

DEMOGRAPHIC TENDENCIES IN THE CROSS-BORDER REGION OF SATU MARE (ROMANIA) AND SZABOLCS-SZATMÁR-BEREG (HUNGARY) COUNTIES

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ABSTRACT - From the point of view of trans-border co-operations, the inventory of the regional socio- economic relationships is indispensable for an exhaustive empirical study. Through this study we only begin to understand the demographic tendencies in Satu Mare County (Romania) and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (Hungary) in order to highlight the main features of the most important resource – the human capital. The analysis of the main indicators refers, first of all, to the vital statistics, population migration, and the demographic structure. Although the economical periphery-status of the Hungarian side is not valid for the Romanian side – because Satu Mare County is a medium-developed, while Bihor County is an advanced region in Romania – the demographic periphery status is fitting to the two Romanian counties, and because the relative positive tendencies, the Hungarian counties have a quite good demographical position in comparison with other regions in Hungary. That is why we have to face a kind of contradiction because the lack of spatial interference between demographical, positional and economical peripheries. At the Hungarian side the most disadvantageous subregions from social point of view are those lying next to the border line, while in Romania the border area is the most urbanized and developed subregion. The relative good demographical situation in Hungary in great part is a consequence of the presence of the numerous Gipsy population, which in the same time represents a major reason of the disadvantaged demographic-structural indicators, such as educational level or infant-mortality.

Key words: population growth, migration, demographic periphery, young and old population, Gipsy population, border area.

BASIC TENDENCIES IN VITAL STATISTICS AND MIGRATION

In 2002 Satu Mare County was ranked the 30th among the 42 counties in Romania from the demographic point of view (362,781 inhabitants, 51.5% females, 48.5% males).

In Satu Mare County the numeric decrease of the population exceeded the average of the country and the county belongs to the “high rate population decrease model”. Thus, the Romanian area of the cross-border region (including Crişana and Maramureş) has become an area where “demographic erosion” is very prominent. This process is characterized by high mortality rates and birth rates similar to the country’s average.

The demographic reserves are in a relatively more favorable situation as the proportion of the young population is slightly higher than the country’s average. On the whole, the Romanian area of the region is characterized by the numerical decrease of the population with a moderate reproduction capacity. The increasing demographic erosion is, first of all, characteristic of the peripheral areas, a situation that is slightly improved through a positive demographic migration rate as the western border region is viewed more favourably and it is more attractive.

In the Hungarian area of the Euroregion, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County has positive demographic features as compared to the national tendencies in Hungary. In Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County the rate of population decrease is much below the national average. Especially, birth rates are higher than the country’s average and this is not counterbalanced by a higher death rate than the national average in Hungary.

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Table 1. The Main Demographic Indicators of Satu Mare (Romania) and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (Hungary) Counties in 2002.

	<i>Satu Mare</i>	<i>Romania</i>	<i>Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg</i>	Hungary
Territory (km ²)	4, 417. 8	238, 000	5, 937	93, 032
Total population	367, 281	21, 700, 000	572, 500	10, 179, 000 (2001)
Births ‰	10. 2	10. 5 (2000)	13. 6	9. 3 (2003)
Deaths ‰	13. 6	11. 4 (2000)	15. 3	13. 4 (2003)
Natural increase rate ‰	-3. 4	-0. 9 (2000)	-1. 7	-4. 1 (2003)
Migration rate ‰	0. 6	-	-4. 3	-
Infantile mortality (under 1 year, ‰)	17. 2	18. 6 (2000)	13. 8	7. 3 (2003)
0-14 years, %	19. 4	17. 7	21. 4	17. 1 (2000)
15-60 years, %	64	62. 9	58. 2	63. 2 (2000)
60-x years, %	16. 5	19. 4	20. 4	19. 7 (2000)
Demographic density (inh./km ²)	83. 1	91. 1	96. 4	109. 4

That is why we cannot consider this area one of Hungary's demographically peripheral regions. But taking into consideration the proportion of the Gypsies, which exceeds the national average, and who have a much higher natural increase rate than the Hungarian majority, the situation is a bit different. Due to these facts as well (but not only to these factors) the area becomes part of the social and economic periphery. This ethnic group is numerous and, similarly to the Romanian situation, they live in disadvantaged areas, in poverty, they are often marginalized and racially discriminated. In many small villages (with fewer than 200 inhabitants) the proportion of the Gypsies exceeds 50%. This is the case mostly in the villages close to the Romanian borderline or along the valley of the Tisa. River. The official total number of the Gypsies in the county is 26,000 (4,5%). On the whole, in the border micro-region the proportion of the Gypsies is between 20%-40% in the northern area, and between 8% -11% in the southern area. The high infantile mortality rate and the great proportion of youths in comparison with the national average are explained by the presence of the Gypsies in the area. They are a "pro birth" community. If compared to Satu Mare County, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County has a favorable demographic situation from the point of view of the vital statistics and infantile mortality, though its status as a socio-economic periphery is shown in the negative migration balance. This is not true for Satu Mare County. In fact, according to the number of people who left, the county is ranked the third after Budapest (due to its remarkable suburbanization) and after Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County (the Western neighbouring county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County; its main city is in Miskolc). The county has a reduced capacity to maintain its population, which is shown in the young people's migration to targets with a negative migratory rate themselves, such as, Budapest and the two neighbouring counties: Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Hajdú- Bihar.

The regional differences within the vital statistics components are presented with the help of the 1990-2002 average rates because we want to show them in a progressive order, characteristic of the period after the economic-political changes in 1989.

