

# FROM SPATIAL INEQUALITIES TO SOCIAL WELL-BEING

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# The Spatial Social Characteristics of Hungarian Metropolitan Regions and the Transformation of the Core—Periphery Model<sup>29</sup>

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## Introduction

This chapter examines the spatial social characteristics of Hungarian metropolitan regions in order to explore and interpret their spatial structure and its changes by comparing the results of nine representative researches carried out in 2005<sup>30</sup> and 2014<sup>31</sup> in nine metropolitan regions<sup>32</sup> (with more than 100,000 residents).

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<sup>30</sup> The research project implemented in 2005, was carried out within the framework of 'Urban Areas, Spatial, Social Inequalities and Conflicts - The Spatial Social Factors of European Competitiveness' research project implemented between 2004 and 2007, in consortium framework, with the financial assistance of National Research and Development Programmes. The leading institution was the Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The consortium members were Centre for Regional Studies, Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences, PESTTERV Pest County Regional, Settlement, Environmental Planning and Consulting Ltd. and Fejér Enterprise Agency in Székesfehérvár. The head of research project was Prof. Dr. Viktória Szirmai. The sociological survey was conducted by TÁRKI Social Research Inc.

<sup>31</sup> The 2014 research project 'Social Conflicts – Competitiveness and Social Development - Social Well-being and Security' was the result of TÁMOP 4.2.2.A-11/1/KONV-2012-0069 research project. The project was implemented between 2013 and 2015, also in a consortium, led by the Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences and the members were Széchenyi István University and Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Economic and Regional Studies Regional Research Institute. The head of research project was Prof. Dr. Viktória Szirmai. The sociological survey was conducted by TÁRKI Social Research Inc.

The two surveys were conducted almost ten years apart. This allows us to examine what happened to the social structure of Hungarian metropolitan regions in this period, to see how apparent (if at all) are the effects of social and structural changes, the economic crisis, and, most importantly, the effects of global-level urbanisation.

During the 2005 survey we believed to have captured not only an important moment but such one that would characterise the social structure and features of Hungary's metropolitan regions for a long time. However, during the next nine years, both the newest European urban development trends<sup>33</sup>, and the newest studies of the Hungarian social structure<sup>34</sup> showed an increasing possibility of transformation in these previously recorded processes.

During the analysis, we wanted to know what characterises the social structure of Hungarian metropolitan regions and what changes can be observed in 2014 compared to the structural characteristics we found in 2005. Finally, we also wanted to see whether social polarisation mechanisms observed in European metropolitan regions are also present here.

The main assumption underlying our 2014 study was that the structure of metropolitan regions observed in 2005 would undergo a transformation in line with the characteristics of the contemporary European metropolitan regions. Accordingly, spatial social polarisation has increased along with social marginalisation.

Next, we will look at the empirical data. We will present the most important (historic) results of the 2005 study. Then, we will indicate the trends present in 2014 by comparing this to current data. We also have the opportunity to present a 2010 snapshot of the Budapest metropolitan region. This was necessary because here the impacts of the above mentioned changes<sup>35</sup> were already perceptible. At the end of the chapter, we will answer the initial questions and summarise the principal trends.

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<sup>32</sup> In both cases, the research sample areas were the nine major cities of Hungary, Budapest and its agglomeration, and eight Hungarian cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants: Debrecen, Győr, Kecskemét, Miskolc, Nyíregyháza, Pécs, Szeged and Székesfehérvár, and their metropolitan region. The research was built on a number of methods, but the most important was a representative questionnaire survey based on 5,000 people interviewed.

<sup>33</sup> See their presentation in the introductory chapter and in the sub-chapter on the well-being issues of the European urbanization periods.

<sup>34</sup> See the relevant findings on social structure in the introductory chapter.

## The historical background

The 2005 study started from the assumption that the model along which Hungarian metropolitan regions historically developed involved a centre of high social status surrounded by a periphery of low social status<sup>36</sup>. (After the turn of the century, for example, higher-status social groups in Budapest inhabited inner districts, while up to 1950, lower-status groups lived in Budapest's suburban zones, industrial districts and in peripheral settlements<sup>37</sup>.) During the socialist era, the historical core–periphery social inequality model had changed with the declining prestige of the city centre, urban decay, and the quasi-suburbanisation processes that followed the development of new real estates in the outskirts of cities, though living in a Hungarian city centre (or in any city centre in Europe) has always been an object of value. The European middle class has never rejected the inner parts of the city in the same way that wealthy classes did in the US, so moving to suburbs has never reached the levels experienced by American metropolises. This still holds true today as people living in metro-

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<sup>35</sup> The research project '*Sustainable Consumption, Production and Communication. Social Mechanisms and Vested Interests in Defining the Modern Consumer Models. The Social and Spatial Model of Sustainable Consumption*' implemented between 2009 and 2011 was carried out in consortium, led by Corvinus University in Budapest with the financial assistance of Norway Grants (Norwegian Financial Mechanism). (Reference no.: 0056/NA/2006-2/ÖP). The partial research conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was headed by Prof. Dr. Viktória Szirmai. The results are provided by a representative questionnaire survey of 1,000 people in the metropolitan regions of Budapest.

