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PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE AND MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS

A qualitative study on the intertwined nature of rural development and outwards mobility aspirations in the Hungarian countryside

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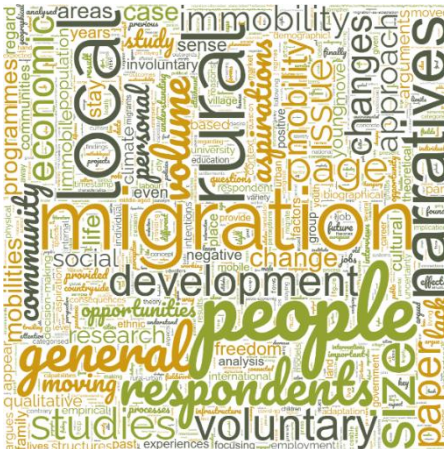

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Abstract: Based on a series of qualitative fieldwork in peripheral rural settlements of Hungary, this paper aims to explore the intertwined nature of development and migration by developing a theory-based methodology as a tool. Specifically, the goal is to understand how personal perceptions of local changes are connected to outwards mobility aspirations of rural dwellers. The series of fieldwork, conducted in 8 remote villages of Hungary in the period of 2014–2019 along with the 163, verbatim-transcribed semi-structured and in-depth interviews specifically engaged in understanding changes and migration goals, sets the ground for a detailed investigation of the topic. During the analytical process, a theory-based system is provided for the categorisation of respondents into migration aspiration groups. Differences and similarities based on personal perceptions of social change are then analysed in this distinction. Results show that both voluntary mobile and involuntary immobile people regard local changes as deterioration and development programmes as unsatisfactory, with the former group speaking in relative, contextual terms and the latter with the terminology of invariability, fixedness and hopelessness. Conversely, voluntary immobile respondents regard local changes as positive enabling (though not facilitating) factors of their desire to stay, while understanding their ineffective nature on local economy in general. This paper argues (im)mobility aspirations to be determined by similar freedom-maximizing strategies in all mobility groups, with different forms of freedom being preferred by the different groups. Consequently, to reach the goals of decreasing the depopulation of the countryside, public development policies are expected to enhance the forms of freedom preferred by people who desire to stay.

Keywords: rural development, social change, migration aspirations, place attachment, depopulation, qualitative fieldwork

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Absztrakt: A tanulmányban magyarországi vidéki terekben végzett terepmunkasorozat alapján vizsgálom a helyi fejlesztések és a vándorlás összefüggésrendszerét. A vizsgálathoz eszközként kidolgozok egy társadalomtudományi elméleten alapuló szisztematikus módszertant. A célom annak megértése, hogy miként kapcsolódnak a helyi lakók kifelé történő mobilitási törekvései, a migrációs aspirációjuk a helyi változásokról alkotott személyes elképzeléseikhez. Az empirikus munkát a 2014-2019-es időszakban Magyarország nem-agglomerációs vidéki tereiben, összesen 8 faluban végzett terepmunkasorozat, illetve az ennek keretében készített 163 db, szó szerinti átírással rögzített félig strukturált interjúk elemzésével végzem. Az elemzés során a válaszadókat migrációs aspirációjuk szerint csoportokra osztom, a helyi változásokkal kapcsolatos percepcióikat csoportonként vizsgálom. Az eredmények azt mutatják, hogy mind az "önkéntesen mobil", mind a "nem önkéntesen immobil" válaszadói csoport inkább hanyatlástörténetként éli meg a helyi változásokat, amelyen a fejlesztési programok sem tudtak változtatni. Előbbi csoport relációs fogalmakkal ragadja meg a változásokat, más korokhoz és térbeli helyekhez viszonyítva azokat, az utóbbiak pedig a változatlanság, a helyhez kötöttség és a reménytelenség terminológiáit használják narratíváikban. Ezzel szemben az "önkéntesen immobil" válaszadók a helyi változásokat pozitív, olyan tényezőkként láttatják, amelyek befolyásolják (de nem meghatározzák) maradásra vonatkozó törekvésüket, ugyanakkor a fejlesztési programok gazdaságot ösztönző hatásával kapcsolatban szkeptikusak. A tanulmányban azt állítom, hogy az (im)mobilitási törekvéseket minden csoportban hasonló szabadságmaximalizáló stratégiák határozzák meg, ám az egyes mobilitási csoportok a szabadságnak más aspektusát tartják szem előtt. A vidék elnéptelenedésének csökkentésére irányuló célok elérése érdekében a központi fejlesztéspolitikáknak érdemes a maradni vágyók által preferált szabadságformákat – és így fejlesztésformákat – támogatni.

Kulcsszavakat: vidékfejlesztés, társadalmi változás, vándorlási törekvések, migráció, helykötődés, kvalitatív terepmunka

Highlights

- Exploring the intertwined nature of development and migration in a rural context
- A theory-based method is developed for perceptions of local change analysis
- Series of fieldwork in rural Hungary: 185 semi-structured interviews.
- Immobile people tend to understand changes as positive, mobile people as insufficient.
- (Im)mobility aspirations are influenced by personal freedom-maximising strategies

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1. Introduction

This paper, being based on a segment of my doctoral dissertation (Horzsa, 2021), engages in analysing development-migration interaction on the micro level by employing qualitative interview data gathered in a series of sociological fieldwork in peripheral rural settlements of Hungary. Based on previous theories, especially the theoretical concept of de Haas (2010) and de Haas (2014), which is in accord with the ideas of Carling (2002); Carling and Schewel (2018); Schewel (2019); Appadurai (2004), and the theoretical standpoint of Sen (2001), this paper develops an analytical framework to address this matter and afterwards provides a systematic, inductive analysis of interview narratives regarding development (or local changes), in accord with the analytical framework of migration aspirations and capabilities. By building on recent theoretical advancements, this paper aims to provide a micro-level analysis on how migration is embedded within personal narratives of development and social change.

By analysing narratives from a series of fieldwork, the paper will unveil a variety of strategies with regard to migration, provide a categorisation based on this variety and demonstrate how they are connected to specific personal interpretations of the changes in the socio-economic environment. Fieldworks serving as a basis for these analyses were conducted in peripheral rural regions of Hungary, more precisely, in non-agglomeration villages of the country, between the years 2014–2019 and were focusing on precisely the issues of development and migration. Nevertheless, (im)mobilities are viewed on the settlement-level: as far as concepts of outwards mobility is concerned, migration includes forms of intentions related to both intra-national and international flows.

A general practical (societal) context for this research is provided by development policies (both international and intra-national ones) aiming to reduce outwards mobility by providing subsidies for closing up of underdeveloped regions. However, as known from previous researches (de Haas, 2007; Gamso and Yuldashev, 2018; Rhoda, 1983) these ideas can seldomly be reinforced by empirical findings or can even be disproved.

To understand development-migration interaction in an intra-national context, Hungary could serve as one of the most suitable case, as the share of people living in predominantly rural regions (46.7%) is one of the highest in the EU, more than double than EU average (22.3%) and differences of social status (risk of poverty or social exclusion) between rural and urban areas in Hungary is one of the highest among all European countries. Furthermore, the per capita EU funding paid for rural development is one of the highest in Europe (€ 1477 in only the 2007–2013 period)[2]. As avoiding rural depopulation was the central aim of Hungarian rural development policies (VM 2015, VM 2012), results of these analyses also provide a critical evaluation of the justifiability of such interventions.

It should be added, that due to concerns with government corruption, a major portion of development funds (in particular, funds directed towards rural development) have been held back in the case of

[2] Data available at
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/expost2013/wp1_synthesis_factsheet_en.pdf
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Rural_development_statistics_by_urban-rural_typology
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/regional-focus/2011/the-financial-execution-of-structural-funds
https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/dataset/2007-2013-Funds-Absoption-Rate/kk86-ceun/data#column-menu

Hungary by the European Commission[3]. Nevertheless, the period of focus (2007–2013 and 2014–2020 EU budget periods) may serve as a useful lab for analysing interaction between social change and societal outcomes. In this paper, without the intention to analyse a specific contemporary societal problem, I aim to provide a general insight of how development-migration interaction might systematically be analysed and regard this specific EU budget period as an example.

