



## Journal of Geography, Politics and Society

2017, 7(1), 10–18

DOI 10.4467/24512249JG.17.002.6201

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# SLOVENE BORDER LANDSCAPE TRANSFORMATION

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### Citation

Zupančič J., 2017, Slovene border landscape transformation, *Journal of Geography, Politics and Society*, 7(1), 10–18.

### Abstract

The paper is analyzing the contemporary processes inside border areas. Due to different political destinies through near past, the distinct border sectors developed various types of borderlands: mainly open and structurally asymmetric in the west and north and close-like and symmetric on the east. The border toward Croatia is the youngest and therefore still in turbulent accommodation to the border-situations. The paper takes special attention to recent spatial processes: from close and rich crossborder cooperation to ignorance or abandoning of planning measures and avoidance. Second main attention is taken to the minorities settled inside borderlands and their influence to borderlands.

### Key words

Slovenia, borders, crossborder relations, minorities, political geography.

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## 1. Introduction

Surfacing 20,273 km<sup>2</sup> with 2,066,000 inhabitants (est. 2014) Slovenia counts to smallest European countries. Thanks to geographical location between Alpine Arc, Dinaric mountain ranges and hills, Carpathian basin and edge of Mediterranean, many geographical descriptions named the country as geographical laboratory (Adamič Orožen, 2004), due to variety of different landscapes coming close together on short distances and making a picturesque pay-sages. Sure, that Slovene traditional settlement territory represent a culturally contact area between the Italian, German, Hungarian and Croatian ethnic area. While the classic geographical impressions of the Slovene cultural landscapes give major importance to the contiguity of natural geographical units, the modern way of understanding these features should

merge more to past and recent dynamics of social and economic processes. Within these-ones the political borders and border regimes are playing very important role, while in the frontier areas represent certain a key factor. The contribution will take attention exactly to these "border" factors and border landscapes, which has been influencing particularly during last three decades.

The border areas are a special type of cultural landscape, the creation of which is due to local characteristics and in particular the wider hinterland and international circumstances. They represent the resultant of internal and external forces of closer and wider hinterland. Ethnic minorities assume a special role therein as in the last century having gone through the different stages of relationships, i.e. the

competition, genocidal policies and ignorance of participation (Zupančič, 2008). In this context, the structural characteristics of border areas are an important or even crucial factor in passive fostering these relationships.

Positioned in southern part of Central Europe, Slovenia is a true „border country“: a good half of state territory lies inside of 25 km – border belt. Slovenia is bordering to four neighbour countries: Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. The total border length is 1,334 km; almost exactly half of Slovenia's land border is with Croatia: 670 km, 25 % with Austria, 17% with Italy and 8% with Hungary (National Atlas of Slovenia, 2001). By another recapitulation, the borderness can be measured by share of km of international border-line per 100 km<sup>2</sup> of state surface: Slovenia is the second country in Europe with 5.7 km of border/100 km<sup>2</sup> (Bufon, 2004). The slovene maritime border (towards Italian and Croatian territorial water in Upper shelf sea) is still (in 2016) disputing. The decision should be done by International Arbitrary Court during next years<sup>1</sup>. The second question here is the influence of recent geopolitical features in regional neighbourhood. This might be area of collaboration (collaborative area) or regions and states of competition or, in some cases, to a potential conflict. That's why the relevant attention must be done to these regional factors.

This contribution examines the influence of minority groups in three key-studies: the Slovenian-Italian (Gorizia – Nova Gorica), Austrian-Slovenian (Radgona – Gornja Radgona), Slovenian-Hungarian border and with some special remarks, the longest of them, with Croatia. Based on a comparative analysis of the border area structure, the effects of motherland and minority policies and the activities of minorities, the main processes in the border areas are outlined by means of five indicators monitored, namely political climate, spatial paradigms, socio-economic development, protection of minorities and activities of persons belonging to minorities.

