

Demographic Transition of Three Populations in Two Countries – The Population of Romania and Hungary Compared*

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The main goal of our study is to describe and to interpret the selected features of demographic behaviour after the regime change. We compare two countries and three populations – the Hungarians in Hungary, the Romanian population, and the Hungarian population living in Transylvania. We are interested in similarities and differences in fertility trends, partnership behaviour, such as marriage, cohabitation, and divorce. Dissimilarities in the social changes and economic development are also outlined. We focus on structure versus culture since the Hungarian population lives within the Romanian institutional settings and under Romanian socio-economic circumstances but, at the same time, they have strong cultural ties with Hungary too. Using vital statistics, we are able to show that the trends of fertility behaviour of the Hungarians in Transylvania is closely related to the Romanian general tendencies, however, several deviations can be also identified. Our study serves as a first step in examining the comparison between Romania and Hungary together with the behaviour of ethnic minorities.

KEYWORDS:
Population.
Fertility.
Family policy.

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We are not short of papers studying the demographic behaviour of the Hungarian population, even that of Hungarians living beyond the borders. In the last decade, numerous comprehensive analyses were prepared in the latter topic (for example *Csata–Kiss* [2007], *Veress* [2002], *Kiss–Gyurgyik* [2009]), and continuous researches are being conducted on the stratification of the population as well (*Veress* [2003]). There are a large number of thematic studies on (out)migration (*Gödri–Tóth* [2005]), as well as on migration intentions, the ethnic composition of marriages and the changes of the latter (*Horváth* [2004]). We cannot be dissatisfied with the exploration of the conditions in Hungary either, since newer and newer papers are published on fertility, changes in couple relationships, divorces, ageing, health conditions and migration (*Sik* [1994], *Bukodi* [2004], *Spéder–Kamarás* [2008]). Even an estimation of the total Hungarian population has been prepared recently.

However, there are not plenty of researches where the Hungarian population in Transylvania is studied in a “multiple context”, namely is compared with the Romanian and the Hungarian society at the same time. We believe that such kind of comparison could be advantageous not only in understanding the behaviour of the Hungarian population in Transylvania, but also could provide new insights into the demographic changes in the two neighbouring countries, and can give us also some important theoretical lessons. Indeed, such kind of research can contribute to understanding *the role of structure* (the Romanian institutional setting, structural circumstances) *and culture* (Hungarian language use, Transylvania everyday culture) in shaping demographic behaviour.

Demographers are inclined to disregard that the key events of life – birth, moving out of the parental home, marriage, divorce, migration, and out-migration – occur in a given social, economic, and institutional context, and a definite cultural space. Nevertheless, there are an increasing number of studies, which call attention to the determinant role of the institutional systems, structure, and culture. (*Buchanan* [1989], *Thornton–Philipov* [2009]) It is justified to classify also our study among them. The Hungarians living in Romania within the Romanian institutional settings are players of the Romanian labour market, and their behaviour (intentions, decisions, social practice) is embedded in the Romanian social structure. However, they are linked in various ways with Hungary, and the cultural characteristics of the Hungarian population in Transylvania and in Hungary are almost the same. From our research perspective, especially those elements of the culture are of importance that shape everyday life and social praxis, especially demographic behaviour (see *Rehberg* [2003]).

This study can be considered as a “background paper” for a research program that compares Hungarians living in Hungary and in Transylvania with the Romanian population. Here we outline the basic social, economic and institutional contexts (Sections 1 and 5) and – using vital statistics – describe the basic tendencies of demographic behaviour in the three populations (Sections 2–4). Since we are interested in the first half of the life course, we limit ourselves to the trends of fertility, partnership, and touch only migration in the description of population development.

The Generations and Gender Program and as one of its pillars the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS) are ideal frameworks for carrying out research programs, and thus they were so in the case of data collection of both Hungary and Romania.¹ For the sake of a more detailed analysis of the Hungarian population in Romania, a separate data collection was initiated and accomplished in Transylvania. The first wave questionnaires of the GGS (see *Vikat et al.* [2005]) and the Hungarian “Turning Points of Our Life Course” Panel Survey (*Spéder* [2001]) were adapted to the Transylvanian situation. Due to financial constraints, we interviewed only the young (18–45 year-old) population in Transylvania, although in the GGS the total adult (18–75 year-old) population is targeted. Contrary to the earlier investigations in Transylvania, we applied a two-stage sampling (visiting addresses, data collection), and the selection criterion for becoming a sample member was the following: “those people are Hungarians who understand the questions of the questionnaire and are able to answer them”. According to our knowledge, we obtained this way a sample representing the Hungarian population of Transylvania in respect of our research better than the former ones.

Finally, we would like to give an account of the accomplishment of comparing the Hungarian populations living in Hungary and in Transylvania (see *Spéder* [2009]). Papers were published on partnership and fertility behaviour (*Pongrácz* [2009], *Spéder–Kiss* [2009], *Spéder–Veress* [2009]), divorce and separation (*Földházi* [2009]), as well as on leaving the parental home (*Murinko* [2009]). The socio-economic comparisons included the topics of stratification (*Monostori–Veress* [2009]) and Roma ethnicity (*Kapitány–Kiss* [2009]). Specific studies targeted only the situation (for example ethnocultural reproduction (*Horváth* [2009]), migration (*Gödri Kiss* [2009])) of the Hungarians in Transylvania or described the methodological issues of the Transylvanian data collection. This paper is based on the introductory chapter of our research report titled “Parallels. Hungarians in the Mother Country and in Transylvania at the Turn of the Century” (*Spéder* [2009]).

Our main goal is to describe and to interpret some crucial elements of the demographic behaviour after the regime change. Meanwhile, we concentrate on the analysis

¹ For the concept of the Generations and Gender Survey, see *Vikat et al.* [2005]. Data collection in the participating countries was launched in different time. Hungary has its first wave in 2000–2001, Romania in 2004. In this paper, our analysis is based on vital statistics.

of the present situation even if the factors of the late socialist era continue to exert an influence in several respects. According to our intentions, we are dealing with the past only if it is indispensable for understanding the present situation. We are addressing similarly the social context: we cannot aim at the comprehensive comparison of the Hungarian–Romanian situation and within that at the analysis of the circumstances in Transylvania, as this is beyond our possibilities. At the same time it is essential to outline – even if roughly – some specific features of the regime change in Hungary and in Romania and those characteristics of the social and economic transition.

