Demographic and Regional Labour Market Analysis of the Historic Market Towns of Greater Cumania, Hungary

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Abstract

The subject of my research is the study of the settlements with a rural-urban past in the Greater Cumania (Hungarian name of the region: Nagykunság). This historic small region in the Northern Great Plain region is a region with many economic and social problems. My research covers six settlements, all of which have a rural-urban past, but only five of them have city status today: Karcag, Kisújszállás Kunhegyes, Kunszentmárton and Túrkeve. Kunmadaras is a municipality.

The focus of my research is on the common economic and cultural heritage of these settlements and their unique development paths. The common economic and cultural heritage is the past as a field town, and the heritage that the Kuns who founded the settlements not only had an administration independent of the county system, a patent status, but also shared a common culture. Grater Cumania as a historical region is no longer a functional unit. Starting from common foundations, the six settlements have responded differently to the challenges of the past decades. The extent to which each of them has successfully responded to the economic and social challenges they have faced is faithfully reflected in their economic and social relations.

The aim of my research is, on the one hand, to review the current balance of the settlements with a rural-urban past in Greater Cumania, both individually and in comparison with each other, in order to identify future opportunities, possibilities and threats. On the other hand, my aim is also to examine what the common Greater Cumanian heritage means for the settlements that have taken different development paths and rely on different spatial relations. Can a cultural product, a brand, be built out of it?

Keywords: Labour market, demography, territorial disparities

JEL: R10

Introduction

The more narrowly defined Greater Cumania, the geographical setting of my study, is only one small part of the Great Hungarian Plain, but it is not alien to my family: kinship is found throughout the Jász-NagyKun-Szolnok county, including here. What I found fascinating about this historic little region in the Northern Great Plain region is that, while it is a region with many economic and social problems, it also boasts a famous site such as the Hortobágy World Heritage Site and has its own Hungaricum: the Karcag mutton stew. In my research, I examine how a once-rich region, part of the once-privileged Hortobágy region, is facing the fact that since the mid-1900s, around 20% of the population has emigrated and, following the regime change, the agricultural sector, which was once a golden age, has also entered a significant recession. The link between the settlements in the area under study is still alive today: the Kun tradition. After the change of regime, each of the municipalities in the region responded to the challenges and crisis problems in its own way.

My research covers 6 settlements, all of which have a rural past, but only 5 of them have city status today: Karcag, Kisújszállás Kunhegyes, Kunszentmárton and Túrkeve. Kunmadaras has civil parish status. The focus of my research is to present the common economic and cultural heritage of these settlements, their unique development paths and their specific spatial structure. The field towns of Greater Cumania are urban in character, because they have a spatial organising function, but at the same time they are rural, because in some places their settlement pattern is more like a village than a town.

The common economic and cultural heritage is the rural past and the heritage that the Kuns who founded the settlements not only had an administration independent of the county system and a patent status, but also shared a common culture. Despite their common foundations, the six settlements have responded differently to the challenges of the past decades. The extent to which each has responded successfully to economic and social challenges is faithfully reflected in their economic and social conditions. The question is where are these cities progressing, what room for development do they have, and to what extent have they responded adaptively to their opportunities?

The aim of my research is to investigate: what makes the settlements of Greater Cumania "one"? What is the Kun heritage? In order to achieve this latter aim, I will firstly draw up a demographic balance sheet of the municipalities with a rural-urban past in Greater Carlsbad, comparing them individually and with each other, from which future trends can be drawn.Based on my regional ties and my professional knowledge, I formulated two research hypotheses prior to my study:

– Hypothesis 1: The settlements of Greater Cumania with a rural-urban past are characterised by unfavourable demographic trends after the Fall of communism in Hungary.
– Hypothesis 2: In the rural-urban settlements of the Greater Cumania, the employment role of the traditional primary sector, agriculture, did not increase after the Fall of communism in Hungary.

The settlement structure of the Great Hungarian Plain and the characteristics of market towns

The market town as a form of settlement and legal status can be considered a very Hungarian peculiarity, just like the settlement structure in the lowlands, so I dedicate a separate chapter to the presentation of these concepts.

Tibor Mendöl, a geographer, was one of the pioneers of the study of settlements in Hungary. His work dates back a very long time, so there is reason to believe that his importance in the literature has faded, but as Mendöl was one of the first to carry out a geographically based study of towns, he is exceptional and worthy of mention in my thesis. Mendöl's Morphology of the Cities of the Great Hungarian Plain (1936) explains that at that time, geographic urban studies were in their infancy. The stereotype of the time was that all Hungarian towns were rather rural in both population composition and settlement pattern. This strong rural character was much more prevalent in the Lowlands, but the author warned those who believed that the towns of the Lowlands were different only in population, but were otherwise identical in all other respects, i.e. they were so-called peasant towns. Occupational statistics from the 1930s confirmed the rural character of the towns, but Tibor Mendöl still thought that this claim was exaggerated. Sticking to the topic of the lowlands, the author cites in his work examples relevant to my research to prove his hypothesis, such as Szolnok and Nyíregyháza, where according to the statistics of occupational stratification at the time, only 10-13% of the total population of the towns were farmers, which

was almost on a par with Miskolc and Győr. Mendöl also points out, however, that the cities mentioned above should not be mentioned together with Törökszentmiklós and Karcag, where the proportion of farmers in the total population was between 60 and 70%. The author points out that this dichotomy is reflected in lowland towns in such a way that, when agricultural employment is in the majority, an urban core is surrounded by a much larger rural core. In the case of a reverse employment structure, the urban core is much larger and the rural core smaller (Mendöl, 1936).

