

René Matlovič: Geografia obyvateľstva Slovenska so zreteľom na rómsku minoritu (Roma Minority in the Geography of the Slovak Population)

Katedra geografie a regionálneho rozvoja Fakulty humanitných a prírodných vied Prešovskej univerzity, Prešov, 332 s., ISBN 80-8068-348-4

At the beginning of September 2005, René Matlovič, professor emeritus at the Department of Geography and Regional Development at the University of Prešov, published his monograph which analyses and assesses the state of the population in the Slovak Republic in the first years of the third millennium.

This handbook is meant mainly for students of geography, demography, sociology, and other social sciences as well as for other members of the public who are interested in the current state, problems, and historical context of the demographic development of the Slovak population.

Knowledge of the behaviour of the population, its reactions to changes of environment, internal and international socio-economic conditions, its behaviour transformed into specific statistical data, the typical demographic features of the population, and its development stages, is peculiar to every state, nation, and social entity. Therefore, it is natural that in the latest years of the development of Slovak society (during the constitution of its statehood and the transformation of the social and economic system), in a period when the conditions for demographic and demogeographic research have been created, intensive research into the character of the Slovak population has become an eminent interest and an object of social science studies in Slovakia. Matlovič's book belongs among the works that have these aspirations and attributes.

The central part of the work (Chapters 3 and 5) provides detailed assessment of all the current basic static and dynamic characteristics of the Slovak population. It is chiefly based on the Census of Population, Houses, and Apartments in the Slovak Republic from 2001. The author covers not only the current state of the Slovak population as a whole, but also provides deep insight from a broader spatial-temporal view. The analysis of population movements, either natural or due to migration draws on data from the second half of the 19th century until the present time. The period after World War II, especially during the turn of this century (years 1996-2004), is evaluated in more detail. From a spatial aspect, the analysis is based on a comparison of the Slovak population as a whole with other, mainly European populations, on the comparison of regions and primarily (most of the cartographic outputs) on the comparison of counties in the Slovak republic. Some specific evaluations are at the municipality level.

The analysis of structural characteristics of the population also has a spatial-temporal dimension. It is based on the last Census of Population. In contrast, the assessments on the level of municipalities are more often used in spatial differentiation (mainly in the national, linguistic and religious structure of population).

We should not forget to mention that in the first chapters, broader space is devoted to historical-demographic connections – to the development of settlements, spatial differentiation, and the development of the population rate in Slovakia.

Besides the author's analysis and synthesis of the demographic situation, which represent the central part of the work, the publication also contains quoted outcomes of other demographic studies carried out in Slovakia (the spread of the population according to geo-morphological units, population potential and population prognosis). Thus the book takes on the character of an exhaustive, complex set on current knowledge about the Slovak population.

The second dimension, by which the work exceeds the frame of traditional demographic insight, is a view on the demographic situation of the Roma minority. It is an attempt to comprehensively demographically analyse (to the extent that statistical and other published data enable it) the origin, development, current spread, natality, mortality, migration as well as sex, age, education and social, economic and religious structure of the Roma ethnic group in the Slovak Republic.

The content is divided into seven chapters. In the introduction, the author monitors the development and the current state of research, mainly by Slovak researchers – demographers, statisticians, mathematicians, economists, urbanists, sociologists, psychologists, physicians, biologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, ethnologists, linguists, geographers, and demo-geographers – who contributed to demographic knowledge on the Slovak population through their published works. The conclusion outlines the populational future and the alternatives for population policy in Slovakia.

A precise overview of appendixes, located (in an unusual way right behind the contents), enables easy orientation. Besides many tables, figures, graphs and cartographic material, there are also so-called “frames“ which are very specific as well as pithy, and provide the reader with additional information.

Unfortunately, an index of basic terminology was not included. It would make use of the handbook and orientation in its content easier, especially for readers with little demographic knowledge.

The bibliography is very useful. It is an exhaustive overview of interdisciplinary research on the Slovak population. Therefore, it should be a reliable bibliographic tool for beginners as well as for experts from the field of demographic research and practice.

This publication is the most current and complex image of the Slovak population available and I recommend it for every public library.

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