

DIFFERENCES IN THE STANDARDS LIVING IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS

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Abstract: *Despite significant differences between developing and developed countries, health and access to health are of key importance worldwide. Even in countries where the majority of the population lives in rural areas, some resources are concentrated in cities. In the case of developing and developed countries, we can see significant differences between urban and rural areas, as the difference in development is even more acute in this respect. The reason for this phenomenon is that in developed countries the phase of urban explosion took a long time and affected fewer people than in developing countries. Overpopulation and changing habits are putting great pressure on both agriculture and rural areas. Explosive, uncoordinated growth can also lead to a significant increase in land use and a disproportionate spread of urban areas, which must be avoided at all costs. There is a strong correlation between population growth and urbanisation. As the population grows, the proportion of the urban population continues to grow, thereby increasingly contributing to the depopulation of rural areas. Changes in the world's population also have a direct impact on the natural environment. There is no doubt that population growth is one of the main drivers of global change. Urbanisation is accompanied by a transformation of lifestyle and consumption patterns. Combined with income growth, urbanisation is accelerating dietary diversification in developing countries. While consumption of cereals and other crops will decline, consumption of vegetables, fruits, meat, dairy products and fish will increase. The growing demand for semi-processed or ready-to-eat foods is causing further concentration in food chains. The rapid change in eating habits is associated with urbanisation, among other things. People who give up farming are moving en masse to cities where their eating habits are changing. Even today, more than half of the world's population lives in cities, and their proportion will inevitably continue to grow in the future. While the proportion of the urban population is increasing, rural regions continue to be home to the majority of the poor, where hunger is not uncommon. Nowadays, more and more people are studying the changes in the global population and the resulting situation.*

Keywords: *Population; Working; Population density; Health status; Health; Urbanisation.*

JEL Classification: *R11; R13; R51.*

1. Introduction

Settlements can be divided into two main categories, namely urban and rural areas based on population, development, comfort, employment opportunities, education, etc. A city refers to human settlement where urbanisation and industrialisation levels are high, while in a rural settlement, the rate of urbanisation is rather low.

Nowadays, many people believe that people living in the city have many more benefits than those living in the countryside. The term “urban” refers to an area that is densely populated and has the characteristics of a man-made environment. People living in such areas are mostly engaged in trade or services. Cities can be characterised by a high level of industrialisation, which results in better employment opportunities compared to rural areas. The delimitation of the urban area is limited not only to the cities but also to the cities and suburbs (suburban areas). Today, people migrate to cities because rural unemployment frightens them. People who move to cities come under the influence of the urban way of life in every aspect. Basically, three types of urban migration can be distinguished in terms of how the city affects rural society through migration:

- Employment in cities
- Industrial cities
- Metropolises

There are many benefits to living in urban areas, such as easy access to a variety of amenities, entertainment and education options, better transportation options, and health facilities. Although it has certain disadvantages, such as high levels of air pollution caused by large-scale industrialisation and means of transport such as buses, trains, cars, etc. Urban and rural societies are two extremes of a relationship, as they coexist and are interconnected day by day.

In contrast, the term “rural” is called a suburban region. It refers to a small settlement located outside the boundaries of a city, commercial, or industrial area. This region may include rural areas, villages or homesteads where natural vegetation also appears. The population of these areas is low. The primary source of income for the population is agriculture and animal husbandry, but trade also appears. The number of people living in a city varies from continent to continent. For example, there are settlements in India that count as cities only above 15,000 local residents.

Research in the European Union focuses primarily on the relationship between the EU and the global development process. Based on my previous research and literature review, I have come to the conclusion that regional development and catching-up issues have become increasingly important in recent years. Due to the different characteristics of the countryside, it is necessary to have development concepts tailored to each region, however, at the same time, the exploration of common features can be useful for all regional development efforts.

