Emotions, population and ethnicity on three borderlands

(A comparison study of Slovakian-Hungarian, Ukrainian-Hungarian and the Austrian-Hungarian borderlands based on selected pilot areas)

INTRODUCTION

The goal of the study

The Slovak-Hungarian, Ukrainian-Hungarian and Austrian-Hungarian borderlands have changed significantly during the last century, and are facing changes now that Hungary is a European Union member state. The paper analyses the demographic and ethnic characteristics of the three borderlands, and examines processes of ethnic sympathy or antipathy and self evaluation in an attempt to answer the following questions: Is there any relationship between the ethnic composition of these areas and their demographic structure? Do these relationships cause any problems? What are the possibilities for the future in these kinds of areas?

Martinez comments that “As the world has evolved geopolitically, more and more borderlands have tended toward convergence rather divergence, but unfavourable conditions in many areas still keep neighbouring borderlanders in a state of limited interaction” (Martinez, O. J. 1994. p.1). It is important to solve these borderland problems and remove obstacles to achieving good coexistence and developing economic and social life.

Methods

The study is mainly based on statistical data and on a survey of ethnic sympathy or antipathy (and self-evaluation), which is a common procedure in borderland studies. Following Éger György’s method (Éger, GY. 1996), a modified Bogardus-scale, similar surveys were carried out in the three Hungarian borderlands. Nineteen nationalities or ethnic groups were mentioned in the survey, and the respondents ranked the nationalities on a five scale system based on their feelings of sympathy or antipathy towards them (1 = the least liked, 5 = the most liked).

Research areas

The study is based on three border regions:

- 98 settlements running of the full length of the Hungarian-Ukrainian border, called the “Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland” (Figure 1)
- 105 settlements along the border section between the Sajó and Hernád rivers of the Hungarian-Slovakian border, called the “Sajó-Hernád borderland” (Figure 2)
- the Sopron region of the Austrian-Hungarian border with 35 settlements including the city of Sopron and the Fertő-lake region, called the “Kékfrankos borderland” (Figure 3).

Historical background

In two of these areas (Sajó-Hernád and Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderlands) the border changed three times in this century: in 1920, after the Trianon peace-treaty; in 1938, when Upper Northern Hungary and some part of Subcarpathia was reunited; and in 1947, during the Paris Peace Conference when the former state of Trianon was restored. In the third research area the border changed only once - in 1920 (Figure 4-5).
Figure 1  The Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland research area

Figure 2  The Sajó-Hernád borderland research area
Figure 3 The Kékfrankos borderland research area

Figure 4 The ‘Dismemberment’ of Hungary in 1920
(In: Historical Atlas)
Figure 5 Hungary between 1938 and 1941
(In: Historical Atlas)

After World War II the economic-social-political situation of the area changed significantly. Political borders created in this way did not follow either ethnic or regional-structural principles. They were exclusively the results of great power bargaining, so it is not surprising that the real regional pattern of life was also ignored (TÓTH, J. 1996). In Eastern Central Europe social and economic development has taken a different direction from Western Europe. Due to this, relations between states have also been completely different. Centralism has predominated the political-economic relations of the countries of COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance): the co-operating countries organized their economic relations entirely through their centres. From an international economic relations point of view, the location of companies taking part in trade was of no importance in Hungary (ASCHAUER, W. 1996). While direct contacts between each country became rigorous, border regions were separated and isolated completely by their borders. This phenomenon has affected the border areas seriously, particularly those ones whose natural centres remained on the other side of the ‘separating border’.

ETHNIC STRUCTURE AND POPULATION SIZE IN THE RESEARCH AREAS

The population size of any area and its change over time is determined by economical and social factors (G. FEKETE, É. 1991). The population structure reflects the living conditions of the inhabitants. If there are a lot of ongoing unfavourable socio-economic processes, the population cannot produce enough offspring to maintain its original size and decline can become irreversible. These changes often have a significant further impact on economic and social conditions. The resulting trend of abandoning rural villages cause serious social problems: the resources of the abandoned villages are lost or used much under their
potential level, while the social and environmental resources of the bigger cities are overused. (ENYEDI, GY. 1983). Characterizing the population structure and identifying ongoing processes and trends is very important to understand the overall picture of their economical and social situation.