In the case of Satu Mare County a clear regional grouping is possible as far as the variables of the demographic evolution are concerned. Taking into consideration birth rates, a region with high values is clearly defined in the area of the Oaş Mountains and the Oaş Depression, practically the area near the Ukrainian border. Here there are settlements with birth rates between 15‰- 22‰, such as: Gherța Mică, Turț, Cămârzana, Tarna Mare, Târșolț, or villages, such as Socond, near the Codru Peak and Acâș in the southern area of the county. Death rates are low in this region as well as in the main town of the county. There are high death rates(20 ‰-23‰) in the external and internal peripheral areas, in villages such as: Homoroad, Săuca, Craidorolț, Săcășeni, Terebești. The natural increase rate is the highest in the Oaş area

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(values between 3‰ -12‰), the lowest values are in the peripheral zone (-10‰...-16‰) in villages, such as: Homoroade, Valea Vinului, Pomi, Supur, Beltiug, Sanislău.

The infantile mortality rate is the highest at the periphery of Satu Mare County, either on the state or the county border areas. The values of infantile mortality are between 30‰-59‰ in villages, such as: Acăș, Craidorolț, Dorolț, Andrid, Terebești, Săcășeni, Tarna Mare, Ardud, Apa.

In Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County birth rates between 1990-2002 have a diffuse distribution. The highest values (between 20‰-27‰) are in the border area villages whose inhabitants are 50% Gypsies: Komlódtótfalu, Nyírpilis, Uszka, Kispalád, Méhtelek, Aranyosapáti, Magosliget, Tiszabездéd. At the same time, in the border area there are villages with the lowest birth rates (between 4,5‰-10,9‰): Nagyhódos, Gyügye, Pátyod, Panyola, Szamosújlak, Szamosbecs, Vállaj, etc. The highest death rates are also in the border area, in villages, such as: Komlódtótfalu, Mérk, Fülöpösdaróc, Kishódos, Rápolt, (between 25‰-38‰). The highest and the lowest values of the natural increase rate are in the border area; the highest values (6‰-12‰) are in: Nyírpilis, Rozsály, Uszka, Tuzsér, Aranyosapáti, Tiszabездéd, etc., villages with a numerous Gypsy population. The lowest values, 15‰...-23‰ are in: Mérk, Fülöpösdaróc, Kishódos, Komlódtótfalu, villages with high death rates. But generally we can say that the border stripe (by the Ukrainian and the Romanian border) has more unfavorable demographical values than the inside or the western areas of county.

Between 1990-2002, the infantile mortality rate has very low values in the border area of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, mainly in those villages where the population is old, and the number of births is small. There are even no births in the villages of Mánd, Garbolc, Jánkmajtis, Kishódos, Hermánszeg, and Fülöpösdaróc. The worst infantile mortality rate is in the villages where Gypsies are very numerous: Tizsakórod, Császló, Ökörítőfülpös, Csaholc, Panyola (between 40-50‰).

Migration is a demographic phenomenon which shows how attractive a region is or, on the contrary, it shows the incapability of a region to maintain its population.

Between 1990-2002 in Satu Mare County the highest rates of demographic decrease because of migration (-17, 5‰... -10, 2‰) were registered in the peripheral villages of the Oaş Mountains and the Oaş Depression area. These values were also backed up by a positive birth rate, which generated a surplus of population (Bătarci, Cămârzana, Târșolt). Other villages with a similar situation are in the Codru Peak area (Bogdand, Socond, Homoroade). Most of the population (an average of 2-3‰) was attracted by Satu Mare and a few villages around it (Micula, Odoeu), but also Bervenii, a village very close to the Hungarian borderline.

In Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County the situation is quite strange as the settlements with the highest demographic decrease through migration are situated in the most peripheral and most isolated areas very close to the borderline common with Ukraine and Romania, but the same is true for those settlements with the highest demographic increase through immigration. These settlements have migratory rate values under -15‰, the average rate between 1990 - 2002, (Jánd, Hetefejércse, Győröcske, Tákos, Gulács, Tizsaszalka, Tizsacsécse near the border with Ukraine; and Szamossályi, Méhtelek, Rápolt, Penészlek, Rozsály Tizstaberek near the border with Romania). At the other extreme, there are the settlements of the peripheral area of the county where the migratory rates are positive, (exception the village of Nyírpazony, near Nyíregyháza, growing because of suburbanization). Between 1990-2002 the average rate is between 10%-29‰, (Uszka, Kishódos, Gacsály near the Ukrainian-Romanian-Hungarian border, namely, the village of Mérk near the checkpoint of Vállaj-Urziceni). The migration balance, however, is less positive in the border area of the Hungarian county.

THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEMOGRAPHICAL STRUCTURE

As far as the ethnic structure is concerned, we would like to highlight the fact that the ethnic structure of Satu Mare County is favorable for cross-border contacts because of the relatively high number of Hungarians living in this county – 59.5% Romanians, 39.0% Hungarians, 1.5% other nationalities in 2002 (from these 0.6% Gypsies, 2, 520 in number). This is an important convergence factor in the relationships with Hungary, the contact being easier due to cultural and linguistic affinities. The Hungarian minority lives in a relatively compact area near the border, in the southern area of Satu Mare County. This makes contacts even easier. We should not forget to mention the German community (Svabs) living in the southern area of

the county, most of them having been already assimilated by the Hungarians. An important problem in this context is that contacts are mainly between the Hungarians living on both sides of the border, but it would be necessary to involve the Romanian population as well in order to create harmonious trans-border relationships and help inter-ethnic dialogue.

According to the data of the 2001 census, in the county of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, 4.7% (27,000 people) belong to an ethnic minority. 90% are Gypsies. Their situation has already been presented. Therefore, the minorities living in the Hungarian county represent 8.7% of the total number of minorities living in Hungary. In Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County there is a German community as well (730 people) in the village of Mérk, near the Romanian border, and Ukrainians (470 people) (Kocsis K, 2003)

The age structure of a population is an important indicator in evaluating human resources, the potential labour force reserve, and, generally, in the estimation of the biological potential and the viability of a population. This structure is “healthy”, i.e. it reveals the prevalence of the young population in the settlements where the birth rate is high or in the settlements with a “pro- birth” mentality population, such as the Gypsies.

