Population changing and structure in the special rural areas along the borders

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Aim and method of the research

Researchers deal with borderlands from different aspects, such as political (e.g. O’DOWD, L. 1994; ANDERSON, J. O’DOWD, L. 1999; DIEZ, T, STETTER, S, ALBERT, M. 2004), the point of security (e.g. SALLAI, J. 2002; KOBOLKA, I. 2000), sociological (e.g. DONNAN, H, McFARLANE, G. 1987; COOK, S, POOLE, M. A, PRINGLE, D. G, MOORE, A. J. 2000) anthropological (e.g. DONNAN, H, WILSON, T. M. 1999), historical (e.g. ZEIDLER, M. 2001), economical (e.g. FITZGERALD, J.D, QUINN, T. P, WHELA, B. J, WILLIAMS, J. A. 1988), demographical (e.g. HOÖZ, I. 1992) etc. This is a very important issue for all social sciences, because borderlands can be contact or dividing lines, conflict zones or market places, intercultural or multicultural territories, homogeneous or heterogeneous spaces, developed and impoverished areas, etc, with important social, territorial and political roles. When we would like to exam these areas we need to start our research with population, the people who live there and who are the main actors in the area.

In this paper we have compared the different rural areas, and how the population has changed under different circumstances using examples from the Hungarian-Austrian, Hungarian-Slovakian, Hungarian-Ukrainian borderlands and the Northern Ireland-Republic of Ireland border region. The study is based on questionnaire surveys and statistical data analysis.

Research area

The study is based on four 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).
• Northern Irish and Irish borderland from Monaghan, Cavan an Fermanagh County with 42 districts or electoral divisions, called “Upper-Erne” borderland (Figure 4)
Population changing and structure

In all these areas the creation of borders has divided formerly cohesive communities and territories. In three of these borderlands (only Kékfrankos borderland is exception) mostly people with same languages and nationalities live both sides of the borders.

The population change in Hungarian borderlands 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 5).
Figure 5 The population size of three Hungarian borderlands research areas between 1880-2001

Population changing in Irish borderland research area: In the case of Northern Ireland, people moved to neighbouring towns during the conflict from 1971 (Figure 6). In the Southern border area after 1971 a relatively high percentage of inhabitants left, some to go to more peaceful and safer parts of the Republic of Ireland. When the situation became more peaceful from the mid-1990s the overall population change was positive (though not necessarily large), though Southern border towns continued to experience population decline (Figure 7). (Unfortunately it was not possible to get comparable data from this research area before 1971.)
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 8-9). 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 are more open than in the other research areas. Visitors are 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 8  Factors in population dynamics on the Hungarian side of the Kékfrankos borderland research area

Figure 9  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 10-11). 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 9. 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).

![Graph](attachment:population_graph.png)

**Figure 10** Population of the Sajó-Hernád borderlands
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, Nagyszölős) 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 12). 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 (Figure 13). 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 majority of the emigrants were from the younger, more educated part of the society. This selective migration caused an extremely low fertility rate (Figure 14-15).
Figure 14  Factors of population dynamics of the Sajó-Hernád borderland

Figure 15  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 16-17).

**Figure 16** Factors in population dynamics of Tornanádaska, where the proportion of Gypsy people is more than 60%

**Figure 17** Factors in population dynamics with more than 20% gipsy population in Hungarian side of the Šatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland
We have no data about the birth, death and migration rate either from rest of these borderlands, neither from Irish border areas.

If we exam the age factor of the population comparing with the past situation, we can see that it has changed all research area and became less advantageous (Figure 18-24). The situation is the worst in Slovakian-Hungarian border research area, where in Hungarian side we can find villages without people who are younger than 14 years old (Figure 21). In case of Irish border research area the aging of the population is still advantageous, but in some output areas lost their young inhabitants (Figure 24).

Figure 18 Index of population age structure in Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland, 1941

Figure 19 Index of population age structure in Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja borderland, 2001
Figure 20  Index of population age structure in Sajó-Hernád borderland, 1941

Figure 21  Index of population age structure in Sajó-Hernád borderland, 2001
Figure 22  Index of population age structure in Kékfrankos borderland, 2001

Figure 23  Index of population age structure in Upper-Erne borderland, 1971
Summary

If we focus on population change in borderlands, we often find that if the border acts as a barrier and border-crossing is difficult or impossible, the population starts to decrease on both sides of the border. The main outcome is high levels of migration on both sides of the border. When physical obstacles are removed from the borderlands, and the economic and political situation improves, we can see that life is not significantly changed in those areas. Only in the Hungarian-Austrian borderland research area are the processes changed much, both in terms of society and in the economy as well, especially on the Hungarian side of this borderland. Recently the population is increasing in this area because of high levels of selective migration within Hungary. The young and qualified people move in. In the Northern Ireland-Republic of Ireland borderland research area, after 10 years of paramilitary cease-fires the people feel more peaceful, but the proportion of qualified people is less than the norm for Northern Ireland. The apprehension of paramilitary activity has an effect on people’s mobility. In all these areas the natural population increase rates are declining. However, the main factor in population change is migration - if life conditions are advantageous people will move into this area, if not the population will decrease. In case of some Hungarian borderlands (Szatmár-Bereg-Kárpátalja and Sajó-Hernád borderlands) in villages where the gypsy inhabitant rate is high, the population is increasing, because of high level of birth rate.

REFERENCES