
EMPLOYMENT IN THE SMALL RURAL SETTLEMENTS OF SOUTH-TRANS-DANUBIA

BY

KERESZTES LÁSZLÓ LÓRÁNT

AND

VÁMOSI TAMÁS

1. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The determining processes of the settlement network of Hungary are the concentration of the population in settlement ensembles which are at different urbanization levels, and the growing of the number of tiny villages. Less and less people lives in the steadily growing group of tiny villages (settlements with less than 500 heads), which gives one-third of the whole settlement stock, and the demographic composition and social situation of this population show a declining tendency. It is a serious problem in the regions far from the dynamically developing regions of the country. The aim of this short paper is to give an overview of the situation of the Hungarian tiny villages, mainly of the employment conditions in South-Transdanubian small settlements. We mostly use settlement level statistical datas and we analyse the the available literature to display these problems as the most important challenge for the sustainability of these small villages. In connection with this, the importance of the subsistence of villages with low population and the dangers of continuing the present tendencies would be mentioned additionally.

2. EMPLOYMENT SITUATIONS IN SMALL VILLAGES

According to GYÖRGY ENYEDI (1984), *"the settlement network should be regarded as a dynamic system, which passes through an equilibrium line; in reality, the conformation of settlement network is the search for an equilibrium in which the spatial distribution of the population by settlements is optimal from the aspect of the development of productive forces."* (p. 7.). Among the workplaces, working opportunities and the

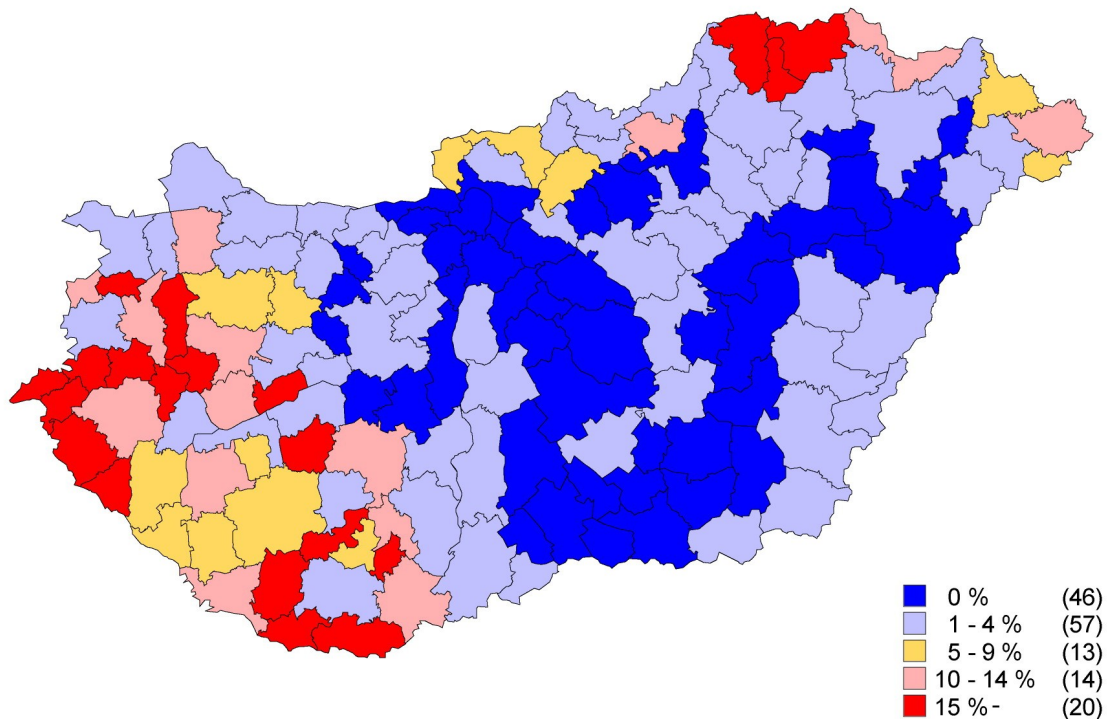
regional concentration of the population there is usually a significant regionally changing deviation. If this regional difference substantially higher than what the regional adaptiveness of the population can conduct efficiently, socio-economic tension would arise. If these tensions (and problems) show remarkable regional concentration, they would assist in the drifting of the affected regions into a disadvantageous situation, and the deepening of their constantly adverse situation.

