

# De-Privatization in Higher Education

## A Conceptual Approach Generated by Recent Empirical Evidence

**CHER 29th Annual Conference, University of Cambridge, UK,  
September 5, 2016**

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# Structure

- **Structure:**
  - Introduction
  - Theoretical approaches to privatization (and de-privatization).
  - The expansion/privatization and contraction/de-privatization links
  - Operationalization and measurement of de-privatization
  - Data-based discussion
  - Conclusions

# 1. Introduction (1)

- **Purpose:** to **conceptualize** the processes of de-privatization in HE.
- Empirically observed trends of **de-privatization** (and **contraction** in enrolments) are highly interesting: they **go against global trends of privatization (and expansion)**.
- De-privatization processes are **defined** here as:
  - **a decreasing role** of the private component in the changing public-private dynamics in HE funding and provision.

# 1. Introduction (2)

- **Two dimensions** of de-privatization (funding and provision) and **seven** empirical organizational/geographical **levels of analysis** (from “individual department” to “global”).
- Data from (parts of) Central Europe (CEE).
- The traditional **dichotomous pairing** of the public and the private is shown here to be **still useful** in a **specific** empirical context of CEE (despite it becoming **blurred** globally).
- Major **theoretical approaches to privatization in HE** – are being **elaborated** here towards de-privatization.
- So an **empirically-informed notion** of de-privatization is being developed (and its usefulness - briefly **tested**).
- A **step back** in HE research needed: **the 1990s** in CEE are **not 2016** when privatization was a useful description.

# 1. Introduction (3)

- **Global assumptions** about the **ever-growing demand** for HE (constant **growth in enrolments**) – and about the increasing **pressure to privatize** HE for financial reasons – **do not hold in CEE!**
- On the contrary: **new public-private dynamics at work in such countries as Poland, Estonia, Romania and Bulgaria** suggest opposite processes (Curaj et al. 2015; OECD 2015):
  - **privatization** is not taken **for granted** any more,
  - **college-age cohorts** are **declining** for demographic reasons,
  - the **overall demand** for has been **declining**.
  - there are **more vacancies than candidates** (in public and private sectors).
- Consequently: the pressure **to privatize the public sector** and to **expand the private sector** is **as low as never before** in the post-1989 period!
- The region looks differently – new **trends** demand new **analyses** (and possibly new **conceptual tools!**).

# 1. Introduction (4)

- CEE HE has been moving **against two major global trends**:
  - **private sector growth**, and
  - **cost-sharing** in public HE.
- Both trends globally **the weakest in Continental Europe**, and – surprisingly – even **weaker** in the region („2016 is not 1990s”).
- While **privatization** in US context means “**the substitution of tuition fee income for state support**” and “the move toward **more reliance on private funding for ‘public’ HE**” (Zusman 2005: 119),
  - **de-privatization would mean** exactly the opposite: the **substitution of state support for tuition fee income**, and the move toward **more reliance on public funding for public HE** (additionally, combined with private sector decline).
- So the conclusion and the rationale for this presentation:
  - **regional countertrends** (from a **global** perspective) in funding and provision demand greater conceptual and empirical **attention**.

# 1. Introduction (5)

- **De-privatization** processes (in funding) refer to **proportionally decreasing private funding** in HE (or at different levels), or its decreasing privateness, **over time**;
  - Analogously, **privatization** processes refer to proportionally **increasing** private funding, or its increasing privateness, over time.
- A **proportional approach** to de-privatization (i.e. **percentages** of public and private finance) makes it **easier to identify the direction** of changes - at various levels of analysis.
- CEE: clearly changing towards **more publicness** and **less privateness** in the last decade (as the data show).

