

Theoretical and Practical Research as Exemplified by the Hungarian-Serbian-Romanian Border Zone Area

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ABSTRACT

The geography of border zones deals with the interrelatedness of the elements of border and other components of spatial and economic relations and it describes the process by which national borders come into existence and the way they dissolve; other research questions include what the political significance of national borders is and to what extent they influence local people and regional economy. It is also important to consider that some of these factors have a combined influence. Consequently, the relationship between borders and their regions is mutual and changeable. Thus the topic of research is the national border itself and its socio-economic environment. Since border zone research is of interdisciplinary nature it has many auxiliary sciences, including political and military geography, traditional economic geography, population and urban studies, demography, as well as philosophy.

Border zone research has become one of the most important objectives in geographical investigations in Hungary.

In the first phase of research geographers formulated the academic problem itself; that is, whether or not border zone settlements develop differently from those settlements which are located in other parts of the country. Border zone location supposedly has an - advantageous or disadvantageous - impact on the development of the given settlement. In the next phase of the research – the period between 1991-1994- empirical research was carried out. Statistical analyses and surveys through questionnaires were conducted in relation to the areas and settlements located in the vicinity of the Romanian-Serbian-Hungarian borders. This research was primarily aimed at exploring the economic relations of these settlements, and, as a result, the conclusion was drawn that, in most cases, border zone location is favorable when a developed region meets another relatively developed region. If the two sides of the border are both underdeveloped, that is, poverty meets poverty, or there is a considerable developmental gap between the settlements located on the two sides of the border, border zone location is only to preserve the peripheral characteristics of the given settlement.

KEYWORDS

Border, cross-border cooperation, changing of functions of borders

Introduction

In the last few decades border zone research has become one of the most important research topics in geographical investigations in Hungary. In the first phase of research geographers formulated the academic problem itself; then, in the next phase empirical research was carried out, which was primarily aimed at exploring the economic situation of the areas concerned. Later, due to the emergence of Euroregions and regional restructuring in Hungary, researchers have shifted their interest towards the investigation of cross-border relations. Accordingly, in the first part of our paper the theoretical implications of the topic, then, in the second part, the results of our own empirical research will be explored.

It was in the 20th century that geographers first attempted to explore the complicated and multidirectional relationship between man and nature in its full complexity. Regional research of economic nature was still fragmentary and scholars primarily focused on the ethnographic or sociographic characteristics of the given area (e.g. homestead research by ERDEI, F. 1976)

At the same time, the geography departments, affiliated with Hungarian universities and colleges, played a significant role in geographical research.

In economic geography the central research question was the emergence of economic regions (rayons), a phenomenon that had first been detectable in the 1960s. It became generally acceptable that the aim of the establishment of economic regions was to support state planning. (VÖRÖSMARTI, A 1961.) Up to the late 1960s there were several plans concerning the establishment of regions in Hungary, but, none of these was based on detailed research results. The research into economic regions in this period had a clear ideological background, which was inseparable from the given historical reality and the social system of the country. Research aims were varied and depended on social needs.

The Department of Economic Geopgraphy at the Attila József University in Szeged, Hungary, was actively involved in research and, concerning the regions of the Great Plain, the Southern Great Plain and the whole area of Hungary, significant amount of research material was collected by the research team. It was in this period, too, that the system of planning-based economic regions came into existence under the guidance of the National Planning Office.

This research into economic regions could be characterized with expediency and social centredness, but its basic objectives included the complex analysis of geographical processes, the exploration of their interrelatedness, the examination of the relationship between man and nature, the description of geographical environment and the characterization of its main components.

Economic and social activities always take place in a definite natural environment and this feature needs to be considered in research. Another important feature is that each activity has a back-action on the natural environment and vice versa. In addition, spatial changes need to be brought about in relation to temporal changes, especially, when the research is targeted at a spatial economic formation in a given area, including agglomeration or zones of attraction. The approach and research methodology of *geography* have enriched human knowledge with *spatial approach*. When examining large social groups, the irregular quantitative differences, detectable in different regions, can be explained with special features to be found in history, physical geography, economy, society and administration. The exploration of all these aspects leads to the identification of spatial connections.

Linking up *geography*, as a *spatial discipline* and *history*, as a *temporal discipline* makes it possible to examine spatial changes in relation to temporal features.

The temporal cross-section of research into historical development is determined by concrete research objectives and the database available. Main tendencies can be detected only if data are well-grounded and comparable. In the 1950s, due to difficulties in obtaining data, research was slow. (VÖRÖSMARTINÉ TAJTI E. 1962.)

Statistics, as an auxiliary science is as important for economic geography as for economics or sociology. Statistical data reflect social processes (E.g. changing population figures, natural movement of peoples, migration, population figures by age group and gender, changes in economic activity, employment structure, ratio by place of residence and/or place

of work, urbanization). The infrastructural conditions – distribution of energy, water supply, trade, housing conditions, county planning, services, health care, culture, education, and administration are all factors to be considered because they represent the triangle of production- distribution-consumption, and they can easily be monitored using statistical figures.

The earliest statistical data go back to the time of Emperor Joseph II and his census, but we do not have the full spectrum of figures from that period (Figure 1).

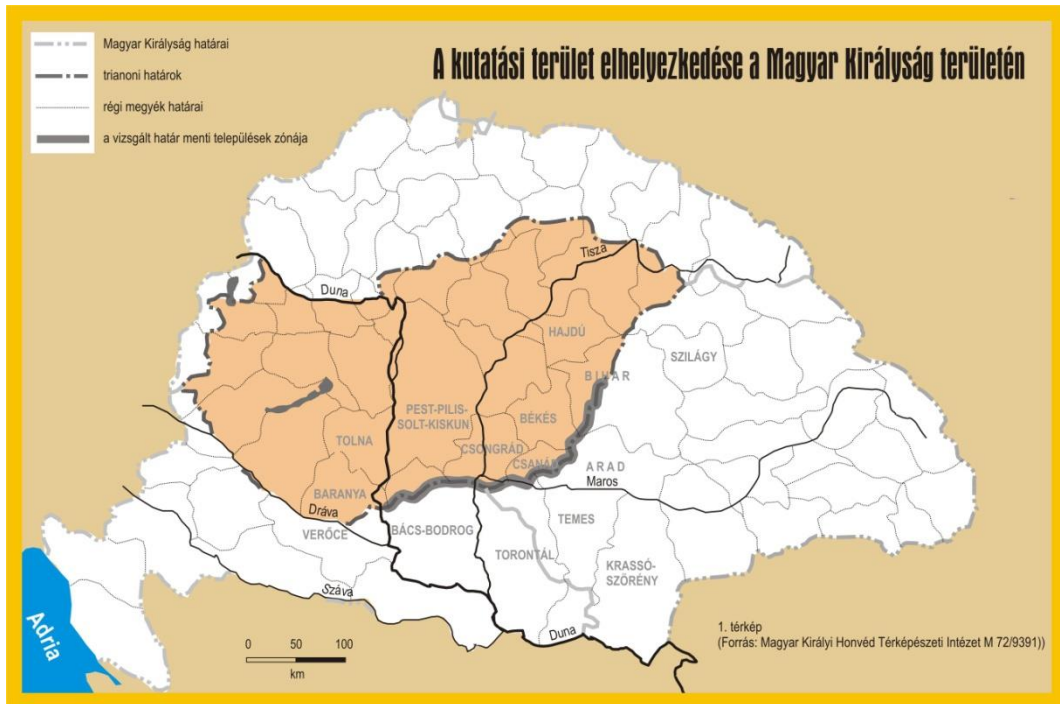


Figure 1 – The location of the area researched within the Kingdom of Hungary

The most outstanding problems of research in economic geography include the concentration of production, the spatial concentration of social and economic objects and phenomena, including agglomeration.

