

examines rising and persisting poverty and inequality in rural contexts. Secondly, we also address how different national welfare systems influence the structure, availability and governance of opportunity offers in rural areas and what it means for social disadvantage.

### **A Sure Start? Child welfare services, professionals and the recreation of socio-spatial inequalities in Hungary**

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Keywords: early childhood prevention, Sure Start programme, socio-spatial inequalities, welfare professionals, Hungary

Sure Start houses were set up in Hungary in the early 2000, adapting the British model, to combat social exclusion and compensate unequal opportunities related to socio-spatial inequalities. The underlying idea is that disadvantages should be addressed at the earliest possible age, as development can be influenced the most at this period. As such early intervention in the long-run can break the reproduction of social problems related to poverty, exclusion and segregation. Thus Sure Start houses were set up mostly in remote rural areas or town segregates, offering for families early developmental services, assistance, healthy food, washing opportunities, parenting advise and a place to play together.

My paper examines the complex and often contradictory effects of this welfare programme on socio-spatial inequalities and exclusion. Even though the working of these houses are centrally financed and regulated, my year-long ethnographic research conducted in three locations (remote village, small town and the capital) shows that in fact these houses are very differently organised with diverse outcomes in the different locations. This is partly linked to the discretionary power of the professionals working in the houses and partly to the structural constraints and opportunities within which they work. Due to limited funding, the availability of local resources and professionals largely determines the quality and content of the service, resulting in the reproduction of existing socio-spatial inequalities. The more remote rural areas with little resources are not able to provide the material circumstances and developmental services that would be needed to compensate the place-based disadvantages of their clients, whereas in the capital or well-situated towns the houses can easily draw on local resources to offer multiple and good quality services. However, the everyday interaction of professionals with parents have the potential for both alleviating and reinforcing socio-spatial inequalities, depending on the attitude and personal conviction of the professionals. Through these personal interactions they can not only propagate certain ideals and norms of child raising, but also reinforce lines of social exclusion and the wide-spread

differentiation between deserving and undeserving citizens. At the same time, these interactions can also lead to the opening up of informal and non-state channels of assistance that can alleviate exclusion and poverty. Thus my paper argues that we need to examine both the structural frameworks and the everyday workings and interactions, and attain a spatially sensitive angle in order to uncover the complex and often contradictory effects of such programmes.

### **The Dynamics of Low Income in Rural Britain 1991-2008: analysis of the BHPS**

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This paper analyses the dynamics of low income in rural Britain between 1991-2008 by comparing a rural sample with a non-rural sample using the British Household Panel Survey of around 7,000 households who were surveyed each year during this period. In the most general sense, we seek to examine rural and urban income distributions and inequality. More specifically, we focus on low income mobility, the distribution of low income spells, the characteristics of those on low incomes and possible trigger events associated with low income entry and exit across the rural and urban samples. We also consider the impact of policy changes during this period, notably the election of the 'new Labour' government in 1997 and their social policy reforms which are shown to have led to substantial decreases in poverty. The results reveal that both rural and urban poverty fell from 1999 when Labour began to introduce their spending programme and reforms: comparing 1991-99 with 2000-08, rural poverty fell from 17% to 13% while urban poverty fell from 19% to 16%. Notwithstanding that rural poverty was slightly lower than urban, 50% of households in rural Britain experienced at least one spell of low income during this 18 year period (compared with 56% of urban households). This reveals that rural poverty is not a minority experience ("pockets of rural poverty") but that half the population of rural Britain was at risk of poverty over this period. The analysis examines how the composition and incidence of poverty changed during that period, with reductions in poverty in old age and in child poverty, for example, and assesses the role of different policy measures. The paper also reveals a number of important dynamic aspects of the rural low income problem, such as the greater persistence of low pay in rural areas and the growing importance of poverty in work and in self-employment.