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Changes in the human migration patterns in the Maramures region (Romania - Ukraine)

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Changes in the human migration patterns in the Maramures region (Romania - Ukraine)

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Introduction

- 1 The term Maramures Region is meant to refer to the historical Maramures County, composed of the Maramures Lowlands and the corresponding mountain ranges surrounding them. As a geographical unit, the region belongs to the Northern sector of the South-Eastern Carpathians and encompasses the superior basin of the Tisa River. The river constitutes the gravitational and convergence axis of natural and human fluxes of the whole region.
- 2 Against the unity of the natural environment and the long common history, after WWI, against the backdrop of the disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the unity of the Maramures region was lost through the placing of a national border on the thalweg of the Tisa River. Therefore, on a length of 62 km, between Valea Viscului and Teceu Mic, the convergence axis of the region became a major discontinuity line and the two sectors of the Maramures region began their separate evolution.
- 3 The Southern sector (3381km²), having a Romanian majority, maintained its affiliation to Transylvania and joined Romania, according to the results of the Alba-Iulia meeting (December 1st 1918), where the Maramures region had its own representatives voting for the union. Presently, the Southern sector is part of the Maramures County, Romania.
- 4 The Northern sector (6619km²), having a Ukrainian majority, has been part of, in chronological order, Czechoslovakia (1920-1939), Hungary (1939-1945), USSR (1945-1992) and Ukraine (Zakarpattia region, 1992).

Table 1. Population and administrative units of the Romanian sector of Maramures (2002).

River Valley	Administrative units				Population (thousands)			relative (%)	
	municipality	cities	villages	hamlets	Total	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Tisa	1	-	8	15	66,8	44,7	22,1	67,0	33,0
Viseu	-	2	8	11	91,5	45,5	46,0	49,7	50,3
Iza	-	-	10	14	41,3	-	41,3	-	100,0
Mara	-	-	5	15	17,7	-	17,7	-	100,0
Total	1	2	31	55	217,3	90,2	127,1	41,5	58,5

- 5 Worth mentioning is that connections between the two sectors were facilitated between 1920-1939 by the presence of 8 bridges (5 roads and 3 railroads) connecting the two sectors, and also due to the relaxed cross-border policy. During WWII (1940-1944), the unity of the Maramures region was restored. The region, together with Northern Transylvania, became part of Hungary as a consequence of the Vienna Treaty. Between 1944 and 1990, the communist regimes of Romania and the USSR transformed the border along Tisa into an authentic barrier by destroying the bridges and implementing a highly restrictive cross-border policy.

Table 2. Population and administrative units of the Ukrainian sector of Maramures (2001).

Department	Administrative units				Population (thousands)				relative %		
	cities	SMT	villages	hamlets	Total	Urban	SMT	Rural	Urban	SMT	Rural
Mijghirea	-	1	22	43	50,1	-	10,2	39,9	-	20,4	79,6
Rahiv	1	3	17	28	91,6	17,0	21,0	53,6	18,6	22,9	58,5
Tiaciv	1	5	31	56	172,4	11,1	37,7	123,6	6,4	21,9	71,7
Hust	1	1	25	56	129,9	32,2	11,6	86,1	24,8	8,9	66,3
Total	3	10	85	183	444,0	60,3	80,5	303,2	13,6	18,1	68,3

- 6 Contrary to its relative isolation in the second half of the XXth century, the unity of the natural environment and a long common history made the inhabitants of the whole Maramures region consider it a single region. The return to normal cross-border relations after 1990 showed a rapid resumption of human interactions between the two sectors. Moreover, an element that amplifies the common traits of both sectors is their peripheral position within their local administrative structure (Maramures County for the Romanian sector and, respectively, the Zakarpattia region for the Ukrainian one), and within the newly formed cross-border structure: the Carpathian Euroregion (since 1993). The unitary natural environment, a common history and a peripheral position are all elements that justify a unified approach to the issue of human migration

patterns, while ethnic differences and the affiliation to different countries give specific traits to human mobility patterns in the two sectors (figure 1).