In the last few decades social geography has gained special significance and it relates to a settlement, group of settlements, district of settlements or a region. (e.g. PÁL, Á.,2001.). On the other hand social geography explores special topics, too, including industrial geography, tourism geography, ethnic problems and research into cross-border zones.

1. Geographical notions

1.1 Special areas

The most comprehensive spatial feature of regional development is that it is irregular. This feature can be explained by the fact that the natural, social, economic and infrastructural factors which have an impact on development, are unevenly and irregularly distributed in space.

Regions with diverse potentials may represent different levels of development, thus well-developed and underdeveloped regions come into being. Most undeveloped regions are of peripheral location and they might be situated along or near county-, or national borders. National borders are crossed at certain points. This is the case even when county borders are considered, because two settlements belonging to two different counties may not be necessarily connected via public roads. The situation is more obvious when national borders

are considered. On the other hand, not all areas are underdeveloped which lie in the vicinity of national borders. The Hungarian towns of Szeged, Pécs and Gyula can be quoted as examples. All border zones belong to the category of special areas.

This category also includes tourist regions and recreation areas, what is more, these areas have special functions and play an outstanding role in the category. They are of special significance either locally or nationally (present or future holiday areas).

For researchers relativity – differences in relation to the environment – is of special significance, too: index numbers themselves are not absolute.

The economic spatial structure of a country is the sum of its network of centres and peripheries at various levels. Peripheries can be characterized by their distance from the centre, as well as by belated development. It means that developmental processes, taking their origin from the centre, are not only late, but they are different by the time they reach the peripheries.

Special areas can be described by diverse characteristic features, consequently, research into them has to be multidisciplinary in nature; the problem areas researchers focus on are far-reaching.

1. 2 Border zone location

Being on the periphery and border zone location are not necessarily synonymous, although both terms describe a kind of special area.

The interrelatedness of administration and special areas is inconsistent, although the problems could be solved more easily if the administrative systems consider the special features and needs of these areas.

BERÉNYI I. (1988) did not consider border zone location synonymous with peripheries mainly, because areas in the vicinity of the country's national borders can be characterized by both advantageous or disadvantageous features, which are all consequences of an external influence. On the other hand, peripheries in his opinion, can be described with their distance from the centre. With increasing distance there is a decreasing number of functions and a lesser degree of the intensity of development.

Berényi's starting point derives from social geography and he considers local impact and its investigation of utmost importance, because the individual social groups and their decision-making processes are differently influenced by border zone location. (A similar point was outlined by ERDŐSI, F. 1988).

In our days it is the national borders that determine national economies. In the future regional spatial organizations might play a more significant role with the national borders playing a less significant role. (Euroregions)

In the opinion of PÁL, Á. (1999), the network of Euroregions within the European Union might give an impulse to the emergence of different types of institutionalized cooperation along the external borders of the EU, which aim at developing the collaboration between areas, demonstrating diverse conditions and representing different levels of development. The network of Euroregions offers new possibilities for border zone cooperation and regional development. These new possibilities may mean new scope for action for a new Europe and new dimensions for the Southern Great Plain in Hungary.

1. 3 Border

Political borders are closely related to the emergence of national states. (JEGGLE U. 1994.). The borders of national states represent the projection of a nationality's ideas of its own location, thus it represents a closed – as opposed to an open - notion. When national

states emerged, fixed borders came into being. If later on the national states were not capable of accepting enclaves, they had to reconcile to the emergence of ethnic minorities and, consequently, had to face ethnicity-based conflicts. .

When describing the notion of borders the starting point is on the one hand the characteristics of the given discipline, such as political geography, sociology, ethnography. On the other hand it also needs to be considered whether the border separates two different cultures, or only two subcultures.

From the point of view of political geography national borders imply both the possibilities of separation and cooperation. *Thus border zone location means a unique spatial location as well as a special political situation.* The development of border zone settlements is strongly influenced by the perception of what a national border is, and also by the historically created system of relationships between the given states. .

National borders and border zone areas signify a special condition because they represent a contact zone between the states. The daily multi-coloured political practices as well as cohabitation signify the fact that shared borders imply possibilities of different nature and quality.

In the process of doing research into the spatial features and the symbiosis of states, political geographers elaborated the principles of the discipline of limology. Due to differing opinions concerning theoretical approaches, political geography-based limology is considered as a very complex and controversial discipline. It has several 'schools' based on national interests and pursuits. The border theory of French political geography is largely dominated by the idea of 'natural borders', thus it has served the interests of the French pursuit of power. The border theory in German political geography was primarily influenced by the idea of the 'folk/ethnic character', thus researchers mainly focused on the interaction between state borders and ethnic boundaries. The border theory in English political geography was dominated by the ideas of the 'empire' and impartial arbitration. Border theory in American political geography is determined by the notion of 'usefulness' and the pursuit of a balance of power (HAJDÚ Z. 1998).

When applying a legal or a geographical approach, a border is actually a line, but, when considering its meaning and impact, it is rather a zone, a smaller or larger area, in which states interact..

CSÉFALVAI Z. (1994) has pointed out that borders may come into being in many different ways. Their common characteristic feature is that they separate, and designate a special area with typical social and cultural features. A border signifies what group of people possesses and controls the area behind it. Two conditions are necessary to fulfil this requirement: border control and regulated conditions for entry. (border crossing points, visas, customs, passports).

NEMES NAGY J. (1998.) summarizes the most dsignificant features of national borders in four points. It fuctions as a(n)

1. separator (barrière)
2. filter (filter)
3. edge and buffer zone (frontier)
4. contact (contact zone)

It is political geography that describes the theoretical, historical and functional questions of the emergence of national borders and within this framework this is the discipline that deals with the development and typology of the areas in the vicinity of borders, including the notions of borderland, border zone, border region, frontier zone and Granzentrum.

The political geographical research into the border zones of the European Economic Community signifies that the possibilites of integration might raise the value of border zones. The role of European political borders is changing now. Instead of the role of being a

separator it is to shift towards the role of becoming a filter,- and contact zone. Concerning our research target, the Southern Great Plain region of Hungary, unfortunately there were only a few signs of this change detectable.

1. 4 Region-regionalism

A *region* is a group of settlements (DÖVÉNYI Z. 1980.), with intensive relationships between them. In other words, this is a system comprising a centre and its zones of attraction. In most general terms a region is a given area. According to ÉGER GY., in this case the same word has a theoretical meaning as well as an intellectual and/or political context.

Regionalism – as a theoretical category – is the attachment of a group of people to a certain land. (ÉGER GY. 2000.). We can agree with ÉGER GY that approaches and interpretations may vary depending on the disciplinary approach and the given ideology. Geographers, historians, ethnographers, economists and sociologists may disagree when taking over terms and notions from other disciplines.

When interpreting the term 'region' as a sociological, socio-psychological and anthropological phenomenon, it will be different from the traditional geographical definition and it will become a social and human category, in which the starting point for research is the system of relationships by which society and space are organized. Consequently, a region is not a permanent and static category, but a dynamic, constantly changing phenomenon in society, which can rather be interpreted as a *process*. The process, in which a certain region develops as part of the spatial organization of society can be called the institutionalization of the region. The development of the process has four levels. 1. the emergence of spatial framework 2. the creation of a theoretical framework 3. the creation of an institutionalized form 4. Institutionalization, regional system and regional consciousness.

The emergence of regional identity is part of regional development. The fullest possible form of the process of institutionalization of a region is the emergence of the *nation state*, which implies an area, national border, a name, language, symbols and institutions.