The settlement structure of Hungarian tiny village regions (*Figure 1.*) is a heritage of centuries. The state of these regions were traditionally disadvantageous, mostly because of the weak agricultural capabilities and the peripheral geographical location. Masses of people living in villages left the agrarian sector because of the effect of the development of the production means, the growing level of industrialization, and the further attributes of the socialist era politics (e.g. collectivization). The integrity of living and working places could hardly be maintained. The settlement network of these regions experienced higher pressure than ever before, which made the changes even more radical. These changes can be seen in the migration and the demographic processes of the settlements. The tension deriving from the difference between the spatial location of the population and the workplaces was eased by the growing level of commutation. After the change of the political system, the more or less formal intention to push the villages with low population into the background ended, but with the conditions of market economy, the decreasing employment possibilities, and with the liquidation of bigger economic units (workplaces) in the rural regions, the pressure on the settlement networks kept increasing (with significant regional differences) from a certain aspect. The appearance of new trends and the differentiation inside the group of tiny villages intensified after the change of the political system (FEKETE, G.É. 2004).

Since the change of the regime, the formulation of the settlement system has been determined mostly by the employment opportunities (BELUSZKY, P. 2003). The settlement system – deriving from its nature – can react only with limited flexibility to the changed circumstances. The growing regional differences between employment and unemployment cause significant social problems today. The areas in crisis are in steady-state condition, particularly the situation of settlements with low population is the most disadvantageous. Small settlements giving home to only a few hundred people, located far from the major employment centers, suffer insurmountable disadvantages as they are not able to attract considerable employers, and thus provide jobs for only a small percent of their residents. It can mostly be explained with the geographical location of their homes, lack of traffic possibilities, the low demand for excess labour force of the major cities located in reachable distance. Corresponding to this, the situational energy deriving from the geographical locations of the settlements, and as it can also be apprehended, the ability to

overcome the distance, which is appraisable from the aspect of the residents hugely determine the spatial mobility of workforce and the regional accommodation ability of the residents interpreted from this view, thus the future of the settlements (regions).

Figure 1. The ratio of the inhabitants of the tiny villages of the total population of the microregions, 2001



Source: MTA RKK

According to the data of the census from 2001, in Hungary, there were 1023 settlements with a population of 500 or less (so one third of the settlements were composed of tiny villages). These settlements gave home to 278 thousand people altogether. Most of the settlements having fewer than 500 people can be found in Baranya (201), Zala (156), Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (135) and Vas (130) counties. The overall population of tiny villages is also the highest in Baranya county (52 thousand residents), followed by Zala (35 thousand), Vas (35 thousand) and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén.

These small settlements are usually characterized by a considerably older age structure, because of this the demographic indexes are worse, the rate of the working-age population is low, the dependent – rate of the elderly population is high, the ageing index is extremely high (KOVÁCS, T. 2004). There are numerous small settlements with young age structure, mostly the ones with significant Roma minority. The Roma population usually has a different age structure with a higher share of children and youth than the majority population.

The economic activities of the population of the tiny villages are really unbeneficial. From more than a quarter of a million total population only 76 thousand people were employed, so only more than one - quarter of the population. (In the case of the settlements having more than 500 residents this ratio was 36%.) With the knowledge of the fact that the educational level of the people of these villages is lower than the average, and the infrastructure on these villages are underdeveloped, It is easy to see that in the case of most of the small settlements there are few possibilities for the increase in local employment. The dependency of people living in tiny villages is indicated by the fact that 71% of employees were daily commuters (and there were only 70 from the 1023 settlements, in which the number of arriving commuters exceeded the number of commuters to other settlements, even if with only one head).

3. EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

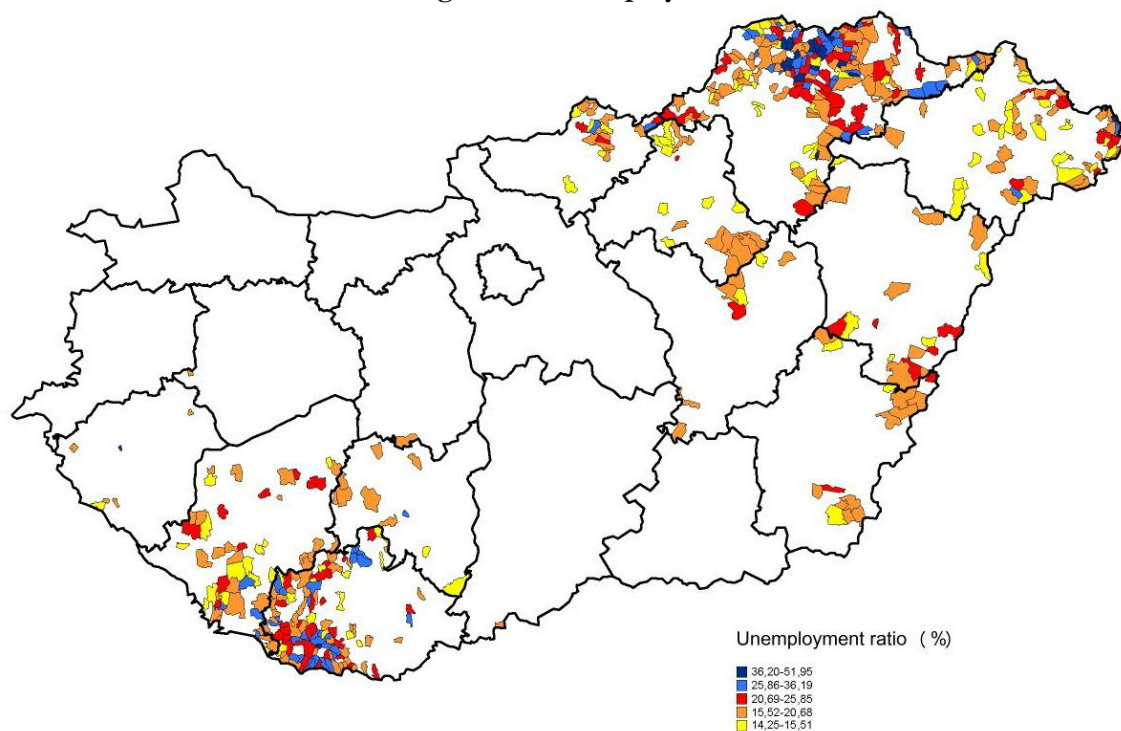
One of the possibilities for the geographical accommodation to the dependent situation of labour market, and for the moderation of the significant regional differences lies in the physical communication and in overcoming the distance. The possibility of employment in other settlements for the population of tiny villages is determined by the economic advancement of the wider surroundings of settlements, and the number of employment opportunities available in a distance easy to reach economically. During the 1990s more analysis assessed that the chances for employment of people living in rural settlements is rather influenced by the geographical location of living places than by the size of the settlements (FÓTI et al., 1991 and DÚSNÉ OBÁDOVICS, Cs. 1997). The effect of the geographical location of living places and the effect of the cost of traveling to the commutation was also the matter of analyses in more cases. The result of a national examination from 1999 (BÓDI, F. and OBÁDOVICS, Cs. 2000) reinforced that the employees living in settlements at least 10 km far from important employment centers suffer disadvantage, because the employers take on the traveling costs less and less. More survey examined the probability of commutation in case of the existence of traveling costs, the effect to the

commutation of the distance between the living place and the possible workplace, and the occurrent compensation by the employers (KÖLLŐ, J. 1997, 2002, KERTESI, G. 2000, BARTUS, T. 2003). According to János Köllő and Gábor Kertesi parallel to the economic boom the unemployment rate could not decrease in the villages in the most disadvantageous areas, because the traveling cost was higher than the difference between the village and city wages.

