

EXAMINATIONS OF SUCCESS ON THE HUNGARIAN SETTLEMENT MARKET

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Abstract: We made a layered questionnaire survey in 2004-2005, consisting of two parts. In the first part of the research one thousand private persons responded to our questions. The five aspects taken into consideration during the survey were as follows: breakdown of the Hungarian population by regions and, within this, by settlement size categories; breakdown of the inhabitants by gender, age groups and level of education). In the light of the results, we repeated our survey in 2013, allowing thereby the comprehensive evaluation of a period of almost ten years. The number one attraction of settlements as residential places in Hungary is public safety now. This is followed by factors quite constant over a ten-year period like infrastructure of the settlement, the condition of the residential environment, the complexity of health services, employment conditions, the presence of kindergarten and primary school education, transport relations and the possibilities of administration. The dominant advantages of cities qualified as the most attractive places to live in are still their goods supply, and the quantity and quality of the available services. On the other extreme, the list of big city disadvantages is led by polluted, unhealthy residential environment. Alienated, indifferent human relations are mentioned by one-quarter of respondents as a problem, and fewer people mentioned bad public safety.

Key words: city competitiveness, success, Hungarian settlements, residential places, attractions, settlement types

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 City competitiveness in international dimension

The division into “developed” and “underdeveloped” regions has been an ongoing phenomenon of societies, even though their content and spatial scales have been continuously changing. Behind spatial disequilibria we find the effort for the optimal location of the economy, by which it tries to maximise its efficiency. The geographical distribution of economic activities, which are the engines of development of their time is very much different in various periods of economic history. In the times be-

fore industrialisation, the most important location factors were usually related to agriculture, so the spatial distribution of settlements was mostly influenced by the abundance of natural resources, orography and soil, and access to water. Exceptions were the foundations of cities on the ground of geopolitical aspects (control of river crossing points, military defensibility of power centres). During the industrialisation process of the 19th century, the most important factors were the location of raw materials, waterways suitable for mass transportation, and sea coasts. Finally, looking at post-industrial societies we can see that the geographical location of production processes has clearly lost much of its former constraints.

If we concentrate on the competition among regions after the 19th century only, we must differentiate between two major phases. Internationally, rivalry until the 1970s for better infrastructure, industrial investments, and institutions was much more typical within the nation states, basically influenced by a top-down spatial development policy. However, spatial development interventions showed many similarities in the market economies of Western Europe and in the socialist states of Eastern Europe, both regarding their objectives (effort for equalisation to level out the economic disparities, living standards and the quality of service in different regions of the countries) and the spatial processes to be influenced (completion of industrialisation, start of industrial restructuring, and later the spread of processing industry in a broader circle of settlements).

In the Western countries a very different era of economic development started in the 1970s, regarding both the location factors of the economy and state intervention. Spatial processes have been characterised by a special duality since this time: we can see a stronger focus on local resources, on one hand (the so-called bottom-up principle), and the intention of active participation in the supranational, global relationship systems, on the other. Instead of traditional city planning, the concept of so-called market-based planning gradually gained ground. This meant that while supply-orientation had previously dominated the creation of the built environment's structure, with the demand being of only secondary importance, the objective of market-oriented plans were now implemented with the involvement of as many of the social groups as possible in the planning phase. Through this the focus shifted towards the demand side, and planning became goal-oriented with the actual target users, including the existing or potential consumers and businesses.

The increased attention to regional disparities was mostly due to the repeated enlargement of the European Community, as the territory of the integration was supplemented by less developed regions; in addition, the frequent crises of the classic industrial areas in this period also increased spatial differences. The intention of creating economic, social and spatial cohesion was clear, and regional policy was now used as a tool in the interest of societies. This of course also meant that demand for data and indices demonstrating spatial disparities and serving as the bases of interventions increased, too. Competitiveness as a potential tool for the creation of cohesion became a key concept in community documents.

The fact that it makes sense to talk about competition in the spatial sense at all (due to rivalry at the level of nations, regions or cities) is to a large extent related to

globalisation processes intensifying in recent years, and to the economic and social transitions behind it. Parallel to the decrease of the importance of nation states, the gates of a new economic space have opened up, in which primary actors are now spatial units at the subnational level (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990; Brenner, 1999; Kresl and Singh, 1999).

A driving force of globalisation is the strengthening of deregulation (liberalisation) policy, the partial or complete elimination of technical and physical barriers to competition, which results in more options in choosing business locations, the spread of multi-location business forms, and the growing market share of transnational corporations. A growing number of businesses enter international market processes, which often take place within the same company, among different company units. This increased freedom is visible not only in the flow of product and service outputs but also in that of the production factors (inputs) necessary for them, so the phenomenon of “from anywhere – anything – at any place – to anywhere” has become widespread (Porter, 1998). The borderless economic processes are further reinforced by technology development. The increased importance of modern information and communication technologies in the economy results in the considerable decrease of (primarily transportation) expenses and time, making these factors of secondary importance when choosing a location. Distance loses much of its former significance, both as cost and time factor, which is especially true for information societies. All this is complemented by the restructuring of economy, the ever growing share of services, and the breakdown of manufacturing processes of industrial companies into smaller parts. This further increases the range of settlements entering the competition and strengthens the differentiating features of the respective places.

