

Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Rural - Urban Typology

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Abstract. One of the main goals set both by the European Union and the Latvian government is territorial cohesion and balanced spatial development. The common understanding of urban and rural areas is essential to implement this goal. The aim of this research is to compare and evaluate experience and approaches in classification of rural and urban areas. The methods of analysis, synthesis and logical construction, statistical data calculations as well as scientific discussion were applied in the research. According to the research results, there are numbered approaches in the world - based on demographic indicators, main economic activity, or social beliefs. There is no unified understanding on rural and urban in Latvia as well. If using the Central Statistical Bureau information - 32% of population lived in rural area, based on the OECD approach - 39.3%, while the State Regional Development Agency data show that 35.4% of total population in 2010 lived in rural areas. Such situation can become a problem when implementing national and international development programmes and there is a great need to develop a single classification of spatial division.

Key words: rural – urban dichotomy, spatial development.

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Introduction

The main trend in today's territorial development is the concentration of people and resources in cities, leading to unequal development of territories. The year 2008 was a dividing line when half of the world's population lived in cities. In Europe, urbanisation is more explicit – already in the 1950s, more than half of its population lived in cities (United Nation, 2009). As a result, the economic structure of territories changes, human lifestyles and the perception of life have become more diversified, leading to unequal development of territories. One of the main goals set both by the European Union (EU) and the Latvian government is to balance the development of cities and rural areas by promoting their mutual functional linkages and partnerships (Latvijas ilgtspējīgas attīstības..., 2010). An important issue in implementation of these goals is a common understanding of spatial division – which criteria classify area as urban, and which – as rural. The development of clear criteria is vitally essential for effective analysis of the spatial processes and successful development of the entire country.

The rural – urban typology related issues have been analysed in studies by different authors in Latvia: A. Melluma (1994), J. Iesalnieks (1995), A. Krauklis (2000), Z. Krisjane, M. Berzins (2008), and L. Kule (2010).

The aim of the research is to compare and evaluate experience and approaches in classification of rural and urban areas in the world and in Latvia. the following tasks are set to achieve the goal:

- 1) to evaluate the theoretical aspects of the concepts 'rural' and 'urban' in three dimensions - demographic, economic, and social;
- 2) to analyse the small-town identification possibilities as rural or urban area.

Research methodology – the methods of analysis, synthesis and logical construction, statistical data calculations as well as scientific discussion were applied for fulfilment of the above assignments.

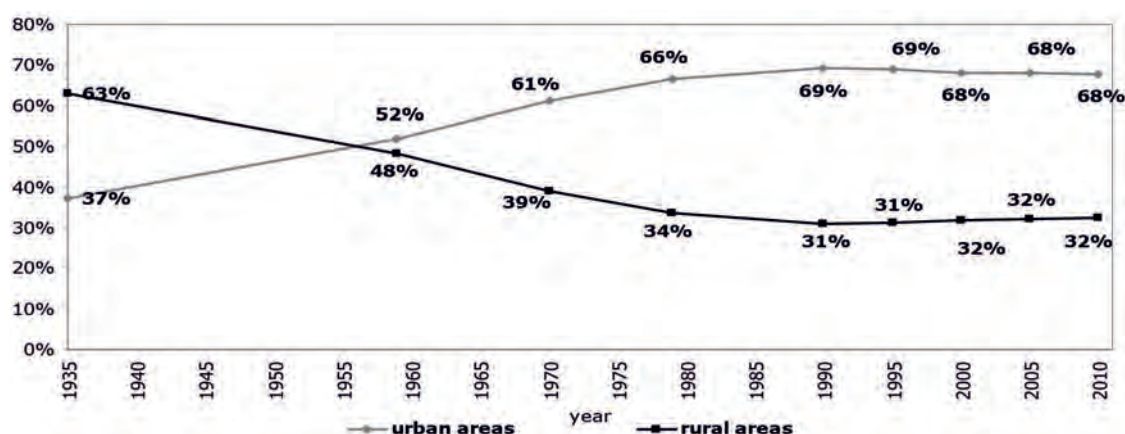
The regulatory enactments of the Republic of Latvia, scientific publications and special literature as well as statistical data from national and international institutions were used to achieve the goal and fulfil the tasks.

