

## CITIES VS THE COUNTRYSIDE – PROS AND CONS OF URBAN AND RURAL LIFE

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**Abstract:** *Urban and rural life have traditionally been interpreted in opposition to each other. This perspective is based on the fact that urban and rural areas are home to different types of people who lead a different way of life, and in general, the characteristics of their lives show significant differences. Consequently, it can be clearly seen that the classical urban-rural division has become fundamentally obsolete nowadays, the functions are mixed, it is becoming less and less possible to meet a purely urban or purely rural way of life. With the appearance of new social classes, services for the needs of the middle class or the upper middle class will also be introduced in these settlements. In practice, this means that, regardless of the size and location of the settlement, different services can be provided if there is a realistic solvent demand for them in a given community. This also well predicts the development potential of rural settlements, as it turns out that the composition, needs and financial opportunities of inhabitants also have an impact. However, the effect outlined above is bidirectional, i.e. it also works in the opposite direction to that outlined. The fact that urban areas typically have better economic, labor market and public service situation than villages can definitely be characterised as an advantage of urban life. Companies capable of producing high added value typically settle in cities, which is partly explained by the fact that these settlements have a complex, multi-level education system that is able to serve the needs of employers more efficiently and effectively. The presence of better jobs generally also allows for the availability of higher average incomes, which acts as a strong motivator for initiating both external and internal migration. The disadvantages of cities are crowdedness, alienation and poor air quality. In the case of rural settlements and villages, several advantageous features can be mentioned, including the much more reasonable settlement size, community cohesion, and generally better environmental conditions. Greater personal space can also be tempting for many. The negative characteristics, however, are the weak local economy, the lack of jobs and, in general, the lack of opportunities.*

**Keywords:** *urbanisation; rural development; households; lifestyle.*

**JEL Classification:** *Q56; R11; R23.*

### 1. Introduction

Urban and rural life have traditionally been interpreted in opposition to each other. This perspective is based on the fact that urban and rural areas are home to different

types of people who lead a different way of life, and in general, the characteristics of their lives show significant differences. In addition, there is also a kind of hierarchical relationship between the city and the countryside, according to which the urbanised environment would take precedence over rural areas. It has been a further assumption for a long time that the process of becoming a city is an almost natural evolutionary process, as each city was established as a village-sized, rural settlement. Accordingly, rural settlements will sooner or later show a natural development curve and become towns. However, in practice, this theory seems to be surpassed by everyday experience. If we work with the village-city binary settlement division, then we do not know how to handle many other types of settlements. How can homesteads and farms be interpreted? How do we interpret the existence of agglomerations, where a larger settlement is surrounded by smaller ones which perform various functions, most of which are not classically related to rurality and rural character? Additional issues are raised by so-called "sleeping towns", whose function is almost exclusively to provide a place to sleep for people who could not afford to live in the city or voluntarily moved from larger settlements and to provide the possibility of daily commuting. Suburban areas are also difficult to interpret in this bipolar system: residential areas, often considered to be the most elegant and expensive quarters of large cities, have many of the characteristics classically associated with the countryside, but they hardly perform functions of small village households. Further questions are raised by the functioning of market towns that legally qualify as cities, even though they are not able to perform all functions that can be rightfully expected from a city (Lajos - Ujhelyi, 2016). Consequently, it can be clearly seen that the classical urban-rural division has become fundamentally obsolete nowadays, the functions are mixed, it is becoming less and less possible to meet a purely urban or purely rural way of life. The aim of this paper is not only to examine the changes in the functions performed by urban and rural areas and settlements, but also to analyse how the benefits related to urban and rural residences have developed in the recent period, their practical impact on intra-country migration, and we plan to analyse the impact of the presence of each social class in the settlements on the development of the given town or village.

## 2. Applied methods

The aim of this paper is to provide an extensive literature analysis on the examined topic, i.e. on some of the advantages and disadvantages of urban and rural life. In the paper, we deduct a summary evaluation from secondary data and previously published publications, which is of public interest in connection due to its novelty. In preparing this paper, we have also kept in mind all the benefits and risks that Kothari (2004) formulated in his summary research methodology work. Accordingly, during the preparation of the article, the research work based on the processing of secondary data was much more efficient than primary data collection in terms of both time management and use of financial resources. One of the main advantages of the rapid utilisation of scientific findings is that they do not have to be used to re-perform already verified surveys, i.e. the efficiency of research activities increases. At the same time, we had to keep in mind our relative exposure in the research

activity as a risk. If the processed database is not created as a result of our own data collection, the possibility of performing analyses is limited by the nature and depth of the original data collection(s). An additional problem during secondary data processing is that when conducting research work, only limited information is available to researchers about the authenticity of the processed data at all times. In order for our research to be sufficiently credible and based on reliable data, we quoted sources only from controlled sources and publications published in peer-reviewed journals. In addition, this activity meets the expectations of Harris (1998), who stated that the basis of each independent research project should be the available technical literature, as the knowledge of previously published scientific findings allows to avoid duplication of research and the unnecessary parallel use of the scarce research infrastructure.

