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THE MAJOR RELATIONSHIPS IN THE ECONOMIC GROWTH OF THE RURAL SPACE

József Káposzta[1], Henrietta Nagy[2]





[1] Prof. József Káposzta, Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences Gödöllö, Hungary, ORCID: 0000-0002-1239-8541; e-mail: Kaposzta.Jozsef@uni-mate.hu

[2] Ass. Prof. Dr. Henrietta Nagy, Kodolányi János University Budapest, Hungary, ORCID: 0000-0001-9732-9926; e-mail: henriettanagydr@gmail.com

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Abstract: In this study, we aimed to overview the relationships of the most significant international theories dealing with the spatial economy, with special regard to the endogenous resources. We examined the effects and the development trends of economic and social capital because we believe that they may determine the future directions of strategic planning. Spatial capital (being the focus of our research) is proven to have outstanding influence on the society. In this study, we compare the development paths deriving from international models with the endogenous resources of rural space, considering the new development paths deriving from new paradigms. Based on all this, related to the most important international spatial economic theories, we define the strategic directions that are built on local endogenous resources, including the relations between tourism, infrastructure and environment.

Keywords: space economy, economic development strategies, gradual growth, factors of social wellbeing, sectoral relationships, rural development, new rurality

Highlights

- The interactions of the rural space and globalization are getting important, resulting in a new rural paradigm.
- Such a strategy can be created which is able to improve the territorial competitiveness.
- Tourism concepts are linked to the optimal and complex spatial economic development.
- The spatial strategy of rural economies must emphasize that the countryside represents and also creates value.

1. Introduction

The examination of the reasons of the spatial economic growth is one of the most important issues nowadays. The concept is complex and varies depending on spatial features and context. It is based on evolution theories but different as the social, economic, environmental and political approaches vary. Economic development also results in quality improvement in the spatial economy. As the data changes, the social and economic conditions also change, the standard of living increases, the quality of environment improves, therefore the social well-being overall improves. Of course, it is ideal if development is followed by growth, but considering today's global economic policy and its relationships, growth does not always come hand in hand with development. Due to the spread of globalization, such economic approaches have come to the frontline that have fundamental influence on the approaches of economic development. Taking the effects of spatial inequalities into account, we can state that the differences in the productivity of regions, the inflexible wages and prices, the human resource conditions as well as in the value of investments, markets are not balanced, thus the differences between the regions gradually grow. Additionally, center/periphery as well as the urban/rural context have been getting more and more important and determinant in spatial economy, therefore these are important factors in the relationships of spatial economy analyses.

The issues related to the spatial economic growth nowadays are in the focus of interest, since the mitigation of the spatial inequalities is a priority for all governments. Many address the urgent problems of spatial economy that have also cover the problems of urban areas by now. We are convinced that national governments are very much interested in achieving results in spatial developments, they have huge impact on the developments but also great responsibility in realizing the developments to meet the needs of the society. However, there have been only a few governments which have had conscious policy in spatial planning so far. It is somewhat disappointing that the developing countries were not able to catch up with the developed ones since the 1950s despite the various and huge amount of financial

assistance. Moreover, according to statisticians specialized in economics, who examined the income disparities among the countries, there is reason to question the inevitability of convergence.

The basis of the demand for better economic conditions and strategies was the assumption that regional decline might be continuous, and the spatial economic and social crisis might be constant. In the 1960s, when the European and overseas societies were considered the „societies of wealth", the attention turned to the poor. Nowadays, unfortunately, we do not tend to consider underdeveloped areas or areas with economic and social decline as problematic areas. The structural and demographic changes in the economy of Europe during the 80s and 90s brought to the surface those problems that cause the traditional spatial discrepancies. Those changes caused development in the Northern-, Western- and South-Western-European countries, while resulting in relative or total decline in Eastern Europe. However, they also generated debates about programs related to the renewal of the rural development, i.e., the 'reindustrialization'. It was assumed that the basis of economy in Western-Europe was threatened by tight competition and technological shift. Parallel to these changes, we had to address the urgent problems of spatial economy.

We cannot forget the fact that economic and social transition in some European countries happened with the expansion of rural economy, while in some countries it caused decline. Additionally, in most cases, the cause of changes was difficult to identify, thus it was problematic to handle the effects and consequences and to plan innovative and new measures. Most of these regional problems existed and still exist in purely rural and urban dimensions. There is a general opinion saying that depopulation and ageing threaten the peripheral rural areas. It is stated based on the job opportunities available and the cultural and social shortcomings in the micro regions. However, international research papers mention migration and emigration abroad as determining factors more and more often. Nowadays, rather the elderly population and unskilled people staying in the peripheral rural areas as well as the lack of social and cultural relationships cause the economic break-off (Venhorst, van Dijk, van Wissen, 2010, Vaishar, Pavlů, 2018).

At the beginning of the 20th century, due to the decrease in the importance of agriculture within the economy, the urbanization process speeded up and the leading role of agriculture was replaced by the industrial revolution, while in the countryside, agriculture was still dominant. Urban unemployment was more spectacular and worrying for both individuals and the community had the issue of employment in the countryside. Moreover, the rapid flow of the rural population to the poor districts of cities also speeded up this change, resulting in the increase in the number of urban areas that needed external financial assistance along with the new tasks in urban settlement. The environmental and pollution problems (especially in urban and suburban areas), as well as the higher tensions in the society urged the more rational use of space and resources, so their examination got to the frontline. The abovementioned problems occurred in the 1950s and 60s in Western-Europe, while at the time of the change of regime and after the EU accession in Eastern-Europe, when due to the structural funds of the EU, all the large urban areas developed.

In order to mitigate the spatial inequalities, the EU is doing active rural development policy, which helps to realize the union's important aims for the rural areas and rural population. Rural areas play a key role in the spatial economic system; thus, they are determinant in designing the identity and characters of the Union. According to the traditional definitions, these rural areas cover 91% of the EU's territory and are the place of residence for more than 56% of the Union's population. Considering the transformation in the economic structure, we can state that several rural areas have to face and address serious challenges. Some of the European entreprises in agricultural and forestry must improve their competitiveness and businesses operating in the rural areas need to improve their absorption and innovation abilities. If we look at the overall picture, we can see that the average income per capita in the rural areas is lower compared to the urban areas, the qualification of the population is lower, the service sector is less developed and the infrastructure is poorer than in the cities. All these clearly show that the factors of spatial economy exist in complexity. To achieve harmonious development, these factors demand economic and social balance in which spatial competitiveness and innovation-driven development are a must.

