

# MOBILITY AND MIGRATION PECULIARITIES OF THE POPULATION OF THE HUNGARIAN PLAIN BEFORE WORLD WAR 1

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## The aim and the methods of the research

The research into the mobility and migration relationships of population promises versatile and useful results. Taking into consideration the fact that the regional movement of the population — as the population is the most important force of labour and consumer of the produced material goods — is in close connection with the regional situation and redistribution of other elements of forces of labour, by a manifold research into migration relationships, one can come to conclusions of basic importance as far as the situation and changes of the latter is concerned.

On the one hand mobility and migration relationships reflect the character, the regional distribution and the changes of labour forces, and on the other the have an effect on them, inducing qualitative, quantitative and spatial changes. Since the regional redistribution of the population has an outcome in the future on its own as well as in the structure of the other elements of labour forces, the research of the mobility and migration relationships of the past can give useful results for our day.

In this present study — concentrating mainly on the region of the *Alföld (Hungarian Plain)* — by an analysis of the migration and mobility relationships round about the turn of the century an attempt is made to provide data for the specification of the economic development of the time as well as for the apatial redistribution of labour forces.

From this time no data which contained the migration relationships of the population and which gave a direct, entire and satisfactory description of the directions of migration could be found. So our bases were the data of the population census at that time which present the “population exchange balance” of the municipalities according to the places of registration. Although in these balances the movements of earlier periods add up, satisfactory conclusions can be made on the quantitative character and main directions of the internal migration.

During the course of our research we had to respect the administrative borders of that time, therefore our area of investigation is not the same as what we call the *Alföld* today. A similar problem was that only the settlements which had municipal rights could be regarded as towns since we had data referring only to them. Only careful estimations were made in the case of towns which had regular councils.

In order to give a correct estimation of the rate and role of the internal migration a brief outline of the data regarding movements of population within an administrative border as well as emigration will also be given.

### General Characteristics of Mobility and Migration in Hungary

In Hungary — owing to the slow, contradictory and recoiling capitalist development — there are special features in the mobility of the population as well as the migration relationships in contrast with Western Europe. These special features can be traced in the forms of migration which are not going to be analysed in this present study.

The tendency of migration within the administrative border, i.e. between the downtown areas and the suburbs, was contradictory with the main trends of capitalistic development. In Hungary the role of a small estate in the migration of the population was greater than in the developed Western European countries, so the population of the suburbs goes on; the population of the suburbs grows more rapidly than that of the downtown areas. This is in connection with the population of the sandy and anti-inundated areas as well as the period of the development of a cottage-dwelling system in which those who owned a cottage as well as a house in a downtown area were forced to sell their houses downtown and become cottage-dwellers. Most of all the Alföld can be characterized by this form of migration. (TÓTH J., 1969. BECSEI J. 1972).

The most frequent form of migration at the turn of the century was the wandering across the borders of the country, i.e. emigration. We have official data referring to this from the period between 1899 and 1913. During this period well over one million people left the country. This enormous rate of emigration was caused first of all by the relative underdevelopment of Hungary: small industrialization gave only a limited possibility of social regroupment and resulted in a state of relative overpopulation. (The number of industrial workers between 1880 and 1890 grew only by 88,000; in the following decade by 230,000; between 1900 and 1910 it grew by 260,000. This growth was too small to absorb the mass of population which came away from agriculture.)

In certain periods such as in the "peak period" (between 1905 and 1907) emigration took away the majority of the natural growth — more than two-thirds of it between 1905 and 1907. (In 1907 it even outnumbered the rate of natural growth.) Emigration took away 31% of the natural growth between 1908 and 1913; between 1899 and 1904 it was 20%. The number of those who emigrated was very small (Fig. 1.). According to the research which analyses the internal regional rate (PUSKÁS J., 1974) emigration had an effect below the average on the Alföld.