2. Theories and previous researches

For the analysis of development-migration interaction on the micro level, it is foremost crucial to set up a theoretic framework for personal mobilities. For a long time, economic models have dominated these theories, as migration was taken as a distinct geographic mobility action in time-space. Gravity models (Andersson et al., 2017; Bertoli and Moraga, 2017; Ravenstein, 1885; Sjaastad, 1962; Wolpert, 1965) as well as push-pull models (Harris and Todaro, 1970) were engaged in how labour market variables such as wage gaps influence employment flows from underdeveloped to more developed regions. However, as Halfacree and Boyle (1993) pointed out, these approaches to migration decision making regard individuals as a rationally calculating decision-makers, which standpoint is often overwritten by actual demographic tendencies. The proposal of Halfacree and Boyle (1993) consists of regarding migration decisions as being embedded in the whole life stories, or biographies of respondents and in parallel, to broaden the scope with which these decisions are analysed. Invocating Habermas' concept of habitus, they argue migration to be regarded as a social construct, and migration decision making as more than a simple result (with two possible outcomes) of a rational cost-benefit calculation. Instead, migration is a statement of the self about their vision of the world.

An answer to the selective aspect of migration (namely, that having all macroeconomic conditions fit for moving, only a few choose to go) lies in exactly this cultural element. Aspirations to move (or to stay, see the literature of place attachment (Low and Altman, 1992) thus is a crucial aspect of the literature of migration. Qualitative investigations of migration aspirations witness a large influence of education on outmigration attitudes of the youth, this however concerns not only the level of education, but – as both Corbett (2005), Corbett (2013) and Dabasi-Halász, Lipták, and Horváth (2017) pointed out – also the institutions themselves. Rural outwards mobility can be regarded as a source and also answer to Beck's understanding of risk, which is demonstrated clearly in an East-West German context by Schäfer (2010). Furthermore, as it unfolds from the narratives presented by Corbett (2013), in traditional rural communities, the cultural norm of progress and education and locality, family and other traditional norms are present in parallel, often causing conflicts for young people in migration decision making. If understood as a statement of self on its own identity, as Fielding (1992) proposes, migration decision making unfolds in rural dwellers' narratives as being in a strong connection with not only vertical mobility, but also the general cultural value of progress in life. Thus, in rural mobility-narratives, 'leaving' is a strong synonym for 'moving forward' rather than 'moving away', and the opportunity of physical returning never cease to be an option (Findlay and Li, 1997; Ni Laoire, 2000; Nugin, 2014). This invokes once again the difference between attachment and actual geographical location, where attachment can be reinforced by the idea of the rural idyll, even though in several cases migration seems to be influenced by ad-hoc life events (Stockdale, 2014).

Nevertheless, besides modelling actual migration flow, grasping the socio-cultural aspect of migration is challenging, too. According to Halfacree and Boyle (1993), even micro-level models of migration (such as the push-pull models inspired by (Harris and Todaro, 1970)), even implying personal decisions in mobility, regard migration and non-migration deterministically, as if agents being exposed to certain sets of external stimuli would have no other choice but to 'decide' to act accordingly. In contrast, the question can be raised of why only a small share of those expected to go by these models do in fact. The starting question of Carling (2002) is exactly this: having this era defined as the 'age of mobility' (Castles and Miller,

[3] Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506 of 15 December 2022 on measures for the protection of the Union budget against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32022D2506&qid=1724841706405

1993), why are there no more migration than there is actually. Carling (2002) argues that reasons of immobility is rarely assessed and even when they are, reasons lying in the scarcity of opportunities are mixed with reasons of a lack of personal will. Nevertheless, a large share of people is immobile not because push-pull effects are at a low level, but despite it being high. The author refers to them as the involuntarily immobile. Based on personal research experiences in Cape Verde, it is suggested that ability and aspiration be assessed in parallel by migration studies. Migration aspiration is defined by Carling and Schewel (2018, 946) "*as a conviction that migration is preferable to non-migration*". The proposal is to embed the group of actual migrants (who are supposedly both aspiring to migrate and being able to) in the group of all those aspiring to migrate (irrespectively of ability). Thus, we receive an analytical context to address questions of immobility.

With regard to migration-related decision making, the concepts can be divided into two categories, namely, those used by scholars trying to estimate future ratios of emigrants from a given population, and those interested in explaining migration decision-making processes on the micro level. Examples for the former category include the concepts of *migration potential* (without exception used by international migration analyses and almost entirely by researchers on East-West migration within Europe) (Bauer and Zimmermann, 1999; Berencsi, 1995; Csata and Kiss, 2003; Fassmann and Hintermann, 1997; Gödri and Kiss, 2009; Honvári, 2012; Kupiszewski, 2002; Sik and Örkény, 2003; Siskáné Szilasi et al., 2017) and *migration propensity* (Gödri and Feleky, 2013), whereas for the latter, mentionable examples might be the concepts of *migration intentions* (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006; Findlay and Li, 1997; Morais et al., 2017; Thissen et al., 10), *migration aspirations* (Carling, 2002; Carling and Schewel, 2018; Crivello, 6; de Haas, 2014; Durst and Nyírő, 2018; Van Mol, 2016; Váradi et al., 2017), *migration plans* (Czibere and Rácz, 2016; Gödri and Kiss, 2009), *migration expectations* (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006) or *moving desires* (Coulter and Scott, 2015). In addition to the variety of the concepts used by scholars analysing migration decision-making, the terminology is applied rather in an *ad hoc* way, i.e., defined by the concrete employed measures and methods themselves – as pointed out on the example of migration potential by Kupiszewski (2002).

Internal migration research often includes contemporary societal questions or phenomena as their core subject of analysis. In recent years, many papers have dealt with how the COVID-19 pandemic, stay-at-home regulations and physical distancing reshaped urban-rural migration flows and migration aspirations (Bista et al., 2022; Fielding and Ishikawa, 2021; González-Leonardo et al., 2022; González-Leonardo et al., 2022; Rajan and Bhagat, 2022; Vaishar and Šťastná, 2022). Further fields of interest include the war-induced migration flows within Ukraine (Mulska et al., 2022; Voznyak et al., 2023) and the interaction of internal and international migration, development under populist regimes in Central-Eastern Europe (Enyedi, 2020; Paul, 2020). The question of how effects of climate change influences internal migration also has a growing literature (Adger et al., 2024; Boas et al., 2022; Germani et al., 2021; Sakdapolrak et al., 2024; Salerno et al., 2024), as well as gender differences and the selection effect of migration (Leibert, 2016).

Yet another concept connecting to migration decision making on the individual level is often referred to as 'place attachment'. The term is used to describe a phenomenon consisting of several (various) factors that act contrary to 'push' and 'pull' effects of migration. Even though place attachment is considered as a force keeping people from moving, some authors pointed out the appearance of place attachment as a psychical connection to a geographical area in narratives of those already living or staying at a distance (Morse and Mudgett, 2017; Timár and Velkey, 2016).

To understand how development influences migration in the cultural sense (and vice versa), it is important to also understand how both rely on the extension of capacities and in general, personal freedom. Myrdal (1956) supports a materialist, practical and technocratic way of development – that is, economic development focusing on advancement in purely the economic production of underdeveloped regions, even – if reluctance is seen – against citizens' will. As he phrases this: *"(…) there is no choice open between wanting a slower or faster rate of economic development. Every government will have to do its utmost to push on as fast as possible. (…)".* He admits, that *"cultural and social effects of economic change may be disastrous. (…) the cultural and social changes have to be planned and controlled; to a certain extent they*

have even to be induced" (Myrdal, 1956, p. 174). Hayek (1972) on the other hand supports the statement that "(…) *the holder of coercive power should confine himself in general to creating conditions under which the knowledge and initiative of individuals are given the best scope that* they *can plan most successfully*" (Hayek, 1972, p. 35). The author stresses, that what he supports is not a laissez-faire attitude in planning, but in contrast, a setting-up of a carefully thought-out legal framework is necessary for the handling of our common problems.

Whereas in his 1944 work, Hayek considers central planning as being strongly connected to the lack of long-term progress and a lack of freedom, Sen (2001) describes development more as a synonym for freedom, by arguing that freedom is not just a prerequisite of development, but rather, the pure essence of it. Freedom (meaning the availability of choices) in the understanding of the author is in parallel to the goal and the tool of development. This might be a somewhat confusing argument (as freedom thus would become the reason for its existence and growth), but Sen (2001) resolves this contradiction by regarding general freedom as being constituted by separate subtypes of freedom, interacting with and reinforcing one another.

Research based on qualitative document analyses, biography-analyses, and interviews can analyse migration decision making as being embedded in a complex socio-cultural context. Interviews may discover the cultural meaning of migration beyond labour market matters from the perspective of the individual (Halfacree, 2004). According to the standpoint of these researches, leaving (home)village is a symbolic action that has its meaning beyond the outcomes of pure cost-benefit calculations of labour market and economic matters. Migration decision making can be understood as a moral statement of the individual about herself, that is shaped by the social meaning of 'rural' and 'urban', 'village' and 'city', 'here' and 'there'(Ni Laoire, 2000). The meaning of rural is connected to the past, being stuck, traditions; whereas urban implies concepts of future, progress, adventure, modernity. Therefore, the decision (or desire) of moving can be understood as a commitment to the latter principles (Crivello, 2015).