1. Regime change in Hungary and in Romania

The political and economic system in Hungary and in Romania being the subject of our research can be considered essentially the same – democratic competition, market economy based on private ownership –, and it is widely known that both countries are on their way of transition from socialism to capitalism and are on the periphery of the European centre of the global economy. At the same time, we cannot consider them equal either in respect of the starting situation or the way of transition, as a consequence of which the social order of the two countries, which were both already EU members at the time of our study, cannot be regarded the same either. In the present study we will rather focus on the specific features (differences), but we will by no means neglect the basic similarities characteristic of the two countries.

1.1. Objectives, tools, circumstances

At the time of the political transformation, which started in 1989/90, there was a mutual understanding that the socialist regime was untenable. Even if there were debates about the way, extent and nature of changes, it was agreed that the goal of the transformation was the Western social system: competitive private sector, functioning political democracy, welfare. The way of realization depended of course on several external and internal factors, such as the power relations of the ruling elite groups, the distance from the centre in Western Europe, the long-term trends of economic development (state of economic development and structure), cultural traditions and last but not least the expectations of the international organizations (EU, World Bank, IMF, etc.) “being at the birth” of the transition (*Janos* [2003], *King–Szelényi* [2005], *Kornai* [2005], *Sztompka* [2000], *Zapf* [2002]).

1.2. Characteristics of the new system

We agree with those who are of the opinion that there may be significant differences in respect of the “paths” and “destinations” of the transition. According to the typology developed by *King* and *Szelényi*, the transition observed in the two countries cannot be classified in the same category (*King–Szelényi* [2005]). They distinguish three typical paths of the transition from socialism to capitalism: capitalism without capitalists, political capitalism built from the top down and hybrid capitalism built from the bottom up. Out of the three different formations, Hungary (together with the Czech Republic and Poland) can be classified in the first one, Romania (together with Russia) in the second one, while the third one is represented by China.

The main characteristic of the *Hungarian transition* – according to *King* and *Szelényi* – is the coalition of the technocrats and the intellectual groups, which hinders the former party/state nomenclature (elite) from becoming the hegemonic participant of the privatization (as for example in Russia). Instead, foreign capital attracted by wage advantage, closeness to Western Europe and the relation network of technocrats dominates privatization, but we should not forget the aspects of security policy in the EU either (*Janos* [2003]). This way of privatization was accompanied by an economic/organizational/technical expertise, which caused that the necessary deindustrialization (the disintegration of the non-competitive industrial structure) was followed by a period of new industrialization. The newly developed industrial sector is export-oriented and produces for the central Western European markets. The role of the state has not fully disappeared either: though it narrowed considerably, it still plays a significant part in ensuring public infrastructure and in the reproduction of human resources (*King–Szelényi* [2005]).

In the capitalism built from the top down, where also the transition *in Romania* can be classified, the former nomenclature (elite) plays a key role in the transition and more precisely in privatization as well. The inflow of direct investment is less lively than in the other two types, actually a shortage of capital and investment is characteristic. So it is more difficult to renew the economic structure in which the primary branches (exploitation and raw materials) came to the front, barter trade among corporations is very frequent. Due to the weak regenerative capacity of industry, the process of re-ruralization is typical. Because of the shortage of work and money, small-scale subsistence farming and household production strengthen. Economic integration and capital inflow are hindered by the fact that the government does not invest enough resources in the training of human capital due to the low budget revenue (*King–Szelényi* [2005]).

Naturally, it is not presumable, and we do not think either, that the transformation of the two countries to be compared can be fully described by the former types, as real processes are always of “mixed nature”. It is however important to refer to the

differences in the course of investigating social structures, even if the full EU membership of both countries can be considered the “guarantee of homogeneity”.

1.3. The performance of the economy

When qualifying the results of transition, the change in living standard – depending obviously on the economic performance – has a prominent role. The social system has lost its legitimacy just because of its unsuitability in this respect, as, the development of welfare in a wider sense is one of the most important criteria of legitimacy in the modern welfare states as well (*Janos* [2003]). In all the countries concerned, the change over to market economy occurred along with stopping inefficient economic activities, and, as a consequence, with an economic decline and a decrease of incomes and consumption. A growth started only in the middle – at the end of the 1990s, but with a shift in time and at a different pace. For evaluating this social transformation within a country, it is enough to examine the changes in economic performance in many considerations, but if two countries are involved, it is advisable to survey the difference in the level of welfare as well.

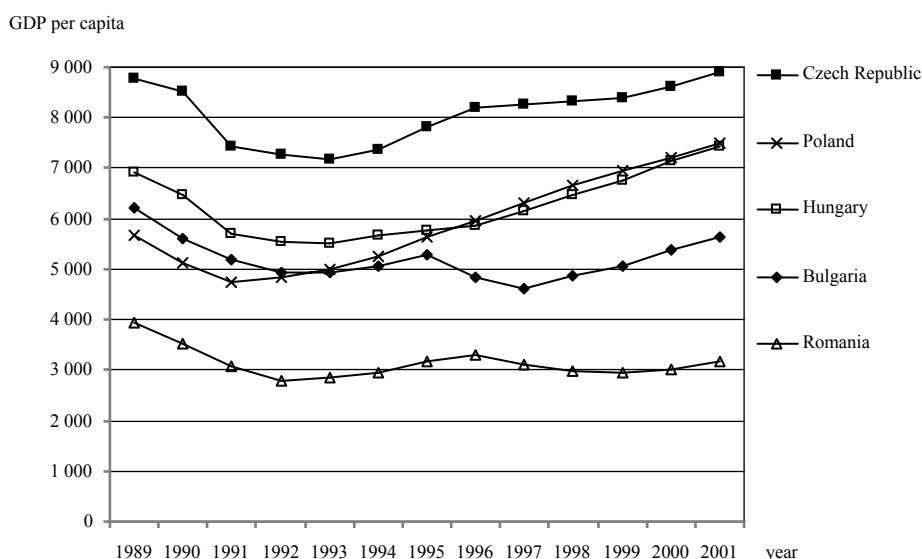
For the *accurate comparison* of the economic performance and *level of welfare* in the different countries, data calculated at constant prices, which take into account wage costs and price structure as well, are needed. We used the historical statistical data of *Madison* [2006] for this purpose. These are suitable for describing both dimensions at the same time.² According to these data, right before the regime change, the economic performance per capita was in Hungary 1.75-fold of the one in Romania.³ In the first half of the 1990s, there was a decline in both countries, and then, in the mid-1990s a growth started slowly (see Figure 1). While this process was unbroken till the beginning of the first decade of the new millennium in Hungary, and it even accelerated at the end of the 1990s, Romania suffered again a decline and stagnation (compare *Stanculescu* [2009]), and the next growth phase appeared only around the turn of the millennium. According to the calculations of Eurostat, in 2005, the economic performance of Hungary was 63 percent, while that of Romania 35 percent of the EU27 average (*Eurostat* [2008]). Based on these, at the time of our investigation, the difference between the levels of welfare was slightly larger than in 1989 (1.8-fold).⁴