<sup>36</sup> The core–periphery model here is used in social geographic and sociological sense. In geographical terms, centre means the spatial centre of a specific geographical unit; periphery means the outlying areas of the particular geographical unit. Between centre and outlying areas there may be historically changing economic, infrastructural, functional and social disparities and inequalities. These inequalities mark the positions of the spatial geographic centre of the unit and the ecological positions of periphery as well. In sociological terms centre and periphery express the position of population located in the geographical space in the social hierarchy in the centre and the social status of population living in the periphery. As a result of the 2005 survey in our 'traditional' core–periphery model the population's position in the social hierarchy was the highest in the geographical centre and moving outward from the city centre it was gradually decreasing as a tendency.

<sup>37</sup> In Budapest this kind of core–periphery model never prevailed clearly; in the city centre always lived lower-status groups as well; partly for urban planning, architectural reasons, partly because of the composition of urban society, and partly as a result of the low percentage of higher and middle classes.

politan city centres (including the middle class) value the advantages it provides. While evaluating migration processes, it was clearly visible that in 2005 only a minority of city centre residents strived to move out of the city centre.

The processes of this transition transformed the traditional core–periphery structure by partially strengthening and partially reorganising it. The representative sociological study conducted in nine metropolitan regions in 2005 showed a definite spatial social hierarchy not only between cities and their suburban zones but also in the internal structures of cities themselves. According to the study, going from the city centre towards outskirts districts and suburban zones, the number of people in higher social status (who are highly educated and perform qualified jobs) hierarchically decreased while lower status groups (who were low-skilled or unqualified) showed an increasing concentration.

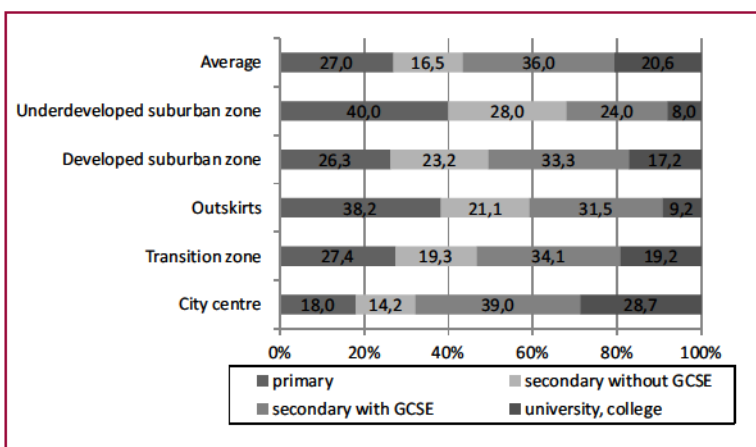
This hierarchy seemed to be clear, as long as urban regions were analysed in general and not according to their level of development. As soon as we started to examine the social structure of developed and underdeveloped urban regions separately<sup>38</sup>, there was no longer a clear hierarchical trend between the population's education level and its distribution. As a result, in the case of developed urban regions there was no longer a clear 'social downward slope' (in terms of education and qualification) that stretched outwards from the city centre toward suburban zones. Instead, this decrease in social status stopped at the surroundings, as those had highly developed infrastructure (see Figure 12. and 13.). This revealed that the urban area is comprised of spatial social units with differing social statuses, some higher and some lower. The reason for this was that there were zones and villages in the metropolitan region which were inhabited by social groups of higher or lower social status.

The changes were caused by the strengthening of certain layers of the urban middle class, the bettering of their financial situation and the resulting requirements for new housing which led to their need to 'occupy' better suburban settlements – altogether stimu-

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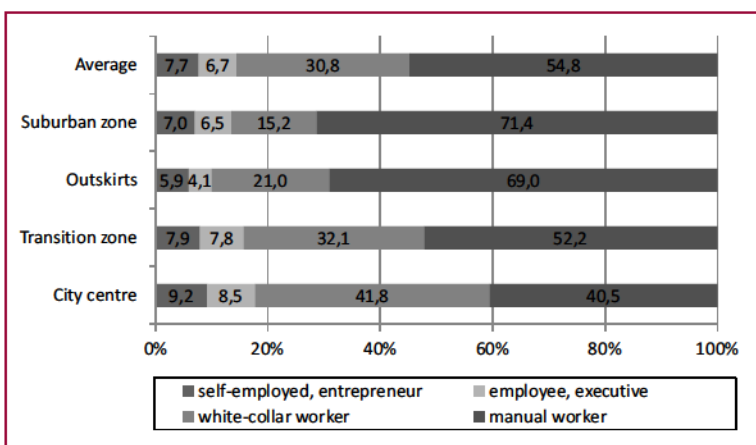
<sup>38</sup> The developed and underdeveloped suburban zones in 2005 and 2014 were marked out in a similar way: by using the so-called rank number method based on the statistical data defined by the research team. The ranking included different indicators of accessibility, housing, public and higher education, health care, entrepreneurial activity, taxation, income, employment, unemployment, mobility, and social care.