In order to establish a new type of regionalism which can cope with challenges of history, relevant institutions need to be brought about. For example, 'in the area of administration it needs to be achieved that on different sides of the border local administrative units be compatible with each other.'

According to LANG W. 1994, there are three types of regionalism:

1. within national framework ;
2. within transnational framework (going beyond national borders);
3. within international framework (the notion was introduced after WWII and the process of European integration can be found at its highest-level).

The characteristic features of regionalism at national level are now being under the scrutiny of researchers. The relationships between the individual regions are based on the fact that the individual regions represent not only the regular exchange of products and activities but, due to their specializations, they also embody the individual economic branches and their territorial allocations.

2. The Hungarian-Serbian-Romanian border zone and its human- and economic geographical investigation

2.1. Choice of research topic, its academic antecedents and research objective

In the last two and a half decades the research into border zones has become one of the most significant questions of social geography. Our research was intended as a

contribution to this series of investigations. Our choice of topic goes back to a variety of resources.

It was fifteen years ago that the research groups of the Regional Research Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences conducted research into the *problem areas and the development of special regions*. It was at the same time that the questions of the possible research into border zones and settlements and their description were raised. Our research team joined this proposal with the aim of exploring the elements, the structure of the social and economic development of border zone settlements, as well as their developmental potential.

On the basis of the above we can agree with BERÉNYI I., according to whom instead of the generally perceived geographical notion of border zones, researchers need to explore the development of border zones and their settlements.

The other significant – theoretical and often debated - research question was the comparative analysis and the identification of the concepts of *centre*, *periphery* and *border zone*. As it is attested by our research results, the concepts of periphery and border zone are not identical. This feature can be proven by the fact that the advantageous and disadvantageous characteristics of border zones within a country are most often influenced by *external* factors.

The *periphery effect* depends on the distance from the centre of a functionally unified area because the number of its functions and their intensity decrease. Considering all the above characteristics in border zone research, it is of utmost importance to explore newly developing spatial structures, or, those traditional ones, which used to develop in the historical past, but then, for one reason or another, their development halted. (BERÉNYI I. 1988.).

Our geographical location determined the area we considered for research. 74 settlements along the border in the Hungarian Great Plain were selected for socio-geographical and economic investigation. We also chose to study 23 settlements on the Serbian side of the border in Voivodina, and 44 settlements in Partium, a border region in Romania.

The political, economic and cultural relations between the previously mentioned countries was not satisfactory – borders in this case rather separated than united. This is why it was in the middle of research work that we realized what a difficult task we had undertaken when we had outlined the hypothetical emergence of a Szeged-Subotica and Makó-Arad zones of attraction together with the birth of a borderless Central-Eastern Europe and an extended European Economic Area.

Our direct goal was to identify for the local governments those steps, which need to be taken to achieve regional development: We also intended to give basic information for them to elaborate concrete local or regional developmental projects.

In general terms the results obtained in our research meant getting acquainted with changes in historical, traditional border zone economies. Also, we did not want to disregard those scholars' work who had attempted to define border zones in the past and who described regional characteristics. Our tasks were complex and goals manifold; consequently, research was conducted in several stages and took a long period of time. (1988-1998) .

The *first step* in our research work was to identify the region and zone to be examined and describe their characteristic features. Why does this or that settlement belong to the given border zone? Why do we not accept administrative units as border zones? There are two answers to this latter question. One is that the approach and the points to be considered had to be the same on both sides of the border. The other answer relates to transport. The dominant, organic and unifying role of transport also had to be considered.

As second step, empirical research was conducted: visits were paid, statistical data were collected, analyzed and processed

As *third step* the economic conditions in relation to one or another chosen settlement were explored by using questionnaires. (1992, 1998) A software was created to process the data available and the figures were complemented and corrected using the data of census 1990 and 2012.

2.2. Research methods and databases

2.2.1. Research methods, the characteristics of border zones

When doing research the topic itself made it necessary to use the same research methods and uniform database. This is why when identifying our target – time indicators were borrowed from transport geography. The questionnaires, used in the settlements on both sides of the border served to provide complex data concerning the given settlements. .

Geographical location, local values are given in each region, while the potential values are dependent on time and society. The relative value can be determined on the basis of external and internal interactions. When defining the term border zone, the description by ERDŐSI F. and HAJDÚ Z. were considered, who had based their definition on administrative boundaries (Figure 2). Later on transport geographical relations of the given settlement were identified using indicators taken from the area of road and rail transport. (SZÓNOKYNÉ ANCSIN G. 1994).

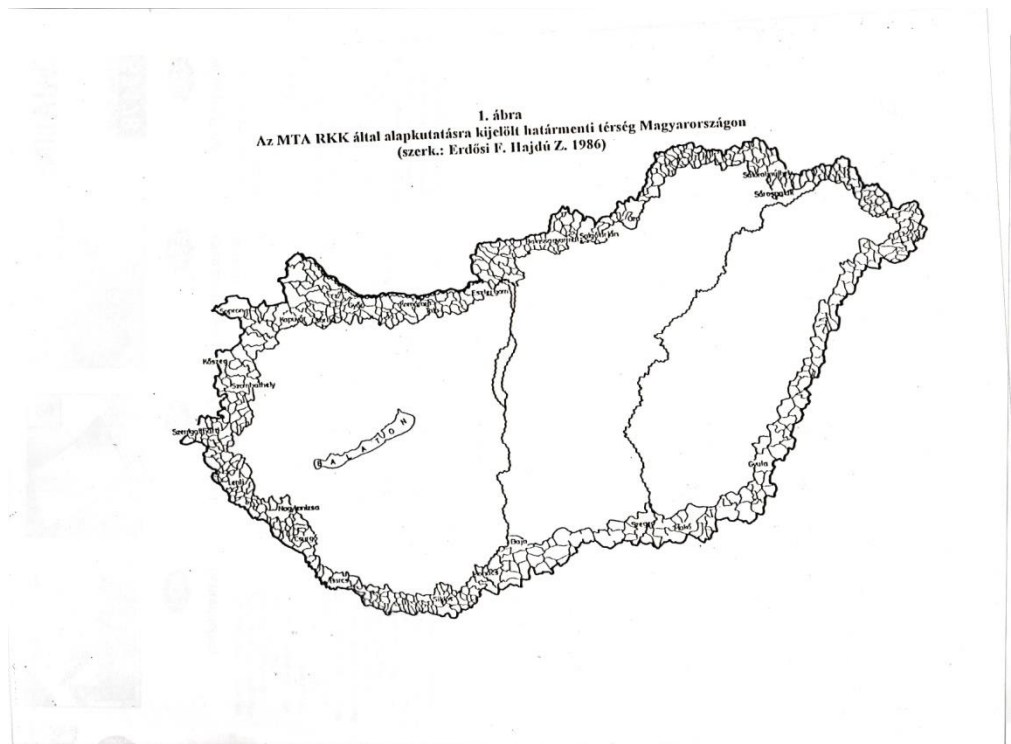
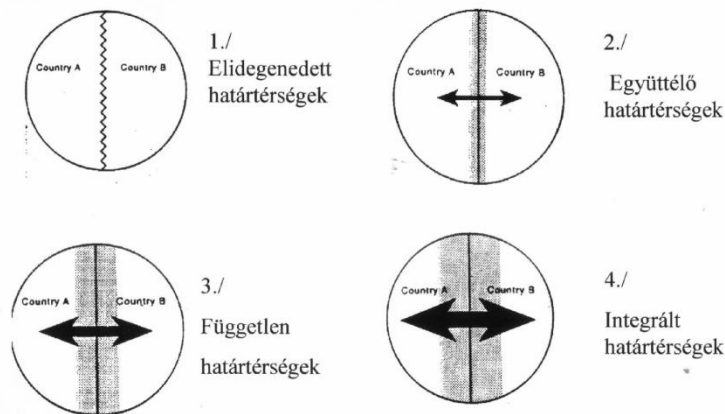


Figure 2 – The border zones in Hungary, as determined by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Centre for Regional Studies
Ed. By Erdősi, F. and Hajdú, Z. 1986

These transport-based attraction zones served as bases for the identification of border zones. The area, located on the other side of the border was also identified using transport-based attraction zones. The southern boundary of cross-border transport, typical in the 1970s, was also identified.

