

DOES IT CONNECT OR SEPARATE? CROSS – BORDER LINKS BETWEEN SE SLOVAKIA AND NE HUNGARY.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A socio-geographical research of the Hungarian-Slovakian border region of BAZ county was performed by a team made up of the staff members and students of the department of Geography and Environmental Sciences of the University of Miskolc. 105 villages and towns of this region were involved and questioned.

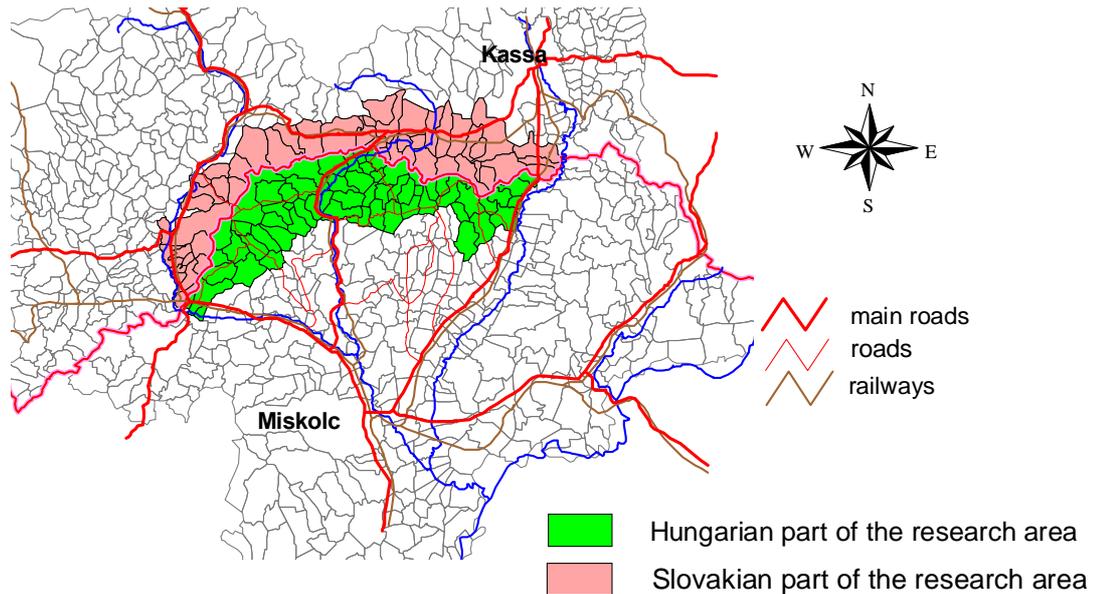
The research area is located along the Hungarian-Slovakian border section between the rivers of Sajó and Hernád. The Hungarian side represents a bigger area, because this area was first selected for an independent rural region study and has been complemented with the adjacent Slovakian border region. The rural status of this region is strongly connected to the border line and the history and formation of it. In the Hungarian side the study area includes the Gömör region - the area north from the Sajó valley -, the northern part of the Gallyaság, and extends onto the eastern side of the Bódva river till Büttös and to the North-Eastern part of the Cserehát region till the Hernád region.

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The stormy history of twentieth century of this region has resulted in a significant change in all aspects of the region's life, and had a strong influence on the social and economical life of the region. The small villages remained in Hungary have left their historical center towns and cities, and the newly declared centers were not able to fully take over all the tasks, that had been well managed by the historically developed center towns before the border changes of the Trianon peace treaty. The villages on the Slovakian side of the border had different difficulties: how to fit themselves to the life of a new country while keeping their national identity, how to keep their connection with the Hungary and with those villages, with whom they had shared their life for a long time before and from which they are now separated by this border line.

Figure 1.
The research area



2. BORDER CHANGES AND BORDER CONNECTIONS

After the World War II the economic-social-political situation of the area changed significantly. Political borders created in this way did not follow either ethnic or regional-structural principles. They were exclusive results of great power bargaining so it may be taken for granted that the region initiatives were left out of consideration, as well. [1] In the area the border changed three times in this century: in 1920 after the Trianon peace treaty, in 1938 when Upper Northern Hungary was reannexed and then in 1947 on the Paris peace conference when the former state of Trianon was restored. In Eastern Central Europe the economic-social way of development has taken a different direction than in Western Europe. Thus the relation between each state can be described by completely different parameters. Centralism has predominated the political-economic relations of the countries of COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance): the co-operating countries organized their economic relations through their centers. From an international economic relations point of view it was of no importance where the companies taking part in the business were located within Hungary. [2] At the same time the direct contacts between each country have become rigorous, border regions have been separated and isolated completely by the borders. This phenomenon has affected the border areas seriously, particularly the ones whose centers remained on the other side of the 'separating border'.

