

## RESEARCH TASKS OF THE BORDER REGIONS OF HUNGARY

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Over the past few centuries borders have not proved to be stable in many countries of the world, even country boundaries determined by physical factors, often mentioned in geopolitics, were modified.

The history of Hungary for all its interesting changes and turn has also determined the size of the country. The Treaty of Trianon after World War I readjusted the boundaries between the Biddle European states; consequently the spatial structure of economy formed during the earlier decades was destroyed and the settlements concerned found themselves in a disadvantageous situation. A number of problems rising from this historical fact are worth examining:

— The historical process had a significant impact on the forming of the spatial-structural relationships and the fortune of the settlements in the border regions. Thus logically, during the research work we have had to look to the past, into different depths according to each region. For instance, historically the Hungarian Őrség region has always played a border zone therefore completely different factors influenced the settlements in this region than those found in the settlements surrounding Szeged, due to the fact that the latter was one of the largest centers in the Hungarian Plain until the end of World War I, while the former region was periphery even at that time. The city of Baja is also in a unique situation, because it had an administrative function earlier, while today it is a paracentre with a significant zone of attraction. It is obviopous therefore that an understanding of the present situation is very difficult without a historical analysis that examines the changing of the spatial structure.

— The new boundary created after World War I resulted in a peculiar situation for the people living there; the Hungarians living in the new neighbouring countries became border national minorities, while the national minorities living within Hungary became a minority living in the immediate vicinity of their mother country. On both sides the assimilation process started or continued in the circle of the national minorities, but at the same time they preserved their national identity to a significant extent. At present the national minorities on both sides play a specific role in the widening relationship with the neighbouring countries. It is advisable to run sociological research work and examine ways of thinking of the national minorities and the possibilities of intensifying the connections with the neighbouring countries. (For example: the exchange of cultural values beside just the frontier traffic and family visits, the widening of the educational possibilities, etc.)

— Knowing the historical processes helps the more precise territorial differentiation of the border zone. After World War 2 the improving economic cooperation with the neighbouring countries, the increasing exchange of goods and personal traffic, furthermore transit traffic through Hungary created a more favourable situation for many of the frontier settlements (eg. Záhony), more than in other settlements, where did not seem to change visibly. The economic radiation of some larger cities like Szeged, also contributes to the territorial differences. After World War 1 and during the decade following the Second World War in particular Szeged was in an unfavourable situation, its development stagnated, the last decade progress has come about due to the fact that our connections with Yugoslavia improved, the position of Szeged improved with respect to transit traffic which increased to a significant extent. Therefore it is reasonable to accentuate Szeged and its surroundings especially its role in the border zone.

Each of the territorial differences require different methods of research work. Accordingly the cooperation with the countries involved, varies by different sections of the border.

To set the exact limits or size of the border region is a problem. It cannot be said generally that the border zone is a 30-35 km wide strip of land because it is narrower at some places and wider at some others. It seems to be more advisable to examine the available data for a much wider zone or for the entire country, and then on the basis of these try to determine the border region more precisely.

It must be added that the essential task of the research work is not to determine the exact extension of the boundary region, in fact it cannot be precise because of the transitional areas, but to study the settlements in this zone, to explore the possibilities of development, and to find ways for better cooperation with the neighbouring countries in the interest of better exploiting the local resources.

### **The tasks of research**

The study of border regions is not a new field; in relation to other geographical research work a number of important statements and conclusions have already been made which are worth collecting from the point of view of our research theme also. The examining of the boundary regions (eg. Szabolcs county, Northern-Hungary or in the Örség region, etc.) have yielded many significant scientific results.

An overall monographical work for the whole country cannot be expected in this theme because the main problems we have to deal with, vary within regions to a great extent.