**Figure 12:** The distribution of the residents of the nine metropolitan regions by educational attainment (% , 2005)



Source: The authors' edition based on National Research and Development Programme survey data

**Figure 13:** The distribution of the population of the nine metropolitan regions by job position (% , 2005)



Source: The authors' edition based on National Research and Development Programme survey data

lating the process of suburbanisation. Another determining factor was the displacement of lower status social groups from better neighbourhoods to less developed, more disadvantaged suburban settlements. This was caused by the city centre's transformation and citification, leading to increased real estate prices. The transition changed the economic value of the peripheral zones of urban regions. While most of the economic potential was still concen-



trated in metropolitan city centres, the needs of global economy, the location choices of transnational and multinational companies, and companies located in background settlements increased the economic role of metropolitan regions.

According to the results of the 2005 research project the core–periphery model was still functioning to a certain degree in Hungarian metropolitan regions since people of higher social status usually inhabited cities and their central districts while those of lower social status lived in outskirts districts and urban peripheries. Back then, this phenomenon was named as dual hierarchical spatial-social structure (see Szirmai, 2009, 119–123.). However, the transformation of spatial social, structural characteristics, the differentiation of the societies of urban regions, and the higher social status of population in more developed areas all signalled the new features of the traditional core–periphery model, the restructuring of the social characteristics of the peripheries as well. Based on this, we concluded that the traditional core–periphery model did not fully apply to Hungarian urban regions: the spatial, ecological and social downward slope (that existed between the two ‘endpoints’ of city centre and periphery) was broken by the social structure of developed urban regions and the higher percentage of higher-status groups (see Figure 16. below).

After analysing the data gathered in 2005 we were uncertain about the future development of the spatial social structure as multiple scenarios seemed possible. According to one, the most realistic option was a strengthening dual-structured core–periphery model. In this possible future model, the social value of the centre would continue to rise, especially if the outflow of higher-status people slowed down or their backflow increased. This seemed realistic if city centre regeneration processes were extended, if the gentrification of inner neighbourhoods strengthened, or if urban area development would not improve significantly, if the social prestige of urban regions was to drop.

Another possibility was that the prestige of certain parts of the urban regions would rise, along with the number of higher-status suburbs and suburban settlements. This would be made possible by the outward migration of higher-status inner-city residents, but especially by the middle classes’ longing for out-migration (as indicated by the 2005 research). However, this would require urban regions to develop more dynamically than they do today. The con-

tinuation of the isolated regeneration of city centre quarters may strengthen the outward migration of the middle classes.

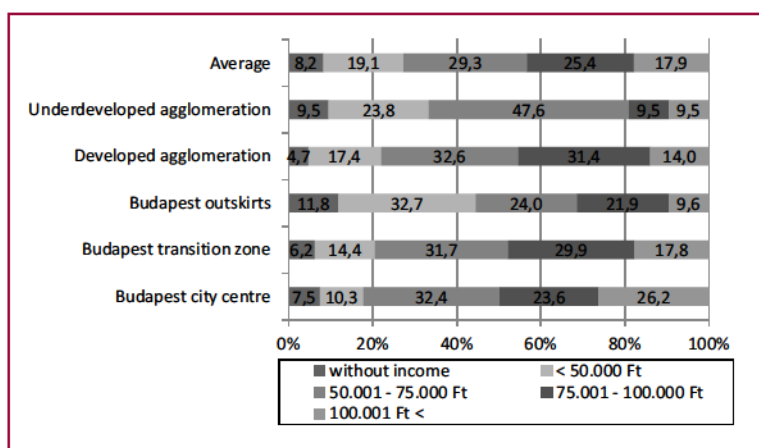
So it seemed that the future of the dual model is principally determined by how social structure and spatial social inequalities would progress and what kind of spatial mobility strategies could arise from the situation, options and satisfaction of major occupational groups. However, research results from 2014 reveal that events occurred along a third, new scenario which incorporated both the first and the second one.

## Processes perceived in Budapest metropolitan region

The emerging signs of the new scenario were already perceptible in the 2010 survey of Budapest metropolitan region. This new scenario showed the previously mentioned European trend that predicts an increase in social polarisation in urban regions along with an accelerating social exclusion.

According to the results of the Norwegian project<sup>39</sup>, the comparison of the 2005 and 2010 distributions of the residents' net

**Figure 14:** The distribution of population by net monthly income in the different zones of Budapest metropolitan region (% , 2005)



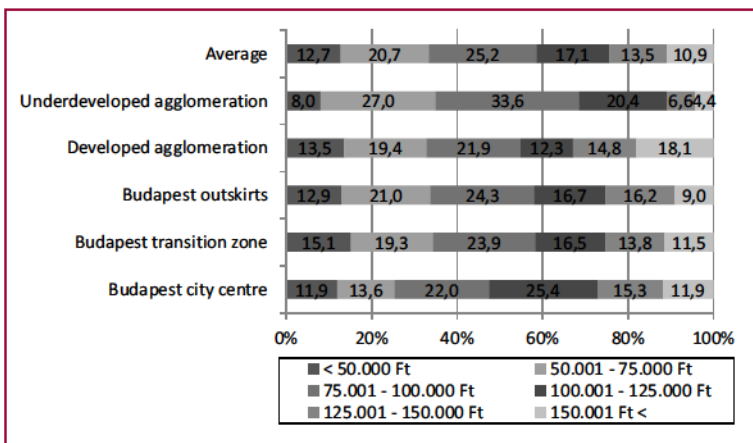
Source: The authors' edition based on National Research and Development Programme survey data

<sup>39</sup> See the project' details in footnote No. 35.