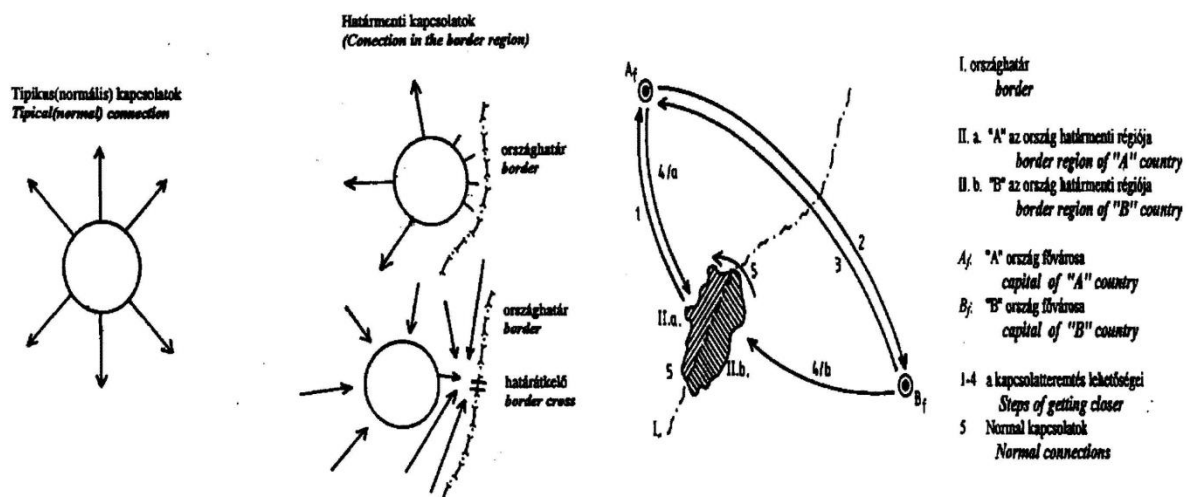
2.2. Database used for analysis

The data gained on the Hungarian side of the border from 1988-1992, was first processed, then this database was complemented with more recent figures. As far as the Serbian and Romanian data are concerned, they go back to the years 1992 and 1998. It does not mean that our investigations were of statistical nature since empirical observation was also used to register the changes. (Figures 3 and 4).



Forrás: MARTINEZ modell alapján 1994.

Figure 3 – Interactional models in the border zone
Source: Model by Martinez 1994.



Forrás: Tóth J. 1996.

Figure 4. Spatial relations of settlements
Source: Model by Tóth J.

3. Research findings

In our days a region representing a certain level of development is a link in international integrational processes, since it is quite common in the countries of the European Union, that on both sides of the border one can find regions, which represent a certain level of development, different from the one in the given countries. This is why within the EU regional policies have recently paid a special attention to the concerted development of the entire region. This is why -with help from the EU - interregional cooperation has come into being in the Carpathian Basin. PHARE as well as CBC support served to assist the cross-border cooperation between EU and non-EU countries. These projects were aimed at reducing differences, and they also served to help the technological development in the countries concerned in order to catch up with the rest of Europe.

But, further analyses and investigations are needed to explore the process how the border zone could become a crisis zone due to depopulation, the narrowing of employment opportunities and the destructive effects of the Southern Slav war.

The variety of newly emerging economic relations all contributed to the survival and the development of the settlements of the border zone. During this research our research team had to face many problems and challenges and this situation has motivated us to continue the research. A survey was conducted and the answers processed in relation to the questions about ethnicity, religion, health care, education and the environment. This questionnaire-based survey might serve as a starting point for a new phase of research work, i.e. the investigation of spheres in relation to the border zone of the southern Great Plain region of Hungary, applying EU standards.

3.1 Interaction between ethnicities, as basis for border zone cooperation

The border we investigated, i.e. the border between Hungary, Serbia and Romania, which runs from Bezdan through Körösnagyharsány to Vizesgyán (Toboliu), was marked out as a result of the Peace Treaty of Trianon of 1920. (Figure 5).

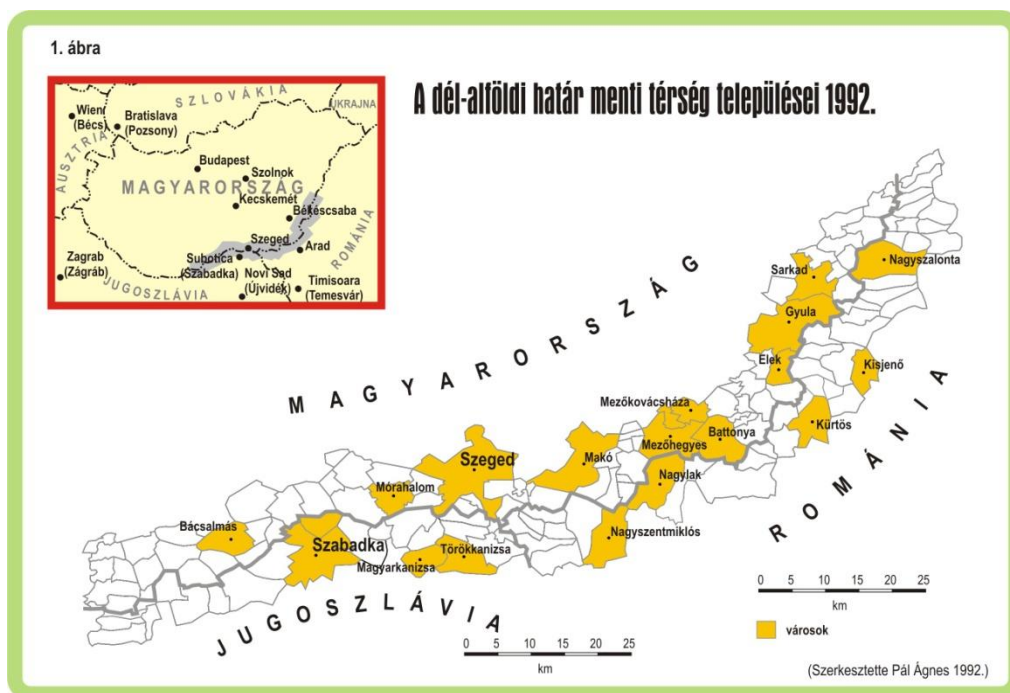


Figure 5 - Settlements of border zone in the Hungarian Southern Great Plain region.
Ed. by Pál, Á. 1992

The length of this section of border is about 500 km. Occasionally it is marked by natural boundaries, but most often the border separates agricultural fields.