The different research groups should come to a common agreement on only the most important aspects of what shall be practically elaborated, which can later, in practice, be worked but to different depths. In our opinion the research work should involve the following scope of problems (the research of the Danube section between Hungary and Czechoslovakia obviously diverts from this because the mutual investment induces unique problems, like environmental protection.)

a) We do not wish to study the settlements in monographies. Instead of this we give priority to the detailed examination of the advantages and disadvantages deriving from the location of each settlement; we also have to examine at length the local physical and social potentials, which, by their exploitation, the living conditions of the population can be improved. It means that we have to work out each factor of the spatial structure of economy, and to determine the strength of the relationships so that we can see the contradictions and distortions formed here which became acute at some places and caused regional crisis.

Analysing the spatial structure of economy we have to go back to the period before World War I, because a number of the processes started as a consequence of the readjustment of the borders by the Treaty of Trianon. Consequently the interrelationship system modified to a great extent.

b) The natural resource factors should be evaluated from the point of view of development. We have to take into account the relationship with the natural landscape, the geographical, agrometeorological conditions, the fertility of soil and the utilisation capability of the surface and subsoil waters. The physical geographical potential also involves the rational management of the mineral resources.

In a word not the monographical factors are necessary, but the economic evaluation of them. In this way we provide a stable starting basis for the arrangement of the spatial structure of economy and for the revelation of the contradictions experienced here. (For instance, in some places inside of all the favourable geographical potential the ability of the settlement to hold on to population is very weak, the composition of population according to age is distorted etc., and the settlement did not develop either.

In this case we have to look for the solution somewhere else; the traffic geographical situation, maybe unfavourable for the settlement or subjective factors may cause stagnation.

In the boundary region the methodological, practical and legal questions related to environmental protection arise in a peculiar way. The problem of water-, air-, and soil etc., pollution appear with different emphasis at the various border sections.

These problems can only be examined together with the cooperation of the research workers of the countries involved.

c) In the boundary region agriculture is the most general element in the production sphere of the spatial structure of economy. Here beyond the traditional evaluation there are some special regional problems too. We have to evaluate the technical level of the agricultural activity further that of how the cultivation of land complies with the natural resources and market conditions. We also have to examine the labour force supply, how efficient are the secondary activities and what sort of cooperational possibilities with the neighbouring countries can be found in the sphere of trade. In summary it is advisable to determine the level of agricultural development and the regional differences of it by means of a complex index.

d) In the border region agriculture is increasingly supplemented with industrial activities. In some places, especially in the towns it provides the most important

occupation of the population. In rural areas we have to evaluate the role of industry as a power in holding on to the population besides just its efficiency, structure and nature. Then as with agriculture, the level of industrial development is to be determined. During the research work we have to try to determine the main trend of development and to work out the cooperational possibilities with the neighbouring countries.

e) Examining the infrastructure of the settlements, two fields seem to be worth while to be examined more thoroughly: one of them is that, on what level can the commercial, public utilities, educational-cultural, health etc. supply of the population be solved from the point of view of efficiency and that what kind of influence can be expected on the ability of the settlements to hold on to population. The other field is the geographical situation of the settlements in respect to transportation and the impacts deriving from it on the agricultural and industrial activities. Experience shows that traffic conditions are mostly unfavourable and many disadvantages arise in the transport of agricultural products, also this hinders the more mobile, better use of the labour source. In both fields contradictions have a direct influence upon the population and contribute to their migration to a great extent, while at the same time the situation could be improved at a relatively low cost. That is the efficiency of the productive branches can be increased and this way the ability of the settlements to hold on to the population can also be improved. In the research work of the infrastructural supply system of the settlements it is also necessary to determine the complex level of development and the precise regional differences deriving from it.

In choosing the system of indices it is very important that the level of agricultural, industrial and infrastructural development should be comparable because it is essential for the further analysis of the interrelationship between the three elements of the spatial structure of economy. Experience shows that there are significant contradictions between the above mentioned three factors in all the regions of the country, but it especially refers to the border regions of the country, where, expert the border crossings, mostly adverse supply circumstances and very disadvantageous traffic geographical situation are characteristic.

