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Urban-Rural Differences in Level of Various Forms of Trust in Hungary

This study examines the association between urban/rural residence and various forms of trust in Hungary, including control variables such as age, gender, income, marriage, qualification into the analysis. Trust is a basic dimension of human capital and a very often used concept in everyday situations too. Trust research became increasingly popular in recent years. However, urban-rural and spatial differences of specific forms of trust remains a rarely investigated question.

Trust can be measured with one question (global or general trust) or with many questions. Global measures of trust have serious methodological and interpretative problems. Therefore a research was conducted with 19 questions concerning the various personal or impersonal subjects of trust. Respondents (n=2031) of a countrywide representative survey in Hungary rated their trust in various groups or institutions on a 10-point Likert scale.[3]

The results were analysed along the settlement hierarchy at four different levels: Budapest, the country capital; cities with county rights (namely the biggest Hungarian cities, apart from Budapest); smaller and medium sized cities; villages. Various sociodemographic factors were included into the analysis. In some cases age and gender is a more significant factor in differentiating the results as the settlement type, but age and gender can have a different effect on results for different settlement types.

The results have a great variability according to the subject of trust. General differences between settlement types show a higher trust level in cities with county rights, then towns, villages and at last Budapest. Exceptions from this general picture are highly interesting: trust in personal contacts is much lower

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in Budapest, trust in institutions or abstract institutions (law and legal system, market system, political system, banks) is higher than in villages, institutions with more concrete personal contacts is higher in villages than in Budapest. The difference is bigger in the case of church.

In Budapest, compared to other settlements, trust is lower in personal contacts, but the differences between settlement categories are lower than the differences of trust between the personal and impersonal contacts. Gender differences according to the settlement categories are also interesting. The highest trust level can be seen in elder age. However, trust of younger adults is higher in Budapest, mainly thanks to the much higher trust level in abstract institutions. Trust of younger adults in personal contacts and health institutions is not higher in Budapest.

INTRODUCTION

Trust is a basic dimension of human capital and a very often used concept in everyday situations too. Positive attitudes towards one's neighbors contribute to cohesion within the local community, and thus leading to residents' willingness to participate in local affairs and to cooperate in everyday matters. It has been asserted that, in societies where people trust each other, social relations are solidified, transaction cost are reduced, problems and conflicts are solved in a more effective way, economic activities and institutions function effectively, and government and political institutions work better. "Social life without trust would be intolerable and, most likely, quite impossible".[4]

This paper gives an analysis of the various from of trust, from the point of view of urban-rural dichotomy in Hungary. The empirical basis of the analysis is the county-level population survey (N=2031) conducted in 2013. The first part of the paper deals with some conceptual and methodological questions, supplied by minor references to literature. The second part is an exploratory study, where besides the urban-rural aspects some important socio-demographic variables are taken into consideration too. The paper disregards from the various illusory, utopian suggestions, which is sometime ballasts this research topic.

1. GENERAL CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

1.1 The spatial level of analysis

This research treats the settlements as basic spatial units. Interestingly, the

[4] Newton, K. (2001): *Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society, and Democracy.* International Political Sciences Review, 22. 202.

majority of spatial research deals with either bigger units (countries) or smaller units (neighborhoods inside the settlements). Urban-rural differences cannot be defined generally and principally. Each criterion (sociological, historical, legal, economical, human geographical, size and functional) used for definition can be criticized. Each settlement lies somewhere in the individual farm – world metropolis continuum. However, this is not an obstacle for the practical analysis for examining the effects of obvious size and functional differences of settlements. This paper uses the legal settlement definition, which has a strong relation with the size categories of settlements. In Hungary, town status is given once in a year by the president and the parliament to the applicant villages. In 2013, there were 346 towns (or cities) in Hungary. Seven towns have less than two thousand inhabitants. The legal limits between towns and villages are strict and explicit, but the functional limit, of course, is indistinct: there are villages which are almost towns, there are towns which are almost villages. However, as groups, towns and villages are clearly different. The capital city, Budapest has 1740 thousand inhabitants, the second largest city, Debrecen, has 208 thousand inhabitants. There are 23 cities with county rights: the 18 county capitals, plus 5 cities with more than 50 thousand inhabitants. This paper distinguishes these three categories in the cities: Budapest (as a dominant city, without any other city close to it), cities with county rights and other cities (named as towns for now). This categorization is good for that reason too, because it is almost the same, as the categorization according to the size of the settlements.

