

Ethnic diversity of Slovakia

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Ethnic Diversity of Slovakia.

It is no doubt that ethnic structure of Slovakia is very heterogeneous and in the past was very dynamic also. Especially, between years 1880 – 1930 the Slovak population had undergone its most dynamic era in history. Many of these changes were conditioned by social, cultural and political factors in Hungarian Empire, as well as founding of Czechoslovak republic. Significant changes of ethnic structure had occurred during, and after the end of WW II as well. The aim of this paper is to show the changes of diversity of ethnic structure in Slovakia with the appropriate census data. The changes in ethnic structure are compared against the census in 2001, and spatial changes of ethnic structure are evaluated by indices of ethnic diversity of Slovak regions

Key words: ethnicity, ethnic diversity, ethnic diversity measurement, Slovakia, history

Ethnic diversity of Slovakia

The region of Central Europe is one of the most dynamic region considering more cultural aspects. For example, this region is crossed by boundary between Eastern and Western Christianity. Western Christianity is here represented not only by Roman-Catholic Church, but also by strong historical Protestant denominations. Unique denominations in this region are Uniate churches, creating cultural bridge between Eastern and Western Christianity and culture. Central Europe had also been influenced by Islam between 16th and 18th century, and there were numerous Jewish minorities all over this region.

This region was diversified from the point of view of ethnicity. In the Carpathian Basin there were many ethnic groups living together ever since. These ethnic groups belonged to various language families (Slavic, Finno - Ugric, Italic). Therefore, in the region of Slovakia had always been inhabited by Slovaks, Hungarians, Germans, and Ruthenians mainly. This mosaic was completed Croatians, Serbians, Jews, Romanians, Gypsies, Poles, and many others.

Such ethnic diversity is past nowadays. Except Slovaks, Hungarians, Ruthenians and Romas, there are unfortunately no larger ethnic groups living in Slovakia. The process of assimilation is slower in these ethnic groups, but the ethnic structure is now much less diversified. Rural settlements had sustained its ethnic diversity more intensively than cities, although some homogenization processes are evident here too. The aim of this paper is to convey snapshot of today's ethnic diversification of Slovakia in comparison to year 1880.

Ethnic diversity is structured phenomenon encompassing various processes. Also, methods of measurement of such type of diversity vary. There are qualitative or quantitative methods of diversity measurement. We have adopted measurement of ethnic diversity according to the **ethnic fragmentation index** (Greenberg index of ethnic diversity) used in paper from Yeoh (Yeoh 2003)

$$F = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{n_i}{N} \right) \left(\frac{n_i - 1}{N - 1} \right)$$

n_i represents number of members of i -ethnic group, and N total population of a statistical unit. This formula is defined as probability of membership of two randomly selected persons in different ethnic group. This index varies from 0-1, and the value 0 represents completely homogeneous unit, and 1 completely heterogeneous unit. (Yeoh 2003).

Key data for ethnic diversity measurement come from Census 2001. We have analyzed data of ethnic structure (Slovak statistics prefers term nationality) of communes. Membership in nationality group was freely declared in census. According to official definition from census, *nationality is referred to as the person's affiliation to the nation or ethnic minority. Mother tongue is not the decisive factor when determining nationality, nor the tongue mostly used or better spoken by the citizen, it is rather his/own decision on the affiliation to the nation or ethnic minority. The nationality of children aged under 15 was indicated according to the nationality of their parents. If parents stated different nationalities, the nationality declared by one of them was indicated (upon mutual agreement of parents).*

(according to <http://portal.statistics.sk/showdoc.do?docid=4486>). Salient information is that ethnic membership does not depend on the use of ethnic minority language, but on free declaration of membership. That is why ethnic diversity does not mean the same as linguistic diversity.

Another data source from census 1880 had totally different philosophy. There are data according to mother tongue available only (*népeesség anyanyelv szerint*). Therefore, these data are not completely comparable to the data from 2001, but there are no other ethnicity data from this period available. Statistical system of ethnic affiliation record started to fully develop after 1918 only.

