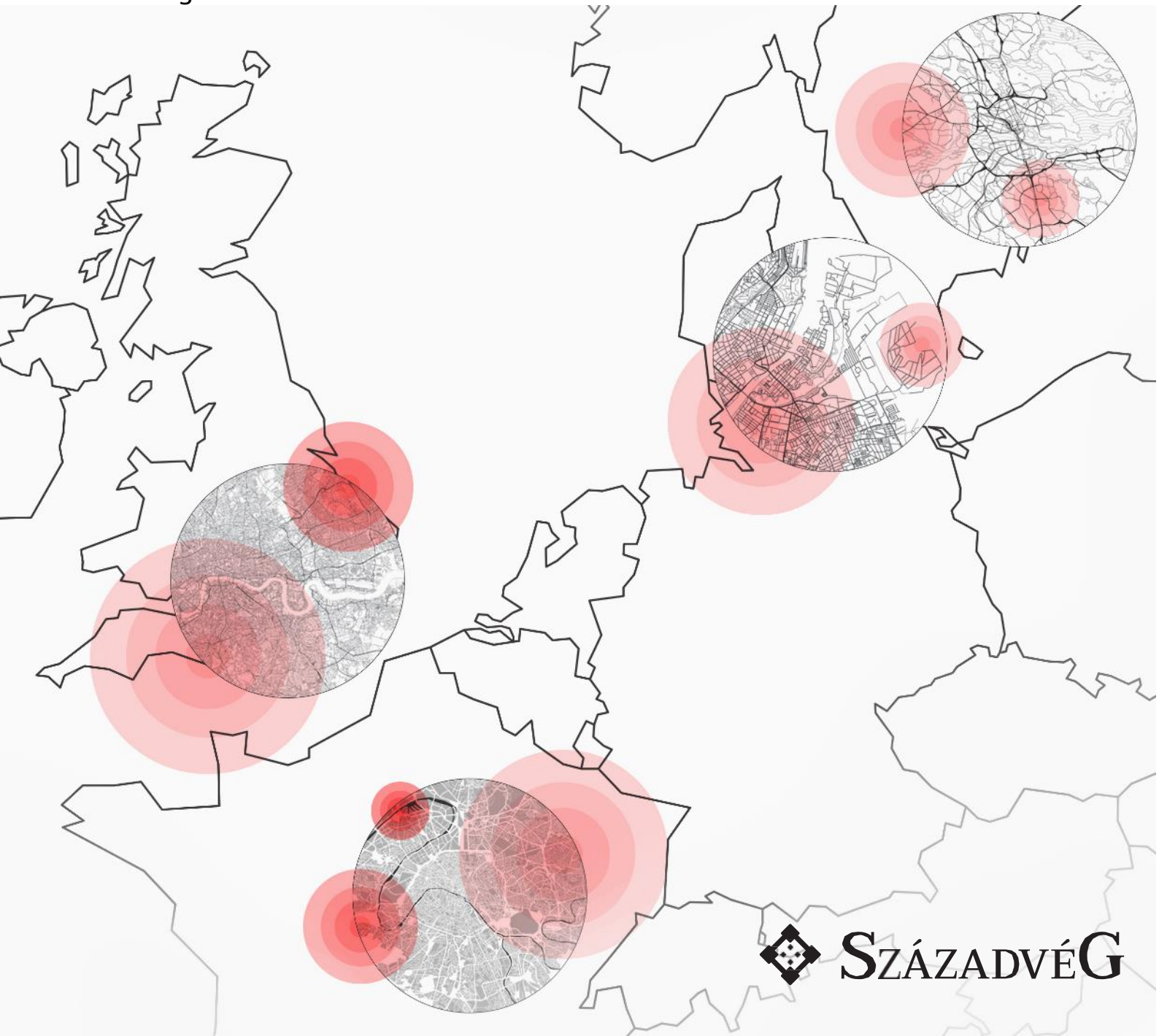


Migration as an urban phenomenon

Dynamics and Consequences

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SZÁZADVÉG

In the past 50 years, migration has mostly been defined as the movement of people from the developing world to countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE), particularly Western Europe and North America. The most recent Pew Research Center data (from December 2022) states that 86.7 million international migrants choose to settle in Europe as their final destination, Europe being the top destination of migration in the world. With over 51 million migrants in 2020, the United States will have more international migrants than any other nation, followed by Germany (15.8 million).¹ The prime minister of the United Kingdom, the first industrialized nation in Europe, is now Rishi Sunak, of Indian origin. Scotland, one of the most industrialized nations in Europe, has a prime minister of Pakistani descent (Humza Yousaf), and Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London—the model European metropolis—is also of Pakistani descent.

Since industrialisation, a strong services sector, and connectivity all go hand in hand with urbanity, it can be claimed that migration is largely an urban phenomena although there may be exceptions. The majority of migrants are drawn to large urban areas, with both planned and unexpected outcomes. Because of industrialisation since the 19th century, the trend of migration from rural to urban areas within nations is also observed in the rural-urban mobility on a global scale. People are drawn to cities because of the services they can provide (health, education, mobility), as well as the potential financial gain from working in industry.²

Why do migrants settle in certain regions and not in others?

If we were to concentrate on Europe, from the 1950s to the 1970s, guest workers made up the first wave of immigration. In order to rebuild their mine, construction, and factory industries, highly industrialized Western European nations (France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Austria) decided to sign labor agreements with nations from Southern Europe (Spain, Turkey, Italy, Portugal), Turkey, Morocco, and

¹ Key facts about recent trends in global migration

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/12/16/key-facts-about-recent-trends-in-global-migration/>

² An agent-model to rural-urban migration analysis <https://arxiv.org/pdf/physics/0506021.pdf>