From the methodological point of view, the location of settlements would be important, besides the above mentioned difference in size and legal form. First of all, the difference between suburban villages, close to the cities, and the villages farther from the cities is potentially interesting. In these two categories, the spatial arbitrariness can occur, because there is no strict difference between the two categories. Secondly, an own category for the farm population would be reasonable. Due to the space limitation, these two aspects are not investigated in this paper. However, these two factors should be investigated in a more detailed analysis, as well as the various districts inside the settlements.

The duration of homeownership is also an important indicator, which mixes the spatial, temporal and personal characteristics. Several previous investigations have shown the importance of this factor and its relation with the evaluation of neighborhood environment. Longer residence means stronger local ties, stronger local integration, more friends, relatives and formal contacts too.

1.2 The spatial factor, as a unique explanatory variable

Examination of socio-demographic characteristics can be extremely complex in the case of simultaneous examination of several socio-demographic factors. This can be further complicated with the inclusion of behavioral and attitude variables. However, any inclusion of spatial characteristics leads to a more complex

connections between various factors and makes the effect and directions of causality uneasy to arrange. The reason behind this is, that spatial characteristics are simultaneous with any other non-spatial variables, therefore it is necessarily a new and peculiar dimension. Spatial characteristics are categorically independent from the demographical and behavioral characteristics, which can be cause (for example, the neighborhood has an influence on family status or on the choice of job) and effect too (for example, the family status or the job has an influence on the choice of neighborhood). The direction of causality cannot always be decided, the interrelated connections are more frequent.

Some basic forms of causal relationship, however, can be distinguished. Firstly, spatial variable has a direct effect on behavior. The most obvious case is the effect of climate or weather. Secondly, spatial variable has an indirect effect on behavior, because the direct effect influences the socio-demographic characteristics through both the mobility of people and by autonomous spatial processes. Thirdly, the socio-demographic characteristics have an influence on the choice of location, and in this case socio-demographic characteristics have an effect simultaneously on location and behavior. Fourthly, socio-demographic characteristics have an indirect influence on behavior through the choice of location. The fourth case can be accepted by a spatial researcher, but it is a rare case in the mainstream sociology.

To put differently the main dilemma of explanation: either the neighborhood, settlement type has an influence on behavior through spatial mobility, or the settlement type has an effect on the behavior of inhabitants. Both form of explanations can be true at the same time.

1.3 Definition and measurement of trust

The concept of trust is widely used in everyday life, everybody has an opinion about it, its essence can be a subject of fierce discussions. The concept is examined by sociologists, economists, politician analysts, psychologists and other human sciences. The notion became trendy for the research. This manifested also in the publication of new academic journal by famous publisher, namely the Journal of Trust Research. Parallel to this tendency, operationalization of the concept is a popular research area. Tremendous suggestion exists for measurement of the concept.

The common point in the definitions of trust is the uncertainty of the future. To give only some typical examples, Misztal[5] defines trust as believing that the consequences of someone else's intended action will be appropriate from our own point of view. Luhmann[6] equates trust with subjective reduction of complexity

[5] Misztal, B. (1996): *Trust in Modern Societies: The Search for the Bases of Social Order.* Polity Press, Cambridge.
[6] Luhmann, N. (1979): Trust: a Mechanism for the Reduction of Social Complexity. In: Luhmann, N.: *Trust and Power: Two Works.* Wiley, Chichester.

or uncertainty. Barber (1983) defines trust as the expectation of the persistence and fulfillment of the natural and the moral orders. Gambetta[7] summarises the different conceptions of trust as "trust is a particular level of subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both before he can monitor such action... and in a context in which it affects his own action." Sztompka[8] defines trust as a bet on the future contingent action of others. Rose-Ackerman[9] writes that trust implies confidence, but not certainty, that some person or institution will behave in an expected way. Cook[10] notes that trust is rooted in uncertainty as well, but suggests that trust should be defined as knowledge or belief – not action. Hardin[11] contends that what actually constitutes trust is its manifestation in the realm of action.