Figure 1. Maramuresean space. Geographical localisation.

Seasonal migrations

- 7 These form the most widespread type and have a long tradition. Seasonal migrations are due to the relatively high population density (100-125 inhabitant/ km² in central regions) for a mountain area with relatively poor natural resources. The environment allows for cattle breeding, but farming land is scarce. A clear disequilibrium between the local supply of meat and agricultural products is present, leading to a constant shortage of key cereals (wheat and corn). In compensation, an unspent time resource exists and seasonal agricultural work migrations are the logical consequence. Key migration directions are towards Poltava (Ukraine) and Banat (Romania). It is mostly men or young people of both sexes that take part and returns take place in the autumn, after crop harvesting. Payments are usually made in kind, as a percentage of yearly production (25-30%).
- 8 If the shortage in the supply of cereals can be solved via seasonal migrations, cash shortages require other types of mobility. Representative here are the all male work formations, whose leaders are in charge of contracting work, ensuring food supply and distributing income. Standard destinations are hay mowing, construction work, forestry, hydropower plants or land bettering. Very heavy work, in difficult or risky conditions is preferred, as it is usually best rewarded from a financial point of view. Income is often spent on improving housing or other major investments and rarely on covering daily expenses.

- 9 Another migration pattern characteristic of Maramures inhabitants are seasonal displacements for commercial purposes. The presence, before WWII, of a strong Jewish minority was not without consequences. They left behind a certain “art of commerce”, a large percentage of the present day population being involved in commercial activities. In the Romanian sector, apples, sunflower and pumpkin seeds, nuts and beans are collected from local farmers and transported for en-detail sale in larger cities. However, en-detail sales activities require a certain sedentarization, and large amounts of time spent in the country’s capital or its main cities. The same pattern is also present in the Ukrainian sector; here the small Romanian community (approx. 40,000) spends a large part of its time selling products in different markets in the ex-USSR, especially in the Novosibirsk-Omsk region. The income has been mostly used to build impressive houses, mainly inhabited by children and their grandparents, the parents coming home only during the main religious feasts.
- 10 Local and regional statistic departments in both countries do not collect seasonal migration data and the only source of information is fieldwork. Therefore, only qualitative results with respect to motivations and main migration directions could be obtained. However, the most obvious observation made is that seasonal work migrations involve a significant percentage of the population.

Definitive migrations

- 11 These are also characteristic of the Maramures region, both sectors having negative migration rates. In the Ukrainian sector in 2001, out of 440,000 inhabitants, 1,795 people immigrated and 3,071 emigrated, leading to a net emigration of 1,276 persons (-3.7%). Per department, the highest rates belong to the Mijghirea department (-10.5%), a mountain region with no cities and a single urban-like locality. The lowest rates correspond to the Hust department (-1.6%), where the homonymous city is the largest of the whole region and still attracts a proportion of people leaving rural areas. The largest share belongs to interregional migration, the main flows directed towards Lviv, the biggest Ukrainian city west of Kiev, and towards the Poltava region, for seasonal migration.

Table 3. Definitive migrations in the Ukrainian sector of Maramures (2001).

Department	Absolute values				per 1000 inhabitants (%)		
	Population	Immigrated	Emigrated	Rate	Immigrated	Emigrated	Rate
Mijghirea	150 100	166	527	-361	3,3	10,5	-7,2
Rahiv	91 600	362	499	-137	4,0	5,4	-1,4
Tiaciv	172 400	535	1 107	-572	3,1	6,4	-3,3
Hust	129 900	732	938	-206	5,6	7,2	-1,6
Total	444 000	1 795	3 071	-1 276	5,2	8,98	-3,7

- 12 The Romanian sector shows comparable trends. The exception is the Tisa valley, where strong emigration and immigration are in relative equilibrium. Immigration is due not only to the city of Sighet that attracts part of the rural population, but also to a migration flux from isolated villages towards the more easily accessible Tisa corridor.