A theoretic proposal of de Haas (2014) to connect development with migration builds on the development idea of Sen (2001) and the concept of involuntary mobility of Carling (2002). As much as Sen equates development with freedom, de Haas regards migration with freedom (and thus, social change: development). Migration is regarded as a function of capabilities and aspirations which intervene with one another, too. Here, capabilities stand for negative and positive liberties as understood by (Berlin, 1969), whereas aspirations are constituted by general life aspirations and perceived spatial opportunity structures (i.e., migration aspirations in its narrower sense). de Haas (2014) argues, that Sen (2001) does not feature migration on connection with the concept of freedom and development[4]. Nevertheless, by equating migration with development and regarding migration as a function of aspirations and capabilities, the scope of migration theories can be widened to describe several previous, particular migration studies. In this paper, I aim to develop a systematic method to analyse development-migration interaction in accordance with de Haas' concept in a concrete case.

		Migration capabilities	
		Low	***High***
Migration aspirations (intrinsic and/or instrumental)	***High***	**Involuntary immobility** (Carling 2002) (feeling 'trapped')	**Voluntary mobility** (most forms of migration)
	Low	**Acquiescent immobility** (Schewel 2015)	**Voluntary immobility** *and* **Involuntary mobility** (eg refugees, 'soft deportation')[13]

Fig 1. Aspirations-capabilities derived individual mobility types. Source: de Haas (2014, 32)

[4] It should be noted, that strictly speaking, this is not necessarily true, as Sen regards general development as a process defined by the "*replacement of bonded labor and forced work (...) with a system of free labor contract and unrestrained physical movement*" (Sen 2001, 28). Still, it is true that migration does not play a major role in the general idea.

We might state that this concept trailed great impact within the sociological migration literature with many authors using, referring to this theory and even, further developing it (Boas et al., 2022; Brunarska and Ivlevs, 2023; Clark et al., 2022; Hunkler et al., 2022; Pagogna and Sakdapolrak, 2021; Pervez et al., 2024; Rishworth et al., 2023; Rootamm-Valter and Herm, 2022; Salerno et al., 2024).

3. Empirical strategy, field and respondents

Building on the theoretic concept of de Haas (2014), an empirical strategy is developed in this subsection for the micro-level analysis of development-migration interaction in a concrete case. Development, as the personal perception of local change in opportunity structures, and migration, as understood as the individuals' personal attitudes regarding the ranking of locations to be (i.e., moving is preferable to staying or vice versa), will be analysed in relation with one another. It is important to note that as the qualitative fieldwork series was conducted with local dwellers of rural settlements, mobilities of all kinds (such as desires to stay or move, concrete and general ideas of mobilities and international as well as interregional mobilities) will be taken into account.

In Central-Eastern Europe, the differentiated countryside consists of a variety of localities between well-off suburbs (Csanádi and Csizmady, 2002; Csurgó, 2013; Kovách et al., 2006) and rural ghettos (Feischmidt, 2013; Kovács, 2005; Virág, 2010). Rural areas of the Central-Eastern region suffered two great shocks in the post-socialist era. The first one was the depopulation of the countryside, which was followed by immigration of underclass people unable to maintain their lifestyles in other settlements of the country. Many rural localities could witness economic development, too, as a result of tourism, location and rural development programmes, too. As the rural countryside is populated by up to 70 percent of the Hungarian population depending on the definition of rural (or non-urban) (Kovách, 2012). The Central-Eastern European countryside therefore, concerning internal migration flows, shows a great variety (Kovách, 2012; Pitoski et al., 2021; Rosner and Wesołowska, 2020; Vaishar and šťastná, 2019)

In the period of 2014–2019, fieldwork in altogether 8 Hungarian, non-agglomeration villages were conducted with the definite aim to try to address questions of socio-economic change in rural areas as well as questions of rural-urban linkages and mobility. Therefore, these settlements were selected in order to represent a variety of rural localities including many regions, a variety with regard of distance to capital and regional centres, a variety of socio-economic situation – for a spatial distribution of these localities, please consult the map in the Appendix. Fieldwork took the time of around a week each, during which either one or two villages were investigated and with one exception took place during the summer. Altogether, 163 semi-structured interviews were voice-recorded of 78 minutes of length on average. This provides around 211-hour length audio source that was after the fieldwork subject of verbatim transcription. Field variety concerns the villages' rural development subsidisation, migration tendencies and labour market as well. Nevertheless, it neither was an aim of the fieldworks, nor is it of this paper to identify specific development projects and evaluate potential changes they generate locally. Instead, a general understanding of the perception of change under various circumstances might provide a comprehensive view on how (im)mobilites are affected by them.

Even though random sampling was not employed in either of the researches, during the fieldwork series, the research teams aimed to ask people with different demographic status and socio-economic background for response. We also wanted to include people with different roles in the localities, thus, to call employed and unemployed, active and inactive people, employees and entrepreneurs, farmers and service sector employee, NGO members and members of the local administration, priests, students and retirees proportionately. As a result, interviewees show a variety considering gender and age, too. Further, around half of the interviewees were born locally, whereas the others moved in only later (on average, in their twenties). Among non-local borns (i.e., 'immigrants), gender ratios are 4:5, with females being overrepresented. As for their marital status, around half of all interviewees were married, 10 per cent (17 persons) single and 16 per cent (26 persons) widow. As they were not directly asked, and the reconstruction-categorisation based on the interviews is often very challenging, exact data on highest level of education has a low validity. However, in general, it can be determined, that a third of respondents are vocational-school skilled labourers, around 15 per cent of interviewees have attended and passed

higher education, whereas some 20 per cent have only elementary qualification. The rest have a middle-level qualification of other kinds.

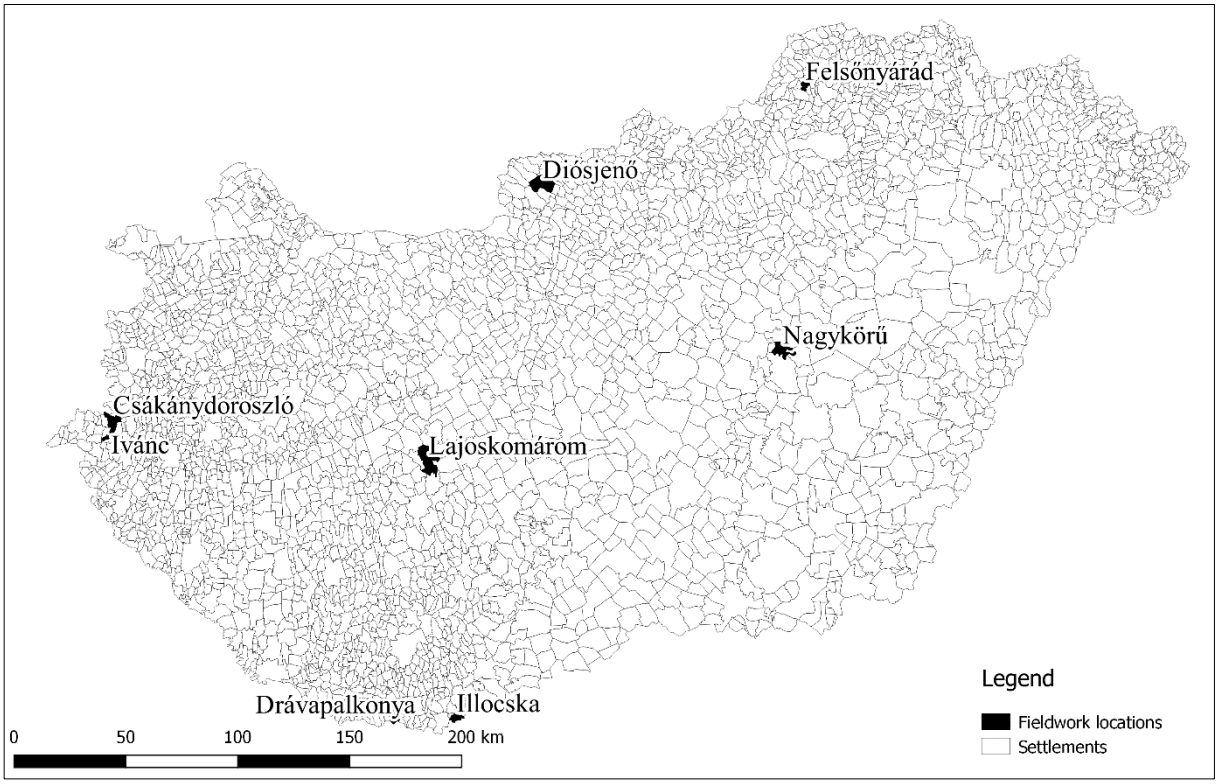

Fig 2. Villages under study. Source: own construction

In general, the variety of both the fields and interviewees allows a multi-perspective approach when answering the research questions. The narratives provided by respondents on perceived social change and migration considerations are fit to describe a phenomenon in its entire complexity and from different perspectives. The analysis of the transcribed 163 interviews was done with Atlas.ti software, which consisted of the following steps:

1. Identifying and labelling (coding) the parts (from a few sentences to longer paragraphs or pages) of narratives separately, in which the following topics were discussed by respondents:
    a. changes (or the lack of changes) in the local setting. Any changes were labelled, let them be social, economic, cultural, infrastructure or lifestyle changes of any kinds which resulted to changes in local lives according to respondents. Altogether, 607 quotations were coded.
    b. development in the local context. Any shorter-longer narratives concerning the question of development (regardless of them trailing concrete changes or referring only to general ideas about development) were coded here. Altogether 319 quotations were collected.
    c. migration. Any narratives were coded where questions of whether or not to emigrate was mentioned with possible reasons for acting alike. These narratives include questions of general depopulation as well. Altogether 367 narratives were selected.
    d. rural-urban connections. All narratives from the 163 transcribed interviews were coded at this step, which explicitly referred to questions or comparisons of rural and urban life or the linkages between the two. Altogether 256 such scripts were coded.
2. Inductively collecting typical narratives. Types of „change" and „migration" responses were identified based on narratives coded into the respective two categories.

a. change narratives: typical narratives included narratives of “no local change”, „local deterioration” (postsocialism/local community/demographic changes/local services/local governance/cultural-mental/aesthetic), „local development” (aesthetic/infrastructural/ political/economic/cultural), „change in comparison (with other places)”, „natural”, „national-global”)

b. migration narratives: typical responses included narratives of „pro-move statements” (no social life/necessity of housework/commuting/self-actualisation/incomes/lack of jobs/fear (security or social downfall)/personal ties/adventure-moving forward/cheaper city life/boredom) and „pro-stay statements” (community/family/fear from new/escaping/ moving costs/rural idyll/local career/undervalued local property)

As the next step of the analysis, respondents were categorised based on their migration-narratives. To answer the research questions, typical “change-narratives” of these individual categories will be connected to respondent categories.

Questions of migration were explicitly issued in altogether 93 interviews (57% of all interviews), of which a three-fourth (n=73) contained concerned ideas regarding personal aspirations for either moving or staying, whereas 20 respondents only mentioned general local social tendencies in relation with mobility. Out of the 73 respondents, more than half (n=39) provided only pro-staying arguments, whereas the others provided mixed or pro-leaving arguments.

To identify voluntary mobile people, the following strategy was employed: at least the ones providing pro-moving arguments belong here, who will be joined by those providing both pro-leaving and positive pro-staying arguments, while not providing negative pro-staying factors. Voluntarism of immobility will be estimated based on the nature of pro-staying arguments. Leaning-to-stay persons mentioned both negative (forestalling) and positive factors for staying – examples for the former are named as ‘family attachment’ and ‘getting stuck’. Those respondents mentioning such negative pro-staying factors for their stay will be categorised as involuntary immobile, regardless of other pro-staying or pro-leaving reasons mentioned, whereas other pro-stayers (not mentioning pro-leaving factors either) will be grouped into the category of voluntary immobile people. The idea of naming anyone involuntary immobile, who provided negative pro-stay arguments, regardless of any further pro-stay or pro-leave arguments is that these negative reasons, approaching them in a qualitative way, dominates all other factors for staying or moving (these exceed all the others in their effects). Categorisation process is presented in Fig 3.

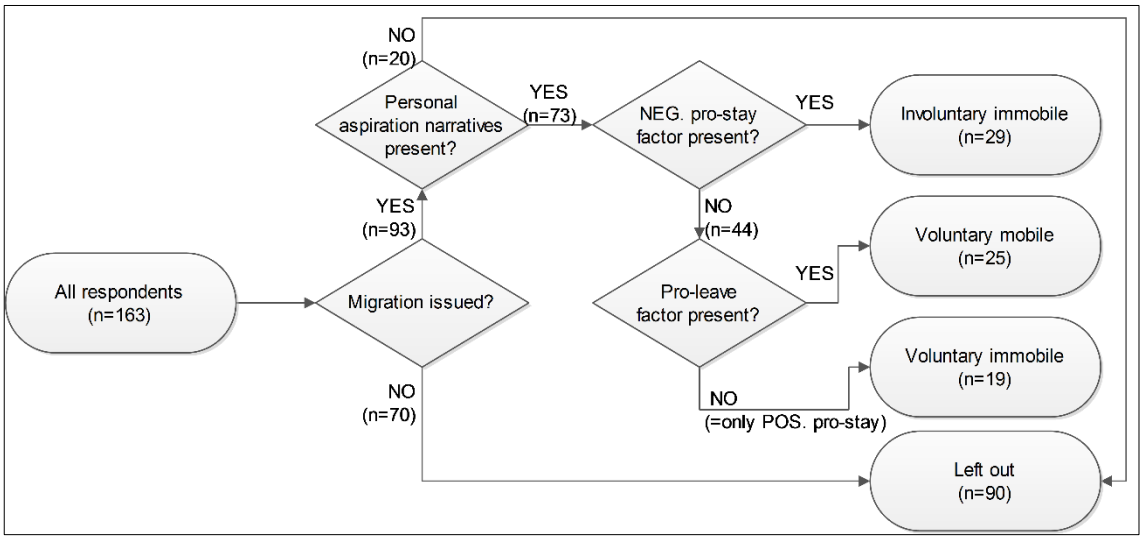

Fig 3. Interviewees’ categorisation process based on narratives. Source: own construction

4. Results

Voluntary mobility

Voluntary mobile people are the ones having both the desire and opportunity to move away from the settlement[5]. Within this, voluntary migrant group of respondents, positive local socio-economic change narratives and narratives of concrete development projects are – contrary to what could have been expected – present, sometimes even as part of migration-considerations. However, this comes in parallel with the sense of general economic downsizing (often compared to other eras, such as state socialism or even feudalism), and those are precisely these comparisons which provide the final balance. Based on these arguments, group characteristics with regard to the relationship between narratives of changes, development and migration can be summarized as follows:

1) **Downsizing and deterioration**: Among voluntary mobile people, we might find respondents with active as well as inactive labour market status (both students, retirees and women on maternity leave). All respondents with active status have decent jobs, either locally or at a distance and neither of them are unemployed. Thus, their narratives on economic downsizing and the lack of local jobs are to be understood in the context that members of this, labour market-wise active subgroup individually having no problem of being employed. This is important to be pointed out, as labour market status thus is not a substantive, rather, a relational factor. Indeed, questions of the current economic status is considered by these respondents in either a spatial or temporal setting (i.e., compared to the past or to other regions' opportunities), and migration aspirations in the voluntary mobile subgroup are not the question of unsatisfied physical needs, and if not being able to financially maintain their lives. The clear disgust from local deterioration is clearly connected to a strong desire to leave in the narrative provided by a public servant respondent, who otherwise have a fine career in a local social institution:

   > *"Why stay where things are worse? Instead, I could live where it's better and better are the opportunities. All services, infrastructure... Why's that good for me that roads stagger my car? During MOT-tests, technicians say, suspension's shit. I should pay them to be repaired. Why me? Society destroyed it!" (Respondent 7114, middle-aged male, public servant, manager)*

   On the other hand, members of the inactive population within the group themselves are either *yet* or *anymore* not affected very much by the local economy and the decrease of local employment opportunities. Students postpone their decision precisely for the period of job search, as disadvantageous economic surroundings are not yet a cause of trouble for them. There are indeed elderly, retired people, thinking of moving not because they don't have employment opportunities, but because – as it is argued – their relatives don't, and maintaining their relationship (and their own security) is hard considering perceived distances and bad commuting opportunities. This form of migration chain (i.e., elderly parents considering moving after their children once they themselves have troubles keeping up with their everyday life) is a distinct pattern of strategies within this group. In general, the appearance of relative change of local economic opportunities within these narratives is well-recognisable.