² Madison gives both GDP and GDP per capita in 1990 Geary–Khamis dollar.

³ GDP per capita calculated on constant prices was the highest in 1988 (7 031 dollars) in Hungary and in 1986 (4 215 dollars) in Romania; it has been continuously decreasing since then.

⁴ Though it is irrelevant in respect of comparative analyses, as they compare the circumstances and behaviour of Hungarians in 2004–2005, we have to remark that in the second half of this decade, when GDP stagnated in Hungary, it grew significantly in Romania, and the difference between the two countries was only 1.53-fold in 2007 (*Eurostat* [2008] p. 3.).

Figure 1. Changes of GDP in five Central Eastern European countries
(constant dollar)

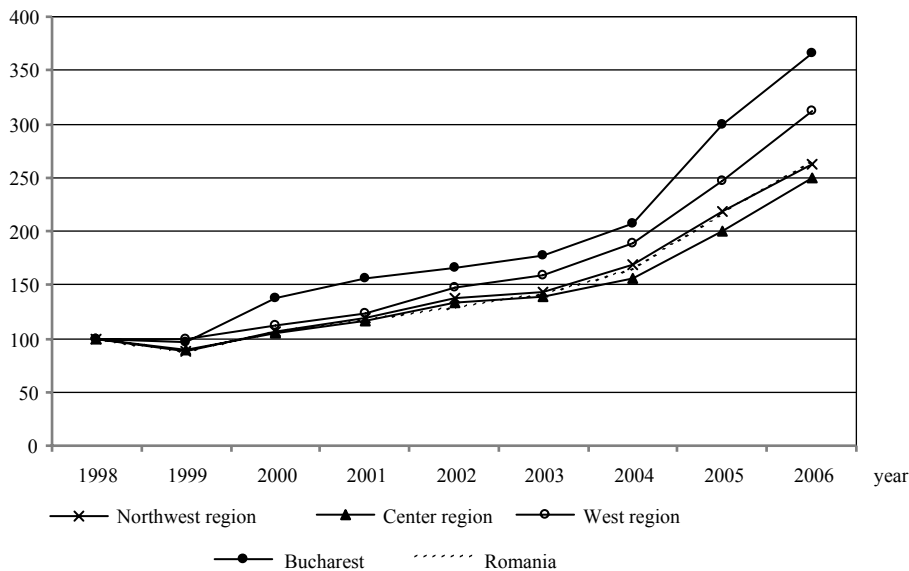


Source: Madison [2006] p. 481.

With respect to the changes in the living standard of the Hungarian population in Transylvania, a good starting point can be the examination of trends in GDP in the different regions of Romania. In regional differences, two phases can be distinguished: in the first period between 1990 and 1998, the proportion of industrial production in GDP in the given region was the determinant. The decline was namely the strongest in industrial zones, which were in privileged situation earlier. However, the dissimilarities were not apparent between Transylvania and the Regat (Romanian Old Kingdom) but rather on the level of smaller regional units (counties). There was an above the average decline in Bucharest, Prahova county and in the district of heavy industry and mining in Southern Transylvania (Braşov, Hunedoara, Caraş-Severin counties). The counties in Northern Transylvania populated by Hungarians to a larger extent were less industrialized, so these Hungarian-populated areas of Transylvania felt the decline less than the average (*Constantin et al.* [2003]). In the second period, from the end of the 1990s, when the role of foreign capital became more intensive in Romania as well, the situation of the (former industrialized) regions with better infrastructure supply became more advantageous. The growth in Bucharest is far above the average, and it was significant – even if to a smaller extent – in Banat as well. The growth in the Northwest region was equal to the average in which the development in Cluj Napoca has the key role. In this region, the areas be-

longing to the Partium (“parts” of the former Kingdom of Hungary) – Satu Mare, Biharia, Salāj – performed much below the average. The growth in the Center region where Hungarians mostly live was below the national average on the whole. The indicators of Tinutul Secuiesc (Székelyföld) are even much more disadvantageous than the average. On the whole, the relative situation of the Hungarian-populated area probably worsened compared to 1989. However, this deterioration appeared after 1998 and cannot be attributed to the disintegration of the industrial structure but to the fact that economic renewal reached these regions less.

Figure 2. Changes of GDP between 1998 and 2006 by regions
(1998=100 percent)



Source: Eurostat.

1.4. Social inequalities, integration

The transformation of the economic structure has numerous negative consequences. One of them is the increase of social inequalities, which occurred mainly in the 1990s in Hungary, and following the turn of the millennium, we can speak rather about stabilization (Tóth [2005]). This process took place in Romania as well, where it was presumably also the most dynamic at the beginning of the transition (Stanculescu [2009]). This is suggested by the fact that at the beginning of the 1990s, the inflation in Romania was multiple of the one in Hungary (compare Madison [2006])

p. 374.), and it is widely known that inequalities increase in inflationary periods.⁵ According to the data of Eurostat, in 2001, the gaps between the bottom and top income quintiles were 3.4-fold in Hungary, while 4.6-fold in Romania (*Eurostat* [2008] p. 69.).

