

## **ETHNIC IDENTITY OF THE BORDERLAND OF HUNGARY, AUSTRIA AND SLOVENIA**

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**Abstract** The historical Vas county is a mezoregion on the borderland of three countries – Austria, Hungary and Slovenia. It has multipolar ethnic structure with several ethnic minorities along the borders. We can see the decline of ethnic diversity in the last decades not only in the disappearing of linguistic islands and scattered minority groups, but also in identical (dual identity, strong local identities) and language using (bilingualism, polilingualism) aspects. In this paper we try to present the number, changes and regionality of ethnically mixed settlements and try to quantify the percentage of the ethnically mixed population. We used the official statistics and added the results of fieldworks and interviews with local people. In the minority settlements large percentage of the local community (30-70%) has a special type of identity because of the differences of ethnic, national and local identities, the geographic and historical circumstances. We can see this special way of thinking by the individual and community routes, language using specialities and the other representations of ethnic consciousness.

**Keywords:** *minorities, ethnic geography, ethnic identity, Carpathian Basin, diversity*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this paper is to describe the ethnic characteristics of a special region. We can find several minority groups in the western part of the Carpathian-Basin. Because of its historical background and ethnodemographic characteristics, we chose the area of the historical Vas county. We could not describe all the details of the ethnic characteristics of this region, we just used some special methods (specification of percentage of population with double identity using statistical data, measuring the ethnic heterogeneity by the number of ethnically mixed settlements, interview with some local persons).

## **2. RESEARCH AREA**

The historical Vas county had been existed at the western edge of the Carpathian Basin since the 11<sup>th</sup> century to the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The borders of Vas county were relatively stable, they were almost at the same place in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as in the middle ages. The area of Vas county was 5.472 km<sup>2</sup> in 1910, while the population was 435.000 persons in that time. The population declined by 6-7% in the last two-three decades. Since 1920/1921 it was separated into three countries (Hungary in the east, Austria in the west and Slovenia (former Yugoslavia) in the southwest. The main characteristics of the ethnic structure are the same (Hungarians in the east, Germans in the west, Slovenes in the southwest), but there are some other ethnic groups as well, the most important are the Croats on the borderland of Austria and Hungary. The area is diverse in geographic view (hills, plains, historical background, settlement structure, ethnological specialities). It is very diverse in ethnic view also, especially near the borders and in the northern part of Austrian side.

## **3. ETHNIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND**

In the middle ages the ethnic situation was relatively stable in Vas county, the Hungarian migrated here from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, but to the sparsely populated western part Germans and Slovenes migrated. The situation changed significantly in the 16<sup>th</sup> century: because of the Turkish devastation in the western part of Vas county the number of Hungarian population declined, Germans and Croats arrived. The Croats migrated from the present territory of Croatia because of the Turkish danger. By the data of Vörös K (1962) in that period there were no strict borderlines between the areas of different ethnic groups. By the data of 1696 tax census 44 thousand persons lived in homogenous Hungarian, 28.500 in homogenous German, 10.000 in homogenous Slovene and 5.000 in homogenous Croat settlements, while 13.500 persons (13% of the population) lived in ethnically mixed settlements.

The speed of the change of ethnic areas became smaller from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Anyway there were notable German immigration in these centuries (Gyémánt R. 2007, Borovszky S. 1898). But we could not find large changes in the ethnic structure of the area till 1867. The ethnic homogenization of the traditional ethnic blocks (German, Hungarian, Slovene) had been started before, the increase of the Hungarian population started after 1867.

The percentage of the Hungarians increased from 49% (1880) to 56.9% (1910), because of their larger natural increase, smaller out-migration, and the assimilation of other ethnic groups, especially in the towns. The percentage of the Slovenes remained 11.6%, but the Germans dropped from 34% to 26.9%, the Croats from 4.7% to 3.7%. The strongest assimilation we could observe at the German and the partly German (Yiddish) speaking Jewish population.

