THE COMPARISON OF THE HUNGARIAN-CROATIAN AND HUNGARIAN-SLOVENIAN TOURISTICAL CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

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Abstract. With the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991 significant differences developed even in the tourism of the shared border regions of the post-Yugoslav countries and Hungary. This study examines the Slovenian border from within the Schengen zone and the Croatian one as an external border. It compares the natural grounds for cross-border co-operation, the political backgrounds linked to the EU and the affinity of co-operation on both sides of the border. The study organizes the EU tenders connected either directly or indirectly to cross-border relations, analyzes the factors hindering co-operation and tries to make proposals regarding the future.


Keywords: cross-border relations, Hungarian-Croatian border, Hungarian-Slovenian border, EU tender

Cuvinte cheie: relații transfrontaliere, granița ungaro-croată, granița ungaro-slovena, tendințe ale EU

1. THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE TOPIC

The examination of the cross-border interactions at the one-time Hungarian-Yugoslavian borderlines is rather up-to-date. The former peripheral areas have the chance to forge their earlier disadvantage into an advantage during tourism development, since in the socialist era as a consequence of the tense political situation – mainly in the Austrian and Yugoslavian borderlands – the anthropogenic impacts remained on a low level. The relatively intact landscape and the folk architectural memories provide a favourable basis for tourism. Particularly important are the cross-border connections and relations in the areas, where as a result of the Treaty of Trianon pure Hungarian territories were cut off from the mother country, since these shared projects can help the preservation of Hungarian identity as well. And last but not at least the European Union provides a significant help in
strengthening cross-border connections and it is also of the economic interest of the locals to excavate new opportunities and make use of the EU funds.

However, the present sections (Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian) of the formerly unified Yugoslavian border are now in different stages of transformation. At the Hungarian-Slovenian frontier the border control discontinued because of the extension of the Schengen borders. The reinforcement of the Hungarian-Slovenian cross-border relations is justified by the fact that the Treaty of Trianon cut uniform ethnographic units (Hetés, Örség, Göcsej) into half (BAZSIKA E. – GYURICZA L. 2008). Though, today these historical units can theoretically create restarted communities and can serve as a basis for the cross-border cooperation both from cultural and economic aspects but especially from the point of view of tourism. The uniform natural landscape of the Slovenian-Hungarian borderland was only cut up by political borders, after the Trianon decision removed an 8-10 km wide pure Hungarian belt from the mother country.

Nonetheless, Croatia is not yet a member of the European Union (so the current border is also a Schengen border complicating the expansion of interactions) but based on its existing political conditions Hungary’s southern neighbour will soon become a member of both the EU and the Schengen zone. This is the reason why it is practical to prepare beforehand for the opportunities that can occur after the joining and that is why now, during the pre-joining, the EU provides significant sources for the facilitation of interactions.

Differently from the Slovenian borderline, towards Croatia – on a predominant section of the border – the border rivers (Mura and Drava) as natural barriers complicate the establishment of direct contacts. This boundary also differs in the aspect that on the other side of the border there are Hungarian settlements only in some particular areas. However, in the regions at the Drava important natural values got maintained (national park) due to the peripheral location, and the preservation and touristic use of these in the spirit of sustainable development are only possible in collaboration with Croatian settlements located across the border.

The character of the present Serbian segment of the one-time Yugoslavian frontier resembles the Slovenian borderland from physical geographical and ethnical aspects because it was also divided only by political borders. Serbia on the other hand, based on its political affairs is far away from the European Union, the building of connections is timely and important but the creation of a “European border” still has to wait.

This is why in our study we only deal with the Slovenian and Croatian borderlines: we compare the present levels of tourism in the borderlands, paying special attention to the cross-border relations. We examine the attributes forming the base of interactions and further possibilities of touristic co-operations.

2. A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF TOURISM IN THE REGIONS LOCATED AT THE SLOVENIAN-HUNGARIAN AND CROATIAN-HUNGARIAN BORDERS

Before the Treaty of Trianon tourism in its present sense did not exist in the regions, except for health tourism. The spa (Tótszentmárton/Moravské Toplice) belonging to today’s Slovenia was visited by many from Hungary as well. After the Trianon decision border control was very strict for years. Crossing the Slovenian border was also complicated because train connections were ceased in 1919 both on the lines of Lendva-Rédics and
Kőrmend-Hodos-Murszombat. More than 80 years had to go by – except for the 1941-45 annexation period – to have a new train connection in the area. The train in the Órség region was rebuilt in 2001. There were train connections with Croatia but these did not generate tourism in the borderlands.