It was mentioned that the new borders were created to take no notice of the ethnic compositions. As a result of this treaty a lot of Hungarian people found themselves out of their original home country. After the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary lost 66% of its territory; its population decreased from 18,264,533 to 7,990,202; and its territory decreased from 282,870 km² to 93,073 km². 1.7 million Hungarian people were left in Romania, 0.5 million Hungarian people in the Serb-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom, 1.1 million Hungarian people in Czechoslovakia, and 26,000 Hungarian people in Austria (ZEIDLER, M. 2001) (Figure 6).

![Figure 6](http://www.htmh.hu/terkep/hatterk.jpg)

Figure 6 Ethnic Hungarians in Central Europe
(Pink colour shows Hungarian majorities, orange colour shows Hungarian minorities, green circles show approximately the research areas)
(in: http://www.htmh.hu/terkep/hatterk.jpg)

Two of our research areas have ethnic Hungarian majorities on the non-Hungarian side of the border: the Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland and the Sajó-Hernád borderland. Within these areas there are settlements with Hungarian minorities and majorities. Hungarian people, who had to live in an inimical foreign country, had different difficulties: how to fit themselves into the life of a new country while keeping their national identity, how to keep their connection with Hungary and with those localities of their villages, with which they had shared their life for a long time and from which they were now separated by this border line. The high proportion of relatives living on the other side of the border (this survey was done between 1999 and 2003) shows these close relationships (Figure 7).
Hungarian people who live in the Ukraine and Slovakia research areas have the most relatives across the border, in Hungary. Hungarian people who live in Hungary in the Sajó-Hernád and Kékfrankos borderlands of research areas, have the fewest relatives on the other side of the border. Consequently, the social interweaving can be strongly felt.

In these borderlands we can find an other significant ethnic minority group, one that is sometimes a local majority: this is the Gypsy minority. We find most of these communities in the Sajó-Hernád borderland of the research area (Figure 8-9). Unfortunately we have no data on Gypsy minorities from the Ukrainian side of the Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland. Based on the official data the Gypsy population on the Hungarian side of this study area was 9.63% in 1990 and 6.74% in 2001. The relative size of the Gypsy population did not actually decrease. It is only that the census data is not dependable in this sense, because many of Gypsies have not declared themselves as Gypsies. This thesis was confirmed by questionnaire survey, when every village’s mayors were asked about the ethnic composition of settlements. In some places we can found significant differences between these data and the official statistical data. Based on the official data the Gypsy group of the Hungarian side of Sajó-Hernád borderland was 10.75% of the population in 1990 and 14.66% in 2001 and Slovakian side was 2.65% in 1991 and 5.64% in 2001. The only partly dependable way to get an estimate of the real proportion was through the questionnaire survey for the mayors of the villages, where they gave their estimation of the size of the Gypsy population within the villages (22.14% in Hungarian side, 7.13% in Slovakian side). This survey was carried out in 1998, but it is still the most dependable source of information from the region (Figure 9-10).

The Gypsy proportion of the population of Kékfrankos borderland area is below 0.5%.
Figure 8 Relative size of the Gypsy populations in 1990 in the Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland

Figure 9 Relative size of the Gypsy populations in 2001 in the Sajó-Hernád borderland
The population change in these research areas can be described here from 1880 until 2001. The population of the Hungarian side of the Sajó-Hernád and Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderlands had been increasing until the 1970s, except during the two world wars. Between 1970 and 1990, ten years before the start of the overall population decrease in Hungary, the population of these areas started to decline, especially in Sajó-Hernád borderland, where the population size has decreased to under its 1880 level. At the same time, the population size was increasing on the other side of the border in these research areas. The population of Kékfrankos borderland has increased on both sides of the border, but it was in drastic decline on Hungarian side after World War II. Probably the war casualties played an important role in this. Also, a lot of German speakers lived here previously, who were forced to leave this area after the war. After this time the number of the people started to quickly increase. On the Austrian side the population increase was continuous, but very slow (Figure 11).

If we study the different factors involved in population dynamics over the last 10-20 years in the Kékfrankos borderland, we can see the increase was caused by immigration and not by natural change (Figure 12-13). This area is one of the gates to West-Europe with Sopron at its centre. This town is important for tourism, education, and trade, and it has a significant role as an attraction in the whole surrounding area, and across the border as well. There are good connections between the two countries, so we find close economic relationships both legal and illegal. The cheap but skilled labour force goes to Austria from Hungary, and people from Austria go to Hungary for many services. In spite of the iron curtain the borders were more open than in the other research areas. This openness continued in the 1990’s. Visitors were warmly made welcome on both sides of the Kékfrankos borderland, there is also good cooperation in education, with teachers working in Austria and in Hungary from both sides of the border.
Figure 11  The population size of the research areas between 1880-2001