Finally, if we add to this all, the decreasing importance of nation states, the decentralisation of public administration in some counties to a formerly unimaginable extent and the parallel increase of regional and city autonomy, it may not be an exaggeration to say that the number of potential and attractive locations (both extraction places of raw materials, business locations, consumers markets, places of residence) has multiplied over the recent years. And one of the most important functions of competition is just the possibility of choice. All this is manifested in a phenomenon called global-local paradox, where resources continue to stay local despite the globalisation of finance, goods and services markets.

In Hungary this process has been further strengthened by the democratic and market-oriented economic model replacing the centralised model of social administration. Besides this model heavily promoting the expansion of spatial relationship systems, it “... appreciates and favours almost all parts of the country, as opposed to (or at least besides) the former organisational and sectoral dependencies. Local and regional economic potential, local and regional power have gained importance, with the possibility of the local potential to be transformed into a national one” (Nemes Nagy, 1998, 6 p.). All this was completed by the strong regional focus of the EU as an example to be followed. The related financing system of the integration process was in focus due to the ideal of regionalism, in addition to intellectual and cultural values and political content, with direct economic interests.

As an effect of the processes indicated above (appreciation of the global and local level against that of the national economies), competition itself is to be interpreted within new economic framework conditions. In Porter's view (Porter, 1998), deregulation makes the governmental economic policy of various countries similar and also limited. Direct interventions are replaced by indirect tools, which result in influence on the micro-economic level.

2 RANKINGS OF AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS HUNGARIAN SETTLEMENTS AS RESIDENTIAL PLACES

We made a layered questionnaire survey in 2004-2005. In the first part of the research one thousand private persons responded to our questions (Koltai, 2005, 2006, 2008). The five aspects taken into consideration during the survey were as follows: breakdown of the Hungarian population by regions and, within this, by settlement size categories; breakdown of the inhabitants by gender, age groups and level of education). Owing to the face to face interviews, almost all questionnaires were suitable for analysis. Inspired by the initial results, in the later phases of the research we completed the survey by a new questioning session using an adequate number of sample persons.

We wanted to find the answer to the following questions:

- What aspects do Hungarian citizens prefer when choosing their place of residence?
- What characteristics, advantages and disadvantages do they use to describe the settlement types of different size?
- Which Hungarian settlements are considered competitive by the respondents and why?

In the light of the results, we repeated our survey in 2013, allowing thereby the comprehensive evaluation of a period of almost ten years. In the second survey we used the method of a layered questionnaire survey again (the four aspects considered were as follows: breakdown of the Hungarian population by regions, breakdown of the population by gender, age groups and finally level of education), in which it was one thousand private persons again who responded to our questions.

Before the publication of the research findings I must point out that in the data recording process of 2012-2013, the proportion of respondents from the settlement categories of 5,000–50,000 population and 50,000 inhabitants above was somewhat higher, and accordingly the share of respondents from settlements with less than 5,000 inhabitants was lower. I will repeatedly refer to this fact during the comparison of the research findings.

Our analysis this time also meant comparison, based primarily on statistical data with of researches made on the topic. The interpretation of competitiveness during the survey is not restricted to an exclusively economic approach; it is seen as

a broader, more complex issue also involving social and environmental aspects, and quality of life in general (Enyedi, 2012).

2.1 Assessment of the attractiveness of the residential place in 2012-2013

In our repeated survey we enlarged the range of aspects influencing the attractiveness of settlements from 12 to 20. We found this necessary for two reasons. On the one hand, we took into consideration the factors mentioned in larger numbers in the category “other” of the 2004-2005 survey (accordingly, factors like “ethnic composition of the population” or “public safety of the settlement” were now seen as separate categories); on the other hand, we wanted to see what extra information we would get from breaking into pieces former three factors with rather heterogeneous content (settlement infrastructure, educational features, width of urban functions).

For this reason, we broke the category “settlement infrastructure”, seen as most important in the previous survey, into four elements (natural gas supply; canalisation; internet access and mobile phone services; roads), while the former category “education” was supplemented with one extra factor (“existence of kindergarten and primary education”). In addition, the aspect called “width of urban functions” was now considered as two separate categories (“possibilities of administration” and “development of commercial network” separately).

As a result of the changes above, the list of factors influencing the attraction of settlements in our 2012-2013 research is as follows (in brackets: new categories in the second survey):

1. Complexity of health services (from general practitioner to hospital care, all services are available in the settlement).
2. Existence of kindergarten and primary education. (new category).
3. Existence of complete educational structure (institutions from primary education to higher education).
4. Infrastructure in the settlement as a whole (public utilities, roads, possibilities of mass communication).
5. Within settlement infrastructure: existence of natural gas supply. (new category).
6. Within settlement infrastructure: existence of canalisation. (new category).
7. Within settlement infrastructure: quality of internet access and mobile phone services. (new category).
8. Within settlement infrastructure: quality of public roads within the settlement. (new category).
9. Development level of shopping facilities (existence of larger shops, supermarkets). (new category).
10. Existence of the public administration (e.g.: public institutions, bureaus – in addition to the mayor’s office). (new category).
11. Quality of the residential environment (e.g.: size of green areas, cleanliness, volume of environment pollution).
12. Natural endowments of the settlement (climate, orography, river).