Consequently the economic activity, the income of the population and the development of the settlements are not satisfactory either.

f) During the examination those characteristic features are to be stressed from among the most important ones of the population, which are of determining nature. All the indices should be grouped so that each process can be followed clearly from the period before World War I until now. The change in population, the trend of the important demographical indices, the process of restratification and the mobility of the inhabitants are such elements of population geography which cannot be easily explained without an adequate social and economic background.

So as I have already mentioned all the elements of the spatial structure of economy have to be described historically too.

In the description of the population the central place is taken by the migration process. It cannot be separated from the changes taken place in the country. The majority of the settlements of the border region were in a rather disadvantageous

situation between the two world wars, but only a small proportion of the population left, for the simple reason that there were no such centres in other regions of the country which were able to accept them.

After World War 2 especially the "energy-axis" and the industry of Budapest developed dynamically as the first wave of socialist industrialization. A significant part of the labour force necessary for this came from the countryside. Consequently the out-migration from the weakly industrialized areas and the border regions increased. The migration intensified by the socialist reorganization of agriculture, which released great masses of the work force. The development of the secondary activities at the co-operatives together with the development of industry in the villages, the regions mentioned could employ more and more workers. At the same time, in the industrially developed areas, the intensive phase of the development started, consequently their demand for new workers decreased. As a result of these two nationwide processes the migration of the population considerably decreased and a number of settlements could stabilize their situation. Unfortunately the situation in the economically disadvantageous, less developed regions with unfavourable natural potentials — a significant part of the border region can be listed here — hardly improved.

An explanation of this is that as a result of the out-migration, in respect to villages, lasting for decades, the composition of the population has become very unfavourable: the proportion of the old is very high, while that of the skilled workers is low (those who trained themselves did not return to their home towns), the reproducing process of the population has been deformed to a great extent, the birth rate has decreased while the death rate is unnecessarily high.

In certain areas the developing of industry alone is not enough to hold on to the population. That is another question whether industry can be developed with the required efficiency everywhere.

Consequently in certain settlements a bigger or smaller concentration of industrial activity and population has inevitably formed. The conditions of their formation require a detailed analysis. The analysis of the effect mechanism of all the factors motivating the migration is also necessary, because it helps to determine the future possibilities of each concrete area.

The population geographical investigation can help the evaluation of the local socioeconomic potentials and its better usage. In the next few decades the significance of the local potentials will be upgraded in the economic development. Besides the natural resources the most important local potential is labour force. Therefore it is necessary to deal with the flow of the work force, its professional composition, the possibilities of its vocational training and the level of qualifications in detail.

Experience shows that during the intensive economic development, mainly the level of qualifications determines the prospects of economic growth. It can be often heard that the main reason of the backwardness of the developing countries is the lack of skilled workers. Unfortunately a similar situation developed in the rural settlements close to the country boundary, because the majority of the skilled workers left. To record the work force it is necessary to make a balance of labour

force for each settlement or for settlement groups, which can serve as a starting point to the precise evaluation of the future prospects.

g) The analysis of the development of the settlement network and settlement systems rely on the examination of the above listed elements of the spatial structure of economy.

The characteristic analysis, classification and system in the geographical monographs are considerably modified here and as I have already mentioned, there is a shifting of stress.

Practically the investigation of the interrelationship between industry, agriculture, population and the infrastructural degree of supply helps the population geographical conclusions. It is completely in accordance with the recent efforts in this scientific branch that settlement policy has to rely in the complete knowledge of the spatial structure of economy. Within the border region it is advisable to examine the role of the rural settlements and the particular situation of the towns. The relationships among settlements, the attraction zones give an important element of the development of settlement groups and this phenomenon obviously is not confined exclusively to the boundary region. The settlements of this region organically are joined to other parts of the country, either as the attraction zone of a centre, or like in the case of Szeged the majority of the settlements closely attracted by and dependent on Szeged do not belong to the area examined.

We have to deal with some special towns separately. For example in the case of Szeged, its being in the border region has been very important from the point of view of its history, development, as well as its relation system and it also has a determining role in the economic and cultural co-operation with Jugoslavia.

