post-amenity migration.

institutional improvements (triggering improved social services, health care, and educational opportunities), and expanded physical infrastructure (e.g., new and improved recreational facilities, transportation, and housing). Negative impacts include unanticipated growth-related stresses on the capacity of local social and health delivery systems, stress on natural resources (e.g., water, energy, wildlife, and protected areas), and cultural and recreational facilities, retailing services, and the supply of residential housing. These effects range from the overt, such as inflating the local cost of living, to the subtle, such as shaping long-term community visions and land use development strategies.

The environmental impacts of amenity migration are not always negative. Given the poor state of some prior land use and landscapes, and the motivations of migrants, new residents may make a significant contribution to local conservation and rehabilitation. This can occur particularly in areas where new government policies or emerging market forces lead farmers or forestry operations to expand into marginal areas which were not economically viable in the past (often for political/security reasons), and which provided buffer zones around strictly protected areas. In such circumstances, where new migrants have independent incomes, with no incentive to make way for these sorts of developments, amenity migration slows or even halts environmentally destructive primary production practices. In places, where they have personal interests in conservation, or where they rely on undisturbed scenery, for personal amenity, to maintain or improve their property values, or to underpin new tourism businesses, such effects may be stronger still.

Results of our field research suggest that amenity migration can slow the depopulation of characteristically rural areas rich in mountain and fresh water amenities in the Czech Republic, and in the process help balance historically unequal development across regions. At the same time it can contribute to the maintenance, or even the improvement in the environmental and cultural assets of rural areas. Our most recent findings indicate that amenity migration in the Czech Republic is holding firm, despite the current climate of economic crisis.

## Acknowledgement

This study was financially supported by a grant from the Czech Science Foundation: (Project No. 403/07/0714) *Amenity migration as an emerging form of global human migration: Its role in socio-economic development of rural areas in the Czech Republic.*

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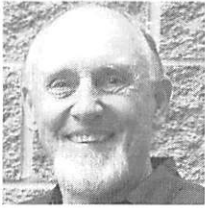
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