

Socioeconomic and cultural determinants of fertility transition: a comparative micro-level study from Western and Southern Transdanubia (Hungary), 19th and 20th centuries

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The analysis of fertility decline and its socioeconomic and cultural determinants during the demographic transition is a hardly researched topic in Hungary. By applying the processing of aggregated data previous research have examined the question only at country and regional level. Therefore, we can claim that, similar to the international historical demographic literature, little attention has been paid to non-aggregated data and to micro level. Previous family reconstitution studies, the most feasible method for micro-level analysis in Hungary, focused only on the analysis of pre-transitional fertility. The objective of this paper is to retrace, by using longitudinal micro-level data, reconstructed for several communities from Western and Southern Transdanubia (Hungary), the path towards fertility control followed by these populations. The analysis will cover the period before and during the fertility transition, mainly from the second part of the 19th century up to the Second World War, a period in the Hungarian demographic transition up to now never explored at the micro-level. We analyze the fertility differentials between various socioeconomic and religious groups over time using the method of event history analysis. Preliminary results from Western Transdanubia show that fertility decline started from the First World War. Roman Catholics had higher fertility than Lutherans, but these differentials merely reflected their socioeconomic features. Before the fertility transition High status families had higher fertility, but fertility decline started first in this group. In the first phase of fertility decline the socioeconomic differentials widened, than Artisans and Farmers followed the High status group. Unskilled Laborers were last in the process of fertility decline. The fertility decline by socioeconomic status was a process of divergence. During the period analyzed we could not see a process of convergence, the fertility differentials were high also at the end of the study period.