2. The relationship between the spatial economic growth and spatial competitiveness

If someone is willing to define the growth of spatial economy, we need to point out the growth in the total output in time and quantity that can be reflected by various indicators (GDP, GNI, GNP). If we look at the four resources (population, capital, natural resources and innovations) of regional economic development, it is clear that spatial competitiveness is such a complex system whose spatial projections are more than economic performance itself.

Fundamental economic trends of different periods interpreted spatial growth differently. Growth theories dealing with spatial growth have already come to the center of research since the 18th century. The theories detailed the types of growths and the types of interventions. Such theories provided the basis for the economic development theories, which are the cornerstones of today's spatial economy (Porter, 1993, 1999; Flink-Schnierrek, 2009).

Measuring the territorial competitiveness is more unique in economic sectors, where most of the competitiveness factors can be interpreted in territorial aspect (environmental, social, cultural, political, institutional) as well (Barradon-Timón, 2016). Enhancing the importance of these factors, we believe that it is necessary to involve the economic factors and the factors of location theory into consideration, since these external factors cover such conditions for companies which are determinant in the territorial competitiveness analyses. Based on our former research, we stated that the territorial factors have key importance, since the competitiveness of a region is closely related to the country-specific benefits, endogenous resources. Agreeing with the research findings of De Falco (2012), it can be stated that the human resource determines the dynamism of the evolution of a region, with special role of those leaders/organizers who are able to transform the endogenous resources into advantages in competition and to develop them in a unique competition strategy. In our opinion, by developing the endogenous resources, based on country-specific development instruments, while preserving the structural balance, such a strategic dimension can be created, which is able to improve the territorial competitiveness.

When examining the ability for competition of the territorial units, we need to state that it is primarily determined by the inputs, the internal and external benefits, e.g., the structure and quality of the possessed goods as well as the quality of institutional background and political environment. All these inputs together determine the strategy and opportunities of spatial economy to achieve appropriate and competitive structure. Based on this, spatial competitiveness is determined by efficient and productive use of material and immaterial goods, resulting in social and economic well-being. The latter one is reflected in the incomes, standard of living and living conditions (Mártha-Darabos, 2017). During the analysis of endogenous development, the acceptance of culture-related principles means that we accept the analytical framework that deals with complex issues ranging from environment to the space even involving cultural, social or institutional context (Marsden, 1998).

According to IMD, sustainable competitiveness factors include efficient public administration, economic performance, infrastructure as well as the efficiency of business environment (Figure 1). Thus, the spatial competitiveness can be measured with the production of sustainable values, i.e., the job opportunities, employment of companies as well as the long-term profitability of businesses (Aiginger, 1995). Until the millennium, three categories of spatial competitiveness were distinguished, namely *income-competitiveness* (meaning the sustainable increase in the standard of living), *trade-competitiveness* (meaning the improvement of the country's position on the global market) and *the competitiveness of investments* (meaning the improvement in the capital-attracting ability of the economy, especially foreign capital). By now, it can be stated that the definition of spatial competitiveness is always changing, global trends are getting more and more importance.

We can observe the occurrence of additional competitiveness dimensions, which also contribute to the competitiveness of the economy of a given area. Based on such, new spatial competitiveness directions appeared, like *technological competitiveness* (meaning active participation in technological diffusion process), *competitiveness of digital competencies* (ability to adopt and discover digital

technologies) and *competitiveness in sustainability* (including social and environmental sustainability as well) (Mártha-Darabos, 2017).



Fig 1. Sustainable Competitiveness. Source: 3BL MEDIA, 2020

3. The headway of locality in the rural space

Economic and social transformations in Eastern-Europe at the end of the 20th century fundamentally changed the basic factors and processes of the spatial economy. Agriculture, significantly affected by the changes, as well as the rural areas and settlements including the population, all had to face a new situation. The adaptation process, being a must and a challenge, caused further special problems, tensions and resulted in, of course, new opportunities. When considering the rural space, we need to see that there is no standard rural space, only the complexity of various rural spaces. Rural areas located in the agglomeration of a city might have different features than others located in the periphery. Consequently, we cannot refer to traditional rural and urban areas nowadays, since the relationship has become two-sided (Vaishar et. al., 2020). One of the most significant elements of the fundamental changes is the strengthening and transformation of the concept of rural along with fulfilling new roles. Due to the changes in the functions of spatial economy, rural areas are not only the venue for food-production, but they possess such values like recreation, biological diversity, place of residence, environment protection, which represent competitive advantages compared to the urban areas (Figure 2). It is worth to mention that despite the abovementioned, rural areas are still identified by negative features. Rurality is quasi equal to negative characteristics. Meanwhile, the abovementioned new features and dimensions are emphasized as basic rural values.

On the other hand, it is understandable that negative characteristics are used to identify the countryside, since due to the spatial economic transformations, the globalization and the shrinked role of agriculture, rural areas had to face and address serious problems. Therefore, recovery after the economic crisis, the mitigation of spatial break-off, the equal opportunities, the migration as well as the development of infrastructure have become their most important aims (Capello, 2007; Káposzta-Tóth, 2014).

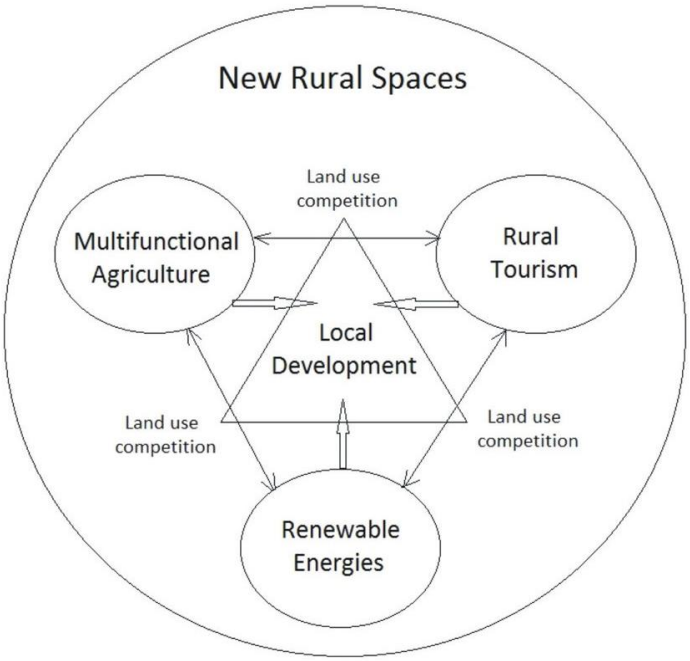


Fig 2. New Rural Spaces. Source: Frantál et. al. 2013

The complex examination of these factors, as the determining factors of spatial development, is the examination of spatial capital. Modelling the spatial capital has just recently occurred. A well-known researcher of this field is Roberto Camagni, whose spatial capital model in 2008 was a milestone in the topic. His model was integrated into the development strategies of the European Union, therefore it has become an important part of spatial planning. His model defined the objectives and guidelines of spatial competitiveness in relation to spatial cohesion, local and regional sustainable development and the increase of the innovation potential (Camagni, 1991, 2004, 2008). It is in harmony with the pillars of the development policy approach of the Union, by emphasizing the endogenous development, preferring the place-based approach and by encouraging the bottom-up capacity building (Grünhut, 2014).