In Satu Mare County, in the area of the Oaş Mountains and the Oaş Depression there is demographic dynamism, the percentage of youths is high. According to the 2002 census, young people make 25-31% of the population in the settlements from this area (Gherța Mică, Turț, Târșolț, Tarna Mare, Vama, Bătarci, Călinești-Oaş). The villages where 25%-31% of the population is old are situated on the periphery of the county, near the border of the two neighboring counties, Bihor and Sălaj (Hodod, Supur, Cehal, Săuca), or in the area of the Codru Peak (Homoroad, Pomi, Valea Vinului, Bogdand), or they are internal peripheries (Terebești).

In Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County the settlements with the most numerous young population are situated near the borders with Romania and Ukraine. In most cases, the Gypsy population reaches 50% of the population of these settlements. According to the 2001 census, in these settlements the proportion of the young population is between 20%-35% (Nyírpilis, Uszka, Magosliget, Tuzsér, Garbolc etc.). But these are extreme exceptions. On the whole, the border stripe is mostly inhabited by elderly population. The settlements where there is a high proportion of old population (between 30%-44%) are also situated near the border area, for example Nagyhódos, Komlódtótfalu (where rural tourism is fast developing, Baranyi B., 2004), Hermánszeg, Mérk, Vállaj, Szamosújlak, etc.

The level of education of the population is another indicator of the quality, the adaptability, and the competitiveness of the human resources.

According to the 2002 census, in Romania, illiteracy is 2.3% (23.6% of these people live in urban areas, 76.4% in rural areas). In Satu Mare County this value is higher than the national average, 2.4% (17.4% live in urban areas and 82.6% live in rural areas). Three communities (Andrid, Dorolț, and Supur) have the highest illiteracy-rate: i.e. over 10%.

On the whole, the illiteracy rate in Hungary is 1% and it is mainly among old population. As we do not possess territorial data on illiteracy, we searched for another indicator: the rate of the population over 7 who dropped out of the first grade in primary school, according to the 2001 census. This indicator shows an average of 2.8% in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County. Most of the settlements with the highest values (between 6%-16%) are situated near the Romanian border (Gacsály, Fülöpdsaróc, Györtelek, Rápolc, Tiszaberek, Rozsály). But an actual comparison between the two counties is not possible because the data refer to different age groups.

According to the 2002 census, in Romania, 7 % of the population aged 10 and above graduated from an institute of higher education (89.4% of these people live in urban areas, 10.6% live in rural areas). In Satu Mare County 4.5% of the population graduated from a higher education institution (83% of these people live in urban areas, 17% live in rural areas). Most of high school and university graduates (between 4,3%-9,5%) live in towns, such as the county's main town Satu Mare, then Carei, Tășnad, Negrești-Oaş, and also in Urziceni, a community near the Hungarian frontier. The lowest level (under 0,5%) is characteristic of some peripheral communities: Bârsău, Cămârzana, Dorolț, Gherța Mică. From this point of view, the urban-rural dualism is, probably, the most spectacular in the Romanian country.

In Hungary, 10% of the population aged 25 and above graduated from a higher education institution, according to the 2001 census. In Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County 3.9% of the same population group have graduated from a higher education institute. The highest value, 18%, is in Nyíregyháza, while the settlements with the lowest values (under 1%) are in the Szatmár Plain, the borderlands with Romania and Ukraine

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(Hetefejércse, Kispalád, Önböly, Szamostatárfalva, Mánd, Rápolc). A reliable comparison is not possible in this case either, because the data refer to very different age groups and the Romanian county is more unfavorably represented. However, we can have an overview of the situation and an inner regional comparison, too. Similarly, in the Hungarian county, the average number of grades the population graduated from is the lowest in the same settlement group (under 7 grades, in Uszka, Nyírpilis, Kishódos, Gacsály, Kisléta, Rápolc, Önböly); the other extreme is Nyíregyháza with an average of 10 grades graduated from.

From the point of view of unemployment, Satu Mare County has always held a special place in Romania. It has very low rates, in contrast with the Hungarian county, which has often had the highest unemployment rates in Hungary. At the moment, the 4% unemployment rate in Satu Mare County is well below 6.1%, the national average. In 2002, the settlements with the highest unemployment rate (between 10,7%-17,9%) were Carei, Tășnad, Berveni, Terebești, Supur, Pomi, Dorolț, Moftin, which lie in the external as well as in the internal periphery of the county. In Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County the unemployment rate was often 13.1% in 2001, which is twice the national average (6%). The settlements with the most alarming unemployment rates are, with some minor exceptions, situated near the Romanian and the Ukrainian borders, which reinforces the social periphery stereotype: Hetefejércse-69.2%, Kispalád-60.2%, Magosliget-60%, Császló-60%, Darnó-50%, Kishódos-50%, Tiszavid- 42.2%, Szamostatárfalva-36.6%, Milota-35.2%, Csaolc-32.5%, Nyírpilis-30.9%, Jánd-30.7%, Önböly-30.2%.

The occupational structure of the population in Romania, though slowly improving, still shows general backwardness. 35,4% of the employees worked in the primary sector (agriculture, forestry) in 2003. 29,8% of the population worked in the secondary sector (industry, mining, construction) and 34,8% worked in the tertiary sector (services) in the same year. In Satu Mare County the occupational situation is better as 51.9% of the population work in the tertiary sector, 26% work in the secondary sector, and 21.8% in the primary one. These facts show, beyond doubt, a healthier and more advanced economic structure. The most rural settlements with the highest rate of agricultural employees (over 75%) are Cehal, Pișcolt, Bixad, Certeze, Săuca, Gherța Mică, Andrid, and Socond. They all lie in the peripheral area of the county. From the point of view of industry and services, most of the towns in Satu Mare County have an outstandingly good situation because over 40% of the population is employed in these two branches (industry – Satu Mare-49%, Carei-42,1 %, Negrești Oaș-41,3%; services – Carei-51,4%, Satu Mare-48,5%, Negrești Oaș-48,2%). Also, we can mention some communities with a higher rate of industry employees (Căpleni-50,9%, Crucișor-73,5%), mostly in food industry. On the other hand, none of these communities has a higher rate of employees in services, with the exception of Craidorolț.