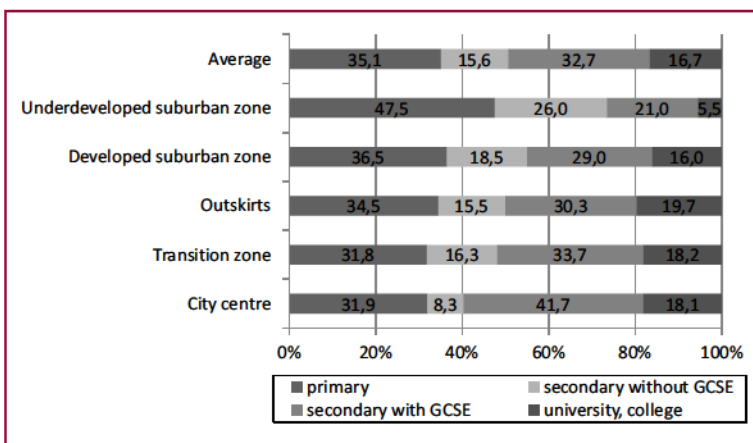
monthly income between the different zones of the studied Budapest metropolitan region shows an important change: compared to the average, in 2010 the concentration of high earners strengthened in the city (and not just the city centre), as well as in suburban settlements. A study by Zoltán Kovács cites similar trends (Kovács, 2014).

**Figure 15:** The distribution of population by net monthly income in the different zones of Budapest metropolitan region (% , 2010)



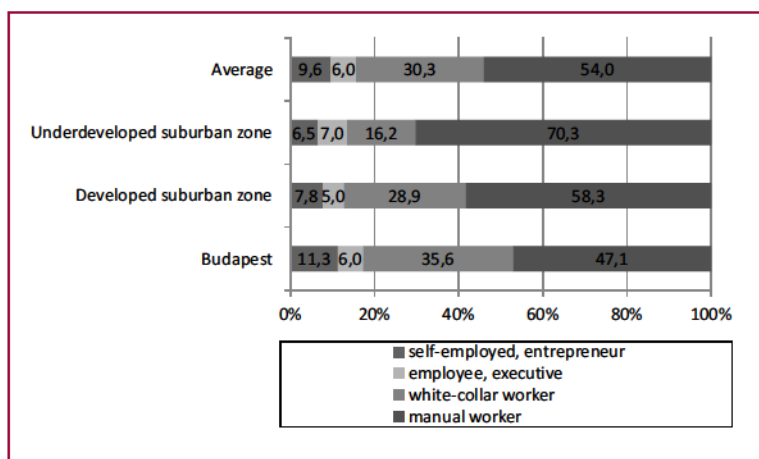
Source: The authors' edition based on Norway Grants questionnaire data

**Figure 16:** The distribution of population by educational attainment in the different zones of Budapest metropolitan region (% , 2010)



Source: The authors' edition based on Norway Grants questionnaire data

**Figure 17:** The distribution of residents by major occupational groups in the different zones of Budapest metropolitan region (% , 2010)



Source: The authors' edition based on the Norway Grants questionnaire data

The distribution by educational attainment between 2005 and 2010 also verified the change, the formation of a new spatial social dichotomy (see Figure 12. and 16.). This dichotomy was manifested in the tight seclusion between socially converging cities, developed urban regions and underdeveloped urban regions. The new distribution is due to highly-educated people moving towards the outskirts zones of the city, 'occupying' certain outskirts districts. Namely to the fact that in developed urban regions the presence of more qualified groups is in accordance with the sample average but their presence is much higher than in underdeveloped outskirts districts. It is important to underline that the percentage of manual workers in the underdeveloped metropolitan regions of Budapest was significantly higher compared to both Budapest and the sample average (see Figure 13.).

## Transformation of spatial social structure: the situation in 2014

The 2014 survey showed a partial prevalence and also a partial transformation of the previous characteristics of the social structure of metropolitan regions. These new processes are in many

aspects similar to the phenomena already detected in Budapest metropolitan region in 2010. One of the most important trends of the new data is that, compared to 2005, in 2014 the social hierarchy of urban regions seems to be loosening as the social structure of certain urban neighbourhoods is becoming more balanced.

### *Gentrification of cities*

Among the reasons for the balanced structure, we must first mention the gentrification of cities, that is, a larger ratio of higher-status people. Behind this there are nationwide processes, such as the increasing ratio of college and university graduates: according to the 2011 census, 18.2% of people aged 25 and over had a college or university degree, which was triple of the ratio in 1980 – however, this percentage is projected to shrink due to the current barriers to entry into higher education. Even differences in the sampling of the 2005 and 2014 studies reflected this change in the percentage: in 2005, 18.4% of the sample population were graduates, compared to 25.9% in 2014. Gentrification is shown to be strengthening, as the percentage of graduates significantly increased between 2005 and 2014 in all the parts of metropolitan regions, in various city zones, and in urban peripheries too. (Meanwhile, the percentage of people with secondary grammar and technical school education decreased or, in some zones, stagnated.)