In view of the above written facts, during the preparation of this paper we processed only the sources published in journals and volumes the proper proofreading of which guaranteed the authenticity of communication. We searched for resources using Google Scholar, EconBiz.de and AGECONSEARCH. The authentic statistical data examined during the preparation of the research were downloaded from the EUROSTAT databases in order to start the examination of the revealed literature sources with an authentic, transparent preliminary knowledge.

The aim of our article is to synthesize the literature of the investigated topic available in Hungarian and in English. However the topic is popular in the international literature there aren't many articles paying attention for the Eastern part of the European Union where we can find regions in unique situation: these regions became parts of one of the most developed areas of the world while they are facing many problems according to their poor economic conditions. With the preparation of this literature review article we used to collect the literature background of our future primary research in which we would like to investigate the situation and the perspectives of the poor regions located in the Eastern part of the European Union.

### **3. Why is(n't) it attractive to live in a city?**

Cities are at the heart of social and economic life and the innovation functions performed by urban organisations are of paramount importance. All of these effects are also extremely attractive to a wider mass of people, which is why the flow of population towards urbanised areas will be particularly characteristic. In addition, urban areas can provide a number of opportunities for residents that rural areas are not, or only to a much lesser extent, capable of. Such opportunities include, for example, the significantly wider range of educational opportunities available, but the larger number of cultural and entertainment institutions should also be emphasised. However, one of the downsides of urban life is the relatively large number of people living in a relatively small area, which also raises several environmental, social, and welfare issues (Biagi et al., 2018).

Lots of other arguments are usually brought up in favour of the urban way of life. One of these is that a variety of job opportunities are available in cities in greater numbers. The possibility of working can have a serious effect even in the case of secondary school students, as the possibility of creating an independent income is

of paramount importance for them as well (Kőmíves et al., 2018). Students in higher education try to explore, consider and decide on their subsequent labor market opportunities when making their decision to continue their studies, and they do the same when deciding on employment during their studies. It can be seen how important the possibility of self-education and gaining work experience is in the lives of young adults studying in full-time courses in higher education institutions. Students are even willing to make a mobility decision in order to access the development paths that offer the best opportunities, i.e. they move from the countryside to the city, or from a less developed region to a more developed region, according to the location of the given higher education institution (Liskuné Vathy et al., 2020). At the same time, this is a completely natural process, as migration, regardless of whether it involves crossing borders, is a phenomenon of the same age as humanity, and the reasons for migration have always included the possibility of creating a better life. More specifically, people feel a strong urge to move to areas that offer them the opportunity for a better life (Valuch, 2005; Dajnoki et al., 2017; Kőmíves et al., 2017; Máté et al., 2017; Oláh et al., 2017; Oláh et al., 2018). This process results in the emergence of high value-added, therefore profitable, knowledge-intensive companies in areas where the workforce necessary for their operation is available (Máté et al., 2016; Tarnóczy et al., 2017) - this is typically the case for cities, including campuses.

The condition of air could be one of the major disadvantages of urban life - and the advantage of rural life. The condition of the air can be affected by a number of external factors. The impact of air pollution from transport is very significant (Popp et al., 2014; Bai et al., 2017), which is also of unquestionable significance from an urban planning point of view. Transport, which also has an impact on the cityscape, causes several problems. On the one hand, local emissions have a negative effect on the air quality of settlements. This effect is more significant in cities than in rural settlements due to greater built-up and possibly poorer ventilation facilities. Due to the high population density of cities and the high concentration of certain frequent traffic destinations, traffic becomes more difficult. In addition, more congestion and traffic jams develop in these settlements, which impairs their breathable air. In addition, the construction and maintenance of transport infrastructure poses an additional problem, and the former category involves not only the space of the commuter, but also the storage space of parked cars (Fleischer, 2019). Partly due to the latter problems and the increase in costs associated with them, car-sharing services may become increasingly popular (Németh - Kőmíves, 2020).

