

# Comparison of professional plans of students from rural areas and cities in terms of economic mentality

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**Abstract:** Process of globalization, rapidly progressing nowadays, can cause conflicts between cultural norms and values valid in a globalized society and local values. Similar mechanism may occur on a smaller scale, where culture characteristic of urban centers and rural areas may clash. The purpose of this article is to establish what is the economic mentality of students at the Faculty of Economics of the University of Opole from rural areas and cities by comparative analysis of one of its components - work. The article presents a fragment of own research conducted in April 2016 year. Research is an introduction to the wider research into the economic culture of rural areas. In the course of testing the hypothesis formulated in the context of the economic mentality have been confirmed.

*Keywords: Economic mentality, Economic culture, Work, Students, Rural and urban areas*  
JEL: A22, J24

## 1. Introduction

Economic, ecological, political and cultural factors make up the quality of life. Economic factors define living conditions especially in terms of earnings, ecological ones refer to the environment we live in, political ones define the quality of exercised power whereas cultural ones comprise identity, history, health and mentality. The issues related to ecology and economy are quite familiar however cultural ones have not been familiarized yet.

As Katarzyna Hełpa-Liszkowska (2012: 22) rightly puts it, omitting various cultural aspects in social and economic development may lead to alienation of individuals and communities or dangerous disintegration phenomena and disorders in social governance resulting in a weaker pace

and scale of development of a particular region. It is not without a reason that in the regional and economic research cultural capital holds a stronger position and is treated as an important determinant of development building a competitive edge while the term “culture” is too narrowly perceived even in significant strategic documents.

The basis for observing cultural phenomena is constituted by preceding mentality creating conditions for creation of culture and its message is a particular community. As local culture affects development perspectives in the area it affects, not only its manifestations should be researched but also the basis, particularly economic mentality in order to better understand directions of its changes and their potential consequences for local economic phenomena.

Mentality is perceived as a specific way an individual or a group think and approach the reality which constitutes a significant element of social change (Cierniak-Szóstak 2006: 266). It determines people’s behaviour also of economic nature.

In her research Grażyna Krzyminiewska (2000: 118–129) has concluded that economic mentality is dependent on the way respondents perceive the three areas which „significantly show their perceptive, emotional and behavioural attitude” and they comprise work, ownership and consumption. The research whose results are presented in this paper considers the work-related area including vocational plans, the way professional experience is gained at studies as well as the way success is perceived in life.

The research was to make an attempt to evaluate economic mentality by researching the way students perceive one of its areas (work) as well as researching differences between economic mentality characteristic of rural and urban areas by comparing the structure of responses of students coming from rural areas with those originating from the town. The survey has been of a pilot nature and constitutes a starting point for broader research on economic culture in rural areas. In respect of economic mentality as the subject of the research two hypothesis have been formulated:

1. Differences related to economic mentality between the town and the country are slight.
2. Motivation and life plans are strictly correlated and mutually supportive.

## 2. The essence, dimensions and ingredients of economic mentality

The notion of mentality poses a lot of problems as far as its definition is concerned. That is why it seems necessary to systemize relevant approaches (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Mentality/economic mentality – background review

Author /s (year)	Mentality/Economic mentality
Reykowski (1990)	Mentality is a system of general principles to individual or collective directed at processing information about social life. These principles are not always fully made aware of: axial elements of mentality are hidden by normative assumptions.
Becker (1993)	Economic mentality, besides the economic attitudes, those views which are economic factors, is the economic component of consciousness. It is a component of the economic awareness that is unaware and not put in words, and is expressed in spontaneous attitudes towards the world.
Kozek (1994)	The economic mentality is such a way of interpreting the world around us, which takes account of all economic views and simultaneously informs what is the axis of the whole.
Koralewicz, Ziółkowski (2003)	The components of mentality are orientations, which are generalized tendencies to perceive, value, perception and reaction to social reality.
Popovich, Kisliakovska, Viatkina et al. (2006)	Mentality is a "system of images and ideas that in different countries are combined in different ways, but always underlying human understanding of the world and its place in it and, consequently, determine actions and behaviour of people.