3.2 Criteria of cross border transport

The most important features of border zones can all be detected in our region, that is, the intensity of transit transport, the higher proportion of daytime population, black commerce and environmental pollution. In addition to the usually limited capacity of border crossing points, other social and political factors cause significant problems, too. There are too many foreigners arriving from Eastern Europe, the majority of them come from Romania, Ukraine, Serbia and Croatia. Their main aim is to trade, that is they sell their own products and with the Hungarian forints they get for them they buy our products and thus, from sellers they become customers. The products these 'tourists' sell are mostly public necessity goods, and the products they purchase are primarily food items including meat and dairy products breads and cooking oil. In many cases the border zone settlements are unable to satisfy these commercial needs. The local governments of settlements with a border crossing possibility are not prepared to solve the accomodation, catering and health care needs of transit passengers. Thus they consider it an advantage if the groups of 'unwanted' tourists avoid their settlements. At present several border zone settlements have to face economic problems. It does not mean that in the no-man's land drainage, dumping of waste, grass cover and the building of cultural and leisure centres, campsites and guest houses would be desirable to ease the problems. In optimal case prospering markets could operate in the future on the Hungarian, Serbian and Romanian sides of the border.

After the lifting of the embargo the economic cooperation between Hungary and Serbia was renewed and intensified. The planned cooperation implies the deepening of the economic relations in the border zone, the establishment of a free zone in the tri-border area. All these developments can only be realized if the association of local governments and all local businesses in the border zone closely cooperate.

3.3 Demographic conditions

The decrease of population numbers in the border region in relation to the past 10 years shows significant differences by area. (Figure 6).

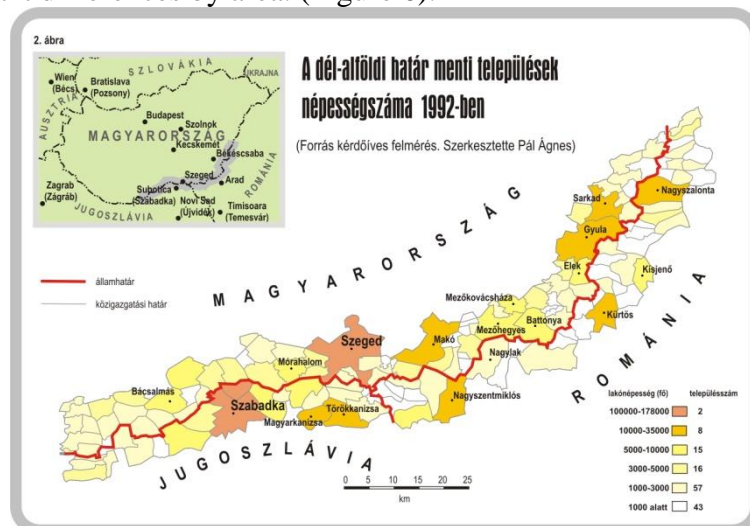


Figure 6 – The number of inhabitants of the border zone settlements of the Southern Great Plain 1992.
Ed. by Pál, Á. 1992.

Due to the lack of demographic balance, ageing and the decrease of population figures have become the most significant trends in the villages of the border zone in the last few decades. These features are the consequences of the migration from the area, which started in the 1960s. As a result, the proportion of the young has been on the decrease, while the proportion of the elderly has been on the rise. .

The prognostized value was determined without the consideration of migration figures since the trend in the settlements under survey shows considerably high figures. The population figures have decreased in all settlements, but the tendency slowed down by the turn of the century

Population prognostics is reliably suitable for the investigation of the age structure of inhabitants. It can be seen that the figures in age group 0-14 go further down until the year 2000, then they start to rise, a trend, which is the result of the second demographic wave.

When considering the elderly, it was in 1990 that the several-decade-long growth was halted, then the figures started to go down until the year 2000, then they began to rise slowly. From this trend it can be concluded that, although, the disproportionate structure of relations is somewhat modified, the proportion of the elderly is still high. In other settlements of the border zone there were random waves of immigration, too.

The settlement of immigrants and the increasing figures of those people who come from Transylvania, both contribute to the growth. If this tendency prevails in other settlements of the zone, population figures will be on the rise, or, at least they will stagnate. This research needs to be extended to the entire border zone area in the future.

In the 74 settlements of the border zone area the decrease of population figures was halted and the natural increase has relatively stabilized, too.

When analyzing the negative natural increase of population, the histogram shows that the death rate is exceptionally high in 55 settlements (13- 20%), and the proportion of births is 10-14.5% in 53 settlements.

More than 700,000 people live in the settlements of the border zone, the number of settlements and the number of inhabitants inversely correlate, but, when considering urban and rural areas, the figures are in direct proportion.

Generally speaking, in the border zone depopulation tendency is detectable, meaning, that the population decrease occurs both in time and space. In case the dynamism of population decrease is investigated, then, especially on the Hungarian side of the border, a process of deceleration, or stagnation is observable. This trend is due to the external and internal migrational processes, both of which resulted in changes in the demographic structure of settlements and the ageing of the population. In the border zones considering the population distribution by age, the proportion of the elderly has been on the rise for some time, while the proportion of the young has been on the decrease. As far as the future was concerned, it was thought that the the process of ageing would slow down. The turning point was the year 2000.

Cooperation might contribute to keeping the population in place. There are several initiatives in this respect, including a conference on cooperation organized in Apátfalva with the participation of representatives of local governments of border zone settlements with the aim of exploring the problems of the cohabitation of Serbian, Roma, Romanian and Hungarian ethnic minorities of the region. At the same time, Bosnian refugees were settled down in the region of Voivodina to replace the Hungarian population that had left for

Hungary. The process of the assimilation of Hungarians has consolidated in Voivodina, while in the area of the Partium it has nearly been completed.

The ethnic composition, the religious affiliation of inhabitants and their employment possibilities are all factors, contributing to the ability of the settlement to keep its population.

The ethnic-religious background and the assimilation of the inhabitants have an impact on the system of relationships in the border zone, too. On the Romanian side of the border the decrease and assimilation of the Hungarian population preceded the same tendencies that took place on the Serbian side of the border. This process on the Serbian side was completed after the Southern Slav war ended. In general it can be said that, the Hungarian population of the Partium are Calvinists by religious affiliation, the Romanians are Orthodox, while the Hungarians of Voivodina are Catholics. The inhabitants of the Hungarian side of the border are mostly Catholics, the minorities are affiliated with Calvinism and Greek Catholicism.

The actively employed in the population represent the foundation of the structural and innovative changes of the economic sphere.

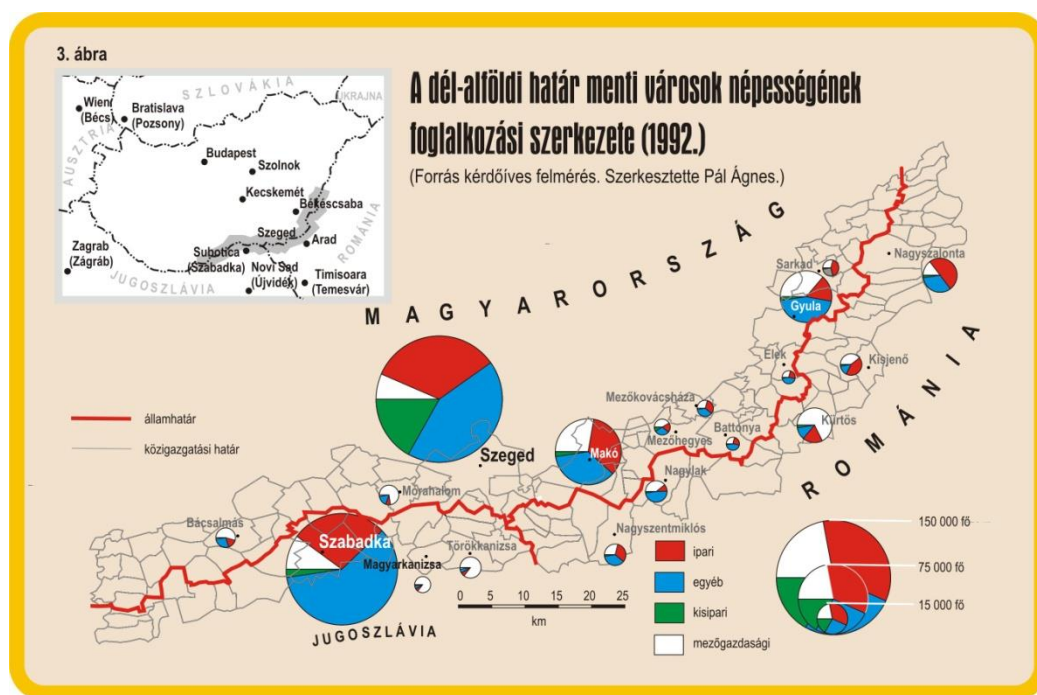


Figure 7 – The occupational structure of the urban population in the border zone of the Southern Great Plain 1992.