Ethnic diversity of population of Slovakia in 1880

There were 44 settlements having the status of town in 1880. These were free royal towns, or towns with established municipal authority. Slovaks were mostly largest ethnic group inhabiting towns at the end of 19th century. Another important ethnic group shaping urban space of northern Hungarian towns were Germans, followed by Magyars, and another minor ethnic groups. There was very little share of Ruthenians in urban settlements then. According to the Table 1., the most ethnically diverse town was Nitra composed of Slovaks, Magyars,

and Germans. There was only slight dominance of Slovak population in Nitra. The share of Slovaks and Magyars was almost equal in the second most heterogeneous town – Košice

Interesting fact is that the total urban settlements heterogeneity index value was higher – 0.684. This value was mainly composed by three most numerous ethnic groups then – Slovaks, Germans, and Magyars in various combinations and share. As already mentioned, the major ethnic group in the top heterogeneous town rank was Slovaks. There were only two towns with non-Slovak majority – Komárno and Rimavská Sobota. These towns were mainly inhabited by Hungarians. Ethnic diversity in Slovak towns is proved by fact, that there were only 4 towns with the share of one ethnic group (Slovaks) over 90 % – Ľubietová, Nová Baňa, Pukanec a Krupina. Ľubietová and Pukanec towns were not considered urban settlements in the following censuses (such as 1910 census). Although these towns were former mining towns, and the population was not much lower than other towns, it seems that their structure resembled rural settlements rather than urban settlements at that time. Ethnic homogeneity of towns in 1880 presents Map 1.

Rural settlements had lower diversity index than urban settlements – 0.538. It is not much lower value comparing to the urban settlements value. So, it means, that rural settlements were almost equally heterogeneous, or homogeneous, as towns. The most heterogeneous villages were located in the eastern part of Slovakia. Rural settlements in this part of Slovakia were mostly heterogeneous thank to Ruthenian population. There is a spatial exception to this rule, when one of the more heterogeneous villages is located in the western part. Leopoldov municipality is mostly composed by Slovaks and Magyars as well as by other, not specified ethnic groups.

Ethnic diversity of Slovak population is proved by fact, that in 1880 there were only 12 ethnically homogeneous communities. Most of them were rather small in population, and were mostly located in eastern parts of Slovakia.

Ethnic diversity of Slovakia in 2001.

In comparison with year 2001 there were some really remarkable changes in processes of ethnic homogenization of population of Slovakia.

The most numerous ethnic groups besides Slovaks were also Magyars, Ruthenians, and Romas. Spatial distribution of Magyars and Ruthenians copies state boundaries with adjacent states, while the distribution of Romas is focused in central and eastern parts of Slovakia, in so called regions of Gemer and Spiš.

Diversification of ethnic structure of Slovakia in 2001 was based again on comparison between rural and urban population. The processes of ethnic changes influenced also the values of ethnic diversification index, which dropped to quite low values. Urban ethnic structure was diversified at the value of 0.21, and, surprisingly, rural population was diversified at the level 0.3. These differences are not significant, but presents that urban population is today more homogeneous than rural. In comparison to year 1880, these values are lower, and the rural settlements were more ethnically diversified in 2001 than towns. We would expect that towns and cities, as sites of high population concentration, would have higher values of ethnic diversity index than rural municipalities. There might be present more complex and rather latent processes of ethnic identity change in new environment, and more intense level of social interaction in urban space. The idea of towns being something like “melting pot“ for minor ethnicities emerges from these speculations. Evident manifestation of own ethnic identity of new immigrants might make social integration more difficult. This is not universal rule in this area, but there might be some impacts of urban areas on ethnic identity stability.

Table 2 as well as Map 2 show, that towns with higher value of ethnic diversification are located in central and eastern parts of Slovakia. Ethnic groups composing ethnic diversification are generally common, and another sign is that values are lower than in 1880. First two mentioned ethnic group in table are dominant, third is rather complementary making ethnic appearance of town more diverse. Index values around 0.5 might show, that in most towns there are mostly only two ethnic groups forming ethnic circumstances in Slovak towns. Census 2001 is missing important urban element from 1880 – Germans, that is now replaced by new urban ethnic group - Romas.

Homogeneity of towns in Slovakia is proved by fact, that 100 towns from 138 have share of one ethnic group above 90 %. In all cases this majority group represents Slovaks. This is

salient change in 130 year history of Slovakia. Most of them lie in the ethnically most stable north-western region of Slovakia.