Source: based on Reykowski (1990), Koralewicz, Ziółkowski (2003), Becker (1993), Kozek (1994), quote for: Krzyminiewska (2000) and Cierniak-Szóstak (2006), Popovich et al. (2006), quote for: Bondarenko (2010: 6).

When analysing the above approaches it is worthwhile to consider features characterizing economic mentality indicated in the literature (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Features of economic mentality

Common features	Distinction
Functions	Communicational, Motivational, Identification and integration, Quasicognitive Economic
Structures	Stereotypes, Mythic structure, Mental instructions, Symbols
Levels	Archaic and cultural of social practice, Integral and normative
Subsystems	Thinking modus, Modus of the economic behavior

Source: Own study based on: Zaharchin (2012: 64).

Mentality is featured by: functions, the structure, levels and sub-subsystems. They may be considered universal, however in particular approaches (Table 1) only some of them are emphasized. For instance Reykowski (1990) draws attention to hidden normative assumptions which may be subordinated to levels and sub-systems as they are of deep nature often not familiar.

Becker's (1993) approach is similar in underlying that economic mentality is not made aware of and not verbalized so the inclinations mentioned are revealed in action. Wiesława Kozek (1994) emphasizes the role of values and habits which are elements of the structure such as stereotypes, a mythic structure or symbols whereas Jadwiga Koralewicz and Marek Ziółkowski (2003) indicate orientation, namely generalized tendencies to perceive and interpret phenomena. We may relate to stereotypes and social practices. The last approach additionally underlines an element of sub-systems concerning the way of thinking and understanding the world as a determinant of human behaviour.

Mentality is referred to as a „deep structure”: resistant to change, deeply rooted, non-verbalized and not made aware of, a result of entire socialization: a system of situational and verbal incentives, experiences of one's own, perception of reality, successes and failures of one's own behaviour and actions. It is also a formal and generalized structure conditioning automatic and spontaneous reflexes to incentives and situation (Świda-Ziemia 1990: 362).

Despite differences in approaches we may assume that mentality as a social phenomenon on one hand is affected by experience of individuals and groups, on the other hand it exerts an influence on other individuals and groups conveying norms and values. The presented classifications of economic mentality reply to the question in what areas, in the authors' view, attitudes of individuals and social groups are revealed to form the basis for concluding about economic mentality.

### **3. Research methodology**

The research conducted in April 2016 was of a pilot nature and commenced more thorough deliberations. It comprised 167 full-time students at the Economic Faculty of Opole University. The sample was non-randomly selected through selection of typical individuals. More than a half of respondents (51%) indicated a village as their origin whereas remaining 49% comes from the town. Most surveyed respondents were women (71%) which corresponds to the structure of students at the Economic Faculty of Opole University. The research used a survey questionnaire consisting the metrics (3 closed-ended questions and 1 closed-ended question- about the age) and 17 closed-ended questions including open cafeteria questions (a variant including “other

....what?”). The questions concerned a degree and sources of life satisfaction, tendencies to take a risk, previous experiences and professional plans, evaluations of the labour market and the function of expenses. This research discusses future life choices of students especially those related to work from the perspective of professional experiences, the extent of making life plans precise as well as desired social roles and the evaluation of labour market functioning and intentions related to the place of residence after graduation. As far as most questions are concerned, the respondents applied a five-level scale (where 1 denoted „I strongly disagree”, 2 – „I disagree”, 3 – „Neither agree or disagree”, 4 – „I agree”, 5 – „I strongly agree”) to say whether they considered the responses right. The test of independence was used to examine independence (Mynarski 2003). The chi-square test of independence is applied to research independence of non-measurable features (qualitative) or independence of a qualitative feature and a quantitative feature. The basis for verifying hypotheses H0: the features are independent and H1: the features are dependent is provided by the statistics of

the form 
$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^k \frac{(n_{ij} - \hat{n}_{ij})^2}{\hat{n}_{ij}}$$
 having a chi-square distribution (Kauf, Tłuczak 2013).