Consequently, the situation of small settlements is basically determined by the economic conditions of their environment. If we examine the employment conditions of tiny villages in certain counties of the country, we see the confirmation of the above. It is not surprising, deriving from the small size of the settlements, that averagely everywhere there are less than 10 local employment possibilities for 100 residents in settlements in counties (with tiny villages) of the country having less than 500 residents – based on the 2001 census data. Considering this, the economic position of the counties have no particular importance, that is confirmed by the fact that this value is lower in Vas, Zala, and Veszprém counties than in Tolna or Somogy counties having significantly worse position. In case of certain counties we still find considerable differences regarding the employment and demographic situation of tiny villages. In Vas, Zala, Győr-Moson-Sopron and Veszprém countries the number of active employed amounted to more than 30% (37%, 32%, 36%, 31%) of the total population of tiny villages, in contrast with Baranya, Somogy and Tolna counties where these values are 24%, 25% and 26%. The situation is substantially worse in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (17%) and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (18%) counties (regarding the activity ratio: the ratio of people entered the labourmarket comparing to the total population of the country).

The different employment possibilities of small settlements in different parts of the country located in the typical areas with tiny villages is described by the the location (density) of the 500 settlements in the most disadvantageous situation from an employment aspect (*Figure 2*). Settlements in the most disadvantageous situation are concentrated in the North-Hungarian and South-Transdanubian tiny village regions.

Figure 2. The 500 most disadvantageous settlements according to the ratio of the registered unemployed



Source: Balcsók I. MTA-RKK-ATI

4. SMALL VILLAGES IN SOUTH-TRANSDANUBIA

The South-Transdanubian settlement system is typically tiny village structured, more than half of the settlements (51,38%) are tiny villages with less than 500 residents. Townships of this category are mostly in Baranya county (66,7%), but their ratio is high in Somogy county too (43,27%). 9,4% of the population in this region live in tiny villages, significantly exceeding the national average (2,8%). In some of the small regions, more than 20% of the populations live in settlements having less than 500 residents (in small regions of Pécsvárad, Sásd, Sellye, Siklós, and Tab). The division of Sellye is outstanding from these regions where the ratio of those who live in settlement size mentioned, is approximately 50%.

On these small village areas the road-network is not sufficient, and there are high number of dead-end settlements. The ratio is the highest in Baranya county, where almost one-third of the villages can only be reached from one direction.

It shows the complexity of the settlement network, that in Tolna and External-Somogy, in the neighborhood of Villány hills and in the Mohács Plain the tiny villages are mixed with small and big villages. The number of people living in settlements with less than 500 residents is approximates 100 thousand heads (93 386), so the living place of every tenth South-Transdanubian resident is a tiny village. The population of those townships with less than 2000 residents in the region was together 337 778 heads in 2003.

The present town network has been developed from the relatively sparsely occurrent conglomerations (Bonyhád, Dombóvár, Tamási, Nagyatád, Szigetvár, Marcali, Barcs) with more than a few thousand residents fulfilling elementary town functions. Population most of these towns barely reach 10 thousand heads. The population of settlements (Sásd, Simontornya, Bátaszék, Szentlőrinc, Selye, Bóly, Villány, Harkány) who have gained the rank of a town in the past one and a half decade, are scater than of the previous. Against the intensive urbanizational processes underwent during the 1990s some of the areas of the region are still lack of towns.

The tiny village nature is also reflected by the avarage population. In 9 districts (Districts of Pécsvárad, Sásd, Selye, Siklós, Szentlőrinc, Szigetvár, Balatonföldvár, Marcali, and Tab), the population per settlements, even with towns, do not reach 1000 residents. Partly because of the settlement network South-Transdanubia is the least densely populated region. Based on these, it can be said that we can find relatively considerable tiny village areas in the region without settlements offering significant employment possibilities with higher number of population.

