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**Commuting in Szabolcs-Szatmár county during the  
Kádár period.**

**Social issues in political practice**

**Thesis of doctoral (PhD) dissertation**

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In my doctoral dissertation, I examined one of the most emblematic social phenomenon of state socialism on a macro- and micro-historical level, with a parallel analysis, in the form of a social-political discourse analysis. The purpose of my dissertation was to present the specific situation and individual characteristics of the social class of commuter workers in the county based on new aspects. A prominent aspect of the research is the impact of the commuting phenomenon on political decision-making, and how it influenced the main dimensions of social inequality. The phenomenon gained greater political publicity mainly from the 1960s. Mainly in relation to commuting, social problems such as social inequality, territorial inequality, and other social phenomena that strongly influenced the political practice of the era, such as alcoholism, came to the surface. The mitigation of social inequality and territorial disadvantages was mainly expected from the regional development policy that developed from the 1970s.

The practical form of the political goal-setting was mostly the responsibility of companies, where employing commuters. Focusing mainly on the activities of companies operating in the two largest labor-attraction districts (Nyíregy-

háza, Mátészalka), such as the Szabolcs County State Construction Company, the Taurus Rubber Factory (Nyíregyháza) and Hungarian Optical Plant (Mátészalka). The central question of the research was primarily how the "company profile" was built, and were there any aspects that reflected the county's conditions? To what extent did the national companies take into account the needs of workers in the rural units or were their activities primarily "capital city-specific"?

The massification of commuting has been given greater political significance since the 1960s. Significant changes appeared from the end of the decade with the beginning of the economic independence of companies, following the announcement of the new economic mechanism. This affected the county from the end of the sixties, several settlements of the county became a priority target of the industrial development program. The activity of the Szabolcs County State Construction Company was basically defined by the more than two and a half thousand commuters who worked for the company. Although as a local company, reacted to the situation in the county much more "sensitively" than national companies, despite the financial expenditure, they did not achieve lasting results. In reality, the cultural and social

political objectives did not live up to the expectations attached to them. The company transport of workers was also only partially successful, for e. g. even at the end of the seventies, despite national measures, extremely low-quality wooden carriages were used. The successes of the alcohol policy was hindered by corporate economic interests.

In contrast to Szabolcs County State Construction Company the social profile of Hungarian Optical Plant and Taurus Rubbery Factory with few exceptions, was characterized by a "capital city-centric" responsibility. This was mostly typical in the field of culture. Taurus' housing program and social measures were also aimed at county commuters, but were not successful. The political failures against alcoholism may have been due to the labour shortage, although sources did not exactly support it. The work of the company anti-alcoholism committee was not decisive either, I found no evidence that it operated in rural plants outside the capital. Not only the crowded buses and wooden carriages made the daily commute difficult, but the housing program of the companies did not support the needy either. For the failure of the cultural programs, the companies mainly blamed among other things, the 'dual income workers'. My aim with the dissertation was to present the situation of daily

commuters in a county, their social conditions, their vulnerability, and the relationship between power and society. It is clear that there was a great distance between the social reality of everyday life and official discourses on commuting and social issues. The reality and the company's ideas did not overlap either. At the same time, the political failure may have contributed even more to the fact that the social integration of the commuters could never be complete.