The mobility of the population regarding internal migration changed at a slow pace. In 1880 three-fourths of the population were registered in the places of birth. This rate gradually diminished during the following decades, but its value was still 68,6% in 1910. Gradually the countrywide form of migration, i.e. migration from one region to another, came to be important. The rate of those who were born in far-away regions is increasing. In this phenomenon the fact that Budapest becomes a metropolis and also the fact that the country-wide network of public transport is completed have a leading role. The rate of those who were born in a given county but were registered in another does not undergo an essential change which means that the regional population concentrating centres of urbanization are relatively underdeveloped at that time in Hungary (Table. 1.).

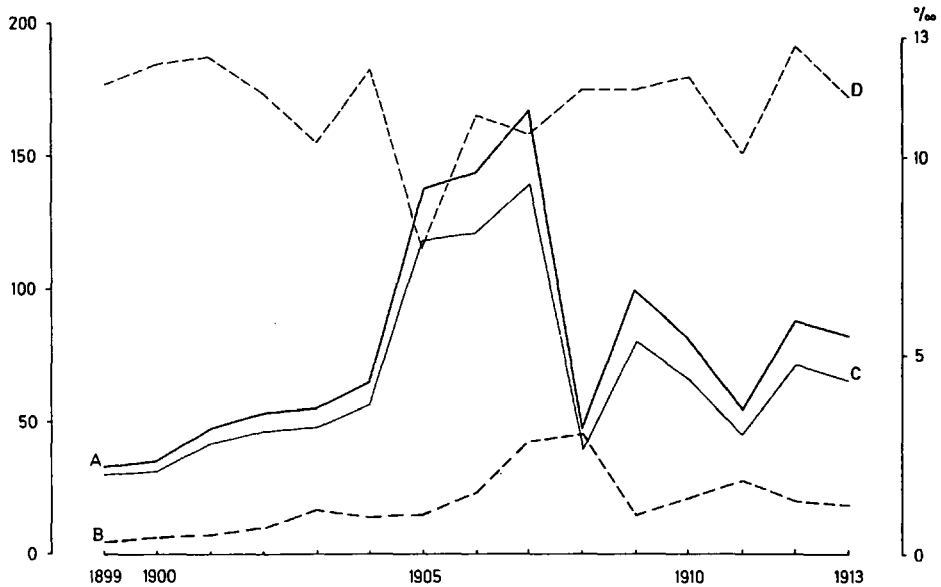


Fig. 1. Data of natural growth and emigration in Hungary between 1899 and 1913  
 A: emigration (1000 people), B: re-emigration (1000 people)  
 C: proportion of emigration (%), D: natural growth (%)

Table 1.: *The Distribution of Registered Population According to Place of Birth*  
 1890—1910%

	Local	From the same county	From a different region
1880	74,4	16,1	9,5
1890	74,4	16,0	10,6
1900	70,0	17,0	13,0
1910	68,6	17,0	14,4

Mobility in the environment of Budapest and in the middle part of the country is average, or slightly above it; in the regions of the periphery, most of all in Croatia-Slavonia and in Transsylvania it is below the average. It is near the average or slightly above it in the Alföld (Pest—Pilis—Solt—Kiskun, Csongrád, Csanád, Hajdú counties, Fig. 2.)

The rate of population-concentration according to the size of the settlements is rather small in spite of certain results of the course of concentration: only 23,7% of the entire population of the country lived in settlements which had more than 10,000 inhabitants in 1910. As a result of the concentrating course the number of the population living in settlements with less than 1,000 inhabitants diminished between 1880 and 1890; in spite of the numerical growth there was a ratial decrease in the case of the settlements which had 1,000—2,000 inhabitants; the rate of the ones with a