In his researches, Camagni makes a distinction between the relational capital and social capital. In our opinion, it is important, since Camagni places the importance of spatial relationships in the center of his concept. When he explains the necessity of territorial capital concept (Camagni, 2009), he declares that in the global competition, the key factors of both the development and underdevelopment of regions are the endogenous resource-based cooperations that support the competitiveness of the regions. Based on that, we can state that development can be realized only in such areas where the necessary relational factors are available, i.e., the regions' resources are able to collectively and actively support the operation of the entreprises (Camagni, Capello 2002, 2013).

Our research also proves that it is justified and necessary to distinguish the expressions of social and relational capital in a universal spatial capital model, thus we agree with the efforts of Camagni to distinguish resources from those that are classified into the general social capital category (resources being solely public goods).

Based on our research results, we can state that this distinction in the territorial capital model might be the most significant break in the history of social capital concept – though it is not – since these capitals are not separate in reality. Endogenous resources affecting territorial capital can be directly and indirectly found in the other type of capital. It may happen that they are created due to the interactions between potential components, since geographic potential influences market potentials and relations of regions. Geographic potential includes the conditions and limitation of transportation and communication infrastructure. The workforce potential can be identified in the composition of the population as well, though it influences the sociocultural conditions, the capital and its activity (Samuelson, Nordhaus, 1995). The potentials hidden in the settlements can also be identified in the capital potential as well as in

the infrastructure and have influence on the workforce and human conditions. It is clear that such endogenous resources can be interpreted individually, but they are interdependent and are related to each other. Moreover, in certain social and economic conditions, they are able to activate the others and even encourage the renewal of the region. Regional potentials may link to each other, one can be built on the other, thus forming territorial relations, which are also able to activate new potentials and additional endogenous resources.

As analyzing the concept of territorial capital, Garrod et al. – who did research in the relationship between rural tourism and rural capital – adapted the definition of the Countryside Agency, according to which the "fibres" of the countryside, the villages and towns have also been involved in territorial capital. Though the definition seems to be quite simplified, we still think that it is valuable since it describes the rural territorial capital as including various elements of the rural space from natural (e.g., wildlife), through built environment (e.g., rural settlements) to social conditions (e.g., local cultural traditions). In practice, rural territorial and social capital is the unique mixture of the main types of capital, combining the material and immaterial capital (Garrod et al. 2006). Based on this, it can be stated that considering the rural resources as territorial capital leads to a broader and uniform interpretation of rural economy, thus rural communities will be able to exploit the opportunities from globalization and to avoid its negative effects more efficiently.

The above-mentioned also proves that the new interpretation of the culture and the development of rural areas cannot be done without analyzing the endogenous resources. This is also established by the cultural economy concept of Christofer Ray (1998), saying that certain elements of the culture have new, economic functions, making the culture to be the basis of local developments, i.e., the local culture influences the dynamics of economic development and the strategic objectives. Such interpretation of rural development is in close relation with the globalization and localization, the adaptation process of rural areas as well as the strategic planning (Ray, 1999, 2001). Giving new functions to the rural areas, making the rural life more attractive, keeping the qualified and educated population in the countryside and expanding the rural services, enable the rural space to develop economically and socially. In addition to increasing the quality of services, creating job opportunities must be in the frontline so that the welfare could be improved due to the increase in spatial competitiveness and the amounts of disposable income. All in all, quick access to public services, the broad availability of cultural goods as well as the participation in the life of local community, are all considered important elements of the development of spatial capital. The rate of social and economic development derives from the above-mentioned transformation of the social and economic environment, resulting in new direction of the development of rural space (Komorowski et al. 2021).

4. The relationship between globalization and the rural space

Analyzing the relationship between globalization and the countryside is as complex a task as interpreting the concept of globalization itself. Regarding the impacts and their consequences, we cannot find similar point of views. We can state that the globalizing world and the accompanying processes as well as the changes in the basis factors and processes of spatial economy, had influence on the rural areas too. Various rural areas reacted – the globalizing capital, the international migration and trade, as well as the deregulation of national legislation and privatization in various ways (Flink-Schnierek, 2009).

The transformation of these factors leads to the reconsideration of the natural resources, which opens new dimensions in the development of rural space. Our research also points out that the changes in the natural resources may result to a direction named „post-productional" countryside. We agree with those who forecast the creation of a special rural living space. In such a space, apart from the traditional agricultural production, the creation of a so-called „rural center" role can be observed, in which the development of the rural space gets into the focus in addition to the production (Marsden, 1998). Agreeing with the findings of Marsden, the picture of such a rural space can be seen, which determines the dynamism of the space in a more differentiated way and with more regional context, reflecting an economically and socially stable picture, being the basis for long-term rural economic development.

As a result of globalization, placing the geographical venues and distances into new dimensions, all rural areas faced unprecedented changes in which local values are getting more and more significant. However, for rural areas, globalization means both opportunities and threats. On one hand, it offers new opportunities for local businesses such as opening new markets and allowing the unique local products and services to enter the market without worrying about the isolation or distance (e.g., purchasing on the internet). Moreover, many rural areas which were not in the mass production earlier are more open to adapt to new economic structures compared to the traditional industrial areas with specially qualified labour force. On the other hand, globalization also increases competition, since international competitors enter the local markets, thus cross the geographical, political identity-based borders which formerly protected the products, industry and cultural traditions of the countryside. Though localization process related to globalization is important to be mentioned, which led to the evaluation of rural areas, the expansion of opportunities as local values and internal resources, have come to the frontline. Which factor is stronger than the other? It depends on the capital-attractive ability of areas in the transforming national or international economy and their distance to the spatial economic centers (Aboelnaga et al., 2019).

Based on the abovementioned, it can be stated that the global trends also need to be taken into account in the development of the rural economy, thus territorial marketing has increasing significance. Regional marketing can be used to develop international relations and also as a market tool to mobilize economic resources (Roberts, 1993). It must be stated that regions are able to link to the global division of labour and to gain development positions in the competition of European space, if they organize and support the selling of their products' services and natural values. Thus, the role of the above-mentioned endogenous resources is getting more important. Players of the space, especially the municipalities and entreprises operating in the economic centers, should create an attractive image about their region with joint complex marketing activities, thus improving the region's competitiveness. Based on all these, it is clear that in order to improve the region's competitiveness, strong relationship must be built between the foreign operational capital (that will be attracted to the region), the conditions of legal, economic and technical background and the endogenous resources of the region (Page, Hardyman, 1996; Jóna, Tóth, 2017).

