

THE COMPLEX OF FACTORS THAT DETERMINE WHY YOUNG PEOPLE LIVE, WORK AND CREATE BUSINESSES (INVEST) IN RURAL AREAS

VILMA ATKOČIŪNIENĖ,¹ GRETA ŠIMKIENĖ²

Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania)

ABSTRACT

The depopulation of young and active people, open to innovation, who seek better living conditions in rural areas is inseparable from various negative economic and social consequences. The purpose of the research is to reveal the main factors that determine the decision of young people to return to live, work and create businesses (invest) in X rural area. In order to attract educated youth to rural areas, it is important to reveal the factors that influence the decision to stay. A qualitative case study was conducted. A semi-structured interview was used. Ten young people who decided to return to live in rural area X took part in the study. According to the respondents, their choice to live in the country was determined by factors such as cheaper housing, inherited property, accessible preschool education, healthier food at lower prices, fresh air, trust and relations based on mutual assistance, family support, farming, and orientation towards foreign markets. However, despite all these factors, young people mostly feel a lack of variety in social services. Also, their initiatives in the sphere of social service are limited.

KEY WORDS: *young people, educated people, living in a rural area, attitude research, deciding to live in a rural area.*

JEL CODES: J17, O15, R58.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15181/rfds.v41i3.2542>

Introduction

Active discussions about improving the quality of life in rural areas started being taken more seriously in the context of the ever-growing urban population and the declining vitality of villages. Although different rural areas face unique challenges, most of these areas are characterised by a weak economy and a limited labour market (Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska, 2021; Sowmyashree, Shivalingappa, 2019; Novakov, Jankovic, 2019), a lack of infrastructure and services (Jesus, Loundres, 2021; Singh, Patel, 2018), an underdeveloped education system (Tindeche, Mărcuță, 2022; Tonezer, Pagliosa Corona, Rauch Ceratti, 2022), and environmental problems (Popescu, Tindeche, Mărcuță, 2022), etc. In research literature, the ageing of the rural population (Carvalho Fiúza, Almeida de Faria, Alves de Carvalho, 2022; Tonezer, Pagliosa Corona, Rauch Ceratti, 2022; Atkočiūniene, Vaznonienė, 2019) is often seen not only as a loss of people of working age, but also as a loss of vitality in decaying rural areas. Meanwhile, the possibilities for sustainable rural development are primarily assessed through the conceptualisation of an efficient social system (Jucevičius, 2014; Budziewicz-Guzlecka, 2019). It depends only on united communities of people whether unique solutions, important to the development of villages, will be found.

Despite all the challenges mentioned, rural areas have many untapped possibilities. Bearing this in mind, a communiqué from the European Commission in 1988 began to discuss various methods of rural development,

¹ Vilma Atkočiūniene – professor, doctor of social sciences, Department of Business and Rural Development Management, Bioeconomy Development Faculty, Vytautas Magnus University
Research interests: competitiveness of rural areas, development of rural social infrastructure, place marketing, social partnership
E-mail: vilma.atkociuniene@vdu.lt

² Greta Šimkienė – MA in education management
Research interests: integrated development of rural areas, development of smart villages, human resources management
E-mail: gre.simkiene@gmail.com

emphasising the active engagement (of local rural communities) in the management of changes in their local areas. In various political and strategic documents, such as the Cork 2.0 Declaration (published in 2016), the European Union Action Plan for Smart Villages (2017), the Venhost Declaration, the 2018 BLED Declaration, the Strategic Guidelines ‘Smart Villages: Concept, Issues and Prospects’ (2021), everything was primarily about people, about communities that strive to improve the well-being of their local residential area.

According to McLaughlin and Gauvain (2016), and Tonezer, Pagliosa Corona and Rauch Ceratti (2022), a young person who goes to study in the city gains different experience than if he chose to live in a rural area instead. A person who goes to study in a city compares the advantages and disadvantages of both urban and rural areas, and makes a decision about his future. Therefore, by creating better living, working and farming conditions in rural areas, it would be possible to motivate more young people to return and live there. According to Carvalho Fiúza, Almeida de Faria and Alves de Carvalho (2022), rural youth should be introduced to the opportunities for work and entrepreneurship in their village while still at school. Also, it is necessary to enrich the lives of young people in rural areas with more diverse and attractive social initiatives, free time, educational activities, and opportunities at self-realisation. Taking into account the need to bring back to rural areas as many educated young people as possible, it is important to reveal and understand their opinions about what the main factors and positive aspects of life in rural areas are that can influence their decision to live, create businesses and work there. Accordingly, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the opinion of young people about the main factors that determined their decision to return and live in rural area X after graduation?
2. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of living in rural area X?
3. What are the opportunities for improving life in rural areas, and how much do young people contribute to them?

The goal of the research is to reveal the main factors that determine the decision of young people to return to live, work and create businesses (invest) in X rural area.

Research methods: the research methods included the analysis, systematisation and comparison of scientific literature. In order to highlight the approaches of the respondents (their coherence or differences), a qualitative method study was chosen. Semi-structured interviews were used to reveal the views of young people.