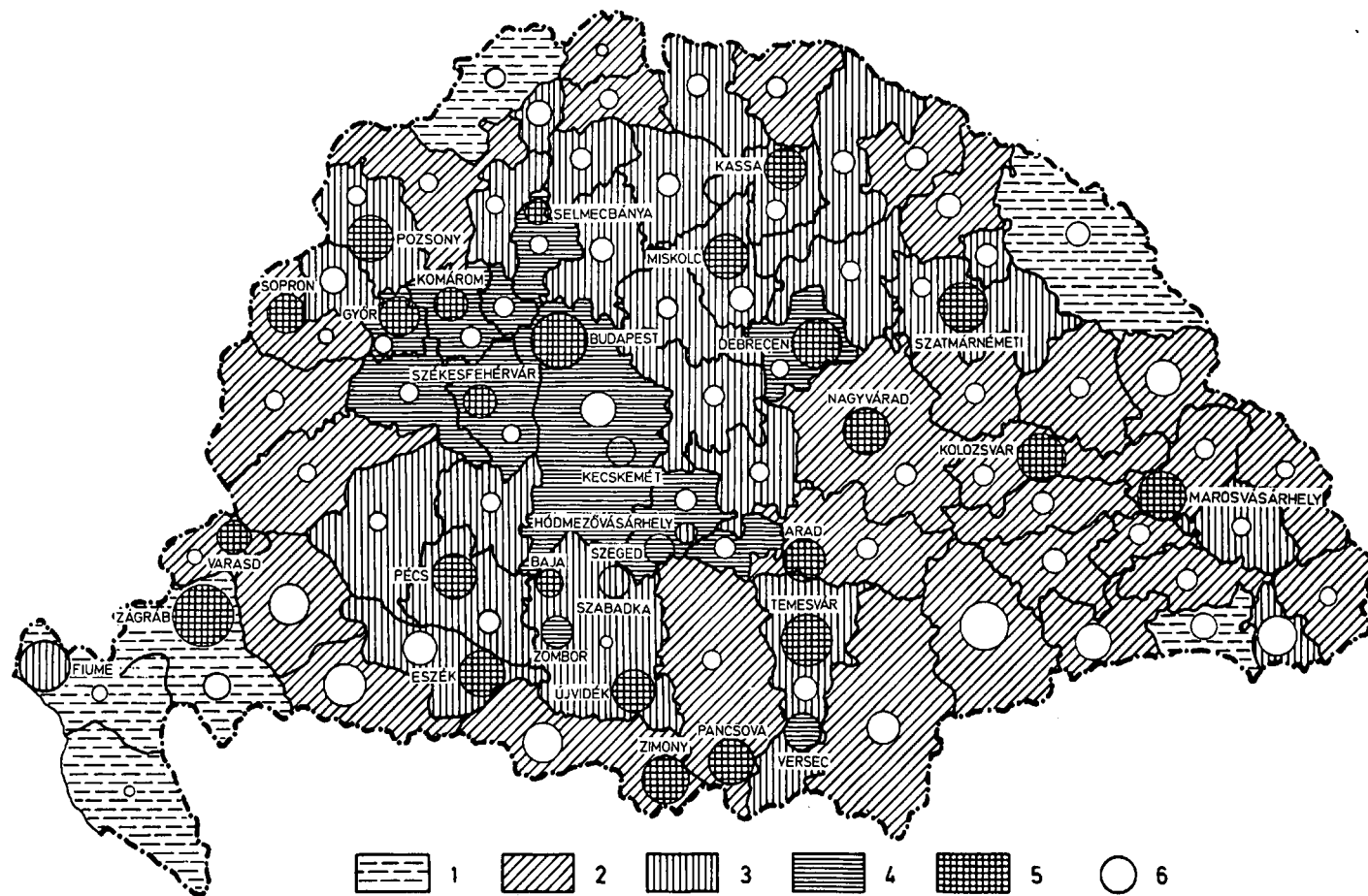


Fig. 2. Regional differences of mobility in Hungary according to the data from 1910.

The values of mobility (percentage of the present population):  
 1: low (—15), 2: below average (16—25), 3: average (26—35), 4: above average (36—55),  
 5: high (56—), 6: the rate of re-emigrating in proportion to 100 people  
 (the basic circle means 200 people)



### The Role of the Alföld in Internal Migration

The role of the Alföld in the migration of the population was researched in a country-wide relationship first. There were 6 regions into which Hungary\* was divided in respect of numerous factors: *Alföld*, *Trans-Danubia*, *Northern Hungary* (the highlands), *Transsylvania*, *Croatia-Slavonia*, and *Voivodship*, and on the basis of its social and economic significance, Budapest.