As indicated by the preliminary results of an investigation in 2008,⁶ income inequalities are lower among the Hungarian population in Transylvania than among the total population of Romania. This can be attributed to two factors: on the one hand, the proportion of Hungarian people belonging to the top income group is lower than the average. It coincides with the result of the census in Romania, which showed that among Hungarians in Transylvania the proportion of those working in the financial or the economic service sectors as well as in administration is much lower than the average. On the other hand, despite the lower average income, the proportion of the poor, socially excluded people is also lower than in the Romanian population. The smaller proportion of poor people may be in connection primarily with the situation of Hungarians living in villages relatively better than the average in the Romanian villages.

2. Fertility

In the former socialist countries, an overall change in the demographic behaviour began after the regime change. The model of “early marriage, early child-bearing” prevailing earlier universally began to disintegrate; young people form their first couple relationship and have children at a higher and higher age (*Sobotka* [2008]). In Western Europe, this process has prevailed already since the 1970s, and even ended in many countries (*Frejka–Sobotka* [2008]), but in the majority of the former socialist countries it is still lasting (*Spéder* [2009]). Among the explanatory factors of the change, the expansion of education, the transformation of values (individualization), the increasing instability of couple relationships, the financial–institutional changes resulting from the regime change are usually referred to, which all brought uncertainties in the life of the people. It is mentioned less frequently, but it has a special importance in our case, that essential changes occurred in the institutions of family policy. As a consequence of all these factors, the total fertility rate (TFR) characteristic

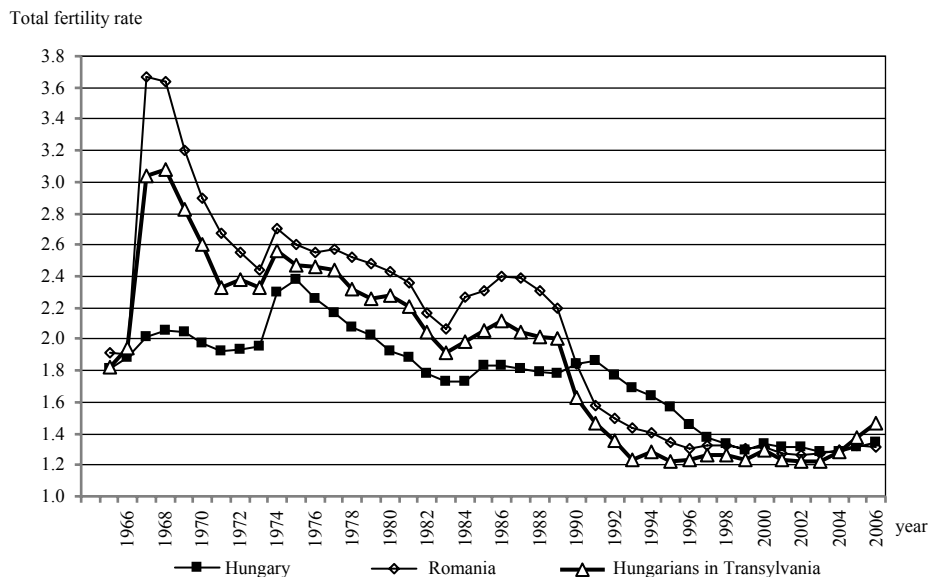
⁵ We cannot state that inflation directly increases inequalities, but that social groups in more favourable situation can assert their advantages over weaker ones more easily in an inflationary environment, as inflation, as a type of “social curtain” conceals the strengthening of differences. (Inequalities increase so that nominal wages rise everywhere.)

⁶ Tamás Kiss’s personal information based on the investigations “Demography, stratification, use of language” and “Relations of ethnic groups and tolerance”.

of the different periods fell very low: in the middle of the first decade of the new millennium, at the time of our data collection, it was around 1.3 in all the former socialist countries which joined the European Union. With the knowledge of the previous general tendencies, it is worth examining separately the changes of TFR in Hungary, Romania and, within that, in Transylvania.

In the years preceding the regime change, total fertility rate was unambiguously higher in Romania than in Hungary (see Figure 3). This was decisively due to the fact that from 1967 to 1989 the demographic policy was based on very strong prohibitions in Romania (compare *Kligman [1998]*, *Kiss [2009]*, *Muresan et al. [2008]*), which imposed strict sanctions on abortion and did not let up-to-date contraceptive means in the market. Nevertheless, fertility showed strong fluctuations depending always on the practical enforcement of this policy (*Kiss [2009]*). The volatility of the Hungarian social policy can be demonstrated in the changes of fertility too, though it applied first of all stimulating and not prohibiting means (*Spéder–Kamarás [2008]*). The fertility behaviour of the Hungarian population in Transylvania followed the trends in Romania, though, according to estimations, their fertility rate was always lower than the national rate.

Figure 3. Total fertility rate in Hungary, Romania and among Hungarians in Transylvania between 1965 and 2006



Source: Vital events data, own and Tamás Kiss' (Hungarians in Transylvania) calculations.

Following the regime change, TFR fell from 2.2 to 1.6 from one year to the next in Romania. (Similar decrease occurred perhaps only in the German Democratic Republic (*Zapf-Mau* [1993]).) Also the fertility of Hungarians in Transylvania followed this trend. The evident reason for the sudden decrease is that the direct regulation of contraception stopped and the prohibition on abortion was abolished. In Hungary, the decrease began later and was gradual, and TFR showed even a slight increase until 1991. Since the mid-1990s, total fertility rate has been around 1.3 in both countries. The same can be said about the fertility of Hungarians in Transylvania, but the latest data indicate that in their case, fertility probably began to increase and/or delay ended/slowed down.