## 2. The recent geopolitical features of Slovenia and neighbourhood

Slovenia lies in a strategic bridgehead and Slovenes are a nation at the crosswinds. For the review of modern geopolitical picture of Slovenia and for the determination of the main premises of its situation we can use the three main parameters: the

macrostructure of Slovene space, elements of traffic transfer and the involvement of the country in international connections. All these can reflect to the border-situation and their various functions directly and indirectly. The first parameter is mostly structural and therefore plays a passive role, the other two being functional; therefore the national policy can evidently put the directions and manage the challenges that come from close and wide. Findings of the geopolitical situation has also assessed the adequacy and effectiveness of the management skills of Slovene politics with natural and acquired spatial and social elements. The starting point for it are demographic features, education, employment skills, the mentality in a very general and large understanding, as well as the organization (administrative, social, safety and in this context especially military security). Problem free ethnic relations are an important cornerstone of stability and social cohesion and therefore always subject to geopolitical assessments of the country. The minority issues are almost ever relevant directly to border features due to historical reasons.

First we have to assess macrostructure of Slovene state territory. In the center of the state lies Ljubljana where around a third of the population, around 700,000 people are concentrated in the urban agglomeration. Ljubljana's central location gives the town an undisputed primacy and the role of macro-regional center. It is directly linked to transport and industrial axis with Gorenjska Kranj (43,000 inhabitants) and Jesenice (20,000 inhabitants). In the direction to the south is Dolenjska with Novo Mesto (28,000 inhabitants). The third largest city is Celje (50,000 inhabitants) in the narrow valley which has a weak hinterland. Maribor, the second largest city (100,000 inhabitants) lies close to the border with Austria and faces regional competition of much stronger Graz; Maribor's hinterland is predominantly peripheral and rural. At the edge of the state there are also Nova Gorica (20,000 inhabitants) and Koper (26,000 inhabitants). The first was formed close to the border because of political defiance. After its industrial development failed it has become a leading gambling city in the region. Seaside city of Koper is close to the Italian and Croatian borders. Despite less favorable conditions, it has become an important northern Adriatic port (Zupančič, Pipan, 2012). The weakest is the eastern part of Slovenia. Murska Sobota (15,000 inhabitants) does not constitute a proper development center. Due to the prevalence of hilly and mountainous physical geography Slovene state territory is divided internally, certain areas have poor access to major centers and the residents of them have poor access to the appropriate

<sup>1</sup> Both diplomatic representatives, slovenian and croatian, agreed in 2012 to abjure the boundary decision (maritime and terrestrial in whole) to International Arbitrary Court.

services. In the light of border issues it is to note that more than half of regional urban centres are quite close to the border and some municipal cities like Nova Gorica, Sežana, Radgona, Metlika, Ormož, Dravograd, Jesenice, Brežice, Rogaška etc. beside directly or very close to international border-lines. That's why the border issues are of a vital importance in national context.

A special part of the state macrostructures represent political boundaries and with them related cross-border relations. Slovene Italian border on the north ridge to the south of Gorizia and Trieste takes place in the middle of the inhabitable space and has at many border crossings highly cohesive character. Most of the Austrian border runs along natural barriers (mountain ridges and rivers) and is by its nature thus separating. However, in recent history it has nevertheless predominantly integrating character and like the Slovene-Italian border has distinguished itself by a high degree of cross-border cooperation. Minorities play an extremely important role. Slovene-Hungarian border runs at an average at the lowest ground, but due to the past policies (the Iron Curtain) was distinctly separating and poor transient border region which was also passive. Border with Croatia is the youngest in its status, but is in individual sectors (more than two thirds) significantly older. As it had in the past have only administrative-political character it was developed as a serpentine line adjusted on legal-property and not primarily on the security situation. Therefore, in many sectors it is open to local traffic, but due to recent regional policy, most of the border area is strongly peripheral and economically passive, and thus sensitive (Zupančič, 2015).