Among the five regions the exchange of population was favourable from the respect of the Alföld in relation to Trans-Danubia and the Highlands (Fig. 3.). The gain was especially considerable in relation to the counties of North Hungary which were near the Alföld such as Heves, Nógrád, Nyitra. In Trans-Danubia it was Fejér county that had the greatest emigration loss.

The majority of the positive saldo went into Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun counties which were 12 000 km<sup>2</sup> large and had an entire population of more than one million. Within this it contributed to the development of the settlement-ring around Budapest. This does not mean, however, that the positive balance of the Alföld in these two relationships is a result of only this since, on the one hand, the population exchange would be favourable even if these four counties were not taken into consideration, and, on the other, migration had a role in the dynamic population increase of the Sandy Region.

In relation to Transsylvania the population exchange was not favourable in either case. This was mainly caused by the attraction of the dynamically developing Nagyvárad, Arad and Temesvár which were also near the Alföld. These three towns gained 37,5% of the loss of the Alföld in favour of Transsylvania in 1900; the percentage was 52,5 in 1910. As for the counties, apart from Arad county, it was Hunyad and Krassó—Szörény which had relatively developed industry that attracted the population of the Alföld.

Budapest also gained a considerable number of people from the Alföld, especially from Jász—Nagykún—Szolnok, Pest—Pilis—Solt—Kiskun and Békés counties.

In contrast with the above-mentioned regions, population exchange was more balanced with Croatia—Slavonia and the Voivodship: a considerable number of people came to the Alföld only from Bács—Bodrog and Torontál counties. This results in the population gain in 1900 and 1910.

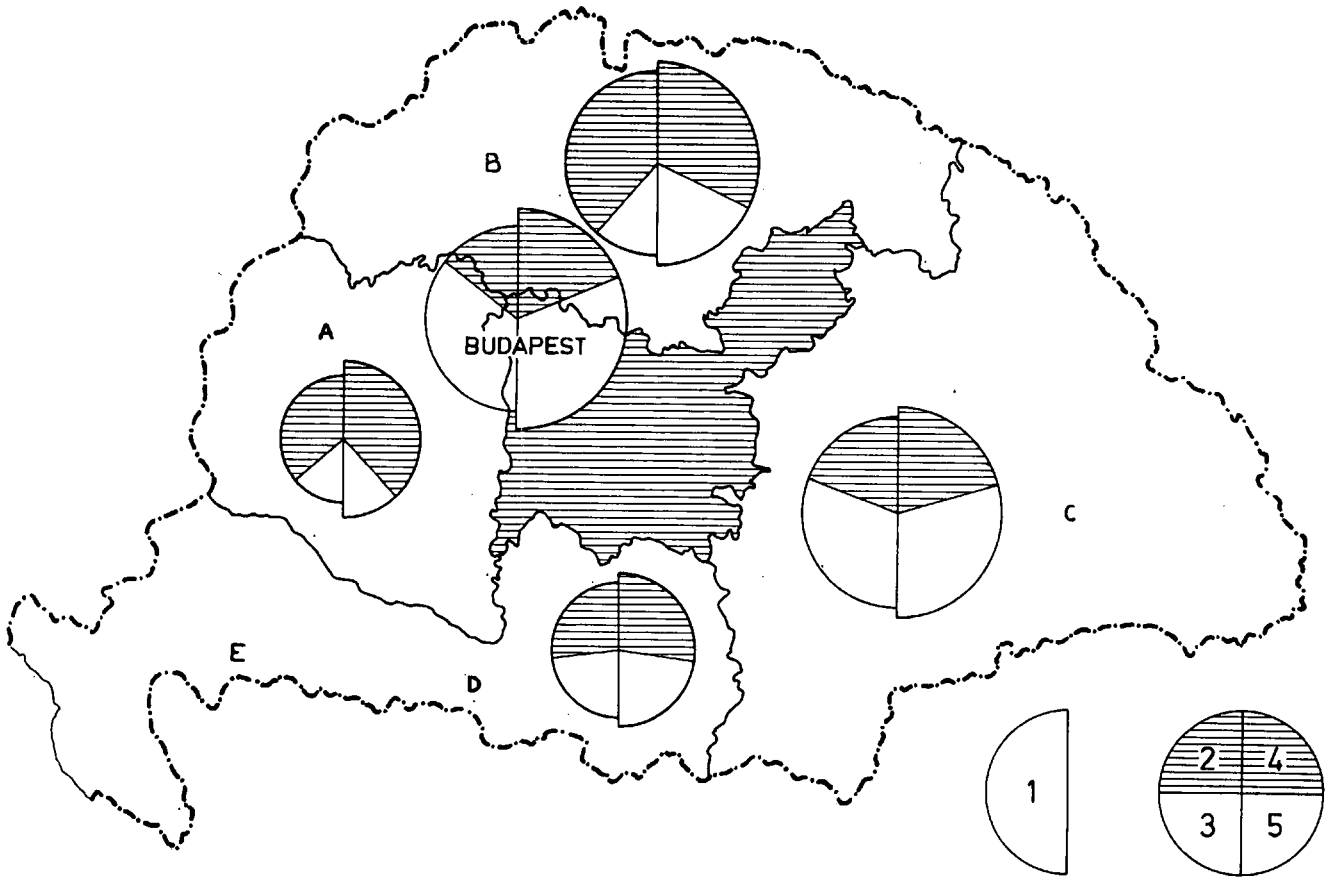
### Population Exchange in the counties of the Alföld