## 2. Theoretical approaches (1)

- Research on privatization in HE so far comes in **three, largely separate strands**:
  - (1) **Privatization in general** (especially in the **US context** of public universities, Priest and St.John 2006; Morphey and Eckel 2009),
  - (2) **Private higher education** (especially in the **Latin American and European post-communist** contexts of private sector growth, Levy 1986, 2013; Slantcheva and Levy 2007), and
  - (3) **Cost-sharing** (in the context of **public** universities, see Johnstone 2006; Teixeira et al 2006; Johnstone and Marcucci 2010; Heller and Callender 2013).
- **I synthesize** here the three strands, focusing on **the privatization agenda**
  - which I view as consisting of the changes in **both public and private sectors** and define as the combination of the **private sector growth** and the increasing use of **cost-sharing in the public sector**.



## 2. Theoretical approaches (2)

- **Narrowly defined**, privatization means **denationalization** and refers to the transfer to private ownership of public assets; including sales of public land, infrastructure and enterprises (see Starr 1989; Spulber 1997; Belfield and Levin 2002).
- The terms “**public**” and “**private**” are **politically crucial**: they sum up a “whole structure of rules and **expectations about the proper conduct and limits of the state**” (Starr 1989: 42).
- In general terms, any privatization proposal involves the “**rolling back of the activities of the state**” (Le Grand and Robinson 1984: 3). The state can **provide** a particular commodity, **subsidize** it, and **regulate** its provision.
- Therefore in HE, its privatization would entail the **reduction** of state’s role along these three dimensions – and its **de-privatization**, by analogy, would entail **the increase in the role of the state along these dimensions**.
- Privatization (and privatization in HE) has also an **important normative dimension**, though: the role of the state and its services in democratic societies, which goes **far beyond provision, subsidy and regulation**.

## 2. Theoretical approaches (3)

- In CEE, privatization and de-privatization processes are linked to **two of the three** (Le Grand and Robinson's) dimensions: **provision and subsidy**.
- Traditional (ideological) assumption was: the public sector was "**wasteful, inefficient and unproductive**" (Walker 1984: 30).
  - While **privatization** at a political level is an **ideology**
  - **de-privatization does not seem to have ideological overtones**: it is linked to more **mundane factors** such as, most of all, declining **demographics**.

## 2. Theoretical approaches (4)

- There is a **lack of conceptual clarity in theorizing about privatization in higher education** (Fryar 2012: 521); and the precise definition of the term remains “**elusive**” (Ikenberry 2009: 2). Consequently, **privatization (just a quick look)**:
  - Means “**many things**” (Altbach et al. 2010: 73);
  - It is a “**nuanced phenomenon**” (Eckel and Morpew 2009: 183);
  - It has “**neither an unequivocal definition nor absolute or delimited characteristics**” (Gómez and Ordorika 202: 219).
  - Most common among discussions of privatization is its definition as **the decline in state support** for higher education (Teixeira 2012).
  - Privatization of public universities can be viewed as
    - the **decentralization** of governmental control (Eckel and Morpew 2009: 190-191);
    - **shifts in public opinion** about the value of higher education, as studied through a median voter model (Toutkoushian 2009: 74-75);
    - **decreases in public funding and increases in entrepreneurial activities** within institutions (Ikenberry 2009: 5);
    - **increased reliance on market mechanisms** to govern higher education (McLendon and Mokher 2009: 25-26)
    - **increases in competition for students and resources** (Kaplan 2009: 128) – as Fryar (2012: 523) shows taking the single volume on “privatizing the public university” in an American context as an example (Morpew and Eckel 2009).
- The **de-privatization theme** - seems to have been **heavily under-researched**: it has been mentioned in passing only in several isolated instances (e.g. Painter and Mok 2008; Mok 2011).

## 2. Theoretical approaches (5)

- Globally, the public and the private are **increasingly viewed as “blurred”** (Geiger 2007; Altbach et al. 2010; Sanyal and Johnstone 2011; Enders and Jongbloed 2007). But **in CEE, there is a still sharp divide** between:
  - public and private **institutions**,
  - **publicly-supported** and privately-supported **students**,
  - **public sector students** and private sector students, and
  - public and private **sources of funding of HEIs**.

**The public/private distinction in CEE still analytically useful!** (not elsewhere)

- The **core of the post-1989 transformations** from the public-private perspective was the emergence of **the privates** and the appearance of **fee-paying students** in the public sector. This has been **changing for a decade** or so now.
- I am following here Dan Levy who argues that **“the private-public distinction matters”** (Levy 1986: 293) and it is “strong” (Levy 2013: 3) (in some empirical contexts).