1. Literature review

When thinking about the possibilities of viability in rural areas as one of the possible solutions to mitigate the demographic, economic and social challenges, researchers identify the choice of educated young people to stay, work, create businesses and invest in rural areas (Jesus, Loundres, 2021; Wielewska, Kacprzak, 2022; Singh, Patel, 2018; Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska, 2021; Popescu, Tindeche, Mărcuță, 2022; Despotović, Joksimović, Jovanović, 2020; Carvalho Fiúza, Almeida de Faria, Alves de Carvalho, 2022; Tonezer, Pagliosa Corona, Rauch Ceratti, 2022; McLaughlin, Gauvain, 2016; Bedmar, Delgado Palma, Granadas, 2021; Sowmyashree, Shivalingappa, 2019; Novakov, Jankovic, 2019; Glasgow, Brown, 2012; Hanlon, Skinner, 2022; Marioara, Armanca, 2019; etc). People who are guided by the engagement paradigm actively participate in the overall process of the sustainable development of villages and discover specific driving forces most suitable for a certain rural area (Atkočiūniene, Vazonienė, 2019). Analysing the demographic development of rural areas in Poland, Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska (2021) drew attention to the growing and complex problem of an ageing rural population, noting that a larger population of young people is observed in villages that are geographically closer to cities, where the needs of young people are easily met. At the same time, those needs are restricted, and the possibilities to satisfy them are limited for young people who choose to live in more remote rural areas. A similar conclusion was made by Carvalho Fiúza, Almeida de Faria and Alves de Carvalho (2022), after analysing the Brazilian regional situation. In addition, the issue of women, who leave villages more often, was touched on. Sowmyashree and Shivalingappa (2019) noted that as the rural population ages, the demand for education, health, and financial and social services decreases. When various services in rural areas are combined, educational and health-care institutions become infrastruc-

rally more difficult to reach, and services in those areas are less accessible. Due to the decreasing demand, in the absence of an opportunity to ensure a critical number of users and qualified service providers, social services cannot establish themselves well enough in rural areas. This factor affects negatively the economic well-being of villages, etc. Novakov and Jankovic (2019), in their analysis of the rural population in Serbia, observed that the demographic potential is an important basis for social and rural development, and many villages in Serbia are empty or demographically old. In addition, some young people who still choose to live in the countryside in Serbia are less educated, or suffer from various addictions. Therefore, it is very important to make efforts to attract energetic and educated young people to live in rural areas. This would contribute to the creation of general prosperity. Popescu, Tindeche and Mărcuță (2022), and Sterie (2020), highlighted the issues of lack of innovation and digital illiteracy through the prism of the ageing population of rural areas in Romania. They also touched on the aspect of smart farming, which is especially important for villages. Although most country people work in the agricultural sector, labour productivity in farms in Romania remains low. It is hoped that by investing the financial resources of the European Union and using new knowledge, innovations and digitisation, the situation might improve. However, to realise this goal, above all, Romania needs energetic farmers who are constantly learning and updating their knowledge. Tonezer, Pagliosa Corona and Rauch Ceratti (2022), and Despotović, Joksimović and Jovanović (2020), also focused on the issue of farming. It was highlighted that it is possible to achieve rural progress by exploiting the potential of rural areas, that is, by strengthening the management of changes in rural areas, having smart, innovative family farming, and educating young working farmers who live and raise families in the countryside and recognise the various opportunities in their local environment. Research about farming opportunities for young people was done by Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska (2021) and others. Researchers emphasised that, specifically in rural areas, things such as a culture of trust and good neighbourly relations between local people can be beneficially exploited as the main strengths when building networks in local farming, local food supply chains, and many more beneficial things. Hanlon and Skinner (2022) defined an ageing population in rural Canada. McLaughlin and Gauvain (2016) analysed young people in rural areas in developing countries who were looking to move to the city. Researchers highlighted three of the most important psychological aspects for such young people: motivation, evaluation, and planning. According to McLaughlin and Gauvain (2016), when going to study in a city, young people are usually motivated by their short-term goals (such as entertainment, casually meeting new people, the various conveniences of city life, etc), and long-term goals (such as careers, housing, relationships, etc). Later, after evaluating their real opportunities and quality of life in the city, young people analyse where the quality of life seemed to them to be better, in urban or rural areas. Young people plan their future and make the decision to return to the countryside or stay in the city. Analysing the scientific literature, it was observed that the main reasons (defined by scientists) for young people who move from rural areas to urban areas are these: the poorer quality of housing in the countryside, an uneducated neighbourhood and its people who often lack social skills, the problems of quality, accessibility and availability of social services, the limited labour market opportunities, infrastructure issues, lack of innovation, better access to high-quality and fast Internet in the city, limited opportunities for the development of business or individual activities, and outdated farming methods passed down from generation to generation in rural areas, as well as a great lack of various entertainment services compared to cities.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research design

A qualitative case study research strategy was chosen, in order to identify and understand the views of educated young people of the main factors that determined their decision to go back and live, work and create businesses in their local rural area after graduation. Qualitative research was conducted for the detailed disclosure of the problematic issue, while delving into the views, suggestions and recommendations expressed by the research participants at the same time.