The second strategic element is geopolitical situation of Slovenia which is predisposed as a transitional territory – bridgehead – and this despite of the mountainous character described above. The shortest route between the North Sea or the Baltic coasts in the north and the upper Adriatic, thru the heart of the European continent to the edge of the Mediterranean Sea passes thru Slovene territory. In between there lies industrial and economically strong Central European core (Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and Poland) where central portion of the European population and economic axes are located. Iberian economic arc which reaches areas of northern Italy, southern France in Spanish Catalonia begins in Northern Italy. Slovenia is on the edge of the area, but the Ljubljana hub brings together 9th pan-European TEN corridor with trans-Alpine region. On the way from northern Italy it crosses the Postojna Gate, which lies 600 m above the sea and represents the broadest and lowest natural gateway to

the entire Alpine-Dinaric arc! Tauern-corridor passes thru Ljubljana, while Pyrin road passes thru in Maribor. Pyrn roads. 9th TEN Corridor leads towards the east to Budapest and further into Eastern Europe. Other transport corridor represent the line that follows from the Baltic to Adriatic, which extends from the north of Central Europe to the northern ports. Parts of the Slovene state territory are included into this old transport route from Vienna to Trieste (and now the Port of Koper) and also as a gateway to Rijeka in Croatia. Transalpine roads continue east to the Balkans. Slovenia has a relatively dense and high-quality motorway network, which corresponds to the transit nature of its territory. However, key nodes are to modestly equipped and therefore the economic benefits from transit are not adequate, especially if the environmental pollution is taken into account. The railway network is relatively dense, but very outdated and its- the modest inter-modality is inhibited already in transit traffic, so that it is not able to service and promote economic development. The country has three airports, but only Ljubljana airport has appropriate European macro-regional character. The location of this airport is far from the city and has no direct railway or/and highway connection. In contrary, there are three important regional airports very close to Slovene borders: in Zagreb (Croatia), Graz (Austria) and Ronchi – Trieste (Italy). Port of Koper has developed a modern maritime transport strategy and acquired a wide hinterland, but highway and rail infrastructure does not support it properly.

The third parameter of the geopolitical position Slovenia represent the inclusion of Slovenia in international flows and organizations in the recent period. Central European position of Slovenia is usually proven by its membership to cultural circle in Central European cultural circle, which historically meant political affiliation with the Habsburg Monarchy, industrial regions of Central Europe and vibrant cultural communication with the northern area. An important element is also Catholic and to a lesser extent Protestant provenance as the foundation of the most of Slovene society, although extensively hidden by the newer socialist doctrine and atheism. The socialist era was also a time of attachment to the Yugoslav or the wider Balkan area. Independence also meant return to the concept of Central Europe, accession to the EU (2004 pragmatic upgrade of the previously established economic and cultural ties. Membership in NATO (2004) and later in the Eurozone and the Schengen area of Europe (2007) concluded the main range of new alliances and Slovenia positioned itself in the international arena. This sequence reads like a successful transition story.

Slovenia was also the first country of Eastern Europe to preside EU, thus demonstrating confidence in the international environment. No less important is symbolic construction of the Western Balkans following the formula: former Yugoslavia minus Slovenia plus Albania.

Achieved external success had experienced a break during the international financial crisis from 2008 onwards. Since then not only economic, but also internal political crisis has escalated. It cannot be interpreted simply as a reflection of the instability of Western economies. It is necessary to look for much deeper reasons in the political and economic structure of the country and, ultimately, in the mentality of executives in politics, economy and public administration. However, one should also take into account large, even radical geopolitical changes after 2008, at which none of the key actors (EU, NATO) did not show a successful response, which only deepened the crisis. Crisis of these associations have consequently impact particularly on Slovenia. Furthermore, in 2015 came the completely new political challenge: the immigrant influx. Enormous masses of people from large areas in Near East and Northern African countries and regions (most of them have any documents for exact personal and therefore regional / national identification) were driven through the "Balkan way" to Central Europe. Slovene-Croatian border is there second (first is greek-) "schengen-border". In a short period, the nature of former open or even not-controlled border line has been changed radically. After several months of different attempts how to control and secure the border line and border zone, the Slovene policy followed the Hungarian example: they put the border razor-wired border fences along whole border-line. After a decade of open border and philosophy of crossborder collaboration these lines became the frontiers and securization the main principle, not easy, but anyway largely accepted principle.