Between the two World Wars we can observe decline of Hungarian population in those regions, which went to Austria or Yugoslavia, because of the exchange of mainly Hungarian civil servants into Germans and Slovenes. During the World War II. the loss of the Jewish population was 7.500-8.000 persons in the historical Vas county, of which 6.000

persons lived in the Hungarian side (Braham 2007). After the World War II because of the expellation 2.942 ethnic German people had to move from Hungary from Vas county by the data (Czibulka et al. 2004), the exact number can be a little bit larger. From the Yugoslavian side 2.000 Germans (almost all, who lived there) had been expelled.

After the spontaneous and forced migrations in the 1950's the number of ethnic minorities in the historic Vas county dropped into the minimum. This situation started to change only from the 1960's (distrust, fear from statement of ethnic identity), but this increase stopped soon because of the worse demographic situation and the decline of traditional village society. The borders were strictly closed in this period, so the minority groups felt themselves homeless and the started to close culturally and in language-using to the majority population. After the changes of political regimes in Eastern-Europe (1989-1990) the situation became much better in all countries, but the so called "ethnic renaissance", the increase of number of ethnic minorities because of the improve in ethnic identity, which was strong in several parts of the Carpathian Basin, here, in Vas county was not so important.

#### **4. POPULATION WITH DUAL IDENTITY IN VAS COUNTY**

We can find several smaller or larger regions in the Carpathian Basin, where sizable part of the population has uncertain ethnic identity, they feel themselves belonging to two (or more) ethnic groups. In the background there are several local factors, and because of them the borders between the ethnic groups became blurred in the consequence of several historic, demographic, migrational or cultural effects. We have to emphasize the importance of mixed marriages. In several situations (for example in Slovakia in the Levice-Nitra-Nove Zamky triangle or the region of Kosice, in the south-western part of Zakarpattya (Ukraine) or in the Satu Mare region of Romania) the population with dual identity changed their ethnic affiliation between Hungarian and the majority population during the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of the changes in political situation (Kocsis et al. 2006, Tátrai 2009, 2010). In these situations we spoke about Hungarians outside the borders of Hungary, but the situation is similar in Hungary among the ethnic minorities. Because of the advanced assimilation the minority population in Hungary declare themselves to the majority population (German, Croat, Slovene, etc.) and they belong to the Hungarian state and the Hungarian nation as well. The changes in the identity dimensions (migration, mixed marriages) are rather similar at the minorities in Hungary and the Hungarians outside the borders, there are several differences as well. At the minority groups in Hungary a very important part of their identity is the minority situation since centuries and the loyalty for the majority nation (Bindorffer 2001, 2005). This situation is much less important at the Hungarians outside the border. Such larger population with double identity live in the multi-ethnic regions of Hungary (Schwäbische Türkei, Buda Hills, Békés-Csanád, Western-Hungary, etc.) (Aschauer 1992, Bindorffer 2002, Homišinová 2008, Seewann 2000).

The situation in the historical Vas county is a little bit different. In Hungary the identity forms of the German, Croat and Slovene population rather similar than the other ethnic groups in Hungary. In contrast of it the identity of Hungarians in Slovenia (Prekmurje) and in Burgenland (Oberwart region) changes dramatically form the general situation, because of the small number, the large assimilation pressure, the former closed

borders and the low prestige of the Hungarian language. (Kocsis–Wastl-Walter 1991, Kontra 2012, Szoták 2005).

We can quantify the number of ethnically mixed population with different ethnic geographic methods, but it is impossible to get a really exact result. In those regions, where the religion is also different among the different ethnic groups (Ceangai population in Moldva, Romania, Hungarians in Vojvodina, Serbia) it is worth to compare the ethnic and religious data to quantify the assimilated population (Tátrai 2010). We can use this method in different parts of the Carpathian Basin, but in the historic Vas county the borders between the ethnic groups and religious groups are different (the Hungarians Germans and Slovenes can be Roman Catholic or Lutheran, the Croats also Roman Catholic). The only exception is the Calvinist Hungarian population in Oberwart, Austria. So we have to find other methods to quantify the ethnically mixed population in Vas county.

