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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF BORDER AREAS IN SLOVENIA

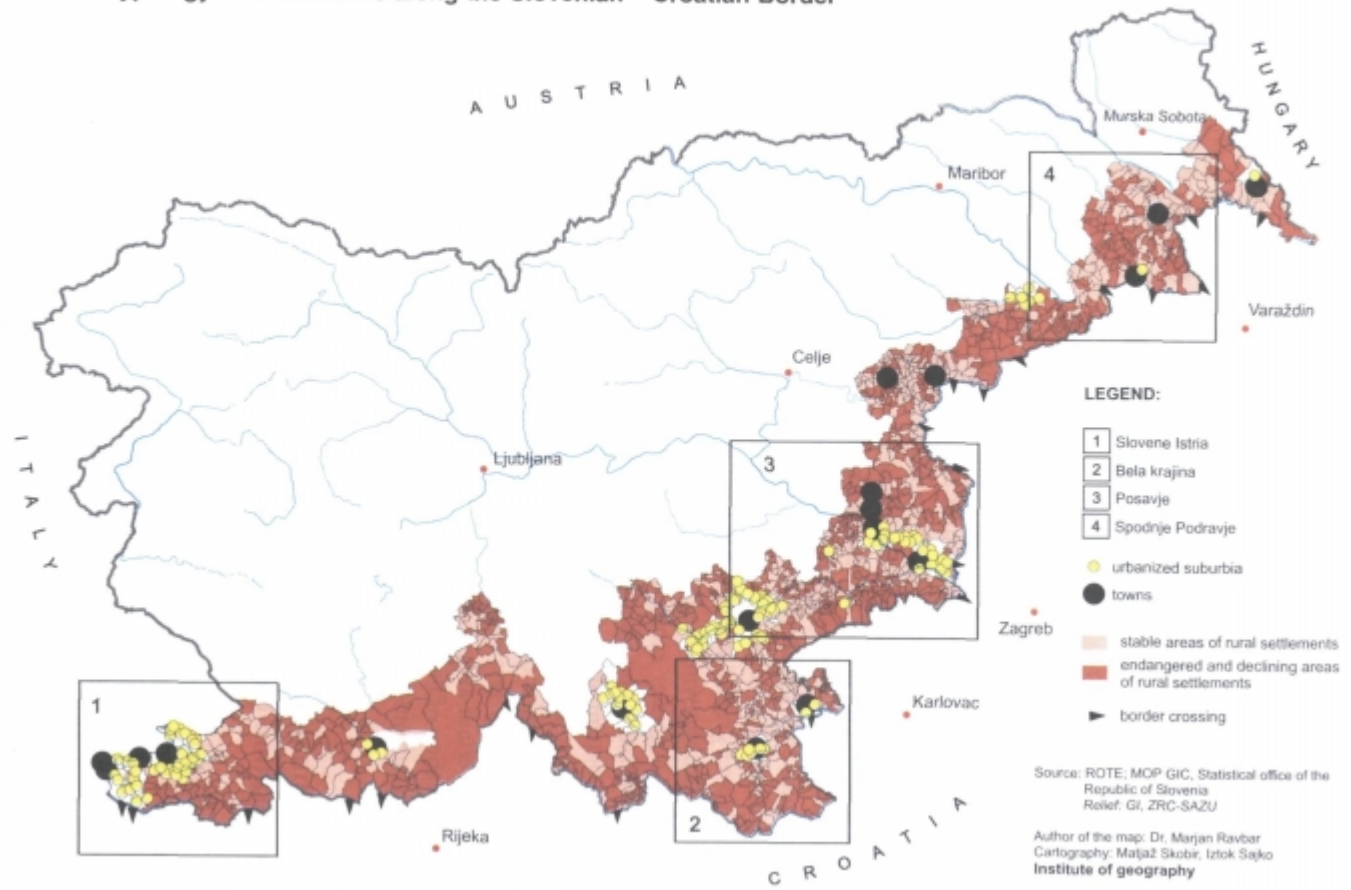
An important role in the regional development of Slovenia in all the periods has also been played by a state border which mainly runs, except for few exceptions, across the rural areas. At the premise that the impacts of state borders are noticeable even 30 km, or more, into the interior of the state, it can be concluded that more than a half of the territory of Slovenia belongs to the so-called "border areas". Therefore, in the time when a border represents a connecting link between two states, and is also an important factor of regional development, the investigation of border areas and transborder co-operation comes more and more to the front.