### 3. The creation of Slovene national boundaries and border-typology

Recent Slovene political borders have a rich history behind. Almost a half of total border-line have their roots deep in 18th century. They are direct or indirect successors of inner Austrian lands-borders. The "lands" were relatively large administrative units in former Hapsburg Empire, Austrian part. It was after the First and Second World Wars and the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991 when the Slovenian political boundaries were formed. The border with Italy was drawn in 1954 provisionally and have been fully

accepted in 1975 by the Treaty of Ossimo (Klemenčič, 1987). The border with Austria was agreed upon with the St. Germain Peace Treaty in 1920, and a year later the border with Hungary with the Treaty of Trianon (Celar, 2002). Subsequently, there has been no alteration thereof. The border with Croatia was established by proclamation of independence and mutual recognition of the two countries in June 25th, 1991. However, there are still some outstanding border issues on land and at sea between the two countries. A significant milestone as regards the border issue is the Slovenia's and Hungary's accession to the EU (2004) and further into the Schengen area (2007); namely when direct military, police and customs control of the boundary have been abolished.

The border area structure dynamically reflected the general modernisation processes and at the same time was adjusted to the influence of national centres. As minorities had certain influence, the border area was therefore structured in a specific way. The border areas examined belong to three different types of border areas, namely cohesive, passive and isolation border areas.

The Slovenian-Italian border stretches between the foothills, the Karst plateau and the Friuli plain, whereas one part is drawn in a way the natural obstacles taken into account (mountain crest and reef) and the other crosses the densely populated and economically active area. Longitudinally, it goes through densely populated area of the Friuli plain in Italy and the Vipavska valley in Slovenia. Old political boundaries (between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Venetian Republic and its successor, the Kingdom of Italy) were held slightly to the west. Therefore, the area was for centuries characterised by intensive cultural and economic contact. Urban centres are in the middle of the Soča river valley. A regional centre of Nova Gorica was established, directly on the border, demonstrating the defiant nature of these decisions. As regards the structure, the areas are complementary as certain forms of cross-border cooperation are required that results in the dependence thereon. Thus, the area represents a type of cohesive border. In this respect, the Slovenian minority is an essential factor in increasing the cohesiveness as a result of many familial ties and friendships local population has a lot of personal motives for cross-border cooperation. Moreover, the 10th European transport corridor crosses the city and the region. Beside this, the border is crossed by many daily working commuters from Slovenia to Italy, while the opposite flow is much less evident (Zupančič, 2002).

The Slovenian-Austrian border in the section Bad Radkersburg – Gornja Radgona is an example of passive border. The geographical structure of areas on

both side of the border is quite similar. The broad plains along the Mura River represent the central part thereof, and dense, but highly dispersed populated hills dominate in the background. The area has quite agrarian character and there are two smaller centres, i.e. Bad Radkersburg (slov. Radgona) and Gornja Radgona, the latter nestled directly along the border. As the areas are self-sufficient, the cross-border communication was limited for decades. The border was drawn exclusively with respect to water-courses; one part along the Mura river, which was due to its role fortified with embankment in order to maintain the flow, and then on the stream Kučnica, flow of which was adjusted to the agreed border. Similarly, there was a negative attitude to minority by both sides. While the German population of the Apaško polje was mostly banished, the Slovenian minority in Radgona / Radkersburg area remained practically ignored for decades (Zupančič, 1999).

The border between Slovenia and Hungary represents the type of isolative border. The border is drawn across relatively ethnically homogeneous and entirely agrarian area. The northern part follows the watershed and the eastern part, however, goes through some settlements. Decades of separate development accelerated depopulation and peripherization of the area. As, due to the specific policy of separation, the border was extensively fortified (military infrastructure of the Iron Curtain) and controlled, cross-border contacts were practically prevented. Even though the structure of the areas on both side of the border is quite similar (agriculture and industry) and represent the periphery of Slovenia or Hungary, their development was entirely separate. Even after the accession of both countries to the EU and the "Schengen area" the features of separation are preserved; on both sides the passivity is canned with the designation of protected areas.