The economic output of the region is ranged in the middle in a national comparison. Considering the GDP per capita, the index of Tolna county is the most advantageous, followed by Baranya and Somogy counties. South-Transdanubia's share in the Hungarian GDP is the lowest among the regions: only 7,4%. Among the economic indexes of the counties, there are a sharp areal differencies. It is confirmed by the fact that 18 from the 24 small areas of the region are beneficiaries from a regional developmental aspect (8 in Baranya, 8 in Somogy, and 2 in Tolna).

The outcomes of the South-Transdanubian business activity refer to a less advantageous environment and structure. Analysing the occurance data of companies by size, based on the 2003 data it can be said that the number of companies in the competition in the region is the lowest in South-Transdanubia both together and inside the different categories of company size.

The activity rate of the region (51,3%) stays behind the national avarage, and has the least advantageous index among the Transdanubian regions. In South-Transdanubia, in Tolna county the index is equal to the national avarage, in the other two counties it stays behind that.

There were 57 286 unemployed in the region on 1 January 2005 which means a 14,1% unemployment rate. Significant differences can be observed on county-, especially on small region-level. Tolna has reached the most advantageous change from the counties, which can register the decrease of the number of unemployed people both aggregately and regarding all of its small regions. Conversely, Baranya reached only a lower level of improvement beside extreme differences, while in Somogy, according to the records unemployment rate has increased. The highest unemployment rate in 2004 was in the small regions of the southern periphery (districts of Selye, Barcs and Szigetvár), and in the small regions of Sásd and Tamási. All of the areas are small village areas with relatively many dead-end settlements, bad road-network, and adverse traffic circumstances, thus there are few jobs, and also less possibility for having a job as a commuter, mainly because of the huge distance from the settlements offering employment. Those educational level who live in this area is lower than the region average. Conversely, in the central areas, around the bigger cities, as a result of the more advantageous economic conditions and the settlement of the new companies, the unemployment rate is far under the region average.

5. Employment conditions in the tiny villages of South-Transdanubia

In South-Transdanubia's three counties we found 334 from the country's tiny villages (201 in Baranya, 104 in Somogy, 29 in Tolna). According to the 2001 data, in these settlements the number of the active age population was 59 717, and the number of employed people was 22 234, which indicates a 37,2% employment rate. From the three counties, this value was the lowest in Baranya (35,7%), in Somogy (39,0%) and in Tolna (39,9%) the employment rate of the tiny village population was a bit higher. 68,6% of the active employed living in tiny villages of the three counties were daily commuters, which underlines the importance of the commutation possibility in the formulation of the employment situation in small settlements. The commutation possibility is mainly determined by the distance from the significant employment centers, and the combat of space: traveling abilities. If we try to discover the situational advantages deriving from the geographical location of settlements that can be found near the significant employment centers in the employment data of settlements, the distance would be shown up, which shows the extent of the positive effects of each center (KERESZTES, L.L., 2006). We can analyse with the usage of the available data detailed to settlements, how many possibilities have those who can not find jobs locally for working as commuters, so how can the regional adaptation potentials be regarded by settlements. The population of small settlements having relatively good traffic conditions due to the fact of lying beside the significant cities, and the highways serving the traffic between the important settlements have greater opportunity for the areal accomodation to the opportunities on

the labour market. The significant cities of the region are able to affect their territory positively proportionally to the size of their labour market and the distance. These positive effects beside the traffic corridors can be measured by expansion corresponding to the performance of them. In this respect, South-West and North-Baranya can be regarded as the least advantageous regions. The location of small settlements and the traffic possibilities strongly determines the employment situation of villages, thus their future.