The next possibility is to examine the Census statistics. It can be important to quantify the number or percentage of those persons, who marked two or more ethnic groups. It was the possibility to mark more than one ethnic groups not only in Hungary in the last decades, but the adequate database is only available in Hungary, so this part of our research we made only in the Hungarian part of the historical Vas county. At this calculation we subtracted the difference between the number of answerers and the Hungarians from the total number of minority persons. For example at Kétvölgy  $(76 - (101 - 85)) / 105 = 0,571$  (Table 1). The problem with this method is that is usable to count that type of dual identity, when one part of the identity is Hungarian and the other part is a minority group. It is impossible to count that part of dual identity, when both part are minority groups (for example German-Slovene). In Hungary this type is very rare, so this problem is not so serious.

Using this method there were 6.579 persons with double ethnic identity in the Hungarian part of Vas county in 2011, they give 3.1% of the total answerers or 2.6% of the total population. One third of this population lives in 16 villages, where there are strong minority communities, and usually they give 20-60% of the total population of these villages (Table 1). This number of persons is large enough to form or change the everyday life of these villages, the language using of the local communities, and transmit this special type of identity to the next generations. The percentage of the persons with double identity is the highest in those villages, where the assimilation pressure is low (Apátistvánfalva, Kétvölgy, Narda). In almost all the towns we can find at least 100 persons with double ethnic identity, the largest numbers are in the county-seat Szombathely (1.600 persons) and in the traditional multi-ethnic Szentgotthárd (600 persons, mainly Slovenes) and Kőszeg (550 persons, Germans, Croats) (Figure 1).

Table 1. *Percentage of dual identity population in some settlements in the Hungarian side of the historical Vas county.*

Settlement	Nationality						Inhabitants	Number of answerers	People with double ethnical identity (%)
	Hungarian	German	Slovenian	Croatian	Roma	Other			
Alsószölnök	284	73	54	0	1	1	369	318	25,7
Apátistvánfalva	304	3	231	0	0	1	364	344	53,6
Csehimindszent	355	4	0	0	90	1	364	359	25,0
Csönge	362	6	0	0	43	0	381	369	11,0
Csörötnek	743	2	10	0	202	4	914	758	22,2
Felsőcsatár	227	11	1	195	0	3	459	414	5,0
Felsőszölnök	292	8	395	0	1	1	572	516	31,6
Horvátlovó	128	11	0	109	0	0	190	138	57,9
Kétvölgy	85	0	75	0	0	1	105	101	57,1
Narda	353	4	0	290	0	1	469	420	48,6
Orfalu	42	0	28	0	0	4	61	54	32,8
Pornóapáti	281	140	1	3	0	9	364	318	31,9
Rönök	325	27	3	0	16	0	414	328	10,4
Szakonyfalva	243	0	141	0	20	0	356	312	25,8
Szentpéterfa	448	6	0	782	0	3	987	928	31,5
Vaskeresztes	165	192	0	19	0	1	336	299	23,2

