Questionnaire and statistics based socio-economic study of Kékfrankos Reference Area
(Judit Molnar, University of Miskolc)

Method

This study based on statistics and questionnaire data. They were used census and counted statistical data as well. The questionnaire survey was managed in 35 settlements, and they were asked 1563 people.

This is the flowchart of the reference area study (Figure 1).

They were applied some indexes in this study.

In the research of municipal attraction centers based on the use of retail and services they were used two indexes: attraction and attracted ones. In these cases on the one part we asked where people usually go buy 1. foodstuffs, 2. clothes, and 3. manufactured goods. Then, where do they usually go 4. to shop at the market, 5. to amuse themselves, 6. for the theatre, 7. for the cinema, 8. for the hairdresser, 9. for the tailor, 10. for the shoemaker, 11. for the repairman, 12. for petrol, and 13. for the car garage? They were able to name a maximum of two places used for each activity. A town or village got 1 point each time it was mentioned for any activity (i.e. if one person named the same town for every activity it would receive 13 points). The number of mentions received by each (possible) centre of attraction was summed. If the respondent named their home settlement it was not counted: only places travelled to were. Each centre’s score was divided by the maximum possible score (13*total number of respondents) and multiplied by 1000 to give a per-thousand score. We call this the ‘attraction index’.

On the other part we also gave a score to each area from which people were attracted to these centres based on how attracted people from these settlements were to particular centres. The number of mentions that one particular centre received from each settlement was divided by the maximum possible score (number of people asked in the settlement*13) and multiplied by 100 to give a per cent score. We call this the ‘attracted’ (or ‘attracted-ness’) index.

In the research of ethnic sympathy or antipathy nineteen nationalities or ethnic groups were mentioned in the survey, and the respondents ranked the nationalities on a five scale system based on their feelings of sympathy or antipathy towards them (1 = the least liked, 5 = the most liked).
Demography

Hungarian people, who live in Hungary in this borderland, have the more relatives on the other side of the border (32%) than Austrian people have ones in Hungary (16%). There are very few Hungarians on the Austrian side and also just a few Austrians on the Hungarian side, so they have few relatives across the border. But the Hungarians on the Hungarian side would like to keep the contact with their families who live west, so they keep count of distant cousins on the Austrian side. Connections were found with relatives from the other side of the border and social interweaving across borders is felt, but it is not so intensive (If we make the index of relatives on the other side of the border and intensity of meetings with them, and the maximum value is 100 points, this index will be 3.7 points in Hungarian side and 2.5 points in Austrian side.)

The population of Kékfrankos borderland has increased on both sides of the border, but it was in drastic decline on Hungarian side after World War II. Probably the war casualties played an important role in this. Also, a lot of German speakers lived here previously, who were forced to leave this area after the war. After this time the number of the people started to quickly increase. On the Austrian side the population increase was continuous, but very slow. Recently population of both sides is rather stagnant (Figure 2).

If we study the different factors involved in population dynamics over the last 10-20 years in the Kékfrankos borderland, we can see the increase was caused by immigration and not by natural change (Figure 3-4). This area is one of the gates to West-Europe with Sopron at its centre. This town is important for tourism, education, and trade, and it has a significant role as an attraction in the whole surrounding area and across the border as well. There are good connections between the two countries, so we find close economic relationships both legal and illegal. The cheap but skilled labour force goes to Austria from Hungary, and people from Austria go to Hungary for many services. Visitors were warmly made welcome on both sides of the Kékfrankos borderland, there is also good cooperation in education, with teachers working in Austria and in Hungary from both sides of the border.

The proportion of Hungarians on the Hungarian side of the Kékfrankos borderland is 93.37%, but there are also Germans (3.76%) and Croatians (2.45%) living there, however, most of them also feel themselves Hungarian. On the Austrian side of this border live mostly Austrians (91%) with small Croatian (7%) and Hungarian (1%) minorities (these data came from the result of questionnaire survey).
The frequency of border crossings

Despite the “Schengen border” the frequency of travelling across the border is relatively high in this borderland. But there are only low proportion of border people, who across the border frequently (Figure 5). We can find “tourists”, who go to the neighbouring country for business or to work as cheap labour. These border crossings are illegal, so these people do not always want to tell us the truth about them.