Figure 12  Factors in population dynamics on the Hungarian side of the Kékfrankos borderland research area
Figure 13 Factors in population dynamics on the Austrian side of the Kékfrankos borderland research area

In the two other research areas, there is a mostly Hungarian population on both sides of the border. There were bad political conditions in these borderlands. The borders were difficult to cross. Visitors from Hungary were up against a hostile welcome on the other side of the border among Slovaks; and the Hungarian nationalities not were well tolerated in those countries (in Slovakia and Ukraine). The governments in power made a strong effort to decrease the proportion of Hungarians in these areas and did it with political and administrative tools. They supported ‘foreign’ nationalities (Slovakians, Czechs, or Ukrainians, Russians) moving to these areas, decreased the number of Hungarian schools and put up obstacles to using Hungarian as a formal language. Looking at the processes of population change, we can find differences between Hungarian and other nationalities. The population of Hungarians has been decreasing or slowly increasing opposite the Slovakian or Ukrainian population, which we can see has increased extremely (Figure 14-15). Native language and nationality was asked in 2001 in the Slovakian official census. (Formerly only nationality was asked.) We can see the different on Figure 14. More people declared Hungarian as a native language, than Hungarian nationality. This difference was caused by fear of the Slovakian government rather than by assimilation. On the Sajó-Hernád borderland the official census was organised by government of Czechoslovakia between two world wars, when it was trying to change the ethnic composition, if it needed to, with intimidation. Unfortunately in Ukraine these data were estimated after 1941. The population decrease in 1949 represented those men who were deported by the Soviet government in 1944. In the meantime when Soviet Union annexed Kárpátalja (Subcarpathia), the power feared the failure of an overall referendum, so it enacted compulsory work for three days for every Hungarian and German man between 18 and 50. After they were collected in Szolyva, many of them were killed there or later in the lagers. About 30 000 Hungarian men were deported and 16 000 were killed (KOVÁCS S. 1999).
The new borders created made living even worse for the population. The region remained in Hungary, but the traditional central places, towns (Rimaszombat, Rozsnyó, Kassa or Munkács, Ungvár, Nagyszőlős) of the regions, were given to the newly formed countries. The new relations with the new central cities (Miskolc, Ózd, Kazincbarcika or Nyíregyháza, Mátészalka, Vásárosnamény) don’t always work very well and cannot replace the traditional links. On the Hungarian side of the Sajó-Hernád borderland the settlements with a good condition of transport show an increasing population, but villages with a bad transport situation decreased (Figure 16). Also, on other aspect, population change,
is shown in settlements with high proportion of Gypsy people in 2001. The population of these villages has been increasing from 1990, because after this time there started a change of population from Hungarian to Gypsy. Among the Gypsy population we find a high birth rate, so these population are always increasing. In spite of a good transport situation, the population of the Hungarian side of Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland has been decreasing, but not as radically as in dead-end-road villages (Figure 17). Having less services did not affect population change so much.

Figure 16 Population of Hungarian side of Sajó-Hernád borderlands area

Figure 17 Population of Hungarian side of Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderlands area
Three main factors can be identified behind the population decline in these areas: the low birth rate, the high death rate and the higher number of emigrants than of the immigrants. The most significant of these three was the high emigration rate. The majority of the emigrants were from the younger, more educated part of the society. This selective migration caused an extremely low fertility rate (Figure 18-19).

Figure 18 Factors of population dynamics of the Sajó-Hernád borderland

Figure 19 Factors in population dynamics of the Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland
The population dynamics of Gypsy ethnics are characterized by a high level of births per head, and while the original population are moving out from these villages, the Gypsy population are moving into these settlements (Figure 20-21).

Figure 20  Factors in population dynamics of Tornanádaska, where the proportion of Gypsy people is more than 60%

Figure 21  Factors in population dynamics with more than 20% gipsy population in Hungarian side of the Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland
ETHNIC SYMPATHY OR ANTIPATHY

Ethnic composition is diverse in all three research borderlands. There is a significant Gypsy population in many villages at Sajó-Hernád borderland, and in this area on the other side of the border Hungarian communities are living rather in the majority than in the minority. The ethnic composition is similar in the Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland (though the other group are Ukrainians instead of Slovakiens). The proportion of Hungarians on the Hungarian side of the Kékfrankos borderland is 93.37%, but there are also Germans (3.76%) and Croatians (2.45%) living there, however, most of them also feel themselves Hungarian. On the Austrian side of this border live mostly Austrians with small Croatian and Hungarian minorities.