A difference can be seen between the two parts of the study area, the Hungarian and the Slovakian regions: a rural area has remained in Hungary, which has got into

a difficult position in traffic geographical respect, as well. The newly declared centers are far away from the rural areas and are not within easy reach. It is not to be questioned that the low level of traffic is one of the main sources of rural backwardness. [3] And the farther is a settlement from a town the more so as gets into a peripheral position [4] Slovakian villages near the frontier are in much more favorable situation both from the point of view of traffic geography and from the degree of supply of towns in the area. At the same time, just because of the Hungarians living here, it is very important for them to form more favorable social and cultural relations. The most appropriate way of handling the problems is if the two areas try to form a relation that is really capable of active economic-social-cultural co-operation. These quests and establishments of relations can start from the lower grade of hierarchy. These relationships can be initiated by the settlements of the region and are mainly of cultural nature. Typical examples can be found: in the case of Aggtelek, Jósvafő, Kecő, but there are cultural relations between other villages, as well.) Supporting regional centers and the forming of co-operation in the field of economic-social life are of great importance by all means. (In terms of Miskolc, Kassa, Rozsnyó, Rimaszombat.)

It is advisable to consider the available experiences in connection with the different co-operations. The Carpathians Euroregion itself covers a part of the research area. This does not exclude the forming of a more local relationship besides or concerned this. The Hungarian representatives of the Carpathians Euroregion have still complained of the centralized state power, the bureaucracy and at the same time they have raised a point of the greatest nicety, which has been arisen from the existence of the Hungarian minority. In these countries, and in certain political responsible quarters of them, the view prevails that the Carpathians Euroregion is perhaps not more than the vehicle of the Hungarian expansionist policy whose aim is to support the Hungarian minorities' efforts for autonomy and then the change of the borders. Naturally, this charge is refuted by the Hungarian representatives of the Carpathians Euroregion. [5] This proves after all that though the positive existence of microrelations is essential, still macrorelations play the decisive role, namely how high politics happen to yield, who are the powers to be and how stable is this power.

As far as the way of assigning the concrete task is concerned László Faragó calls the attention to the following: The general aim of every regional and local community is rising their own living standards. The method of it 1. the fuller and fuller exploitation of the inner resources in favor of the 'local' community and 2. the greater and greater obtainment of the external resources. [6] Thus the available resources of the region have to be measured and the potentials have to be denominated.

Besides analyzing the social-economic situation it is important to survey and explore the environmental conditions of the area, as well. These can together form the bases of the long-range projects of co-operation and development.

3. METHODS

The aim of this study was to examine the relations of the people living in the settlements of the region and to present the results of an ethnic preference research. We used questionnaires and surveyed 765 mostly Hungarian households altogether in the 105 settlements (the rate of other nationalities was insignificant). The number of questionnaires changed in the function of the settlement-size. We did not apply probability sampling because of the inaccessibility to the available database in Slovakia.

4. THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

The study area had formed a functional unit before divided by the border, which can be proved simply by the existence of the family connections. 760 out of the 765 respondents answered the question whether they have relatives living on the other side of the frontier. 426 out of this, so a little more than the 55 percent of the whole respondents, said yes, 334 people, that is nearly the 44 percent of them, said no. Consequently, the social interweaving can be felt well. We also asked if they have relatives on the other side of the border, whether they maintain relations with them, and if yes, how often they meet. 27 out of the 426 who said yes, that is a little more than the 6 percent of them, do not maintain relations with their relatives at all. Most people, 49 percent of them, rarely meet their relatives (less often than monthly), 26 percent of them only on major holidays associate them. 10 percent of the respondents meet their relatives monthly, 2,5 percent of them meet them biweekly and only 0,5 percent of them, namely 2 out of 426 families, see their relatives living beyond the frontier weekly or more often (Table 1-2.).

Table 1.
Relatives beyond the frontier in terms of Hungary and Slovakia in the study area

	In percentage of the respondents	Relatives beyond the frontier index*		
		Hungary	Slovakia	Difference
Do not have relatives	43,7	70	30	40
Have relatives	55,7	35	65	-30
No answer	0,6	78	22	56

*For the calculation of the index the input data were weighted in the ratio of the surveyed households in the two countries.

It can be seen from the charts - if we compare the surveys of Hungarian settlements with the Slovakian ones -, that more families of Slovakian villages have relatives on the other side of the border. However from the point of view of how close the relationship is the state of things is more balanced. At both extreme values of the scale of the level of relations maintained by families living in Slovakia dominate, so from among them are many of those who meet their relatives more less or often.