The reasons for these higher percentages are, on one hand, the outward migration of highly educated people from the city centre towards outskirt districts and, on the other hand, their ‘occupation’ of new urban regions. This can be called a new type of internal suburbanisation model<sup>40</sup>, where people do not leave the city but instead move to parts having more rural characteristics – thanks to the gated residential communities built for the middle classes. Traditional suburbanisation is still ongoing but it is slowing down and makes up a smaller proportion of outward migration. Many also come back to cities, dissatisfied with suburban settlements – in other words, due to the relative failure of the Hungarian

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<sup>40</sup> There has already been an example for this in the history of domestic urban development during the 1970s, the 1980s, when higher-status social groups living in the inner parts were flowing out to new housing estates built in the suburbs.

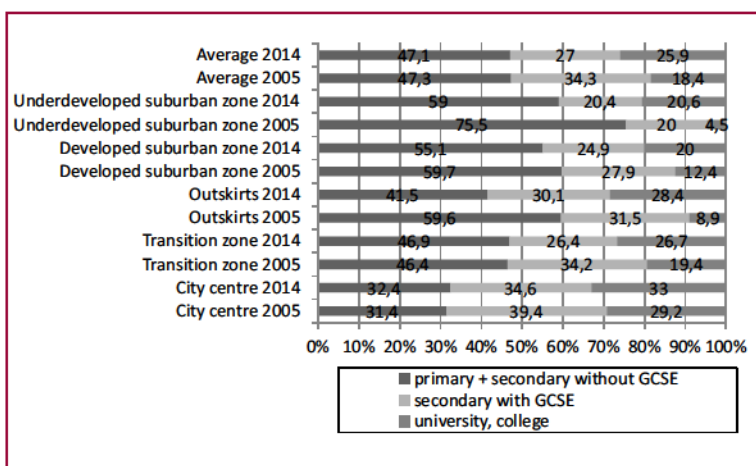
suburbanisation model. Behind the increase in urban population we can find population concentration processes: hardships in rural living circumstances in regions with a well-being deficit leads to many people seeking work again in cities or their peripheral zones.

Changes in the spatial distribution of education level, occupational structure, and income, and the comparison of processes in 2005 and 2014, clearly show the main directions of changes (see Figures 18., 19., 20.)<sup>41</sup>.

Analyses show that in 2005 while moving out from the city centre towards outskirt districts the ratio of people with secondary and tertiary education went down whereas the number of less educated people went up. However, in 2014, these two hierarchical trends seem to be subsiding. People of the highest social position (those with college or university degrees and the highest incomes) make up an increasing percentage of city centre residents, although their number has also increased in outskirt districts.

According to migration data from the 2005 and 2014 studies, outward migrations partly originate from dissatisfaction with city

**Figure 18:** The distribution of population in the nine urban regions by educational attainment by zone categories (% , 2005, 2014)



Source: The authors' edition based on National Research and Development Programme and TÁMOP research

<sup>41</sup> The breakdowns in the two years were intentionally given in the same figure, for a better comparison.

centre quarters and from the quality (or price) of apartments, and partly due to the fact that people moving from other regions, smaller municipalities to larger cities have decidedly bought (or built) real estate in the outskirts districts of the city due to lower prices compared to the city centre.

According to migration data, since 2008, half of the college and university graduates in developed urban regions had moved there from other settlements, while this ratio is 68.4% for underdeveloped urban regions. For graduates, outflow has strengthened in the last few years, compared to 2005 when they mostly intended to move within the city. The majority (41.5%) of those remaining in their current municipality intended to move to a detached house in a high-status suburban zone; to a gated residential community (19.7%) and to a brownstone district (4.9%). Graduates who wanted to move to a nearby settlement did so either because they pursued rural environment, better employment, or more favourable real estate prices. Those who cited environmental or employment reasons wanted to move to a different city in the same county.

Half of the highest earners moved to their current residence after 2000. Since 2008, moving from another part of the settlement to its transitional zone (59.1%); moving out to the peripheral districts of the city (76.7%); and moving from another settlement to a developed urban zone (59.1%) have been the most prominent migration patterns. Among the highest earners, 25% have migrated to underdeveloped urban regions since 2000. 19.5% expressed their desire to move to a nearby municipality within the county.

Migrations inside municipalities were mostly motivated by demands for moving to high-status housing estates (19.7%), to high-status garden city zones with detached housing (41%), and to gated residential communities (18%). The highest earners who would move to nearby small settlements would do so for a rural environment, better job prospects or more favourable real estate prices. (Those who would move due to unfavourable environmental conditions or family reasons would move within their current municipality.)