The emigration flux is mostly caused by the re-ruralization of part of the population of Sighet, due to the loss of jobs. The highest population loss took place in the Viseu valley, due to a strong reduction in industrial output after 1990 in the cities of Borsa and Viseu de Sus.

- 13 At the Maramures County level, 54% of migration was internal and 67% of internal migration was from rural to urban areas. On the other hand, out of the 2,838 persons leaving the urban areas, 1,809 (63%), represented unemployed and pension age people, returning to their original rural areas.
- 14 Out of the 2,240 persons leaving the county, 821 (35%) emigrated to neighbouring counties, and 925 (40%) to the Banat counties, emigration to other regions being negligible. Migration to Banat is mostly a rural to rural emigration, explainable by the reduced price of land (10 times lower than in Maramures).
- 15 With respect to definitive migration, characteristic of both sectors are emigration currents towards larger regional urban centres and agricultural regions attracting seasonal migration. Strong fluxes from rural to urban areas are present, partially compensated by inverse fluxes, due to the unemployed and older people returning to their original rural areas (figure 2).

Table 4. Definitive migrations in the Romanian sector of Maramures (2002).

Valley	Absolute values				per 1000 inhabitants ‰		
	Population	Immigrated	Emigrated	Rate	Immigrated	Emigrated	Rate
Tisei	68 872	573	579	-6	8,3	8,4	-0,1
Viseului	91 540	170	913	743	1,8	9,9	-8,1
Izei	41 320	99	549	-450	2,4	13,2	-10,8
Marei	17 753	112	199	-87	6,3	11,2	-4,9
Total	219 487	454	2240	-1886	4,3	10,2	-5,9

Figure 2. Definitive migration from Maramures.

International migration

- 16 Maramures was and has remained an ethnically varied space, together with the two main nationalities, Romanian and Ukrainian, other minorities being present: Hungarian, Jewish, German, Slovakian, etc. During WWII, a large percentage of the Jewish community was deported (40,000), out of which only a few survived and returned. Moreover, the majority of the remaining Jews emigrated to Israel. The German minority started to emigrate during the communist regime, the process being completed in the 1990s. At present, in both sectors, the strongest emigration flux is of the Hungarian minority towards Hungary. Worth mentioning is that none of these emigration waves was caused by interethnic conflicts, but by the difference in living standards between Maramures and the destination countries. Tolerance and hospitality have always characterized the inhabitants of Maramures and most major historical events had an external origin and did not originate from frictions between local ethnic groups. In the troubled period at the beginning of 1945, representatives of the Red Army tried to extend the Ukrainian administration south of the Tisa River, but a revolt of the Romanian majority led to a restoration of the Romanian administration.
- 17 Today we distinguish two types of international migrations:

Cross-border internal migrations

- 18 The railroad bridge connecting Campulung la Tisa (Romania) and Teresva (Ukraine) is used for daily border crossing for commercial purposes. This forms the so-called small border traffic and inhabitants from both sectors participate. It involves the sale of

coffee, cigarettes and food from Ukraine into Romania and porcelain, glassware and industrial products from Romania into Ukraine. The same bridge route is also used for cultural exchanges, visiting relatives and young people studying in their mother tongue.

- 19 In order to facilitate cross-border relations between Sighetu Marmatiei and Solotvina, the historical wooden bridge has been rebuilt using PHARE funds. Although the bridge has been completed, it cannot be used yet for either vehicle or pedestrian traffic before the customs infrastructure is upgraded from a simplified border crossing point (exclusive use for local inhabitants) to a standard customs station. This is required due to the different position of Romania compared to Ukraine in their relationship with the EU, the former needing to upgrade its cross-border points to security standards imposed by the EU. Moreover, the new regulations for small cross-border traffic limits the period of stay to 5 days, at a frequency of no more than twice a month. The new policy has had an impact on border traffic, reducing it from around 1,000 weekly crossings to less than 500.
- 20 The Romanian community north of Tisa uses the possibility of having double citizenship to also obtain a Romanian passport, which increases their travel opportunities in Europe.