Almost exactly half of Slovenian border line is with Croatia. This is the type of developing border, due to rapid changes of border regimes and border situations during last 25 years. The border is mainly drawn along the old line of the administrative border<sup>2</sup>, which was formed between the 16th and 18th centuries (Zgodovina, 1979). In spite of somewhat different competences, the conditions had been provided for the formation of a settlement structure, traffic order, property law and other public and

private regulations, forming the cultural region. Life was different, but due to relatively close languages and the same (catholic) cultural provenience, there were many contacts, as well as many mixed marriages. The regions lived in intense contact. Towards the end of the 18th century, the cadastre measurement began to form, which differed in details (technique as well as surveying starting points). In region of Žumberak (recent Gorjanci mountain) the border line was drawn according to the possession of land-owners residence and adopted the line "meandering" a lot, making in the area some enclaves (or exclaves) (Celar, 2002), perhaps because of special right of the settlers there, a real "frontiermen" – s. c. Uskoki<sup>3</sup>. Once the double monarchy was formed according to the Austro – Hungarian agreement (1866), the introduction of the internal economical control between Hungarian and Austrian lands saw the implementation of partial harmonisation and straightening out of the border line: legal heritage of today's "cadastre" border (Zajc, 2006), which later, in the Yugoslav era, went through several redrawings; those are where most of the non harmonised cases of the cadastre route of the border line of the current Slovenian – Croatian border stem from. The border on the Mura river was drawn inside one common cadastral measurement (Hungarian part of Austro-Hungary), so that the contemporary differences were done later during Yugoslav period. In the sector of Istria, the border is entirely new and was formed with agreements after World War II. This part is still a subject of debate and dispute due to a series of unclear aspects within the border line drawing process itself (Kristen, 2006). Beside this, the area of Istria was long under Republic of Venice and has therefore, a venetian juridical tradition. Austrian authorities just adopted them after conquering the area in 18th century (Zgodovina, 1979). Another source of border issues stems from mainly erosion - accumulation processes by Drava, Mura and Sotla, which changed the subject characteristics and access to property. The third source of issues is the layout of the infrastructure, especially traffic related one, since it crosses the border line several times and there is no clear competence regarding maintenance and control. A series of open question relates to energy facilities (hydroelectric power plants, nuclear power plant Krško) directly at the border or close to it. The fourth group of problems includes interventions, which were formed after the establishment of the

<sup>2</sup> The perception, that political borders between yugoslav federal units (republics) have »only« administrative character, is completely wrong. The federal republics have large autonomy and competences and were, first among all, political entities and were structuralized like states (countries). But they were not securized trough army, police and custom.

<sup>3</sup> Uskoki – people mainly serbian ethnic origin, who were refugees from areas under ottoman rule, and settled the frontier of Habsburg empire. They have special competences and rights for compensation of military border service.

countries. There were several shortages because of border. All these circumstances significantly influenced the considerable dynamic of changes of the border cultural landscape.

#### 4. Minorities as a decision factor in borderlands

Minorities are the result of demarcation processes, no matter what were the criteria thereof. The creation of political boundaries was primarily a reflection of the military and political power of national centres that conquered the territory for strategic reasons. The negotiators often relied on criterion of ethnic homogeneity of the future countries, this was however often neglected. Minorities are thus the reality of border areas, minority policy is a reflection of the political wisdom of the political elites as well as the realisation of humanistic principles that is consistently proclaimed by all diplomacy, yet with great difficulty realised. The areas examined are typical heirs of the European nationalisms that considered minorities as a foreign body, a suspicious element that is meaningful to assimilate. The result was indisposed, cautious and often even aggressive attitude towards minorities and their settlement areas.