2.2. Sample

Rural area X was chosen at random. The area of village X is about 65 kilometres from Kaunas, the second largest city in Lithuania. Currently, 587 people live in area X. The research sample was formed in stages. From bigger research groups, other smaller groups were formed (Kardelis, 2017). Firstly, a group of people who went to Lithuanian cities to study in 2011 was purposely selected from the entire population of rural area X. Then, taking into account the specifics of the research, the main criteria for the research subjects were defined (young people who had finished their studies and returned to live in a rural area afterwards were interviewed). Later on, applying the probabilistic target study group forming method, two study groups of young people were selected. One group consisted of people who continued to live and work in rural area X after graduating. The second group consisted of young people who had lived in rural area X for a while after their studies, but later decided to return and live in the city. In total, ten educated young people ($n = 10$), who returned to live in rural area X after their studies, took part in the study. Four of them moved back to the city after living in the village. Six men and four women took part in the study. Informant No 1 is identified in the study as a successful young farmer.

2.3. Data collection methods

The main reasons why young people usually choose to live in cities were revealed with the help of data analysis of scientific literature. Also, after reviewing the demographic challenges of rural areas in different countries around the world, the need to attract as many educated young people as possible who would be interested in nurturing personal and general societal well-being in rural areas was highlighted. The scientific literature emphasises the decision-making moment of young people. Bearing this in mind, it was further aimed to reveal the factors that influence the decision to live in a city or a rural area. Later, based on the data collected, a research instrument (verbal survey questionnaire) was constructed.

An oral survey in the form of a semi-structured interview was carried out, with the help of pre-prepared questions and a well-thought-out sequence for their presentation. Also, the possibility to ask additional questions (in order to enrich the research results) during the interview was foreseen and prepared. The oral survey method was chosen for the detailed disclosure of the research topic. In total, nine questions were presented to participants, three of which were aimed at determining the social status of the informants (education, family status, professional activity). Two of the nine questions helped to determine the factors that led to the decision of participants to live in a rural area, and the main advantages of this decision. Two questions helped to reveal what participants in the interview missed when they lived in an urban area, and what positive changes could attract more young people. Two other questions were about involvement in improvements to the quality of life in rural areas.

2.4. Data analysis

Qualitative content analysis was performed using a semi-structured oral interview. The data collected during the interviews was presented in textual expression, further categorising information in a coding system, and thus discovering the meanings studied. Codes were created based on data from the analysis of scientific literature and informants' repeat answers. This method of research was appropriate, because the researcher sought to interpret phenomena in meanings given to him by the people studied (Williamson et al., 2018). The stages in the research data processing were carried out in a purposeful way, after first collecting data significant to the study, and then interpreting it.

2.5. Research ethics

During the conduct of the study, the analysis, and the storage of its data, all ethical principles applied to researchers were followed. The subjects were informed about the purpose of the study and the use of its

results, and willingly agreed to participate in it. All the informants who participated in the study were adults. In accordance with principles of confidentiality and respect for personal privacy, the research participants were guaranteed that information relating to the research would be available only to the researcher. Adhering to the principle of benevolence and a willingness to do no harm to the subject, efforts were made not to violate the subjects' right to dignity, and to maintain a balance between useful and risky or inappropriate and offensive questions. During the research, the researcher communicated directly with the subjects. An effort was made to treat the subjects with respect and helpfulness, and the questions were formulated in such a way that the subjects were protected from psychological vulnerability.

3. A study of the attitude of educated young people to the main factors that determined their decision to live, work and create businesses (invest) in rural area X

After analysing the answers given by the research participants (regarding the factors that determined their decision to live in the country after graduating, the main opportunities for improvement in the village, and their involvement in initiatives for change), 18 qualitative categories were distinguished. Taking into account the purpose of the study, these categories were divided into three main themes: the positive aspects of living in rural area X, which encouraged motivated young people to return and live there; the main disadvantages of living in rural area X; and the opportunities for improving the living conditions in rural areas and the involvement of young people. Each theme was grouped with explanatory sub-themes, and those sub-themes with sub-categories, which were formulated by analysing the results of the interviews (Fig. 1).

When asked about the main reasons (factors) that determined the choice to return and live in rural area X after graduating, all the research participants linked their decision to the main advantages of living in a village, such as the better social support for a young person who is just starting to build an independent life. Benefits such as fresh air, fresh and healthy food, etc, are good for physical and moral health. It is easier to buy physical assets or acquire them through an inheritance. Most work activities in rural areas are related to farming. Young people can also choose employment in various companies that provide better conditions for the growth of a young person. When it comes to the negative aspects of rural life, all the informants complained mainly about the lack of social services and contacts. Some of the informants in the research chose to return and live in the city for those reasons. When talking about improving the quality of life in rural areas, some informants mentioned that they did not try to initiate changes. Some would like to contribute to changes, but there are not favourable conditions for taking such action. However, none of the informants were familiar with the work of local action groups (LAG), and did not even know about the existence of such groups in rural areas in Lithuania.