Beluszky (2001) writes that in the Carpathian Basin, the conditions for the development of early towns were not established until the 1200s. The main reason for this is that the social and geographical division of labour was underdeveloped. Production, trade and craft activities were separate, and there was no permanent and/or large-scale exchange of goods. Although the terms civitas and urbs appear in contemporary sources, they mostly refer to royal, ispanic or ecclesiastical settlements with fortifications, where the population was divided into groups according to the presence of these landlords. These settlements are considered by the author to be larger villages rather than true towns. Prior to the 13th century, only Esztergom and Fehérvár (Székesfehérvár) could be considered as actual towns. These two cities had already functioned as royal and religious centres in the 1100s, while Esztergom had the right to sell goods and was the site of the king's mint. In the 1200s, the emerging European agrarian revolution and social stratification also brought changes. Mass commodities such as grain and wine were introduced into production. The artisans became a distinct stratum, and the emerging serfdom was free to move. In the 1230s, Pest was granted town status, but Szolnok, Veszprém, Kecskemét, for example, as well as the mining towns, the Transylvanian Saxon and the Spiš settlements are also mentioned as towns. After the Tartar invasion of 1241, the building of walls around the settlements was advocated for defence reasons. The existence of a wall was considered at the time as a sign of town status, but they also naturally enjoyed a number of privileges, including the right to hold fairs, exemption from customs duties, freedom of settlement and the right to choose their own magistrates and judges.

According to Beluszky, the field towns were formed from settlements that did not or only partially fulfilled the criteria for being declared towns, but they did perform certain central functions, such as holding fairs. Their name derives from the term oppidum and referred to the fact that they did not have a defensive wall. They were manorial centres under royal, ecclesiastical or private ownership, and in legal terms they were simply serfdoms, owing services to the lord of the manor. Many later field towns were freed from the compulsory serfdom in the 16th and 18th centuries. The granting of the status of field town was the right of the lord, but it did not imply full autonomy from the lord of the manor, and they remained dependent on him for many decisions that determined their lives.

It is important to note here that the category of field town included settlements with very different legal statuses. The settlements of the Greater Cumania, which is the subject of my research, received and bore the highest level of privileges of the time: they were self-governing, independent of the duchy system, and, not having a landlord, were directly accountable to the country's governor (Molnár 2002). As part of the Jászkun district, or Hármas Kerület, the settlements of the Jászság and Kiskunság, in addition to the Greater Cumania, could claim similar privileges. The district of JászKun, which includes today's Greater Cumania, thus granted its inhabitants rights similar to those of the free royal towns, which the Kuns and Jászs who settled in the 13th and 14th centuries enjoyed from the moment of their arrival. One way in which the Cumans paid for their unique freedom was through military service (Beluszky, 2001).

Different definitions of Greater Cumania

In this subsection I want to present the broader context of my research. Following Tóth (2018), we can read that the classical landscape geographic definition of the region is not the same as Greater Cumania in the historical sense. Greater Cumania is one of the middle parts of the Central Tisza region, which consists of three small landscapes: the Szolnok- Túri plain, the Tiszazug, and the Tiszafüred-Cumanhegyesi plain (Tóth, 2018).
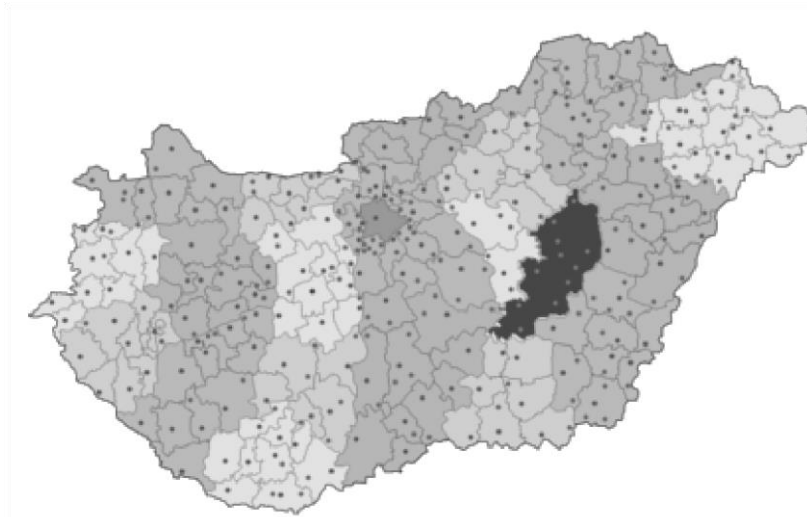

Figure 1. Location of Greater Cumania in Hungary
Source: (nagykunsagiizhaz.hu, 2019)

Melinda Molnár (2002) does not interpret the landscape unit in this context. Greater Cumania, the historical landscape of Jász-NagyCuman-Szolnok county in the south-eastern part of the county, consists geographically of five closely connected settlements - Karcag, Kisújszállás, Cumanhegyes, Cumanmadaras, Túrkeve - and a sixth settlement further south, called Cumanszentmárton. The Greater Cumania is difficult to separate from the neighbouring natural geographic landscapes in the natural geographic sense, but more so in the historical and cultural sense (Molnár, 2002).