Tunisia after the demographic losses of the second world war. Similar trends were observed in other European nations, including the UK. Migration is therefore primarily an urban phenomena for economic reasons. Migrants were placed in industrialized areas, which are by nature urban settings, as guest workers. Employers need the workers to be close to factories, construction sites, and mining operations. Recruitment through massive guest worker programs was stopped in Western Europe in 1974. However, Western European countries started fresh guest worker programs in the late 1980s. These new programs, in contrast to prior ones, are microoriented and focused on filling specific job openings. Yet, they also attempt to be attentive to the labor needs of specific industries and regions which confirms migration as an urban phenomenon.³

Following the guest workers, the second wave of migration was family reunification as wives and children moved in with the guest workers. We should speak of a sociological explanation for urban migration in this context. Since the guest workers were viewed as a fragile social class in Europe after the start of the economic crisis, city authorities in Europe were interested in assisting these families with their relocation. Due to the fact that these neighborhoods were once home to the working class, these families typically settled there. In order to provide these families with housing, some governments also constructed new neighborhoods in the cities.⁴

Connectivity is a third component in addition to economic and sociological variables in the set of explanations to migration as an urban phenomenon. Following the surge of family reunifications in the 1970s and the 1980s, immigrant communities started to emerge in Western Europe's major cities. Later generations of immigrants from the 1990s, particularly those who immigrated as students and illegal immigrants, turned to these communities for support. As a result, a newcomer will likely move in with a friend or family member in a predominantly immigrant neighborhood where there are fewer chances of being apprehended by the police (if the immigrant is illegal) and more opportunities to find a temporary job (that does not require work permits) as well as affordable housing and food. As a result, the connectivity seen in big urban centers provides additional

³ Philip Martin, Guest worker policies for the twenty-first century

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369183X.1997.9976607>

⁴ Gideon Bolt & Ronald van Kempen (2002) „Moving Up or Moving Down? Housing Careers of Turks and Moroccans in Utrecht, the Netherlands.” *Housing Studies*, 17:3, 405-406.

opportunities for work, housing, and mobility (to go to their countries of origin or other regions in the country of immigration). As a result, immigration's status as an urban phenomena was strengthened.