13. History, traditions, local customs of the settlement.
14. Demographic features – age composition of the population.
15. Demographic features – ethnic composition of the population. (new category).
16. Existence of transport connections (proximity of national roads and railways, accessibility to Budapest).
17. Employment possibilities and circumstances (number and quality of jobs, level of wages).
18. Possibilities of leisure activities (e.g.: education, culture, sports, restaurants).
19. Features of homes (age, type and number of residential buildings).
20. Public safety in the settlement. (new category).

Only for the comparison of the content of the factors, it is worth looking at the aspects that the researchers made up for the questioning of the local social actors in leading positions in the big cities, and the inhabitants in 9 city regions (Baráth et al., 2009; Szirmai and Váradi, 2009). The approximately 22 factors were categorised into four clusters (economy, education–culture–health care, local governance, living conditions).

Based on the findings of our research conducted in 2004-2005 (Fig. 1), our hypothesis was that attractions of still primary importance were “condition of the settlement infrastructure”, “transportation possibilities”, “employment circumstances”, “complexity of locally available health services”, and “quality of the residential environment” in general.

During the evaluation of data in the 2012-2013 survey (Fig. 2), the highest values were given to the factor “public safety in the settlement” (4.45), followed by “infrastructure of the settlement” (4.37), “quality of the residential environment” (4.32) and “complete range of health services” (4.27). On the five-grade scale, other four factors were ranked above 4 (employment possibilities and circumstances, existence of kindergarten and primary education, transport connections, and possibilities of public administration). This shows that within the services of education the role of kindergarten and elementary education was highly appreciated (the category “educational structure”, as a single category in our previous research had been given a score 3.83, this time it was broken into two markedly different parts), while the division of the category “urban functions” tells us that that the existence of public administration services and public institutions is somewhat more important for respondents than the shopping facilities within the settlement. In addition, there was a slight increase in the score given by the respondents to the quality of the residential environment and to health services.

Breaking the category “settlement infrastructure” into four parts (natural gas supply, canalisation, internet access and mobile phone services, and roads) did not result in significant differences, as scores were within the range of 4.01-4.35 range. The highest score was given to the existence of canalisation, the lowest to the quality of the roads.

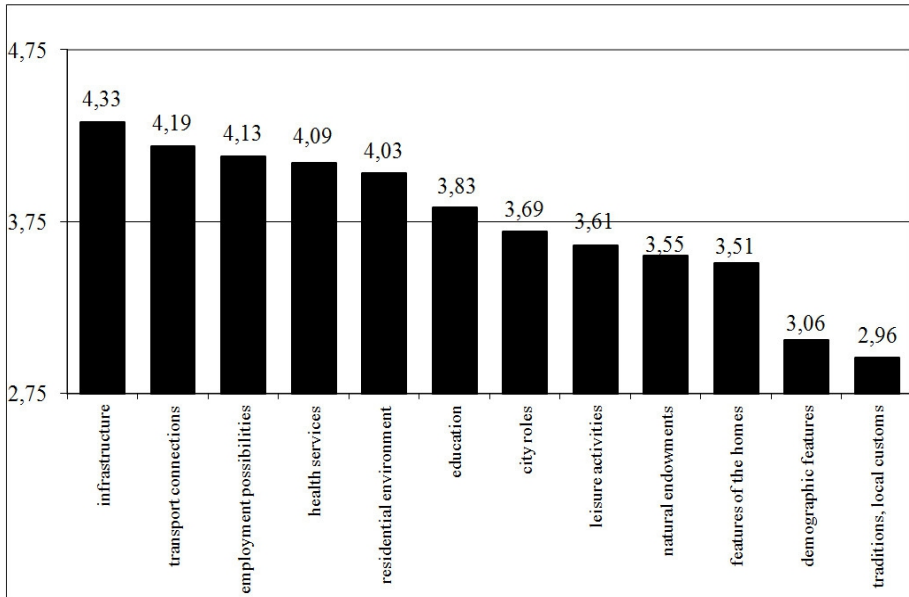


Figure 1 Importance of the attractions of settlement due to responses of the Hungarian population, 2004-2005. Source: Questionnaire survey of the author (2004-2005)