Selmeczi (2018) also views Greater Cumania as a historical landscape, situated between the middle reaches of the Tisza and the Hortobágy, whose developmental history was decisively influenced by the fact that the Redemptio (1745), to be discussed later, established private land ownership here long before its time (Selmeczi, 2018).

The Cuman identity

Kovács (2014) describes in his work that several hypotheses on the origin of the Cumans have been formulated until today, but none of them has been proven beyond doubt. The author takes the reader back to the 1010s, to the then northern China, from where a wave of east-west migration was set in motion by the then rising Kitaean dynasty of Liao origin. Their expansion may have reached the region of East Turkestan, and it is assumed that this is why the Qun people headed westwards to the area of the Saryk - present-day Kazakhstan. Some of the migrating tribes may have come into contact with the Kuman-Polovec-Kipchak tribal alliance in the region of the Aral Sea, now the Uzbek-Azakh border. Kovács mentions that the name 'qun' also appears in Arabic

and Persian sources, but there are at least two hypotheses as to its origin. The first is that it was used to refer to a part of a nomadic tribe that had adopted Nestorian Christianity. According to the second, the name Qun was given by the Kitae to another people known by a different name, so that the identity of the name with the Cuman people group, which settled in the Kingdom of Hungary in the 13th century, is merely coincidental. The development of the name Cuman, as we know it today, may also have been influenced by the Hungarian language, which is why the second possibility is considered more likely (Kovács, 2014).

Paládi-Kovács (2015) presents the history of the Cumans in Hungary from their first settlement in 1239 to their second after the Tatar invasion in 1241. She describes how King Béla IV of Hungary settled the Cumans led by Kötöny Kán in the triple district of JászCuman. Paládi-Kovács's narrative reveals that after the Turkish conquest, there was an exodus to other areas in addition to the classically well-known lowland settlements, as evidenced by the names of the settlements outside present-day Greater Cumania that begin with the adjective Cuman - e.g. Cumansziget - and the six Cuman seats that we know of. The author also tries to use the Cuman language as an example of the origins of the people: the linguistic affinity of another people who came to the Kingdom of Hungary, the Besenyők and the Cumans, both of which belonged to the Kipchak branch of the Turkic languages, should be taken as a fact (Paládi-Kovács, 2015).

Bartha (2015) in his work "The manifestations of the identity of Greater Cumania in our days" presents a proud and much experienced Cuman people. The author points out that identity as a people's self-consciousness and self-esteem has become really important since the 20th century. In his opinion, it is becoming increasingly important with the rise of globalisation. Today, the Cuman are assimilated and are an integral part of the Hungarian people, but not just in any way: according to Bartha, the Cuman have managed to become Hungarian while preserving their traditions and even adding to and enriching Hungarian culture. The typified necked Cuman man in this description is a man who sticks to his own truth, sticks to his own community and is extremely proud of his countrymen, the scholars, writers and artists who continue to spread the legacy of the glorious Triple District (Bartha, 2015).

Material and methodology

In my research project, I was able to interpret the basic identity characteristics of the region. I was studying with the help of national and international literature, which necessarily required a historical situation analysis. After formulating the objectives and hypotheses, I developed my own research database for the study, using electronic sources from the following online data providers:
- Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH),
- National Regional Development and Spatial Planning Information System (TEIR).

Geographically, I extended the data collection to the settlements with a rural-urban past in the historical Greater Cumania, which are:
- Karcag,
- Kisújszállás,
- Cumanhegyes,
- Cumanszentmárton,
- Túrkeve,
- Cumanmadaras.

In addition, the data collection also included national, regional and county level data, which were necessary for the spatial data comparison. For most indicators, the period of analysis was defined as 1990 to 2022, since the aim was to map the economic and social situation of the municipalities I studied after the change of regime up to the present day. The most recent data for the municipalities are from 2022. In addition, I have used the records of four censuses from 1990 to 2022 to examine the occupational stratification of the municipalities. For the present research I used only secondary data.

For demographic and labour market mapping, I analysed long time series data from a database I compiled. I assumed that in a prosperous region, the population is not declining, the ageing index is not declining, the economic activity rate and the education test are favourable. Therefore, I focused on population change and its possible causes, with particular attention to education and economic activity statistics. I calculated and analysed the following indicators by municipality:

- population change,
- rate of natural increase/decrease,
- net migration rate,
- ageing index,
- distribution of population by economic activity,
- domestic taxable income per capita.

The analysis of occupational stratification is based on the assumption that in regions that are adaptive to the challenges of the times, the primary sector is declining in importance while the tertiary sector is growing. I have based my analysis of occupational stratification on the methodology of Edit Lettrich (1965), which allows me to determine the degree of urbanisation of the municipalities I have studied by grouping the occupational structure of the resident population, with wage earners being grouped separately according to agricultural, industrial and other occupations. In his method, Lettrich distinguishes three main types, which he further divides into subtypes:

Agricultural type: the proportion of those earning between 55 and 100% from agriculture.
- Stage 1 = moderately agricultural: share of agricultural workers between 55% and 75%.
- Stage 2 = highly agricultural: share of agricultural workers between 75% and 100%.

Amphibious type: share of people living from agriculture between 36.6% and 55%.
- Industrial urbanisation: majority of industrial workers over other wage earners.
- Other type urbanisation: majority of other earners over industrial workers.