By the beginning of the 1930s Hungarian-Yugoslavian relations moderately softened and various mutual allowances were made in order to support commercial and economic co-operation and tourism. For example in 1931 people from the Mura region – regardless of their ethnicity – could travel to the Budapest market with a 50% price reduction and could visit all museums in the capital city for free, all theatres and spas for half the price. In 1929 inhabitants of the Mura region also had the chance to travel to the Lake Balaton with subsidies. Not surprisingly, only a few could take advantage of this initiation because the majority was living in poverty. At the same time the number of visitors to the health spas from Hungary also decreased (GÖNZL. 2001).

After World War II in the 1950s, when political relations with the southern neighbour got totally estranged, rails were picked up on the Zalaegerszeg–Rédics–Lendva/Lendava line and most vehicular border crossings, functioning in the 1930s, were closed. All along the Yugoslavian boundary the Hungarian national defence constructed a bunker system called the “Hungarian Maginot-line”, which is now utilized by tourism. In the 1950s and ‘60s practically no tourism existed at this borderline.

The beginning of the 1970s brought relief, so the local population living in the bordering zone (20 km) could travel to the neighbouring country with only an identity card. This opportunity was used by people living at the border mainly for shopping in Ledva, Csáktornya, Varasd, Kapronca and Verőce. The main travel motivation in the “jersey” era was the purchase of textile goods (GYURICZA L. 2002).

This type of tourism increased further on in the 1980s when the identity card was replaced by the so called small border traffic pass (“green passport”). It only theoretically served the interests of cross-border family relations and friendships, in reality it meant shopping tourism for Hungarian citizens, whose main motivating factors were goods (sport products, audio disks, toiletries, etc.) not available in Hungary (“Fa soap-era”).

Yugoslavian citizens arriving at Hungary mostly appeared as transit travellers despite the fact that they could travel freely abroad. On the Hungarian side neither the conditions of tourism nor free movement were guaranteed. People could be checked by border guards at any point of the borderland (20 km) and people, not inhabitants of the area, could easily be embarrassed in case they were not able to clarify their travel destination. On the Hungarian side practically only the health tourism of Harkány was developed, but the ratio of Yugoslavian guests was insignificant.

From the 1970s on, health tourism became more and more significant on both sides of the frontier: on the Yugoslavian side besides Moravské Toplice a spa was built in Lendva. Starting from the 1980s wine tourism also has to be mentioned chiefly on the Lendva hill – with its significant winemaking traditions - and on the southern slopes of the Goričko. On the Hungarian side of the border new thermal baths were opened in Lenti, Zalakaros, Csokonyavisonta and Nagyatád which were soon declared spas. These mainly served the recreation of the locals until the 1980s, when their catchment areas gradually expanded. Moreover, they became popular in the circles of foreign tourists, largely among Austrians and Germans. Though, they did not play an important role in the cross-border touristic relations. At this time Siklós and Villány counted already as traditional tourist destinations,
but from their tourist traffic considerable proportion of Yugoslavians could not be detected (MICHALKÓ G. 2008).

The Hungarian system change and the disintegration of Yugoslavia brought an important transformation at the Slovenian boundary from a touristic point of view. The former peripheral region became the south-eastern gate of Hungary. The most essential condition of tourism, free movement was created so the borderland became available. At the same time border traffic increased to a great extent. From 1991 to 1995 personal traffic increased 8 times and cargo traffic increased 35 times, between 1989 and 1995 (GYURICZA L. 1998).

From the politically and economically stabilizing Slovenia – due to their higher salaries and prices – a tremendous amount of shopping tourists flooded Lenti, arriving from all over Slovenia (GYURICZA L. 1998). A dynamic increase of administrative incomes in Lenti became a direct positive consequence of shopping tourism. The profit was partly turned back to shopping tourism and was partly spent on the improvement of the spa complex and infrastructure. The entrepreneur layer in the city got stronger and generally invested their capital, piled up through shopping tourism, in the construction of guesthouses, holiday homes and apartments. With this, the previous bad structure of the lodging market got even worse, no pleasant accommodations were built, which hindered the arrival of wealthy guests. The consequence of the spontaneous growth was an oversupply in cheap accommodations.

Around the time of the system change a significant shopping tourism from Croatia flooded the Hungarian cities located at, or close to the border (Letenye, Csurgó, Barcs, Harkány, Siklós, Pécs).