From the answers given by the respondents, it can be assumed that there are a number of advantages to living in a rural area, but young people who live there miss mostly the choice of entertainment and social life.

3.1. Positive aspects of living in rural area X that determined young people's choice to return and live there

During the research, it was observed that all the informants returned to rural area X primarily because of the social support of members of their immediate family. Also, after returning to the area, they received a lot of help from the people around them, because due to the smaller population and closer social ties, the residents of rural area X tend to help each other more. Sample expressions are: '...at that time I was already expecting. I knew that my husband would be working hard. Who would help me in the city? And here is my mother, grandmother, aunt...'; '...my father's friend offered me a good position in the company of an acquaintance... in the city I would have been looking for such a job position for ten years, but now I learned everything in the workplace instead. I also have a diploma, which is a plus for the company...'; '...I was looking really hard for a job, and thought of returning here temporarily. My aunt's friend offered me a job here...'; '...it was not easy, either there [in the city] or here [in the rural area], but everyone here helps a lot. Old neighbours look after our children for very little...'; '...then I returned to my parents' farm. They work

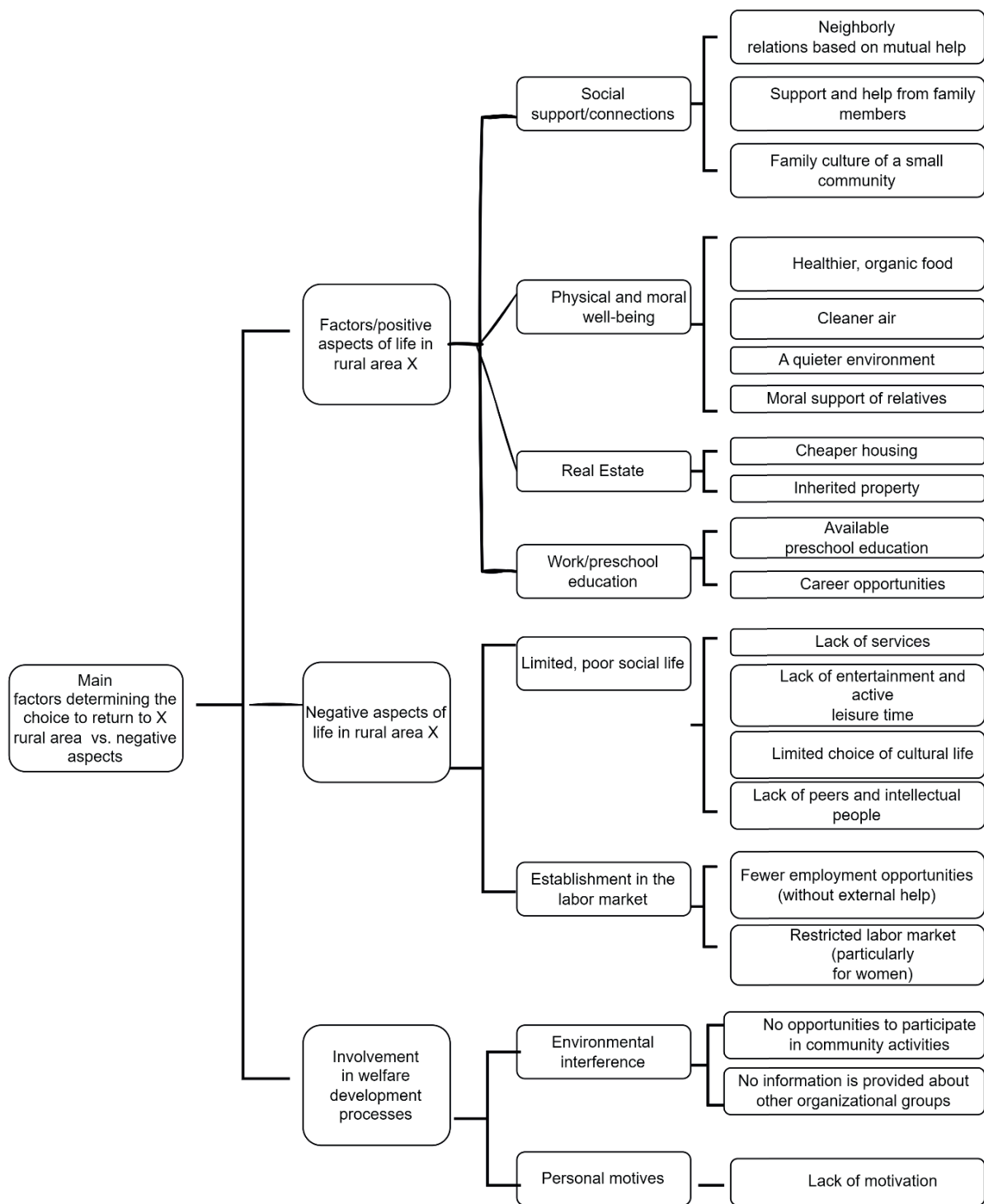


Figure 1. The thematic codification emerging from the interviews

their own way, and now I bring something new as well...'; '...the neighbours all help. They bring eggs, they look after our children...'; '...I came back because there was no help there [in the city] and somehow I stayed...'; etc.