Urban type: share of people living from agriculture 0 - 36.6 %
- Stage 1 = share of agricultural workers 15 - 36.6 %
- Stage 2 = share of agricultural workers 0 – 15 %

In the urban type, for both grades, three additional levels can be introduced to reveal the characteristics of urbanisation, where the share of industrial workers (I) and other wage workers (E) is the determining factor:
- A = industrial (I/E < 1,33)
- B = mixed (I/E ≥ 0,66 and ≤ 1,33)
- C = other (I/E < 0,66)

Results

Demographic and labour market mapping

Figure 2 shows the change in population of Karcag in blue, Kisújszállás in orange, Kunhegyes in grey, Kunmadaras in yellow, Kunszentmárton in turquoise and Túrkeve in green between 2011 and 2022, in thousands of inhabitants.
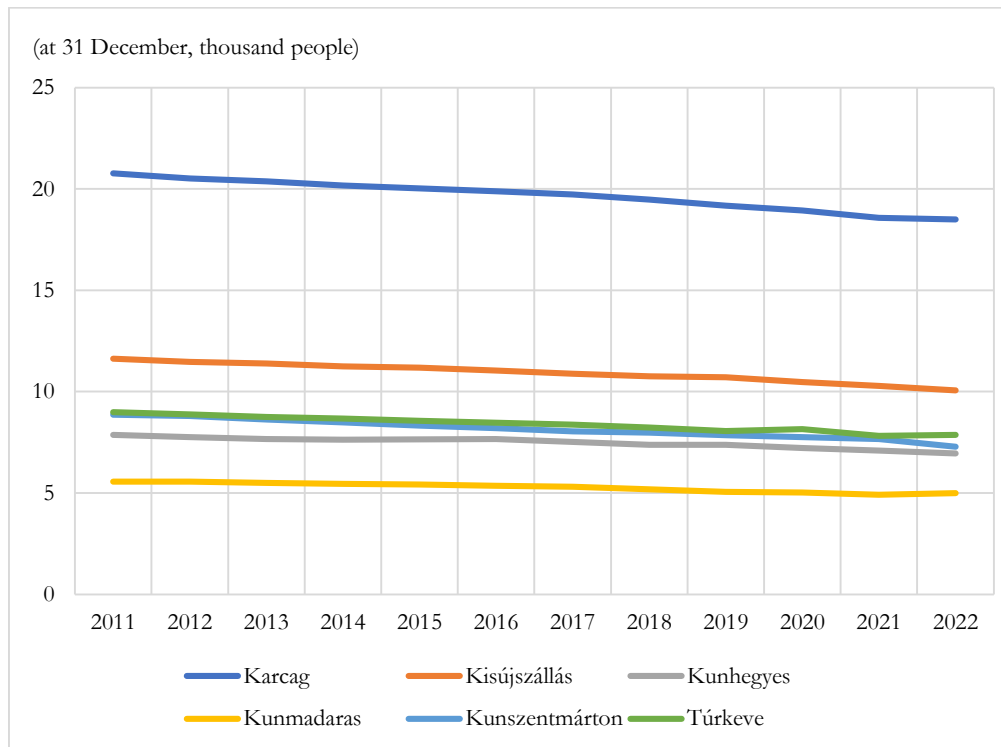

Figure 2. Population of the historic market towns of Greater Cumania, 2011-2022
Source: based on (TEIR, 2024) compiled by the authors

Among the six large cities, Kunszentmárton recorded the largest population loss in the study period, with a 17.87% decrease compared to the 2011 base year. Kunszentmárton was followed by Kisújszállás with a population decrease of almost 14% over 11 years. Túrkeve came third with 12.53%, closely followed by Kunhegyes in fourth place with 11.64%. Karcag's population decrease of 10.96% was a very positive result among the six municipalities surveyed, but the real surprise was Kunmadaras. The population of the municipality was only 10.38% lower in the period under review compared to the base year, which was better than the county statistics. Overall, this table also shows that the field towns of Greater Cumania suffered a significant population decline after the regime change, which does not suggest that the region is prosperous. The reasons for the population decline are examined in the analyses below.