According to Italian official estimations there is in Italy close to 52,000 Slovenes, while Slovenian authors estimates by linguistical criteria their population from 80,000 to more than 100,000. In Austria, the last census in 2001<sup>4</sup> counted around 13,000 of them in the Carinthia, the estimations are evidently higher: 45,000 in the same province. In Hungary, there are close to 3,000 and in Croatia 17,000 by census in 2002, while still a decade before there were more than 25,000. The Slovenian community in Croatia is much more a dispersed urban diaspora and just in smaller part a real territorial minority. Otherwise, in Slovenia there are around 3,000 of Italians and close to 10,000 Hungarians by estimations, while the official number is smaller. Beside this, there are round 10,000 Roma and relatively strong Serbian (around 60,000), Croatian (43,000) and Bosniak (40,000) diaspora (Zupančič, 2004). Before WW2, the strongest ethnic minority were the Germans; to some estimations around 45,000 (Zupančič, 2004) or even more (Karner, 1998), due to its much larger number at last Census in Hapsburg Monarchy in 1910; there were around 105,000 Germans on recent Slovene national territory, according to the linguistical criteria.

In contrary, the motherland considered a minority from viewpoint of demographic, cultural and

often also political potential and occasionally territorial pretensions. In this light, mostly, patronising and generally ethno-centralistic policy was held. Minorities were the object of instrumentalization of bilateral relations, convenient to occasionally raise an "issue" or to "sacrifice" a minority for the higher interests of bilateral relations.

Due to their competences to cope with the language, culture, customs, traditions and in particular by the existence of social networks, which evolved through controlled political borders, members of minority groups provided in particular services. Minorities and their social and spatial functions were directly and indirectly affected by certain policies related to border and border areas. Support for minorities either by the countries or motherland proved to be a valuable investment in terms of improved international relations. Minorities can play economically and culturally unifying role in various fields and are an important development factor.

#### 5. Recent border landscape transformation: the case studies

Comparison of the critical times (1949, 1978, 1990 and 2004) outlines the time-section of four different periods of modern European economic and political history, which is strongly reflected in the marginal and minority policies. This was a time of nationalist Europe that evolved from almost half a century geopolitical polarisation towards the current integration phase.

A decade after World War II was characterised by the beginning of geopolitical polarisation and the creation of the concept of closed borders. In the Gorica region, as an act of defiance, a parallel regional centre was established, directly on the border with the street system, facing the „old“ Gorizia, as if it was a single location. In the pic of geopolitical competition, a border became a cut-off point; the term "Iron Curtain" developed as a concept of strongly secured cumbersome border. In our case, the concept did not long persist, except on the border with Hungary. After the Cominform resolution of 1949 there was a deterioration of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union and its political satellites. Consequently, the border with Hungary was hermetically closed; it became a real „iron curtain“ with two little frequented border crossings, and even less in particular after the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956. The border with Austria was also strongly controlled since it was legally and politically reconstructed only with the State Treaty for Austria of 1957.

<sup>4</sup> The census in 2011 has no linguistical evidence.

In the seventies, the border regimes experienced major changes. According to the Constitution of 1974 the republics of former Yugoslavia had greater autonomy, which enabled Slovenia to focus primarily on the markets of the European Economic Community (EEC). Border regimes were liberalised, the frequency of transitions increased. Italy and Austria were among the most Slovenia's important partners. As a result, there was a great increase in cross-border traffic of goods. The Treaty of Ossimo in 1975 enabled the concept of open borders. Only in the Gorica region there were 28 crossings of different grades or one to 2.3 km, which is an exceptional density in the world! With the active participation of the Slovenian minority in Italy, cross-border activity rapidly increased, in particular in the fields of education, agriculture and trade as well as providing services to companies. Investment and innovation entered in the border area. In contrast to industry, a tertiary paradigm of economic development evolved. The Gorica region became an elite winemaking, culinary, tourism and gambling region, although Slovenia was then in the culmination of agrarian-industrial paradigm of development. On the contrary, the eastern border in the Prekmurje region vegetated along the closed iron curtain and minorities were isolated from the core-centres.

Ten years later, the border area experienced the following series of changes associated with the dissolution of the bloc, the collapse of Yugoslavia and the creation of new political boundaries. Due to the economic and political crisis and lack of resources, the border areas in Italy and Austria specialised in shopping tourism of exceptional character. Minorities assumed therein a very important role because of language competence, which also contributed to their affirmation. The decisive turning point occurred on the border with Hungary. The concept of the Iron Curtain was interrupted and construction of cross-border relations began to accelerate. Here, this process took place much more slowly. Since there were no habits of border areas developed and even less capacity available for successful cross-border communication, they remained at least at the beginning rather passive.