Table 2.
Level of relations maintained with the relatives in terms of Hungary and Slovakia in the study area

How often they meet	In percentage of the repliers	Level of relations maintained index*		
		Hungary	Slovakia	Difference
Do not maintain relations	6	48	52	-4
Every week or more often	0,5	47	53	-6
Every two weeks	2,5	25	75	-50
Every month	10	23	77	-54
Less often	49	44	56	-12
Only on major holidays	26	23	77	-54
No answer	6	26	74	-48

* For the calculation of the index the input data were weighted in the ratio of the surveyed households in the two countries.

Traversability of the border can be conceptualized by several ways. Approaching empirically we attempt to demonstrate it with two questions. The first question was how often they go over to the neighboring country and the other one was the purpose of this travel (Table 3-4.)

Table 3.
Measuring the traversability of the border in terms of Hungary and Slovakia in the study area

How often they go over to the neighboring country	In percentage of the repliers	Border-crossing index*		
		Hungary	Slovakia	Difference
Never	31	78	22	56
Every day	0,3	47	53	-6
Every week	5	37	63	-26
Every month	14	29	71	-42
Every three months	12	25	75	-50
Every half year	10	32	68	-36
Every year	11	34	66	-32
Less often	16	63	37	26
No answer	0,7	78	22	56

* For the calculation of the index the input data were weighted in the ratio of the surveyed households in the two countries.

Nearly one third of the respondents said that they do not go over to the neighboring country. This is a relatively high value in itself. 16 percent of them very rarely cross the border. Thus nearly half of the respondent households never or hardly ever travel to the neighboring countries. A little more than one fifth of them cross the border once or twice a year, one fourth of them cross it four times a year

or monthly and only a little more than 5 percent is the rate of those who go over to the neighboring country more often than this.

Among the ones who travel the least often the majority cross the border with the intention of visiting relatives or going on an excursion. (37 percent named the relative-visiting and 28 percent the excursion.)

Comparing the intensity of border-crossing of the inhabitants of Hungarian and Slovakian settlements, the difference can be clearly seen that people much rather come to Hungary from the Slovakian villages than vice versa. As it has been mentioned already the rate of the ones whose nationalities are not Hungarian is very low since the villages of the research area are predominantly inhabited by Hungarians. So it can be seen that the Hungarians living in Slovakia have closer connections with the home-country. Its direction is shown in the table below (Table 4.)

Table 4.
Purpose of travelling to the neighboring countries in terms of Hungary and Slovakia in the study area

The aim of going over to the neighboring countries	In percentage of the repliers	Aim of border-crossing index*		
		Hungary	Slovakia	Difference
Never go	32	78	22	56
Buying foodstuffs	20	27	73	-46
Buying articles of clothing	30	12	88	-76
Buying industrial articles	14	19	81	-62
Refueling	6	97	3	94
Employing different services	9	23	77	-54
Visiting relatives	31	32	68	-36
Going on an excursion	16	36	64	-28
Working	0,1	100	0	100
Entertainment, visiting friends, theatre	1	64	36	28
Sport (competitions, visiting matches)	0,4	0	100	-100
Studying	0,3	0	100	-100
No answer	1	87	13	74

* For the calculation of the index the input data were weighted in the ratio of the surveyed households in the two countries.

Slovakian families in the study area go to buy food, articles of clothing, industrial articles more than the inhabitants of the Hungarian villages. They also employ different services more frequently than Hungarian families in Slovakia and they more often take a trip to Hungary, as well. Their border-crossing is exclusive in connection with sports and studying as opposed to the ones living in Hungarian settlements. Among the aims mentioned with reference to Hungarian areas only refueling, working, entertainment and visiting friends and theatre are the most typical in the circle of Hungarian families. The difference between the prices of the

different products of the two countries is also reflected as well as at which article it is the most considerable (the price of petrol).

Finally we demonstrate a research of ethnic sympathy and self-evaluation. Such preference research was done by György Éger in 1996. We have adopted the method developed by him (a modified version of the Bogardus-scale), so the results we got are comparable. [7] There are 19 nations and nationalities in our survey (Éger used 21), which had to be ranked on a 1-5 graded scale according as how antipathetic or sympathetic they are. (1= the least liked, 5= the most liked) As the respondents are Hungarian a distinction can be made only between the Hungarians of Hungary and Slovakia. The scene of the survey also differs from Éger's research area in which 6 countries were concerned. We give comparison only with the Slovakian and the adjacent Hungarian border regions but in our research more examples were used in respect of the areas concerned. As for the date, the difference is 3 years on the basis of which we separate the results. (Table 5.)