Results and discussion

Traditionally, 'rural' and 'urban' have been seen as opposites. Most development theory and practice is implicitly based on the dichotomy between rural and urban areas, populations, and activities. This is reflected in the division of policies - urban planners usually concentrating on urban nodes and giving scant attention to agricultural or rural-led development, while rural development planners tend to ignore urban centres and define rural areas as consisting only of villages and their agricultural land (Tacoli, 1998).

In the past, there was a clear visual line between rural and urban areas – fortifications or walls. At present, such physical boundaries do not exist, thus, it is often very difficult to determine at which point the city ends and where the rural area begins. The distinction between 'rural' and 'urban' is probably inescapable for descriptive purposes; however, it often implies a dichotomy, which encompasses both spatial and sectoral dimensions. The key issue dividing various individual authors (Hurbanek, 2008; Pezzini, 2001; Woods, 1998) and their approaches is the manner in which they define rural or urban areas. While Hurbanek (2008) tries to find key characteristics of various rural settlements, when defining rural areas, other authors (Pezzini, 2001) discuss the delimitation of rural areas on the basis of an urban – rural dichotomy, without clearly defining individual categories.

Presently, there are several criteria according to which a particular territory can be defined as urban or rural – by population number, density, economic activity, distance from cities etc. H. Schmal (1981) compiled all the criteria that can be used as a benchmark for determining the status of territories in three dimensions – *demographic, economic, and people behaviour*.



Source: authors' construction based on the Central Statistical Bureau data, 2011

Fig. 1. Share of population in rural and urban areas in Latvia, 1935 - 2010

1. The demographic approach

The demographic approach stresses demographic indicators as the main ones, determining whether a place belongs to an urban or a rural area. In Europe, the majority of countries characterise urban and rural areas according to the number of population. Because of national differences in the characteristics that distinguish urban from rural areas, the distinction between the urban and the rural population is not yet amenable to a single definition that would be applicable to all countries or, for the most part, even to the countries within a region (United Nations Statistics Division, 2011). The Nordic countries (Norway, Sweden, Iceland) consider settlements with 200 inhabitants as urban, in the Central Europe, the customary limit is 2,000 (Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands) or 5,000 inhabitants (Austria, Slovakia, Germany). Countries of the Southern Europe (Greece, Italy, and Portugal) and also Poland, and Switzerland use a limit of 10,000 inhabitants for the delimitation of urban settlement (Demographic Yearbook, 2005).

In Latvia, the Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas (2008) determines - the area is classified as an urban if the population exceeds 2000, the rest of the territory - as rural. This approach can be used conditionally, as in the classification other aspects are taken into account, for instance, a developed infrastructure, road network, secured business opportunities, and cultural services. Over the recent years, the number of towns has not changed in Latvia - in total 76 populated places were granted as towns. As a result, there are towns with a relatively small population, such as Durbe (621 inhab.), Subate (736 inhab.), or Ainazi (993 inhab.), while the largest population, apart from republic cities, is in Ogre - almost 26 000. Presently, the number of population is less than 2000 permanent residents in 21 towns (27% from all towns) as it is set by the Cabinet of Ministers (Central Statistical Bureau, 2011). According to the legislative acts, these populated places have to change their status but it is not done because of various reasons - historical traditions, protests of population etc. Although, discussions on changing the status of small towns have been started many times on the national level, no decision has been made so far. This approach is used by the Central Statistical Bureau as the