But the question arises, what will happen to those settlements, which stay in the background in terms of traffic openness, and located far from the bigger settlements having competent workforce attraction. About the chance for remanence of small settlement in a disadvantageous nature, lying in peripheral areas, in a bad traffic geographical position, a tense disputation has been proceeded for decades, in which besides the really conventional "pessimistic" researcher opinions (e.g.: KOVÁCS, T., 1980, and 2004) researchers painting a more realistic picture do not manage to give an exact future image either. It is fearful that the situation of these settlements will be farther worse if in the management of companies ensuring public transport the market aspects would more dominate. By these public transport systems organised on a market basis the most important point of view would be always the decrease of losses, even at the cost of the continuous restriction of meeting demands. After such a transformation the passengers of the poorly served small settlements would not be able to promote their interests efficiently. In the present system of the service the conditions of that are formulated neither by taking into consideration the interests of the passengers (MOLNÁR, É., 2006).

6. CONCLUSIONS

As a consequence of the unfavourable employment situation of the tiny villages, possibly the migration of the active and younger population will continue (of course, this process was/is moderated, as in this respect these settlements had enormous losses earlier too). Bigger and bigger portion (even bigger than today's) of the population of the settlements would be inactive groups. Although, this process has its dangers too from several aspects. These dangers can be grouped according to the following:

- According to the present trends, the tiny villages lose their highest educated, most mobile range;
- In the dissident tiny village areas the productivity of the economic organisations carry on decreasing, thus they can restrain their activity too, decreasing the demand for labour;

- By the decrease of the output of the areas getting to be empty, the gross economic product of the country would be poorer;
- In connection with the above, the amount of social costs would also keep raising;
- Due to the low economic activity, the exploitation of the public transport would be permanently decreasing, thus also its offerings, which enhance the dependency on individual automobiles and the crowdedness in the suburban and urban traffic due to the increasing number of cars – eventually, the division of labour between the traffic departments will keep worsening;
- The operating of the settlement public utilities becoming less economical, and the build up of the missing public utilities would farther be harder;
- Because of the social problems, the cultural values of these settlements suffer really serious losses;
- With the concentration of employment into cities, and the decrease of the employment in small regions, the dependency of the peripheral areas keeps increasing, and the already narrow sphere of activities of local governments will decrease.

The determining factor of the competitiveness and progressiveness of the certain regions is the limitation of geographical differences inside the region to a minimum level, and the stop of the expansion of peripheral areas becoming inviable. One of the key elements here is the ensurance of the opportunity of communication between the central and peripheral settlements. The extent of catchment areas (labour market areas too) are not only important from the view of the settlements attracted, but also in the supply of town organisations with the means of production, so with labour force.

During the development of the traffic supply, mainly the public transportation system and the physical elements of the traffic infrastructure, an emphasized attention should be put on the analysis of labour market processes. The questions of the traffic reorganising should not be separated from the analysis of these above questions. On the one hand, the improvement of the areas (through this the formulation of the settlement system) is mostly determined by the accession to working possibilities of the population, on the other hand, the ensurance of the accurate exploitation is also the key question of the public transport maintenance, which strongly depends on the mobility of the daily commuters. It is also crucial to make the state donations available for those organizations or non-profit companies, which are transporting their employees between the settlements.

In the infrastructurally backwarded tiny village settlement system areas the problems can not be cured locally, the solution should be found on a small areal level, and the employment widening projects are feasible to be realized at settlements which can be accessed well from the small settlements in bad situation (TÉSERIS, R., 2003). Here, the emphasis is put on the good accessibility (of which basis is the short distance), and on the fact that in the villages situated near these settlements a great number of free employees are available. The traffic opportunities should be made acceptable not only in terms of the central- periphery, but the availability of micro-centres having an important role (hopefully, more and more important) in the employment of certain micro-regions should be ensured at a much higher level than today.