## 2. Theoretical approaches (6)

- **The public-private distinction** is useful for a study of changes in 2 or more countries:
  - **so systems can be located along the two publicness-privateness continua** – one for funding and the other for enrolments – and **compared over time**.
- De-privatization at the **system level** in CEE clearly occurs along both dimensions. But at the **institutional level**, the changes may go in different directions:
  - e.g. privatizing HE institutions in de-privatizing national systems**, and
  - e.g. privatizing faculties in de-privatizing individual HE institutions**

(as shown below based on empirical examples).

## 2. Theoretical approaches (7)

- There are **clear public/private distinctions** in ownership and resourcing in CEE:
  - **privates** receive almost **exclusively private funding** (although their students are entitled to receive state-subsidized loans), and
  - **publics** receive **predominantly public funding** (and are entitled to charge fees in most cases to “part-time” or “second-track” or “out of quota” students).
- In financing**, public sectors in the region are still “**truly public**” and private sectors are “**truly private**” (as Levy on Latin American cases in 1986).

## 2. Theoretical approaches (8)

- **Definitions of de-privatization formed – by analogy – on the basis of major statements on privatization in HE research (1996-2013) (just a quick look).**
  - **Gareth Williams (1996): Keeping university missions away from income-generating activities** focused on outside private funding; economic survival linked to the competition for diversified public funding; **publicly-owned universities receive decreasing shares of their income from student fees.**
  - **Simon Marginson (1997a, 1997b): Students massively choosing public institutions over private institutions; (proportionally) increased public funding of public institutions.**
  - **D. Bruce Johnstone (2000): A shift** along any or all of the five dimensions – 1) mission or purpose, 2) ownership, 3) source of revenue, 4) control by government, and 5) norms of management – **towards the “high publicness” extreme on the “high publicness”/“high privateness” continuum.**
  - **Roger L. Geiger (2007) (1) an increased reliance on public rather than private resources** (particularly in supporting public institutions), (2) decreasing cooperation with private industry, and (3) **decrease in the importance of private institutions.**
  - **Daniel C. Levy (2013): The decline of private higher education** (in terms of the number of institutions and of nominal/proportional enrolments in the private sector).

# 3. Expansion/privatization – contraction/de-privatization? (1)

- HE research have been **focused on the growing worldwide demand**: on ever increasing student numbers – **and on how to finance expanding systems** (Johnstone and Marcucci 2010; Altbach et al. 2010).
- **Growth and expansion** were *the words* (Heller and Callender 2013; Marcucci 2013) – **decline** and **contraction** were **not**.
- A common **global assumption** has been:
  - “**the massive quantitative expansion**” and “the huge increases in projected enrolments”, both **calling for “massive and continuing increases in revenues”** (Sanyal and Johnstone 2012: 159).
  - **Coping with “more students and less money”** (Thornton 2012: 13) has been a global phenomenon.
  - In **demographic** contexts of formidable expansion – combined with **political** contexts of “**permanent austerity**” in **public sector services** and **ideological** contexts of New Public Management – **privatization was the word**.
  - Privatization was thus viewed as a policy mechanism to meet **the goal of increasing access in expanding systems** (St. John 2006: 248).



# 3. Expansion/privatization – contraction/de-privatization? (2)

- Privatization has become a necessity because of “**budgetary problems created by massification with simultaneous reductions in public investment**” (Altbach et al. 2010: 82).
- However, while across **the non-European Western world** (and the **developing world**) there has been a dramatic increase in the number of students combined with the limitations of the public purse,
  - **the region seems unaffected by these global trends** and – consequently – unaffected by Thornton’s “**privatizing imperatives**” (2012) prevalent in public universities across the Anglophone world.
- The critical issue, defining the uniqueness of CEE, is **demographics**.
  - The **privatization-demographics** and **de-privatization-demographics** links are key:
    - Privatization is **on the rise** in **expanding systems** (almost everywhere globally in the 2010s) with **increasing demographics**;
    - Privatization is **in reverse** in **contracting systems** with heavily **declining demographics** (in CEE).
    - Literature refers to **expansion and related rising financial commitments**; however, there are also **systematically contracting systems**, and, consequently, **decreasing commitments**: namely CEE, **the fastest aging societies in Europe**.
    - CEE are **able to increase per student funding without increasing total funding** – as the number of students systematically decreases.