The research data also revealed that, in the opinions of the young people interviewed, the conditions for nurturing their physical and moral well-being in rural area X are better. Sample expressions are: '...fresh air, good food, you can get a break from the children from time to time. A real fairy tale...'; '...it's very calm here...'; '...you don't buy eggs from Maxima [a chain of supermarkets] any more. You buy them from neighbours instead. And you know how the hen that lays those eggs was raised. And vegetables in the summer: a completely different taste...'; '...nature means a lot to me... I often walk... I breathe...'; '...it's clearly a healthier environment, and also, when everybody here is helpful, you feel good, you don't want to shoot yourself'; etc.

During the survey, almost all the participants in the research also mentioned housing or other property acquired under favourable conditions in the rural area of their choice. Sample expressions are: '...my parents' farm is here... I was always drawn to the farm...'; '...father left the house. He died young. At first, I didn't want to stay here, I only came to look round, but I was renting an apartment in the city at the time, and I stayed here in the village for the night more and more...'; '...it's much cheaper both to rent and to buy (property, houses)'; '...we rented for a long time, but it was also much cheaper [than in the city], and now we bought it without a loan ... and in the city we might not even qualify to get a loan'; etc. When talking about work, all the informants noted that although it is not very easy to find a job in rural area X, there are better career opportunities for the chosen job later on. Sample expressions: '...I got my job through acquaintances. At first I thought I'd look at other options, but it was really hard to find any. Demand here is low, but when you get a job and learn, everyone wants you to stay and promotes you to keep you...'; '...it was a very difficult start for me. I opened a beauty salon, but no one understood why. And now older women even come for a massage, even to get their nails or eyebrows done. It's the only entertainment for them here. I'm fully booked, and can't even accept everyone...'; '...my husband got a job through acquaintances, and he is almost the director now. Everything was much more difficult for me. I had to stay at home for a long time...'; '...I can say that everything [with the career] is going very well. It's just a shame that I'm farming for Europe. It's not worth it here. All those constraints. Although I'm clearly learning a lot here, and everything is interesting...'; '...I take my employees on training courses, of course, but I go to study and learn new things, and they go only to eat well ... the lack of innovation is really felt...'; etc. It is important to mention that all the informants had small children, and they noted that one of the advantages of a rural area was that they got a place in a kindergarten easily. Some examples: '...we got it very easily. Without a problem...'; '...ten kids in a kindergarten group, that means a lot of individual attention for them...'; '...we immediately received our place [in a kindergarten]...'.

From the answers given by the respondents, it can be assumed that in the context of the case studied, young people returned to rural area X due to social support and the prospects that opened up for them, which enabled them to have and create an independent life more freely. Also, aspects such as fostering a healthier lifestyle in the natural environment contributed to choosing to stay and live there. A young farmer who participated in the study emphasised that although his activity was profitable (oriented towards foreign markets), and he improves himself with various professional knowledge, there is a lack of innovation in farming, and it is difficult to encourage his employees to learn. However, one of the reasons for returning to the rural area was farming activity.

3.2. The main disadvantages of living in rural area X

The young people interviewed during the case study clearly and confidently defined the main advantages of rural area X, which determined their choice to return and live and work there. Unfortunately, all the informants expressed dissatisfaction with the decline of the social services, the vitality and various kinds of entertainment in the chosen rural area. Sample expressions are: '...well, everything would be fine, but it's too

quiet here. In the city, we went out for a cup of coffee with friends, and here you can only find a kebab shop in the middle of fields...'; '...if any kind of show or theatrical play is planned here, you will be happy, and it doesn't matter whether you like it or not, you simply go. In the city, we spent an hour choosing which movie to go and see, and in the end there are even better free time activities...'; '...I couldn't have known. That's why I went back to the city. I have nothing to do here. Only work. Nothing after work. Such a life has no meaning...'; '... hat to do here... That is the question...'; etc. Also, some informants emphasise the problem of poor social relations. Sample expressions are: '... good for those with second halves, but what about me? If there are any other young people, their activity in their free time is drinking...'; '...people gossip about each other a lot (about me as well)...'; '...you try to talk to someone. Even old classmates from school who didn't go to university or college are difficult to talk to ... you can't find a common language...'; '...you know how much gossip there is here. That creates a lot of pressure, everyone knows everyone...'; etc. It is important to note that all the female informants noted that it was more difficult for them to find a job in a rural area than for their spouses. Sample expressions are: '...no one welcomed me with open arms. They didn't even want me. At first I used to ride home from the city...'; '...a very difficult start. I cried a lot to my husband...'; '...I struck lucky by accident. I participated in the village festival, where I met the current director, but she didn't want to hire me right away...'.

The responses of the research participants helped to determine that the lack of social services, entertainment, employment and social contacts, and communication, are factors that make rural areas unattractive to young people to live in. For this reason, after trying to live in the countryside, some of the informants later returned to live in the city.