In spite of the mushrooming possibility of surveys, measurements can be made principally in two ways: either with only one question (general or global, thin or moralistic or diffuse trust) or with many questions (particular or thick, strategic or specific trust; trust in something). In the first case a question (or a similar one) is used: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?" However, the answer to this question can be misleading, because it is not known, how wide a circle of other respondents imagine as a „most people" – and this problem makes comparisons between individuals and countries problematic. Circle of others can be different not only from geographical, but racial, ethnical and other points of view too. As Reeskens and Hooghe[12] asks, "does the concept of 'most people' have the same meaning for a respondent in the middle of the metropolitan areas in London or Paris, as it has for a respondent in some remote village in the north of Sweden?" According to Sturgis and Smith,[13] substantial number of respondents report having thought about people who are known to them personally (family members, friends, neighbors, and colleagues). Delhey, Newton and Welzel[14] found that radius of trust is significantly different in different countries; therefore generalized trust measures are not comparable across countries.

[7] Gambetta, D. (1988): Can We Trust Trust? In: Gambetta, D. (ed.): *Trust: Making an Braking Cooperative Relations*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
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[13] Sturgis, P – Smith, P. (2010): *Assessing the Validity of Generalized Trust Questions: What Kind of Trust Are We Measuring?* International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 22(1). 74–92.
[14] Delhey, J. – Newton, K. – Welzel, C. (2011): *How General Is Trust in „Most People"? Solving the Radius of Trust Problem.* American Sociological Review, 76. 786–807.

In this research trust was measured with 19 questions. This is a good situation, because general or global trust, as it was previously demonstrated, means almost nothing. Trust can be interpreted much better as a trust in someone or something (person or institution).

Contemporary and recent research papers on trust often declare the novelty of this research topic. This is minimally questionable. Thoughts about trust of popular ideologist, such as Fukuyama, Putnam or Coleman are close to the triviality and well-known for classical economists too.

2. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

As in the introductory part of the paper about trust was written, mainly positive contents are attached to the trust. This is acceptable generally but not always. Trust in an irrational, corrupt, inconsistent institution can be harmful too. Therefore, surveying trust is much better with a questionnaire with many items than only measuring the global or general trust. The EU-SILC survey resulted with a 10 grade scale for general trust 5,30 (5,20 for women, 5,54 for men). This result can be hardly interpreted, even in the light of temporal or international comparison, which suffers from various language and contextual problems.[15] Our analysis is able to give a more sophisticated, exact, unambiguous description, because trust was measured with 19 distinct groups of persons or institutions.

The results have a great variability according to the subject of trust. (Table 1) Settlement type, age and gender differences can be significant too. The highest score (8.88) belongs to the family members, which is not surprising, but important, because it shows the hard interpretability of general questions or those types of questions which are concerned with an unknown group. The mental processes behind the valuation of general or unknown situations are obscure. Opinions and attitudes exist about known phenomena. More precise questions (for example "Do you trust your mother in specific situation") can give more different results.

Table 1: Trust in various groups and institutions according to the settlement type

Do you trust in...?	Total	Budapest	Cities with county rights	Other towns	villages
Family members	8,88	8,79	9,14	8,91	8,70
Friends	8,01	7,79	8,33	8,08	7,86
Colleagues	7,51	7,16	7,66	7,40	7,76
Employer	7,18	7,17	7,22	7,06	7,28

[15] About the comparability of the Likert scale between different cultures, or about the reference-group effect, see Heine et al (2002).

