

MODIFICĂRI PRIVIND ROLUL ZONELOR RURALE DIN
JURUL UNUI ORAȘ

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***Abstract:** With industrial activities changing, the role the country plays is also subject to constant changes. Besides providing agricultural products, the country used to offer labour force to the mines and new industrial plants. In the period of the enforced development, the country continued providing labour force. After the collapse of controlled economies, most heavy industrial plants were unable to survive in the world competition. The changes also affected the countryside. It ceased to provide labour force. Since there were similar processes going on all over Europe, the role the country used to play has changed dramatically in other places, too.*

***Key words:** city, agglomeration, rural area*

INTRODUCTION

With industrial activities changing, the role of the countryside is also subject to changes. It was as late as the 19th century that the large Central and Eastern European agricultural areas started to be replaced by industrial activities. In the beginning, they were replaced by the food industry, later, mainly in the 20th century, by mining, heavy industry and machine production. In this period the country provided the mines and the new industrial plants with labour and, traditionally, it also offered agricultural products.

From the mid-20th century each of the Central and Eastern European countries put all their efforts into developing heavy industry. In the period of enforced industrialization the number of the people moving into cities and towns increased dramatically. In this way, the rural areas continued ensuring labour force, but agricultural products were provided by concentrated cooperative farms with huge arable lands.

After the collapse of plan economies, most heavy industrial factories were unable to survive in the world competition; they went bankrupt and lost their markets. The changes also affected the rural areas. They did not provide labour force any more and they also ceased to contribute to food supply. Rural settlements adapted themselves to the changes in different ways. Since there were similar processes going on all over Europe, the role the country used to play has changed dramatically in other places, too.

The present paper describes the changes in the role of the countryside by the example of a Hungarian region and its regional centre.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The data in the paper were taken from the database of the TEIR-KSH, as well as from a development document of the time. The calculation methods were chosen on the recommendation of the OECD. The interviews were made in the gravitation area of the city Miskolc (OTKA 2011).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL REGIONS

Due to its traditions, of the seven NUTS 2 level regions of Hungary, the Northern Hungarian region can be regarded as an obviously industrial region. In the second half of the 20th century, i.e. in the period of controlled economy, there were coal and ore mines in this region with iron and steel production based on them. Miskolc, the largest city of the region, was the centre of metallurgy and machine industry, the most important city of the industrial zone in the valley of the River Sajó. It is a proof of its importance that in the 1960s, in the age of enforced industrialization, a daily 23,000, and in the 1970s over 33,000 people commuted to work in the city (*Simonyi– Schneller 1979*).

The most industrialized of the three counties making up the Northern Hungarian region was Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, with Nógrád County following it. At the time of the 1980 census, the proportion of the people working in agriculture was under 15%, whereas the proportion of those working in the industry and construction industry exceeded 50%.

Table 1 Changes in the proportion of the people employed in the three counties of Northern Hungary 1980-1990-2001

County (NUTS 3)	Agriculture			Industry			Services		
	1980	1990	2001	1980	1990	2001	1980	1990	2001
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	14.78	12.98	3.88	50.42	45.70	34.32	34.76	41.29	61.79
Heves	19.19	14.59	5.60	45.19	41.69	38.71	35.57	43.68	55.69
Nógrád	14.96	13.99	3.01	51.73	47.52	43.54	33.20	38.46	53.44
Region (NUTS 2)	15.93	13.57	4.20	49.32	45.00	37.26	34.70	41.41	58.53
Country (NUTS 0)	18.91	15.45	5.50	41.91	37.83	32.86	39.12	46.67	61.64

Source: TEIR-KSH database

The national proportion of the people working in agriculture was almost 19%, a proof of the strength of the countryside. This, however, decreased to 15.45% at the time of the 1990 census. The decrease was due to the crisis of controlled economies, rather than the modernization of agriculture. Joining the world market was another reason for a further decrease in the number of the people working in agriculture, to 5.5% in the whole country, and to a much lower level, less than 4%, in the two industrialized counties of Northern Hungary.