Source: questionnaire-based survey ed. by Pál, Á. 1992.

In this respect the actively employed urban population plays the most significant role. When compared with the figures of 1992, it can be concluded that their number went down on the Hungarian side of the border, went up on the Romanian side, while on the Serbian side no significant change was detected. The employment structure of active employees also changed and, at the same time, the number of the unemployed was on the increase, primarily in the urban areas, and, in those villages, where, in the past, the number of the employed was higher. (Source: KSH TSTAR 1996).

From the early 1990s onward the number of the employed and the employment rate both decreased, a process, which was parallel with the radical increase in the number of the unemployed. Precise data were only available as far as the Hungarian side of the border is concerned, but, from the number of those, who resettled in Hungary from the Voivodina and

Partium regions, it can be estimated, that the same or similar processes characterized the neighbouring regions as well.

The migration from Serbia and Romania and the resettlement of people in Hungary can partly be explained by the changing of the political system in Hungary and by the then less successful changes in the neighbouring countries. This process of resettlement concerned the border zone region as well, a feature, which can be illustrated with the example of Szeged. The Romanian immigrants have been arriving in great numbers from 1988. There were huge numbers coming to Szeged from Yugoslavia, because many people wanted to flee from the war. In the first two years of this immigration wave the majority of immigrants was young men, who wanted to avoid military service. From 1993 onward women also came and the number of male and female immigrants was approximately the same. They were primarily Hungarians from the Voivodina region. The political motivation of relocation was changed to an economic one. The immigrants had the aim to preserve their savings, and/or, they intended to start new businesses in Szeged. (SZÓNOKYÉ ANCSIN G. 1997).

3.4. The primary and secondary sectors of border zone economy

The events that took place in the past and in the near past, the economic incompetence of communist state systems, the introduction of the embargo, followed by its lifting, all led to the emergence of several new regional processes in the region, thus border zone economy also underwent a significant change. The measurable economic indicators in the rural areas changed for the worse, meaning that local work force, formerly affiliated with the grey economy, became part of the black economy, then became unemployed. All these factors, as well as the swift information flow strengthened criminal processes.

Csongrád County, due to its border zone location has always had a special role in the Serbian-Hungarian-Romanian economic and trade relations.

3.5. Agriculture

Agricultural activities represent a traditional and typical branch of the economy in each of the three countries concerned. Animal husbandry, cattle and pig breeding, poultry keeping and the cultivation of agricultural plants (wheat, corn, rye, vegetables, paprika, onion, medicinal herbs and various fruits) play a significant role in the life of the individual families, too. (Figure 8)

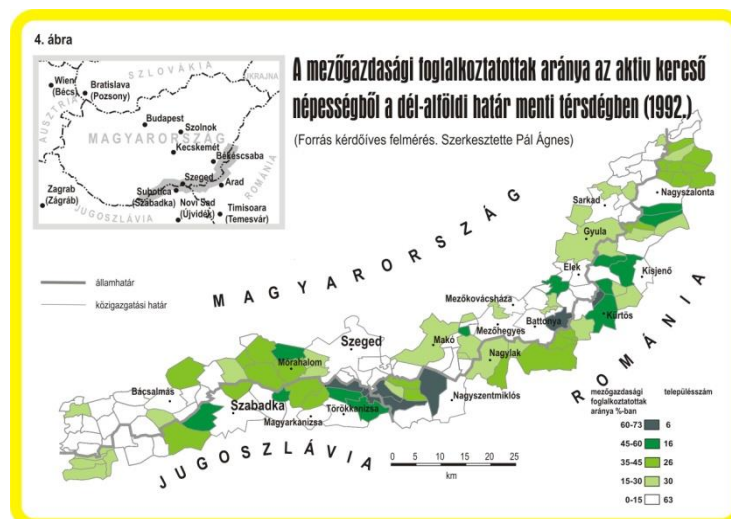


Figure 8 – The proportion of agricultural workers within the group of active employees in the border zone of the Hungarian Southern Great Plain 1992.
Source: questionnaire-based survey ed. by Pál, Á. 1992.

The traditional target areas used for agricultural production were replaced by new ones. This fact proves, that when the political conditions change, agricultural conditions will soon follow. The dynamism of this process was dissimilar on the Serbian, Romanian and Hungarian sides of the border.

3.6 Local industries, industrial organizations and new forms of enterprise

The influence of border zone location can be felt both in the centre, in towns like Szeged, Makó, Gyula, Mezöhegyes, Sarkad, Subotica and Salonta, and in the peripheries. Various periods left behind different traces in local economies. It is the industrial sector where these features are the most prominent. In the last few decades scattered industries have turned into service industries, a radical change in the economy of the zone. Scattered industries represent the remains of the former socialist economy which was characterized by a low level of concentration and low productivity. It consisted of small local industrial units operating in different industrial sectors, including heavy industry (oil industry, machinery) or light industry (textile industry, furriery, carpet-making, hemp industry, feather and down processing, stockings production, shoe making) or food industries (canning and milling industry, sugar production). The branches of industry enlisted above were present in the economy of the border zone, but they are undergoing changes. The neighbouring centres (including Szeged, Baja and Békéscsaba), play an increasingly significant role in attracting free work force.

The changes of the industrial structure are numerically evident when considering the figures available in the area of employment, product structure and mechanization. The table below demonstrates the average of the 74 settlements of the region; the general tendency of decrease varies by settlement. First the ratio of industrial employees to population figures was considered. On the basis of these indicators the majority of settlements belong to the category of low percentage. (1-2 %, 2-5 %, 5-8 Medium-level employability was detected only in 9-10 settlements. Towns (Szeged, Makó, Sarkad) also show decreasing figures. It was only in some new towns of the region where industry shows some extensive characteristics. Some thorough research was also carried out in the individual settlements concerning the direction and the rate of industrial development, which correlates with the employment structure. We used the following formula:

$$A = \frac{L_1 \times Ip_2}{L_2 \times Ip_1}$$

In which A: rate of employment restructuring
 L₁: number of inhabitants in 1991
 L₂: number of inhabitants in 1988
 Ip₁: number of industrial employees in 1991
 Ip₂: number of industrial employees in 1988

The changes (increase or decrease) were partially illustrated by the histogram of industrial workforce. The industrial branches themselves can be identified on the impact of privatizational processes of the border zone region.

It can be concluded from the above, that industry in the border zone mostly represents scattered industry with low productivity (under the national average), outdated product structure and low level of mechanization.

The exploration of the number of enterprises and the follow-up of the afterlife of former cooperatives and community industrial ventures and their work force was the next step in research.

The transformation of industrial structure – concerning employees, product structure and level of mechanization – is evident when investigating the concrete figures. First the ratio of industrial employees to population was considered. Most settlement had low figures. On the Hungarian side it was 5-8, on the Serbian side 2-5, on the Romanian side 1-2 %. Medium level industrial employment figures were detectable in 9-10 settlements. High level of industrial employability was rare (Szeged, Makó, Sarkad). The tendency of industrial employment was radically decreasing even in the towns of the border zone.