# 4. Operationalization and measurement of de-privatization (1)

- The organization of HE can be represented in terms of **the two-dimensional relationship** between **the sources of funding (horizontal)** and **provision (vertical)**.
- **The public provision** of higher education (or enrolments) is shown in **Cells 1/2**, and private provision in Cells 3/4; **public funding is shown in Cells 1/3**, and private funding is shown in Cells 2/4.
- **Privately-provided higher education competes** with publicly-provided one (wherever both occur in the system) for both funding and students.

Cell 1 public funding & public provision	Cell 2 public provision & private funding
Cell 3 private provision & public funding	Cell 4 private provision & private funding

# 4. Operationalization and measurement of de-privatization (2)

- There are **four theoretically pure cases**:
  - public provision and public funding (Cell 1),
  - public provision and private funding (Cell 2),
  - private provision and public funding (Cell 3),
  - private provision and private funding (Cell 4).
  - A pure model of **publicly-funded and publicly-provided** higher education is located in Cell 1; and a pure model of **privately-funded and privately-provided** higher education is located in Cell 4.
- **However, de-privatization is not a straightforward movement out of Cell 4 into Cell 1.**
- Each national system can be **located within the four cells over time.**
- Additionally, **movements within cells** (i.e. **quantitative** differences) and **among cells** (i.e. **qualitative** differences) over time can be shown.
- An empirical study of de-privatization makes sense if it is viewed as **a process, or a difference in the location in the model** between two times in the public/private dimension of funding and/or enrolments at one or more levels.
  - For instance, a shift from **a 40 percent privately-funded institution to a 20 percent privately-funded institution** denotes de-privatization at an institutional level, as does a shift from **40 percent private enrolments to 20 percent private enrolments in a public institution.**