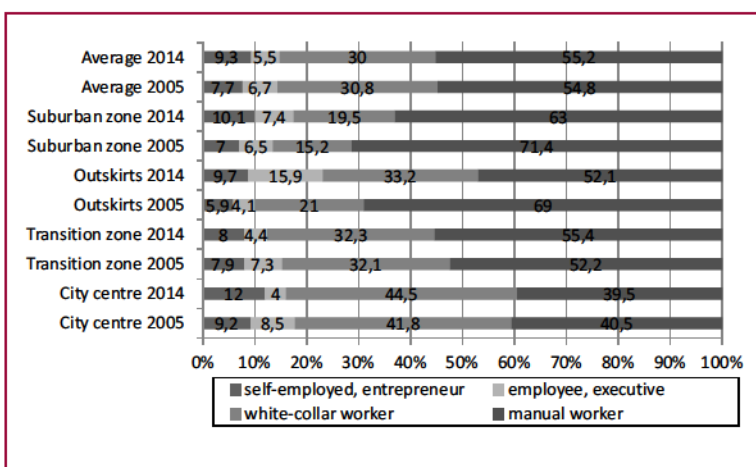
As a result of migrations and territory occupations, by 2014 the proportion of graduates had risen in all parts of the cities we examined (even exceeding the sample average), while in 2005 their percentages only exceeded the sample average in city centres and transitional zones.

During this period, labour and income distributions had also changed due to the trends mentioned above. In 2005, while moving out from the city centre towards outskirts districts the share of brain workers steadily went down while the share of manual workers went up. In 2014, this hierarchical order breaks in suburban regions, with the number of brain workers rising and the number of manual workers falling. Income data shows the same trend (see Figure 14.).

These processes lead to a new social content in the suburbs; places previously regarded as working class neighbourhoods now seeing a rise in middle class presence and a smaller percentage of low-status groups. From Zoltán Kovács's study we already know that real estate prices and environmental factors have made Budapest's outskirts districts an attractive target for young graduates and families with children (Kovács, 2014), while local facilities proved to be too expensive for lower-status people, driving them out from the city. Presumably the transformation of other suburbs was driven by similar factors.

In 2005, people with secondary education (but without GCSE) were present in above average ratio in the transitional zone and the suburbs. In 2014, their presence in all urban zones is below

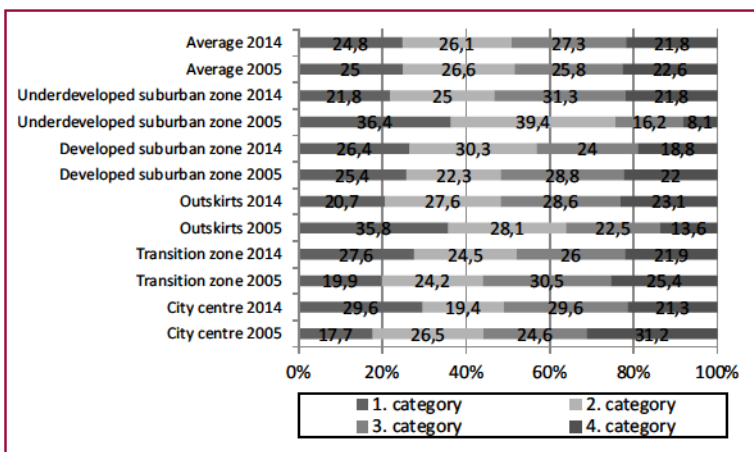
**Figure 19:** The distribution of population by occupational groups in different zones in the nine metropolitan regions (% , 2005, 2014)



Source: The authors' edition based on National Research and Development Programme and TÁMOP research



**Figure 20:** The distribution of population by monthly net income categories in the nine metropolitan regions, by zone (% , 2005, 2014)



Source: The authors' edition based on National Research and Development Programme and TÁMOP research

Income category values (quartiles) in 2005: 1. category: under 43,000 HUF; 2. category: 43,001 to 62,500 HUF; 3. category: 62,501 to 87,500 HUF; 4. category: over 87,501 HUF

Values of income categories (quartiles) 2014: 1. category: under 70,000 HUF; 2. category: 70,001 to 100,000 HUF; 3. category: 100,001 HUF to 150,000 HUF; 4. category: over 150,001 HUF

average. Their presence is only higher in underdeveloped suburban zones. In 2005, people with secondary education (but without GCSE) were only present at above average ratio in city centres. In 2014, their presence is above average in city centres and also in suburbs.

### *The phenomena of social exclusion*

The graduates' 'occupation' of certain urban spaces does not mean that lower social groups (low-skilled, low-earning groups) have been completely displaced from urban zones, as they are still present and in certain zones they outnumber other groups.

Although we are aware that poverty is not exhaustively defined by low education or low income, but it is obviously correlated to both. We know from statistics that poverty has increased in Hungary, just like in other EU member states (*see the analyses in the introductory chapter*).

At first glance it is surprising to see a contradiction between growing poverty and the trend that the number of people with

only primary education has been steadily decreasing in recent years while participation in higher education has continued to grow. In 2012 and 2013 there were some 743,000 people in full-time education. It was by 5,000 less than in the previous year (*Statisztikai Tükör, Vol. 7, No. 32, 30 April 2013, CSO*). Dropouts are also numerous, with many leaving even secondary education at a very early stage.

Our data indicate that poverty does not only affect groups with low level of educational attainment. Although due to limited income data, we can only imprecisely estimate how much of poverty is related to low income but relative poverty is indicated well by our results. One third of people with primary education are struggling with major financial problems. Somewhat more numerous are people who live from paycheck to paycheck. One fifth of people who have not finished secondary education have monthly financial problems, and even one tenth of those who have finished it, said so.

