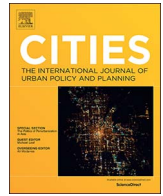


Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

Cities

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/cities](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/cities)

# Violations of the right to the city for women with disabilities in peripheral rural communities in Hungary<sup>☆</sup>

Sz. Fabula<sup>a,\*</sup>, J. Timár<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Economic and Social Geography, University of Szeged, Hungary

<sup>b</sup> Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Department of Social and Economic Geography, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Right to the city  
Gender  
Disability  
Urban-rural inequality  
Intersectionality  
Central and Eastern Europe

## ABSTRACT

The denial of the right to the city for various social groups is well documented in academic discourses. However, these debates lack sufficient attention to intersecting axes of social disadvantage. Furthermore, most of the relevant studies apply definitions of the right to the city that are based on urban inhabitance. In Hungary, and in other Central and Eastern European countries, where urban-rural inequalities are still obvious manifestations of uneven spatial development, we should also concentrate on the right to the city of those who inhabit rural communities.

In this study, we address the following research question: how does the right to the city (as a universal human right) apply to rural women who experience multiple social disadvantage? We argue that within the framework of the concept of the right to the city, people's basic needs and the fact that certain social groups cannot exercise their right to fundamental urban resources should not be downplayed. We also argue that the curtailment of the right to the city is not universal among rural dwellers, and this disadvantage does not affect each of these people to the same extent and in the same ways. There is a considerable diversity in how the limitation of the right to urban resources manifests itself and how disadvantaged rural residents experience it (due to e.g. intersecting axes of oppression/identities). Our empirical study is based on interviews conducted with 32 disabled or chronically ill women living in Hungarian rural areas. The focus is on their perceptions of their everyday lives and reflections on their problems regarding the access to urban resources and services. According to the interviews, urban-rural divide and patriarchal and ableist power relations contribute to the violations of disabled women's right to the city.

## 1. Introduction

The use of feminist research approaches, it can be argued, has made one of the biggest contributions to the development of the 'right to the city' concept proposed by Lefebvre (1968 [1996]). We agree with Fenster's (2005a, 2005b, 2010, p. 229) critique of Lefebvre's original idea in two respects: i) the discourse on patriarchal power relations should be incorporated into the conceptualisation of the right to the city; ii) 'the gendered right to the city' always intersects with other identity issues.

This critique serves as the starting point of our study but we also revisit Lefebvre's – and Harvey's (2008) – concept on the right to the city. In our view, it is mainly this concept which places the right to the city in the context of links between the city (urbanisation/the urban process/production of urban space) and global capitalism, and which

also pays sufficient attention to the relationship between the urban and the rural. Indeed, in many parts of Hungary – and in Central and Eastern Europe in general – the fading of the urban-rural distinction (Lefebvre, 1970 [2003]; Harvey, 2008; Brenner & Schmid, 2011, 2015) has not become a reality for less privileged social groups. In these regions the urban-rural divide is still one of the most apparent manifestations of uneven development, resulting in considerable social inequalities. Furthermore, while 'the right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources' (Harvey, 2008, p. 23), the question could also be asked whether it is only relevant for those who inhabit the city. Since the differences between the urban and the rural have not vanished, and the urban lifestyle [Lefebvre, 1968 (1996)] has not become a universal feature of Hungarian society, we believe that the focus of the right to the city cannot be limited to urban inhabitants. As we agree that the right to the city is a collective human right

<sup>☆</sup> 'Gendering the right to the city: appropriation and participation'

Cities – The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning

\* Corresponding author at: Department of Economic and Social Geography, University of Szeged, 2 Egyetem utca, Szeged H-6722, Hungary.

E-mail address: [Fabula.Szabolcs@geo.u-szeged.hu](mailto:Fabula.Szabolcs@geo.u-szeged.hu) (S. Fabula).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2017.12.005>

Received 12 June 2016; Received in revised form 7 August 2017; Accepted 8 December 2017

0264-2751/ © 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

(Harvey, 2008), we think that urban resources should be accessible to everyone and not only to those in urban areas.

Bearing these issues in mind, we address the following research question in this paper: how does the right to the city (as a universal human right) apply to rural women who experience multiple social disadvantages? To answer this question we highlight the main results of interviews conducted with women living with disabilities in peripheral rural areas in Hungary. Our aim is twofold: first, to understand these people's relationships to the city through their perceptions of their everyday lives and reflections on their problems regarding access to urban resources; and second, to contribute to theoretical debates about the right to the city. Although we agree with the broader definition of the right to the city described above (see Harvey, 2008), we argue that even within the framework of such a broader concept, people's very basic needs and the fact that certain social groups cannot exercise their right to fundamental urban resources should not be downplayed. Furthermore, we argue that the curtailment of the right to the city is not universal among rural dwellers, and this phenomenon does not affect each of these people to the same extent and in the same ways because their group is not homogenous. There is a considerable diversity in how the limitation of the right to urban resources manifests itself and how disadvantaged rural residents experience it (due to intersecting identities and systems of oppression).

This paper is divided into three main parts. In the first part we explore how a broad understanding of the gendered right to the city applies to a range of marginal groups, including those who are not urban inhabitants. The second part briefly outlines the background to the qualitative research based on 32 interviews we conducted in rural areas in Hungary. In the third section disabled women's narratives are analysed to highlight the everyday manifestations of the curtailment of their right to the city in the context of their intersecting gender, disabled and rural identities.