# 4. Operationalization and measurement of de-privatization (3)

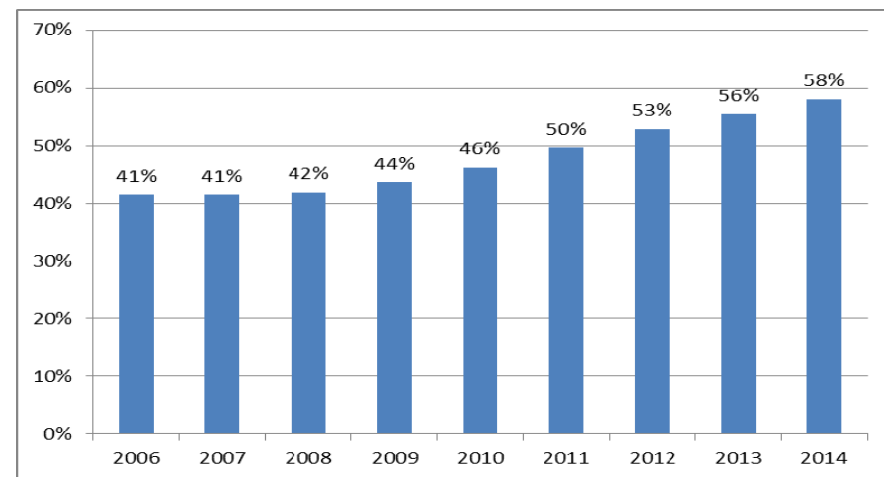
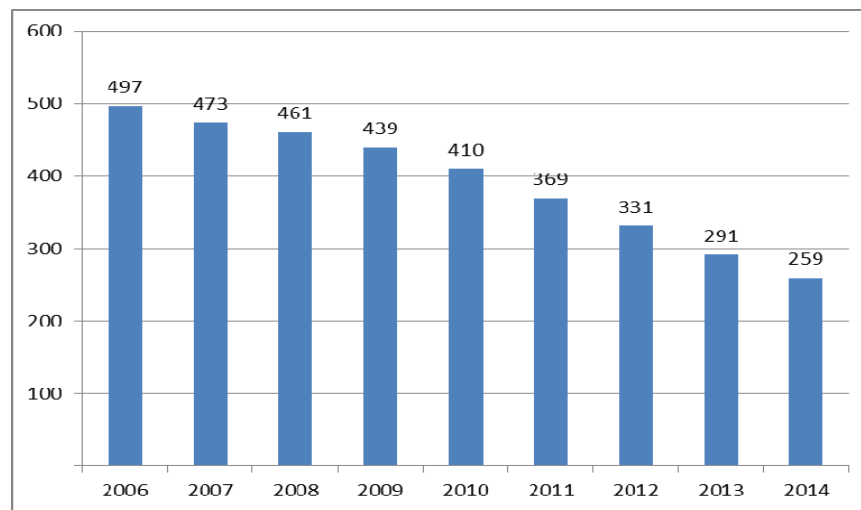
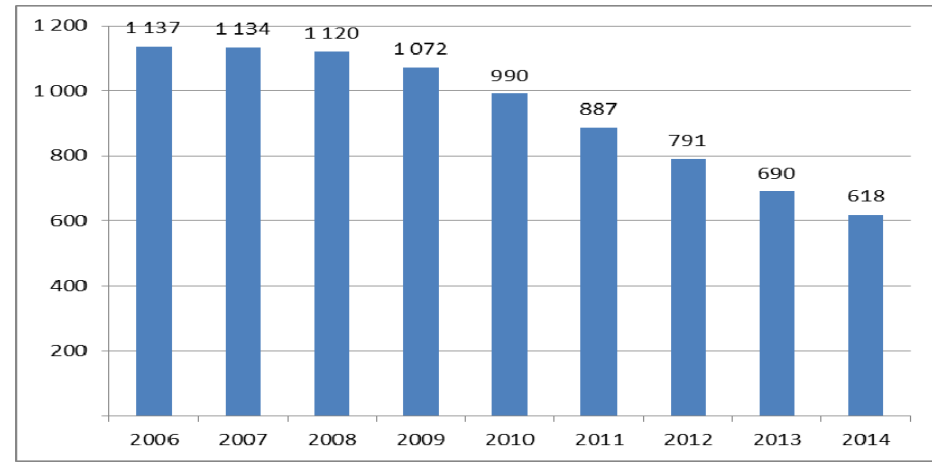
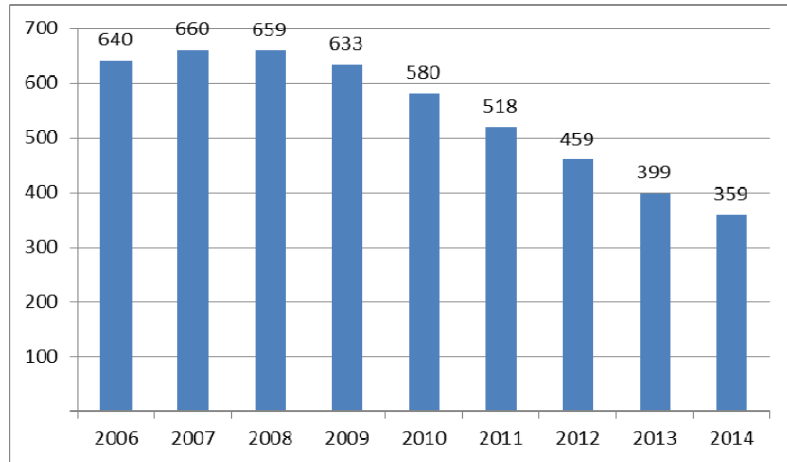
- A two-dimensional relationship can be further developed to be used for **multilevel analyses** at **seven organizational/geographical levels**.
  - **Level 1: Individual faculty/department**
  - **Level 2: Individual university**
  - **Level 3: National state/province**
  - **Level 4a: Higher education sectors: public sector**
  - **Level 4b: Higher education sectors: private sector**
  - **Level 5: National system (country)**
  - **Level 6: Continent/political region**
  - **Level 7: Global**
- **Provision and funding can be analyzed at seven organizational/ geographical levels** (or in a three-dimensional **cube**).
- **The direction of changes over time** at a lower level can be **different from the aggregated direction** of changes at a higher level.
  - **While the university as a whole can be privatizing, its selected faculties/departments may be de-privatizing, or the other way round.**
  - While at an aggregated Level 5 (country), higher education can be de-privatizing, **there may be selected public institutions which are actually privatizing**, along funding, provision, or both. Etc.
  - So, at each level, **trends can be accompanied by countertrends**.