2) **Understatement of the importance of development projects**: It could have been expected, that perceptions of development are scarce within the narratives of voluntary mobile people. Contrary to these expectations, positive changes do appear and are often presented in the responses provided to questions of change evaluation. As it can be seen in the narrative of a middle-aged woman, actual developmental progress is sometimes considered not even slightly countervailing the smashing deterioration identified as the local social (and labour market) downfall:

[5] One of the main questions to be asked is why they will still be found in the village during fieldwork. The answer is two-fold: first, some respondents might have been found just before initiating practical steps towards moving – this statement is especially due to the young generations. Second, some respondents said they did not have alternatives yet, with regard to concrete destination.

"I know elder people from the late ages, lots of old people and I know them, but unfortunately the village has been aged, and young people have gone. Er... this definitely has lots of reasons, but it is not because the village hasn't developed rightly. This should be put aside, this is absolutely not the point. Instead [sighs] job creation, that's what the problem is." (Respondent 8141, 59 years old female, social care worker. Own translation)

Both physical (transportation and utility) and human infrastructure forms of development are present, which should be supplemented by narratives of cultural and aesthetic transformations. However, these are in all cases presented with distinctive understatement and as being overshadowed by negative changes. Understatements are usually connected to the ineffectiveness of these projects to make relevant differences in important matters, or even causing damages, for instance in the labour market. They therefore are very well aware of these development programmes (let them originate from either national or EU-sources). Some respondents can clearly provide a detailed list of desirable actions of development in the past but even this he says not to compensate for the lack of local incomes from the market.

As it can be seen analysing the interviews, the lack of local enterprises relativizes the importance of these development programmes, let them even be really comprehensive and extensive ones. The two factors and consequences of these are the lack of employment and the lack of freedom on behalf of the local community/local government. Thus, personal migration aspirations are not rising due to the perceived lack of development, but regardless of their existence. Both on the individual and the community level, these changes are reported to have failed to significantly increase opportunity structures, which opportunity structures might also be regarded collectively as personal and communal freedom.

3) **Comparison with the state socialist and feudal systems**

As mentioned, voluntary mobile people regard changes relatively, and it is the relative lack of development, what appear in personal migration aspiration narratives. These relations can be addressed either in a territorial or temporal sense. As for the latter, feudal and state-socialist nostalgia (either generally, or strictly focusing on their economic aspects) appear in the interviews. Nostalgia is either economic or cultural-related in its nature, where economic change include the downsizing of agriculture and the decrease of city industrial jobs, and cultural change reflect either attitudes regarding agrarian production or the general disassembly of local communities. In both the economic and cultural aspects, agriculture plays a distinctive role.

Such a narrative unfolds from a middle-aged man's response, who compares cultural attitudes of contemporary alien entrepreneurs with feudal lords, who are remembered as being tied to the local community in at least an extent. This results in a despise of alien entrepreneurship and a community disintegration:

"These new ownership... land property relations... There are lots of strangers. Lots of strangers; people, who have no connections with the land at all. And it's almost like... this is a new-age pillaging. I live away from here [interpretation from their points of view] and come with those terrifyingly big tractors and combines, show up on the given land, do the job and then disappear. I come again when it's spraying time, come again when whatever, come harvesting and then I'm left, so long y'all. [interpretation ends] And they have no connection to the community, to the place, to the culture. If we have a look at an earl for instance, earls lived here. They dwelt here." (Respondent 7114, middle-aged male, public servant, manager. Own translation)

Besides community disintegration, economic downfall unfolds from these narratives, too.

The main question for us is how narratives of change and development in particular appear in the narratives of respondents categorised by their provided migration prospects. Voluntary mobile people provide narratives about not only the positive, but also the negative consequences of development, and this, too has several ties to agriculture. As it can be seen in the narrative of

an above-quoted middle-aged local public servant respondent, by arguing that agricultural development funds contributed to the appearance of huge land with minimum effort put to it, they refer to the loss of both the economic and cultural ground of local life. This statement is true, irrespective of whether the respondents personally be engaged with local production or not. However, people with strong attachment to the land do provide strong, pro-migration arguments.

Voluntary immobility

While both voluntary mobility and involuntary immobility is an often addressed question of migration studies, the forms of immobility characterised by the lack of aspiration to move is a seldomly issued topic. As Schewel (2019) argues, mobility bias in migration studies are caused by "*the dominance of sedentary and nomadic metanarratives about the nature of people and society*" (4.), which regard immobility as the unimportant, 'normal' behaviour or rather, status of people from which occasionally they are rived off by external factors (see for instance the classical gravity or push-pull models). Historical-structural models (de Haas 2014) put this into perspective by recognising power structures interfering in the otherwise ongoing phenomenon of mobility, but these approaches fail to recognise personal aspirations to stay, too.

Voluntary immobile people were identified as respondents providing only pro-staying arguments, which arguments were 'positive' in their nature, while not providing any negative (forestalling) factors for immobility. Conversely, involuntary immobile people are those providing negative pro-staying arguments regardless of other pro-stay or pro-leave arguments. The number of those belonging to this group is the least numerous (n=19), partially due to the strict definition of the category. Similarly to voluntary mobile people, the socio-demographic composition of this group is mixed. Besides all research fields providing respondents, among those being satisfied with their current place of living and not wishing to move elsewhere, we find both males (n=8) and females (n=11), young, middle-aged and elder people. Moreover, even the share of those being born locally (n=10, vs. n=9; 53%) is similar to the full sample data (57%).

Within migration narratives of these respondents, personal career-motives appear in around half of the cases, but reasons for staying is also connected to ideas of the local idyll, and partially to local personal ties. Here, the concept of personal ties should be regarded rather as a general part of the local life, as one aspect of the idyllic rural countryside in relation with cities, instead of in absolute terms. A reason for this is that in temporal relations, these respondents stress how their personal local social connections and community in general fade away. Most voluntary immobile people, while recognising actions of development in the infrastructure and local cultural life, mostly are concerned about deterioration when discussing changes in the local economy, demography, and most importantly, attitudes of local people and community in general. Characteristics of the voluntary immobile subgroup may be summarized as follows.

1) **A love of the local (rural) idyll**

Those people categorised as voluntary immobile explicitly argue their staying aspiration being influenced by the love of the local environment, together with their memories, and these narratives are often situated in a rural-urban context, too. However, these have little to do with changes. Instead, if anything, changes are to be considered as practically resulting in negative consequences to this idyll, either concerning development programmes or the general downfall in economic life and labour market opportunities. The following narrative, received from a retiree woman presents how in parallel with understanding the negative demographic changes and the narrowing opportunities of local governments, the realisation of economic hopes and a general love of the idyll *appears:*

"Well, my generation, many of them moved to [a nearby town]. Many of them have moved, and I stayed, I never desired... So I desired to live in such a place where I live. I loved living here in the village and I love it right now as well. So no, not even for a thought... that

I move to a city. My life happened in a way, that my husband was from here, too, I had my job here, I never-ever desired. I love... and I loved back then, too. […] Anyway, the financial situation of the local governments, you must know it anyway, what situation are they in: they're dependent. From things given from the highest level. And the tender subsidies, which we apply for and then either receive or not. Back then, it wasn't like this. There is still some local money however, because there are some entrepreneurs in the village and... everything, the local taxes from which they [local government] can gain some profit, but our village is not quite a great grantee of tenders. I think, it's not because the tenders are bad or faulty, but because they [the local government] don't do them. (Respondent 7104, 63 years old female, retiree. Own translation)

Interestingly, rural-rural migration aspirations are not present in the interviews, consequently, all respondents reporting their desire to move wish to move to bigger settlements or abroad. However, several respondents, who have already moved (multiple times) in their lives, moved from another village to their current place of living. The fact that rural-rural migration is not considered seriously refers to the fact that while aspirations of emigration is either facilitated by the will for personal development (career), the hardship in rural life or the 'urban idyll' (cultural and social life), voluntary immobility does not only mean the attachment to the idyllic rural life in general, but instead, to the specific, concrete rural surroundings, the rural locality.

As the love of the rural countryside and the given locality appear in narratives of some of those aspiring to move, too, the voluntary immobile subgroup can be differentiated from the voluntary mobile based on the lack of further personal career aspirations (and/or the ease of their everyday rural lives) which in several cases are provided by the fact that respondents are either retirees or have found their career (or in a wider sense, life goals) locally.