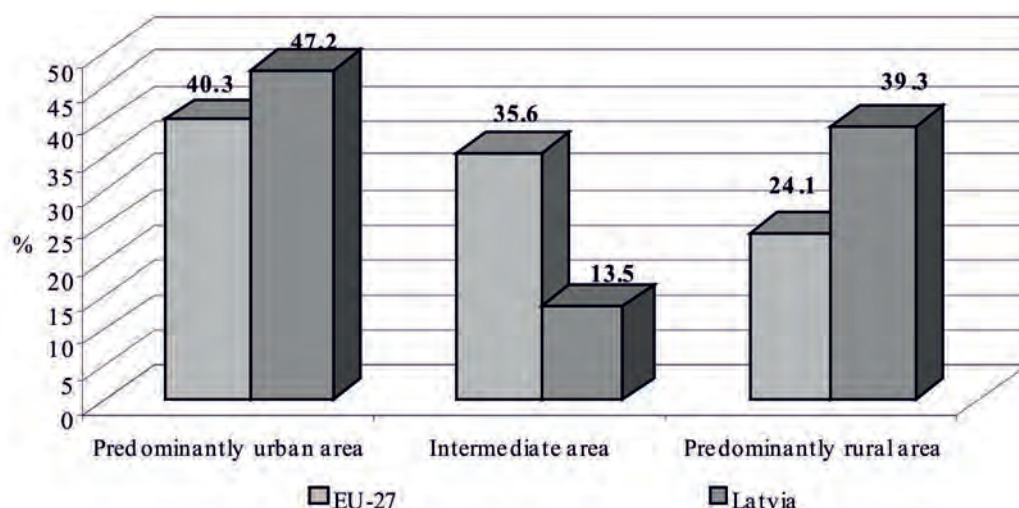
main principle to summarising and analysing the statistical indicators on the national level. In Latvia, the population share living in urban areas has considerably changed over time (Figure 1). Generally, 37% of population lived in urban areas in 1935, since then the share of population has been increasing continuously until reaches the top in 1990 - 69% of population lived in urban areas.

Yet, this approach faces various problems, for instance, the number of declared and actual population can vary considerably, people live in one place and work in another place, people have several places of residence and work. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the number of population in a particular territory.

As a criterion, other demographic indicators can be used, for instance, population density that is undoubtedly higher in urban territories. This approach is used by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) - within each of its 30 member countries, local areas were clustered according to the rural and urban typology, where rural areas were identified as communities with population densities below 150 inhabitants per square kilometre. The regions are also grouped in three clusters depending on the share of regional population living in rural areas: predominantly rural (over 50%), intermediate (15 to 50%), and predominantly urbanised (below 15%) (OECD Regional typology, 2010).

According to this typology (Figure 2), only 24.1% of the EU population lives in predominant rural areas. In Latvia, totally 39.9% of total population lives in predominant rural areas, yet, the territory covers bigger part of Latvia (62%). These trends - exacerbated by structural reductions in agricultural employment and ageing of the population - result in urban over-concentration causing further social and environmental problems. Following the OECD methodology, Riga statistical region is classified as predominantly urban, Kurzeme and Latgale region - as intermediate region, and Zemgale, Vidzeme and Pieriga - as predominantly rural regions based on share of rural population (A Revised Urban..., 2010).

Some countries, such as Japan, would require different population threshold to identify areas, for instance, a threshold of 500 inhabitants per km² due to the higher population density compared with other countries. As well as Belgium, where two different optimal



Source: authors' construction based on the Eurostat data, 2010

Fig. 2. Share of population in the EU-27 and Latvia, 2010

Table 1

Traditional stereotypical differences between urban and rural populations

Urban	Dimension	Rural
Secondary and tertiary sector dominant	Economy	Primary industry sector and supporting dominant activities
Manufacturing, construction, administration and service	Employment	Agriculture, forestry and other primary industry occupations
Higher than national averages	Education	Lower than national averages
High	Services accessibility	Low
Liberal and radical elements are strongly represented	Political views	Conservative, resistance to change

Source: authors' construction based on Scott, Gilbert, Gelan, 2007

population density limits are identified for its two regions: at 600 inhabitants per km² for Flanders and at 300 inhabitants per km² for Wallonia (Pizzoli, Xianoning, 2000).