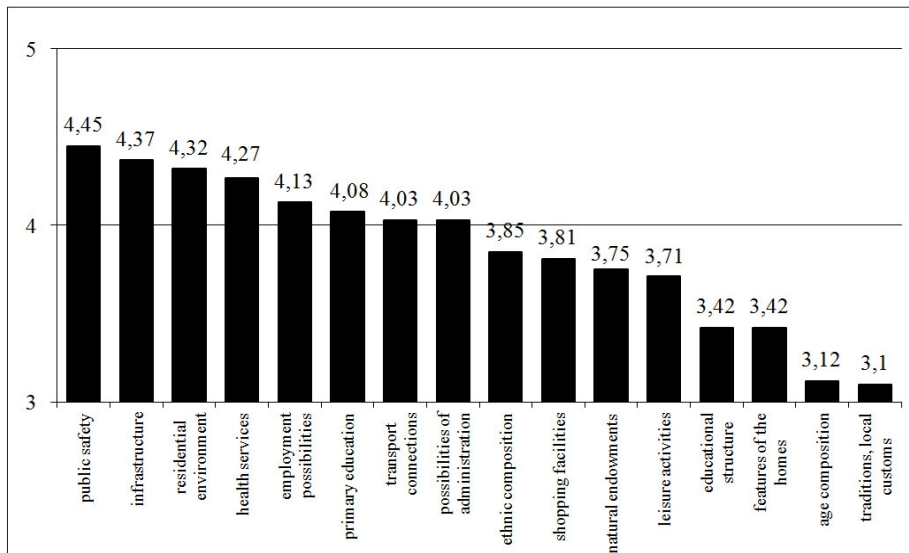


Figure 2 Importance of attractions of settlement due to responses of the Hungarian population, 2012-2013. Source: Questionnaire survey of the author (2012-2013)

The second group of attractions of the residential places, seen as less important, is led by a new factor again: this is “ethnic composition of the population” (3.85), the last factors in the order are, similar to our previous research, the “age composition of the population” and the “history, traditions, local customs of the settlement”. Compared to the previous survey, a factor slightly more appreciated was “natural endowments of the settlement”, while in the category “other” it is only family relations and friendships that are worth to mention (even though with a negligible, below 2 per cent frequency).

As a part of the research already referred to, the inhabitants of 9 city regions evaluated a total of 19 competitiveness factors (Szirmai and Váradi, 2009). In their opinion the most important aspect is that “people should like living here”, and for the realisation of this they considered social factors much more than economic ones of utmost importance (public safety, improvement of living conditions, quality of health services, environment and nature protection, waste management). The high values of these factors are in harmony with our research findings; perhaps the support of SMEs as employers of selected importance was given a little lower value. (The factors considered as least important, i.e. the location of multinational corporations and the development of local non-governmental organisations and R & D institutions were not parts of our survey.)

Our hypothesis was then partially verified, as public safety as an attraction of the settlement unexpectedly ranked first.

3 COMPETITIVENESS OF VARIOUS SETTLEMENT TYPES IN HUNGARY

Taking the findings of our former research as a basis, the following hypothesis can be stated for our last question. The advantages mentioned about big cities are usually related to high quality commercial and services supply and to better employment conditions, whereas disadvantages listed include the impersonality of big cities, their crowdedness, in the second place their polluted environment and finally their worse public safety. (In our interpretation big cities are settlements with more than 100,000 inhabitants, while small towns are settlements with a population of less than 20,000. Kovács, 2010)

The advantages of small towns lie in the quality of human relations, supplemented by their more tranquil and cleaner residential environment. Negative attributes often mentioned like deficient commercial and services supply, inadequate employment conditions and being recognised by too many people. Finally, we assumed that those who found villages good places to live in would like villages for the positive human relationships and the clean and quiet residential environment, whereas those rejecting villages are referring to deficient commercial and services supply, inadequate employment conditions and bad demographic processes. (Related research findings are reported by Molnár, 2008.)

A new element compared to our research in 2004-2005 was the intention to break answers into more categories, like the rather heterogeneous category called commercial and services supply was broken down in all three settlement types to health services, education, commerce, leisure facilities, public institutions and transport infrastructure. In order to allow comparability with the former data, we also used this group as an aggregate category.

The biggest advantage of big cities, meeting our hypothesis, is their retail and services supply, both regarding their quantity and quality. Of all answers, 75% are related to this, while the remaining ones mentioned good employment conditions (24%) and other factors (1%).

Within the group of services most respondents mentioned advanced and well established transport infrastructure, available local public transportation (27.6%). This is followed by the full range of high quality health services (21.2%), diverse leisure and entertainment facilities, the access to culture and sports (19.2%). Further factors, in order of importance are the wide range of (further) education possibilities, high quality educational structure (17.7%), the access to retail networks offering good prices and adequate opening hours (10.8%), and finally (at 3.5%) the complexity of possibilities of administration (see Fig. 3).