This was ceased by the south Slavic crisis, when, instead of tourists only refugees and Peace Preservation Corps used the Croatian-Hungarian border crossings. During the war conflict, Croatian troops mined both the Croatian and Hungarian shores of the river Drava (BOGNÁR A. 2009). As a consequence of this, the number of both Hungarian and foreign investors declined along the South-Transdanubian borderline and similarly to the preceding 50 years –despite the system change- the region remained on the peripheries and there was no demand on the local workforce or working culture. However, because of the chain of landscape protection areas and natural conservation areas along the border river Drava and due to the peripheral location, the fairly intact floodplain system and the exceptionally valuable flora and fauna and because of the preservation of the connected cultural memories the establishment of the Danube–Drava National Park became possible in 1996, which was soon discovered by the fans of eco- and water tourism.

Because of Slovenia’s practical absence from the war the traffic at its borders increased during the crisis, partially because the traffic of the war-struck Croatian border crossings was transposed to the Slovenian boundary and in part because of the formerly mentioned shopping tourism. Slovenia’s and Hungary’s concurrent joining to the European Union in 2004 brought a decisive change in the touristic development of the region. Not only border crossing was eased but it also provided opportunities for the cross-border touristic co-operations, participations in shared EU tenders in order to improve “real” tourism. All these were facilitated by the extension of the Schengen borders and that both the countries became members of the zone. Due to this, again, after 90 years (disregarding the annexed era between 1941 and 1945) -although the border remained- it became
possible to move freely across the border in the West-Zala and Mura regions without border control.

3. TENDERS AND CROSS-BORDER POSSIBILITIES OF IMPROVEMENT

Between 2004 and 2006 the most important sources for the borderland regions of both border sections were provided by the INTERREG IIIA program established by the European Union (Csapó J. 2009). The regional units appearing in the program were the followings (Figure 1):

- **Slovenia**: Pomurje, Podravje, Savinjska, Spodnje posavska, Jugovzhodna Slovenija, Notranjsko-kraška, Obalno-kraška statistical regions;
- **Hungary**: Vas, Zala, Baranya and Somogy counties;
- **Croatia**: Osječko-baranjska, Virovitičko-podravska, Koprivničko-krizevaška, Medimurska, Varaždinska, Krapinsko-zagorska, Zagrebačka (except for the capital Zagreb), Karlovačka, Primorsko-goranska, Istarska (county).

Not only purely touristic projects provide an opportunity for improvement but also the conservational and infrastructural investments contribute indirectly, since availability is one of the most important factors and the consciously handled, protected natural environment might be a purpose of travel or a complementary motivation.

After the windup of the INTERREG program in the period 2007-13, according to the cohesion policy, the European Territorial Co-operation means the new source for the border regions. The initiation targets the strengthening of cross-border transnational co-operations between regions. In the framework of the Hungary-Slovenia Operative Program 2007-13 the European Territorial Co-operation supports the cross-border co-operation of the two countries (www.si-hu.eu). The „connected to the external borders of the EU but having accession negotiations with Brussels” program applies to Croatia in the framework of the IPA Cross-border Co-operation Program. The total financial budget is 11.668.388 €. Based on this, the area can receive a significant financial funding. The motto of the program is apposite: „Where the rivers connect, not divide” (www.hu-hr-ipa.com).

From the thematization of tenders it becomes visible that in the framework of the INTERREG IIIA program several touristic investments got accomplished (Table 1). Looking at the Croatian-Hungarian programs it is observable that environmental protection got an important role and the initiating associate at most tenders was the Danube–Drava National Park. The protection of the border river Drava as a valuable ecosystem can be achieved on both sides of the border with the help of these shared investments. Besides this, its role as a waterway (along with Duna/Danube) is important and three of the projects aim at this. Cultural tenders are also linked to tourism and in this category the church (Pécs Episcopate and Dakovo) and the co-operation between the University of Pécs and the University of Osijek play a central role.
The comparison of the Hungarian-Croatian and Hungarian-Slovenian turistical...

Fig. 1 Regional units taking part in the INTERREG IIIA program
Unitățile regionale care participă la programul INTERREG IIIA
(Source: www.interreg-slohucro.com/modules/SZOMSZEDSAGI
PROGRAMDOKUMENTUM.pdf)

Tab. 1. The thematic comparison of Hungarian-Croatian and Hungarian-
Slovenian successful touristic INTERREG IIIA tenders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes of successful tenders connected to touristic improvement (2004-2006)</th>
<th>Croatian-Hungarian borderline</th>
<th>Slovenian-Hungarian borderline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental protection</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winery, eco-farming</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source of data: RAFAI K. 2007., ed.: Bognár A.)