Now a completely different picture can be observed. After joining the EU and the Schengen regime there were transitional borders in place. The political climate was improved and cross-border cooperation became a political imperative of local and regional elites, minorities were recognised their role of importance not only as the medium but also a catalyst for cross-border communication. In the Gorica region, incentives for cross-border cooperation were not at all needed as there a wealth

of diverse contacts between the minority and the local population had already been in place. Gorica (it. Gorizia) and Nova Gorica developed elements of building common urban policies. As regards the border area with Austria, some forms of employment in Austria and project performance were developed and strengthened. The border area with Hungary remained however largely passive and there was a strong need for incentives and assistance. Starting regional development was based primarily on motherland interventionism. A perception of „protection“ of the border area was preserved; the role of the „iron curtain“ and the area dotted with bunkers was perfidiously dominated by the logic of large-scale protected areas.

Finally, what happened along slovene-croatian border since both countries became independant? Briefly: markation and demonstration first, followed by internal and international pressure to securization, symbolization in-between, then quick attempts to economization and distinct attempts to close border area: abandoning any touch due to avoid possible confrontation in the north and intensive border urbanization as well as parkization, all close together in the southern, coastal space!

The most obvious sign of the establishment of border is its symbolic marking and the establishment of institutionalised control. At the points of road and railroad crossing, wide installations of border infrastructure were set up, border crossings of various ranks in the presence of police, customs and sanitary control. Many local paths and roads were closed, or the transition thereon was allowed exclusively in a limited and conditional scope. The securing of the border line triggered the formation of two types of zones in the border area: intensification zones along the traffic corridors and peripherization zones in the areas with less traffic. In the case of the Slovenian – Croatian border, the investment pressure in the first type of areas increased after the end of the Balkans interethnic conflicts in 1995; then, the traffic increased rapidly. This was followed by the tertiarization of the border area, which replaced the older industrial – agricultural paradigm. On the other hand, the new infrastructure was provided to entirely remode areas in the Gorjanci and Kočevsko regions. Due to military – strategic reasons, several roads were renewed and built<sup>5</sup> in a shorter period of time, with other forms of technical infrastructure being installed, which was meant to aid the local population and, at the same time, be at the disposal to the security forces in the border control function.

<sup>5</sup> Two completely new local roads, built exclusively for supplying small military base on Gorjanci mountain slopes.

The second significant change is of a mainly symbolic character. The border area is important for countries and thus, frequently, if not always, also an area of symbolisation. The border is marked with boards and signs directly on the border line as well as the traffic corridors, which cross the border. Gradually, a symbolic aspect can evolve for the elements of the cultural and historical heritage and natural monuments: all of them speak of "our" country. These elements are generally also attractive and thus subject to visits. Symbolisation then gradually leads to the expansion of services in border areas and in the case of the Slovenian - Croatian border culture, too, it was so.

A special variation of symbolisation is the establishment and maintenance of parks, wider understood as a strategy of protection of the border area, specifically in the phase of the removal of control. The protection of the border area, wherein various "valuable" elements of living and unliving nature are recognised, as well as material cultural heritage, makes sense at first sight, as it neatly complements the visibility of the local environment and contributes to its tourist promotion. However, protection is also a form of new, indirect control over the border area, for which a particular part of other development perspectives are heavily restricted and control is increased. With this, the national care and the tutorship of the state over the local environment is highly increased, with the motive being mainly national and thus conservative: it attempts to maintain the border area such as it is. Thus, next to the Mura and Drava rivers, most of the area is within "Nature 2000" while certain smaller reservations have an even stricter regime. Along the Sotla river, there is the Kozjansko park, Jovsi, and in a certain way also upper Sotla river area, the design of which, however, goes back to the 80s, similarly to Gorjanci, Kolpa river area and Snežnik mountains. Somewhat differently: more than two thirds of the border area is under a certain protection regime. Doubtlessly the most interesting habitat of all are the salt pans of Sečovelje, the maritime part of which continues into the shallow and actually sensitive area of the Northern Adriatic: the Piran bay. But this has, due to its border position and two decades of a border dispute, resulted in an entirely different way: with symbolisation. Both countries, in their rush to prove the ownership of this sea area, attempted to prove the "Slovenianness" or "Croatianness" of Piran bay. While Slovenia declared the protection of this area and also limited it, Croatia exposed another name (Savudrijska vala) (Kladnik et al., 2014), the need to develop mariculture (by far the most intense in the entire area of Western Adriatic), development of tourism (two casinos directly by