In 2000, in Hungary, the occupational structure of the active population was like this: the primary sector 8.9%, the secondary sector 40.7%, and the tertiary sector 50.4%. In 2001, in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, only 20.8% of the population was employed, 8.6% in the primary sector, 31.6% in the secondary sector and 59.8% in the tertiary sector. Most agricultural settlements are spread all over the territory, only the village of Zsarolyán is situated near the borderline, 30% of the population being employed in the primary sector. From among the settlements near the borderline with the highest proportion of the population employed in the primary sector (20%- 30%) we mention: Csengerújfalú, Csengersima, Csaolc, Túrricse, Kishódos, Nagyecséd, Szamosbecs. The employment in the secondary sector is below 10%, in the borderline settlements of: Kishódos, Magosliget, Tiszabecs, Uszka, Tisztaberek, Garbolc, Tuzsér, Gacsály, Barabás, Nagyhódos and Záhony. Surprisingly, the other extreme is near the border with Romania, the villages of Hermánszeg and Komlódtótfalu have the highest rate of population employed in the secondary sector (mostly, in light industry), 55% and 54%, respectively.

In the same settlements, few people are employed in services, probably, mostly people who have no other occupations and who choose to work in public services for a modest payment. In some cases, they are active in rural tourism. This also shows the lack of jobs in the private sector in industry, agriculture, and services, too. The rate of the population occupied in the tertiary sector reaches 80- 90% in settlements such as: Uszka, Tuzsér, Tiszabecs, Magosliget, Záhony (railway shipping services across the border), Garbolc, Gacsály, Tiszacséce, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion we can say, that the main indicators highlight the peripheral character of the region under scrutiny, especially from the point of view of unemployment and the presence of numerous

disadvantaged social groups in the Hungarian area where there is also population decrease through migration. In Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, although there is a negative balance in the vital statistics, the numerical decrease of the population is still much slower than the national average in Hungary, mostly because of the Gypsy population with a “pro birth” mentality. As a consequence, the population in the Hungarian county is younger. The Romanian area has better values in the employment of the labour force, however there is also demographic erosion, and the area is more agricultural. Infantile mortality has high rates in both counties, mainly in the settlements where there are numerous Gypsies. The level of education is comparable in both counties and it needs significant improvements.

From the demographical point of view, there is a sub-regional disparity in the dynamics of the population in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County because the borderline settlements are in a worse situation than the settlements in the inner areas of the county. They also have worse indicators regarding to the population structure (age, education, etc.). This assertion is not valid for Satu Mare County because it has the most developed borderline areas which correspond to the main cities and their suburban micro-regions in the peripheral areas near the Hungarian border. The latter also have better demographic indicators, too.

As far as the structure of population is concerned, both counties are characterized by an obvious contrast between towns and villages, the towns being in advantage, of course.