At the same time, it is important to emphasise that the role of the countryside is constantly re-evaluated due to urbanisation. The previous misconceptions that there are no opportunities in the countryside, it is difficult to get to a smaller or larger city, or one can live in isolation, seem to fade out. In addition to the obvious difficulties,

there are many benefits to living in the countryside that make it worthwhile for people to make this compromise. More and more people from big cities are moving to the countryside for healthier living conditions. Research also confirms that stress in the countryside is reduced, thus the chances of developing many diseases and chronic complaints (high blood pressure, cardiac problems). In addition, the air is cleaner in the countryside and there is more opportunities for physical activities, which is increasingly contributing to the development of health awareness.

In recent years and decades, increased attention has been paid to various forms of health-conscious behavior and their potential effects on everyday life. The topicality of this issue has been accelerated by the spread of various social media, where many thematic pages and blogs await readers interested in the topic. In addition, a number of different lifestyles have become known in recent years, which have extended the diet compiled by doctors for a particular disease to people who did not need it strictly from a diagnostic point of view. In such cases, the volunteer followers of the diet themselves live a life like their fellow human beings who are forced to do so.

2. The importance of population density

Population density has a significant impact on the socio-economic characteristics and sustainability of urban and rural communities. However, it is important to emphasise that both urban and rural areas are essential to the well-being and quality of life of Europeans. Cities are centers of economic and social development and innovation, and therefore attract large numbers of people through a wide range of educational, employment, entertainment and cultural opportunities. However, high concentrations of people and well-being often present a number of complex economic, environmental, and social challenges (Biagi et al., 2018). Romão et al., (2018) have shown that the attractiveness of cities is influenced by the social dimension of sustainability, while the appearance of the urban environment also influences the reputation of settlements from an attractive point of view.

The difference between big cities and small towns allows for a different way of life. Both types have fundamentally similar infrastructural opportunities, but large cities are very different from small towns in quantitative terms, and this quantitative difference often entails qualitative differences (Waitt and Gibson., 2009; Vanderbeck and Morse Dunkley., 2003). A smaller population is not necessarily a disadvantage; with proper municipal development and the resources available for this purpose, development success can be achieved even in less developed regions at the level of individual settlements. However, if a small town is located near a larger settlement, it generally has a beneficial effect on the attractiveness of such cities, the opportunities available there, including job opportunities, and various forms of entertainment (Fertner et al., 2015). At the same time, the proximity of larger settlements can also be dangerous for the functioning of smaller settlements, which may become commuter cities as a result. These settlements are characterised by a number of commuters who live in the town but their work increases the economic performance of other settlements.

As a result, current disparities between cities and small settlements on the periphery may worsen (Horeczki., 2014). The available work opportunities, which constitute the most important basis for the financial well-being of the population, are extremely important for the sustainability of rural areas. Accordingly, settlements where employment opportunities that fit the local educational structure are available to the population can be more successful (Harangi-Rákos, and Szabó, 2012). Although a wider range of products is readily available in cities, opportunities are more limited in rural areas. People living in the countryside regularly shop in shopping malls on the outskirts of big cities, which can be easily accessed by those living in urban settings. Therefore, the difference between urban and rural lifestyles also leads to differences in consumption patterns (Broadbridge and Calderwood., 2002).

Currently, the differences between urban and rural lifestyles are narrowing. On the one hand, rural people are increasingly able to enjoy leisure activities in the same way as urban people, and on the other hand, more and more urban people are spending their free time outside cities. However, it is important to note that even in countries where the majority of the population lives in rural areas, resources are concentrated in cities (Blum., 2005). With the establishment of the European Union, the relationship between the city and the countryside also seems to be changing, as the service sector, which plays a significant role in the national economy, operates in an urban environment. The centralisation tendencies inherent in the functioning of the unified market further strengthen cities, while the partial successes of agricultural transformation and depopulation clearly weaken rural areas (Memagh and Commins., 1992). Although interest in rural areas, their results, and problems have increased in recent years, the scope of research still does not reach the depth of analyses of urban areas (Jentsch and Shucksmith., 2004).