Population decrease can be caused by two factors: natural decrease, emigration. Figure 3 clearly shows that one of the possible causes of depopulation in the municipalities studied is natural decrease, since the values of the municipalities studied (except Kunmadaras) were in negative range throughout the period 2011-222. Kunmadaras has a youthful age structure, although from 2018 onwards, the municipality's values have also taken on a negative sign, meaning that a natural decline in population has started.
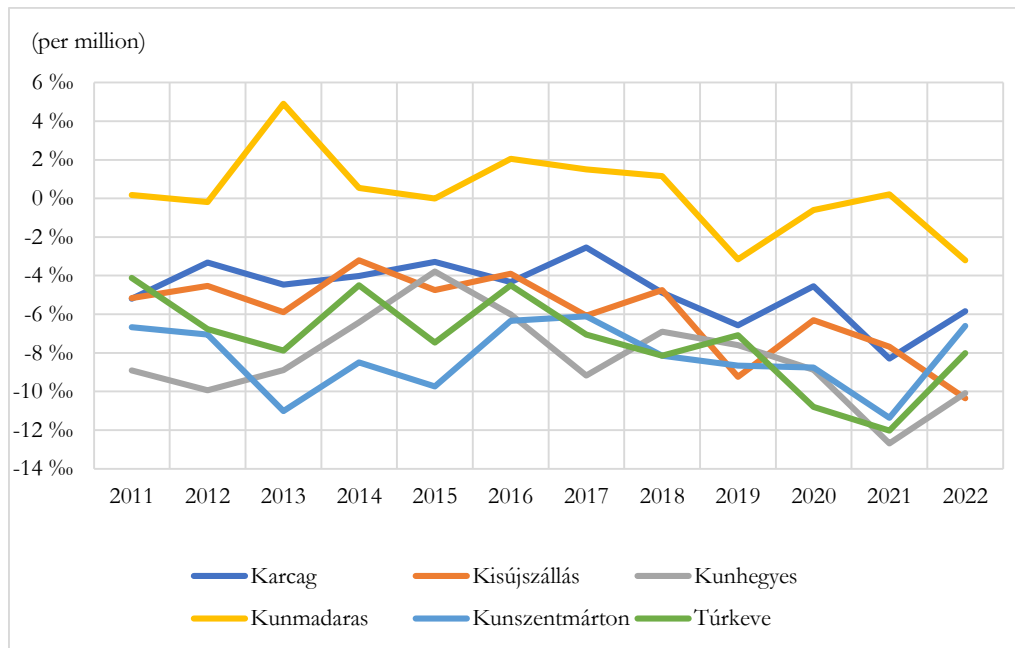
Figure 3. Rate of natural increase of the historic market towns of Greater Cumania, 2011-2022
Source: based on (TEIR, 2024) compiled by the authors

The ageing index is a very good indicator of population ageing. Figure 4 shows that all municipalities show a constant increase. The data show that the population of Karcag, Kisújszállás, Kunhegyes, Kunszentmárton and Túrkeve are all ageing, while in the case of Kunmadaras the extremely low ageing index further confirms the finding that the municipality has been able to minimise the volume of population decline through natural population increase.
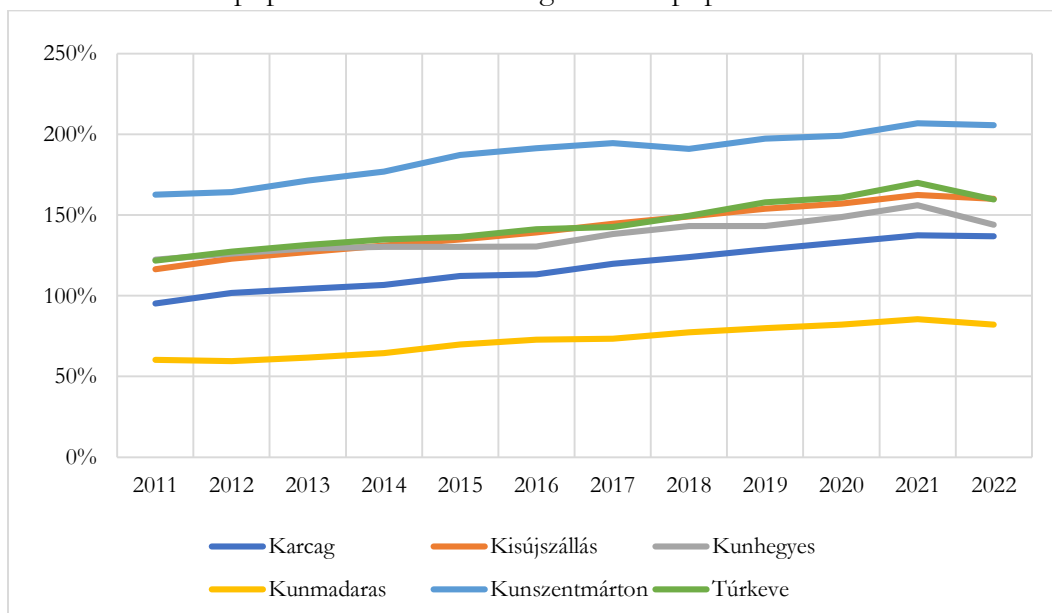

Figure 4. Ageing index of the historical market towns of Greater Cumania, 2011-2022
Source: based on (TEIR, 2024) compiled by the authors

Figure 5 shows the evolution of the migration balance of the surveyed municipalities between 2011 and 2022, expressed in thousands of inhabitants. The graph shows intermittent fluctuations, with out-migration exceeding in-migration in Kunszentmárton in 2018 and in Kisújszállás and Kunhegyes in 2019, so that in addition to the natural decrease shown in Figure 3, the population decline in the city can also be explained by the rate of out-migration.
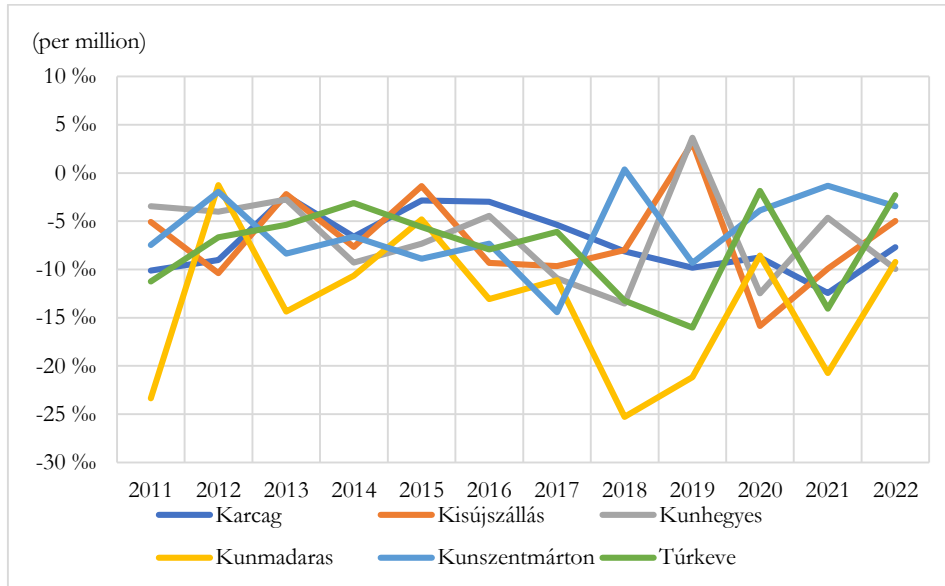