These processes correspond to national trends (*Gabos et al., 2013, 47.*). The educational attainment of the household's main earner is one of the most important characteristics correlating with the risk of poverty. In the 2000s, poverty among households where the main earner completed primary education at most was 6 to 14 times as much as in those where the head of the household held a college or university degree. By 2012, this ratio had increased to 20. The main reason for this is the increased risk of poverty among the low-educated population. The rate of poverty also increased from 15% to 18% among households where the main earner held a vocational school education. In cases, where the head of the household finished secondary or tertiary education, the indicator (6% and 2%, respectively) did not change between 2009 and 2012.

However, according to national data, the number of people who only finish primary education is still significant. In 2011 they made up 27% (*CSO 2011 Census, 3. National data, Budapest, 2013*). People who did not complete primary education make up an additional 4.9%. The two groups altogether make up 31.9% nationwide. According to our research, metropolitan region residents who completed primary education at most made up 34% in 2014.

Also relevant to our urban research is that people who live in Budapest or in cities with county rank are more likely to have at

least completed primary education than those living in smaller towns and municipalities (*CSO Microcensus, 2005*). The latter have even worse chances for that than urban residents.

According to the CSO data, a large percentage of these people are from older age groups. This may mean that the situation may be correlated to the ageing of Hungary's population, and to the fact that many people who had completed primary education could not later break out from their social status, and neither could their children.

The issues of urban poverty is a high priority research topic in contemporary urban sociology literature for several reasons as they represent the other extremity of social polarization, namely the appearance of low-status groups in cities and at the same time they are the indicators of the phenomena of social exclusion. Social exclusion processes exist in other European metropolises as well, (and they are especially prominent in American ones). These processes can be actively mobilised through an urban policy of deliberate exclusion<sup>42</sup>. Various programmes can also lead to exclusion if they are market-based and are not social rehabilitation programmes. Over the last decade, urban regeneration programmes have been implemented in almost all of the major Hungarian cities, mainly funded by the EU. These programmes aimed to strengthen the city centre's functions and to develop it from an environmental and infrastructural point of view. In some zones, these programmes assisted to the renewal and amelioration of old houses and flats and even generated new housing development projects. This had an effect of increasing the price of real estates, housing and rental housing (*Enyedi-Kovács, 2006*).

Our empirical data show that in 2005 the least educated groups mostly lived in the outskirts of cities while their presence in other neighbourhoods was smaller. Their presence was minimal in city centres. If we look at things on a metropolitan region level, they mostly lived in suburban zones where their percentage was higher than in the city, regardless of the level of development of a particular area but compared to the average, their presence was the most dominant in underdeveloped settlements. In 2014, they are

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<sup>40</sup> For this we have seen unfortunate examples in Miskolc, where the disadvantaged Roma population was consciously forced to leave their flats and move out of the city, relying on anti-Roma opinions prevailing among the local population.

more present in the city centre than they were in 2005 but their number is still well below the average. In the transitional zone, their number corresponds to the average, while in the suburbs their number has dipped very low, much lower than the average, which is a significant change. (However, their number is higher than the average in metropolitan regions, especially in developed suburban settlements.)

The presence of people in suburbs with only primary education is a special case: while the lowest-educated groups had the highest presence in the suburbs in 2005, they are the least present there in 2014; their number is well below average. Their concentration is even lower in the city centre and the transitional zone.

The relatively significant presence of low-skilled, low-income population in certain neighbourhoods shows the increasingly urgent problem of urban poverty and also raises the problem of social tensions caused by segregated 'islands' inhabited by poor and low-income people.

Our research shows that the low-skilled inhabitants are mostly present in the same neighbourhoods with low-income households. (These places were the suburbs and suburban zones in 2005, and the city centre, the transitional zone and 'developed' suburban settlements in 2014.)

In 2014, more than half (52.1%) of the lowest-educated people (those who completed primary education at most) live in neighbourhoods that belong to the category of the so-called average housing market. More than a quarter of them (27.8%) live in areas considered cheap. More than a third (37.5%) lives in a single-storey detached or semi-detached house, while those who live in either residential complexes or in a non-greenbelt area apartment both make up 22%. Based on this, we can say that the housing situation of the poorest groups has slightly restructured and improved. Compared to 2005, the biggest growth has been in the number of people who live in old detached houses (+11%) as well as in the number of those who live in apartment blocks (+9%). There was a significant decrease in residents of old tenement buildings (-6%) and emergency housing (-14%). This change can be the result of urban regeneration programmes.

38% live in spaces smaller than 50 m<sup>2</sup> and a similar 38.7% in spaces sized between 51 and 80 m<sup>2</sup>. Only one sixth live in a larger (i.e. 81–100 m<sup>2</sup>) apartment. In general, the size of living spaces

inhabited by the poorest has increased compared to 2005. The percentage of apartments smaller than 50 m<sup>2</sup> has significantly decreased (-14%). This difference can be mostly attributed to a growth in apartments in the 51–80 m<sup>2</sup> range, as the percentage of people living in apartments larger than that did not change over the past nine years. We did not see a significant improvement in comfort levels. In 2005, 6% of living spaces were not fully equipped; this had been a 1% decrease.