3.3. Possibilities for improving living conditions in rural areas and the involvement of young people

When it comes to improving the quality of life in rural area X, all the informants noted that the situation in the country has improved, but not significantly. Sample expressions are: '... when we were younger and attended school here, there were no concerts. And now even Merūnas [a famous Lithuanian opera singer] was here recently. I don't like him, but I still went to the concert...'; '...compared to before, it seems that new events and activities appear, but it's still very little...'; '...there is only one café. Not much really, but there were none before...'. It is also important to note that when it comes to change, some informants did not know where to participate, how to propose or apply their ideas, and only some of them knew the earlier mentioned community group. Sample expressions are: '...I was never interested in it, you know. My wife might know such things...'; '...I don't know who is changing and doing new things there. Maybe some kind of mayor of the district...'; '...a community group, I heard about it. But not about the activity group, I haven't heard about that...'; '...this is the first time I've heard of a local action group...'; etc. Informants who said they would like to contribute to change mentioned that there are no possibilities to do so. Sample expressions are: '...I always plan to go with my husband, but the meetings are always during our work time...'; '...they meet while we are at work. You can't leave your job for a thing like that...'; '...they already have a clear vision there, and announce the results after everything is done...'.

In summary, it can be stated that in the context of this case study, young people see the need to initiate change in rural area X, to achieve a better quality of life, but they do not contribute to the implementation of changes themselves, due to a lack of information, knowledge, or unfavourable organisational conditions.

4. Discussion and conclusions

This study aimed to reveal the views of educated young people about the main factors that determined their decision to return to live, work and create businesses (invest) in rural area X after graduating. Also, one of the aims was to find out which spheres, in their opinion, require fundamental changes, and how young people themselves assess their contribution to improving the quality of life in rural area X. The disadvantages of living in a rural area quoted by informants were closely related to factors defined by researchers throughout

the world: an uneducated neighbourhood, the lack of social skills of local people (Tindeche, Mărcuță, 2022); a lack of or poor-quality social services and various entertainments (Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska, 2021; Jesus, Loundres, 2021); limited labour market opportunities (McLaughlin, Gauvain, 2016); infrastructure issues (Tonezer, Pagliosa Corona, Rauch Ceratti, 2022); a lack of innovation (Singh, Patel, 2018; Atkočiūnienė, Vazonienė, 2019); and outdated farming methods passed down from generation to generation (Tonezer, Pagliosa Corona, Rauch Ceratti, 2022; Popescu, Tindeche, Mărcuță, 2022; Despotović, Joksimović, Jovanović, 2020). It is important to note that, although all the informants returned to live in rural area X, and all have permanent jobs in work positions that meet their needs, some of them had difficulties getting the job they wanted, especially the women. The topic of women in rural areas was also examined by Carvalho Fiúza, Almeida de Faria and Alves de Carvalho (2022). The young farmer who participated in this study confirmed the theoretical assumptions of Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska (2021), Popescu, Tindeche, Mărcuță (2022), Tonezer, Pagliosa Corona, Rauch Ceratti (2022), and Despotović, Joksimović, Jovanović (2020). These assumptions by the researchers state that farming is not attractive to young people due to the lack of innovation and the lack of recognition of the importance of science in it. Also, in rural farming, the lack of advanced technologies is felt. In the case of one respondent, farming in area X is profitable, but oriented towards foreign markets, where there are some serious barriers to this business activity. Also, his work activity lacks innovation, and the engagement of people who work together in continuous learning.

Some of the informants tried to live in rural area X after completing their studies, but they decided to return and live in cities after all, due to the lack of social services, entertainment and communication, and social contacts. This trend was noticed by researchers. They established that young people who live in rural areas that are geographically close to cities and have the opportunity to access social and cultural services more easily, move from the countryside to the city less often (Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska, 2021; Carvalho Fiúza, Almeida de Faria, Alves de Carvalho, 2022).

Research data revealed that young people still return and live in rural areas in order to work and create businesses (invest). One of the informants is developing a beauty services business. Another respondent is engaged in farming. Some have successfully found a job. Almost all the informants started a family and have at least one child. Various social, economic and other problems that researchers have identified as reasons for the loss of vitality in rural areas could be alleviated by attracting more young people to work, live and create businesses in the countryside. Scientists emphasise that the prosperity of villages depends on the local people, who can have a huge impact on creating it. Meanwhile, the research participants revealed that they are not currently involved in processes of improving the quality of life of rural people, due to insufficient information about initiatives by local activity groups, or other unfavourable organisational reasons. Some of the informants do not contribute to changes and innovations due to a lack of motivation. It should be noted that these are the same research participants who left rural location X and moved to the city.

The purpose of the research was to establish the main factors that determined the decision of young people to live, work and create businesses in rural area X. The respondents emphasised that they returned to the country due to the social support and job prospects that opened up for them. These aspects enabled them to create and have an independent, more prosperous and more hopeful life. Also, the possibilities for fostering a healthier lifestyle in a natural environment contributed to their decision to move out of the city. It is important to note that in rural area X, people manage to create new businesses and find profitable self-employment activities. One of the reasons for many interviewees returning to the countryside was farming activity, but there is a particular lack of innovation in this area, and it is difficult to encourage people who work in farming to learn new things.