Table 5.
Ethnic sympathy index in the study area and in Éger's research of 1996

Ethnic group	Ethnic sympathy index					
	Hungary	Slovakia	Difference	Total sample, 1999	Total sample, 1996	Difference
Hungarian	4,40	4,78	-0,38	4,59	4,77	-0,18
Slovakian	3,31	3,83	-0,52	3,57	3,63	-0,06
Ukrainian	2,54	2,78	-0,24	2,64	3,72	-1,04
Ruthenian	2,68	2,79	-0,11	2,73	3,50	-0,77
Romanian	2,54	2,74	-0,20	2,62	2,87	-0,25
Serbian	2,29	2,38	-0,09	2,32	2,69	-0,37
Croatian	2,78	3,21	-0,43	2,95	3,13	-0,18
Slovenian	2,98	3,36	-0,38	3,13	3,42	-0,29
Austrian	3,84	3,78	0,06	3,82	3,91	-0,09
Polish	3,45	3,79	-0,34	3,61	3,60	0,01
Czech	3,30	4,45	-1,15	3,93	3,68	0,25
German	3,76	4,00	-0,24	3,88	3,84	0,04
Gypsy	2,11	2,12	-0,01	2,12	2,35	-0,23
Russian	2,63	2,60	-0,03	2,62	3,33	-0,71
American	3,78	3,93	-0,15	3,84	3,85	-0,01
Japanese	3,77	3,84	-0,08	3,79	3,90	-0,11
Jewish	3,11	3,43	-0,32	3,25	3,46	-0,21
Arabian	2,50	2,66	-0,16	2,57	3,01	-0,44
French	3,77	3,84	-0,07	3,79	3,82	-0,03

It can be seen that in the research carried out 3 years ago the judgement of each ethnic group is a little more positive among the Hungarian respondents than in that of the recent survey. The judgement formed on the Ruthenian and Russian people has deteriorated to the highest degree and the sympathy towards the Czech people has appeared most. The sympathy towards the Czech people in the research area is

surpassingly high among the Hungarians of Slovakia. This sympathy-index was even higher than the one of the self-evaluation of the Hungarians of Hungary.

If we compare the evaluation of Slovakian and Hungarian families in the research area the following is important to be stressed: the Slovaks' self-evaluation is better than the Hungarians'. Judging of Slovaks among the Hungarians of Hungary is a little worse, though it is not surprising, and it does not mean that people living in Slovakia regard them (Slovaks) nicer. According to our personal experiences in the survey the majority of the Hungarians living there overrate this ethnic group since the survey was followed by intense fear. It actually happened during the survey, that, being afraid of some kind of threat, they simply took back the questionnaires and tore them. Others gave right values but at the same time they told stories in which they emphasized their antipathy towards the Slovakian people. Some people said they are on good terms with the Slovaks of East Slovakia but they do not sympathize with the Slovaks of North, North-East Slovakia. (Gy. Éger also draws the attention to this sympathy-difference.) The prominent and unambiguous difference is the judging of Czech people. More than a whole value. Among the Hungarians of Slovakia (and every other respondent ethnic group living in Slovakia) Czech people are pronouncedly nice people. Among the Hungarians of Slovakia it stands second on the preference scale with an outstanding value, while in the survey of Hungary they were placed only seven preceding the Slovakian nation by only one-hundreds. It also indicates, we have similarly experienced, that people in Hungary identify Czech people with Slovaks. In both areas, considering the whole research, the gypsy ethnic group is the least likeable; it always has very unfavorable values everywhere, which refers to tenseness between the two ethnic groups.

5. SUMMARY

The social interweaving of the population of the two sides of the studied area is easily recognizable through the results of this study, that was significantly proved by the Relatives beyond the frontier index. The two regions, that had formed one functional unit before the Trianon peace treaty, were divided by a newly drawn border in 1920. This border line represented a difficult traversability and thus had frozen all kind of connections between the two countries. The high number of still existing family relations refers back to the original unity of the region. The fact that these relations are not functioning well any more proves that the separation of this two areas has already started. The traversability of the border are of generally low intensity, and the Hungarians living in Slovakia cross the border more often than the Hungarians of the Hungarian side.

The ethnic-preferential study showed that the self-evaluation of the Hungarians is significantly high, however, this index decreased a little since the study carried out three years ago. The lowest sympathy was found for the gypsy ethnic. A characteristic feature was the relatively low sympathy in case of those ethnic groups which are geographically close to Hungary, except Austrian, Polish and Czech. The Hungarian population shows the highest sympathy with Czech, particularly the ones

on the Slovakian side. The Germans, Americans, Japanese and French have got a relatively high sympathy index as well.

Our country is the (geographical) key state of this narrow area of the continent.
[8] The best has to be made of its condition, the ways have to be found which can improve relations of these people so as to reach a more dynamic and effective interweaving with the neighbouring states.

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