As a result of the economic changes, new activities appeared in the region. Traditional heavy industrial activities were replaced by modern industries applying new technologies. It was only the chemical industry that proved to be successful on the international market. Unemployment affected first of all manual workers, but in services that required people with higher qualifications the number of vacancies was increasing.

Table 2 The degree of migration in the three counties of Northern Hungary, 1970-1979

Settlements, people	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	Heves	Nógrád	Hungary
-499	-22.82	-9.79	-14.68	-19.98
500-999	-16.53	-5.47	-10.41	-13.85
1000-1999	-8.90	-11.26	-7.05	-9.99
2000-4999	-6.04	-4.64	-1.36	-6.33
5000-9999	-0.73	-2.24	8.60	-1.95
10000-19999	5.92	4.91	5.53	4.76
20000-49999	4.98	6.92	6.90	5.80
50000-	6.58	15.09	-1.41	6.32

Source: TEIR-KSH database

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The high number of labour needed for jobs in the city was ensured by the villages. The number of small villages is very high in this region, even at the national level. These villages with populations fewer than 500-1,000 lost the most inhabitants in the age of industrialization. Nevertheless, the populations of towns with more than 10,000 people were increasing.

The crisis of the heavy industry began in the 1980s. After the change of regime, until the 2001 census, the number of the people working in the industry decreased significantly, to 32.86% in the whole country and to 34.32% in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, the most industrialized county of the region. It is a proof of the changes that the so far one-direction process, the migration of the population of rural areas to the towns, stopped, what is more, the population of towns and cities with a higher number of inhabitants started to decrease. It was partly because a part of the factory workers that had become unemployed moved back to the villages, and partly because a part of the urban middle layer, which became stronger after the change of regime, also moved to the country. The villages around towns and cities lost their agricultural nature, and started to play an increasing role in the urban division of labour. The town became a place to work and the rural area around it became a place to live in. With traffic and telecommunications infrastructure, in a wider sense communication, developing, rural settlements became suitable for certain industrial and service providing activities to be located there.

Table 3 The rate of migration in the three counties of Northern Hungary, 1990-2001

Settlements, people	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	Heves	Nógrád	Hungary
-499	-0.20	2.73	-3.09	1.02
500-999	2.65	4.77	0.64	3.57
1000-1999	3.76	4.75	3.68	5.67
2000-4999	2.72	7.60	6.36	6.88
5000-9999	0.41	8.42	1.18	6.81
10000-19999	-1.39	1.04	2.84	3.61
20000-49999	-9.53	-4.91	-2.65	1.61
50000-	-3.08	-5.02	0.00	-2.93

Source: TEIR-KSH database

Migration changed its direction, and it is also shown by the fact that with the economy changing, gravitation areas emerged around towns

receiving the urban population, and what is more, later new jobs became also available in these areas.

In compliance with the suggestion of OECD and due to the changes in the role rural areas play in the economy all over the developed world, the new and more complex conditions are simply measured by population density, rather than the rate of agricultural employment. The reason for the new approach is that the population density of urban small regions (LAU 1) is higher (over 150 people/km²), whereas that of rural small regions is under it. (Lukovics 2008).

Table 4 The division of urban and rural settlements in the three counties of Northern Hungary, 2001

County (NUTS 3)	Urban settlements				Rural settlements		
	Small regions (LAU 1)	Settlements (LAU 2)	Population density	The rate of employed people	Settlements (LAU 2)	Population density	The rate of employed people
			km ²	%		km ²	%
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	11	39	379	31.63	318	52	22.69
Heves	6	11	385	39.28	107	57	29.68
Nógrád	6	5	347	36.07	123	60	30.78
<i>Total:</i>	23	55	376	33.83	548	55	26.46

Source: TEIR-KSH database

In the Northern Hungarian region there are 23 administrative units and small regions of level LAU 1, among them 55 settlements (LAU 2) with a population density of over 150 people/ km², (347-385 people/km²). These small regions also include 548 settlements with an average population density of 55 people/ km². Due to the extreme figures and the high number of small settlements with extremely low population density, only two out of the 23 small regions have a population density of over 150 people/ km² in the whole of their area, which is a proof of urbanity. Since low population density indicators are typical of the whole of Hungary, Hungarian rural

developers have regarded 120 people/km² as the limit since 2005. However, only 6 out of 23 small regions can fulfil this condition.