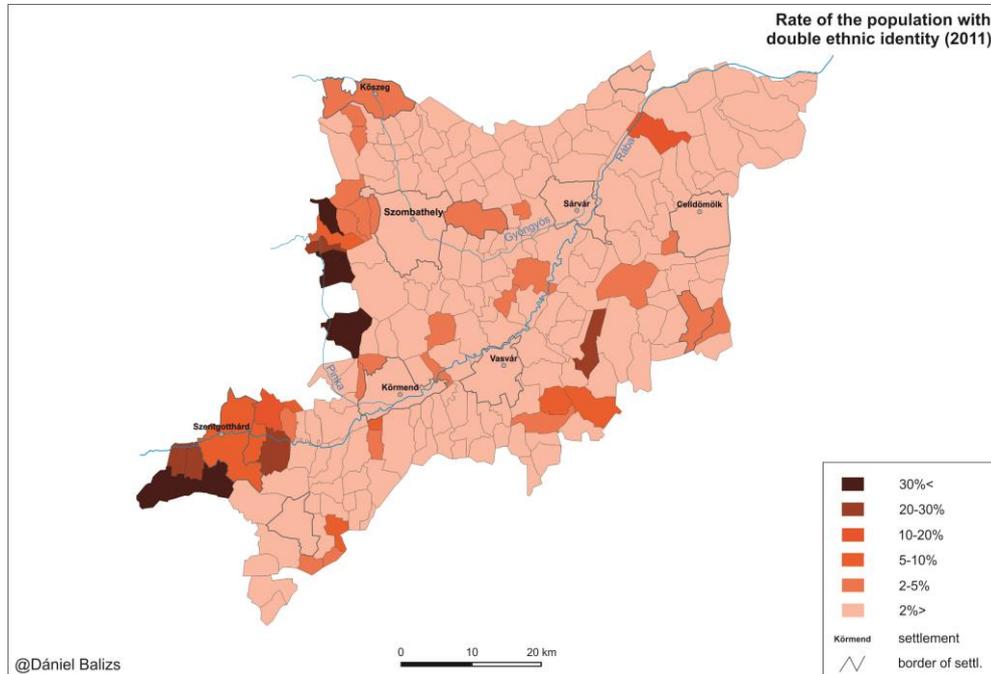


Fig. 1. *Rate of population with double ethnic identity in the Hungarian side of historical Vas county (2011)*  
(Source: own calculations)

## 5. CHANGES OF THE NUMBER OF ETHNICALLY MIXED SETTLEMENTS

Although it is not a method with very long scientific traditions, to count the number of ethnically mixed settlements can be interesting and can give a new approach to the ethnic geography researches in mezo-level, especially if we investigate the reasons of changes as well. The existence of mixed settlements means directly the ethnic mixing, but it has also connections with the cultural diversity of the region and the ethnic contact zones.

To define, which settlements are “ethnically mixed” is not so obvious, because the mixture or the diversity is very hard to quantify. If there is one person with another ethnicity than the majority, we can say the settlement ethnically mixed, but of course in that case (or if there are only two-three, etc persons) the effect of this ethnic mixture can be very low for the whole community.

The first antecedents are the great monographies from the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the authors labelled some settlements as “mixed” (Vályi 1791), or indicated two or more ethnic groups in a settlement (Fényes 1851). There were anyway some mistakes in the first and second monographies (Keményfi R. 2002). For example at Fényes Oberwart is a Hungarian town, but it had at least 20% German population in that time or Eberau was labelled as a Croat-German small town, but the Croatian population assimilated totally for that time. Keményfi used the categories of Vályi in a paper dealing with the settlement

categories and settlement types at Gömör region to describe the language border. Farkas Gy. also used this method to describe the language border at Levica region, Slovakia, he used the type of “ethnically mixed settlement”, but the exact categories and definitions are unknown. By our opinion in ethnic geographic view it is necessary to define exactly the categories, intervals, and in this case the 10% seems the best. So in this paper we called a settlement “ethnically mixed” if the percentage of at least two ethnic groups are larger than 10%.

We made our research by the data of the last 150-200 years. We’ve seen the database of the church sematizm in 1846 (Vörös 1962) and six later censuses. We’ve seen first of all that censuses, when because of some historical reasons it was worth to see the ethnical changes.

The ethnic forms were much less clear in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century than later. In that period there were no strict boundaries between the ethnic blocks, in that period there were almost 100 ethnically mixed settlement in the historical Vas county (with at least two larger ethnic communities). It is that period, when a lot of Croatian language islands and scattered small communities had still existed, the assimilation was in its first phase. We can see the decline of diversity later, there were 70-80 ethnically mixed settlement in Vas county between 1880-1941. The smallest number of ethnically mixed settlements could we observe in 1960 (38 settlements). In the last decades the number is increasing slowly, there were about 50 ethnically mixed settlements in the historical Vas county around 2000 (Table 2).