Figure 5. Net migration rate of the historical market towns of Greater Cumania, 2011-2022
Source: based on (TEIR, 2024) compiled by the authors

The statistics on economic activity in the study areas are presented in Figures 6 and 7.
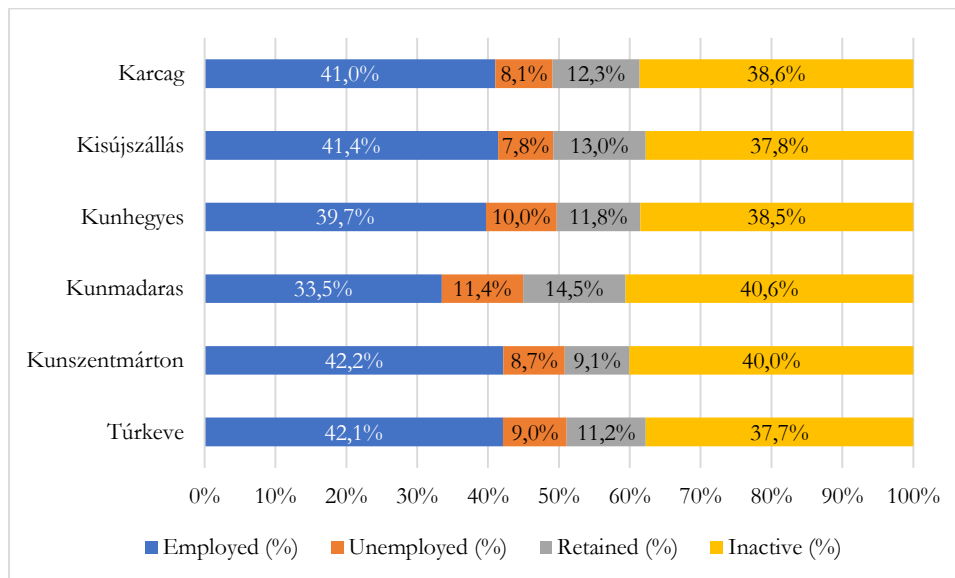

Figure 6. Economic activity of the population of the historical market towns of Greater Cumania, 2011
Source: based on (TEIR, 2024) compiled by the authors

The statistical records of the economic activity of the study areas were also collected from the 2011 (Figure 6) and 2022 (Figure 7) census databases. The population can be divided into four groups according to economic activity, which are:

- employed
- unemployed
- inactive earners
- retained

Figure 6 shows the distribution of the population by economic activity in 2011 in the municipalities surveyed. The highest employment rate (42.2%) was recorded in Kunszentmárton in 2011, while the lowest was recorded in Kunmadarás (33.5%). Unemployment rates in the municipalities surveyed ranged from 8-11%. The dependent group accounted for 9-14.5% of the total population, while inactive earners accounted for around 40%.
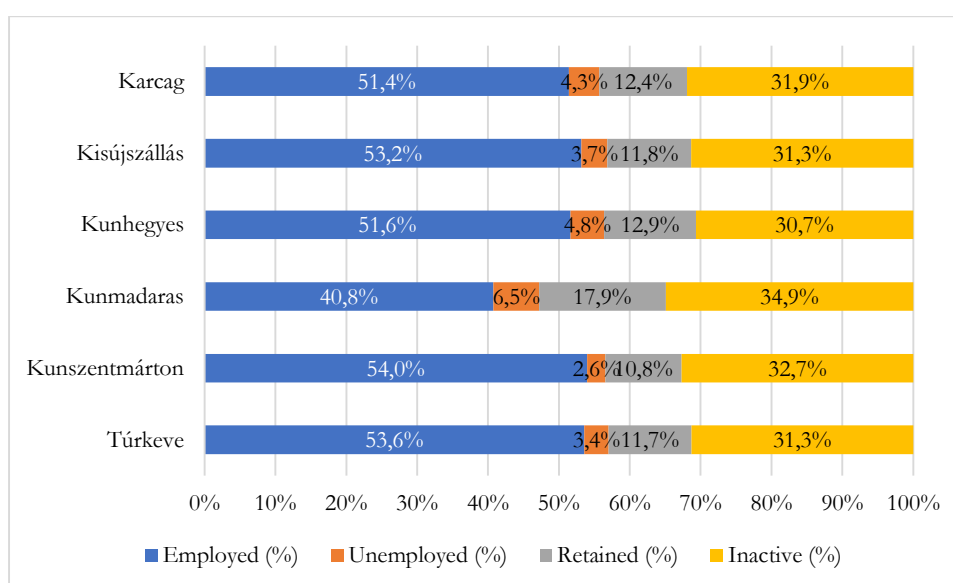

Figure 7. Economic activity of the population of the historical market towns of Greater Cumania, 2022
Source: based on (TEIR, 2024) compiled by the authors

Figure 7 shows the distribution of the population by economic activity in 2012 in the municipalities I studied. The highest employment rate (54%) was in Kunszentmárton in 2022, while the lowest was in Kunmadarason (40.8%). The municipalities surveyed had unemployment rates of between 3 and 7%. The dependent group accounted for 10-18% of the total population, while inactive earners accounted for around 30-35%.