Although Latvia is not an OECD member state and, thus, its formal definition is not mandatory for Latvia, taking into account the experience of other new EU Member States (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia), Latvia can use this classification as the main principle in spatial division. If using the OECD definition, the majority of Latvian small cities and other territorial units meet the criteria of rural areas. In administrative division aspect of the 110 Latvian municipalities, only two (Stopinu and Salaspils) would be defined as urban areas with a density of 187 and 184 inhabitants per km² as well as all the republic cities (Central Statistical Bureau data, 2011).

When delimiting urban or rural areas according to population density, the comparison of various European countries in terms of municipality size is problematic. On the one hand, there are states with very large municipalities (measured by the number of inhabitants), such as Great Britain and Scandinavian countries, while on the other hand, there are countries with relatively small municipalities that are very numerous in certain

regions. Such countries include the Czech Republic, France, and Latvia among others (Regions at the Glance, 2005).

2. Economic approach

This approach views any territorial division by engagement of population in various economic sectors, industries, and occupations emphasising that certain industries are appropriate for different territories (Pizzoli, Xianoning, 2000).

Goals of land use, building density, morphology, and distance between buildings are some of the features that help understand the differences between rural and urban areas. Traditionally, it is considered that urban areas are characterised by intense built-up, while the large distances between buildings are more characteristic to rural areas. European Spatial planning documents define rural areas as a certain type of landscape and land use where agriculture is the key activity. Density of settlement may not, however, be a sufficient criterion in many countries, particularly where there are large localities that are still characterised by a truly rural way of life. Such countries will find it necessary to use additional criteria in developing classifications that are

more distinctive than a simple urban rural differentiation. Some of the additional criteria that may be useful are the percentage of the economically active population employed in agriculture, the general availability of electricity and/or piped water in living quarters, and the ease of access to medical care, schools and recreation facilities (Population Density and Urbanisation, 2011). For instance, in Panama and Nicaragua areas are considered as urban if there are streets, electric light, and water supply systems, meanwhile in the Russian Federation, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, a number of inhabitants and predominance of agricultural or non-agricultural workers and their families are taken into account.

In Latvia, this approach is reflected in the long-term planning document "Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030" (2010) - to maintain a traditional lifestyle with the historic settlement structures, landscapes, and traditions. This can be achieved by ensuring that the rural areas parallel production of agricultural and forestry produce, provides recreational opportunities for urban residents, high-quality living space for urban workers as well as territory for non-agricultural businesses. The document stresses the need to develop both the agriculture and forestry industry as well as diversify economic activity without any priorities.

In rural areas, the availability of basic services (trade, social, health, education, infrastructure etc.) impacts possibilities of the economic activity and quality of life. Services are a precondition for a new, flexible economic development, innovation in local communities. Various researchers from European and the North American countries have found a reduction in service availability especially in rural areas (Latvija. Pārskats par..., 2005). In Latvia, the project of Guidelines in Regional Policy 2012 - 2018 (2011) defines the basket of services available for inhabitants depending on the classification of populated areas - village, county development centre, regional development centre (21), the National Development Centre (5), and the International Development Centre (4). On the lowest level, public and private institutions have to provide basic services in culture, health, social care, education and science, postal services, and business; on each next level, the list of available services are expanding.

However, the economic development causes a situation in which business activities are not explicitly differentiated depending on their relation to rural or urban areas - quite often central offices of large companies are not located in city centres anymore, more often urban residents live a "green" lifestyle, start growing fruit and vegetables, thus becoming engaged in agriculture. Whereas, in agricultural areas, alternative businesses of various types are done - tourism, health and entertainment services, commerce at shopping malls etc. Researchers Mogk, Kwiatkowski, Weindorf (2010) in the United States stress the opportunities for urban agriculture in Detroit, pointing to the need to promote urban agriculture in the era of limited resource - the total population size and overall demand increase result in food deficit due to exploitation of all existing agriculture land outside urban areas. As a result of these processes, it is problematic to determine, which economic activities are solely characteristic of rural territories and which ones - of cities.