2) **Sense of economic and community deterioration**

Voluntary immobile people may very well be expected to refer to positive changes in the local socio-economic environment more often than others, but the interviews show a different picture. Respondents labelled as voluntary immobile are aware of both the economic decay and the general fragmentation of local communities, however, the lack of their further career aspirations (either because they have already found their good fortune or they're retired) seem to balance this equation. Both of the following respondents are well-off entrepreneurs who identify themselves as having found their life goals and career locally. Despite such a self-identification, they both do understand local economic changes in general as downfall, which they consider as being provided by global, external factors. Nevertheless, this does not affect either the perceived general beauty of rural life or their career and wellbeing:

"I manage my businesses from here, in home office. [...] First impression about the village [...] it's beautiful, [...] and especially these charming hills. [...] [As for changes,] there's a natural population decline, which is a nation-wide phenomenon, but it's effect is boosted a lot by the emigration of young people, who for employment, better life or else, move out, in the better case within the country, but the way I see it, this phenomenon doesn't concern only the youth, but [...] my generation, too. There's no job nearby. [...] I moved here and I feel good, I wanna get old here, gardening. I just conserved 40 kilograms of my own tomatoes and this feels really very good." (Respondent 3115, 47 years old male, entrepreneur, business manager. Own translation)

"Well, in our childhood, [for] peasants, it was a shame to have even a leaf of grass within the grapes. Vineyards were so immaculate, it was beautiful. Horticulture everywhere, unbelievable. Compared to that, it's a terrifying devastation. Those generations have died out, and the children were absorbed by the industry, artificially. Being a villager is not fashionable anyway, let's move to the city then!" (Respondent 8147, middle-aged male, local entrepreneur. Own translation)

Besides all these, even with regard to tourist-frequented, economically developing villages, the sense of this growth being inefficient in repopulating the countryside (while continuously destructing the 'real' rural idyll) appears in some narratives. Similarly to the previous two respondents, the following narratives are provided by local entrepreneurs, too. Besides the tragic view on local economic deterioration, even future possible developments provided by the unique location of the settlements (lying in attracting tourists or commuting workers) are interpreted as not trailing relevant positive outcomes.

While, as it was already highlighted, people concern community as an important element of rural life and the idyllic rural in general, yet they also witness the falling apart of these communities.

However, the sense of falling apart of communities has very few connections with migration as a general phenomenon (i.e., occlusion of local public life in general), only as long as personal connections fade away, which is on the other hand not to be undervalued.

As it turned out during the general analysis of the perceptions of change in many occasions, when respondents report about the 'dying out' of their localities, they in fact refer to the deceased of some of their concrete personal acquaintances, relatives and friends. A similar observation should be made in the case of community fragmentation, which is often meant in a concrete, personal way: the loss of personal ties with acquaintances, or that of weak tie-connections with people with specific roles in local everyday life (e.g., shopkeeper, local government, postman, pharmacist). As much as the perception of economic decline doesn't seem to influence outwards mobility aspirations within this group (by being balanced by personal career), this general sense of community fragmentation doesn't seem to influence it either. What becomes important instead is the lack of negative ties, and the 'at-least' neutrality of between-people relations – the lack of being disturbed.

3) **Recognising infrastructure and cultural development and a criticism of development programmes**

Respondents labelled as voluntary immobile recognise the importance of various development programmes within the respective localities, and the understatement of their importance is scarce (compared for instance with the voluntary mobile group). These concern two major fields: infrastructural and cultural services, which contribute to the wellbeing of local dwellers by guaranteeing, especially for the elder generations a relatively carefree life and some leisure-time programmes.

It can be seen when having a look at the lengthy narratives, respondents are well aware of these changes which are reported to trail positive consequences in their lives and is a boost (or, at least an affirmation) for their desire to stay. Respondents can enumerate in details all the infrastructural development actions that took place since they live locally – often without specifically asking.

> *"When I moved here, plumbing was created, which was a very important investment, and the road network was renewed as well [...] we [the village] just have won subsidies for communal lighting [...] Then the heating system and energetics improvements of the public buildings, then the [cultural centre], fully-equipped. [...] Then, the renewal of [a local park] and the cemetery. In every street, pavements will be done on both sides, with decent paving-blocks, so the development in the village is really very spectacular. Several done by the local government itself, but I don't know what's gonna happen once the EU funds run dry. […] I'm not quite a pro-government person, but the young people, so that young people were supported and given land and other subsidies, is good. And a few, three or four people here grasped this opportunity, and it's fine. The problem is rather, that land distribution was a little corrupted. Contrary to what the goal was, so that smallholders receive land, the result was that those already having large lands, received even more through stooges. (Respondent 5109, 37 years old male, cleric)*

On the other hand, this subgroup criticizes development in general, too, by stating that free money might be counterproductive for progress. The criticism of development projects appear as well in narratives of the voluntary immobile people. This is a result of their usual community inclusion and embeddedness, through which they are much aware of not only the positive consequences but also criticize the redistributive system (instead of specific outputs) in which development projects are embedded.

Involuntary immobility

Among respondents, those were labelled as involuntarily immobile, who, when discussing personal migration aspirations, mentioned 'negative' pro-stay factors, regardless of also articulating pro-leave factors or 'positive' pro-stay factors in parallel, or not. Negative factors included the sense of 'getting stuck' and family-related issues, whereas 8 people articulated both positive and negative reasons for staying. The number of those mentioning both pro-leave and negative pro-stay factors is 5, and an additional 9 respondents provided arguments for all 3 factors, which 4 groups thus provide the sum number of people labelled as involuntary immobile (n=29). The idea behind such a categorisation was that negative pro-stay factors oppress all other forms of motives.

When analysing biographies of the involuntary immobile and narratives provided by them, it becomes clear that we also find successful ones in this group as well, namely, people, who found their fortune, at least temporarily within the village (by having a decent job, own enterprise or having a partner – *husband*, who does). We also find commuting and locally employed male respondents within this group, as much as students and retirees. It should be noted, that purely focusing on those providing exclusively negative pro-stay arguments, without expressing pro-move or positive pro-stay matters, this diversity further persists. Even though voluntary mobile people aspire to move away just like this group of respondents, their perceptions on the current status of the village differ greatly, which correlates with their opportunity structures, namely, involuntary immobile people's much less opportunity to emigrate. However, as several people within this group do have jobs, and sometimes even 'appropriate' jobs, the extent of this pessimism vary greatly. It should be added, that appropriate jobs in this category are often less stable than what could be seen among members of the voluntary immobile group. Perceptions of the involuntary immobile might be organised around these following topics:

1) **Hopeless prospects and uncertainty**

   Uncertainty, and, especially among middle-aged and elderly people within the group, a sense of hopelessness is a well-circumscribable characteristics of the involuntary immobile. The lack of means (i.e., opportunities) for change, including not only the opportunities for moving, but also to change other aspects of local life is a definite and common perception. Moving out in general is an action one might only dream of, but certain circumstances keep them back. Elderly people thus, as can be seen in the next quotation, often understand their situation as being stuck.

   It should be emphasized, that the sense of 'being stuck' is not only the question of the financial situation (the sense of not being able to move will be assessed in the next paragraph). Instead, hopelessness and most importantly, uncertainty might appear in relation with several other aspects of life (incapability to leave friends and family behind, job uncertainty for instance). Uncertainty is a crucial category, and this is why people with otherwise satisfactory labour market background ('living as king', as to be seen in the next quote) might be members of this group. Job insecurity creates a setting that increases people's aspirations to move, while other factors (such as family ties or the temporary job they have, besides the lack of individual funds) limit their capacity to move. Here, the level of voluntarism of (im)mobility is questionable, however, the example shows that development plays an important role not only indirectly, but also by facilitating job creation. One might argue that the temporary feature of job creation might only delay outwards mobility, transforming voluntary mobility to a special, temporary form of involuntary immobility on the very short run.