# 5. Data-based discussion (1)

- **A good example of de-privatization is provided by Poland**, the biggest CEE system:
  - at an aggregated system level, Poland was systematically moving **towards the fully-private extreme** on the public-private continuum in its **expansion period of 1990-2005**,
  - and **towards the fully-public extreme since 2006**, **in its contraction period**, both in terms of funding and provision.

**Figures 1-4. Empirical examples (enrollments), 2006-2014, Poland.**

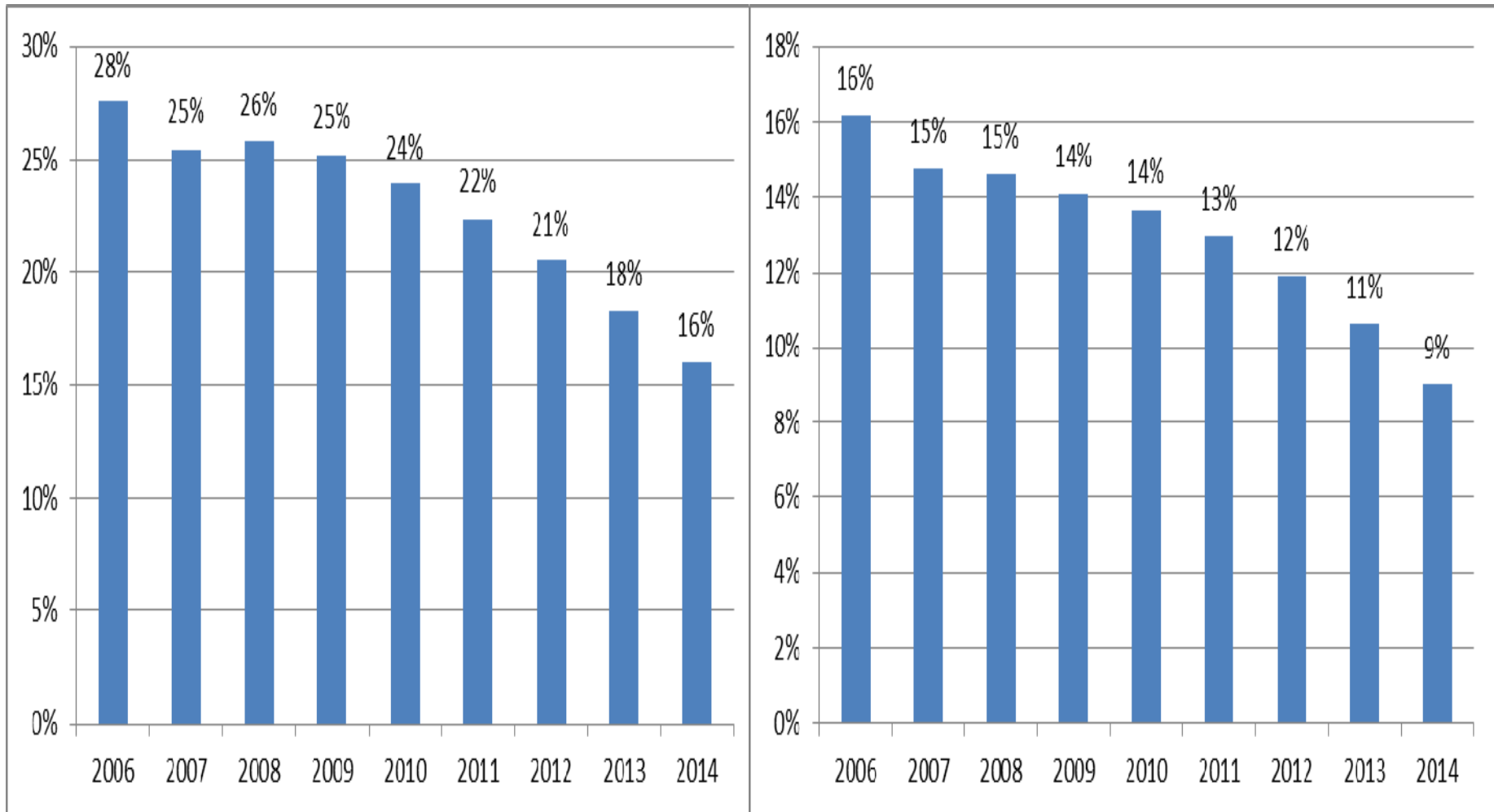
- 1: De-privatization at Level 4b (private sector). The number of students in the **private sector** (in thousands).
- 2: De-privatization at Level 5 (country). The number of fee-paying students in **public and private sectors combined** (in thousands).
- 3: De-privatization at Level 4a (public sector). The number of fee-paying students in the **public sector** (in thousands).
- 4: De-privatization at Level 5 (country). The share of tax-based (tuition-free) students in the **system**.