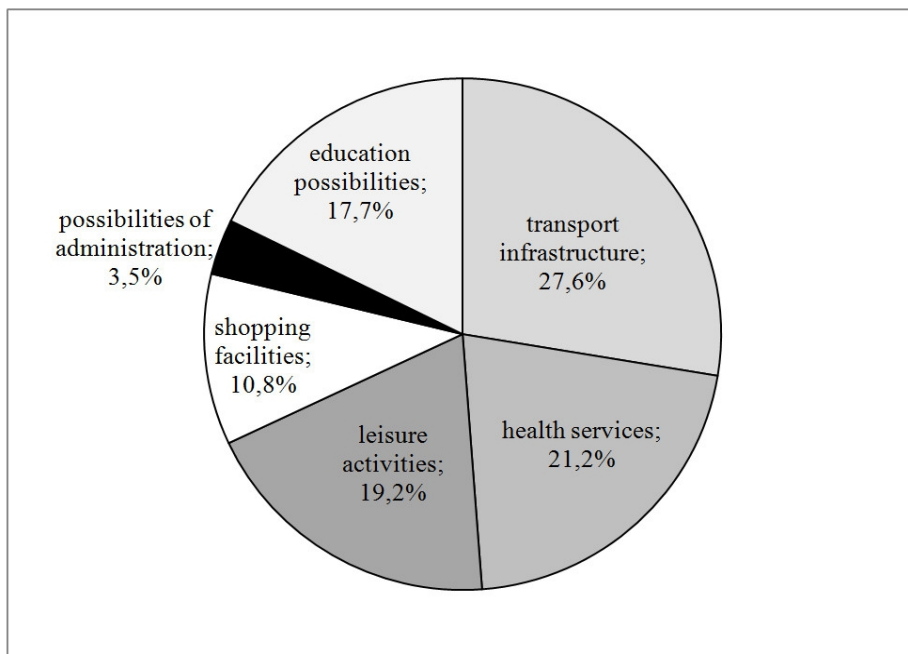


Figure 3 Level of supply and services as factors of the advantages of big cities in the responses of the Hungarian population, 2012-2013. Source: Questionnaire survey of the author (2012-2013)

Regarding further breakdown of employment conditions, higher wages were mentioned just like wider supply of better jobs.

What partially contradicts our hypothesis is that the list of disadvantages associated with big cities is led not by impersonality but polluted and unhealthy residential environment. This was stated as a critique in more than one-third (36.6%) of the responses. A quarter of respondents (28.2%) feel that alienated, indifferent human relations mean a problem, while bad public safety was mentioned by slightly less people (16.5%). A separate category, unlike in our previous research, is transport problems, negative phenomena coming from traffic jams, the lack of parking places and crowded public transportation (8.1%). We also made a category called 'other' (10.6%), including ethnic problems, high costs of living – expensive real estates, obsolete residential buildings and hasty, stressed way of life (Fig. 4).

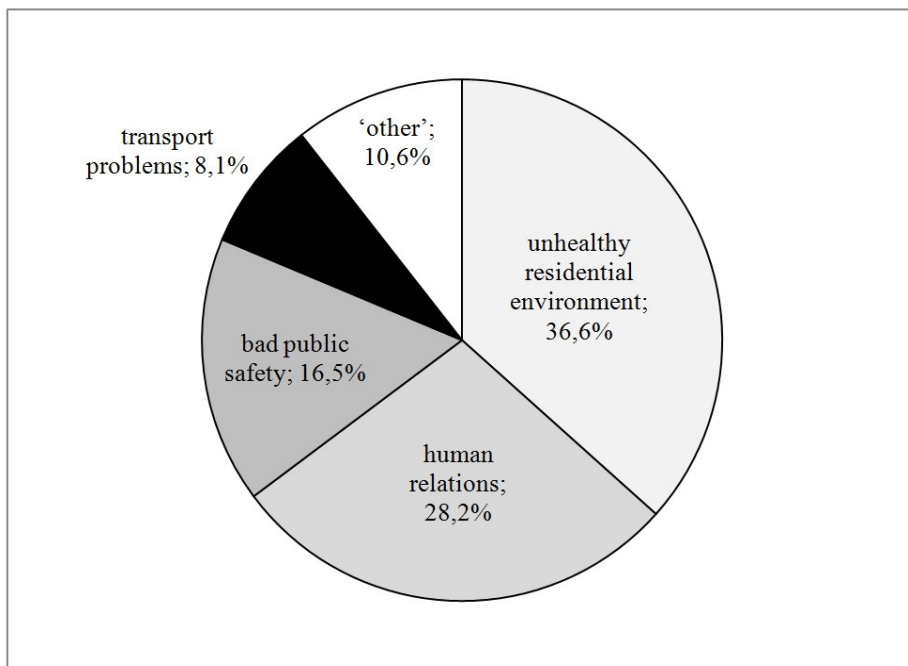


Figure 4 Breakdown of the disadvantages of big cities in the responses of the Hungarian population, 2012-2013. Source: Questionnaire survey of the author (2012-2013)

When describing small towns, most people mentioned, although not to an extent typical for big cities, the supply of services as an advantage (36%), followed by tranquil and clean, quasi natural residential environment (29.6%) and personal, family-like human relations (18.3%). Good public safety was also considered as a separ-

ate group within the positive features (6.1%) and we made a category ‘other’ also in this case (10%), including employment conditions, small geographical distance and lower real estate prices (see Fig. 5).

