

Regarding the valuation of rural vs. urban amenities, it seems that the pandemic did influence people's preferences. In Sweden, the rising prices of second homes relative to the prices of primary residences suggests hidden counterurbanisation. While we did not find the same indications of counterurbanisation for Slovenia, the country is experiencing a rise in real estate prices in its largest cities, motivating individuals to seek a place to live just outside of the urbanised capital city. However, as our analysis shows, it is not rural areas that are experiencing growth in the number of inhabitants in Slovenia, but the sprawling suburbs of the capital.

Considering the factors mentioned, we identified stronger trends of counterurbanisation in Sweden. The disparity cannot be attributed solely to factors related to the pandemic. Other factors may contribute as well – for instance, geographical differences, with Slovenia being smaller and more densely populated, making daily migrations easier and possibly teleworking less popular. It seems that we are dealing with two extreme case studies in Europe concerning the process of counterurbanisation and the impact of teleworking during the pandemic.

There are certain limitations to the comparative case study analysis, notably as regards the availability and comparability of data and differences in definitions of urban vs. rural areas. Nevertheless, this study may be seen as an effort in comparing counterurbanisation and its drivers across national boundaries within the same analytical framework, highlighting the need for further international comparative research in this area.

On the production and marketing of organic food

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In 2021 and 2022, IRSA studied the changes that took place over the last decade in the supply, distribution, and consumption of organic food. The project was conducted based on an order from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food. Dane Podmenik coordinated the project, with external associates primarily from the biotechnical and marketing fields carrying it out. We have now gathered significant empirical data (collected through surveys, interviews, and official statistics), and this material will be subject to re-examination as we work on writing a longer, co-authored article. We believe that this is an important topic in light of the green transition. We are particularly interested in the decision-making behind buying organic food. A new type of consumer is emerging: one who carefully assesses and selects products. This can be referred to as responsible consumption, which is integrated into a lifestyle focused on reducing hyper-consumption (and hyper-production). At the same time, this lifestyle promotes a more reflective attitude towards the environment and sustainable development.

The EU (including Slovenia) has seen an increase in the demand for organic foods in recent years. However, despite this increase, organic foods account for no more than 4% of total food expenditures on average. Even in leading countries, such as Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Luxembourg, and Sweden, the per capita expenditure on organic food does not exceed 300–400 euros per year (in Slovenia, our expenditure is below the EU average, at slightly above 100 euros per capita per year). Agricultural areas holding an ecological certificate do not exceed 20–25% of the total country area (currently 11% in Slovenia). It is true that the trends are favourable, but they could be accelerated.

It is necessary to accelerate organic farming's expansion on the supply side by encouraging more people to opt for it. This can be achieved

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through subsidies and investments facilitated by the state. It is also necessary to incentivize distribution chains and, of course, to encourage consumers to buy more organic products, which offer a number of advantages over conventional or industrially produced ones.

There is a significant amount of dissatisfaction among farmers in Europe. To mitigate this, governments should take more proactive measures to persuade, incentivize, and reward farmers to transition first to integrated and then to organic production methods.