As a result of the changes in the economy, the number of unemployed people has increased sharply. The rate of employment is higher in urban settlements than in rural settlements. In urban settlements most employed people work in the industry and in services and only few work in agriculture.

Since the costs of living are rather high for them, people in rural settlements do some kind of agricultural work for extremely low payments. Towns and cities are not supplied by rural areas any more, this task has been taken over by large shopping centres, which collect their goods from national or international markets, rather than from the rural areas. The high rate of industrial employment is a proof of the appearance of industrial jobs and, besides small plants, that of business parks and medium-sized plants. The participation in services means mostly jobs in local government institutions (mayor's office, kindergarten, school, social institutions, etc.), and there are also some shopkeepers and population service providers.

Table 5 Rates of employment in urban and rural settlements in the three counties of Northern Hungary, 2001

County (NUTS 3)	Urban settlements			Rural settlements		
	Agriculture	Industry	Services	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	1.57	33.40	65.02	8.34	36.09	55.57
Heves	2.59	35.53	61.88	8.65	41.94	49.41
Nógrád	1.09	37.35	61.56	4.39	47.99	47.62
Total:	1.76	34.47	63.77	7.45	40.98	51.57

Source: TEIR-KSH database

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND ENTERPRISES AROUND THE BIG CITY

Since 1990 it has been the role of local governments to serve the inhabitants of the settlement. For this reason they maintain institutions. However, due to the differences in their populations and incomes, there are

considerable differences between the particular local governments in how they perform these tasks. Local governments seek to have an increasing number of inhabitants, so they provide construction sites with public utilities. To create new jobs, they encourage enterprises to be based in the settlement; therefore they keep local taxes low. The settlements around the big city have formed business parks to attract companies. Since local governments cannot set up companies, they try to create jobs by establishing institutions, which serve the inhabitants of other settlements, too. In this way, educational, cultural, social and office sub-centres emerge around the big city.

Settlements either set up rural development organizations, or join existing organizations, which make development possible for them by joint applications for tenders (reconstruction of settlement centres and institutions, development of tourism, development of the road network, etc.).

Companies have different interests. In order to ensure the largest possible profits, they choose premises with the lowest possible costs. Therefore they choose settlements where they have to pay the lowest possible taxes, transportation and traffic are the best and there is eligible labour force available.

1. The only connection companies based in rural areas have with the central city of the region is that they arrange certain official matters there, e.g. banking services, tax authority and insurance. They maintain official relations with the local government, which provides the premises, and this barely means paying taxes (building tax, communal tax, trade tax, vehicle tax).

2. It is important for enterprises that transportation should not mean a waste of time. Since transportation accounts for a large part of their expenses, they pay special attention to how to organize it. Transportation is mainly by road, because this is the fastest way for the cargo to reach its destination. The role of the railway has decreased significantly. It is not flexible or fast enough for enterprises. Employees also travel by road rather than by train. Both public transport (coaches) and travelling by car are faster and more flexible ways of travelling.

3. Finding the eligible employees creates a serious problem for enterprises. Owing to continuous shift-work, they usually look for employees who can take the load of automated production, where the speed

of the work depends on machines. Working for eight hours in this way overburdens people. The unemployed cannot really be regarded as potential labour force, as their ability and attitude to work or their schooling are in most cases insufficient.

CONCLUSION

After the crisis of conventional heavy industry and economic restructuring, the role of rural areas underwent significant changes. Rural areas widened their homogeneous role of serving the town. Industrial gravitation areas emerged around big cities and they also served as residential areas. In areas farther away from the city, the function of residential areas strengthened. In small settlements far from cities social problems tend to accumulate. Working age young people moved away, only elderly people remained there. Unemployed gypsy families with a lot of children moved into the abandoned houses. While performing their tasks, local governments adjust to the above mentioned social changes.

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