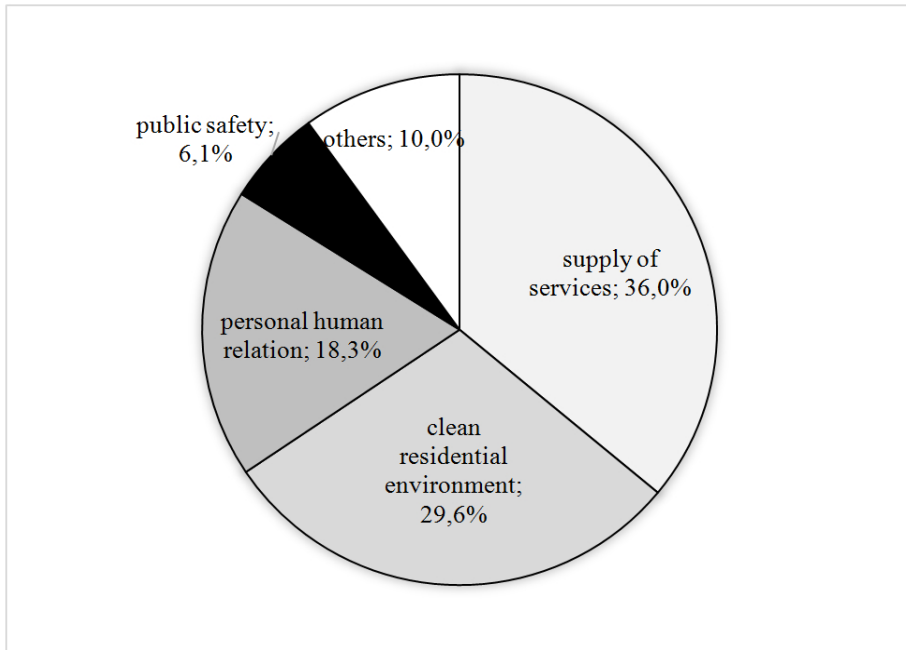


Figure 5 Breakdown of the advantages of small towns in the responses of the Hungarian population, 2012-2013. Source: Questionnaire survey of the author (2012-2013)

Breaking the single group of services into parts, good transportation is of outstanding significance again, followed with almost the same number of mentions by available primary and secondary level education, retail facilities offering adequate supply and opening hours, health services, the availability of leisure, cultural and sport facilities and the chances of relatively simple and fast administration of affairs.

The duality of the assessment of small towns appears in our present research too, as several factors formerly mentioned as advantages are now seen as disadvantages of small towns. In the first place there are problems coming from inadequate services supply (55.6%), which were more of a disadvantage than an advantage for the majority of people. The second most frequently mentioned disadvantage is bad employment conditions, lack of jobs and lower wage level (30.7%), supplemented by a rather heterogeneous group of other factors (13.7%) including deficient public safety, polluted and noisy residential environment, demographic problems (ethnic

tensions and ageing population) and inadequate human relations. (In case of the latter factor we can see the contradictory assessment of small towns again: it is partly being too much known, and partly impersonality that puts human relations into the category of disadvantages).

Taking a more in-depth look at the group of deficient services and goods supply again we can say that almost each area (especially leisure, cultural and sport facilities) are more often mentioned among negative factors than among the positive ones formerly. In addition to the deficient range of health services a (problem identified) was the quality of medical services. Regarding education, it is not only higher but often also secondary education that is missing in these settlements, and the quality of training also lags behind big city levels. In relation to transport it was not only long-distance but also local public transportation that was heavily criticised. Within the group of services there might be two areas where negative opinions were not the clear majority: retail services seem to be satisfactory also at small town level, and the supply of administrative services and public institutions are seen as adequate, too.

Our hypothesis related to the advantages experienced in villages was verified: almost half of the responses (49.1%) mentioned healthy, liveable, clean and quasi natural residential environment. Other frequently cited advantages include positive human relations, cohesion, mutual attention to each other and helpfulness (30.6%), while the third most frequently mentioned advantage is the opportunity of having a homestead, gardening and the related self-sufficiency (10.3%). Better public safety was mentioned by 7.5% of respondents, factors in the category 'other' (2.5%) include lower real estate prices and smaller distances (see Fig. 6).

Villages are most often criticised for their deficient services and goods supply, which also meets our hypothesis. This fact is mentioned in two-thirds of the answers (67.7%) as a disadvantage of villages. Almost every fourth response (23.7%) mentions employment related problems, the lack of job opportunities and low incomes. Within the category 'other' (8.6%) it is depopulation, ageing and disadvantageous ethnic composition that is mentioned, but we also received answers mentioning problems coming from being known too much, deficient public safety and isolation.

Taking a more detailed look at the group of services again we can say that transport infrastructure got the biggest criticism (35.5%), but the limited availability of health services (18.7%) and deficient educational system, starting from kindergarten to secondary schools were also often mentioned (13.7%). At this settlement level too, less criticism is given to the development level of retail facilities, goods supply and price level (13.2%) and to limited and problematic administrative services (7.6%), but more people (11,3%) think that the deficient entertainment and leisure opportunities (cultural, sports facilities) cause problems (see Fig. 7).

"Competitiveness is always a combination of factors, without any guarantee for success; every city has to invent and implement their own development strategies, in competition with the other cities in similar positions" (Lengyel, 2003, 273 p.).