Due to the processes in the world economy, primarily in the countries with more developed market economy, the transforming roles and functions of the rural areas have become clear, but such processes have just recently started or are just getting stronger in Central-Eastern-Europe. The decreasing population of some or increasing inhabitants on other areas, the commuting, the social changes, the increasing demand for recreation, nature protection and the spatial restructuring of the economy already appeared in the Western countries of Europe in the 1970s and highlighted the need for a consequent and sustainable rural development policy. It pointed out a 'post-productivist' countryside due to economic and social changes, where new modes of the use of space can be identified (tourism, recreation, environment protection, place of residence), where services as well as the industry and technology get more importance, while the rural areas further differentiate.

There are various development paths ahead of the European rural regions. Urbanization and the increasingly more intensive agriculture cause continuous changes. They both make it more and more difficult for regions to preserve their specialties and intensify the urbanization processes (Horlings et al., 2012). Due to globalization, the locations, the products and services can be exchanged and transformed easier, since the spatial development and the infrastructural development result in equality in space. In order to survive, many regions need to compete with others with similar characteristics to attract global capital and available skilled workforce. However, there are rural regions which rather work on new endogenous strategies to offset globalization. Such strategies may include the development of local identities, the creation of new agricultural products and services as well as taking advantage of tourism attractions. The above-mentioned can be called the "new paradigm of rural economy" for the European rural regions. According to the results of our recent empirical research, we have elaborated a system of factors that posed the endogenous development into a new dimension. In some of our spatial (domestic and international) research we listed up several relationships that put the spatial competitiveness and

the spatial capital into the dimension of endogenous resources. Based on our research, we stated that endogenous resource-based bottom-up developments are expected to

- generate new development impulses due to their innovativeness
- define new, formerly unknown development directions by reevaluating the special natural, environment and economic conditions
- get integrated into the broader spatial socio-cultural traditions, social decisions and unexploited resources due to the impacts of global trends.

In our former research, we declared that spatial potentials as endogenous resources vary on a wide range of scale. According to our initial hypothesis, the complex system of endogenous resources can be interpreted as an integrated system of geographical, environmental, historical, cultural, social and economic factors of settlements and regions. We are convinced that factors that are able to activate such values may play determinant role in placing the areas on modernization paths. In our analyses, we created complex groups of factors which are in close connection with the endogenous resources determining the regional potentials, as follows:

- potential in capital, meaning the availability and usability of financial sources related to developments;
- availability, qualification and education level of workforce that fundamentally determine the directions of spatial developments;
- quality of infrastructure, including all types of built infrastructure;
- geographical location that is a significant element of the geopolitical context;
- condition and quality of environment that provides the space for living as well as the basis for social welfare;
- market relations as determining factors of spatial competitiveness;
- socio-cultural conditions that are the pillars of spatial capital;
- decision-making system, institutional system and power hierarchy that plan, coordinate and operate the environment of spatial developments through leading the local public administration.

Based on our research, we stated that the endowments, conditions, potentials of the regions, have become the focus of the new endogenous theories. Conditions which are available as internal resources and could be activated under certain circumstances. As consequence, the continuous formation of spatial policy as well as of the granted activities fundamentally influence the economic development of the countryside, thus the development directions of endogenous development. The engine of such activities in most of the regions lagging behind is the municipal system inevitable for the operation as well as the human resource focusing on local values.

Sustainable development models can also be identified in the new development directions, like the publicity of bioeconomy, the popularization of organic farming, all mean significant steps towards sustainability. The increasing expansion of these factors shows that the dynamism of the rural spaces is more wide-spread, thus the phenomenon of sustainable development is also more expanded than its innovation potential mentioned in economics literature. It is because, in addition to the development of rural human resource, these development concepts highlight aspects like second home, recreation and alternative economic opportunities of the rural space (Keskitalo et al., 2020).

The recent use of rural space emphasizes the importance of environment, environment-consciousness and the related social needs. Local and specific endogenous resources are very important, that it must be used to meet the globalized demand and consumption as well as to achieve sufficient accumulation of capital. The whole rural economy has already integrated into the regional, national and international economy and is much more complex than 50 years ago. It is the process of ‘new rurality’ when services, new industries and technologies settle in the rural areas in the postindustrial societies, resulting in the evaluation of rural areas in terms of capital. In the rural areas of the developed countries, agriculture is still dominant regarding the land use, but modern industries and service sector have also appeared.

These processes are greatly reflected in the targeted developments of the US agriculture and rural economy and after Western-Europe, their signs can already be observed in the rural concept and development policy of the Eastern member states of the EU, too. Meanwhile, the role of agriculture is gradually decreasing in the spatial economy and the sector is becoming only one of the various sectors of the rural space. It is due to the fact that globalization and the technological development caused the intensification of agriculture, thus employing less people and losing its determinant roles in the countryside. Rural areas close to the urban ones are becoming more attractive for place of residence. Many people from the cities move to the agglomeration and the new wave of suburbanization are all the new functions of rural areas. This can be greatly influenced by the development of transportation and informatics infrastructure as well as the reduction of related costs.

Changes are linked to the urbanization process, which does not cause only the gradual increase of urban population but the spread of former technical civilization and lifestyle as the social unification of the village and town is ongoing. The structure of the local society is always in change, namely we can observe the urbanization of the village society. New social players appear in the European rural space (Figure 3), coming from various social subsystems and economic sectors, thus the operation of the rural space also significantly changes. Due to this process, the social heterogeneity, which had been characteristics to the rural space before the agriculture's modernization, is reproduced. While the abovementioned transformation has already happened in most of Europe, the rural areas are currently being under transformation in Central-Eastern-Europe at the moment.