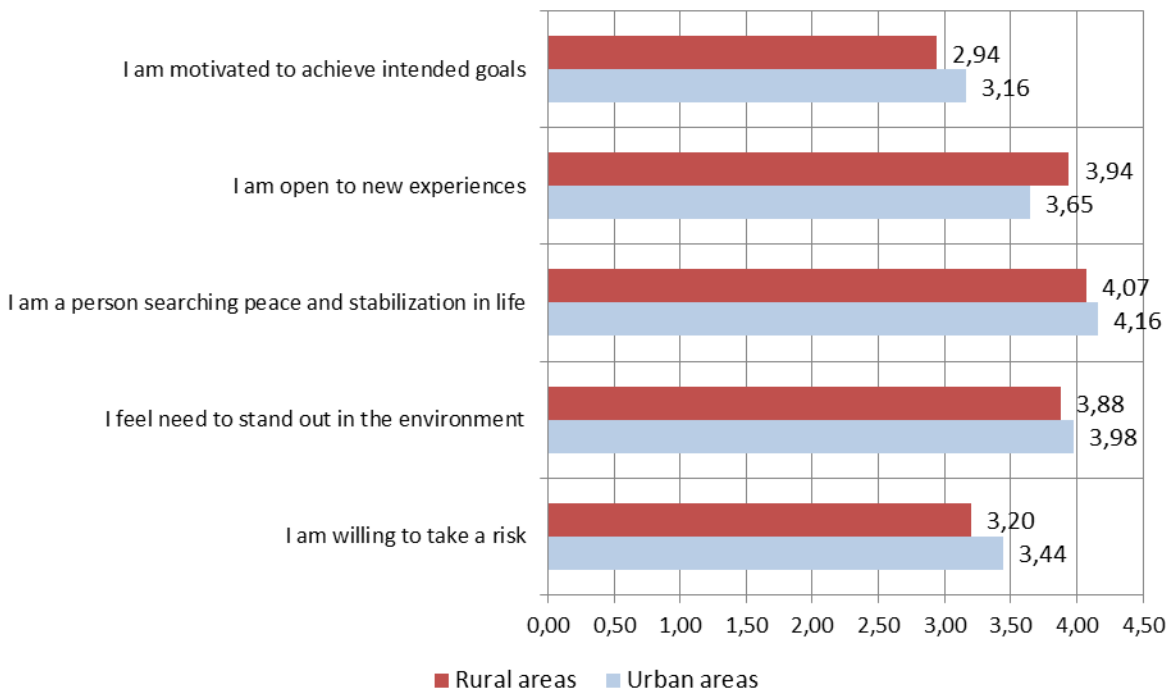
#### 4. Results based on author’s own research

The surveyed respondents were asked to give their opinions about a few statements referring to the need of standing out in the environment, searching stabilization, being open to new challenges, motivation to achieve goals and tendency to take a risk. The structure of the obtained answers allowed us to define economic mentality in respect of an attitude to work, willingness to run a business in the future and the level of motivation necessary to fulfil one’s own plans and intentions. These are vital factors in terms of perception of one of the three areas of economic mentality, namely work. According to the achieved results, the students identify mostly with openness to new experiences. It reflects their flexible approach to a vocational situation and readiness to take up new challenges. The percentage of answers provided by respondents who came from the town is higher, however the difference is slight. A similar structure of the answers was achieved regarding motivation to achieve intended goals (the indicator of 3.98 on the 1 to 5 scale among the students from towns and 3.88 among the students from rural areas). When it comes to

the tendency to take a risk and the need to stand out in the environment, the respondents related to them to a lesser extent (see Graph 1).