The inhabitants of these areas have to live with each other, so their acceptance of each other is very important, and understand inhabitants’ feelings about others. These feeling are presented by ethnic sympathy and antipathy research (Table 1, Figure 22-24).

Inhabitants of Hungarian sides of all three borderlands marked other nations lowest, especially those in the Sajó-Hernád borderland. Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian and Arabian are the least liked named national groups, with less than 2.99 values in every case. The self-evaluation among those in the Sajó-Hernád Hungarian side group is also lowest.

Of any group, however, the lowest sympathy was found for the Gypsy ethnics in all three research areas. This ethnic group is the least likeable (index of sympathy 1.87) among Hungarians, who are living in Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland. Gypsies are less unloved on Austrian side of Kékfrankos borderland with 2.63 marks. This is the one of the most unfavourable values among Austrians, as they gave only Arabs a lower mark (2.53).

Table 1 Ethnic sympathy and antipathy across all research areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borderland</th>
<th>Kékfrankos Hungarian side</th>
<th>Kékfrankos Austrian side</th>
<th>Sajó-Hernád Hungarian side</th>
<th>Sajó-Hernád Slovakian side</th>
<th>Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja Hungarian side</th>
<th>Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja Ukrainian side</th>
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<td>3.83</td>
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Figure 22  Ethnic sympathy and antipathy in the Kékfrankos borderland

Figure 23  Ethnic sympathy and antipathy in Sajó-Hernád borderland
Also less favourable are the Arabian nation receiving a (2.59) score among people who are living in Kéfkfrankos borderlands and Hungarians who are living on the Hungarian side of Sajó-Hernád borderland also give them a low grade (2.5).

The judgement on Romanians is also not so good (2.61), and is the worst among Hungarians, who are living in Hungarian side of Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland. This group are living closest to Romania and they have had many bad experiences with them. Judgements about Serbians (2.64), Russians (2.85), Ukrainians (2.93) and Ruthenians (2.96) are unfavourable as well for whole research area.

Jewish (3.17), Croatians (3.19) do a little better, and we do not find such dislike against them and neither with Slovenians (3.30), Slovakians (3.35) and French people (3.45).

The favourite nation is the Hungarians, but they were valued by only Austrians, However, it is a very high rating that they receive (4.58) - so high that it is higher than the self-evaluation of Hungarians in this borderland. The self-evaluation of Hungarians gives the same score (4.58) when the average (i.e. the mean) of all the areas is taken.

There is a degree of sympathy for Germans (3.76), Austrians (3.67), Americans (3.64), Polishes (3.60), Japanese (3.58) and Czechs (3.58) within these borderlands. The Germans (3.48), Austrians (3.37) and Czechs (3.20) got least marks in the Hungarian side of the Kéfkfrankos borderland. Americans and Japanese were valued worse on the Austrian side. Judging Polish, Hungarians who are living Hungarian side of Sajó-Hernád borderland give the lowest sympathy score (3.45). So ethnic sympathy is clearly lower if the group is competitive with other nations or if they have a common history and a bad experience with them. Expressed judgment of Ukrainians and Slovakians is higher on the Ukrainian side and Slovakian side of the borders. Unfortunately it was caused by fear and not by good relationships. According to our personal experiences in taking the survey the majority of Hungarians living there over grade these ethnic groups since the supply of data was followed by intense fear, especially in Slovakia. It actually happened during the survey, that, being afraid of some kind of threat, the Hungarian minority person simply took back the questionnaires and tore them up. Others gave good scores of sympathy but at the same time they told stories in which they emphasized their antipathy towards the Slovakian or Ukrainian people. In their own country of citizenship they were called foreigners but when they came to Hungary they were also called foreigners ("Ukrainian", "Slovakian"). They feel themselves people who do not belong to anywhere.
There is higher level in self-evaluation among Austrians (4.68), than Hungarians (4.58). Among Hungarians we can find the lowest mark at Hungarian side of Sajó-Hernád borderland (4.40), and here on the other side of the border Hungarians valued themselves best (4.78). This area (the Hungarian side) is the least developed among all research borderlands. The youngest people left these villages, and rather old inhabitants remain. There are Gypsy people staying in abandoned houses and in those settlements where gypsy population increases much, the villages are starting to be destroyed.

What are the reasons for negative feeling about gypsy people?