### **Methodological questions of the research**

The elaboration of the topic is a complex task and requires the collaboration of the representatives of many other scientific branches besides geography. The social movements, the composition of the national minorities and the significant differences in the living conditions, living standards of the population makes the overall sociological analysis necessary. These cannot be substituted by social geographical studies, but awaited results of the research, which naturally the geographers have to do, are indispensable to the synthesis. History with its own method of research can usefully contribute to the proper conclusions. It is not a new solution from the point of view of geography, because economic geography has always relied on the results of history. A relatively new task is the co-operation with the lawyers, who are ready to collect the international legal references of environmental pollution, small border traffic, the mutual flow or work force etc., concerning the border region and also help to solve the problems arising in this field.

Beside the scientific branches mentioned above, the help of the professionals of water management is worth mentioning. Water management is important not only along the Danube or other rivers like the Ipoly and the Drava, but also significant

along sections of the boundary, where the co-operation of the neighbouring countries is indispensable to solve problems of water management, for example the Körös rivers area, Northern Hungary, the Yugoslavian border between the Danube and the Tisza, which is not very rich in surface water. The spatial structure of economy is torn by the country boundary from many points of view, but does not stop the influences.

The close co-operation with the research workers of the neighbouring countries is indispensably necessary when studying the border region. Practice has forerun this co-operation. A great number of examples can be listed, which are efficient and advantageous for both partners. For example: in Northern Hungary the exchange of agricultural equipments help harvesting; co-operational relationship has developed between Bács-Kiskun country and Vajdaság (Yugoslavia) for processing agricultural products (sugar beet, fruit, grape).

In many places co-operational agreements have been made for sensible water management, for the mutual task of environmental protection and for the exploitation of mineral resources (hydrocarbons, coal). Recently the number of the mutual cultural programmes in the circle of the minorities has been increasing.

Between the Hungarian institutes dealing with this theme and the institutes of the neighbouring countries being in the geographical vicinity, an advantageous scientific collaboration has developed. For example, the Department of Geography at the József Attila University of Szeged cooperates with the Department of Geography at the University of Novi Sad (Yugoslavia); the geographers of the Teachers Training College of Nyíregyháza collaborates with the geographers of the University of Ungvár (USSR); the scientists in Pécs work together with the geographers of Zagreb (Yugoslavia); the Teachers' Training College of Szombathely cooperates with the University of Graz (Austria), etc.

So almost everywhere along the Hungarian boundary, except the eastern border, we have co-operation with the neighbouring countries in this theme.

Of course not each institute in the neighbouring countries is interested in a complex study of the settlements in the border region, consequently it is advisable to group the mutual investigations around such questions, which fit both partners' research work and is linked closely with the elaboration of our theme.

These fields can be the following:

- The social and economic importance of small border traffic,
- co-operation possibilities in industry and agriculture, and in the better use of the work force,
- co-operation in the development of traffic and tourism
- the evaluation of other factors that help the development of settlements,
- the investigation of mutual interests in the exploitation of natural resources and water management (from the point of view of environmental protection).

The well advanced scientific research work requires the organization of a symposium where the scientists of the neighbouring countries involved could exchange their results with their Hungarian colleagues.

Even at the beginning of the research work it is advisable to know where to make use of the scientific results, how to fit them into the regional development plans. The boundary region comprises a considerable part of the territory of Hungary. 14 counties out of 19 are involved to a lesser or greater extent, therefore they are also interested in making use of the scientific results. All counties have a middle and long term settlement and regional development plan and these obviously include the boundary region too. Though these do not include the possibility of co-operation with the countries involved, nor is the evaluation of the potentials and the particular situation of the settlements belonging to the border region satisfactory.

In this way with the elaboration of our theme, the regional and settlement development plans of the counties involved can be extended and completed. Therefore the research work in this theme contributes to both the definition of the settlement policy and the development of the methodological and theoretical questions in connection with geography.