The low level of fertility over nearly ten years is misleading in some respects, as its direct reason is that young people of fertility age expect their first and then further children later. If they gave birth to the same number of children at an older age, TFR would (could) reach the earlier level. This is, however, hardly possible, especially in Romania.

Delay of childbearing is well demonstrated by the average age of women at the birth of their first child and by the number of births per thousand women of corresponding age. The first indicator is available only for Hungary and Romania, while the second one is accessible from the year 1994 for the Hungarian population in Transylvania as well. Concerning the average age, the *trend is divergent* in the two countries. The one-year difference, which was typical at the turn of the 1990s, increased to more than two years by 2005 (see Figure 4). Since TFR is the same in the two countries, we can conclude that in the decrease of the indicator, delay has a smaller, while giving up childbearing plays a larger role in Romania than in Hungary.

The number of live births per thousand women of the corresponding age (see Figures 5a–5c) reflects the same tendencies but in more (age-specific) details, and due to this, the changes in the fertility can be examined for the Hungarian population in Transylvania as well. It is true for all of the three populations that fertility of the age-group 20–24 decrease radically; that of people aged 25–29 fall slightly and then, at the end of the observed period it is stagnant, while that of the 30–34 year-olds stagnates and after the turn of the millennium begins to increase slowly. Due to the decrease in the willingness to have a child among people aged 20–24, the *fertility of the age-group 25–29 is the highest* in all of the three populations: the typical childbearing age shifted from the early to the late twenties.

It seems, however, that there is a difference in respect of the levels and the dynamics. Right before the regime change, the number of births per thousand women was higher in each age group in Romania than in Hungary. The difference was the most significant among the youngest people: in the age group 15–19 one and a half times, while among 20–24 year-olds one-fifth more children were born. Similarly to the Romanian figures, the rates typical for the Hungarians in Transylvania at that

time – about which we have no accurate information – presumably exceeded the ones in Hungary.

Figure 4. Average age at the birth of the first child in Hungary and in Romania between 1985 and 2006

Average age at the birth of the first child

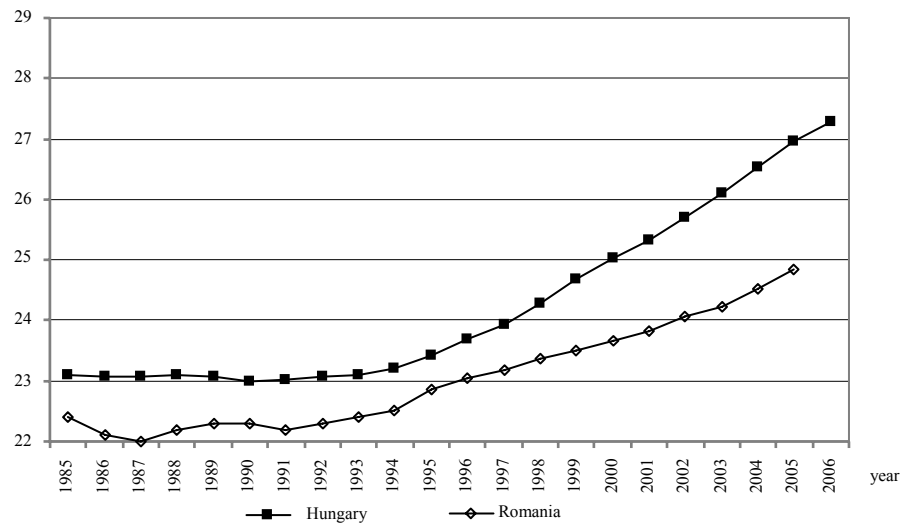
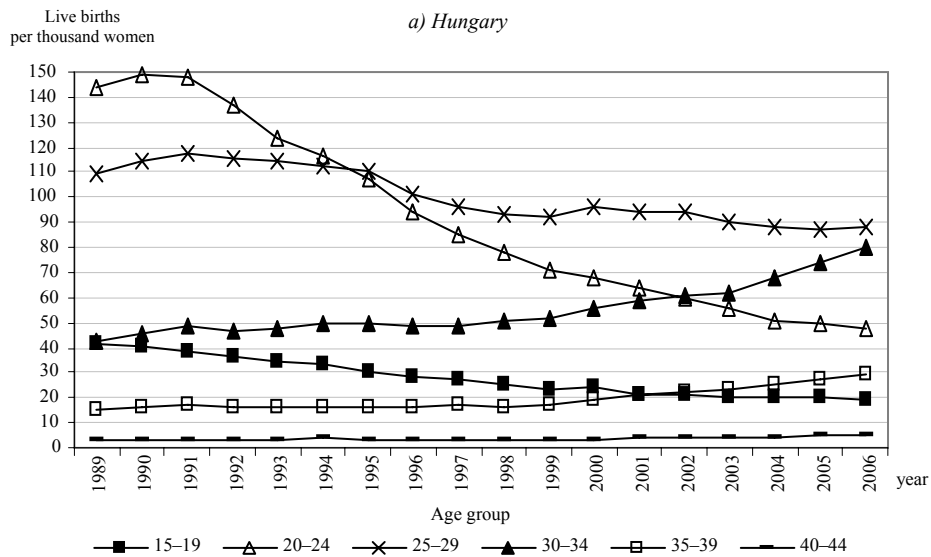
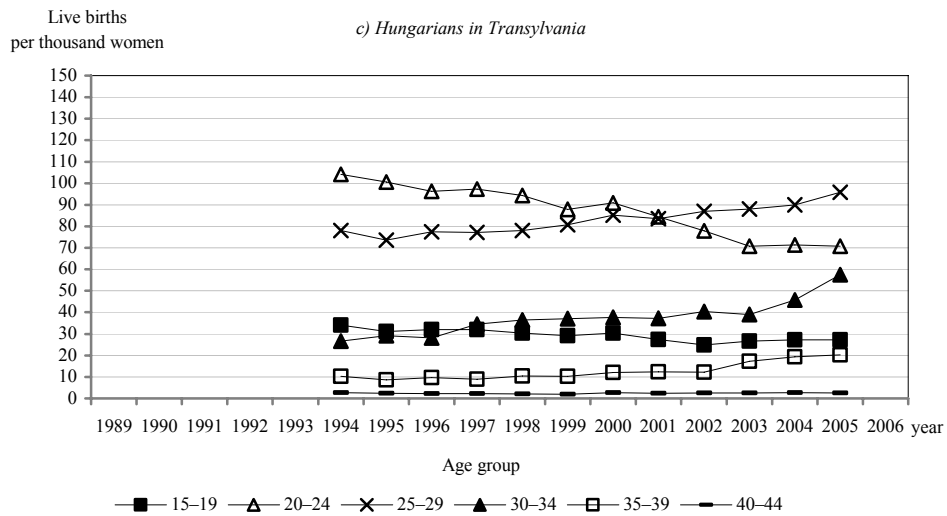
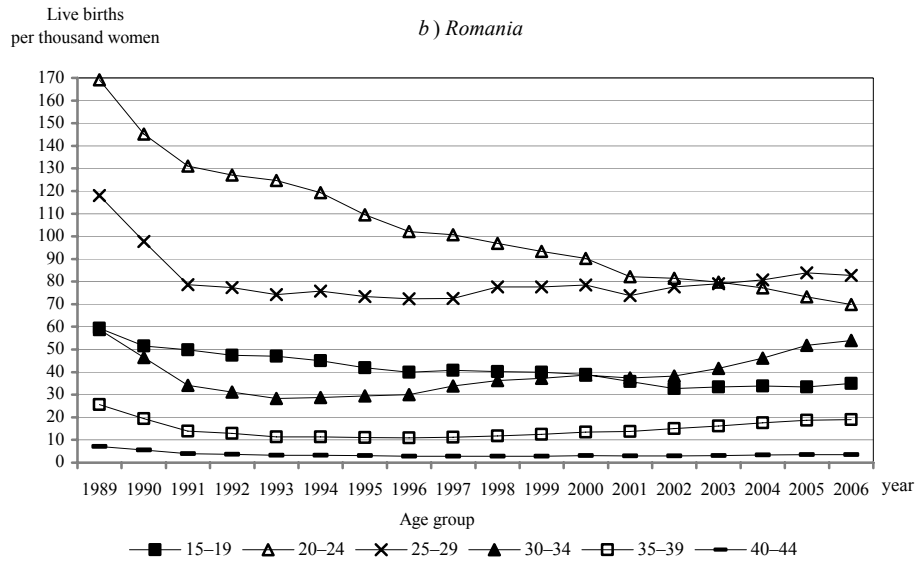