From 2011 to 2022, the share of employed people increased by an average of about 10% and the share of inactive people increased by almost 10%, but unemployment also decreased significantly. It is feared that low unemployment carries with it an inherent rigidity in the local labour market, which is often addressed by re-employing the inactive population in receipt of benefits. At the same time, the proportion of dependants has remained almost unchanged.

In Figure 8, I present the domestic income tax base of the personal income tax for the 6 municipalities I have studied between 2011 and 2022. To facilitate interpretation, I have included

national data in red, regional data in brown and county data in dark blue. Figure 8 clearly shows that between 2011 and 2022, incomes do not reach the national average in any year. Karcag, Kisújszállás and Kunszentmárton reached or even exceeded the regional average in several years, but none of the municipalities under study managed to exceed the county average.
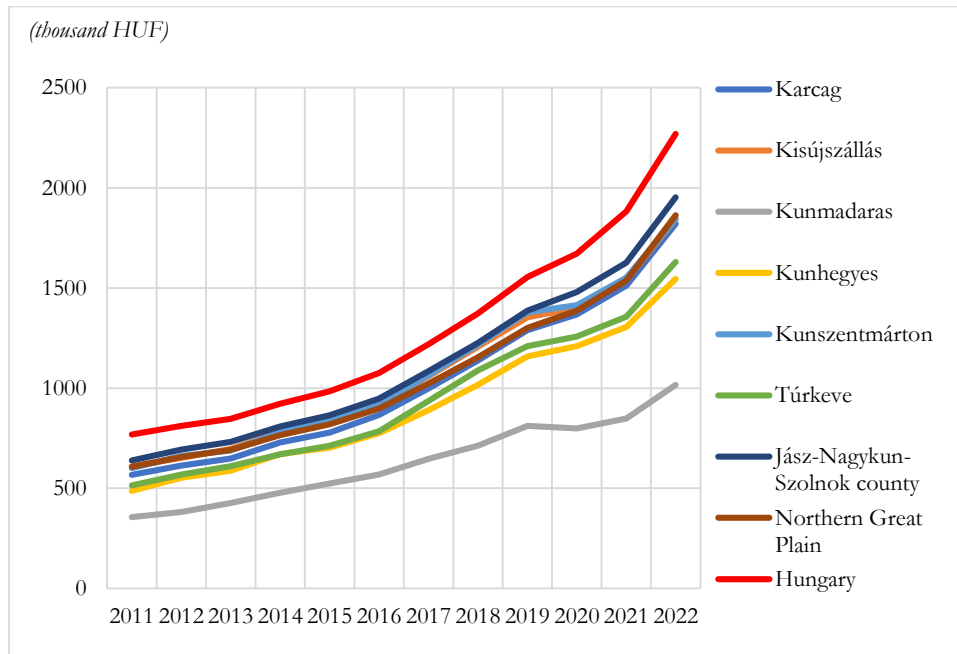

Figure 8. Domestic taxable income per capita of the historical market towns of Greater Cumania, 2011–2022
Source: based on (TEIR, 2024) compiled by the authors

Occupational stratification analysis

I also investigated the degree of urbanisation of the settlements with a rural-urban past in Greater Cumania, using the methodology described in the Material and methodology chapter. The basic premise of the occupational stratification analysis is that in prosperous municipalities and regions that are adaptively responding to the challenges of the times, the size of the primary, agricultural sector is decreasing, while the service sector is increasing.

The results of the occupational stratification study for the six municipalities I studied are summarised in Table 1, using data from the 1990, 2001, 2011 and 2022 Censuses. Table 1 shows that the first and second steps of occupational re-stratification had already taken place in the field towns of the traditionally agricultural past of the Greater Cumania at the mid-point of the party-state regime, i.e. there was an earlier shift from agriculture to industry and later a stronger shift to the service sector.

Table 1. Occupational stratification analysis of the historical market towns of Greater Cumania