Why do migrants not prefer to live in the countryside?

Primarily because agriculture predominates in the countryside, migrants do not favor living there. In terms of the quantity of jobs it generates or the pay it can provide, agriculture is unattractive. Additionally, because agriculture is seasonal, it cannot support large families all year long. Moreover, as was already indicated, while Western Europe underwent an industrial reconstruction following the Second World War, migrants were recruited to help restore destroyed buildings, factories, and mine industries. In Western Europe, agriculture did not dominate the economy. Because of this, no migrant villages or communities have developed outside of urban regions. Furthermore, the majority of immigrants come themselves from rural or semi-urban areas and want to move out of agriculture, which is seen as a lowly occupation in the nations of emigration with limited prospects for prosperity.

The division between multicultural metropolis and native rural areas in the host countries is one unintended consequence of this socioeconomic phenomena. Insofar as local rural communities build their own identities around local cultures, which helps repel immigration, one can speak of cultural and political polarization. In Europe, the majority of rural areas are conservative and right-wing. On the other hand, heavily urbanized areas, particularly the working class neighborhoods, typically support the left and adhere to trade unions. This offers immigrants even more reason to favor metropolitan regions over rural ones. In some situations, a political component may also help to widen this division (for instance, the Finnish Rural Party becoming the Finns Party, the main right wing party in Finland opposed to immigration). Considering this, it is possible to see a divide in Europe between urban areas, which are dominated by liberal parties and values (in wealthy and middle-class areas) and left parties and trade unions in working-class areas, and rural areas, which are primarily led by conservative parties and national-traditional values.

There are some migrants who reside in rural areas of Spain and Italy. The two nations have recently engaged in extensive agricultural activities. The explanatory variable is still economy after all. They appealed to migrants, particularly seasonal and illegal migrants,

because there was a shortage of available native labor.⁵ Regionalized immigration policies have been put into place by Spain and Italy in an effort to draw in workers, reverse the demographic and economic loss of rural areas, and make better use of the infrastructure and services already in place.⁶

Agriculture cannot alter the prevalent reality of migration as an urban phenomenon because it has significant limitations in luring immigrants. In 2018, 15.192 employees from Morocco were recruited by Spain to work in agriculture, followed by 14.774 in 2019 and 12.824 in 2021. The weather and fluctuations in labor demand in agriculture lead to joblessness for many Moroccan immigrants in Spain, who then migrate from rural areas to urban areas to work in restaurants or construction. Moreover, rural areas in Spain are sometime fiercely opposed to the presence of migrants as shown by the El Ejido riots in 2000 which were caused by the murder of three Spanish citizens by Moroccan agricultural workers.⁷

Conclusion

In conclusion, the economic incentives (income, jobs) and city services (transport, health, education) are the primary drivers of migration to Europe. This has been the situation ever since the 1950s guest worker surge began. The overall picture shows a divide between urban areas, which are more susceptible to industrialization, multiculturalism, liberalism, and the left, and rural areas, which are more drawn to local cultures, conservative values, and political parties and are less appealing to immigrants. This is true despite some changes in the panoramas as more and more migrants settle in rural areas in Spain and Italy to work in agriculture. "The metropolis has always been the locus of the money economy," as Simmel states.⁸ The money economy may provide jobs, incomes, and services, but it also has a detrimental impact on social relationships, cultures, values, and souls. The urban ethos, which values exactitude, calculation, and punctuality, stresses

⁵ Migrant seasonal workers in the European agricultural sector
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/689347/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)689347_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/689347/EPRS_BRI(2021)689347_EN.pdf)

⁶ R. Dufty-Jones, Rural Economies in the 'Age of Migration': Perspectives from OECD Countries, p. 374. <https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/gec3.12130>

⁷ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/635092.stm>

⁸ 'The metropolis and the life of spirit' by Georg Simmel: A new translation
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1468795X20980638>

individual pursuit of profit and makes money sovereign (the money economy is independent of nationality, religion, or culture).