Some characteristic features of the migration in the seven counties\*\* of the Alföld (Fig. 4.):

— In both researched periods the balance of Pest—Pilis—Solt—Kiskun, Hajdu and Csongrád counties was positive. The gain of the last comes mainly from Békés

\* In this part of the research Croatia-Slavonia was considered to be a part of Hungary. Hungary in this case means the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

\*\* The data referring to the 7 counties include the municipal towns. Debrecen was considered as a part of Hajdú county; Kecskemét as a part of Pest—Pilis—Solt—Kiskun county; Szeged and Hódmezővásárhely as parts of Csongrád county, although these towns are considered to be separate units in the census-volumes.



*Fig. 3. The role of the Alföld in the regional population exchange of Hungary*  
 A: Trans-Danubia B: Northern Hungary (the highlands) C: Transsylvania  
 D: Voivodship E: Croatia-Slavonia  
 1: the number of wandering people (the semi-circle means 10.000 people)  
 2: gain in 1900 }  
 3: loss in 1900 } in the case of the Alföld  
 4: gain in 1910 }  
 5: loss in 1910 } in the case of the Alföld

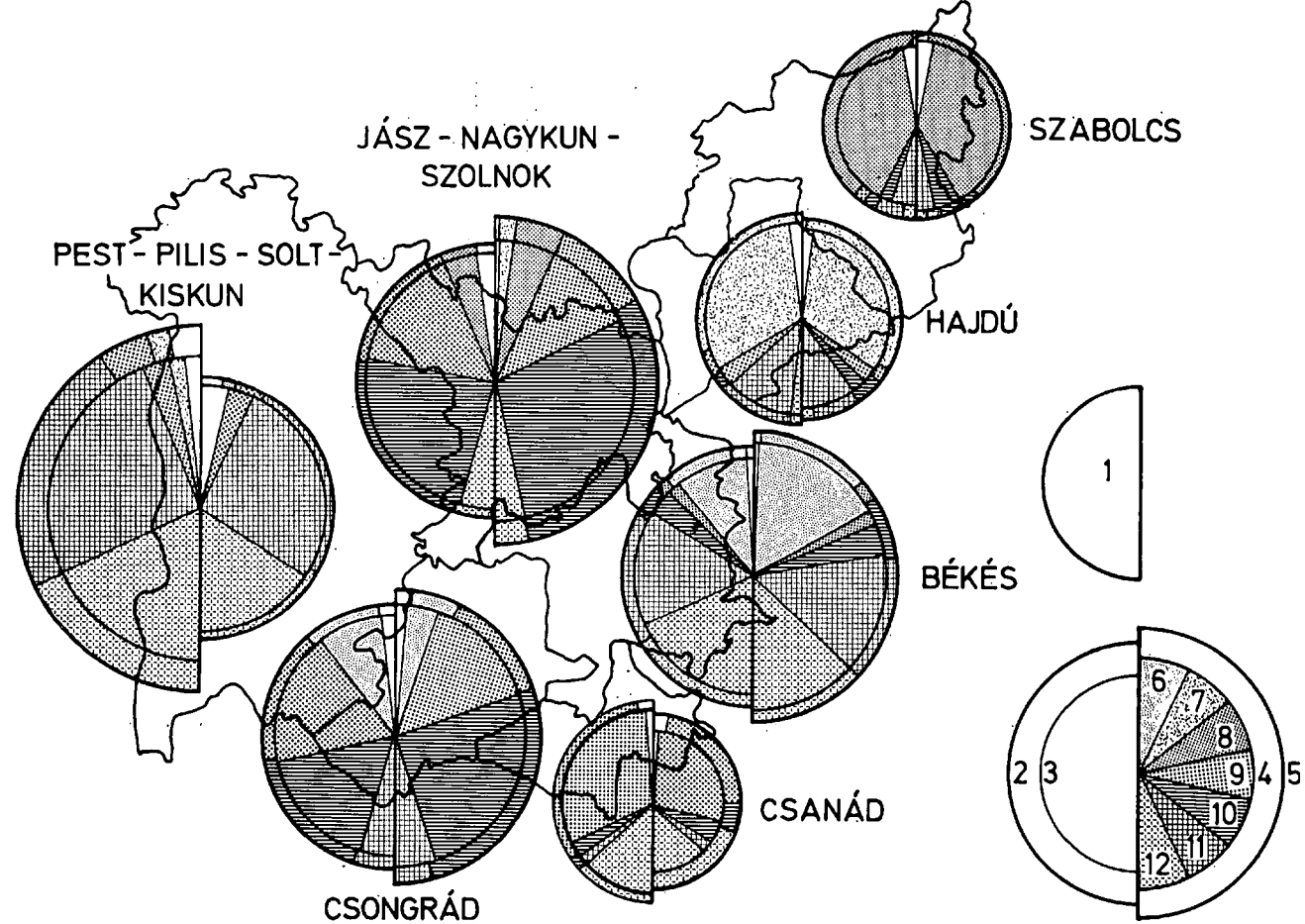


Fig. 4. Population exchange within the counties of the Alföld

1: the number of wandering people (the semi-circle means 10,000 people)

Immigrated population:

2, in 1900 3: in 1910

Emigrated population:

4: in 1900 5: in 1910

Counties:

6: Csanád 7: Szabolcs 8: Hajdú 9: Békés  
 10: Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun 11: Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok



county, and the favourable state of Hajdu county is due entirely to the migration to Debrecen.

— The other pole is represented by Jász—Nagykun—Szolnok, Csongrád and Békés counties. The majority of the emigrating people from the first two counties settled in Pest—Pilis—Solt—Kiskun county.

— Szabolcs county was in a temporary state: its population loss was above 1000 in 1900 whereas it had a minimum gain ten years later.

— There was a considerable difference in the counties as far as the share of the Alföld counties in the balance of the exchange of population was concerned. Nearly half of the loss of Csongrád county (46,3%) and one-third of the loss of Jász—Nagykun—Szolnok counties was the result of an internal migration of population within the Alföld according to the data from 1910. Only one-sixth of the gain of Pest—Pilis—Solt—Kiskun came from this relationship, however. Csongrád county was in a peculiar state; its positive balance in relation to the Alföld could only diminish its considerable loss in relation to the other parts of the country.