Figure 5a–5c. Live births per thousand women of the corresponding age in Hungary, Romania and among Hungarians in Transylvania between 1989 and 2006





In the observed one and a half decade, this relation turned in some age groups. At present, among 20–24 year-old people, the willingness to have children is still higher in Romania and Transylvania, but in the age group 25–29 it was nearly the same in 2005 in the three populations. Among 30–34 year-old people, the chance of having a child is one and a half times higher in Hungary than in Romania and Transylvania. On the whole, the number of births per thousand women aged 15–49 years

is the highest, even if only minimally, among the Hungarian population in Transylvania.

The number of extra-marital births rose significantly both in Hungary and in Romania. In the first it increased from 15 to about 40 percent in the observed period, while in the latter it grew from 4–5 percent of 1990 to 30 percent. Thus, stronger dynamics characterized Romania, since the rate increase was at least six-fold there as opposed to about three-fold growth in Hungary. Concerning the Hungarian population in Transylvania, we do not have relevant data.

The formerly detailed topic of births leads to the next theoretical unit, the change in marriages, for which we also have comparative data.

3. Couple relationships: marriages, cohabitation, divorces, ethnic reproduction

The demographic changes, which started in the 1970s in Europe, were manifested in the transformation of couple relationships, the expansion of cohabitation and a reduction in marriages (*Lesthaghe* [1995]). Similar processes began in Central Eastern Europe as well, but the changes in respect of couple relationships cannot be considered uniform (*Sobotka–Toulemon* [2008], *Spéder* [2009], *Hoem et al.* [2009]). There are significant differences between Hungary and Romania as well if we examine the classical demographic indicators. According to the total marriage rate, which presents what percentage of the given population will marry in the course of their life on the basis of the marriage frequency in a given year, half of the population in Hungary and seven tenth of that in Romania can be expected to get married (see Figure 6). It must be known that this indicator is also biased due to the delay, and this phenomenon is stronger in Hungary (*Bongaarts–Feeny* [2006]). Despite this, we assume that in Hungary, fewer young people of today will get married later than in Romania. This hypothesis is supported also by the fact that cohabitation is less widespread in Romania.

Unfortunately, total marriage rate cannot be calculated for the Hungarian population in Transylvania, we can only estimate it. We can determine, however, the crude marriage rate. According to the analyses of researchers in Cluj Napoca (*Kiss* [2009]), it can be definitely stated that willingness to get married is lower among Hungarians in Transylvania than in the whole of Romania (see Figure 7). It must be stressed particularly that a Romanian regulation issued in 2007 in favour of those who get married – a one-time assistance of EUR 250 – raised considerably the proportion of people getting married in the given year (*Kiss* [2009] p. 77.).