One of the statements receiving a higher response indicator of students coming from rural areas compared to those coming from the town, features a more protective rather than entrepreneurial attitude („I am the person searching stabilization and peace”).

**Graph 1.** Self-assessment of the respondents



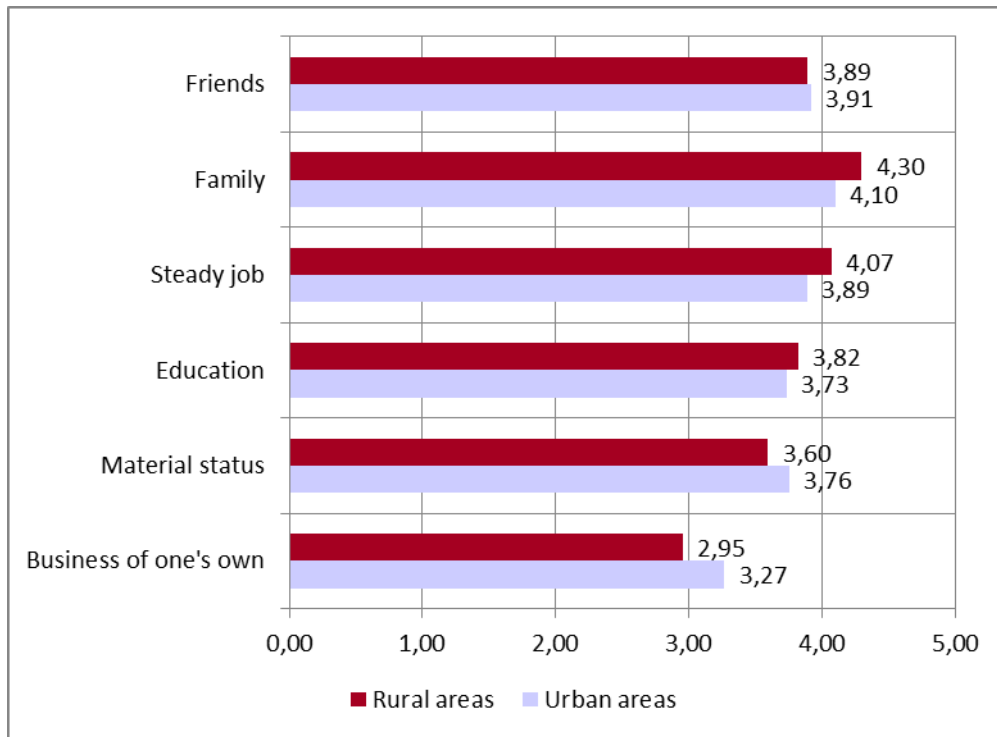
Source: Own study based on research results, n = 166<sup>2</sup>.

The structure of answers to the question about satisfaction with a material situation indicates a higher level in case of respondents coming from the country (3.67 on the 1 to 5 scale) as compared to the town (3.57 on the 1 to 5 scale)

The structure of answers to the question about satisfaction from the material status indicates its higher level in case of respondents coming from rural areas (3.67 on the 1 to 5 scale) as compared to urban areas as well as slight discrepancies between the structure of answers of respondents originating from the country and the town in case of life satisfaction connected to prospects and the material situation. Other differences of slight nature reveal a less favourable assessment of future perspectives among students from rural areas as compared to those from the

town whereas the material situation is ranked higher (more than half indicated the relationship between satisfaction from life and the material situation) which may be related to not merely different material situation but the way it is perceived. Answers about factors deciding about life success were similar in the two groups (see Graph 2).