3.6.1 Private enterprises and the impact of privatisation processes

It is a mistake to think that it is only our time that foreign entrepreneurs and sponsors appeared in the region. As early as the summer of 1988 the production of several industrial companies was financed using foreign (Italian, German, English, American, Canadian) capital. Foreign investors were already present in the settlements of Voivodina (paprika processing), but there was no interest on the part of foreign investors in Transylvanian businesses. The investment of foreign capital was dependent on location, and on personal relations of foreigners, who had originated from the same region. Today's processes are more predictable. In areas, other than the centres, various private enterprises and economic organizations may fill the vacuum in the economy.

When considering the amount and country of origin of foreign capital to be invested, the following conclusions can be drawn. Austrian capital prefers the northern counties of Hungary's Transdanubian region. German and Swiss capital was primarily invested in the settlements of the Great Plain region. In addition, in the border zone settlements capital from Italy, Great Britain, Lichtenstein and Ukraine was also invested, primarily in the centres of the periphery. (Szeged, Subotica, Kanjiza). It was capital from Hungary, that was primarily invested in Romania. In general it can be said that the Great Plain region and its border zone do not represent a preferred area for foreign investors. Still, the bigger cities of Szeged, Subotica and Novi Knezevac have several companies with foreign investors and capital in the background. (RECHNITZER J. 1993.)

2.6% of the companies registered in Hungary were registered in Szeged. An outstanding majority of these was founded by Serbian Hungarian businessmen, which represent 34.3% of all Hungarian businesses founded by Serbians. The majority of the founding businessmen came from the nearby towns of Voivodina, including Subotica, Senta, Kanjiza, Ada and Novi Sad. (SZÓNOKYNÉ ANCSIN.G., 1997).

Due to the outstandingly high number of new businesses, which were founded by Serbians, several chains of stores came into being in Szeged, which can be characterized by a variety of business activities and successful business achievements. Those businesses which were founded in 1992 and 1993 chose to bring about limited partnerships because it was the

period when the people, fleeing from the war did not have a considerable amount of savings. Thus several new companies were established which had to put up with a modest amount of original capital. Occasionally the most important motivation was the avoidance of the bureaucratic procedure of obtaining legal work permits. .

When integrating into market economy the most important requirement is the working capital. Economic development requires working capital from abroad, although it has advantages and disadvantages as well. Foreign capital partially contributed to the economic development of border zone regions, especially in towns and in the areas of industry, trade and health care.

3.7. Tertiary sector – services – infrastructure

Infrastructural development both in Yugoslavia and Hungary was a neglected area for decades, it was especially true of the southern part in the border zones of the Great Plain region. This backwardness is even more obvious when the infrastructure in towns and in villages is compared. Telecommunication plays a significant role in the developmental concept of infrastructure. From the point of view of regional development various forms of communication (from transport to telemathics) are of key importance. It was in the last years that the reconstruction of pre-Trianon railway lines, using Serbian, Hungarian and Austrian capital, is being planned. Major and minor public roads are being reconstructed, too, and, in addition, the technological infrastructure in the individual settlements is also modernized.

Telemathics, a combination of informatics and telecommunication (ERDŐSI F. 1992.) – is also being researched and taught in the educational and research centres of the region including Szeged and Subotica.

3.7.1 Economic services: trade, transport and tourism

Within the tertiary sector trade, transport, tourism, education and innovative development play a significant role in shaping the true aspect of the region.

Tourism triggered economic stability in the region after the war years. It is rural tourism that dominates in the smaller settlements of the region, while the towns are attractive, because they are cultural centres.

After the lifting of the embargo more complex trade relations were established within the region. Tax free zones are still to be established, but they will greatly contribute to the widening of trade relations and the opening of new businesses. In trade it is the agricultural products that dominate. A positive change is that there is a growing number of trading companies in the region. (Figure 9.) Some changes are observable in retail trade and the ownership of companies on both sides of the border, too.

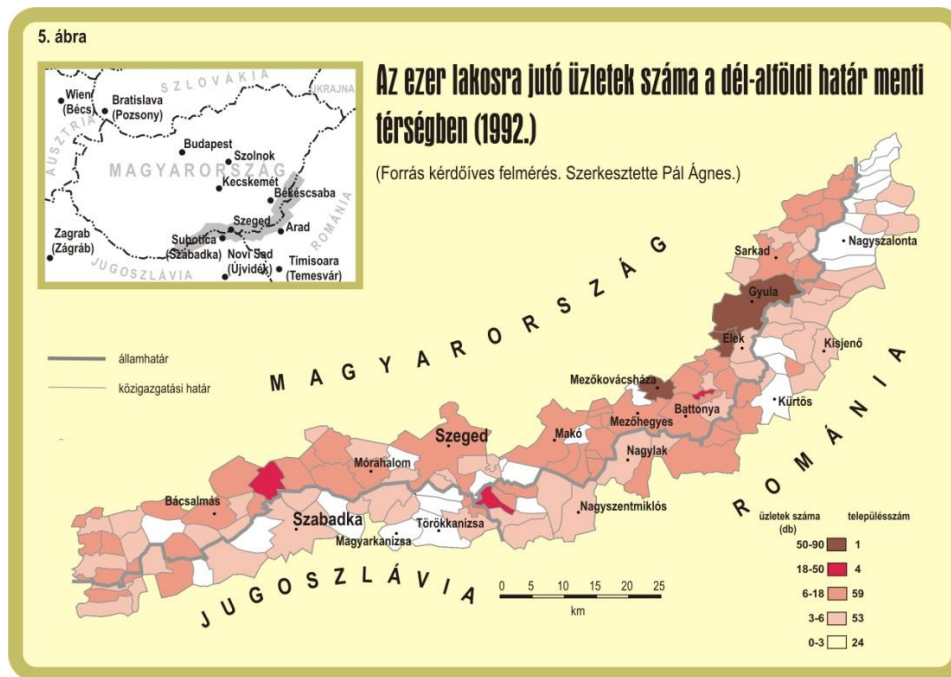


Figure 9 – The number of the shops per 1.000 inhabitants in the border zone of the Southern Great Plain 1992.

Source: questionnaire-based survey ed. by Pál, Á. 1992.

3.7.2. Transport

As it has been stated earlier, the infrastructural development was neglected in the entire region, especially in the border zone researched. The towns of the region were perhaps in a more favourable situation, when compared with smaller settlements of the region

For the purposes of public transport there are international railway lines and shorter international lines operating between Subotica and Szeged. Road transport is the most popular form of transport between Hungary and Serbia. There are three international border crossing stations. In addition, there are two border crossing points, open for Hungarian and Serbian citizens only. One of the disadvantageous features of the region is that only those settlements are included in transport routes, which are directly located along main transport routes.

3.8 Education

The characteristics of border zone settlements are mostly different from the characteristics of the settlements in the inner areas of the country. As a consequence of peripheral location, the relations between settlements is mostly one-sided, unlike in other areas. The structure of relations is incomplete and they can be characterized by lower intensity. Earlier these relations were clearly disadvantageous. Today there is a new situation, although, the new features are not necessarily beneficial either.

The necessity of active relations and cooperation was raised in the past, too. When mutual interests are being recognized, next the programmes need to be finetuned and joint regional projects need to be elaborated. Such programmes are available in all economic areas. There are examples in the area of health care and education, too.