The numbers and also the categories depend on the census rules and practice and also the self-identification of the ethnic groups, especially the Roma people. The Croats lived always near German villages, so the largest part of the ethnically mixed settlements almost always German-Croatian villages. We can find German-Roma villages at the north-western part of the historical Vas county (in Burgenland), but the number of these villages changes rapidly because of the linguistic assimilation of Roma people and also the very low level self-identification of them. In some case it was important for the majority nation to distinguish the Roma people from others, for example in the 1934 census in Austria it was important to take different category for the Hungarian speaking Roma group to distinguish and separate them from the Hungarians. The Germans and the Hungarians mixed mainly in the last years of 19<sup>th</sup> and early years of 20<sup>th</sup> century because of the assimilation tendencies from German to Hungarian. The mixed Hungarian-German settlements were mainly former German villages with increasing Hungarian population in the later Austrian part of Vas county. The mixture of the Germans and Hungarians had been influenced by the new borders and also the expellation of Germans from Hungary after the World War II. We can see steep decline at the number of German-Slovene mixed settlements because of the consolidation of language borders at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Later the deportation of all the Slovenian Germans took this process unreversable. At the Hungarian-Slovene villages we can see increase in the second part of 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is because in the Slovenian villages in Hungary we can see increasing Hungarian population and in the Hungarian villages in Slovenia we can see increasing Slovenian population because of the assimilation and immigration.

Table 2. *Number of ethnically mixed settlements between 1846-2002.*<sup>1</sup>

Type	1846	1880	1910	1934/ 1941	1960/ 1961	1990/ 1991	2001/ 2002
<b>Hungarian-German</b>	17	11	20	8	5	6	6
<b>Hungarian-Slovenian</b>	8	13	14	7	10	13	13
<b>Hungarian-Croatian</b>	4	3	5	6	4	4	4
<b>Hungarian-Roma</b>	0	0	0	1	2	1	0
<b>German-Slovenian</b>	11	12	4	2	0	0	0
<b>German-Croatian</b>	60	30	18	19	15	22	23
<b>German-Roma</b>	0	2	14	25	2	0	0
<b>Slovenian-Roma</b>	0	0	0	4	0	3	4
<b>Croatian-Roma</b>	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>50</b>

We can see changes not only the number of ethnically mixed settlements, but also we can observe a regional shift of them. In the last 150 years the number of ethnically mixed settlement dropped by 50% in the historical Vas county, but on the other hand there were only 20 settlements, which were ethnically mixed both in 1846 and 2001 (of which 15 have partly Croatian population). There are 30 villages which became ethnically mixed after 1846 (first of all in the last decades), most of them are not in the middle of the ethnic blocks but near the state boundaries (Figure 2). So we can see ethnic homogenization and diversification as well, first in the middle of ethnic blocks, last near the borders at the edge of the blocks. These new ethnically mixed settlements were former homogenous settlements but in minority situation and later the majority population started to increase because of assimilation and immigration. In 2001 the two largest groups of ethnically mixed settlements are the partly Croat settlements in Burgenland and the minority settlements near the borders (Hungarian-Austrian, Hungarian-Slovenian border). Another factors are the increasing number of Roma population and the immigration to the towns of Burgenland and possibly to the German and Croatian villages near the border and Szombathely in Hungary.

<sup>1</sup> At the data of 1934-1941 one data is missing (the sum is 73 and not 74). In that time there was a refugee camp at Sárvár (Polish refugees) and its population was more than 15% of the total population of the city. In that case the town was ethnically mixed, but because of the special situation we did not take into consideration.

