

MINORITIES RESEARCH

Conditions of Minorities

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Regional Research. Report on a Comparative Investigation

Supported by the Council of Ministers of the European Union, the Szórvány [Diaspora] Foundation of Temesvár carried out a comparative survey in Csongrád county in Hungary, in the Bânság region in Romania, and in Voivodina in Yugoslavia during the winter of 1996 and the spring of 1997. Altogether 907 people were asked questions about the position of the region belonging today to three different countries, about the ethnic conditions, attachment to the birthplace or intention to migrate, and about other aspects of human relations. Data processing and elaboration of details are still going on. On this occasion, only a sample is to be presented and one aspect of the survey - the correlation between the attachment to the homeland and national identity - is to be addressed briefly.

Description of the sample

The sample includes inhabitants of six settlements. In Hungary: Békéscsaba and Bánhegyes, in Voivodina: Ada and Szabadka, in Romania: Temesvár and Varjas. The respondents were aged 16-84, average age being 42.2 years. Distribution by gender: 446 men and 458 women were involved, three persons registered without noting their gender. 63 per cent lived in marriage or live-in companionship, 29 per cent were single, 7.5 per cent were widowed, with 5 (0.5 per cent) without indication of marital status. As for religious affiliation, 453 were Roman catholic, 231 Greek orthodox, 90 Lutheran, 74 Calvinist, 18 Greek catholic, 6 other, 30 not baptised, and information missing for 5 persons. As regards nationality: 475 (52.37 per cent) were Hungarian, 134 (14.77 per cent) Romanian, 133 (14.66 per cent) Slovakian, 104 (11.46 per cent) Serbian, 19 (2.09 per cent) Croatian, 6 (0.66 per cent) Roma, 36 (3.96 per cent) other nationals.

Intensity of attachment

One of the many aims of the survey was to explore whether the different ethnic groups living in the region are attached identically to the place they live in: their residential neighbourhood, their own settlement, the village (district, county), the region, the country and Europe. What are they more closely attached to? To what extent do each of the peoples living there see their residence as their home, the country they live in as their fatherland? What does Europe mean for them? Etc.

Attachment to place of residence

The intensity of attachment is expressed by the mean of answers placed on a value scale (1- attached weakly, 2 more or less, 3 - strongly). Let us first see the

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degree of attachment to the place of residence by the different nationalities in the three countries concerned.

Nationality	Hungary	Romania	Yugoslavia
Hungarian	2.33	2.54	2.52
Serbian	-	-	2.22
Slovakian	2.77	-	-
Romanian	-	2.57	-
Croatian	-	-	2.63
Roma	-	-	2.50

As regards Hungarians of whom many live in all three countries of the region criss-crossed by borders those cling most tightly to their birthplace who live in the Bánság in Romania (intensity of attachment:2.54), with almost the same degree of attachment characterising Hungarians in Voivodina (2.52), whereas Hungarians in the parent country (averaging 2.33) are seemingly less attached to their residence.

As for the intensity of attachment, Slovaks in Hungary proved most tightly adhering to their places of residence (2.77). Next came the Croats in Voivodina (2.63) and the Romanians in Romania (2.57). The Hungarians living in Romania and in Voivodina (2.54 and 2.52, respectively), as well as the Gypsies (2.50) are somewhere in mid field. Substantially less attached to their places of residence are the Hungarians in Hungary (2.33) and even less the Serbs in Voivodina (averaging 2.22).

The above figures only apply to persons whose nationality is identical with their mother tongue and speak that language in the family, too. In reality, however, the picture is far more mottled: nationality, mother tongue and the language spoken at home are frequently different, and that, in turn, naturally influences the intensity of attachment as well. All things considered, the Békéscsaba citizens who claim to be Hungarian nationals but speak Slovakian as their mother tongue still top the list of attachment to their residential environment (2.77, this being the figure for Slovaks in Hungary in general). The Romanians of Varjas, who rank themselves as Hungarian nationals but speak Romanian at home, also adhere closely to their home (2.75), and so do the Serbs in Voivodina, whose mother tongue is Serbian and mainly communicate in this language, although they claim to belong to other nationalities (2.68).

Attachment to the country

One finds an utterly different situation when one looks into the question of attachment to the country. In some sense, it is exactly the reverse of the previous picture. The Hungarians living in the parent country are tightly attached to the country (2.85), the Hungarians in Romania and Yugoslavia displaying a low index of

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attachment (2.35 and 2.22, respectively). While Hungarians at home are attached more insistently to their country than to their immediate surroundings, the opposite is true for Hungarians living in minority outside the borders. They are far less attached to the country than to their residential environment, though the latter is also moderate.

Nationality	Hungary	Romania	Yugoslavia
Hungarian	2.85	2.35	2.22
Serbian	-	-	2.50
Slovakian	2.75	-	-
Romanian	-	2.89	-
Croatian	-	-	1.94
Roma	-	-	2.00

However, it is not only Hungarians in Hungary who are attached to their country. The intensity of attachment is even greater among Romanians in Romania (2.89). The Serbs in Voivodina, by contrast, stick less eagerly to their country (2.50), obviously as a result of the Yugoslav situation and the unsettled status of Voivodina. The Slovaks in Hungary appear to be strongly attached to the country (2.75), the index being even higher for the Hungarian nationality Slovaks whose mother tongue is Slovakian (2.92). Mainly those Serbs in Voivodina feel attached to their country who also speak Serbian at home, though their nationality is diverse, e.g. "Yugoslav" (2.68). The least strongly attached to their country are the Croats in Voivodina (1.94), which is understandable in view of the Balkan situation.

Attachment to settlement and its broader environment

No significant novelty can be discerned in the respondents' attachment to their respective settlements and its broader administrative environment (district, county). Generally speaking, it can be stated that attachment to one's own settlement is somewhat more marked than to the residential area, but the difference is not significant. The broader environment (district, county) does not play a special role: the intensity of attachment is usually identical with the feeling for one's residential neighbourhood or settlement.

Attachment to Europe

It is astonishing what high values one finds when looking at the intensity of attachment to Europe among the studied nationalities. Exceptions are the Hungarians and Serbs in Voivodina and the Gypsies. It is to be noted, however, that the Hungarians in Voivodina are more attached to Europe (2.49) than to their country (2.22), and vice versa for the Serbs: they insist on their country more (2.50) than on Europe (2.34).

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Nationality	Hungary	Romania	Yugoslavia
Hungarian	2.81	2.79	2.59
Serbian	-	-	2.34
Slovakian	2.89	-	-
Romanian	-	2.85	-
Croatian	-	-	2.68
Roma	-	-	2.00

To sum up, it can be claimed that people in majority position are more tightly attached to the country they live in than to their immediate residential environment, or settlement. Most obviously, they feel the entire country - wherever they may live inside it - to be their own. Quite different is the case of minorities. They stick far more ardently to their immediate environment, whereas they would not be shaken by border changes resulting in their finding themselves in another country- as has been the case several times already. Exceptions are the Slovakian inhabitants of Hungary, who are equally strongly attached to their settlement, to their country and even to Europe. Gypsies are at the other extreme: Europe and the country they live in make little sense to them, while they feel medium-strong attachment to their residence, settlement and broader administrative area. The correlation between the attachment to one's living space and nationality as well as mother tongue can best be interpreted against the intentions to move out. This is to be discussed in a separate paper.