References

- Atkočiūniene, V., Vazonienė, G. (2019). Smart Village Development Principles and Driving Forces: The Case of Lithuania. *European Countryside*, 11, 497–516. Doi: 10.2478/euco-2019-0028.
- Budziejewicz-Guzlecka, A. (2019). Smart village as a direction for rural development. *Economic Science for Rural Development Conference Proceedings*, 52, 22–28. Doi: 10.22616/ESRD.2019.100.
- Despotović, A., Joksimović, M., Jovanović, M. (2020). Demographic revitalization of montenegrin rural areas through the smart village concept. *Agriculture & Forestry / Poljoprivreda i Sumarstvo*, 66 (4), 125–138. Doi: 10.17707/AgricultForest.66.4.10.
- De Carvalho Fiúza, A., Almeida de Faria, G. J., De Carvalho, A. A., Rodrigues, N. B. (2022). Commuting in the Rural Environment: The Field-City Interrelations in Small Municipalities of the Zona Da Mata Mineira, Minas Gerais, Brazil. *Journal of Rural & Community Development*, 17 (1), 69–89. <https://web-p-ebshost-com.ezproxy.vdu.lt:2443/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=9&sid=08d3b173-c8d8-45b7-ac2c-726d86ad58cf%40redis>.
- Glasgow, N., Brown, D. L. (2012). Rural ageing in the United States: Trends and contexts. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 28 (4), 422–431. Doi: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2012.01.002.
- Hanlon, N., Skinner, N. W. (2022). On older person/place transformations: Towards a more-than-representational geography of aging in rural Canada. *Canadian Geographer*, 66 (1), 145–155. Doi: 10.1111/cag.12737.
- Ilie, N., Oprea, J. A., Turcea, V. C., Parnus, A. (2022). New dimensions of rural communities' development in Romania – smart village concept. *Scientific Papers Series Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture & Rural Development*, 22 (2), 425–435. <https://web-p-ebshost-com.ezproxy.vdu.lt:2443/ehost/detail/detail?vid=26&sid=08d3b173-c8d8-45b7-ac2c-726d86ad58cf%40redis&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHVybCxlWQmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#AN=158046119&db=asn>.
- Jesús, J., Lourdes, P. (2021). *(Re)thinking smart in rural contexts: A multi-country study*. *Growth and Change*. Doi: 10.1111/grow.12612.
- Jucevičius, R. (2014). Sumaniojo miesto vystymo strateginės dimensijos. *Public policy and administration*, 13 (3), 427–441. Doi: 10.5755/j01.ppaa.13.3.8299.
- Kardelis, K. (2017). *Research Methodology and Methods: Educology and Other Social Sciences*. Vilnius: Science and Encyclopedia Publishing Center.
- Marioara, I., Armanca, L. (2019). Sustainable development initiatives and practices for smart villages. *Agricultural Management / Lucrari Stiintifice Seria I, Management Agricol*, 21 (3), 412–416. <https://web-s-ebshost-com.ezproxy.vdu.lt:2443/ehost/detail/detail?vid=9&sid=2d8ce619-b94e-47d5-8e45-f3bdfea755ff%40redis&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHVybCxlWQmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#AN=140997661&db=bsu>.
- McLaughlin, H., Gauvain, M. (2020). Looking into the future: Using drawings and interviews to uncover migration expectations among rural Ugandan youth. *Peer Reviewed Journal*. Doi: 10.1037/ipp0000058.
- Novakov, M., Jankovic, D. (2019). Portrait of the rural population of Serbia at the beginning of the new Millennium. *Proceedings of the IAE Scientific Meetings*, 506–524. <https://web-p-ebshost-com.ezproxy.vdu.lt:2443/ehost/detail/detail?vid=17&sid=08d3b173-c8d8-45b7-ac2c-726d86ad58cf%40redis&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHVybCxlWQmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#AN=135900581&db=asn>.
- Patel, M., Singh, A. (2012). Achieving inclusive development through smart village. *Journal of Energy and Management*, 3 (1), 38. <https://www.pdpu.ac.in/downloads/SPM%20JEM%20Oct18-Editorial%20Chap4.pdf>.
- Popescu, A., Tindecu, C., Mărcuță, A., Mărcuță, L. (2022). Rural areas in Romania – discrepancies versus urban areas and European Union. *Scientific Papers Series Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture & Rural Development*, 22 (1), 515–532. <https://web-p-ebshost-com.ezproxy.vdu.lt:2443/ehost/detail/detail?vid=6&sid=08d3b173-c8d8-45b7-ac2c-726d86ad58cf%40redis&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHVybCxlWQmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#AN=156517019&db=asn>.
- Sowmyashree, K. L., Shivalingappa, B. N. (2019). Determinants and Implications of Population Ageing in Mysuru District: A Comparative Micro Level Analysis between Rural and Urban Areas. *Indian Journal of Gerontology*, 33 (1), 31–43. <https://web-p-ebshost-com.ezproxy.vdu.lt:2443/ehost/detail/detail?vid=15&sid=08d3b173-c8d8-45b7-ac2c-726d86ad58cf%40redis&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHVybCxlWQmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#AN=135768889&db=asn>.
- Sterie, C. (2020). Analysis regarding the situation of the Romanian village – case study, Tetoiu commune, Vâlcea county, Romania. *Scientific Papers Series Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture & Rural Development*, 20 (3), 583–588. <https://web-s-ebshost-com.ezproxy.vdu.lt:2443/ehost/detail/detail?vid=11&sid=2d8ce619-b94e-47d5-8e45-f3bdfea755ff%40redis&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHVybCxlWQmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#AN=146519879&db=asn>.
- Tonezer, C., Pagliosa Corona, H. M., Rauch Ceratti, E. R. (2022). Rural youth: challenges and possibilities for the social reproduction of family farming. *Redes (1414–7106)*, 27 (1), 1–18. Doi: 10.17058/redes.v27i1.15425.
- Williamson, W. (2018). *Qualitative data analysis. Research Methods*. Doi:10.1016/B978-0-08-102220-7.00019-4.
- Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska, A. (2021). Rural areas endangered with depopulation as problem areas – the example of Poland. *Research Papers of the Wrocław University of Economics*, 65 (1), 158–170. Doi: 10.15611/pn.2021.4.10.