**Graph 2.** Life success factors

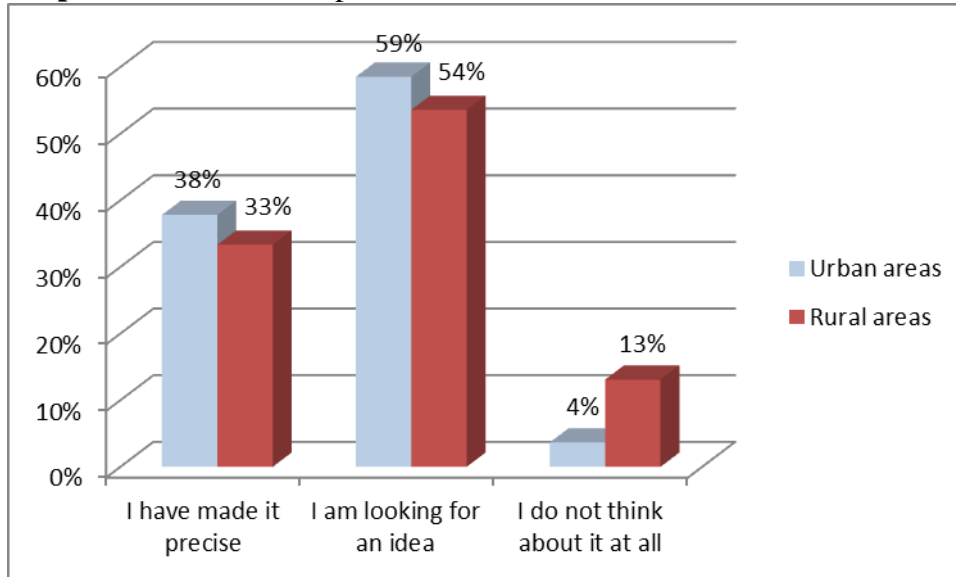


Source: Own study based on research results, n = 166.

In fact all mentioned factors were considered important (factors fluctuating around value 4). The respondents valued most a family, a steady job and friends so they are vital factors in terms of safety and social needs. Surprisingly, particularly in case of economics students, the smallest importance is attached to owning a business as a determinant of life success. As far as this factor is concerned, the biggest discrepancy was observed in the structure of answers of students originating from rural and urban areas. The indicator of 2.95 denotes that the most respondents coming from the country do not agree that having a business of one's own decides about a success in life. When it comes to students from the town, this indicator was slightly higher and amounted to 3.27. It means that the majority of surveyed students after graduation intend to seek a job rather

than create jobs. In order to assess if these are real plans, students were asked about their life and career plans. The structure of answers was presented in Graph 3.

**Graph 3.** Life and career plan



Source: Own study based on research results, n = 166<sup>7</sup>.

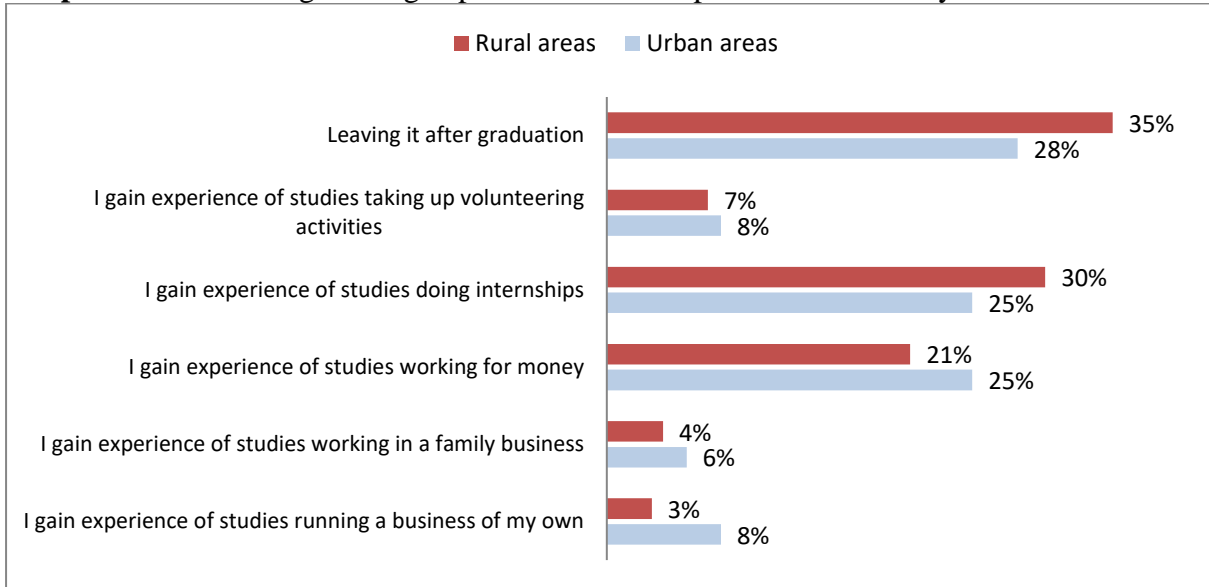
The responses to this question show that over a half of the respondents, regardless of their origin, is looking for an idea. Merely 38% of students from towns and 33% students coming from the country have made their plan precise whereas 13% does not think of it at all. Only 4% of students from urban areas does not have a precise plan nor looks for an idea for the future. Unwillingness to make decisions about the future professional life at studies or to take actions facilitating such a decision is confirmed by the structure of answers to the question concerning ways of gathering experiences useful at work (Graph 4).