In the last few decades, border areas have acquired numerous new characteristics; thus, an ever greater attention has been paid to these areas by geography and related sciences dealing with the problems of space organisation. This is due to integration processes, a greater economic and political openness, and more intensive transport flows of persons and goods, including the information flow across the state border. Since a contemporary infrastructural furnishing is necessary for performing the functions of transborder connecting, functional changes consequently occur and a settlement appearance changes, not only directly by the border but also in settlements that are more or less remote. Thus, a more advanced socio-economic development began in certain areas rather early (W. Gallusser, 1981), which has resulted in the transformation of the once economically retarded and peripheral border areas into the developed urbanised areas which are usually connected into a uniform border region.

Determination of border areas and the forms of transborder cooperation (from divisions and differentiations to integrations)

A physical borderline is nowadays still one of the key moments of the national system. Concurrently, it plays an important role in the delineation of political systems (legal order, education, economic system, etc.). Therefore, a border in the socio-geographical sense still carries a rather negative connotation. The negative effects are usually manifested in the economic disparity, in the cultural distance, in a special role in the field of defence, in deficient possibilities of economic, cultural and social contacts, in limiting the flows of people (migrations, for example), in the deve-

Typology of Settlements along the Slovenian – Croatian Border



lopment of services, jobs, etc., in people's behaviour, which eventually results in the isolation and marginalisation.

In the post-war period, borderlands in Europe underwent radical changes. From the aspect of socio-economic development, the borders and their related border areas developed into different types. Nowadays, we can no more talk about a closed border since a country intending to develop and be integrated into European integration processes is forced to include in the development its border areas, too. We can only talk of two types, (A) and (B), of border regions: the (A) type border regions are based on open borders and interconnectedness of these regions in all the segments of everyday life; and the (B) type border regions where bi-directional transport still prevails but has almost no influence on the development of borderlands. Thus, we talk in the first case of the open border type, and in the second case, of the limitedly open border type only. There are several methods of determining the border area extent; these are usually border zones that are 10, or 15, 20, or even 50 km wide. Border areas can be defined on the basis of administrative units, bordering on similar units in the neighbouring country, which often coincide in the sphere of culture, have similar economic structure and tradition.

According to Denis de Rougemont (1978), a border region is the geographically, historically, ecologically, ethnically and economically rounded off and uniform region, limited in its sovereignty only by the respective governments of the states from both sides of the border. Since the economic and social developments demand a consistent spatial development, special regional communities were formed in border areas already in the sixties, the purpose of which was to co-ordinate the economic and regional developments and to build the common infrastructure; besides, in many parts, the co-ordination of a uniform educational system has already begun in the last decades, in order to provide for the better acquaintance with the neighbouring population (v. Malchus, 1981). Regional communities developed first in the Pyrenees, on the borderlands of France and Spain, then on the borderlands of the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, France and Luxembourg, on the borderlands of Scandinavian countries; Slovenia, too, has been part of the Alps-Adriatic regional community already for two decades. Similar regional communities were also formed on certain borderlands of the former Eastern Europe.

Transborder contacts can be formal or non-formal, primary (spontaneous) or secondary (organised). In a systematic transition from the non-formal to the formal co-operation, the specific features of the areas concerned and the integration problems should always be taken into account. The new political philosophy of Europe tends towards the elimination of borders as barriers and towards the equalisation of effects resultant from the borders which have still been closed recently; it is done by means of the regional policy instruments which are implemented, above all, in the typical areas of transborder co-operation.

Typical areas of transborder co-operation

- environmental protection, regional planning;
- transport and communications;
- regional development and employment;
- tourism and recreation;
- education and culture;
- transborder flows of population.