The Hungarian-Slovenian tenders differ from the ones mentioned above because the number of environmental protection initiations is fewer but wine tourism and wine marketing are important. The proof of the bond and creativity of Zala winemakers is that they succeeded to receive financial funds in several aspects in order to achieve their goal. Numerous touristic tenders of the region aim at the creation of cross-border thematic itineraries e.g. “Szent Márton route”, “Őrállók route”, (not characteristic to the other borderline). Besides this, there is a plan to accomplish a touristic zone stretching over to both sides of the border: the Murania Tourist Region.
In the initiations of the new program period there are several tenders at the Slovenian-Hungarian border, which were beneficiaries within the INTERREG program (Table 2). These were voluminous plans that served a long-term aim e.g. the “Szent Márton route”, the wine marketing of Zala and the cross-border wine route plan’s continuation. The protection of the NATURA 2000 areas and the basis of the thermal waters on both sides of the border are also important. It is a praiseworthy initiation because several thermal springs can be found in this area and health tourism has an emphatic role in both Slovenia and Hungary (Moravske Toplice, Lendva, Lenti, etc.)

In the Croatian-Hungarian tenders however, a new element can be discovered: thematic touristic-cultural utilization based on the cross-border touristic heritage. The idea, which in the previous program period was only characteristic to the other examined region, emerges in this area as well and it promises to be a successful project. It is built on the historic heritage of the Zrínyi family (Zrínyi’s Land); on the Hungarian heritage of Szigetvár and the Croatian inheritance of Csáktornya (Čakovec) and aims at the improvement and touristic utilization of castles. This project might be the pioneer in the touristic co-operation at the border of the two countries. Tenders targeting the protection of the river Drava and its oxbows are further important and are continuations of former programs. It is positive that the Croatian half initiates today as well.

**Tab. 2. The thematic comparison of approved touristic tenders in the first call for tenders by the IPA and the SI-HUN OP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenders connected to touristic improvement, accepted in first round</th>
<th>Croatian-Hungarian borderline (IPA 2007-2013)</th>
<th>Slovenian-Hungarian borderline (SI-HUN OP 2007-2013)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared cultural heritage, cross-border heritage tourism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health tourism</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastronomy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental protection</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-border tourist traffic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-border protection of thermal waters</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source of data: www.hu-hr-ipa.com, www.si-hu.eu, ed.: Bognár A.)

**4. DIFFICULTIES AND CONFLICTS DERIVING FROM THE BORDERLAND POSITION**

The appeals of the examined regions are linked mainly to the natural attributes, more specifically to the protected areas. Exceptional values can be found along the Slovenian-Hungarian border in the Őrség National Park and in Danube-Drava National Park in connection with the Croatian-Hungarian frontier. Besides, the role of nature parks (Kerkaside and the Goričko Nature Park in Slovenia) is significant. These sights are generally situated in the proximity of the border. It also means a source of conflicts because
their preservation and improvement are only possible in co-operation with the neighbouring country (BERKI M. – FÁBIÁN SZ. 2009), considering a hydroelectric power plant, the air polluting effects of a factory or water protection in general. The main conflict at the Hungarian-Croatian boundary is caused by the proposed construction of a hydroelectric power plant planned by Croatians at Novo Virje because it would highly endanger the ecosystem along Drava. Since both shores of the river are similarly valuable, a shared Hungarian-Croatian national park would be the solution for the protection and preservation of natural values. Unfortunately, an initiation of the Danube–Drava National Park was turned down by the Croatian side (IVÁNYI I. – LEHMANN A. 2002). The reason why the Croatian half does not want to co-operate in the project of a shared national park should be examined. However, in other areas, e.g. Paklenica N.P., Krka N.P., Kornati N.P., Plitvicei N.P. etc. serious regulations were introduced in favour of the protection of the nature. The not very emphatic lobbyist activities of the professional background, the predominance of industrial and economic interests and the ownership problems of the territories and immovables at the Drava all overshadow the protection of nature (BOGNÁR A. 2009).

The Drava-section of the examined area struggles with several problems regarding tourism as well. The problem basically derives from the fact that the formerly unified territory is now divided by the Drava as a border river and this official borderline, set up in 1920, also slits the water tour routes and study trails. The participation at canoe-tours – because the trails cross the border numerous times – is bound to permission, so all participants are obliged to hand over their personal data to the border guards, preceding the tour, because a check can take place any time. The violations go along with serious punishment. In this aspect there is no co-operation between Croatia and Hungary, on the Croatian side of the river both bathing and mooring is forbidden, since the crossing of the green border violates certain rules. On the Hungarian side mooring is only possible at assigned points and bathing is forbidden because of the highly protected areas. So in both nature protection and tourism utilizing the river the two shores lack correspondence.