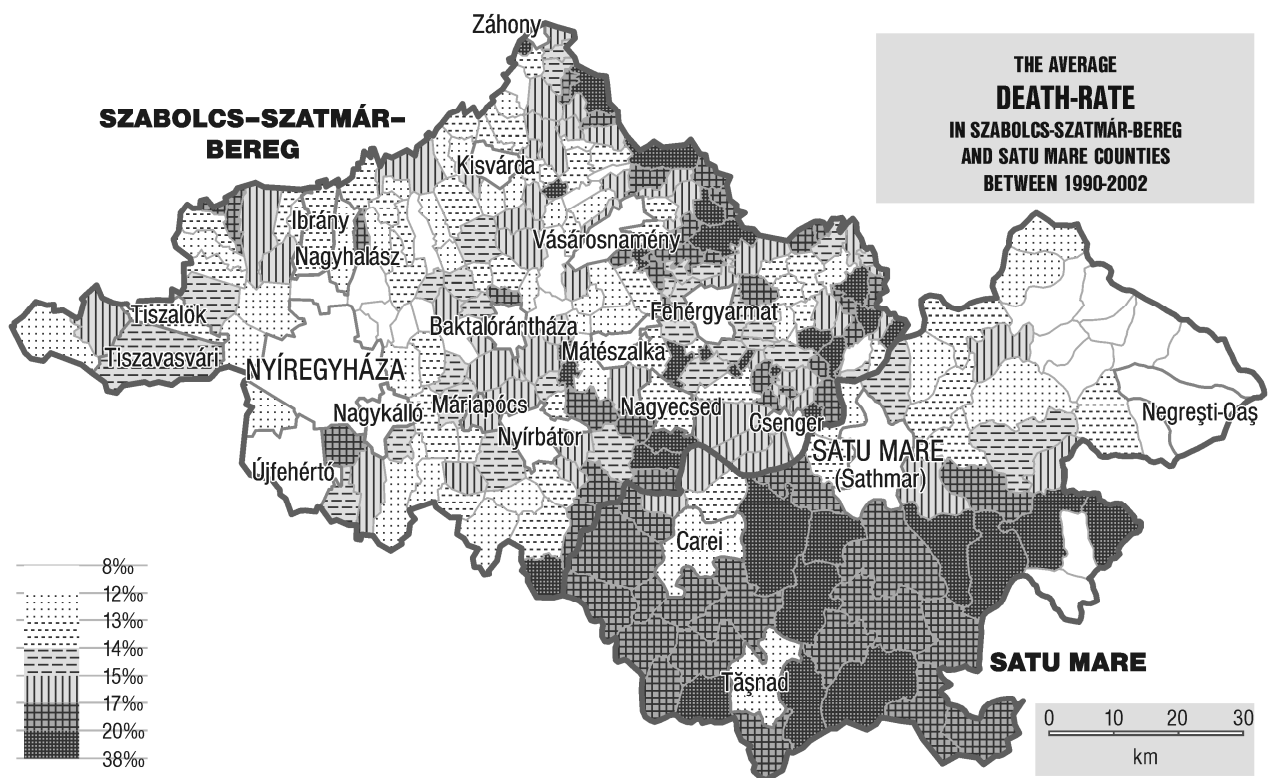
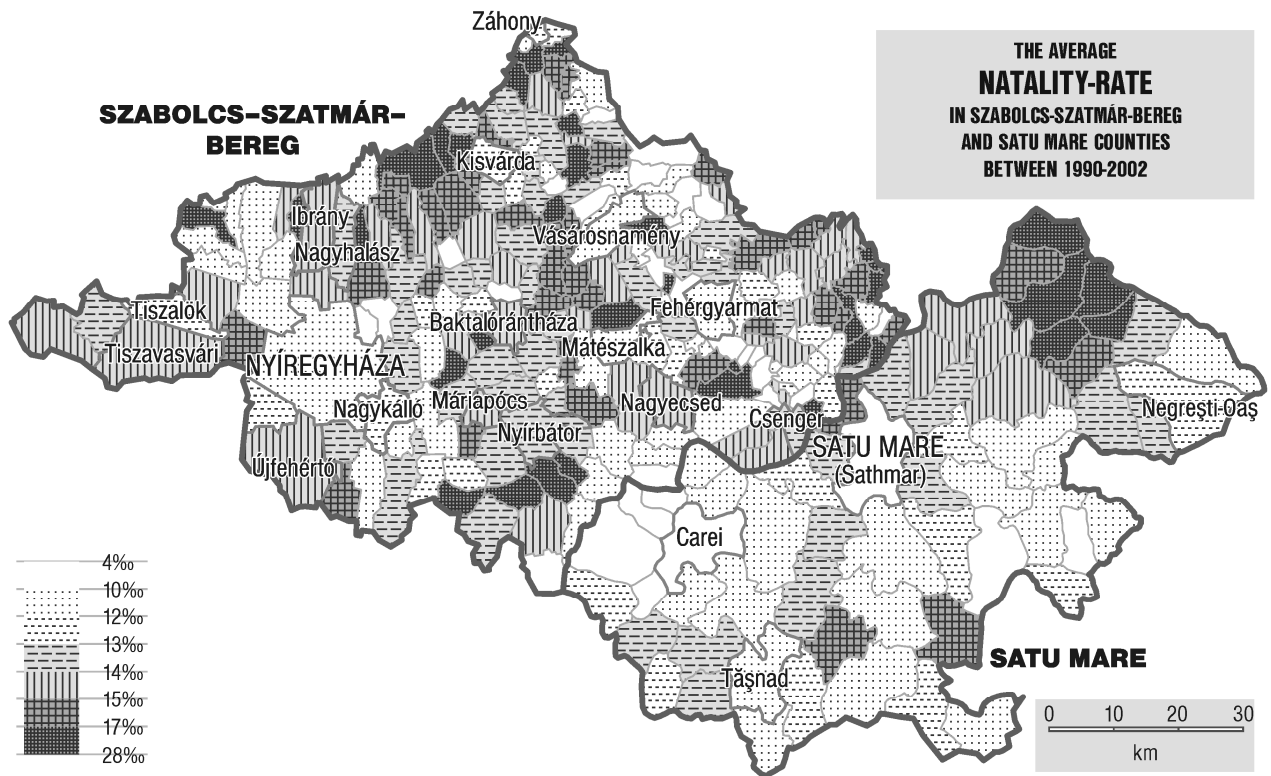
In the Romanian Satu Mare County there is a very obvious north-south slope in the dynamics of the population, the southern area being in a very unfavourable situation, from this point of view. In this southern area there lies the largest inner periphery of the county, too.