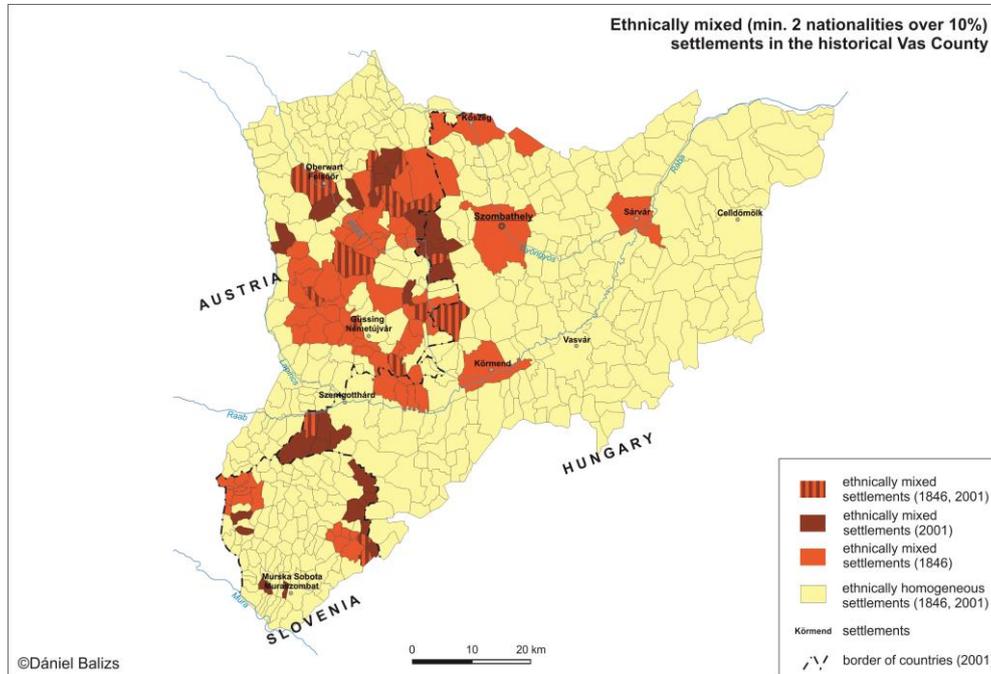


Fig. 2. *Ethnically mixed settlements in the historical Vas county in 1846 and 2001.*

(Source: own calculations)

## 6. DEFINITION AND INTERPRETATIONS OF IDENTITY AND BILINGUALISM

The identity means consciousness of self –identification and became among the main concepts of sociology after the World War II. It is used by several disciplines, in this paper we use the concept of identity in context of minority groups. The main parts of identity are effort to survive, preservation of special characteristics and preservation of self-identity by Gereben F. Pataki define the identity as a mediatory category between personality and society (Gereben 1999). Geertz, C. (1994) distinguish ethnic and national identity. By the opinion of the Czech Maříková, H. (1996) the ethnic identity is the realization that somebody belongs to an ethnic minority in the special social environment. In that case by her opinion at the ethnic identity is mainly traditional and genealogical, while the national identity connecting to the state and nationality. The double identity means the mixture of two ethnic identities (Homišínová, M. 2008). We can distinguish balanced or unbalanced dual identity. If the two identities are same strong, we speak about balanced dual ethnic identity.

Bilingualism is a permanent usage of two (or more) languages, those people are bilingual, who need at least two languages in the everyday life and they even use both (Grosjean 1992). By the opinion of Bartha Cs. (2005) bilingual is that person, who regularly use at least two languages in the everyday life for the communicative and socio-cultural

needs. There can be several reasons of bilingualism, for example spreading the languages, changes of borders, migration, cross-border relations, etc. There are several typizations of bilingualism, complex-coordinated, early-late, invertive-additive, symmetrical-assymmetrical. In our topic the last pair is the most important.