A young man, just starting his first job, sponsored mostly by EU subsidies, defines this sort of an uncertainty very clearly. Furthermore, this quote also shows that it is a clear matter of young adults as well whether or not to leave their parental home for another city or country:

> *"I think – and it's a cliché, isn't it – that in cities, there are much more job opportunities, and... in general, more opportunities. But it's very hard to leave off. So, whatever, I'm not happy about leaving my parents here, or leaving my friends here. So both have its advantages and disadvantages, and how interesting is it that everybody wants something they don't have. A city resident would move to villages, and villagers rather move to cities. [...] For an entrant, I earn well here, they're very flexible with me, too, I don't have to spend money for basically anything, so financially, I live like a king, I don't have anything to brag about. But then, what's gonna happen next... I work at the association, financed from EU-money supporting entrants. Six part financed by the Union and three parts by the association, that's how it's made for me. But afterwards, then, I don't know what's gonna happen, or where I'll move to." (Respondent 5105, 23 years old male, administrative worker. Own translation)*

2) **Perception of being stuck**

Besides personal, social ties and – occasionally – temporary jobs, financial incapability plays a major (arguably the most important) role in the narratives about emigration prospects. During the years of the fieldworks, estate sale as well as leasing prices rose in each and every major Hungarian cities (as well as in other European countries), resulting in an intangibly great gap between flat prices and most rural dwellers' financial capacities, which affected even the more well-off people (e.g., enterprise owners). This simple and quite clear-cut perception is phrased very well in the narrative of the following lady ("here we are"), who, as a local communal worker, does not at all have any potential chance to leave the locality to change her and her family's local being for the desired city life:

> *„Well, we were born here, I was raised up here. I think, I'm gonna die here. It's not for sure though. It depends. [...] Village people like to move to town. And so to say, some city people, some of them, it depends, like to come to village, 'cause it's more silent. My dream always was to rather live in the city, but then… here we are." (Respondent 2106, 39 years old female, communal worker. Own translation)*

It is a well-considered factor for both local-born people as well as newcomers, that besides price being higher in cities, the value of estates are also different – value here meaning size and "services" a house can provide for its dwellers, with large gardened houses being the ones representing the highest value for some respondents. While the previous respondent referred to a general "urban idyll" as the attraction for ("village people" in general), and parallelly, the "rural idyll" which she considers a usual, general factor attracting city dwellers, this respondent, a middle-aged physical worker, based on personal experiences sheds light to the fact that it is in many cases a financial necessity to move to a rural settlement instead of a general attraction to the rural idyll:

> *"We ended up here after... we had a flat in Budapest, that we wanted to change for a bigger one. But we had deficits, and finally we moved closer and closer to this place and finally ended up here. My sister's family is here, too. So this was a consideration. [...] We have also thought about [closer cities], but we have finally rejected it because the estate prices were high there, too, so that we simply couldn't afford it." (Respondent 6116, middle-aged male, entrepreneur, physical worker)*

3) **Perception of lack of change**

Questions of change and development provide pessimistic narratives in the involuntary immobile group. Besides regarding the local circumstances as being unsatisfactory ('nothing is here') and desperately dreaming about moving to areas with more opportunities and stimuli, besides the perception of being lagged behind, in some interviews, developmental fall-backs appear, too,

which, even among the young generations, formulates a sort of nostalgia. This can be paralleled with the sense of deterioration among other groups, however, within this group, negative changes are focusing mostly to the local environment and its continuous lag, rather than more global (e.g., national) phenomena.

Some younger people, as the respondent providing the next quote clearly have nothing to show regarding the locality's progress, especially in the sense of cultural opportunities for the younger generations. The question of a local club or communal places has appeared in most of the fieldwork locations, and thus might be a general problem. The story is always the same: while being a place for communal gatherings in the pasts, now young people aren't provided the otherwise existing club place due to a lack of trust on behalf of local political leaders. Nevertheless, as it seems, this is only a fraction of reasons for the perception of no local changes:

> *"This village, hare wasn't anything ever. ...Except from, if I'm right – and I am – this was something... where we are, this community centre, in the past. Actors came and stuff, there were some... a disco-like thing, here. [...] They wouldn't leave any opportunity for the young. There was for example in the backyard, a sort of club-ish place, where young people went partying, young people had a key to it, it was theirs, theirs, it was made for them. And it was furnished, and then after... somebody took the key away." (Respondent 4132, 17 years old male, student. Own translation)*

The question of opportunities doesn't just concern community places, but the general level of development that these young people see. For instance, a young man, returning home to a peripheral village to start his life anew, leaves no doubt about how he is concerned about his life returning to a much lower level than how it used to be in a bigger city and the capital of Hungary. He describes this contrast as being enormous and any progress as just closing up to a standard that would long had been more than necessary:

> *"[We have internet through] that stuff that's been mounted to the church tower, the signal's not bad. Two years ago, we still only had dial-up net [laughs], you know [mimicking its sound]. That terrible sound, when you connect and finally get into a page, then go smoke, fry some eggs 'n all, you go feed or walk the dog, and only then you get to read the second half of it. We are lagging way behind in everything. No roads, there aren't! A normal road. A car comes towards you, what y'do? Either drive into the ditch or stop somewhere, 'cause that's what you can. So I don't like this place. I hate it. In the past, it was fuckin' good, now it's shit." (Respondent 1117, 23 years old male, odd-job worker. Own translation)*

4) **Understatement of the importance of development projects**

As seen in the previous comment, questions of actual local development programmes appear in this group, too, but their effect, just as it was seen among other groups, are valued as being unsatisfactory, by not generating internal sources for career opportunities. What should be emphasized is that opportunities are not considered in substantive, rather, in relative terms, compared to opportunity structures elsewhere. Besides the lastly quoted young man's argument about internet connection and roads, it can be seen in the following quote, the applied narrative strategy and phrasing ("little", "fell here", "few dimes", "here and there"), as well, how little members of this group think of development actions:

> *"A little development has fell here, too. You can see the boards [EU-funded projects'] Our village has received 45 million Forints [around € 145,000 in 2016] for the renewal of the community centre. We got some thirty-two [around € 100,000 in 2016] for the health centre, too. A few dimes here and there have been spent on the renewal of the local government building, too. But it is not only these that should be supported, rather, jobs should be created. To keep the people." (Respondent 4114, 67 years old male, retiree. Own translation)*

5. Discussion

Respondents were categorised in the analytical section based on how they deal with questions of mobility, and, as a next step, typical narratives provided by people belonging to the three categories of "voluntary mobile", voluntary immobile and "involuntary immobile" on their individual perceptions of change was analysed in a qualitative way.

Results suggest that voluntary immobility is facilitated by positive changes in local career opportunities (instead of simply jobs), a sense of freedom and independence that the countryside may provide (instead of vivid local cultural life) and strong personal connections (instead of weak community ties). Nevertheless, programmes focusing on the development of utilities, infrastructure and cultural life, though typically do appear in personal narratives of voluntary immobile people, are rather considered secondarily in importance for staying. However, the few development programmes that facilitate personal career opportunities (such as those supporting family farms and manufacturing industry) are much higher in importance, but only among owners and managers. This helps to explain the negative correlation between enterprises and outwards mobility seen in the path models.

Conversely, as it turns out from the narratives, job creation, at least seemingly, positively influences emigration through two factors. First, because the rise of employees is connected to the rise of nearby, rather than local jobs, and without infrastructure development, bad commuting opportunities significantly cause relocations. Second, because local jobs, especially those created through development programmes are temporary and thus, trail uncertainty – in general, they cannot compete with jobs elsewhere and may only delay migration. More generally, development programmes seem to contribute to local labour market opportunities only temporarily, only as long as the given subsidies are being granted and are ineffective in trailing longer-term development consequences. In addition, their negative effects are universally recognised by respondents: by trailing corruption, bureaucratic stress, indebtedness of local governments, the decrease of local jobs (e.g., as a result of land concentration and automatization), and creating distrust, they in several ways result in negative outcomes. These findings don't only support the results of the regression analyses, but also question whether the found more satisfactory elements of those models are permanent or conversely, only temporary.

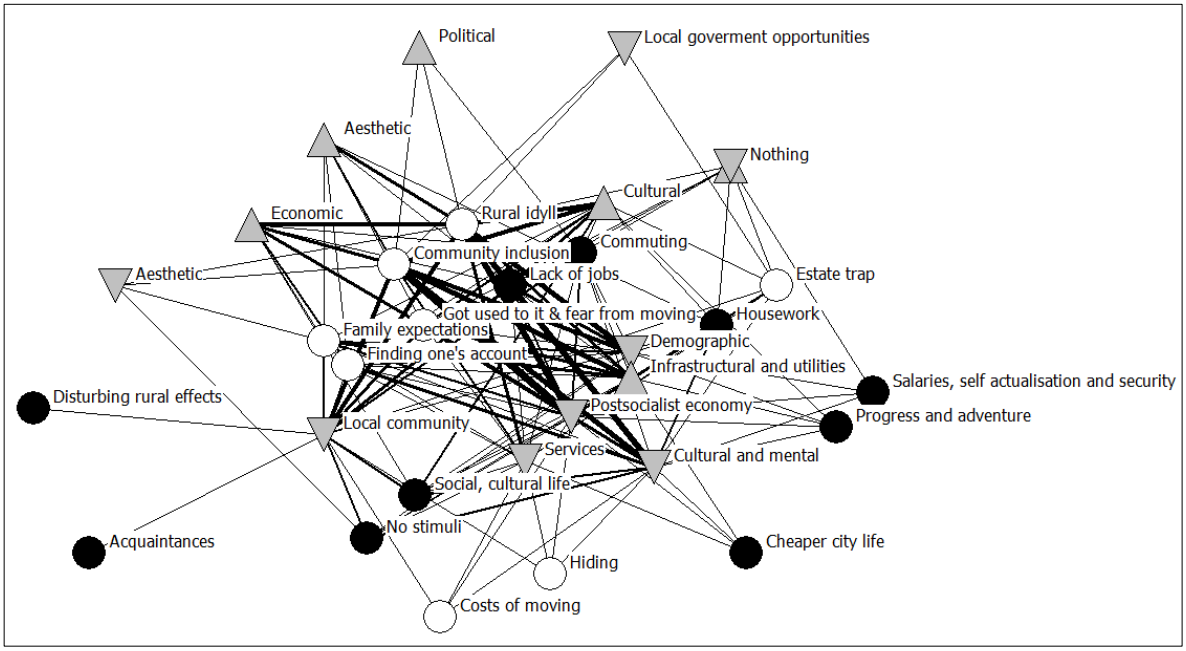

Fig 4. Topic map – Interaction network of the general topics of local change and personal migration aspiration factors. Source: own construction