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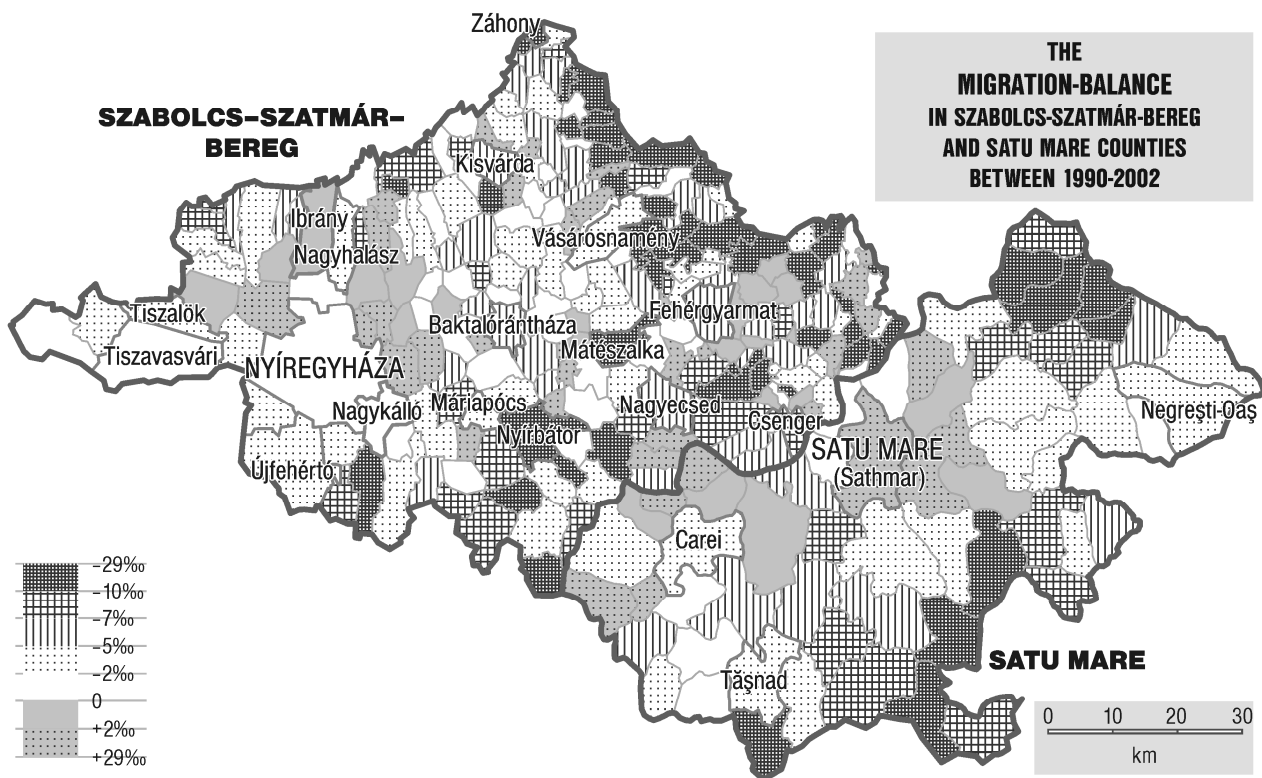
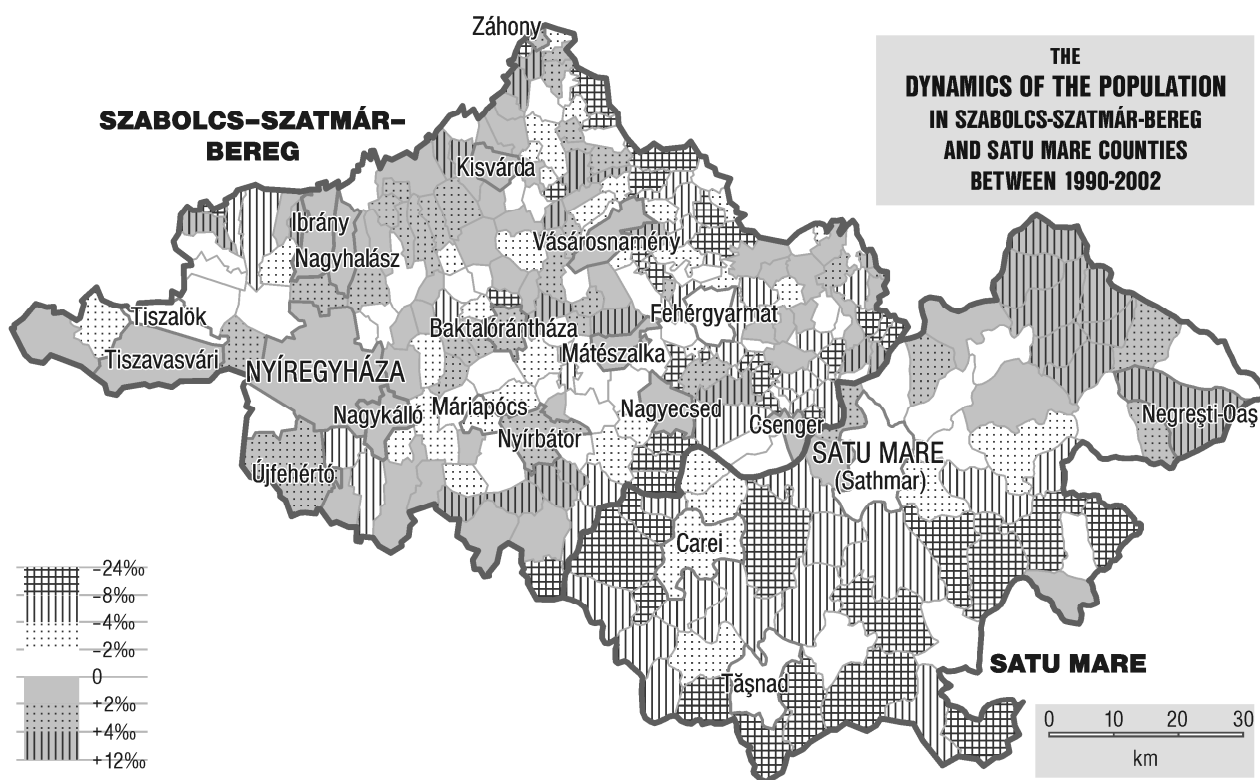