## 7. RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

We made 21 semi-structured interviews about the ethnicity of the mixed villages, but also asked some information about the demographic, ethnic, historical and social situation. These questions had been deal about the present situation, but also had questions about the past situation, so we can observe the changes in the ethnic processes as well. In this paper we deal with the interviews of the Hungarian and Slovenian part of the historical Vas county, we do not deal with the Austrian interviews.

All those villages, where we made the interviews were almost homogenously minority villages till the World War II, except Felsőcsatár, which was mixed Hungarian-Croatian. Most of them are small villages (with the population between 300 and 1000), the population became older and older, we can see natural decrease, but the local communities take efforts to stabilize the population.

In the past of the villages there were several breaking points, the local situation was influenced by local and general historic, social or economic processes. The most important historic breaking points we the end of World War I. (Peace treaty of Trianon, new borders, countries), the re-annexation of some villages from Austria to Hungary after a census in 1923 ('faithful villages'), the World War II and after it the expellation of the German population from Hungary, the iron-curtain between Austria and Hungary, the revolution and the emigration wave in 1956, the change in political regimes after 1989-1990, the collapse of Yugoslavia, join to the European Union of Hungary and Slovenia. Among the social breaking points we have to mention the decline of the role of family, increasing social mobility during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, urbanization, out-migration from the villages, disorganization of the closed village communities, education and work possibilities in abroad.

The population has dual identity in ethnic and national view, the minority ethnic identity and the majority national identity live together. They are proud to the minority origin, they cling to the minority language and culture, but they belong strongly to the country, the homeland. In these aspects there were no significant differences among the minorities, countries, but can be large differences among the settlements.

The second important aspect of identity is the local identity. The local identity is really important in the mixed villages, both minority or majority population, it is an important part of self-determining, the importance of local identity is similar to ethnic and national identity. We can see it in three different aspects:

- the local people are really proud and loyal to the home-village, to the local community
- it make disappear the breaking lines between the different ethnic groups
- they prefer the local language variety instead of standard forms

In context of language using and education the answerers emphasized the importance of language to slow the assimilation. We can see here a great contradiction: the assimilation process is the strongest at the language using, we can see the clearest signs of assimilation at minority language using. But it is not surprise because of the small number of minority

language users, their scattered situation and the isolated situation from the motherland. The assimilation pressure is the strongest at the language using, at the other aspects of identity (culture, religion) are much smaller, they are more resistable.

It is also interesting that we can see changes in that case, where the children meet with the minority language. Formerly they meet with the minority language in the family, they learned the minority language first. Nowadays the children learn first the majority language and they meet with the minority language only in the kindergarten or primary school. Because of it the languages using habits of the young and old generations are really different.

We have to emphasize the changes at the importance of German language in the last years. German language as lingua franca was important in the last decades as well, but because of the closed boundaries and the negative experiences of the German population it was not important in the context of minority language using. This tendency changed rapidly in the last years because of the working possibilities in Austria. There is larger and larger need for German education in the local communities near the Austrian border, so the possibilities of the minority language (German) became better. The Croatian pupils this time used to choose German classes rather than Croatian ones. (In Felsőcsatár, which is an ethnic Croatian village, but responsible for other four villages, among them ethnic German ones, there is a three lingual (Hungarian, German, Croatian) school.) In the German class there are three times more students than in the Croatian one.

With the aspect of community language using we can say that larger part of the local community is bilingual, but the importance of the two languages is different person by person. There are also differences among the settlements by the percentage of bilingual persons (25-80%, probably the highest in Szentpéterfa). In the community language using the language is determined by the situation, the place, the conversationalist. The bilingualism is important first of all at the minority population, at the local majority population not. But changing the language from one to another, it is not a problem among the minority population.