Science	7,06	7,31	7,08	7,10	6,86
Neighbors	6,83	6,20	6,92	6,98	7,01
Fellow countrymen	6,51	6,29	6,60	6,66	6,43
Inhabitants of the settlement	6,36	5,97	6,30	6,43	6,57
Do you trust in...?	**Total**	**Budapest**	**Cities with county rights**	**Other towns**	**villages**
Police	6,12	5,91	6,33	6,17	6,03
Education	6,05	5,86	6,11	6,20	5,95
Law, legal system	5,91	6,09	5,88	6,09	5,63
Local government	5,82	5,57	5,86	5,64	6,14
Market system	5,72	5,86	5,79	6,00	5,25
Health institutions	5,58	5,01	5,77	5,78	5,60
Civil societies	5,57	5,51	5,69	5,40	5,73
Church	5,44	4,68	5,50	5,71	5,55
Government	5,07	4,99	5,13	5,22	4,90
Political system	5,05	5,13	5,10	5,10	4,90
Banks	4,68	4,92	4,93	4,64	4,39
Mean	6,28	6,12	6,39	6,35	6,24

Source: own calculations, Conflict survey, 2013.

Only personal contacts are in the first four places, the first abstract institution is science in the fifth place, followed by neighbors. Fellow countrymen and inhabitants of the settlement mean more general groups of people than the previous groups with a higher trust level, but they are not entirely abstract. These eight items are only followed by institutions or abstract institutions. This is a healthy, sound and understandable ordering: why would the people have, for example, higher trust in a civil society than in their own neighbors? Which world would it be, where people could have higher trust in a bureaucratic institution than in personal acquaintances?

General differences between settlement types show higher trust level in cities with county rights, then towns, villages and at last Budapest. Exceptions from this general picture is highly interesting: trust in personal contacts is much lower in Budapest, trust in abstract institutions (law and legal system, market system, political system, banks) is higher than in villages, institutions with more concrete personal contacts is higher in villages than in Budapest. The difference is bigger in the case of church.

This distinction between abstract and non-abstract institutions, however, is not perfect, because persons can have personal experiences about banks too, and not everybody has direct experience with church, moreover, church may

have different meaning for different people and this difference can be a spatial pattern too. Anyway, higher level of personality in villages surely plays an important factor in explanation of these differences. Cities with county rights and towns have a higher trust level than villages. This is in accordance with the social psychology claim that between too impersonal, too open and too small, personal communities there is an optimum somewhere.

In Budapest, compared to other settlements, trust is lower in personal contacts, but the differences between settlement categories are much lower than the differences of trust between the personal and impersonal contacts.

The average of the 19 items was 6,39 for women and 6,15 for men. This result is the opposite of the EU-SILC survey. Men have a higher trust only in family members but the difference is not significant (0.02). The biggest difference occurs with church, where the average of women is 0.87 higher than men. Gender differences according to the settlement categories are interesting. Trust in family members is the same in Budapest and in villages, but men have a higher scores in Budapest (difference is 0.35), women have higher scores in villages (difference is 0.10). Similar results are not known, but, of course, these could be calculated easily from the basic data of similar surveys.

The highest trust level can be seen in elder age: above 60 years, the average is 6.49. Between younger adults (under 40 years) and middle age adults there are no differences (6.18 and 6.20, respectively). However, trust of younger adults is higher in Budapest, mainly thanks to the much higher trust level in abstract institutions. Trust of younger adults in personal contact and health institutions is not higher in Budapest.

Two other factors, namely neighborhood satisfaction and happiness, is connected to the level of trust. This is a typical two-directional connection: people with higher neighborhood satisfaction are happier, and happier people have higher neighborhood satisfaction. This is true for trust and happiness, as well. Claiming that from the two factors one is reason and the other one is effect is a rather philosophical or view of life question than a scientific research task.

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HUNGARIAN SUMMARY

A tanulmány célja annak vizsgálata, hogy a bizalom különböző formáinak szintje eltérő-e Magyarországon a városok és falvak között. Az eredmények forrása egy kérdőíves felmérés, amelyre választ adók egy 10 pontos skálán fejezhették ki bizalmuk szintjét összesen 19 különböző személyes kapcsolattal és intézménnyel szemben. A legfőbb különbségek úgy foglalható össze, hogy a személyes kapcsolatokhoz kötődő bizalom szintje alacsonyabb, az intézményekben való bizalom szintje magasabb Budapesten, mint a falvakban. A különbségeket tovább árnyaljuk a nemek és az életkor változó bekapcsolásával, valamint a 19 különböző személyes kapcsolat és intézmény iránti bizalmi szint megkülönböztetett elemzésével.