## 2. Some theoretical reflections on the concept of the right to the city

To support our main arguments, in this section we critically analyse and challenge the right to the city concept from the point of view of rural disabled women. For this purpose, we focus on two aspects of the concept that are emerging in academic discourse: (i) 'who' the right to the city can be exercised by and (ii) 'where' the right to the city can be exercised.

According to Lefebvre's concept, the right to *participation* is as important as the right to *appropriation*, and the former must prevail not only in democratic decision-making but also in every aspect of the production of urban space (Lefebvre, 1968 [1996]; Purcell, 2002). Furthermore, when Harvey (2012, p. 4) argues that the right to the city is 'far more than a right of individual or group access to the resources that the city embodies', he refers to a 'collective power over the process of urbanisation': 'Since the urban process is a major channel of use [of the surplus], then the right to the city is constituted by establishing democratic control over the deployment of the surpluses through urbanisation' (2012, pp. 22–23).

Today the right to appropriation, participation and control do not seem to be fundamental human rights but privileges of the powerful. Such inequalities are well indicated by the fact that within academic discourse one of the most frequent themes is '*whose right to the city*'. A number of groups, such as the homeless (Mitchell, 2003; Núñez, 2010), immigrants and ethnic minorities (Dikeç, 2002) and sexual minorities (Hubbard, 2013) are experiencing high degrees of exclusion. Recent studies have also highlighted the curtailment of the right to the city of urban women (Buckingham, 2010; Fenster, 2005a, 2005b, 2010), rural-to-urban migrant women (Secor, 2003) and people with disabilities (Bezmez, 2013; Harold, 2013) as outcomes of patriarchal social relations and ableism. Moreover, there is a considerable literature about the

effects of ableist power geometries on women living with disability in Western urban societies (Anderson & Kitchin, 2000; Crooks & Chouinard, 2006).

The right to the city may also be pertinent for those who do not inhabit the city but who wish to access the multiple urban resources. Although Lefebvre (1989 [2014]) argued that capitalist industrialisation was dissolving the city as a bounded entity and would eventually obliterate the urban-rural distinction 'into a set of porous spaces of uneven development under the hegemonic command of capital and the state' (Harvey, 2008, p. 36), and the rural has been profoundly transformed, the disparities between the urban and the rural may remain very sharp, especially for those with limited mobility and material resources. Furthermore, recent studies – applying administrative or functional territorial definitions of 'the rural' – have demonstrated the existence of inequalities between urban and rural areas in Hungary with respect to, for example, income (Pénzes, Pálóczi, & Pásztor, 2014), labour-market opportunities (Bihari & Kovács, 2005), the availability of public services (Nikitscher & Velkey, 2012) and the level of well-being (Nagy & Koós, 2014). It can be concluded that many rural areas in Hungary are 'disadvantaged' regions, characterised by the concentration of socio-economic problems and conflicts, and even by ghetto formation in some cases (Virág, 2006). Although, according to Lefebvre, the right to the city is a normative category based on inhabitation (Fenster, 2010; Iveson, 2013), he also suggested that the holder of this right is the whole of society (Lefebvre, 1968 [1996]). This generalisation is important since for him the urban does not pertain to the traditional or the existing city but to a future city, to a place in which the city-country hierarchical distinction will disappear (Marcuse, 2009, 2014).

In this study we draw attention to those social groups that – under the conditions of current social reproduction, characterised by capitalist, patriarchal and ableist relations – are mostly excluded from the 'urban process' described by Lefebvre (1968 [1996]) or from the 'planetary urbanisation' described by Brenner and Schmid (2011, 2015). We wish to challenge the demarcation which stems from the approach that limits the right to the city to the territory of the 'city as a spatial unit'. We argue that if attention is not paid to those living on the 'dark side' of the uneven development at an urban-rural scale (Harvey, 2008), thus excluding them from our discourses, then we contribute to the reproduction of existing inequalities.

In this paper we focus on people who are affected by both patriarchal and ableist relations, with special attention to those everyday practices and struggles which are rooted in uneven urban-rural development. By doing so, we hope that our study will also contribute to the right to the city concept: the broader concept of the right to the city proposed above is extended to rural areas and it emphasises the importance of control but does not downplay the importance of accessibility to urban resources. Besides, from a gendered perspective, our study will not only add another – hitherto neglected – group to the discourse, but it will also deepen our understanding of the effects of intersecting oppressive social relations on rights. As we study rural disabled women's discourses and practices in and through which relational, fluid and changing identities are mutually and continuously (re) constructed and as we also wish to understand multiple structures of subordination and inequalities, we apply the idea of the complexity of intersectionality both in a conceptual and a theoretical sense (McDowell, 2008). Paraphrasing McDowell (2008, p. 505), we believe that combining the understanding of 'the specificities of different lived experiences with the commonalities' of the varied manifestations of the violations of the right to the city 'is an essential part of feminist politics', thus our empirical analysis is also based on this way of thinking.

## 3. Research method and contextual information

This study is based on interviews conducted with 32 disabled or

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7417394>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7417394>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)