the border - and according to Slovenian convictions already in the area of protected nature) and finally also construction work of areas which have previously been entirely vacant, of the cape of Savudrija, with exclusive villas and an apartment settlement (Zupančič, Pipan, 2012).

The third form of influence in the border area is represented by the abandonment of any use. This is especially present in the "mature" phase and later, when the broad range of border infrastructure is not necessary any more. To avoid border disputes in a time, when the question of borders in a subject of international arbitration, the countries abandoned the use of it; for example the border sand quarries on Mura and Drava rivers. But they have also abandoned the maintenance of anti-flood embankments and thus, due to problems, farm use in certain periphery is also abandoned. The exploitation of sand, rubble and lignite deposits by Mura has nearly ceased. To keep the energy buildings in use, many compromises had to be made. The use of railway by Sotla river was nearly abandoned<sup>6</sup>, and mainly the care for it: as it is on the border. With the entry of Croatia into the EU (2013), the need for the use of broad border infrastructure should slowly be reduced, with said infrastructure being abandoned and possibly decaying. It seemed so in 2013. But development in the wider European area with a large immigrant influx to Central Europe turned the collaborative ideas and easing of border controls on its head. The security question became primary common issue. In the last months of 2015, Slovenia, in order to provide the so-called Schengen border control still acceptable, introduced a high wire fence along almost whole slovene-croatian border. Despite considerable initial outcry and public opposition, this new securization infrastructure remained.

## 6. Conclusion

In the changed conditions due to European integration, globalisation, informatisation and accompanying processes, the mobility of the population significantly increases. Regarding establishing and maintaining ties members of minorities, despite small in number, have significantly contributed to an increase in cross-border cooperation in various fields. Due to the changing role and power, the protection of minorities by the motherland is a priori expected to be reduced and replaced with a functional one. A comparative analysis of the four border areas

<sup>6</sup> This railway is in bad technical condition and probably out of use.

indicates the persistence of spatial structures. Despite their true efforts, local authorities are however susceptible to the heritage of the past.

Slovenian borderlands reflects the long and rich history, where the dominant factors influenced from their centres: austrian, venetian, later Italian, hungarian (and strong Russian-soviet influence during socialist period, either) and, of course, the Yugoslavian. The minorities settled there have been important "inner" factor: sometimes understood as "bridge-maker" and quickly thereafter a nonwishable menace. But they survived. The borders were places of contact and confrontation, memories, demonstration of power and violence still some decades ago, became then a good reasons for cooperation and stimulated by new European friendship-spirit, a real crossborder cooperators. The cities grown beside the border, despite it and against it. Now, they are close to some common spatial decisions, but still far away from common management. They remain spaces of double-interests: inner (or local) and central – ones.

2015 and beyond the Slovene – Croatian border facing with completely new challenge: the immigration influx. In less than half a year (2015) the border has been crossed by nearly 800,000 refugees and migrants on their main routes through Turkey and the Balkans. Their goal is to reach primarily the areas of rich countries of Central Europe and Scandinavia. Due to the extreme pressure of migrants, the Slovenian government followed the Hungarian example: to limit the uncontrolled immigrant influx they installed protective razor-sharp wire fencing. The securization of outer EU schengen-border became and remain until recent times the ultimate goal. Security measure has been effective, although it has been criticized and several public protests has been done by some political groups.

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