Figure 6. Total marriage rate in Hungary and Romania between 1988 and 2004

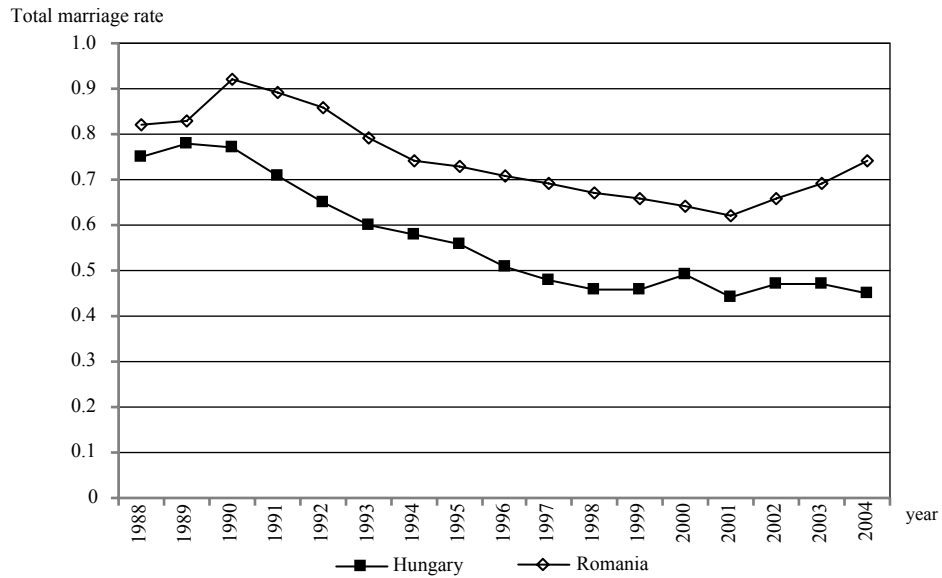


Figure 7. Crude marriage rate of the Hungarian population in Romania and of the total Romanian population between 1992 and 2007

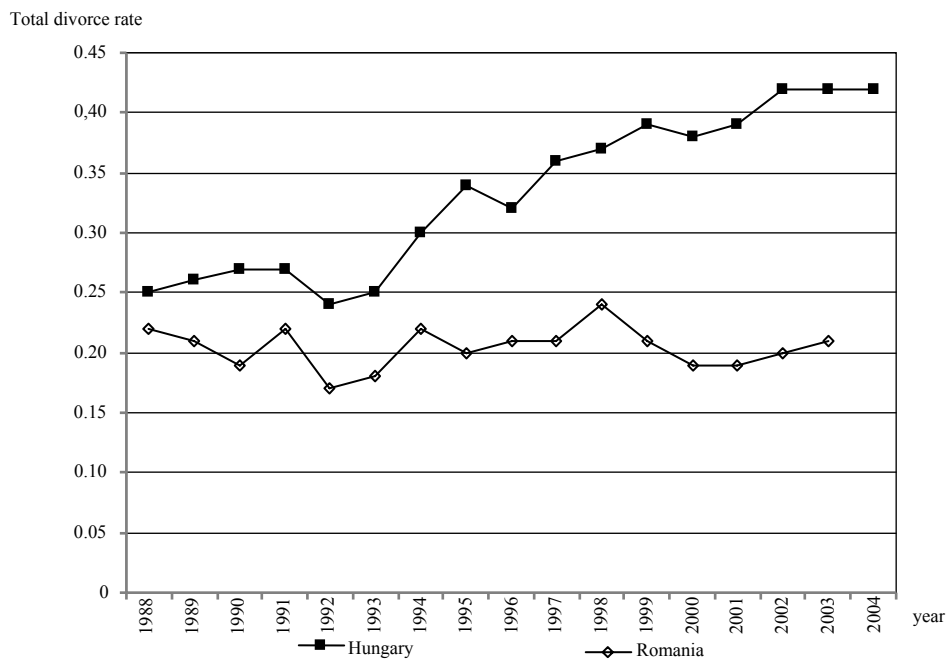


Source: Kiss-Gyurgyik [2009] p. 78.

There are significant differences in respect of the *willingness to divorce* as well. According to estimations, 40–45 percent of married people get divorced in the course of their life in Hungary, while this proportion is around 30 percent in Romania (see Figure 8). We do not have separate data for Transylvania in this respect.

It is worth briefly touching upon the *effect of couple relationships on fertility*. Many assume – and we also believe – that the increasing uncertainties of this kind of relationships contribute to the decrease in fertility. This connection may be true in case of certain social groups, but the *Hungarian–Romanian comparison* of essential indicators *does not confirm this*. Though in Romania, more people get married and fewer get divorced, fertility is not higher there than in Hungary. It is of course not the matter of causal relation, presumably other factors play predominant role in it. However, it is worth laying down that the earlier close connection between marriages and fertility on macro-level became loose (*Billari [2005]*).

Figure 8. Total divorce rate in Hungary and Romania between 1988 and 2004



In Transylvania, a separate school was established within the scientific research of couple relationships, which deals with marriage homogamy.⁷ It is understandable,

⁷ Hungarian research, of course, also addresses the homogamy of marriages in respect of nationality (for example *Tóth–Vékás [2008]*), but this study doesn't analyse this subject, as the survey "Turning Points of Our Life in Hungary" does not cover it.

as this phenomenon has a cardinal role in ethnic reproduction (*Varga* [2002], *Szilágyi* [2004], *Horváth* [2004], *Kiss–Gyurgyik* [2009]). In the opinion of researchers in Transylvania, marriage heterogamy is one of the key-factors of assimilation mechanism. According to their results, the proportion of homogamous marriages is four fifths: 81.2 percent of Hungarian men and 79.7 percent of Hungarian women married Hungarians (*Horváth* [2004], *Kiss* [2009] p. 85.). We cannot state of course that people born in mixed marriages identify themselves by all means with the majority nation: their identity depends on whether the wife or the husband is of Hungarian nationality, what their language–minority environment is like, etc. Furthermore, we must reckon with dual identity and identity change within generations as well (*Szilágyi* [2002]). We can only indicate here the stressed relevance of this topic in Transylvania.

4. Out-migration

In the two countries, the net migration was of opposite sign in the last two decades: in Hungary immigrants, while in Romania emigrants were in majority. The reason for the latter fact was not only or primarily, that in the last two decades, ten thousands (according to estimations nearly 150 thousand between 1988 and 2006) of Hungarians living in Transylvania left Romania and moved to Hungary. The number of people moving abroad from Romania (temporarily) and living there is namely around a million. According to *Sandu's* estimations [2006], in 2002, 777 thousand Romanian citizens worked temporarily abroad, and another 250 thousand left Romania forever between 1990 and 2003. The out-migration of Hungarians from Transylvania is only a small proportion of that of the total out-migration from Romania, but it has serious significance for the Hungarian population, especially if we take into account that migrants are usually younger than the average. (It is true even if in the last period, just the out-migration of the elder Hungarian population living in Transylvania became stronger.) Romania (and Transylvania) is in any case *a sending country and population*. The differences in the welfare level of Romania and the Western European host countries as well as in that of Hungary and Transylvania surely play a key-role in this process. However, Hungary is a host country, mainly due to the great number of Hungarian immigrants from the neighbouring countries, especially from Transylvania. At the same time, Hungary is not the only target country for Hungarians in Transylvania, and the immigrants in Hungary are not only from Transylvania. The differences in in- and out-migration by countries are much tinged, which is the subject of numerous studies (*Tóth* [2003], *Gödri–Tóth* [2005], *Sik* [1994], *Sandu* [2006]).