Note: The figure presents the main narratives of change (triangles: up triangles = positive change; down triangles = negative change; up&down triangle: neutral) and personal migration aspirations (circles: white circles = aspiration factor to stay; black circles = aspiration factor to move). Lines represent the co-occurrence of topics in personal narratives. Line strength equals to co-occurrence frequency of topics within personal narratives. Network analysis and visualisation software: NetDraw 2.175

Figure 4 provides a detailed, summarizing picture of the co-occurrence of various local change and personal migration aspiration narratives. As the figure suggests, positive stay-narratives (idyll, community inclusion, finding one's account & career) are rather connected to the recognition of improvement in the local context (economic, aesthetic, political and cultural), whereas the negative pro-stay narratives (costs of moving, estate price differences) along with pro-move considerations (progress, salaries, cheaper city life) are connected to narratives of decline (demographic, economic decline, cultural decline, decline of services). Furthermore, the figure presents the central ideas appearing in narratives: the lack of rural jobs and commuting problems as pro-move personal aspiration factor appear both with narratives about decline and progress.

Sen (2001) argues that development is an intrinsic part of freedom: development is constituted by the reduction of different types of 'unfreedoms', which are a crucial part of people's welfare even they don't grasp the opportunities provided by freedom. de Haas (2014) connects the concepts of development and freedom to migration by arguing that migration, especially in its intrinsic form, is itself freedom: the fact that they could move, irrespectively of whether they actually move or not, contribute to people's wellbeing. This is to say that the opportunity of migration is only partially a tool for people to achieve their life goals and that migration is not constituted by geographical movements, rather, the "*freedom to choose where to live*" (26.).

Besides the interviews reflecting precisely this wellbeing-enhancing aspect of capabilities to migrate (see the difference between voluntary and involuntary immobile respondents), they also show, that these choices of mobility and immobility, are themselves facilitated by the will of achieving more freedom. Migration (to choose where to live), as a form of freedom, itself contributes to other forms of freedom, however, the narratives indicate that freedom is subjective and not universal, and consequently, aspirations whether or not to move are influenced by personal subjective understanding and ranking of its forms. For some, freedom guaranteed by space and the opportunity for a higher variety of physical activities, provided by the countryside is more important that city opportunities and vice versa. For some, self-actualisation opportunities provided by local activities are more important than city jobs which, besides the opportunities provided by a higher salary may not promise any possibilities for relevant careers.

From the micro perspective, it is precisely the lack of freedom-enhancing factor of Hungarian rural development programmes (thus, their failure to be understood as development in the way Sen understands them), why they seem to be ineffective in trailing satisfactory outcomes. Instead, as seen, these are interpreted by several respondents as dependency-increasing interventions, let these dependencies be meant on either the personal or community level. Despite of a limited expansion in political rights, during the post-socialist period, especially along the Hungarian peripheries a fallback in various forms of capabilities can be witnessed, and these changes explicitly appear in most narratives. While rural development programmes are present in respondents' minds, they are embedded in general interpretations of change, including the decrease in personal opportunities for conveniently access services such as commuting (bad roads and mass transportation), education (closing of local schools), commerce and career opportunities, as well as community-level opportunities (continuous decrease of local governments' incomes and responsibilities). While positive changes due to development projects are thus acknowledged in many settlements (utilities, local culture, aesthetics, etc.), these are, as could be seen, not the factors that influence either immobility or mobility aspirations.

Those are instead personal freedom-maximalisation strategies that play a crucial role both among those being happy to stay and planning to move. Instead of jobs and employment, career opportunities (including entrepreneurship and education) and self-actualisation is, that seems to matter in either moving or staying. Instead of local cultural life, basic welfare services and rural idyll in general, it is personal connections and the liberating aspects of the rural idyll that seems to matter in staying. It is unsurprising thus, that those were exactly these aspects of development programmes that seemed to reduce outwards mobility, whereas other aspects had no or even, contrary effects, some of which lies in the very essence and organisational setting of subsidisation.

6. Conclusion

This research has engaged in a qualitative analysis of how rural dwellers perceive local changes and how this connects to specific personal attitudes with regard to (im)mobility. Based on a series of fieldwork and around 70 semi-structured interviews containing narratives about personal mobility aspirations, respondents were systematically categorised, followed by an evaluation on their specific views on how the local surroundings have changed. Besides providing an (early), systematic empirical attempt to adopt the theoretical framework of de Haas (2014) in a concrete case, the analysis reinforce the intertwined nature of development and migration, which can be understood in both intra-national and international context.

For respondents labelled as voluntary mobiles, positive forms of freedom are more important than negative ones, whereas the contrary might be due to the voluntary immobile. While job creation might seem a beneficial social intervention for the involuntary immobile, mobility aspirations are more affected by postmodern values of self-actualisation than the modernistic value of simple job acquisition, and this seems true to every analysed subgroups. Regardless of being poor or rich, the immobility aspiration of the voluntary immobile is influenced by the opportunity for them to engage in creative self-actualisation activities locally. Although in most cases, those with active labour market status needed high-paying and creative (entrepreneurial) engagements to choose to live locally, relatively poor respondents have argued alike to have found their 'meaning of life' in the local environment.

The results of this research trail lessons for development policies. Generally, various development programmes are present within the narratives on local change, however, these are interpreted as trailing different consequences on the types of freedom reported as being important from the individual perspectives. Therefore, defining development as freedom as Sen (2001) does, it comes clear that various types of projects cannot be referred to as development from these individual perspectives, that vary between migration-categories. For instance, positive changes in local public utilities, services and job opportunities can be regarded as important improvements for involuntary immobile people, whereas for the voluntary immobile, some of these improvements seem freedom-decreasing. However, as argued earlier, among neither of these groups do these specific improvements increase immobility. Furthermore, as for voluntary mobile people, these developments seem relatively inefficient in competing with urban or overseas opportunities for reaching their goals, and consequently, migration aspirations within this are not influenced negatively either. Thus, these findings help to understand from the micro perspective the ambiguous general relationship of development and migration, pointed out by several researchers (Bakewell, 2008; de Haas, 2007; Rhoda, 1983). One of the major findings is, that local career opportunities is what counts more for the aspiration to stay, than simply 'decent' jobs: among the active population, local enterprise owners and managers were the ones having the financial background for immobility. For policies trying to keep the people, instead of job creation, the environment should rather be reinforced for increasing opportunities for individual and creative entrepreneurship and thus, the opportunity for bottom-up development. Based on the analysed narratives, this seems the only way to decrease outwards mobility aspirations among especially the active population. By approaching the question with qualitative methods, this paper might be beneficial for further research on mobility aspirations by providing empirical support for the migration aspiration-capability framework as well as a possible qualitative method for the better understanding of different aspects of immobility. The empirical strategy and tool presented in this paper can serve as a guide to further researches on this issue.

Nevertheless, the analysis has its limitations, partially due to the fact that patterns of migration could only by assessed in cases with spontaneous mentions on geographical mobility, and furthermore, due to only differentiating between three forms of mobilities. The detailed assessment of acquiescent immobility, as Schewel (2015) argues would need more nuanced methodological tools as in this case, the evaluation of objective opportunity structures and psychological responses would be necessary, which was out of scope of the current analysis. Furthermore, neither was a socio-political environment provided for the analysis of forced migration (de Haas, 2014). However, the received results might help not only to understand how personal freedom-maximising strategies are connected to both the general development context as well as (im)mobility aspirations, but also to receive deeper insights of how Sen's ideas of the various forms of

freedom influencing one another work from a micro point of view. Furthermore, from a practical perspective, this and potential similar researches in the future would reinforce arguments about why it is a generally misleading idea to expect development policies to strengthen individuals' will to stay in peripheral regions.

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