Figure 4  Factors in population dynamics on the Hungarian side of the Kékfrankos borderland research area

Figure 5  Frequency of border crossings in the research area
The purpose of the border crossings

In the research area we can find intense contacts between people living two sides of the border. Austrians travel to Hungary for holiday, for services and shopping, Hungarians go to Austria to buy foodstuffs, clothes and manufactured goods and to visit their relatives (Figure 6).

Figure 6 The purpose of travelling cross the border in the Kékfrankos borderland

Municipal attraction centers based on the use of retail and services

In Hungarian side is the Sopron (Figure 8) as the main centre with its complementary region. Sopron has the highest level of attraction (or it is the most attractive), in particular if our assessment is based on only the Hungarian reference area (Figure 7). On the Hungarian side there is no other important centre in this research territory. On the Austrian side there are two main centres, Eisenstadt (Kismarton) (Figure 9) and the capital, Wien (or 'Vienna') (Figure 10). We can find an important role from a very local point of view, if we observe the magnitude of Mattersburg, as a local centre (Figure 7, 11). The people asked from Hungary, they did not mark any centre on the Austrian side, but marked Austria in general (Figure 12). But we can see that Sopron, as a centre, is working a little from Austrian side (Figure 7, 8). It was mentioned, that Sopron is the important centre in this region. This significant situation exists not only from the point of view of Hungary, but of Austria as well. A lot of Austrians went to this town to do the shopping, for eating out, for services despite different currency and busy check points. After the enlargement maybe the border crossing became easier and Sopron will have higher position in the future if it will be same currency in Hungary than in Europe. It can be defined as the main central places and their primary attracted settlements (Figures 13). There are concentrated and homogeneous attracted areas the Hungarian side of the Kékfrankos borderlands. Although there is good structure of settlements in this borderland, with favourable central places hierarchies, if we see the main central places and their primary attracted settlements we will find very scattered areas attracted to the centres on the Austrian side, some villages are a long distance from their central places.

Notice
It is important not to forget that this research (in terms of data gathering) finished before the 1st of May in 2004, that is, Hungary became EU members.
Figure 7  Centres and their attraction index scores in the Kékfrankos borderland

Figure 8  Sopron and its catchment area in the Kékfrankos borderland
Figure 9. Eisenstadt and its catchment area in the Kékfrankos borderland

Figure 10. Vienna's catchment area in the Kékfrankos borderland
Figure 11  Mattersburg and its catchment area in the Kékfrankos borderland

Figure 12  Austria’s catchment area from Hungarian side in the Kékfrankos borderland
The ethnic sympathy and antipathy:

There is higher level in self-evaluation among Austrians (4.68), than Hungarians (4.54). On Hungarian side the less favourable groups are Gypsy, Romanian, Arab and Serbian. On Austrian side the less favourable groups are these, but with different order. The favourite nation is the Hungarians among Austrians. However, it is a very high rating that they receive (4.58) - so high that it is higher than the self-evaluation of Hungarians in this borderland. But the Austrians are not so beloved among Hungarians. Every group got higher scores on Austrian side than Hungarian side, except American, Japanese and French. Maybe it is because of competition (Figure 14).
Summery

It may seem to us that this border is mostly open without any real obstacles to crossing it. This research allows us to see what the real situation is. Despite the busy border check points, there were a lot of “illegal movements” (with illegal purpose). Of course there were additional people from outside the local area who cross the border. Therefore there were fewer proper and frequent connections between the border regions. This conclusion also could be drawn if we see the results of central places research. There are not any real central places, which could have attracted people from settlements on the other side of the border. But Sopron has a little central role from Austrian side as well. This town will be able to be in the centre of region, even after the EU enlargement. In some cases the settlements structures are highly unfavorable (Austrian side). The original structures of social and economic communication were broken by the new borders imposed, and the new ones do not work very well even after a considerable passage of time. After EU enlargement, we may guess that border crossing and connections across borders will improve in this area, but this is only a hopeful hypothesis now, which new research from these areas will test in future.