Parallel with the changes, the reterritorialization of rural policy is underway in the developed countries. Sectoral approaches are being replaced by spatial approaches in the complex rural policies, while the dimensions of rural development are expanding. In our paper, the spatial economic dimension is important because without viable economic and social basis, there is no viable countryside, consequently the rural functions (landscape preservation, environment protection, protecting the rural heritage) get significantly damaged. The protection of natural resources and the environment, as the basis of rural life and the general expectation from the society, is extremely an important role in the transforming functions of the rural areas. Based on the above-mentioned, the strengthening role of the social system and its relationships have close relation with the development of the spatial economy. The development of the areas is influenced by not only the economic but the social changes, too. Regarding the economy of the 90s, it was characterized by a decline in Eastern-Europe, while the social transformation was not considered as a positive process either. That period was mainly about the increasing social disparities and the polarization of spatial economy. Such disparities could be observed in the material goods and the economic conditions of enterprises as well. The abovementioned factors did not have unfavourable impacts only on such areas where building on their experience/knowledge and business contacts, highly qualified experts did not allow to increase the disparities. As it was in the case of economic disparities, there could be factors identified that determined the disparities in the case of social changes, e.g., necessary conditions to better quality of life, to better chance in life, qualification, prosperity distribution, the population tendencies, the ability of settlements to keep the population there as well as the unemployment rate and its spatial distribution. The complex system and network of these factors influence the conditions and opportunities of the strategic functions of the countryside, all shaping the system of functions in the rural economy. The concept of urban and rural space, the contrast between the center and periphery are multidimensional concepts from the policy and economic development point of view. The community of a given area is usually considered homogenous and it serves a basis for analyses. However, some experts say that the economic and social inequalities result in differentiation within the given community, therefore we cannot consider the space and community of the target area homogenous. From this aspect, the individual strategies of clusters existing within the space, may differ (Paniagua, 2017).

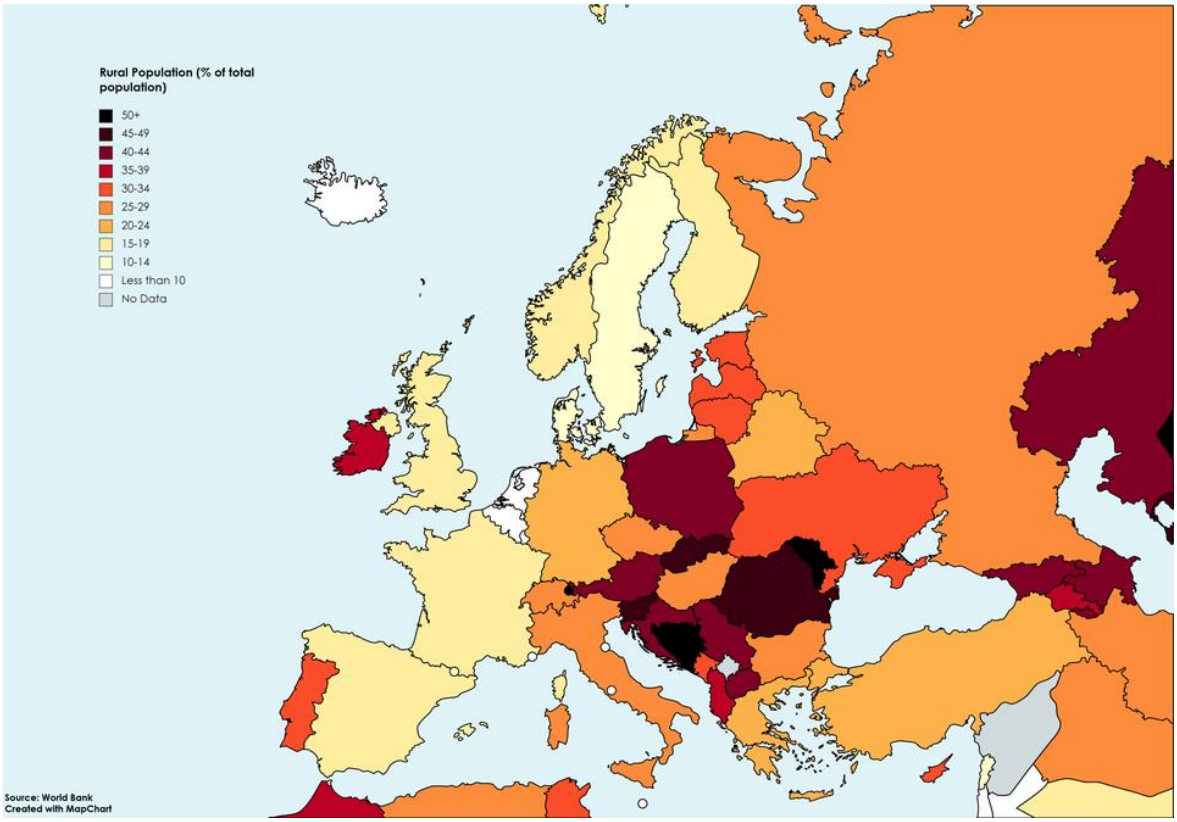


Fig 3. Rural population in Europe. Source: World Bank, 2020

The basic factors and processes of the economy and society have changed since the end of the 20th century. Rural areas in question as well as their population had to face a new situation. The pressure or challenge to adapt to this new situation caused further special problems, tensions and of course opportunities. One of the most important elements in the fundamental rural changes is the stronger concept of rural, its transformation and its new functions. As it was already mentioned, the countryside is not only the place of food raw material production but it has become a competitive area responsible for new functions, roles and dimensions. Through the development of rural economy, several fields of spatial science occurred, like the center-periphery research, research on the areas along the borders, spatial social analyses and the research on urban and rural economy all have become the part of spatial economy transformation. According to Enyedi (2003), the most important aim of rural development is to create close entrepreneurship integration between the economic sectors (primary, secondary, tertiary), which is based on the well-constructed developments in the rural space, on the cooperation between the civil sphere and the local government as well as on the rural society, which is able to form their future, active and viable (Enyedi, 2003).

Due to the restructuring in the rural economy, the use of land is also undergoing significant changes. The increase in the use of land for non-agricultural purposes and the innovations of the rural economic systems encouraged new methods, which led to the creation of multifunctional spaces where the role of agriculture in income-generation of the population has dramatically decreased. As the primary sector has lost from its significance, the services and reindustrialization have come to the front. According to numerous researchers, those processes are unavoidable – considering the changes in the rural areas. A spectacular effect of such continuous transformations is the change in the settlement samples in the countryside. All these reflect that the transformation and the development of the countryside have already started and still in progress (Rosner, Wesołowska, M. 2020).

Nowadays, in addition to the development of agricultural production, the development of all economic, social, cultural and ecological factors is the part of rural economy. Such factors contribute to the development of a given geographical area through the improvement of the quality of life, thus serve

the development of the whole national economy while protecting the landscape, the natural resources and the local heritage (Buday-Sántha, 2001).