On a global scale, the health status of people living in rural areas is usually worse than in urban areas. Several studies have attempted to analyse the cause of this trend. Previous research has shown that the number of medical staff per person living in rural areas is lower than the same value in urban areas, even in developed countries such as the United States (Bolin et al., 2015). These data show that it is more difficult for people living in rural areas to use quality medical services available in urban areas. The health status of rural people is often compared to the health status of urban people - and, of course, the available health services are also compared. Based on this comparison, the health prospects of the rural population are weaker than the health prospects of the urban population (Malatzky and Bourke., 2016). The opportunities of elderly people living in the countryside to access health care services and especially those of older people accessing health care in rural areas cannot reach the level of elderly people living in rural setting (Zhong et al., 2017). Unfortunately, the general tendencies can also be felt in Hungary, where an increasing number of doctors and dentists are missing in basic health care (Nagy., 2019). These factors also encourage people to move from rural areas to cities (Humphreys et al., 2002).

It should not be forgotten that more than a billion people in the world's larger cities live without proper waste management or sanitation while inhaling polluted air. Urban life is accompanied by a stressful lifestyle that leads to various cardiovascular

diseases. Accordingly, it can be stated that both urban and rural areas have disadvantages (Smith et al., 2008). Interestingly, in the case of big cities, a process has begun as a result of which people are moving from increasingly expensive and less livable cities to rural areas.

Table 1. Advantages of the rural and urban environment (2019)

Rural	Urban
Village people live in the countryside	There is a greater supply of employment opportunities in cities
Open air – physical activities	Salaries in the city are higher
Human relationships	Shopping is easier → convenience
Self-sufficient farming	Educational infrastructure is more developed in cities
Horticulture	Education in large cities are usually of higher standard than in rural areas
Livestock management	Development level of health care
Lower real estate prices	Less space

Source: Own research, own construction 2019

Table 2. Disadvantages of the rural and urban environment (2019)

Rural	Urban
Limited job opportunities, lower educational level	Traffic jams, crowd, stress, noise, crime, polluted air
Lack of municipal infrastructure (institutions serving the population)	Lack of green environment – diseases
Inequality / lack of municipal technical infrastructure (e.g. pipeline gas supply)	Urban air can be harmful to health as early as fetal age
Lack of transport infrastructure	
Few programs and entertainment opportunities	

Source: Own research, own construction 2019

There are basically two social groups that tend to move to small towns in the catchment areas of big cities: rich people, who want a more enjoyable natural environment, and those fleeing urban poverty. It is obvious that the members of these two groups live in different settlements, which can cause significant differences between the settlements in suburban areas. Wealthy people move to settlements with good opportunities that provide a healthy environment and easy access, while those in less favorable financial situations move to settlements with poorer health care, less access and fewer opportunities. This process further increases the disadvantage of lagging groups (Vasárus., 2016). Due to poverty, poor health and the high proportion of diseases in rural areas, special attention should be paid to improving the health of people living in the countryside. In general, lifestyle-related diseases are more common in rural areas. Peaks and depths of the economic cycle have a greater impact on rural communities (Hartley., 2004). A survey performed among young people showed that university students migrating from rural areas to urban areas justify their relocation strategy primarily with the greater job opportunities available in cities. However, other reasons listed immediately after job opportunities were lifestyle and living conditions, which is in line with the results

described above. Thus, a university operating in a rural area will be attracted to young graduates in 2017 by means of the benefits of urban life, including the living conditions listed above (Dajnoki et al., 2018).