#### **4. Changes in the functions of the countryside**

In order for human life to be sustainable, the existence and survival of both urban and rural areas is necessary. There is also a need for these areas of distinct function and location in order for European life and well-being to survive (Biagi et al., 2018). One type of area cannot replace the other, i.e. there are functions that are only available in cities, while other functions are only available in rural areas. This is still true today, even though we can observe the expansion of functions and the partial

change of the tasks performed in rural areas - and to a lesser extent also in urban areas.

Today, all functions that rural areas perform are constantly changing. This is typically reflected in the fact that, in addition to maintaining traditional tasks and functions, new tasks and functions are also emerging in the countryside that were not previously typical of these areas. In practice, this means that the agricultural functions of the countryside remain strong, as agricultural production typically takes place in these areas. However, in recent years and decades, features such as leisure and sports have also appeared - nowadays we can see an increasing number of people basically living in urban areas traveling to the countryside just to indulge their hobbies. As a matter of course, as a result of the demand for such activities, supply also appeared: an increasing number of developments is taking place in rural areas, the aim of which is to support leisure and recreational activities and to serve the related needs (Pinto-Correira et al., 2015). Of course, the extent to which and the fields in which each rural area proves to be worth developing depends on a number of circumstances. Not all rural areas can be developed with the same methodology, each area has its strengths and weaknesses - the same can be said for urban areas in a similar way. Local development depends to a large extent on the social and economic capital available, the environmental characteristics of the area, the composition of the human resources living in or commuting to the area, last but not least, the amount, usability and nature of the economic resources available (Sørensen, 2018).

As a matter of course, the success of rural areas depends on a number of conditions. A recurring view in Hungary is that small settlements in the countryside are less able to provide adequate employment opportunities for residents, especially young people, which has a significant negative impact on the attractiveness of villages. In order for a municipality to successfully undertake to retain the population living there, especially young people, it is also necessary to have a supply of jobs adapted to the qualifications of the population. Failing this, the young population will emigrate from small settlements, which will inevitably lead to the aging of villages, and their slow and gradual depopulation. This undesirable scenario is especially dangerous for the survival of rural areas, settlements and communities (Harangi-Rákos - Szabó, 2012). Unfortunately, despite attempts to support rural development in many forms and ways around the world, there are still negative descriptors in the image of the countryside, in addition to positive indicators. The healthy nature of rural life, the humane-like social functioning and the moderate settlement size are emphasised as positive aspects, while the lack of different opportunities is usually highlighted as a negativity (Short, 2006).

Some settlements are also open to artificially influencing the image of them, to indicate the given village as in a better position than the real one (Tózsá, 2014). All this is most often manifested in the emphasis on the positives and the silence and hiding of the negatives, ie there is no question of the leaders of the settlement lying about the given village or town, they merely emphasise certain features and content elements more than others. In such activities, settlements can even use personal branding tools (Nagy et al., 2018).

However, smaller settlements may face a large number of problems in their functioning. Some of these problems are of infrastructural nature, which may affect the issue of existing or missing infrastructure in part, as well as the connection of the municipality to various networks, such as road, railway, electricity, drinking water, internet, sewer, gas, telephone and other networks. It should be emphasised here that there may be problems with the availability of certain public services, even in key areas such as health, education, retail or the post office. The other part of the problems in these settlements is of a labor market nature, which can mean, on the one hand, unemployment and, on the other hand, a lack of a properly trained workforce, which in the long run can cause difficulties for companies operating in smaller settlements. Finally, it is necessary to mention economic problems, which, often due to the existence of the problem areas explained above, develop in a derivative way. The special difficulties of commuter towns should also be highlighted here, as residents in these areas are typically very active from an economic point of view, but the fruits of their work are realised in other settlements, therefore they cannot contribute to the functioning of the settlements they live in (Horeczki, 2014).

### **5. The impact of the presence of different social classes on the living environment**

By changing their place of residence, the middle class and the upper middle class is able to influence the development of their living environment. In practice, this means that with the appearance of new social classes, services for the needs of the middle class or the upper middle class will also be introduced in these settlements. For example, a survey has shown that if a larger number of people from the middle-class or upper-middle-class move out of cities to the suburban environment, the educational institutions that new residents need will also appear in these smaller settlements (Gamsu, 2015). In practice, this means that, regardless of the size and location of the settlement, different services can be provided if there is a realistic solvent demand for them in a given community. This also well predicts the development potential of rural settlements, as it turns out that the composition, needs and financial opportunities of inhabitants also have an impact.