Higher rate of heterogeneity is evident at the rural settlements. Ethnic diversity index reached level of 0.303. Tendency of heterogeneity index growth from north towards south and from east to west is common for towns as well as for rural settlements. The most heterogeneous communities can be found at the contact zone between Slovak, Ruthenian, and Ukrainian majority. This structure becomes more colorful due to Roma population and are rather small in population

Small population is common sign for ethnically homogeneous rural communities. These communities are small, mostly depopulating settlements with population varying from 7 to 950 inhabitants. Their common sign is Slovak population exclusively and their concentration to the areas of central and eastern Slovakia. Higher concentration is evident around the town Prešov. (see Map. 3)

Conclusion

Presented analytical data indicates great dynamics that ethnic structure has undergone in past 130 years in heterogeneous cultural region of Central Europe and Slovakia. At first, the dynamics of ethnic processes springs from rather unstable political circumstances in the first half of the 20th century, that influenced willingness of not declaring own ethnic affiliation, and secondly, there were evident processes coming from inside of ethnic groups as a response to impetus coming from outside of ethnic groups. Changes of ethnic structure continued after the WW II. Not only population expel and exchanges, but also processes of fast growing urbanization and industrialization caused numerous migration flows coming to towns, or centers with employment possibilities. These processes resulted in emerging of dense urban zones with inhabitants of varied ethnic background. Such processes disrupted hitherto strong ties inside community sharing common ethnicity, religion, family ties and cultural and social patterns. If individual, remote from own and known environment wanted to „survive“, then he or she had to accomodate and tend own ethnic identity within family. Ethnically mixed marriages had also impact on transmitting own ethnic identity. Urban space missed outer symbols, and environment that is important for identity formation and transmission to coming generations. What is the outcome of these processes? There is one important change present

in 2001. Towns in 1880 were centers of diverse ethnic structure of population, while rural settlements were more stable due to social and cultural patterns and low ethnic heterogamy. If there were more ethnic groups present in one community in history, the interaction was usually only official with low rate of intermarriage. Ethnic intermarriage was usually not fully accepted by local community.

Census in 2001 has presented results of processes that took place between years 1950 – 2001. Fast growing urbanization in years of communism has created ethnically almost homogeneous cities destroy in former ethnic and cultural diversity of town and social networks. Countryside has in some cases started to depopulate, but ethnic situation remained stable with minor changes of ethnic structure and cultural interaction.

Table 1. Ethnic diversity index of towns in Slovakia in 1880

	<i>town</i>	<i>index value</i>	<i>major ethnic groups</i>
1	Nitra	0.674	Slovaks, Magyars, Germans
2	Košice	0.667	Slovaks, Magyars, Germans
3	Levoča	0.619	Slovaks, Germans, Magyars
4	Prešov	0.610	Slovaks, Magyars, Germans
5	Trenčín	0.604	Slovaks, Germans, Magyars
6	Trnava	0.600	Slovaks, Germans, Magyars
7	Pezinok	0.579	Slovaks, Germans, others
8	Svätý Jur	0.574	Slovaks, Germans, others
9	Spišská Nová Ves	0.570	Slovaks, Germans, Magyars
10	Spišské Vlachy	0.568	Slovaks, Germans, Magyars

source: 2001 Population and Housing Census

Table 2. Ethnic diversity of towns in Slovakia in 2001

	<i>town</i>	<i>index value</i>	<i>major ethnic groups</i>
1	Medzilaborce	0.561	Slovaks, Ruthenians, Ukrainians
2	Moldava nad Bodvou	0.549	Slovaks, Magyars, Romas
3	Veľké Kapušany	0.544	Magyars, Slovaks, Romas
4	Hurbanovo	0.540	Magyars, Slovaks, Romas
5	Čierna nad Tisou	0.524	Magyars, Slovaks, Romas
6	Rimavská Sobota	0.523	Slovaks, Magyars, others
7	Tornaľa	0.521	Magyars, Slovaks, Romas
8	Komárno	0.518	Magyars, Slovaks, others
9	Želiezovce	0.515	Magyars, Slovaks, Romas
10	Galanta	0.500	Slovaks, Magyars, Romas

source: 2001 Population and Housing Census

Table 3. The most ethnically homogeneous towns in Slovakia in 2001

<i>town</i>	<i>index value</i>	<i>share of Slovaks</i>
Tvrdošín	0.019	99.03 %
Rajec	0.023	98.86 %
Trstená	0.023	98.82 %
Vrbové	0.025	98.75 %
Námestovo	0.027	98.65 %
Hriňová	0.028	98.56 %
Rajecké Teplice	0.029	98.54 %
Leopoldov	0.030	98.50 %
Krásno nad Kysucou	0.032	98.39 %
Bytča	0.034	98.27 %

source: 2001 Population and Housing Census

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