However, it can be seen that rural settlements make a strong effort to form a positive image of themselves. Known as the current main area of research, municipal marketing aims to make settlements, including many rural settlements, more attractive to potential investors and residents. With the appearance of investors, the general situation of these settlements improves and, as a result, they are able to catch up with more developed areas and improve all properties that appear as potential risk sources or causes of backwardness (Tózsá., 2014; Rechnitzer., 1995). The development of these settlements depends primarily on the amount of money spent on various investments. In order to make a settlement more attractive to investors, public expenditures had to be made, for example to meet the infrastructure needs of investors. In this case, public expenditure could be covered by local budget resources, which are mainly based on the local tax system, or by means of support from the national budget (the source of budget support could be international support to the country, such as that of the European Union). Many Member States joined the EU in 2004 or later. In addition, private investment can also support the development of different settlements. In these cases, investors can make extra profit after their investments. The development of settlements usually results in an increase in locally earned wages, and under these circumstances, the average standard of living and the average income level of households may be higher, resulting in an additional tendency for local companies to use more services and consume more products (Sørensen., 2018).

3. Conclusions

One the other hand the goals of sustainability and sustainable development could be reached in the countryside much easier than in urban areas. In cities and suburban areas many diseases are caused by the low air quality, the pollution. During urban planning specialists have to pay attention for these circumstances (Zhou et al., 2017).

Explosive, uncoordinated growth can also lead to a significant increase in land use and a disproportionate spread of urban areas, which must be avoided at all costs. Furthermore, the significant increase in cities is accompanied by an increase in urban poverty and an increase in the proportion of people living in slums. As cities have significant economic potential and a large share of GDP is generated in cities, it is important that instead of fragmented and dissipated urbanisation, a concentrated urban growth is taking place, which also keeps the resource use of cities relatively lower. However, in addition to concentration, attention must also be paid to addressing the specific challenges of megacities, where the problems listed above (e.g. air pollution, inadequate infrastructure, transport, housing, etc.) are concentrated in these settlements due to their high density (Káposzta., 2018).

In many developed countries, funding for health services and infrastructural support for rural and remote communities has declined (Bernard., 2019)

The difference between a big city and a small town allows for a different way of life. Although a big city and a small town have fundamentally similar infrastructural opportunities (hence both are cities), big cities are very different from small towns in terms of quantity, and this quantitative difference often means a difference in quality, too. For example, there are many small towns with - mostly one - theater, while in big cities, the fact that there are more theaters in the settlement could also mean a quality improvement. The fact that small towns provide a calmer way of life is not true in all respects.

Rural and urban social contacts are determined by the circumstances where they take place. It can be observed that the metacommunication of people is different in public spaces, shops, public transport, the countryside and in large cities. A good example of this observation is that in Budapest or Debrecen, during a one-hour journey on public transport, one meets many more people than the total population of a town. As a matter of course, there is no direct interaction with the people seen along the way, which changes this kind of relationship compared to small-town public behavior (Beling et al., 2018).

Today, the differences between urban and rural lifestyles have largely diminished. On the one hand, rural people are also gaining more and more access to leisure activities as urban people, and on the other hand, people living in cities are spending an increasing amount of their free time outside the cities (mountain tours, castle visits, rural tourism). Even though this is a trend, differences still exist today. Watching television, as one of the main leisure activities, largely determines both lifestyles (Strasser., 2003).

Through its specific objectives, the WHO International Development Program has developed a policy and action plan to promote sustainable livelihoods, including access to land, resources and markets for people, as well as better education, health and opportunities for the rural population. This program contributes to reducing child and maternal mortality and improving basic health care for all, including reproductive services. Training the rural population, and in particular along the careers available in rural areas, is important for addressing the challenges of rural areas. As a result of up-to-date knowledge, the labor market situation of individuals improves and the development of rural areas is also easier (Kórmíves et al., 2019). The WHO has recently launched the "Towards Unity for Health" project (TUHF), the aim of which is to study and promote efforts to achieve the unity of health care organisations, in particular the sustainable integration of medicine and public health, in other words, individual health and community health activities and important reforms (Boelen., 2000).

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