Although the main language in the offices is the majority language, the civil servants but also the people working in services used to take into consideration the first language of the costumers. The local government use the majority language, only the invitation cards or posters for cultural events are bilingual. At the minority local governments the official notifications and the administration are bilingual. In the religious language using the first language is the language of the majority (in Hungary Hungarian, in Slovenia Slovene), the push back of the minority language on masses is a great problem. In all the villages the priests belong to the majority population. These are good examples for asymmetric bilingualism (Gereben F. 1999), in community, official and at mixed marriages in family language using the importance of majority language are larger and larger. The importance and using of minority language is declining in official, community and also family using.

In the topic of culture and coexistence we can say, that the importance of the minority life and minority culture are great, they have important role in keeping the population in the villages. If the community is strong and dynamic, the young people can live in the home villages and the migration force is much smaller. The different parts of the minority culture (folklore, school programmes, festivals, art programmes, etc.) are different from the majority culture and also different from village by village, so there are own specialities of the different communities. in all the minority villages of the historical Vas

county the minority cultural life is well organized, and the importance of it is accepted by the largest part of the local people, both minority and majority population. So in these villages the minority culture has much larger importance now than the minority language. The programmes are usually bilingual, so they are the most important places for minority language using. There are no ethnic conflicts in this region, the level of tolerancy is high. Because of it the percentage of ethnic mixed marriages are high and increasing in the last decades.

In the next part we deal with the topic of migration and motherland. In these villages the migration was always important, first of all the out-migration (expellation of Germans, urbanization, lack of local working places). The out-migration after the revolution in Hungary in 1956 was also important on the Hungarian side with sometimes out-migration of at least 10-20% of the local population. After 1990 more and more people work in Austria, some of the local people live there most of their life. On the other side, in the contact of in-migration the list is much shorter. In the last decades just some border guards came, Hungarians from the nearby villages because of marriage and in the last decades people from Eastern-Hungary to live here, but work in Austria.

There are several aspects of connections with the motherland, mother nation. The most important link is the common language and the common identity. The minority population think that they can feel home also in the motherland and can preserve ethnic identity. Before 1990 one of the most important reason of assimilation was the unaccessibility of motherland. The working places in the home-country is also important, but first of all we can see it only at the Germans living in Hungary and work in Austria. There are very limited international commuting among the Hungarians in Austria or Slovenia, among the Slovenes in Hungary and among the Croats to Croatia. The partnership between settlements, schools, associations have also large importance (sister-villages, cultural connections, common trips). Among the Hungarians, Croats and Slovenes the relations with the motherland led by emotional reasons, the importance of language is secondary. The Germans of Hungary the working possibilities have much larger importance in Austria, but the emotional reasons are also important. This situation is because of the geographical location, the economic possibilities and because they can not feel Austria as their mother-county.

## **8. SUMMARY**

The historical Vas county is one of the most ethnic diverse regions of the Carpathian Basin. To describe this diversity we used both quantitative and qualitative methods. With mathematic-statistic methods we can say, that the minority people have mixed ethnic identity and the majority of this mixed-population had been concentrated mainly in the minority villages. We can see ethnic homogenization and diversification in the region, and now we can find most of the ethnic mixed villages near the state-borders (at the former minority villages). The minority islands inside the large ethnic blocks seems to disappear. The interviews confirm, that the importance of the local minorities decline, but the interethnic effects and connections became larger and more diverse. The ethnic structure changed dramatically in the last decades, but not because of direct effects (in-migration of majority population), but because of indirect effects (assimilation, changes in family-model). There is a need in the local community to slow the assimilation, they declare the

most important thing to preserve the language, but the linguistic assimilation is the strongest. Nowadays the most important factor to keep the identity is the minority culture and not the minority language.

In the context of language using we can see bilingualism, especially asymmetrical bilingualism, which is sometimes forced. The local communities aspect bilingualism and the level of ethnic tolerancy is high, they can live together well, they accept the culture of each other. There are large differences in ethnic and national identity, but this mixed identity is unbalanced and shifts slowly towards the majority identity. The local identity is also strong, so there is a very special mixture of local, ethnic (minority) and nation (majority) identities.

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