As an element of the change, it can be stated that the realization of sustainable development needs to be revised. The most important aims and management modes of several sectors of the rural economies have changed due to the global trends, thus in sectors, where the economic processes largely depend on the condition of the natural environment, the issue of sustainability has been reevaluated. Such sectors include agriculture that plays special role in environment protection due to its direct impact on the ecosystem, food safety and the condition of rural areas. In the developed countries, such transformation has been encouraged by the development of the system of grants, resulting in increase in the quantity. Consequently, such agricultural practices can be found nowadays in the rural space which make the production increasingly intensive, while paying less attention on the environmental tendencies (Łuczka et al. 2021. This also justifies that the issue of sustainability can only be interpreted according to strategic directions and have impact on more than one economic sector.

These coherences show clearly that the countryside has become the venue of such globally social developments in the spatial economy, which aims at the establishment of the prosperity and development of rural population (Lengyel-Rechnitzer, 2004). If we examine the spatial functions and relations of the countryside in a complex way, we can state that apart from agriculture, it deals with issues like healthcare, the prosperity of the community, fight against poverty, job creation, housing, environment protection, leisure time activities, development of arts in the life of a settlement. However, it can be stated that in global terms, agricultural function is still dominant. Thus, we consider it important to go into this topic in more details (Kovács, 2003).

We must emphasize that in the case of agriculture, „not importable" functions are playing more important role, since they represent public goods (food security, care about the cultural landscape, the sustainable maintenance of place of residence, maintaining the ecological and technical infrastructure, ecological stability, keeping the rural population, balance on the job market, basis for tourism, peasant life values etc.) which cannot be regulated by the conventional market instruments through prices, meanwhile they have increasing role in achieving the balance between the rural society, environment and nature. Due to the ongoing unavoidable restructuring in the agricultural and rural policy, also in the EU, the target areas of different measures must be properly identified. During the past 30–40 years, in the developed European countries, the role of and the approach to rural landscape and environment have significantly changed. The performance and profit of agriculture are highly dependent on the quality and condition of the environment and the natural endowments.

The interdependence between nature protection and agriculture forces the harmonized development of the two sectors, though local and passive nature- and environment protection with applying sanctions after the happenings proved to be a failure. Better results can be achieved if we apply active, diffuse protection principles and change the environment use related to production and consumption accordingly. The rural space, apart from production, is able to fulfil functions like keeping the population in the rural areas, stabilizing role in social, cultural and environmental aspects (Table 1).

Tab 1. The New Rural Paradigm. Source: OECD, 2020

	Old approach	**New approach**
Objectives	Equalization, farm income, farm competitiveness	Competitiveness of rural areas, valorization of local assets, exploitation of unused resources
Key target sector	Agriculture	Various sectors of rural economies (ex. rural tourism, manufacturing, ICT, industry, etc.)
Main tools	Subsidies	Investments
Key actors	National governments, farmers	All levels of government (supra-national, national, regional, local, stakeholders)

While interpreting the strategic role of the countryside, we need to examine the integrative advantages of the space and its contribution to the development of the well-being of people. The space is an integrative concept that is often mentioned in relation to environment, society, agriculture, water management, nature protection, biodiversity, green infrastructure, sustainable development, tourism and recreation issues, since the rural dimension of spatial economy is diversified (Hersperger et al., 2020).

We need to mention that today in Europe, there are two agricultural strategies existing strongly distinguished from each other. One of the strategies does not take the fact into consideration that the abovementioned processes are irreversible and intend to organize the industrial food production "better". The other strategy takes agriculture and rural development as a strong unit and takes the production role of agriculture equal with the social, cultural and environmental functions. Of course, we do not want to choose which direction is the right one since both can be explained logically. On one hand, due to the dramatic increase in the number of world population, food raw material supply can only be provided with intensive technologies, on the other hand, through the spread of intensive technologies, damaging the environment, the exploitation of the natural resources they cause irreversible problems. In our opinion, along with the modern technologies, production zones must be identified which will contribute to the balance.

Regarding rural life, it is essential to understand that the local economic development policy and global trends might not be related to each other, therefore their relationship might be even antagonistic. In many cases, the existing environmental radicalism makes it more difficult to develop the rural economy, resulting in the increase of rural inequalities (Duggan-Peeren, 2020). Such territorial discrepancies may further damage the opportunities of rural economy and the growth potential of the rural population. Obviously, it is the responsibility of the national policies to define economic development directions which handle those discrepancies sustainably. In our opinion, such direction can be the development of tourism and rural tourism.

In addition to agriculture, the tourism and the recreation represent great share in the rural spatial economy, therefore it is important to examine that sector as well. Due to its role in employment and economic performance, and being one of the most important sectors in the world economy, and by developing the most dynamically, tourism has several close links to spatial economy. At the same time, since tourism is very vulnerable and has close relationships with global economic processes, it has a complex spatial economic network.

The results and performance of tourism are partly based on the general position, economy, society, security of the given country as well as the security of the whole region. On the other hand, it has important role in the development of „hard" factors that can even be out of the scope of the sector, e.g., infrastructure. Spatial strategies related to tourism development, beyond the abovementioned, point out that the sustainable development of the sector can only be realized in the framework of a tourism „pyramid" (Figure 4). Based on all these, it can be stated that an attractive international tourism and its high quality services can be operated profitably in long terms where a broader basis of the services exist, there is intensive domestic tourism and the leisure time activities also flourish.

Considering the abovementioned, we can state that tourism concepts target various fields of the sector and are also linked to the optimal and complex spatial economic development of a country taking its own potentials into account. When examining the spatial coherences of tourism, we need to stop by the issue of concentration, since the primary destinations of incoming tourism are usually the capitals, centers, areas with exceptional services, receiving 60–70% of the tourists. This also shows that during the planning of the spatial strategies, a significant change in the approach is necessary, since the coherences in the center/periphery models get to the frontline, and deep knowledge about the spatial and social relations of urban life is inevitable to plan and develop the sector. Based on the abovementioned, such an approach is determining, which is in harmony with the principles to improve the service-supply of a region, to achieve balance in the sector by increasing domestic tourism, to promote sustainable tourism, to expand the potential foreign sending countries. Applying all these will result in a proper spatial strategy.