### The Population Concentrating Role of Towns

In 1910 there were 22 towns in the region of the Alföld. Data referring to the exchange of population were found for only five of them. According to their migration relationships they can be put on 3 different levels:

— The first level is represented by Debrecen. According to the data of the population census in 1910 it had a 30,000 gain during the course of the population exchange, which was one-third of the population already living there. The attraction of the town is represented by the following data: the proportion of the loss and gain is 100:317. The values are sometimes even more favourable than the corresponding ones for Nagyvárad and Arad.

— The next level is represented by Szeged, Kecskemét and Baja. There is migration gain in this case, too, but the absolute value is under 10,000 even in the case of Szeged. The proportion of the loss and gain is smaller, too: 100:136, 100:109, 100:121.

— The third level is represented by Hódmezővásárhely. In this town there is a migration loss. The rate of the gain and loss is 100:58.

There is an even sharper difference if the migration margin between 1900 and 1910 is taken into consideration only. During this decade the gain of Debrecen was 13,7%, that of Szeged was 3,6%, Kecskemét 2,8%, Baja 2%. The loss of Hódmezővásárhely was 3,6%. The absolute population growth of Debrecen the migration gain was considerably greater than the natural growth. This puts Debrecen in a unique place among the five towns.

Only careful estimations can be made as far as the migration balance is concerned in the case of the 17 towns with a regular council. The gross growth is known and, with an expected realistic natural growth of 10%, the role of these towns in the concentration of population can be estimated.

No great error can possibly be made if we expect a migration gain in the case of towns which had a population gain of over 30% between 1900 and 1910. Kiskunhalas, Nyíregyháza, Szolnok and Hajdúböszörmény belong to this group. Migration loss can be expected in the case of towns with less than 10% population growth. These

are: Hajdúszoboszló, Mezőtúr, Kisújszállás, Makó, Szentés, Túrkeve. The state of the other seven towns cannot be approached by this method.

In the case of the five municipal towns the areas which had a leading role in their population exchange can also be deduced. The attraction of Debrecen is greatest in this field, too: it gained a considerable number of population from Bihar, Szabolcs, Szatmár, Heves and Jász—Nagykun—Szolnok counties as well as its own Hajdú county. Surprisingly, Szeged gained a minimum growth from Csongrád county; people migrated to the largest town of the Alföld most of all from Torontál, Bács-Bodrog and Csanád counties and from Hódmezővásárhely.

The strong attraction of Baja was dominant only in Bács-Bodrog county; in the case of Kecskemét there is no county where the attraction of this town would be dominant.

The different attraction intensity of the five cities is reflected in the different distribution of their population according to the places of birth. (Table 4.)

Table 4. *The distribution of the population in the municipal towns according to birth-places in 1900 and in 1910 (%)*

Towns	Local		From the same county		From the other regions	
	1900	1910	1900	1910	1900	1910
Baja	57,3	54,0	22,7	24,2	20,0	21,8
Hódmezővásárhely	89,6	88,2	2,2	2,7	8,2	9,1
Szeged	73,9	69,3	5,0	6,5	21,1	24,2
Kecskemét	78,7	76,3	11,6	12,8	9,7	10,9
Debrecen	54,5	51,6	16,2	17,9	29,3	30,5

### Summary

According to the mobility and migration relationships the main characteristics of the Alföld can be summarized as follows:

— In the internal mobility of population the mobility of the regions in the Alföld is above the average, or near the average. Their share of emigration is slight.

— Before World War I the Alföld did not belong to the population-losing regions. It had a population gain in the course of the population exchange in relation to Trans-Danubia and the Highlands.

— The towns of the Alföld could not fulfil their role in the concentration of the population. There are only few exceptions to this, first of all Debrecen.

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