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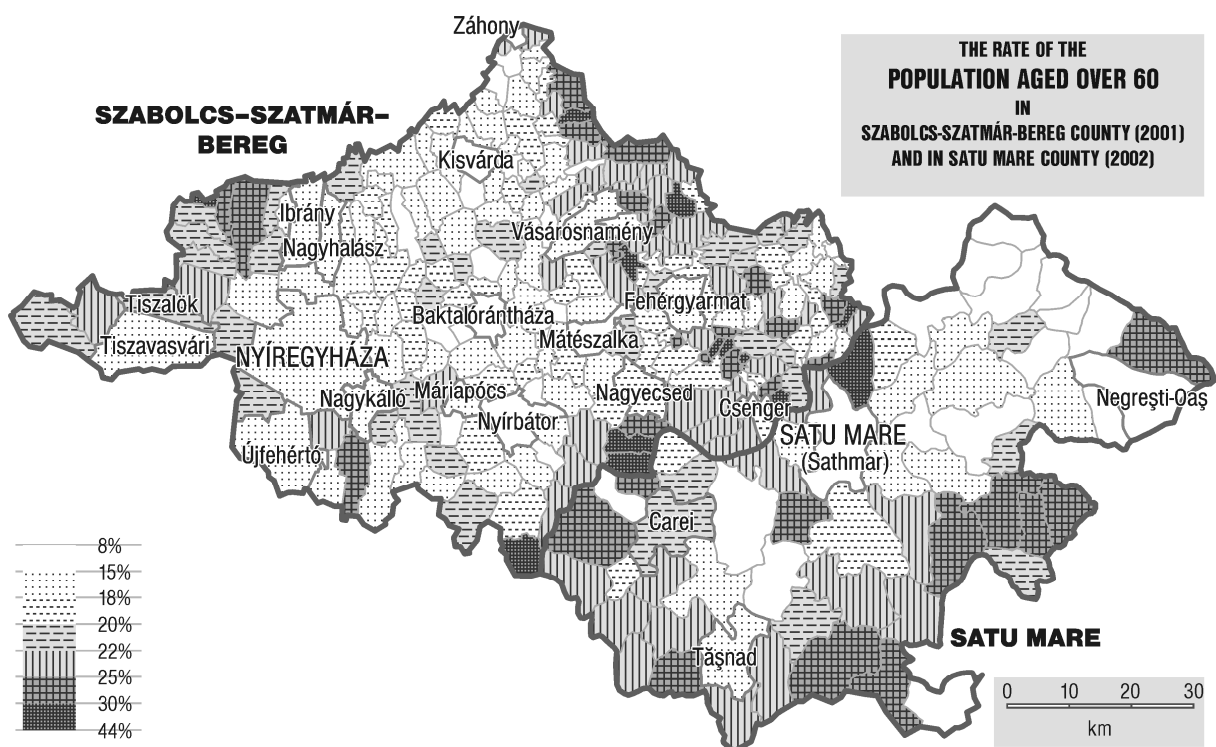
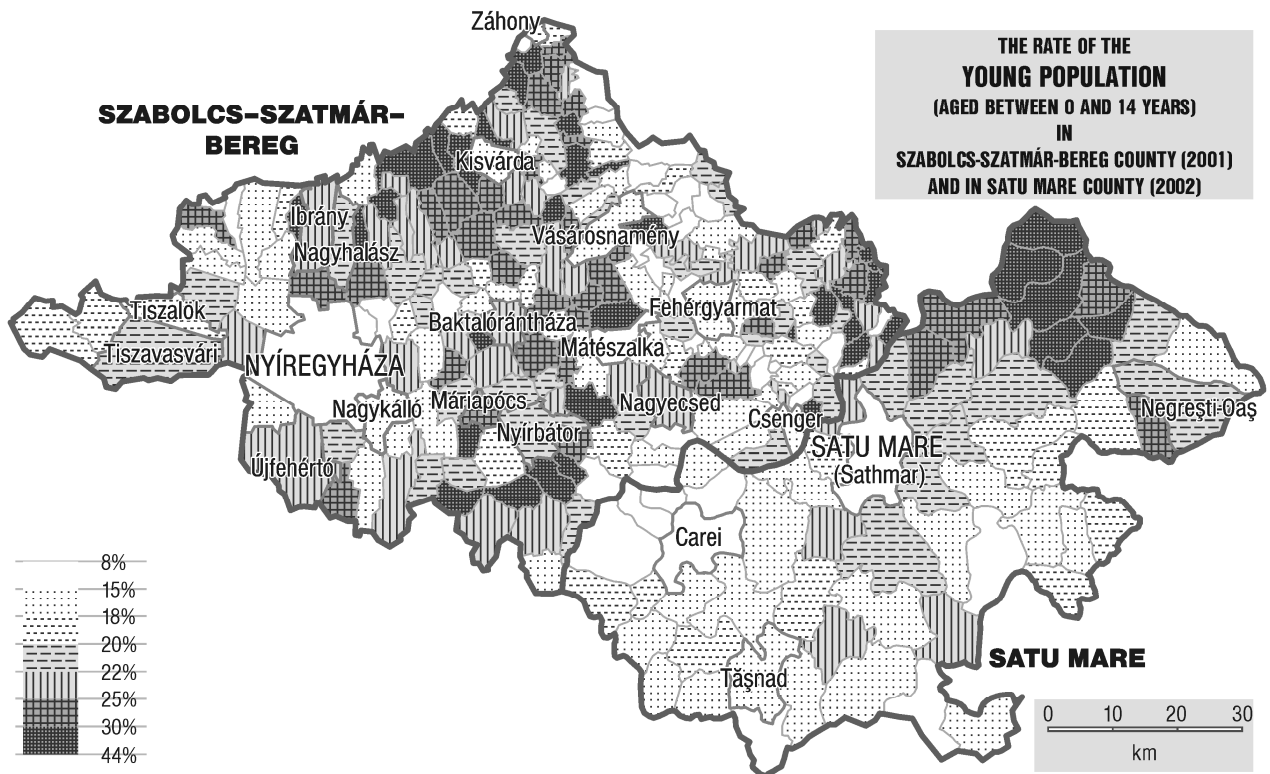
APPENDIX