Moreover, one third (35%) of students from rural areas waits with gaining useful work experience until after the studies, more seldom they decide to take up paid work (21%). In respect of the above, students from towns are more active: every fourth takes up paid work whereas 28% respondents puts off the decision about gaining professional experience until they graduate. Internships are identified with gaining experience by 30% of students from the country and only by 25% of students from towns. The number of positive answers to questions concerning work in a family business and running a business of one's own was tiny whereas responses of students from the town and the country were similar. Students' participation in volunteering must be positively evaluated despite a marginal number of indications (7% of students from the town and 8% of



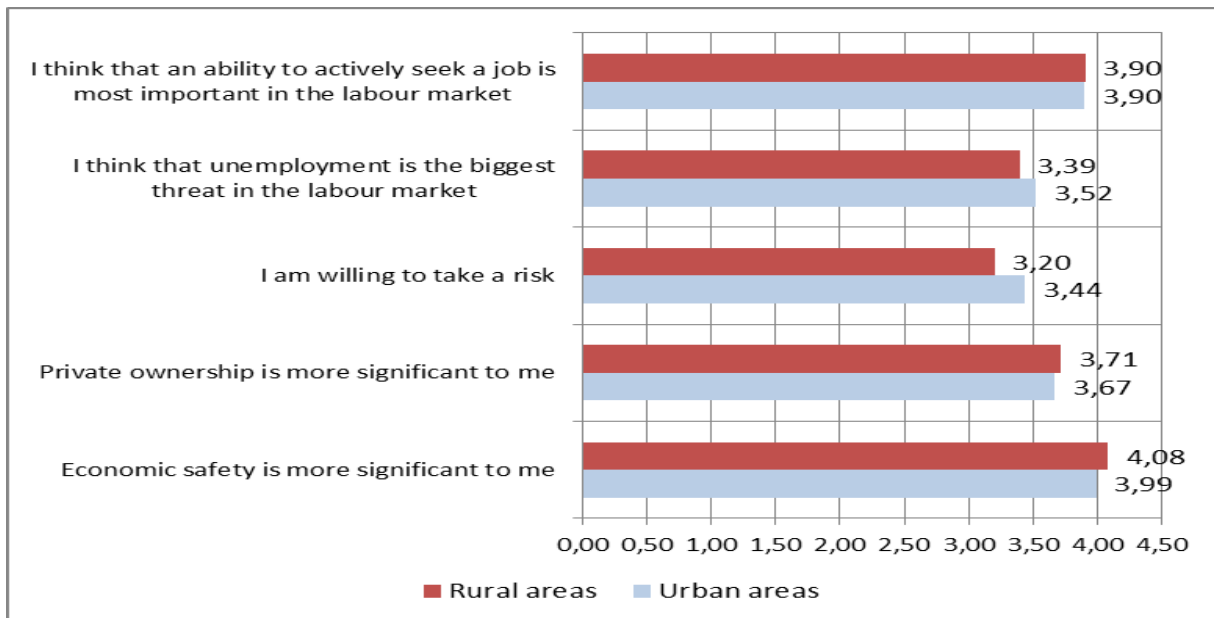
students from rural areas. This reflects other than financial reasons for taking an activity resulting in gaining experience. Running a business is not a common practice among students so a tiny number of indications is not surprising however the majority of positive answers was provided by respondents from the town.