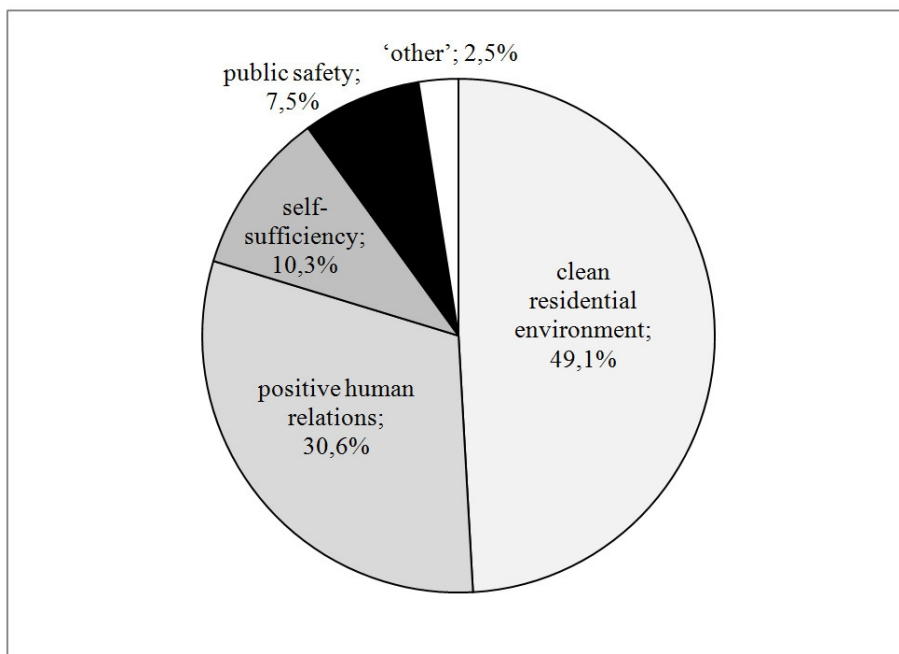


Figure 6 Breakdown of the advantages of villages in the responses of the Hungarian population, 2012-2013. Source: Questionnaire survey of the author (2012-2013)

4 CLOSING REMARKS

It tells a lot that the number one attraction of settlements as residential places in Hungary is public safety now. This is followed by factors quite constant over a ten-year period like infrastructure of the settlement, the condition of the residential environment, the complexity of health services, employment conditions, the presence of kindergarten and primary school education, transport relations and the possibilities of administration.

The dominant advantages of cities qualified as the most attractive places to live in are still their goods supply, and the quantity and quality of the available services. Seventy-five per cent of all answers were related to this group, while the rest is good employment possibilities. Within the group of services advanced and high quality transport infrastructure and the existence of adequate local transportation were mentioned. These are followed by the full range of high quality health services, the wide range of leisure and entertainment facilities and the access to culture and sport. On the other extreme, the list of big city disadvantages is led by polluted, unhealthy residential environment. Alienated, indifferent human relations are mentioned by one-quarter of respondents as a problem, and fewer people mentioned bad public safety.

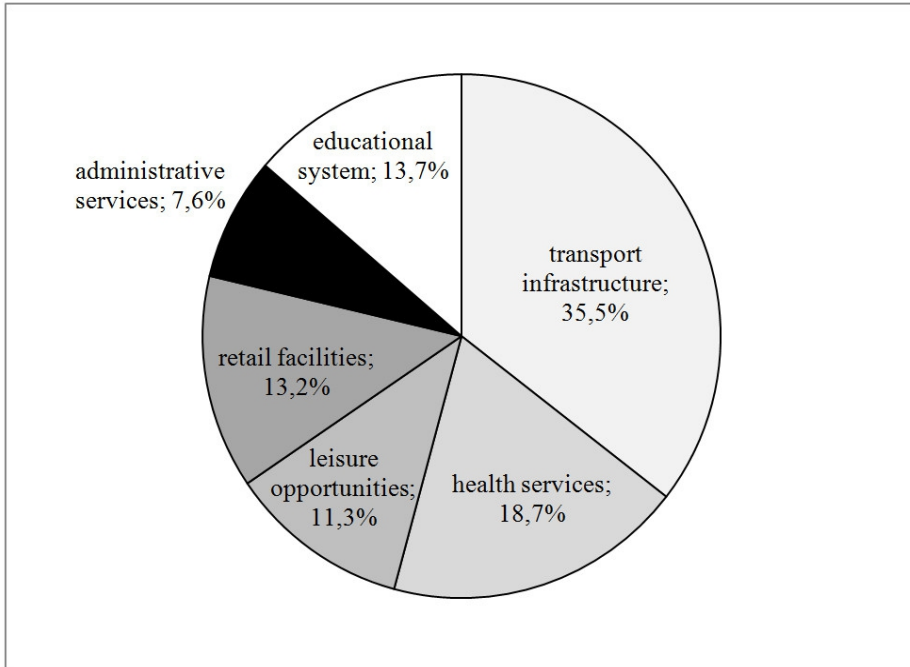


Figure 7 Level of supply and services as factors of the disadvantages of villages in the responses of the Hungarian population, 2012-2013. Source: Questionnaire survey of the author (2012-2013)

The goal of measuring success in the territorial sense in my opinion is to assess the position of a given territorial unit as objectively as possible, and on this ground to look at what needs to be done for its development. It is important to realize in what a respective settlement differs from other settlements of similar size and functions, because the competition among towns and cities has many actors of similar endowments, therefore some speciality must be found. If we accept that the goal of competition is to enhance the well-being of the local residents, we can also say that the tool of successful participation in the competition is a special, but flexibly modifiable development programme based on the partnership of and operating in the coordination of local politics, businesses, the civil sector and the academic sphere; a development programme that the local stakeholders know and support as well.