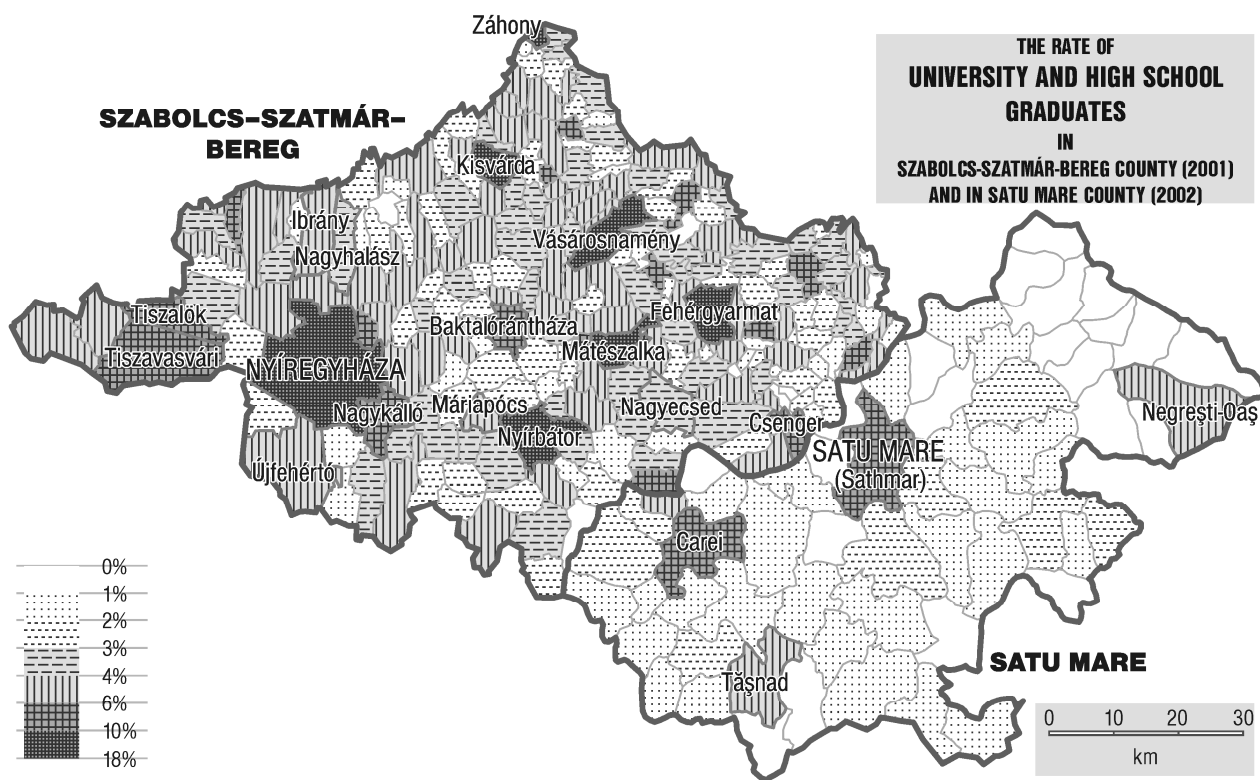
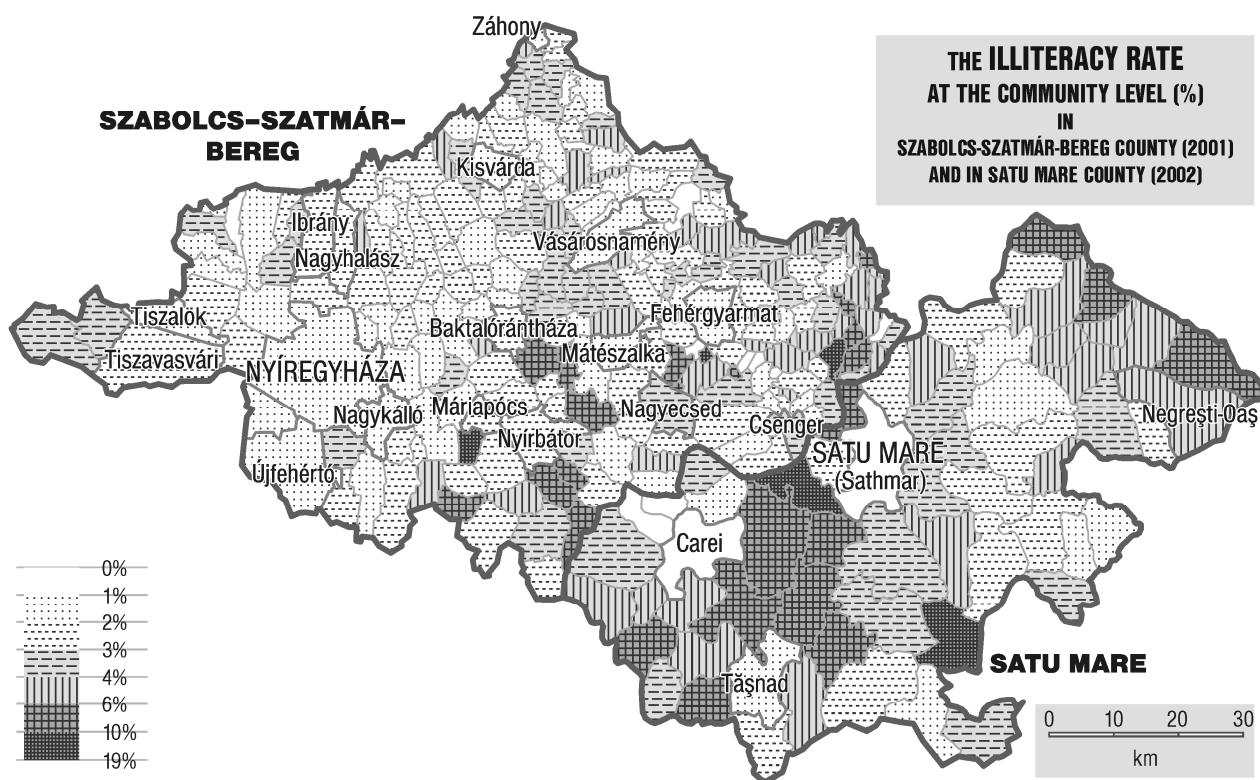
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(Cartography: Bartos-Elekes Zsombor, Magyar-Sáska Zsolt)