10% of the lowest-educated people have a mortgage on their home and only about a third of them (32.4%) do not have any problems paying their monthly overhead expenses, meaning the majority do (*CSO 2011 Census*).

### *Cities and their environment*

The comparative analysis of urban and suburban social structure showed obvious social gaps even in 2005. The 2014 data on education levels, labour structure and income distribution, indicate the strengthening of these dichotomous differences between urban and suburban populations.

Compared to the lower urban prevalence of low-educated and manual workers, suburban regions see a larger presence in underprivileged social groups and less of qualified and brain workers. In our opinion, this dichotomy was less marked in 2005 because there was a higher percentage of low-educated people and manual workers in the cities' outskirt districts. As the percentage of these groups in cities fell between 2005 and 2014, we can notice the new trend of increasing social polarisation between cities and their environment.

However, the social structures in differently-developed neighbourhoods seem to be converging. (This is especially visible if we compare Budapest metropolitan region with other urban regions: the convergence between developed and underdeveloped parts is evident in all eight cases. For instance, education levels show little difference in 2014 compared to the differences seen in 2005.) In 2005, the presence of the lowest-educated groups in underdeveloped urban regions was well above average, even compared to developed settlements and municipalities. In 2014, their percentages dropped significantly, and their presence was converging in both developed and underdeveloped settlements and municipali-



ties. Groups with secondary and higher education behave similarly in suburban regions as they did in others: higher-qualified people tend to live in developed settlements and less-qualified people in underdeveloped areas.

The convergence of suburban settlements with different levels of development (especially in their infrastructure) is facilitated by urban sprawl, that is, the exodus of high-status social groups. It is caused partly by departure from cities (and therefore, by suburbanisation), and partly by nationwide population concentration processes. New housing developments in these regions offer attractive conditions especially for the middle class. The result is that compared to that measured in 2005, 2014 saw a significant increase in the proportion of graduates for each of the two types of neighbourhood.

## Summary

The results of the comparative studies of metropolitan regions show that inequalities in social structure<sup>43</sup> are also manifested spatially in a special manner: higher-status groups gradually displace lower-status groups (especially from cities), thus expressing their social advantages in the form of having access to better regional conditions.

Lower-status groups obviously, also live in cities but most of them reside in suburban settlements. This process explains why the hierarchical character of the Hungarian metropolitan-region's social structure is becoming balanced; why the social and ecological 'downward slope' stretching from the city centre to suburban settlements is softening, and why the wage, qualification and education capacity is becoming more evenly distributed. The spatial social hierarchy is mostly formed by the spatial social polarisation between the city and its environment, and less by the urban area as a whole.

For a long time, gentrification had been a characteristic feature of city centres which was caused by the functional changes of the city centre; citification, urban regeneration projects, and especially

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<sup>43</sup> See their short summary in the introductory chapter.



due to the needs of the global economy, since the decision-making functions of the global economy remain in cities (Enyedi, 2012). Today, however, gentrification affects an increasingly larger part of cities due to city inhabitants' increasing 'commitment to urban spaces, decreasing demands for migration'<sup>44</sup>, and also due to the return of many parts of the suburban middle class back to the city. Mostly they are the ones who were disappointed by conditions in the suburbs and were brought back by the living conditions offered by cities. Therefore, we are now witnessing a widening of the gentrification phenomenon (in Hungary and elsewhere too), where the percentage of the higher-status population is increasing due to a bigger and more visible presence of the middle classes.

We can also see the development progress of a new suburbanisation model. This model is forming as a result of the 'spatial occupation' of high-status groups – namely, due to migrations toward previously derelict suburban zones that now are undergoing development, (which also involves the construction of new flats). The attractiveness of these new neighbourhoods is partly the result of renewing social structure and favourable ecological characteristics, but it is mostly due to the new way of suburbanisation simultaneously ensuring both urban and quasi-rural characteristics. Behind this new structure are the characteristic mechanisms of urban sprawl: high-status groups, who traditionally migrated outward in the process of suburbanisation, now gaining territorial control in new directions.

A significant change is the new social content of previously 'underdeveloped' suburban settlements, behind which we can find the 'spatial occupation' of high-status people displacing low-status groups. It still remains in question what new infrastructural changes (if any at all) the area's new social content will induce. If not, that can cause more social movements.

In 2005, we assumed two possible social structure scenarios. Based on the ongoing processes in 2014, a third, slightly different scenario has unfolded, which includes the previous two as well. In

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<sup>44</sup> The empirical survey of metropolitan regions shows that the majority (three quarters of respondents) living there neither in 2005 nor in 2014 did intend to leave their current place of residence. Between the two years studied the proportion of all those wishing to move out both in the case of the eight rural metropolitan regions and Budapest showed a declining trend.

this model, the dual structure of the core–periphery model has further strengthened, the social value of the centre has further increased due to gentrification and because the outward migration of higher-status people has slowed down and urban regeneration projects have even accelerated their backflow. Meanwhile parts of the urban area have seen an increase in social prestige, especially in previously ‘underdeveloped’ settlements. This is in part due to the outflow of higher-status social groups and partly due to rising real estate and apartment prices in big cities, leading to younger families choosing these localities. Fundamentally, this model corresponds to the latest European urban development trends – thus, global urbanisation trends too.