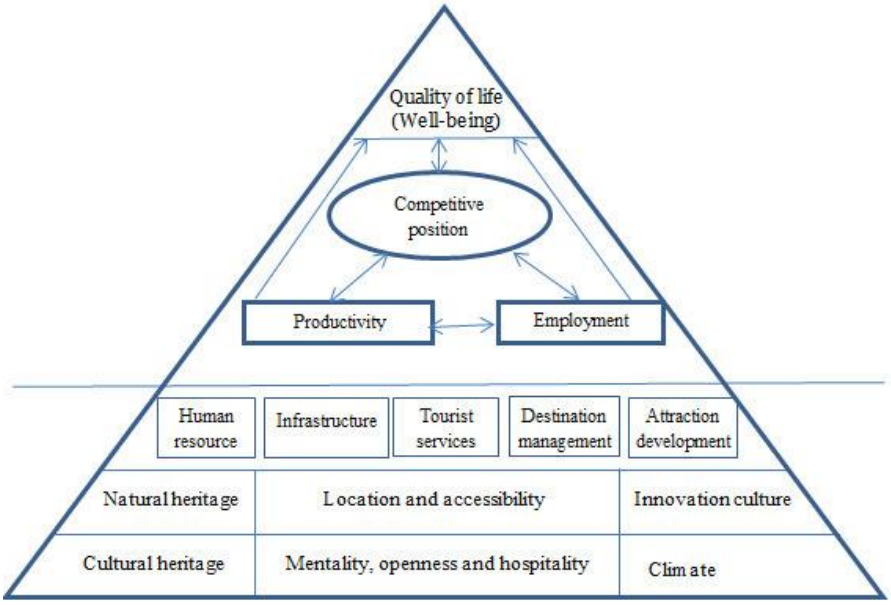


Fig 4. Pyramid Model for Tourism Destination Competitiveness. Source: Papp-Raffay, 2011

Tourism requires valuable areas regarding the environment, landscape, culture etc., however, it is specific forms of tourism themselves that may endanger these values. It also happens with the forestry and hunting that sometimes the protection and utilization aspects get into conflict with each other. In our paper, it is important to highlight the easing of the concentration of tourism in space and time, which can be harmonized with similar intentions in the whole spatial policy guidelines. Accordingly, though the further development of the tourism capacity of centrum destinations might result in investments in short terms, but strategies must intend to spread both domestic and international tourism in the whole country as much as possible. In addition, developments must aim at all types of tourism and not only the elite tourism. It is important that these parallel processes (expansion horizontally in the space and making the supply broader) must link to each other and must be gradual to avoid the further increase in disparities, by separating the elite and middle-category tourism or the domestic and international tourism from each other (Rechnitzer, 1998).

From all these, we can see that the economic relations of the rural space work as the close interactions of factors that are individually also important. Those factors may contribute to the development or the decline of the space, but during the strategic planning process they must not be forgotten. There are two additional factors of spatial strategic developments that can determine the direction of development either individually or together, namely the environment protection and the transportation network benefits.

5. The relationship of the environment and transportation infrastructure with the spatial economic development

It was in the 70s when the environmental problems became known for and discussed by the public. Since that period, over the last 5 decades, the approach to the environment and the way of thinking about environmental issues, have changed a lot. In the beginning, the running down of resources were the most important environmental issues. By now, the burden, the load on the environment, are getting more emphasis. The regulations on environmental protection have gradually become broader from the burocratic and administrative measures to the market conformity where the efficient consideration of the contaminator is also carried out. In addition, the direct expression of social acceptance is also seen where the layman considerations by the endangered can also be taken into account.

The most difficult task of environment protection may be handling the emission of industry, since the transformation of such contamination causes various damages. They can appear in the water under

the surface, from where the drinking water can be easily polluted. If the water is contaminated, plants absorb it and the pollution is expected to be detected in food soon, having negative impact on human health and the ecosystem as a whole. Taking all this into consideration, it is clear that today's essential issue is on how the environment will change in the future (Cfuzelman et al., 1994). Shift to the environmental concerns can be observed on a prevention scale. Environment, in the beginning, focused on the direct protection of natural elements (air, water, soil, living organisms, artificial environment), while today its focus is on the waste and emissions. The attention has shifted to the environmental analyses of products, technologies and investments. Therefore, the focus has gradually shifted from the protection of environmental elements to those who cause the environmental problems. In this context, environment-conscious technologies are not special environmental technologies. They are varieties of technologies meeting the demand of the processing industry, energetics or transportation as well as meeting the environmental requirements (Fleischer et al., 2001).

At the level of spatial economy, there are still unsettled issues regarding environment protection. From the tendencies of Europe's environmental burden, we can see that pollution started to increase by various intensity in the second half of the 20th century. Based on the analysis on the increased burden on the environment and the changes in the EU's regional policy, it is clear that there is strong correlation between the polluting sectors (heavy industry, chemical industry, agriculture, infrastructure) and the environmental burdens of countries, however, there is no relation observed between the environmental pollution and the changes in the regional policy. A complex regional structured approach is missing. There is no link between regional management of nature protection and the authorities responsible for regional environment protection. Moreover, organizations responsible for the built environment and the monuments adapt to those even more rarely.

However, the regional coherences can be well observed in all the sectors of environment protection. The water protection has the system of reservoirs, the protection of the water under the surface is managed based on the water basis. Regarding both the protection of air-cleanness and air pollution, regional characters can also be observed that are closely linked to the economic and social processes. In Europe, the areas that are traditionally polluted by heavy industry or chemical industry can still be identified. Transportation interchanges can also be easily found on the map, similarly to the regional disparities in waste management, public utilities, since they represent extremely high burden on the environment, as it is in the case of centers with huge population concentration. These are all closely linked to the factors influencing the regional distribution of natural resources, thus the regional development.

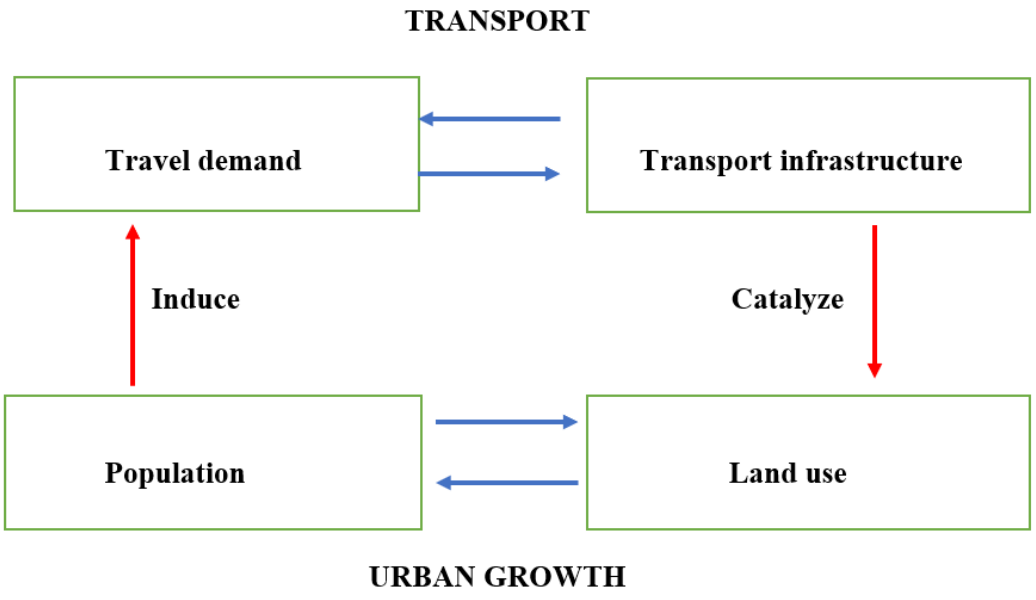


Fig 5. Urban growth and transport. Source: Aljoufie et al. 2011

The increasing standard of living, the low unemployment rate, the increase in the number of vehicles as well as the transportation infrastructure are in close relationship with the changes in transportation modes. In addition to the increasing role of public transport in large cities, we can see increasing expansion in the road transport as well. Developing the links between urban and rural areas means that expansion of transportation is expected in future's urbanization process, since transportation itself creates tens of thousands of jobs. The features of development reflect that the transportation system is not sustainable in long terms, so technical/technological advances are expected in the transportation sector (Štastná et al., 2015).