3. Social aspects

The traditional distinction between urban and rural areas has been based on the assumption that urban areas provide a different way of life and usually a higher standard of living than are found in rural areas. In the 1960s, scientists had an opinion that rural territories featured greater social stability and safety, whereas urban life was much more unpredictable. Many of the rural community members are acquainted with one another, they have a higher sense of community, and rural residents often identify themselves with the territory in which they live (Cloke, 1994). The rural idyll "presents happy, healthy, and problem-free images of rural life safely nestling with both a close social community and a contiguous natural environment" (Cloke, Milbourne, 1992). The urban-led rural idyll emerged from the idea of the countryside as a place to escape from the realities of urban life and has been most evident in the desire for public access. This has latterly developed to encompass residential choice, employment and quality of life issues. Here, too, the idea of a landscape untouched by urbanism has strong resonance (Scott et al., 2007).

The education level of the population in the area is one of the measurements to identify the human resources and skills. In rural areas, they are expected to be low so that mainly manual activities are developed. Indicators refer to the spatial dimension of social life, highlighting that in rural areas, distances are higher, and opportunities are lower with respect to urban areas. In this case, it is not always easy to find out a suitable and available variable, which is why several alternative solutions are applied by the authors suggesting this approach. Distances from some key services, services available per square kilometre or per capita, and the length of roads for square kilometres are some of the proxy variables. Some studies suggest the use of socioeconomic structural characteristics such as infrastructures or human capital (Pizzoli, Xianoning, 2000). Although, the differences between urban and rural ways of life and standards of living remain significant in developing countries, in many industrialised countries this distinction has become blurred (Population Density and Urbanisation, 2011).

In Latvia, there is a strong tradition to describe and identify people by their place of residence (urban, rural population etc.) and assume that people living in the same area have similar traditions, values, and even similar characteristics. Often the rural inhabitants and the farmers are used as synonyms, despite the fact that less and less people are engaged in the agricultural industry (Latvija. Pārskats par..., 2005).

4. Rural areas and small towns

Controversial is the question about small-town identification as rural or urban area. In some developed countries rural areas and towns are separate, determining the rural as territorial residual category - outside of urban areas. However, differences between the rural areas and small towns are not clearly defined in other cases. Rural areas often include small towns, villages, and other populated places with fewer than 1,000, 2,000 or 10,000 people based on principle that the small rural towns provide supply of services for surrounding rural areas. Even more - research results in Finland show that small towns are dependent on the surrounding rural area development (Hinderlink, Titus, 2002). Labour market

Table 2

Socio-economic indicators in urban and rural areas in Latvia on average, 2004 - 2010

Indicator	Area	2004	2006	2008	2010
Change in the number of population over the previous 5-year period (%)	Urban	-4.7	-2.8	-2.5	-2.6
	Rural	-1.8	-3.0	-2.9	0.0
Demographic burden	Urban	570.5	550.9	518.0	517.2
	Rural	641.5	588.6	538.7	506.4
Individual income tax revenues in municipal budgets per capita (EUR)	Urban	133.7	163.9	353.0	332.9
	Rural	67,5	100,2	202,4	325.8
Unemployment rate	Urban	5,5	5,6	3,2	13
	Rural	8,0	7,0	4,4	12.4

Source: authors' construction based on Development of Regions..., 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010

researcher Rasnaca with colleagues (2008) indicates similar trends in Latvia and concludes that there is no evidence that small towns in Latvia are more successful than in Finland. This approach emphasises that small cities are integrated rather than "closed" system. City functional sizes generally do not overlap with its administrative borders. Urban functions are influenced by the demographic (age, profession) structure, seasonal population (number of inhabitants), and while the functions make it possible to change the structure of the population (Kruzmetra, Rasnaca, 2007). Thus, it would be necessary include small towns defining the rural areas.