International work migration

- 21 International work migration has been continuously growing in importance, in practice corresponding to the transformation of internal seasonal work migration into international migration. This is a natural process with two main causes. First of all, the availability of internal work opportunities was reduced due to the shutting down of various building sites and other projects requiring a large work-force. On the other hand, the opening of national borders presented new opportunities compared to the communist era. Therefore, internal construction and agricultural work migrations were transformed into international migration. The process is more pronounced amongst young people, who are better educated, capable of speaking foreign languages and in search of well-paid jobs.

Table 5. International migration from the Ukrainian sector of Maramures.

Department	Absolute values				per 1000 inhabitants ‰		
	Population	Immigrated	Emigrated	Rate	Immigrated	Emigrated	Rate
Mijghirea	50 100	8	3	5	0,1	0,0	0,1
Rahiv	91 600	26	31	-5	0,3	0,3	0,0
Tiaciv	172 400	27	85	-58	0,2	0,5	-0,3
Hust	129 900	64	64	0	0,5	0,5	0,0
Total	444 000	125	183	-58	0,3	0,4	-0,1

Table 6. International work migration from the village of Barsana (Maramures, Romania) (2003).

Sex	Nr.	Education			Country									
		Low	Med.	High	France	Italy	Spain	Austria	Israel	Portugal	Germany	UK	Ireland	Other
male	175	123	46	6	42	56	14	9	11	12	10	5	6	10
female	87	47	33	7	48	13	5	8	3	1	3	1	-	5
total	262	170	79	13	90	69	19	17	14	13	13	6	6	15

- 22 In the Ukrainian sector international migration is reduced, as neighbouring countries have introduced restrictive visa-polices in view of their future adherence to the EU. In the entire Zakarpattia region in 2000, 2,215 persons went to work abroad: 1,105 in the Czech Republic, 350 in Slovakia and 11 in the Russian Federation.
- 23 More than 1,300 people emigrated: 33.9% to Germany, 11.1% to the USA, 9.9% to the Czech Republic and 8.9% to Israel. The cause was either the repatriation of ethnic minorities from Ukraine (Jews, Germans, Hungarians) or the definitive migration of persons who initially temporarily migrated to other countries for work (Czech Republic, Slovakia). The relative weight of definitive migration is low. Although 33.4% of the total population of the Zakarpattia region (1,282 million) live in the Ukrainian sector of Maramures, it contributes only 14% to the total migration flux. The highest rates belong to the Tiaciv and Hust departments, mostly due to the presence of a sizeable Hungarian minority.
- 24 For the Romanian sector, the official statistical data is not very relevant, as definitive internal and international migrations are registered together. Therefore, we will limit ourselves to presenting a few field studies, by submitting data for the village of Barsana, in the Iza valley and Sapanta in the Tisa valley.
- 25 In Barsana, out of 4,067 inhabitants forming 1,218 households, 262 persons (6.4%) from 151 households (12.3%) have gone to work abroad. Per gender, 175 were males (67%) and 87 females (33%). Out of the total, only 59 (22%) had previously been employed; the rest (78%) were either young people who had not yet entered the job market of farmers who changed internal migration to an international one.
- 26 The destination of the migrations was mainly the Latin countries: France, chosen by 90 persons (34.3%), followed by Italy with 69 persons (26.3%), Spain (19) and Portugal (13) with 32 persons (12.9%). Other countries are Austria (17) and Germany (13) with 30 persons (11.4%), Israel with 14 persons and the U.K and Ireland each with 6 persons (2.2%), the remaining 15 persons (8.5%) being distributed in 8 other countries, such as the United States, Sweden, Australia, etc.
- 27 Out of the 262 persons leaving for work abroad, only 18 (7% of the total) decided to settle in their adoptive countries: 8 in Austria, 6 in Italy, 2 in Israel and 1 each in France and Australia. Similarly to internal migrations, only a small fraction decided to definitively leave their native region.
- 28 Useful information can be extracted by looking at how earnings were spent: 185 persons (70%) decided to deposit their money into a bank account, 34 (13%) bought a house and/or household goods, 26 (10%) bought a car and 17 (6.5%) bought land.
- 29 By age group, 238 (90.8%) were aged between 20 and 50, 19 were young people under 20 and 5 (2%) were 50+. By education, 170 (65%) had had a low level of education (medium