Features of successful settlements may be quite varied, from flexibly modifiable economic structure through highly qualified labour force and favourable social structure right to the environment of the settlement. Those European regions have become really successful that were able to define and operate a strategy on the basis of their own indigenous endowments. Such a strategy must always be closely related to the competitive advantages of the local businesses, so first we have to explore the

potentially competitive sectors and also collect the factors from which their real competitive advantages can be derived from. Regions incapable of making programmes on their own can only temporarily stabilise their positions, and even that usually happens from the use of some central support, only.

The goal of the research was to provide information for the elaboration of such a development strategy based on real local needs. The findings clearly demonstrate that the different parts of Hungary are not only characterised by different endowments and very diverse relative positions, but often also by population with diverse needs. “The interpretation of success in city regions, and the contemplation of the competitiveness of these areas depend upon the structural and residential conditions of the social stakeholder groups. These evaluations are not static then and not normative, either, but very much determined socially and regionally, and very differentiated ...” (Szirmai and Váradi, 2009, 190 p.)

Of course we are aware of the fact that a considerable group of the attractions of the settlements is not exclusively formed by local decision-makers, and that only longer term programmes can lead to favourable changes in many cases. Nonetheless we think that responsible development concepts that are specific, maybe concern exact target groups in the settlements and strive for long-term economic success can never neglect personal experiences, and the utilisation of them in a complex regional view.

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Skúmanie úspešnosti na maďarskom „trhu sídiel“

Súhrn

Veľmi dôležitým faktorom je, že najvýznamnejšou prioritou pri výbere miesta bývania v Maďarsku je dnes verejná bezpečnosť. Táto priorita je potom nasledovaná faktormi, ktoré si už dlhšie držia svoju významnú pozíciu: vybavenosť sídla infraštruktúrou, životné prostredie miesta bývania, komplexnosť a kvalita zdravotníckych služieb, prítomnosť materských škôl a škôl pre základné vzdelanie, zabezpečenie dopravy a kvalita administratívnych služieb. Dominantnými výhodami miest hodnotenými ako najatraktívnejšie pre život sú aj dostatok tovarov a množstvo a kvalita dostupných služieb. Sedemdesiatpäť percent všetkých odpovedí bolo spojených s uvedenými skupinami výhod, zatiaľ čo zvyšní preferovali dobré možnosti zamestnania. V rámci skupín „poskytované služby“ a „dopravná infraštruktúra vysokej kvality“ bola zaraďovaná aj primeraná úroveň miestnej verejnej dopravy. Za týmito faktormi nasledovala požiadavka širokej škály voľnočasových a zábavných zariadení a dobrý prístup ku kultúre a športu. Na opačnom konci v zozname nevýhod miest bývania dominovali znečistené ovzdušie a nezdravé životné prostredie, vzájomné odcudzenie a ľahostajné ľudské vzťahy, ktoré uviedla asi jedna štvrtina respondentov. Menšia skupina respondentov má problém so zlou verejnou bezpečnosťou.

Cieľom hodnotenia úspešnosti sídiel v priestorovom kontexte je podľa nášho názoru zhodnotiť pozíciu daného sídla čo najobjektívnejšie a na základe toho stanoviť čo je potrebné pre jeho rozvoj urobiť. Je dôležité uviesť si, čím sa dané sídlo líši od ostatných sídiel podobnej veľkosti a funkcie, pretože konkurencia medzi vidieckymi obcami a mestami je veľká, pričom do hry tu vstupuje veľa aktérov a dotácií, a preto je potrebné nájsť osobitosti jednotlivých sídiel. Ak akceptujeme, že cieľom súperenia sídiel je zvýšenie blahobytu bývajúceho obyvateľstva, musíme akceptovať aj skutočnosť, že dôležité je flexibilné modifikovanie rozvojových programov. Práca na rozvojových programoch musí byť založená na vzájomnom partnerstve lokálnych politikov, podnikateľských subjektov, občianskeho sektora a akademickej sféry.

Črty úspešných sídiel sú veľmi pestré, od flexibilne modifikovanej ekonomickej bázy založenej na vysoko kvalifikovanej pracovnej sile a priaznivej sociálnej štruktúre sídla až k veľmi dobrému životnému prostrediu sídla. Úspešnými sa stali tie európske mestá, ktoré dokázali definovať a realizovať rozvojovú stratégiu mesta na vlastných zdrojoch a dotáciách.

Samozrejme, sme si vedomí skutočnosti, že veľká skupina atraktívnych sídiel nezískala atraktivitu výlučne z miestnych zdrojov a dotácií a spolupracou miestnych aktérov. Takisto rešpektujeme skutočnosť, že vo väčšine prípadov môžu viesť k úspechu len dlhodobé rozvojové programy. Napriek tomu si myslíme, že kľúčovú zodpovednosť za miestny rozvoj a zvyšovanie atraktivity sídla nesú vybrané miestne skupiny a aktéri, ktorí by nemali zanedbávať osobné skúsenosti a mali by využiť svoje schopnosti pre komplexný rozvoj sídla v regionálnom kontexte.