The sectoral differentiation of environment protection seems to be very similar to the institutional roles of spatial economy, namely that a strong sector would be able to realize the principles only through confrontation in the case of activities where other sectors (agriculture, industry, energetics, transportation, tourism) are behind. The principles of environment and spatial policy can only be realized if the principles are related to the abovementioned sectors' ones. In this way, we can avoid the conflict between the spatial policy and environment policy objectives (Figure 5). One of the determining factors of environmental pollution is the transportation itself, which is also one of the engines of spatial economy. The development of the transportation network (infrastructural network in general) of the Visegrad four countries in the 90s were affected by several heritages that are important from spatial development point of view. Such heritages include, firstly, the lasting endowments, geographical conditions that fundamentally determine the network of transportation infrastructure. As second heritage, we can mention the consequence of a special state-socialist development without market conditions, namely the significant role of public transport and railway system as well as the low prices, the induced over-demand or out of stock, the neglected facilities and the political, structural and spatial centralization. The third heritage is related to the development level of the economy, namely developments where politics did not have much impact and where our development level – more or less – can be compared to the countries with similar gross output. Such heritages are the network of public roads, the carpet of the roads, the average quality of the railway as well as the electrification level of railway system.

The most direct relation of transportation infrastructure to spatial economy is that it requires big size of land. Due to the costly construction of infrastructure and the related works, it can also be considered spatial economic factors (job creation, transportation of construction materials) during construction works. In economic arguments, the impacts of construction periods usually get exaggerated emphasis. We must see it clearly that a highway construction does not have more multiplicative effect than any other local investments with the transportation of construction material and job demand (e.g., carpeting roads, constructing sewage system, construction of local governmental institutions).

According to a general statement, the transportation infrastructure can strengthen the already existing conditions, promotes mobility and has significant impact on the environment. It means that in a developing region, insufficient infrastructure would surely be an obstacle. As against, the development of transportation infrastructure, in a region where the production is lagging behind and the population is declining, is not able to stop the unfavourable processes, yet it can even speed them up. It means that in underdeveloped regions, it is an illusion to expect positive changes originating from external developments. The support must rather be targeted to internal developments, based on endogenous resources. In more details, three types of relations must be distinguished in the transportation networks: links that focus on the region internally, links that improve the accessibility of the region as well as links crossing the region (or avoiding it).

In total harmony with the factors contributing to the local development of production and services, or relationships serving the local development of the society, it can be stated that within the transportation links, the existence and appropriate structure of intraregional (physical) links have key importance. Advantages expected from external links can generate development in a region only if the region has a strong internal network and strong absorption ability, necessary for the adaptability. In spite of the abovementioned, it is considered a generally accepted statement that a more balanced regional development – considering transportation aspects – can be achieved by improving the region's accessibility i.e., its accessibility from the centrum.

6. Conclusions

In our paper, we intended to give an overview on the spatial economic coherences of the countryside, their impacts on the strategic development directions. Our analyses also prove that by turning back the ongoing unfavourable processes in the rural areas, various spatial economic opportunities occur that can provide future vision for those living in the countryside that is sustainable, viable and based on endogenous resources. Based on all these, we consider the job creation, the balanced and diversified agriculture and forestry, the production structure based on endogenous resources, the short supply chains, the local energy production, the strengthening of the local community, better demographic tendencies and the preservation of biodiversity, as the most important development directions.

Our analyses also prove that a complex spatial economic program is needed to develop the rural spatial economy. That program must be built on the individual and community values, keep the traditions, preserve the landscape and built environment, use the natural resources sustainably and by developing agricultural and non-agricultural rural enterprises, it allows the development of the countryside, improves the quality of rural life by helping to get back its attractiveness.

Agreeing with the need for the OECD's new spatial approach, we believe that a new rural paradigm must to be formed that includes the most important elements of the social and economic changes of the countryside. It is clear the heterogeneity of rural regions and the reduced role of the countryside must be examined as well as the rural policy must be revised. On the contrary, we want to highlight the following ongoing tendencies: other sectors are getting more role in the spatial economy, the distances in commuting are increasing, thus the influence of urban areas is getting higher and the migration to the rural areas is getting more common. Based on the research, it can be stated that the unexploited economic potentials in the countryside are important factors of development, since the natural and cultural values have increasing value and the decentralized development policies may consider the development of rural space as priority.

Research prove that the developments realized based on the strategy must enable the rural life to become optional and attractive. Instead of the material pressure, the good quality of life and the financial security should form a new basis for the rural economy and encourage the population to stay in the countryside. In order to realize it, not only the economic and physical life conditions must be equalized and improved but the negative consideration of the rural areas (i.e., rural areas are equal to lagging behind and disadvantaged regions) must also be changed. Spatial strategies of rural economies must emphasize that the countryside represents and also creates value.

Our results justify that there is a need for a complex spatial economic program, which builds on the values of people and the community, keeps the traditions, protects the landscape and the built environment, farms sustainably with the natural resources, provides opportunities by developing agricultural and non-agricultural rural entreprises to contribute to the appreciation of the rural areas and to their attractiveness, to the complex improvement of the quality of rural life and to the catching up of the countryside. Our research showed that endogenous factors affecting the spatial capital can be directly identified in the social capital. In many cases, they occur due to the interactions between the potential-components. We state that creating the legal, economic and technical environment for the foreign direct capital to be attracted to the countryside (to improve its competitiveness) is in close relationship with the endogenous resources of the area. It means that it is inevitable to consider the abovementioned resources during strategic planning in the region. We also stated that due to the globalization, the new endogenous theories brought the internal resources and potentials of the regions into the frontline. It is because in case services, new industries and technologies settle down in the rural areas, it increases their value from investment point of view. It can be identified as the process of *„new rurality".*

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