**Graph 4 .** Methods of gathering experience useful in professional activity



Source: Own study based on research results, n = 166<sup>7</sup>.

**Graph 5.** Evaluation of the labour market vs self-assessment

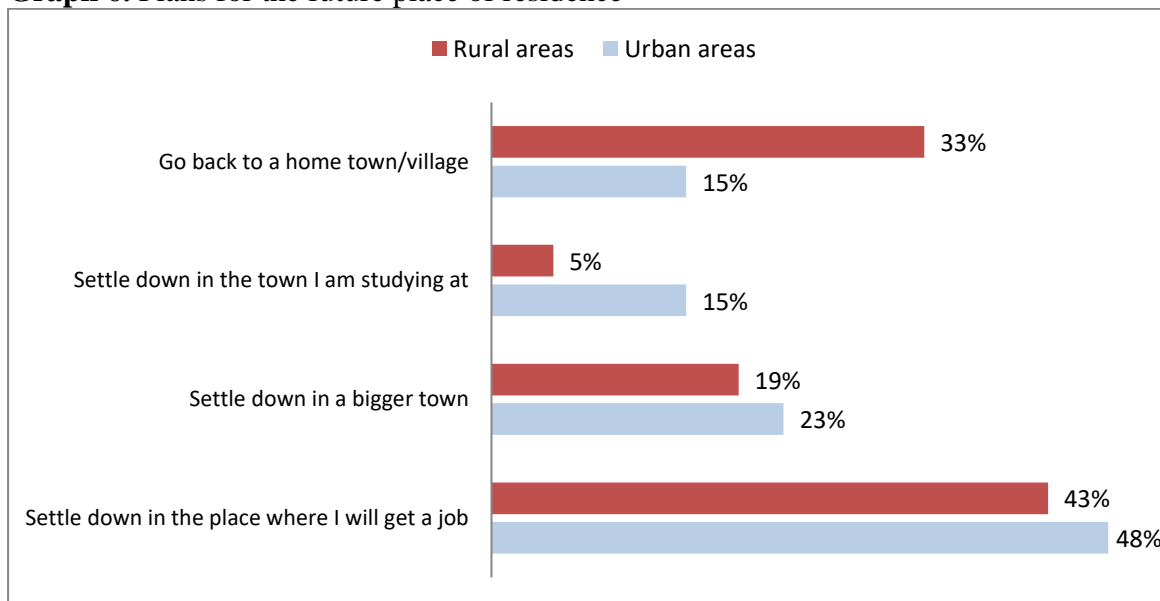


Source: Own study based on questionnaire research results, n = 166.

The research has revealed that economic safety is very important to the surveyed students – the indicators fluctuated around 4 – it is even more important than private ownership. The structure of answers also shows a slight tendency to take a risk which is correlated to a small number of indications of willingness to set up a company of one’s own. The awareness of being able to influence a result of searching a job is great.

The structure of answers to the question about plans for a future place of living clearly indicate a job as the most important determinant<sup>1</sup>. Both students from the country as well as those from the town in nearly half of cases (43% and 48% respectively) gave such answers. Another 23% of students from the town and 19% of students from rural areas intend to settle down in a bigger city, possibly because of greater opportunities offered by the labour market. Only 5% of students from rural areas and respectively 15% students from the town intend to stay in Opole after graduation. In view of the above a higher number of responses showing the intention to go back to the place of origin (33% respondents) provided by students coming from rural areas may be positively evaluated. It means that thanks to them, human capital in rural areas will be enriched with knowledge and abilities acquired at studies. Nevertheless, the fact that two thirds of the respondents does not declare an intention to go back to their home village may raise concerns.