The State Regional Development Agency through survey "Development of Regions in Latvia, 2010" (2011) uses two types of municipalities - urban municipalities and rural municipalities. Rural municipalities (50 municipalities) are those the territory of which is not approved a city by the Cabinet of Ministers, while urban municipality (60 municipalities) has one or more towns or cities. Rural municipalities occupy 35% of the total territory and 15% of the population. However, this distinction is incomplete, since municipalities in Riga suburban area are called the rural because of lack of town or city in its territory.

When analysing the overall trends (Table 2), it can be concluded that all indicators have improved, yet, there are still significant differences between urban and rural areas. Several conclusions can be made based on this approach. Population change on average does not show significant difference in the time dimension, except the year 2004. In 2010, the population in rural areas did not change showing that the attractiveness of rural areas has been increased, and people are not longer attached to live in cities with growing pollution and crime. From 2004 to 2008, the highest indicators of demographic burden were observed in rural areas. The year 2010 is a year of change - demographic burden is higher in urban than in rural areas comparing with previous years. The level of welfare increased in Latvian rural areas in slower rates than in urban areas on average, based on the individual income tax revenues in municipal budgets per capita. In 2004, individual tax revenue volume in urban and rural areas differs by more than 90%, over time these differences are reduced, for instance, in 2010, the difference is only 2%. The values of indicators that characterise, to some extent, the attractiveness of life environment in 2010 are better in rural municipalities,

yet, better values of economic and demographic indicators are observed for the urban municipalities, indicating the impact of the large urban areas.

There are countries, which use the complex method, including a number of indicators. For instance, Spain includes the population age structure, economic dependency, the farm's main occupation as well as density of population and building in its rurality index calculations.

However, there are also opposite views, which state that it is not possible to make any division between rural and urban areas. The main argument for this view is the belief that urban and rural areas may not be separated or isolated - no matter how successfully the classification would be created, it represent only one part of an overall multi-faceted picture.

Conclusions, recommendations

1. One of most common principles in spatial division of urban and rural areas is the use of demographic indicators - in Europe the majority of countries characterise urban and rural areas according to the number of population starting from 200 to 10 000 inhabitants (in Latvia - 2000); meanwhile the OECD and Eurostat consider population density as the main criteria for statistical purposes.
2. The traditional approach is based on belief that rural and urban areas can be classified in terms of most common economic activities, land use, availability of services, and education; meanwhile, other studies argue that old assumptions have to be reviewed taking into consideration globalisation effect, networking, communication and impact of electronic trade, and service availability.
3. The spatial development studies argue that the small towns are part of surrounding rural areas and cannot be separated as individual unit, these areas are strongly connected and interdependent.
4. There are several approaches used in Latvia for definition of urban and rural areas - based on the status of settlements, population density, and administrative division. Every approach is used by different institution and for different purpose - as a result, there is no unified understanding and it can becomes a problem when implementing national and international development programmes.

5. In Latvia, according to the Central Statistical Bureau provided statistical reports, rural areas are territories that are located outside the town borders set by the Cabinet of Ministers – in 2010, 32% of total population lived in rural areas. Based on the OECD approach, 39.3% of population lived in predominantly rural areas, 13.5% - in intermediate and 47.2% of total population lived in predominantly urban areas in 2010. The State Regional Development Agency divides all administrative units into two groups – urban municipalities (one or more towns are located in its territory) and rural municipalities where 35.4% of total population lives.
6. It is essentially to elaborate a unified definition and classification indicators for urban and rural areas in order to implement the EU and national policies regarding spatial development and territorial cohesion, taking into consideration today's situation in spatial development and population tendencies, international experience, and practice.

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