**Figures 5-6. Empirical examples (funding), 2006-2014, Poland.**

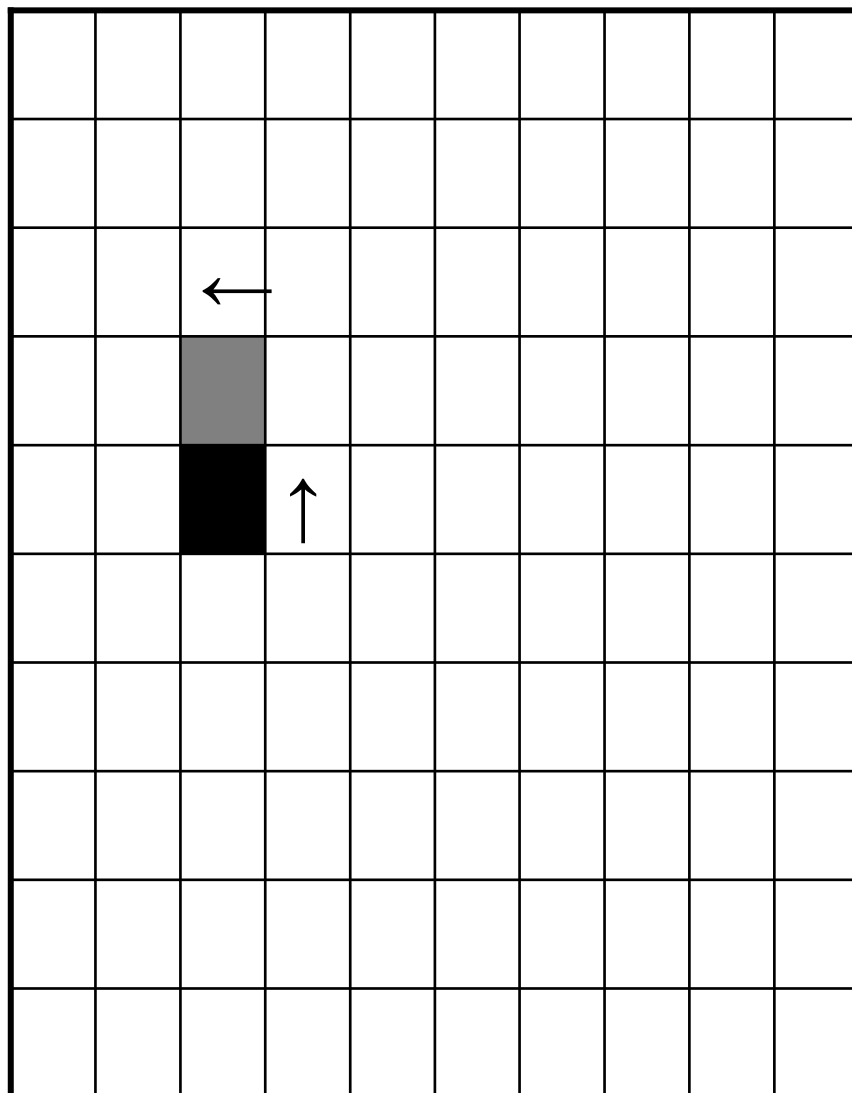
5: De-privatization at **Level 5 (country)**. Share of total income from fees (= private funding, **public and private sectors** combined) in total operating budget in both sectors.