Usual sequence of transborder co-operation

- without any co-operation;
- information exchange;
- advice exchange;
- co-operation
- co-ordination – harmonisation;
- integration

The hitherto investigations (Klemenčič, 1992) established the decisive factors having either positive or negative effects on border regions. As the factors which lead towards the opening of state borders can be considered the following ones:

- equally developed systems of (post)industrial society in the border areas of two neighbouring countries;
- industrialisation system that is co-ordinated with the population density and dynamics;
- consistent assuming of ideas of the modern industrial society;
- common information system and the knowledge of neighbours' language;
- positive attitude towards the neighbours and transborder co-operation.

The factors that influence the closeness of state borders are the following;

- deficient transborder transport connections;
- treating border areas on the national level but without the common, planned connection of border areas;
- low socio-economic development of society;
- population adapting to the position of closed state border;
- deficient transborder connection of information systems (Maier, 1993).

However, the degree of border openness is also affected by the physico-geographical factors. Thus, a border running on the level world has much greater possibilities to become an open border than a border running in the mountainous, sparsely inhabited area, or a border running on a big river. By all means, the level of closeness or openness of borders is also influenced by the differences in socio-political systems of the neighbouring countries.

The border areas in Slovenia and their related spatial problems mainly depend on the following three factors:

- landform configuration of the border separating the border areas of the two neighbouring countries;
- economic development and regional transborder co-operation;
- political connectedness of the two neighbouring states.

Border areas along the Slovenian-Croatian border and their basic sociogeographical characteristics

When we speak of border areas we cannot ignore the time component of border formation, since the present borders were formed in various periods. Slovenian state territory with its strategically important and also the lowest passes on the way from the Alps to South-eastern Europe, and from the Danube basin to the Mediterranean represented an important transitional area through historical periods, in the sense of political geography, transport, economy and culture, where the nation had to fight, all since its settling onwards, for its settling space, its culture, and its own political and economic existence. In this geostrategically important space, the Slovenians succeeded to establish their own economico-political territory. Thus, the state borders of Slovenia were formed as follows: the Slovenian-Austrian and the Slovenian-Hungarian borders after the end of World War I; the Slovenian-Italian border after World War II; and the Slovenian-Croatian border after the year 1991 (Klemenčič, Genorio, 1992).

Owing to its geopolitical position and an international position as to the transit transport, Slovenia was already soon forced to adapt its development in specific way to the needs of developed Europe. Therefore, in all the post-war years, and particularly in the sixties with the opening of borders and the emergence of European integration processes (with certain restrictions of the socialist system), the regional development of Slovenia slowly oriented towards a market economy and free flows of people, goods, information, capital and cultural contacts. By opening its borders towards Austria and Italy, Slovenia began to be a part of European integration processes already in the 60's (Klemenčič, 1987).

With the establishing of the Slovenian-Croatian border after the gained independence of Slovenia, the borderline was elongated, which caused new problems to these areas. These problems are especially acute because they occur along the longest Slovenian border, which is 546 km long; (just for comparison: the border with Italy is 235 km long, with Hungary 102 km, and with Austria, 324 km). While the Slovenian-Italian, Slovenian-Austrian and partly also the Slovenian-Hungarian borders are already furnished with the proper infrastructure providing the unobstructed transport flows of goods and people, such infrastructure is only now being constructed along the Slovenian-Croatian border. Besides, the intensive transborder co-operation with the border areas of Italy, Austria, and in the recent times also of Hungary, is already well established, while the co-operation along the Slovenian-Croatian border is only coming into existence, but only in certain sections. Problems in the border areas are also caused by the poorly passable border which is not surprising, since there are only 35 border crossings on this border; on the much shorter Slovenian-Italian border there are 66 border crossings, and the Slovenian-Austrian border has 49 border crossings. The Slovenian-Croatian border also causes hold-ups in tourist flows, since in the area east of Trieste, tourists travelling to Croatia have to cross two borders within some 30 kilometres: first the Slovenian-Italian border, and next the Slovenian-Croatian border.