**Graph 6.** Plans for the future place of residence



Source: Own study based on questionnaire research results, n = 164.

<sup>1</sup> A smaller number of answers to the question (n=164 instead of n=166) taken into account results from the fact that two respondents selected more than one variant of the answers which consequently were omitted.

Using chi-square test of independence to examine dependence between the origins and factors considered by respondents as decisive in a life success we may conclude that there is dependence between those categories on the significance level of 5% (Table 3).

**Table 3.**  $\chi^2$  test results

Variables	Statistics values $\chi^2$ and p-value
Place of origin vs having own business	$\chi^2 = 4.255$ , $p = 0.372$
Place of origin vs material status	$\chi^2 = 6.857$ , $p = 0.143$
Place of origin vs education	$\chi^2 = 4.633$ , $p = 0.326$
Place of origin vs permanent job	$\chi^2 = 7.685$ , $p = 0.103$
Place of origin vs family	$\chi^2 = 5.384$ , $p = 0.250$
Place of origin vs friends	$\chi^2 = 2.171$ , $p = 0.704$

Source: Own study based on questionnaire research results,  $n = 166$ .

The research did not reveal dependence between the origin (a town/a village) and differentiation of plans for development of professional career ( $\chi^2 = 24.6229$ ,  $p = 0.7843$ ). Most importantly, the respondents were very much oriented on job mobility – both groups most often selected this answer in particular those with no precise career plans. The second place was taken by plans of returning to a family town/ village. It is worthwhile to notice that bigger cities are more attractive to students than Opole where they are studying.

## 5. Concluding remarks

The pilot research conducted concerned the way one of the ingredients of economic mentality, namely work, is perceived by the studying youth originating from rural and urban areas. As far as this aspect is concerned, the students gain their life experience through internships and paid work. Some of them get involved in volunteering. Unfortunately a lot of the respondents put off gaining professional experience until they graduate. Their plans are not made very precise. It is worthwhile to notice that for the majority of them availability of jobs denotes their future place of residence. Both hypothesis were confirmed by the research. We may conclude that the way of thinking of people studying together become similar. It sets a direction for further research checking similarity of economic mentality among the youth living in rural areas on every day basis as compared to the youth from the town.

As far as the examined population is concerned, the differences between people coming from rural areas and the town are minor however the causes to this phenomenon require further research. The research has also produced an interesting result which is confirmation of a high correlation between motivation and life plans of the surveyed students.

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### ***Porównanie planów zawodowych studentów z obszarów wiejskich i miast w aspekcie mentalności ekonomicznej***

#### ***Streszczenie:***

Dynamicznie postępujący proces globalizacji może powodować konflikty kulturowe między normami i wartościami obowiązującymi w społeczeństwie zglobalizowanym a wartościami lokalnymi. Podobny mechanizm może zachodzić na mniejszą skalę tam, gdzie ścierają się kultury charakterystyczne dla ośrodków miejskich i wiejskich. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest ustalenie, jaka jest mentalność ekonomiczna studentów Wydziału Ekonomicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego pochodzących z obszarów wiejskich i miast poprzez analizę porównawczą jednego z jej-pracy. W artykule przedstawiono fragment badań własnych przeprowadzonych w kwietniu 2016 roku. Badania stanowią wstęp do szerszych badań z zakresu kultury ekonomicznej obszarów wiejskich. W toku badań hipotezy sformułowane w kontekście mentalności ekonomicznej zostały potwierdzone.

***Słowa kluczowe:*** mentalność ekonomiczna, kultura ekonomiczna, praca, młodzież studiująca, obszary wiejskie i miejskie

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