Year: 1990	Settlement subtype	I/E ratio	Characteristics of urbanisation
Karcag	Urban, stage 2	2,58	A = industrial
Kisújszállás	Urban, stage 2	3,56	A = industrial
Cumanhegyes	Urban, stage 2	4,01	A = industrial
Cumanmadaras	Urban, stage 2	2,03	A = industrial
Cumanszentmárton	Urban, stage 2	3,46	A = industrial
Túrkeve	Urban, stage 2	3,22	A = industrial
Year: 2001	Settlement subtype	I/E ratio	Characteristics of urbanisation
Karcag	Urban, stage 2	2,89	A = industrial
Kisújszállás	Urban, stage 2	3,92	A = industrial
Cumanhegyes	Urban, stage 2	4,34	A = industrial
Cumanmadaras	Urban, stage 2	3,30	A = industrial
Cumanszentmárton	Urban, stage 2	4,21	A = industrial
Túrkeve	Urban, stage 2	3,22	A = industrial
Year: 2011	Settlement subtype	I/E ratio	Characteristics of urbanisation
Karcag	Urban, stage 2	0,35	C = other
Kisújszállás	Urban, stage 2	0,58	C = other
Cumanhegyes	Urban, stage 2	0,55	C = other
Cumanmadaras	Urban, stage 2	0,37	C = other
Cumanszentmárton	Urban, stage 2	0,61	C = other
Túrkeve	Urban, stage 2	3,30	A = industrial
Year: 2022	Settlement subtype	I/E ratio	Characteristics of urbanisation
Karcag	Urban, stage 2	2,42	A = industrial
Kisújszállás	Urban, stage 2	1,66	A = industrial
Cumanhegyes	Urban, stage 2	1,52	A = industrial
Cumanmadaras	Urban, stage 2	1,98	A = industrial
Cumanszentmárton	Urban, stage 2	1,57	A = industrial
Túrkeve	Urban, stage 2	1,08	B = mixed

Source: based on (KSH, 2024) compiled by the authors

The share of people living from agriculture has fluctuated between 10-13% in all four census years examined, and has only intermittently been able to increase by less than 1%. In each of the four periods under study, the municipalities surveyed were of the urban type, as the share of agricultural earners was and is still below 15%.

From 1990 to 2001, it can be generally stated that more than two thirds of the working population were classified as industrial earners, and that the 'urbanisation' of the towns was therefore industrial in character.

By 2011, however, this had changed and all but Túrkeve of the municipalities surveyed were dominated by workers in the service sectors, which also brought about a predominance of the tertiary sector over the industrial. In Túrkeve, the share of industrial workers and workers in other sectors even increased by 2011, presumably as a result of investment in the metal industry. In the light of the study, it can be said that agriculture is no longer the main livelihood sector in any of the municipalities studied, and its importance has therefore only grown at a hectonic and marginal rate (<1%). In an adaptive response to the challenges of our times, Karcag, Kisújszállás, Kunhegyes, Kunszentmárton and Kunmadaras showed an occupational shift towards the tertiary sector in 2011. However, Túrkeve, which could even strengthen its industrial character, is considered a loser according to the analysis assumption, but this is far from being the case.

The 2022 census results show, however, that the share of industrial employment in the municipalities surveyed has increased significantly. The former transformation towards a tertiary sector has been reversed and a strong industrialisation has started. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that the municipalities surveyed have benefited from a large number of industrial investments, which have created many new jobs. This is also due to Hungary's economic policy and to the fact that the region has seen a number of investments linked to the metal and automotive industries (e.g. BMW factory in Debrecen, Hungary)

Conclusion and suggestions

The demographic and labour market situation survey showed that the six large municipalities I studied were all in demographic decline after the regime change. As a summary of the survey, I have created a ranking of municipalities, which shows that the demographic situation of Karcag was the most favourable among the municipalities surveyed. Kunmadaras came second thanks to its very favourable natural reproduction and ageing index, followed by Kisújszállás, Kunhegyes, Túrkeve and finally Kunszentmárton. Kunhegyes and Kunszentmárton, despite their status as small regional centres, showed a declining social morbidity. It is important to note here, however, that the problem zone is not limited to municipalities with a population problem. The relatively larger demographic reserve of Kunmadaras could be an advantage if the school enrolment indicators were not unfavourable and the growing presence of the Roma population did not reinforce the Kipp effect.

District-level education and labour market statistics have shown that, in terms of educational attainment, about three quarters of the population is made up of the low-skilled classes. The study also suggests that mobility in the region is selective: the region does not offer an alternative for the more highly qualified, and thus cannot retain its intellectual base. The distribution of economic activity did not show any significant deviation from the larger regional scale: it broadly followed regional trends.

In the hypothesis testing, I compare my results with the hypotheses. My first hypothesis was: Municipalities with a rural-urban past in Greater Cumania are characterised by unfavourable

demographic trends after the regime change. In the light of my findings, my first hypothesis was clearly confirmed, as the social situation of the six field towns under study has seen better days.

My second hypothesis was: In the rural-urban settlements of Greater Cumania, the role of the traditional primary sector, agriculture, in employment has not increased after the regime change. In the light of the results presented, I was able to accept this hypothesis, as it was shown that this agrarian region, traditionally linked to agriculture for livelihoods, has minimal links to agriculture for employment, despite the tradition. With the exception of Túrkeve, tertiarisation is observed in the occupational structure of all municipalities. Obviously, further research is needed to determine whether this is due to administrative spatial roles or to entrepreneurial activity linked to the tertiary sector. The present-day Túrkeve is the only one in which the industrial character, which remained predominant during the socialist period, is still predominant.

Based on my findings, I have made the following recommendations:

- The selective mobility of the resident population of Greater Cumania, whereby the majority of ambitious people with higher education are emigrating, raises the need for municipalities to build a monitoring system to assess the career choices and future plans of local youth. This would allow them to plan ways to retain young people locally.
- It would be worthwhile to examine what steps the municipalities in the region are currently taking to retain their population, especially young people, and to plan what other options might be available (e.g. scholarship scheme, preferential property purchase, etc.).
- It would also be worth looking specifically at the extent to which Cuman identity and the preservation of traditions are embedded in the society, particularly among young people. This identity could, in my opinion, be one of the most important retention forces.

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