

Will the last one out turn off the lights? - Demographic scenarios for the Hungarian rural areas

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In the developed world, rural depopulation is a looming problem even when the demographic conditions of the country are relatively favourable. In case of Hungary, where every plausible scenario predicts a significant to massive population loss, this issue can be an existential threat for the rural areas.

Using a self-developed modelling toolset, we prepared a municipality-level demographic forecast for Hungary until 2051, taking the characteristics of natural movement, internal migration, and other socio-economic factors into account. Based on different assumptions for fertility and mortality, regional effects of global climate change and socio-economic paradigm shifts, multiple scenarios were created.

With our results, we can identify rural areas which will have to face severe depopulation and areas, mostly in the vicinity of a large urban centre, which will avoid significant population loss. The most uncertain is the future of rural areas with attractive natural amenities. They are potential destinations for amenity migrants, which process may be more widespread due to the effects of climate change. However, the results indicate that a possible socio-economic paradigm shift would carry more significance than the different climate scenarios.

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