5. Different family policy regimes

The regime change did leave no earlier institution system (thus family policy) untouched. On the one hand, it can be considered a general trend in Central Eastern Europe that entitlements were curtailed, re-distribution in favour of lower social groups was forced and the real value of supports decreased (through inflation).⁸ On the other hand, entirely different family policy regimes developed in Hungary and in Romania, mainly due to the differences in the earlier institutional systems.

Following the change of the political system, Romania broke up with the restrictive population policy of *Ceausescu*. So, it is not a coincidence that raising any aspects of population policy was taboo for a long time, and though demographers indicated the problem of low childbearing already at the end of the 1990s (*Gateau* [1997]), substantial measures were hardly taken (*Muresan et al.* [2008]). At the time of our investigation, the maternity leave of insured women was six months and they got 85 percent of their earlier salary over this period. After this, they could be on childcare leave for two years, and they get RON 800 (EUR 230) assistance. If the mother returns to work before the expiry of the child raising support, she gets RON 300 (EUR 85) wage supplement for the time of her eligibility for child raising support (*Muresan et al.* [2008]).

The regime change in Hungary was not followed directly by the transformation of family policy. Family allowance was made universal and its amount was raised by the last communist government in April 1990 due to the abolishment of price supports depending on the number of children. The Antall government handled the question of population growth as a matter of priority and made efforts to maintain and supplement the system, for example by introducing childcare benefit in 1993. The turn was brought by the “*Bokros package*”; since that time there have been endless political debates about it, and the changes have been continuous and essential (*Ignits–Kapitány* [2006], *Gyarmati* [2008]). While the changes carried out in the framework of the Bokros package made family assistance dependent on income, the comprehensive act of the Orbán government restored the universality of certain elements (family allowance, childcare allowance), extended the system with tax allowance, and reinforced childcare fee compensating income loss. The socialist governments succeeding from 2002 strengthened the principle of universality, cut down the supports connected to taxing capacity, and kept continuously the idea that the family support system serves to handle poverty.

Following the regime change, the real value of family allowance fell in both countries (*Gábos* [2005], *Muresan et al.* [2008]). In Hungary, the wage-proportional childcare fee compensating income loss – which is due until the second birthday of

⁸ There are of course opposite examples as well (for example Slovenia (*Stropnik et al.* [2008])).

the child – was in force except for the period of 1995 and 1998. Childcare allowance was first subject to insurance legal relationship, then to defined income limit, and finally it became universal.

6. Concluding remarks

The main goal of our study was to describe and to interpret the selected features of demographic behaviour after the regime change. We compared two countries (Romania, Hungary) and three populations (the Hungarians in Hungary, the Romanian population and the Hungarian population living in Transylvania). We were interested in similarities and differences in fertility trends, partnership behaviour, such as marriage, cohabitation, and divorce. Differences in the social changes and economic development were also considered.

Although both countries followed the way from communism to market economy and democracy, we agree with those who are of the opinion that there may be significant differences in respect of the “paths” and “destinations” of the transition, and Romania and Hungary do not belong to the same cluster of countries in this regard. According to the accurate measurement of *Madison* [2006], there are decisive differences especially in the level of living between the two countries, and the populations living in them. Based on these data, right before the regime change, the economic performance per capita was in Hungary 1.75-fold of the one in Romania.

Concerning demographic trends, in the years preceding the regime change, total fertility rate was unambiguously higher in Romania than in Hungary. This was mainly due to the fact that from 1967 to 1989 the population policy was based on very strong prohibitions in Romania, which imposed strict sanctions on abortion and did not let up-to-date contraceptive means in the market. The fertility behaviour of the Hungarian population in Transylvania followed the trends in Romania, though, according to estimations, their fertility rate was always lower than the national rate. Following the regime change, TFR fell from 2.2 to 1.6 from one year to the next in Romania. Also the fertility of Hungarians in Transylvania followed this trend. The evident reason for the sudden decrease is that the direct regulation of contraception stopped and the prohibition on abortion was abolished. In Hungary, the decrease began later and was gradual. Since the mid-1990s, total fertility rate has been around 1.3 in both countries (*Muresan et al.* [2008], *Spéder–Kamarás* [2008]). The same can be said about the fertility of Hungarians in Transylvania.

Stronger differences could be identified in partnership behaviour. On the one hand, popularity of marriage (compare total first marriage rate) in Hungary is much

lower than in Romania, on the other hand, divorce propensity is higher in Hungary. According to estimations, 40–45 percent of married people get divorced in the course of their life in Hungary, while this proportion is around 30 percent in Romania. Although we do not have separate data for Transylvania, the figures for people living there are probably closer to the Romanian ones. These results direct our attention to the “questioning” of the assumed relation between childbearing and partnership. Many assume – and we also believe – that decreased marriage propensity and increased willingness to divorce will contribute to lower fertility. This correlation may be invariably true in the case of certain social groups but it is not confirmed by the Hungarian–Romanian comparison of essential indicators. Though more people get married and fewer get divorced in Romania, fertility is not higher there than in Hungary.

We regard our study as a first step to compare Romania and Hungary and also to take the behaviour of ethnic minorities into consideration. Our results, which are based on data analyses using official and vital statistics, show several similarities but also some differences. This justifies further research on demographic transition of different populations. Surveys such as the GGS containing socio-economic characteristics and ideational features (values, attitudes) of the social groups in the two countries may enable deeper insight into the demographic transition that started with the regime change and is still ongoing today.

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