Besides, a serious problem is that study trails lead through areas that had been mined during the South-Slavic war. Going off these study trails is strictly forbidden, can only be done at everyone’s own responsibility. The mined territories are not clearly known. The Hungarian Ministry of Defence surveyed the dangerous area, but a detailed mine-map has not yet been compiled. The existence of the mines is signified by the explosion of unlucky animals. Currently, the unsafe study trails are the followings: study trails of Vízvár, Erzsébetsziget, Mérus forest, Kormorános forest (Figure 2) (BOGNÁR A. 2009).

The border controls got even stricter after Hungary’s joining to the European Union (the Croatian-Hungarian border is also a Schengen border) and this counts as a further setback and complicates the unfolding of cross-border relations.

The conditions are different at the Slovenian-Hungarian border because both countries are members of the Schengen zone and border crossing is not hindered by anything not even at the green border. Since Slovenia got independent (1991) the co-operations between the two countries has been outstanding both in tourism and nature protection. The Őrség Natinal Park and the Goričko Nature Park actually form a complex cross-border nature protection zone.

Even in the case of cross-border initiations and successful tenders several various problems can occur. The basic shortcoming of both examined areas is that there is no satisfactory monitoring system supervising the projects and tracking the impacts. This is
why the success and effects of the projects on certain settlements or on the region is hard to justify. It would also be important to measure the effectiveness of the fund utilization but there are some touristic products (mainly in active- and ecotourism) where the documentation of the number of visitors is almost impossible (hiking, cycling). In case of tenders connected to natural landscapes a visible result is produced but the preparation of concrete statistical data could only happen through a voluminous data collection by questionnaires, for which there are no sources. Unfortunately, it happens that a well documented project can be deemed successful based on the accounts but in reality its practical use is highly questionable.

The Murania Tourist Zone, connecting the sides of the Hungarian-Slovenian border, – established in 2006 by the settlements of the micro-regions Lendva and Lenti – can be mentioned as an example. The content of the “Murania Idea” can be considered positive because it came into existence as a result of a project based on creative, reasonable natural and cultural co-operations. During the execution, however, it showed a lack of adequate proficiency and sufficient care. Though, it can serve as a lesson for the future.

The Murania Tourist Zone seems to be a little premature; it is only successful in a few projects for the time being and basically does not serve the interests of the local inhabitants. The attainments are manifested primarily through cross-border promotion materials, various programs, making of studies and strategies and creation of destinations all financed by European grants. In the destination improvement many severe professional mistakes can be detected. For example, in the region full of natural values, creation of study trails and expansion of cycling routes are accentuated. However, because of the lack of appropriate

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**Fig. 2 Mine-dangered study trails in the area of the Danube–Drava National Park**
(Source: www.ddnp.hu, ed: Bognár A. 2009)
information, the unprofessional, inaccurate placement of study trail boards, incompetent pamphlets, inaccurate maps and the lack of continual maintenance of hiking routes, the well documented study trails practically do not have any visitors. The connection of the Slovenian and Hungarian cycling routes is only realized in the form of some boards placed on the sides of a few accommodation roads.

The main problem is that the Murania Tourist Zone did not yet enter the minds neither of the local residents nor other participants of tourism so its concrete economic gains are not yet realized. Actual effects of the project cannot be detected neither on tourism enterprises nor on the increase of tourist traffic, although, this is supposed to be its primary goal (GYURICZA L, 2009).

5. CONCLUSION

International trends favour the appearance of peripheral regions’ values in tourism. The anthropogenic impacts at the one-time Yugoslavian border remained on a low level but the reserved natural attributes, the folk cultural-historical values and advantages deriving from multiculturalism for the time being exist only as unused potentials.

The borderline played and also plays an important role in the lives of people living at the examined boundaries. Before 1991 both regions were affected by the Hungarian-Yugoslavian border, so active, cross-border relations could not develop. However, at the Slovenian-Hungarian border starting in 1991 and later with both countries joining the Schengen zone facilitated by their willingness for co-operation a new era opened in tourism development at this border. This opportunity –based on the successful tenders as well – is utilized by the settlements located at the frontier.

At the Croatian-Hungarian borderline due to river Drava and the economic underdevelopment of the region, the conditions based on the natural values are potentially advantageous from a touristic point of view. However, the south-Slavic crisis, later the Schengen border and the lack of shared will to co-operate hindered and still hinders the intensive development of cross-border touristic relations, but the first results were achieved through grants.

Though, it would be necessary to implement a monitoring-system checking the successful execution of projects in order to make the effectiveness of the grant utilization measurable.

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