
Saturday night's slack – reasons and effects of young adults' outmigration from small towns

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Abstract

Due to the general demographic situation in Hungary, and the recent overall crisis of this traditional settlement-type, Hungarian small towns have to face an intensive shrinking throughout the last decade. Although natural decrease and migration loss are almost equal factors of population decline, outmigration seems to be a more strategic, critical problem for these settlements. There are hardly any reliable data available about the migrants leaving small towns, but some of them seem to support the well-known supposition that the young people, who leave these towns are looking for a wider horizon, better perspectives. This process has spectacularly intensified in the past 4-5 years, when hundred thousands of Hungarians have started to plan and accomplish their career in EU-core regions. The effects of growing European emigration and "guest working" are still hard to measure, lacking proper data in local (but even national) level. In the particular case of small towns special attention should be paid to the outmigration of young adults as it is a central question of further development since human and social capital are nearly the only significant resources left behind.

The aim of the present paper is to analyse the outmigration of young adults from small towns, with the help of personally collected data, and give estimation about the international aspects of migration, which hardly appears in official statistics. On the other hand, we are to reveal the problems of local labour market caused by the intensive migration. Methodologically, the paper is based on:

- A statistical analysis of all Hungarian small towns using census data to give an estimation of the age distribution of people who left small towns between the last two censuses (2001 and 2011).

- An empirical survey using the social media platforms is to reveal the migration decision and the existing place of living of young adults formerly living in small towns. Our goal is to map the current spatial position of former students, current adults of complete secondary school classes after 10 years of graduation. Several towns of South Transdanubia, different gender, but approximately same education background of the survey pool would provide a reliable cross-section about this generation.

- A qualitative survey is conducted in small towns; interviews with the representatives of local labour market focus on the questions of the economic effects of outmigration.

- With the help of different tools used for the survey a more detailed picture about the lost generation of small towns can be drawn. Exact figures can support local and national planning processes either if accepting or fighting against shrinking.

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