7. REFERENCES:

- BARAKONYINÉ WINICZAI K. 1984: *Baranya aprófalvas településhálózatának múltja és jelene*. Baranya Megyei Levéltár, Pécs, 125 p.
- BARTUS T. 2003: *Ingázás*. In: Fazekas K. (szerk.): *Munkaerőpiaci Tükör 2003*. Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Közgazdaságtudományi Kutatóközpont, Budapest, pp. 88-101.
- BÓDI F. – OBÁDOVICS Cs. 2000: *Munkanélküliség a vidéki Magyarországon*. Területi Statisztika, 2000/január, pp. 55-68.
- BELUSZKY P. 2003: *Magyarország településföldrajza*. Dialóg Campus Kiadó, Budapest-Pécs, 568 p.
- DÚSNÉ OBÁDOVICS Cs. 1997: *A népsűrűség és a nagyváros-közelség hatása a munkanélküliségre falun*. In: Kovács T. (szerk.): *A fenntartható mezőgazdaságtól a vidékfejlesztésig*. IV. Falukonferencia. MTA Regionális Kutatások Központja, Pécs, pp. 445-451.
- ENYEDI Gy. 1980: *Falvaink sorsa*. Magvető Kiadó, Budapest. 184 p.
- ENYEDI Gy. 1984: *Az urbanizációs ciklus és a magyar településhálózat átalakulása*. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 37 p.
- ERDŐSI F. 1985: *A törpefalvak közlekedési ellátottsága*. In: SÜKÖSD (szerk.): *Törpefalvak közlekedése és ifjúsága*. KISZ Baranya Megyei Bizottsága, Pécs., pp. 227-233.
- FÓTI J., LAKATOS M., MÁSZÁROS Á. 1991: *A munkanélküliség Magyarországon*. Statisztikai Szemle. 1991/8-9. pp. 622-639.

- G. FEKETE É. 2004: *Munkanélküliség és foglalkoztatási viszontok az aprófalvas térségekben. Van esély a megmaradásra?* In: A foglalkoztatási szint bővítésének korlátai és lehetőségei. A tudomány a gyakorlat szolgálatában. MTA, Budapest, 55-85.
- KERESZTES L. L. 2006: *A munkaerőpiaci (területi) alkalmazkodás képessége Baranya megye falvaiban.* Modern Geográfia 2006/1. 13 p.
- KERESZTES L. L. – TÓTSIMON P. 2007: *Változó településrendszer, és a vidéki közforgalmú közlekedés fenntartásának kérdései – Baranya megyében.* Tér és Társadalom 2007/2. pp. 85-93.
- KERTESI G. 2000: *Ingázás a falusi Magyarországon. Egy megoldatlan probléma.* Közgazdasági Szemle 47. pp. 778-798.
- KOVÁCS T. 1980: *Magyarország településbálózata és fejlődésének főbb tendenciái.* Statisztikai Szemle 1980/11.
- KOVÁCS T. 2004: *Aprófalvainkról – illúziók nélkül.* Területi Statisztika 2004 március, pp. 125-136.
- KÖLLŐ J. 1997: *A napi ingázás feltételei és a helyi munkanélküliség Magyarországon: számítások és számpéldák.* Esély 2., pp. 33-61.
- KÖLLŐ J. 2002: *Az ingázási költségek szerepe a regionális munkanélküliségi különbségek fenntartásában – Becslési kísérlet.* Budapesti Munkagazdaságtani Füzetek 2002/2. Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Közgazdaságtudományi Kutatóközpont, Budapest, 28 p.
- MOLNÁR É. 2006: *Hosszú és rögzös út a közforgalmú személyszállítás állam-monopolista kínálati piacától a versenyalapú keresleti piachoz.* Közlekedéstudományi Szemle 2006/3. pp. 104-113.
- TÉSITS R. 2003: *A válságtól a szerkezetátalakításig. Baranyai foglalkoztatás az ezredfordulón I.* Egyetemi Kiadó, Pécs. 134 p.
- VÁMOSI T. 2006: *A középfokú szakképzési rendszer területi problémái, különös tekintettel a Dél-Dunántúli Régióra.* PhD-értekezés. Pécsi Tudományegyetem, Földtudományok Doktori Iskola, Kézirat, 161 p.