In history we can find a few Gypsies from XV century in Hungary. They lived separately from Hungarians. Since 1770s there were attempts to settle them, but these were unsuccessful. Recently they have not lived a travelling life but they also have not enough information and they have not enough skills to live by settling down. They cannot use resources well. They often live in heavy poverty (Picture 1). Sometimes they have to steal for their livelihood, however they are often irresponsible in labour market, they have few qualifications and they cannot adapt to the society around them. Where they do co-exist Gypsy population makes the local Hungarian population bitter towards them.

In many cases the local government leaders tried to revise for this situation, but sometimes they cannot handle it. It needs a long time to achieve these goals. Qualification of Gypsy children should have to improve with a program suitable to their cultural characteristics. The government should cooperate better with Gypsy organisations and the Gypsy organizations need to cooperate with local governments.

The Gypsy children tend to drop out of schools young and they cannot get jobs without any qualifications. As is the case with socio-economically deprived groups, they may put emphasis on giving birth to children, and then they become even poorer (Picture 2). They are unemployed, they do not know skills of agricultural cultivation, and they live from support. They need a chance for a better life, but they cannot produce it on their own, or of their own resources.

![Picture 1](image1.jpg) The home of a gypsy family (Tornanádaska, 2003)
SUMMARY

Two of our research areas have ethnic Hungarian majorities on the non-Hungarian side of the border: the Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland and the Sajó-Hernád borderland. Within these areas there are settlements with Hungarian minorities and majorities. Here the social interweaving can be strongly felt.

Between 1970 and 1990, ten years before the start of the overall population decrease in Hungary, the population of these areas started to decline, especially in Sajó-Hernád borderland, where the population size has decreased to under its 1880 level. At the same time, the population size was increasing on the other side of the border in these research areas. But looking at the processes of population change, we can find differences between Hungarian and other nationalities. The population of Hungarians has been decreasing or slowly increasing opposite the Slovakian or Ukrainian population, which we can see has increased extremely. And when the native language also was asked, more people declared Hungarian as a native language, than Hungarian nationality. This difference was caused by fear of the Slovakian government rather than by assimilation.

On the Hungarian side of the Sajó-Hernád borderland the settlements with a good condition of transport show an increasing population, but villages with a bad transport situation decreased. Also, on other aspect, population change, is shown in settlements with high proportion of Gypsy people in 2001. The population of these villages has been increasing from 1990, because after this time there started a change of population from Hungarian to Gypsy. Among the Gypsy population we find a high birth rate, so these populations are always increasing. In spite of a good transport situation, the population of the Hungarian side of Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland has been decreasing, but not as radically as in dead-end-road villages. Having less services did not affect population change so much.
Three main factors can be identified behind the population decline in these areas: the low birth rate, the high death rate and the higher number of emigrants than of the immigrants. The most significant of these three was the high emigration rate.

The population of Kékfrankos borderland has increased on both sides of the border.

Point of view the different factors involved in population dynamics over the last 10-20 years in the Kékfrankos borderland, we can see the increase was caused by immigration and not by natural change.

Ethnic composition is diverse in all three research borderlands. There is a significant Gypsy population in many villages at Sajó-Hernád borderland, and in this area on the other side of the border Hungarian communities are living rather in the majority than in the minority. The ethnic composition is similar in the Szatmár-Beregszász borderland (though the other group are Ukrainians instead of Slovaks). The proportion of Hungarians on the Hungarian side of the Kékfrankos borderland is 93.37%, but there are also Germans (3.76%) and Croats (2.45%) living there, however, most of them also feel themselves Hungarian. On the Austrian side of this border live mostly Austrians with small Croatian and Hungarian minorities.

Of any group, however, the lowest sympathy was found for the Gypsy ethnics in all three research areas. Recently they have not lived a travelling life but they have no enough information and they have not enough skills to live by settle down. They cannot use resources well. They often live in heavy poverty. Sometimes they have to steal for their livelihood, however they are often irresponsible in labour market, they have few qualifications and they cannot adapt to the society around them.

Generally the ethnic sympathy is clearly lower if the group is contiguous with the nation or if they have a common history and a bad experience with them. Expressed judgment of Ukrainians and Slovaks is higher on the Hungarian side and Slovakian side of the borders. Unfortunately it was caused by fear and not by good relationships.

In the case of Gypsy problems the government should cooperate better with Gypsy organisations and the Gypsy organisations need to cooperate with the local governments.

In other case the governments among the neighbour countries needs a good collaboration to revise situation of minorities.

REFERENCES