Were the border areas along the Slovenian-Croatian border defined with the territorial units as determined with the administrative reform of 1994, then 30 Slovenian municipalities (20 %) border to Croatia, from the Piran municipality in the south-western part, to the Lendava municipality in north-eastern Slovenia. So determined territory covers 507,615 ha, which is a quarter of the territory of Slovenia, and 371,813 inhabitants (21 %) live there. Proceeding from the defined typology of inhabited areas (Ravbar, 1997), there are 18 urban agglomerations in the border areas, among which little towns of less than ten thousand inhabitants prevail, with the exception of the littoral towns and Novo mesto. These communities also show a high level of urbanisation. A moderate level of urbanisation is registered in the conurbations Krško–Brežice and Črnomelj–Metlika, and at Rogaška Slatina. A low level of urbanisation occurs in the following municipalities: Ilirska Bistrica, Lendava, Ljutomer, Ormož, Šmarje pri Jelšah, and Videm. The remaining 15 municipalities are completely non-urbanised. The common level of urbanisation of the border area along the Slovenian-Croatian border amounts to 47 % which is lower by a quarter than the average level of urbanisation in Slovenia. It is evident from Table 1 and the attached map, that three quarters of this border area and just as much of the settlements belong to the rural areas. In them live two fifths of the population of this area, or, said in other words, one third of the entire Slovenian rural population live in the border areas along the Slovenian-Croatian border.

The border areas along the Slovenian-Croatian border can be divided into two types: the (A) type — border focuses, and the (B) type — rural areas. Except for the littoral area, the border focuses, which differ in the level of urbanisation and the polycentrism of urban systems, only occur as rare and isolated focuses among which the conurbation Krško–Brežice solely is outstanding, in the hinterlands of the Zagreb metropolitan region. All the border focuses together represent only 3 % of the border area on which a gross third of the population live.

The rest are the rural areas which lag behind the development from the aspects of economy and population. These rural areas represent three quarters of the border area. In them, about 130,000 inhabitants live in 1307 settlements (22 % of Slovenian settlements). Three groups of settlements are discerned (See the map): the most numerous are the **settlements with the stable demographic development**, balanced migration rate and still satisfactory social and economico-geographical structure, and one fifth of the agrarian population. They include a gross quarter of settlements and cover just as much of the area and have about 60,000 inhabitants in total. The settling density amounts to one half of Slovenian average. These are small rural settlements the average size of which is only 130 inhabitants. A slightly more numerous group of rural settlements consists of 582 **mainly endangered rural settlements**, which have in total 57,500 inhabitants and have lost one quarter of the population in the last three decades (the average annual growth rate is -1.01). The entire area of the mainly endangered settlements comprises almost two fifths of the border area. Especially worrying are the conditions in 255 **mainly declining rural settlements** (i.e. 15 % of

Table 1: Types of settling areas in the border areas along the Slovenian-Croatian border by selected indicators

Indicators	1. Towns		2. Urbanised suburbia		3. Urbanised areas of rural settlements		4. Stable areas of rural settlements		5. Endangered areas of rural settlements		6. Declining areas of rural settlements		Total N
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Number of settlements 1991	18	1	152	9	269	15	470	27	582	33	255	15	1746
Population in 1961	69,255	21	37,698	11	53,781	16	70,264	21	77,879	23	25,193	8	334,070
Population in 1991	121,526	36	52,908	16	62,719	19	61,691	18	57,501	17	15,468	5	371,813
Share of Slovenian population in 1991	13 %		13 %		24 %		32 %		33 %		31 %		21 %
Average year growth rate of pop. 1961/91	1.89		1.14		0.51		-0.43		-1.01		-1.61		0.36
Average year growth rate of pop. 1981/91	0.69		1.21		0.92		-0.22		-0.94		-1.75		0.26
% of agrarian population in 1991	2.4		7.8		12.8		19.9		25.1		33.3		20.5
Share of Slovenian working places in '93	16 %		12 %		25 %		17 %		33 %		31 %		16 %
'82/93 net migrations	-554		5729		4682		328		-2839		-1739		5607
Daily commuters in '91	19 %		75 %		65 %		59 %		53 %		44 %		49 %
Population density (inhab./sq. km)	777.7		130.8		96.7		52.4		31.0		18.6		73.2
Inhab.+jobs/sq. km	1476.6		163.0		119.9		55.8		33.6		19.2		102.2
Percentage of territory in border areas	3 %		8 %		13 %		23 %		37 %		16 %		100 %
Percentage of Slovenian territory	19 %		15 %		21 %		26 %		31 %		28 %		25 %