However, the effect outlined above is bidirectional, i.e. it also works in the opposite direction to that outlined. Accordingly, the consumption and lifestyle habits of middle-class members also depend on the services available to them in the vicinity. Furthermore, the range of services which appear in a given settlement is highly dependent on the available direct and indirect government subsidies (Becsky et al., 2015). Among other things, the sports infrastructure available in residential areas is built up depending on the socio-econometric classes of the local residents. In practice, this means that the range of services available for settlements and parts of settlements with higher social status will be much richer than that available for settlements or parts of settlements with lower social classes (Cereijo et al., 2019). Increased attention to society, the living environment and family members is especially characteristic of Scandinavian households. Citizens of countries in Northern Europe typically pay attention to each other and feel responsible for each

other and for future generations, which is reflected, for example, in the protection of their natural environment (Baranyi, 2019).

## 6. Population movements between urban and rural areas

One of the most important scientific topics nowadays is the challenges of the land use. There is a great competition for land and for water in which the agriculture, the food industry, the feed production, chemical industry, energy production, and the population also participates. Of course the humanity has impacts on all of the listed factors but it can have a direct effect on land use by the urbanisation. Only 18% of the Earth surface can be used for the listed aims while people have to pay attention for biodiversity, environmental protection, and recreation. With the urbanisation the lifestyle and the consumption habits of population are rapidly changing causing more pressure on the natural conditions of the Earth (FAO, 2017).

Globally the cities are playing an important role in the economic development with employing a great amount of population. The number of megacities where more than 10 million people are living is continuously growing (de Sherbin et al., 2007). According to FAO (2017) the urban population is continuously growing but according to Shang et al. (2018) there is a connection between the urban-rural population share and the difference of the marginal productivity in case of urban and in case of rural areas. In several cases those people who move from urban areas to the countryside still continue to work in cities. That means there are millions of mobile workers who are travelling daily, weekly etc. from their homes located in rural areas to their workplaces located in cities. This trend is harmful for the environment because of the impacts of the mobility (Klous et al., 2019) but because of the differences of the capital flow to urban or rural areas there is no option for people living in the countryside to work in their hometowns.

The solution of the situation mentioned above is very complicated. Till the economic and employment gap will not become narrow between the urban and rural areas the population will move from the countryside to the cities because of the employment possibilities – and will move from the crowded cities to the agglomerations because of the better living conditions. The cities can weaken these obnoxious trends by supporting more the economic development of the countryside. On the other hand cities should invest in building or re-building the countryside. With the support of the urban areas the strengthened ruralities can become more attractive for the local people who will not move to cities. In this case the rural poverty level can decrease because those people who are likely to work hard for salary will stay at home. With the collaboration of these motivated people the shift from primary to secondary and later tertiary sectors in the countryside can be completed (Wang et al., 2020).

## 7. In conclusion

In this paper, we described the advantages and disadvantages which can be collected for each major settlement type. The aim of our literature review paper is to publish an analysis based on available and relevant literature sources in English and Hungarian.

A number of benefits can be listed in relation to cities. The fact that urban areas typically have better economic, labor market and public service situation than villages can definitely be characterised as an advantage of urban life. Companies capable of producing high added value typically settle in cities, which is partly explained by the fact that these settlements have a complex, multi-level education system that is able to serve the needs of employers more efficiently and effectively. The presence of better jobs generally also allows for the availability of higher average incomes, which acts as a strong motivator for initiating both external and internal migration. The disadvantages of cities are crowdedness, alienation and poor air quality. There have been many attempts to remedy these problems, but so far it has not been possible to develop a reassuring method to solve them.

In the case of rural settlements and villages, several advantageous features can be mentioned, including the much more reasonable settlement size, community cohesion, and generally better environmental conditions. Greater personal space can also be tempting for many. The negative characteristics, however, are the weak local economy, the lack of jobs and, in general, the lack of opportunities. The latter category includes, in addition to economic disadvantages, the limited availability of public services and the lack of leisure opportunities.

At the same time, it can be seen that the development of settlements largely depends on the social strata living there. If higher classes appear in a larger proportion in a settlement, the available services will also develop according to their needs over time, i.e. a small settlement may start to develop due to the re-stratification of its population without a change in the size of the settlement.

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