or vocational school), 79 (30%) had graduated from high school and 13 (5%) were university educated. However, out of these only 3 work in the same field in which they were educated (engineer, musician, programmer).

- 30 The fields of work are the following: construction (119 persons – 45%), agriculture (52-19.8%), housemaids and babysitters (17.8%), industry (4%), other professions being waiters, chefs and drivers.
- 31 From the village of Sapanta, 162 persons left to work outside Romania, representing 4.8% of the 3,297 inhabitants. Per gender, 108 were men (70%) and 54 women (30%). In terms of destination, 114 (70%) went to Spain, 19 (11.1%) to Italy, 14 (8.6%) to France, 4 (2.4%) to Portugal and Austria and 5.5% to other countries (USA, Israel, UK and Switzerland). Per age group, 121 (74.7%) were 20-40 years old, 33 (20%) were 40-50, and the remainder were 3 18 year-olds and 7 over 50s.
- 32 Analogously to the case of Barsana, most of these are lowly educated (104 -63.8%), 56 persons (36%) graduated from high school and only 2 attended university. The types of work are the same: construction work, agriculture, housekeeping, etc. In relative values, International work migration is lower in Sapanta. The reason for this is the better placement of the village on the region's main traffic axis and the high revenues from tourism due to the presence of the Merry Cemetery.
- 33 Another observation is that most of those doing seasonal work in construction and agriculture return home for the main religious feasts. Due to this intense traffic, besides larger bus transportation companies (Eurolines, Atlasib) a series of small transporters making use of small vans, has appeared. In practice, most of those choosing international work do not go at random, except in special cases. The majority go to friends, relatives and neighbours who are already present in the destination countries. These do not only temporarily house the newcomers, but they also help them to find work (figure 3).

Table 7. International work migration from the village of Sapanta (Maramures, Romania) (2003).

Sex	Nr.	Education			Country					
		Low	Med.	High	Spain	Italy	France	Portugal	Australia	other
Male	108	72	35	1	84	7	7	4	2	4
Female	54	32	21	1	30	12	7	-	2	3
Total	162	104	56	2	114	19	14	4	4	7

Figure 3. International migration from Maramures.

Conclusions

- 34 The particular environmental conditions of the Maramures region lead to strong seasonal migration in both sectors, a rare phenomenon for a heavily rural region. Today, this type of migration is slowly being replaced by international work migration. The division of the region into two sectors by imposing the border along the Tisa River, resulted in a migration of the population of the southern sector towards the west and southwest and of the northern sector towards east and northeast, towards the main agricultural regions of Romania and Ukraine. A proportion of seasonal migrations also had a commercial purpose, as a consequence of the earlier presence of a Jewish minority in the region.
- 35 Both sectors register negative emigration rates and definitive migrations to other regions are strong, a phenomenon specific to peripheral spaces. Only in areas with larger cities are emigration and immigration rates relatively balanced. Presently, a sizeable migration rate from rural to urban is still registered. As a consequence, the presence of larger, polarizing urban centres only outside the Maramures region favours a negative migration rate. A reverse flux, from urban towards rural, is also present, due to the return of unemployed and retired persons to their native villages where living possibilities are better. Definitive migrations towards spaces outside the Maramures region follow the same direction as for seasonal migrations or take place towards the larger urban centres.
- 36 Inter-sector international migration (within the historical Maramures region) is increasing, but is still affected by the lack of connecting bridges and by restrictive legislation. As in the long run the borders of the extended future EU might be placed here, an improved customs infrastructure is required.
- 37 International work migration offers the inhabitants the possibility of a much higher income comparative to the local average. As seasonal migration has a long tradition in the Maramures region, the phenomenon of international work migration has also