KOMPLEKSAS VEIKSNIŲ, LEMIANČIŲ JAUNIMO PASIRINKIMĄ GYVENTI, DIRBTI IR KURTI (INVESTUOTI) KAIMIŠKOJOJE VIETOVĖJE

VILMA ATKOČIŪNIENĖ¹, GRETA ŠIMKIENĖ²
Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas (Lietuva)

Santrauka

Jaunų žmonių apsisprendimas išvykti iš kaimiškųjų vietovių ir toliau kurti savo ateitį miestuose dažniausia siejamas su didesnėmis sėkmės garantijomis, karjeros galimybėmis bei būtinais patogumais. Neretai veržlaus, inovacijoms atviro ir geresnių gyvenimo sąlygų siekiančio jaunimo depopuliacija, vykimas iš kaimų į miestus riboja vietos plėtros procesus. Gyventojų skaičiaus pokyčiai ir populiacijos senėjimas neatsiejami nuo neigiamų ekonominių, socialinių pasekmių, darbo rinkos pokyčių bei gyventojų neveiksmingumo dėl naujovių baimės. Mokslinėje literatūroje dažnai nagrinėjamas problemiškas kaimų populiacijos senėjimo klausimas, tačiau siekiant į kaimiškąsias vietas pritraukti aktyvaus, išsilavinusio jaunimo, svarbu atskleisti veiksnius, lemiančius jaunų žmonių pasirinkimą likti gyventi, dirbti, investuoti (kurti) kaimiškose vietovėse. Siekiant atskleisti požiūrių įvairovę ir jų dermę ar skirtumus atliktas kokybinis atvejo analizės tyrimas, kuriame dalyvavo šeši aukštąjį išsilavinimą įgiję ir apsisprendę grįžti gyventi į X kaimiškąją vietovę jauni žmonės bei keturi išsilavinę jauni žmonės, kurie baigę studijas grįžo gyventi į X kaimą, bet vėliau priėmė sprendimą persikelti į miestą. Vienas iš informantų buvo jaunas ūkininkas. Siekiant nustatyti požiūrį pasitelktas iš dalies struktūruotas interviu, kurio transkribuoti duomenys pateikti tekstine išraiška, toliau juos kategorizuojant pagal tam tikrą kodavimo sistemą ir taip atrandant tiriamas prasmes. Atlikta kokybinė turinio analizė. Išanalizavus tyrimo duomenis suformuluotos tokios išvados: jaunų žmonių požiūriu, jų pasirinkimą gyventi kaime nulėmė tokie veiksniai kaip pigesnis būstas; lengviau prieinamas ikimokyklinis vaikų ugdymas; galimybė pigiau įsigyti sveikėnio, ekologiško maisto; savitarpio pagalba ir pasitikėjimu pagrįsti kaimyniški santykiai; ramesnis gyvenimas; grynas oras; paveldėtas turtas; artimų giminystės ryšių puoselėjimas; šeimos narių pagalba; ūkininkavimas, orientuotas į užsienio rinkas. Kaip vieną iš gyvenimo kaimiškojoje vietovėje privalumų informantai įvardijo nuoseklesnį ir greitesnį karjeros siekimą. Visgi apibendrinus tyrimo duomenis nustatyta, kad nepaisant įvardytų privalumų, kaimiškose vietovėse jaunam žmogui labiausiai trūksta socialinių paslaugų ir pramogų įvairovės, o jų pačių iniciatyvas prisidėti prie šių paslaugų organizavimo riboja tam tikri išorės bei asmeniniai veiksniai. Todėl dalis informantų, pagyvenę kaimiškojoje vietovėje, pasirinko grįžti į miestą.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: jauni žmonės, išsilavinę žmonės, gyvenimas kaimiškojoje vietovėje, požiūrio tyrimas, apsisprendimas gyventi kaime.

JEL KLASIFIKACIJA: J17, O15, R58.

Received: 2023-04-10

Revised: 2023-07-02

Accepted: 2023-08-16