the settlements) which have lost 38 % of their inhabitants in the last three decades, and in the last decade only, they lost one seventh of their inhabitants. These are small settlements nowadays, the average size of which does not exceed 60 inhabitants. Typical of these mainly declining rural settlements is an explicit and above-average daily commuting because of the lack of jobs. The settling density is only 18 inhab./km², or, one sixth of Slovenian average. It shall be stressed on this point that the rural areas had already been formed before the state border was established. Some of the rural settlements are located in quite favourable areas from the aspects of settling conditions and agricultural economy, which have only become endangered due to their remoteness from the urban focuses. These are the areas where the people are actually cut away from the benefits of industrial society; therefore, most of the younger population currently move away and only the aged agrarian population and worker-peasants remain, who have but low standard of living. Thus, the population structure which can no more provide for its revitalisation is getting ever firmer and therefore, it is harder and harder for it to control economically its settling space. The cultivable lands are subject to abandonment and overgrowing with forests.

In three quarters of border areas along the Slovenian-Croatian border, constant deformations of the sociogeographical structures have already been manifested for a longer time, which were caused by the unbalanced economic development. The most crucial changes resulted in the following: reduced possibilities of adapting to the principles of European agrarian policy, deficient competitiveness, remote position which does not contribute to contemporary developmental impulses, a decline in economic investments, a strong international competition from traditional agrarian areas which are organised in the contemporary manner, emigration of mainly young population which only further impairs the already unfavourable population development, etc.

While in the border areas along the Italian and Austrian borders, positive effects in the regional development owing to the border have been established, there are no direct signs of border region along the newly formed Slovenian-Croatian border, except for the border crossings and the infrastructure which is necessary for performing border formalities. Besides, a series of phenomena impeding the regional development are present here, such as the undistinctively drawn borderline, or, the problems which have emerged due to the break of communications between the inhabitants of border settlements (especially in agrarian areas) (Belec, 1992), the problems of transborder employment of daily commuters, as well as the problems of satisfying the everyday needs in the central settlements which remained on the other side of the border. Due to a small number of border crossings and unsatisfactory infrastructural furnishing, the border represents an obstruction to the flows of goods and personal transport. Numerous problems also occur in the everyday life of local population, particularly with the bilateral land owners who lost a direct access to their cultivable lands when the border was established, and can reach their lands only across several kilometres distant border crossings.

The new border has also restricted an active exchange of labour between the border settlements and caused changes in the everyday supply of the population. The border which is well guarded for the protection against economic immigrants from South-eastern Europe as well as those from Asia, and refugees from a part of the former Yugoslavia, represents an important obstruction in the everyday life of the local population in these border areas. The crisis of these mainly peripheral areas is further deepened by a high percentage of the unemployed, since only the manufacturing industry was developed in these areas in the past, for which the Slovenian population did not have adequate vocational or school education. Therefore, in spite of the increasing percentage of the unemployed among the Slovenian population, numerous working posts in the manufacturing industry are occupied by the workers from Croatia who are adequately qualified and have proper school education (for example, the glass factory at Rogaška Slatina and the textile factory *Beti* at Metlika). On the other hand, Slovenian workers left their jobs in Croatia to a great extent, either free willingly due to lower incomes, or, owing to reduction in the number of working posts.

However, great differences occur in transborder contacts. Thus, on the one hand, there are the border areas with a high degree of interdependence on account of transborder contacts (between Trieste and Gorizia on the Italian side and Koper and Nova Gorica on the Slovenian side of the border), on the other hand, along the Slovenian-Croatian border, the transborder contacts almost does not exist, since to the people of these border areas, the transborder communication only is already made difficult. Besides, the concept of development of this border area, which should meet the needs of economy and the population, is also quite undetermined.

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