gained importance, especially in the Romanian sector. In determining destination, ease of communication in the target country is a key factor. Therefore the Ukrainian inhabitants of both sectors mostly prefer as their destination the Slavic countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and the Russian Federation). Other potential destinations are well-developed countries such as Germany and the USA and Hungary for the Hungarian minority. The Romanians prefer the Latin countries (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal), followed by the rest of the EU countries and the Middle East.

- 38 Definitive international migrations have until now mostly affected the minority groups that have emigrated towards their “mother” country. The migration rate might be even higher in the future, in view of the expenditure of earnings (70% to bank accounts, 10% to buying a car). The easy transfer of this type of asset between countries leads us to the conclusion that, provided they are accepted, most of those working abroad will also relocate there.
- 39 Migration data, if registered, is poorly or unclearly recorded by the statistics institutes of both Romania and Ukraine. Certain migration types (seasonal migration) are not registered and other (internal and external migration) are registered together. This also explains why the official web-site of the Carpathian Euroregion registers a negative migration rate of 4,000 persons for the whole Romanian sector of the region, while the migration phenomenon is much stronger.

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ABSTRACTS

In this paper we discuss the changes in human migration patterns in the Maramures region during the last decade. The term "Maramures region" refers to the historical Maramures County, in the Northern sector of the South-Eastern Carpathians, encompassing the superior basin of the Tisa river. After WWI, the region was divided into two distinct sectors, presently belonging to Romania and Ukraine. However, the unitary natural environment, a common history and their peripheral position justify a unified approach to the issue of human migration patterns. Before 1990, due to specific human and natural factors, the mobility pattern was characterized by seasonal agricultural work migrations. Due to the opening of new opportunities after 1990, internal agricultural migration was transformed into international work migration. Herein, we present statistical data acquired through fieldwork for two villages in the Romanian sector: Barsana and Sapanta. International migration rates in 2001 were, correspondingly, 6.4% and 4.8%. With respect to migration directions, the ease of communication in the destination country for lower educated persons plays a vital role.

Cet article examine les changements des schémas migratoires dans la région de Maramures au cours de la dernière décennie. Le terme "Maramures" se réfère au comté historique de Maramures, situé dans la partie nord des Carpathes du sud-est, qui englobe le bassin supérieur de la Tisa. Après la Première Guerre mondiale, la région a été divisée en deux secteurs distincts qui appartiennent aujourd'hui à la Roumanie et à l'Ukraine. Cependant, l'environnement naturel uniforme, une histoire et une position périphérique communes justifient une approche unifiée du problème des schémas migratoires. Avant 1990, en raison de facteurs humains et naturels spécifiques, le schéma de mobilité se caractérisait par des migrations saisonnières des travailleurs agricoles. Par la suite, grâce aux possibilités nouvelles, les migrations agricoles internes se sont muées en migrations internationales de travail. Nous présentons ici les données statistiques obtenues sur le terrain pour deux villages du secteur roumain: Barsana et Sapanta. Les taux de migration internationale en 2001 y étaient proportionnellement de 6,4 et 4,8%. Pour les personnes les moins éduquées, ce sont principalement les facilités de communication dans le pays d'émigration qui déterminent leur destination.

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