6: De-privatization at **Level 4a (public sector)**. Share of total income from fees in (= private funding) the **public sector** in operating budget of the public sector.



**Figure 7: Empirical example (funding and provision combined)**

7: De-privatization at **Level 2 (individual university): the University of Warsaw**, the share of private funding (fee-based, horizontal) in total operating budget and the share of private enrolments (fee-paying students, vertical) in total enrolments, 2007 (black) and 2013 (grey). Arrows indicate the direction of changes.



**Horizontal – Funding (0%-100% private)**

**Vertical – Provision (0%-100% private)**

Left upper corner – fully-public funding (0% private) and fully public provision (0% private)

Right upper corner – fully private funding (100% private)

Left lower corner – fully private provision (100% private)

For empirical purposes, both funding and provision dimensions can be **better calibrated** to capture the changing realities at any level over time using **deciles (or percentiles)**.

While at the **aggregated country level (Level 5)**, de-privatization has been in progress in the region for about a decade now, at the **disaggregated level of individual institutions (Level 2)**, it has occurred in different places with different speeds.

And the **speed and the direction of changes at the lower level of faculties (Level 1)** may have been **different**.

Taking the University of Warsaw (UW) as an example, in 2007-2013:

the share of private funding decreased from 19.37 percent to 11.26 percent, and

the share of fee-based students in its student body decreased from 44.72 percent to 31.44 percent (see Figure 7)



# 5. Data-based discussion (2)

At the **aggregated university level of UW, de-privatization is a dominating trend, albeit with different degrees and directions of changes in different faculties**

- there are changing mixes of “publicness” and “privateness” over time in different university units).

Consequently, in general terms, **national trends (Level 5) may conceal more differentiated institution-level trends (Level 2), and even more differentiated trends (and countertrends) at the faculty/department level (Level 1).**

For various countries in the region, one can **provide empirical examples at various levels of analysis**

= (work to be done with international colleagues, CEE and beyond!)

# 6. Conclusions (1)

- **Future** research includes **a replication of data collection and analysis** across selected (CEE) countries; especially at institutional and faculty levels.
- A new concept can be used **to better grasp the ongoing changes** in HE in CEE.
- The global processes of **privatization** and **expansion** in HE - have **not been found to fit** the ongoing (demography-induced) processes in CEE very well.
- Instead of the **conceptual pairing of expansion and privatization** – CEE is **better served by the pairing of contraction and de-privatization**.
- An **empirically-informed notion of de-privatization has been developed**. Its usefulness has been briefly **tested** in explaining the ongoing (and expected) shifts in HE in CEE.

## 6. Conclusions (2)

- The processes of de-privatization have been defined as **the decreasing role of the private component in the changing public-private dynamics**.
- But they can also be defined as **the increasing role of the public component in it (and then termed re-publicization)**.
- **De-privatization and re-publicization** in HE, being the two sides of the same coin, may serve to be used in **different** contexts.
- **De-privatization serves well** the analytical purposes of understanding the impact of **contraction** in CEE. The **historical reason** is that **privatization** used to be the key concept to understand the **expansion** in the post-1989 period. The two pairs of concepts allow to grasp the changes to their core...
- *Thank you so much!*

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