At present it is the task of the government to finance primary education. It is a task which can only be successfully performed if local governments also take part in it. Decreasing

population figures, changes in the demographic conditions and decreasing funds create near-tragic situation in several border zone settlements. The normative financial rules defined by the amendments of the Public Education Act also create many problems for school management and local governments alike. (Figure 10)

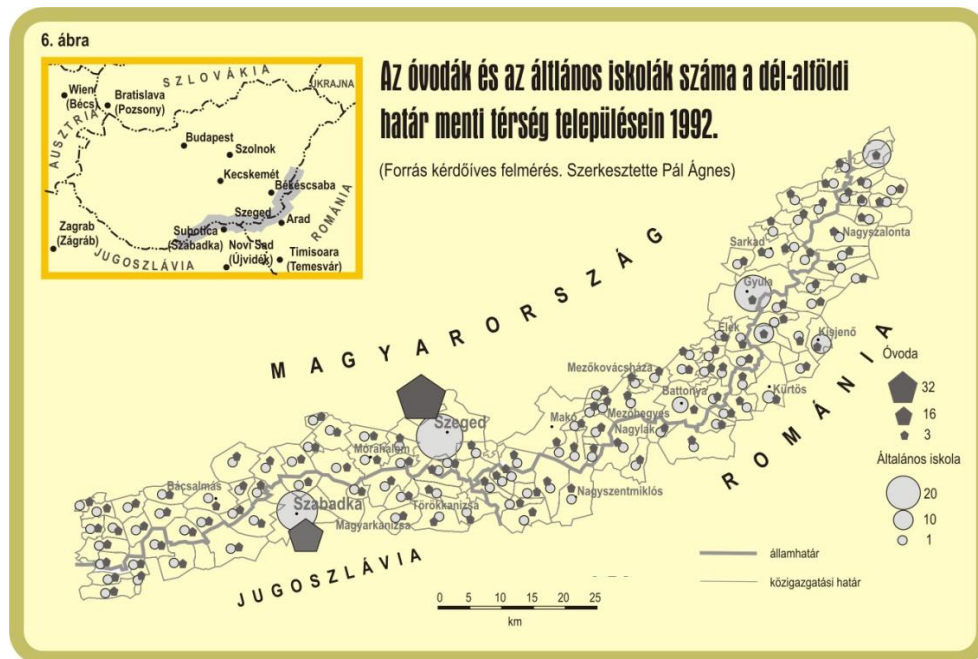


Figure 10 – The number of kindergartens and primary schools in the border zone of the Southern Great Plain 1992.

Source: questionnaire-based survey ed. by Pál, Á. 1992.

In small and medium-size settlements it is the operation and maintenance of schools which is problematic. By the paragraphs of the Public Education Act the state is responsible for organizing and financing public education. The state exercises this right and does this duty through county-level and local governments, but the state may transfer this right to churches, foundations and the private sector, too.

Education, has always had a role as a spatial organizer in Szeged, a traditional university centre. From our questionnaire-based research it has become clear that students (belonging to the Hungarian minority in the neighbouring countries) often come and study at the University of Szeged. Students in Szeged and Békéscsaba often come from the historical towns of Transylvania (Romania) including Cluj, Targu Mures and Miercures Ciuc, or, from the northern Backa region. This role of education is of special significance in higher education and it can be linked to the towns of the region. (Szeged, Subotica, Salonta). (HERENDI:1996)

3.9 The characteristics of religious relations

Religious relations have lately been strengthening in the region. It is manifested in the popularization of wellknown places for pilgrimages, respect for old traditions and rituals; people often seek spiritual peace and shift towards transcendentalism

4. The characteristics of the Danube -Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregion

The role of national borders as 'barriers' came into being as a result of the historical events that had taken place during the centuries past. The military, administrative, social and economic phenomena of the various historical periods also contributed to the phenomenon. This is why, when considering the inhabitants of border zone areas, they always had to cope with disadvantageous circumstances.

The first border zones came into being in the late 1950s along the German-Swedish-Finnish and the Dutch-German as well as the German- French-Swiss borders. The aim of the establishment of these prototypes of border zones was to abolish the historical barriers in the border zones and to counterbalance the disadvantages and inequalities, the consequences of peripheral location.

In the late 1980s as well as throughout the 1990s, due to the political changes occurring in the Central- and Eastern European countries, new circumstances were already detectable: these Central and Eastern European states made approaches toward the European Union and expanded their activities in the area of cross- border cooperation, too.

The emergence of regions is a significant development in cross- border development in Europe. Thus it is in the interest of all parties concerned to finetune the possible models of cross- border location.

The economic cooperation within the Szeged-Timisoara-Novi Sad region represented the main topic on the agenda of the 'triple meeting', organized in December 1995. In the following year a conference, entitled 'Euroregion in the vicinity of the Danube, Mures and Tisa rivers' was organized. The conference talks and presentations were aimed at uniting the adequate regional organizations in the three countries. The already existing relations and the new potentials were also overviewed.

The cooperation within the Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregion was legalized by the decision of the Csongrád County general assembly in 1996. (Figure 11.)



Figure 11 – Parts of the Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregion
Ed. by Pál, Á. 2009.

It was the Serbian regions of Voivodina and Banat as well as the Romanian counties of Hunedoara and Caras-Severin and from Hungary the counties of Bács-Kiskun, Békés, Jász-

Nagykun-Szolnok that joined the Euroregion. This latter Hungarian county left in 1992. In our investigations the empirical methods dominated, but statistical figures (in relation to Subotica, Oradea, Budapest and Szeged), literary texts, specialist publications and questionnaire-based surveys were also used. In addition to describing the characteristics of the region, we also aimed at pinpointing the existing asymmetries.

4.1. The emergence of the Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregion in the Great Plain

The Euroregion covers the southern part of the area called the Great Plain, the lower Tisa region, the loess plateaus in Backa, Banat and Békés-Csanád counties. Regional cooperation can be successful in this region because it has beneficial geographical, economic and social conditions. Currently, it is the borders, the administrative features and some political factors that represent the most significant obstacles.

The area is divided into three parts by the Hungarian-Serbian, the Hungarian-Romanian and the Serbian-Romanian borders. A consequence of this location is that the spatial relations ceased to exist, or, even if they do exist, their intensity decreased. By the end of the 1980s, the period when the political systems changed in Central and Eastern Europe, in this region the necessity of bringing about new border zones also became manifest. The process was greatly delayed by the Yugoslav war in a political, economic, social and cultural sense.

Border zone cooperation represents an integral part of the foreign policy of the individual countries. Socially and economically it is closely related to the 'four freedoms' within the European Union, that is the freedom of movement of goods, people, services and capital over borders. There is also a trilateral agreement, with the main aim of developing the relations in the human and economic sphere, and support the integration into a European framework.

The area of the region is 77.461 km², the length of the common border is 590 km; the number of inhabitants is 5.8 million. (Figure 12)



Figure 12 – The Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euro region. The area for border zone research.
Ed. by Pál, Á. 2009.

When examining social resources it was of primary significance to analyse the distribution of population in the area, its population density and settlement structure. As it is attested by the figures it is the Voivodina region, where the population figures and population density are the highest.

In the entire region it is agriculture which represents the strongest sector in the economy. Agriculture-related industries are also significant. When considering the number of employees and the proportion of economic branches, it can be seen that it is the Voivodina region where one quarter of the employees of the region (1.6 million) work. These figures also relate to unemployment figures and the distribution of working-age inhabitants in the region.

When exploring human resources it becomes clear that unemployment figures are high, the number of employees is going down or stagnating in Voivodina and in the Romanian counties of Timis and Hunedoara, The unemployment rate is the highest in Voivodina, while it is the lowest in the Hungarian Csongrád county and in the Romanian Arad and Timis counties. (Figure 13)

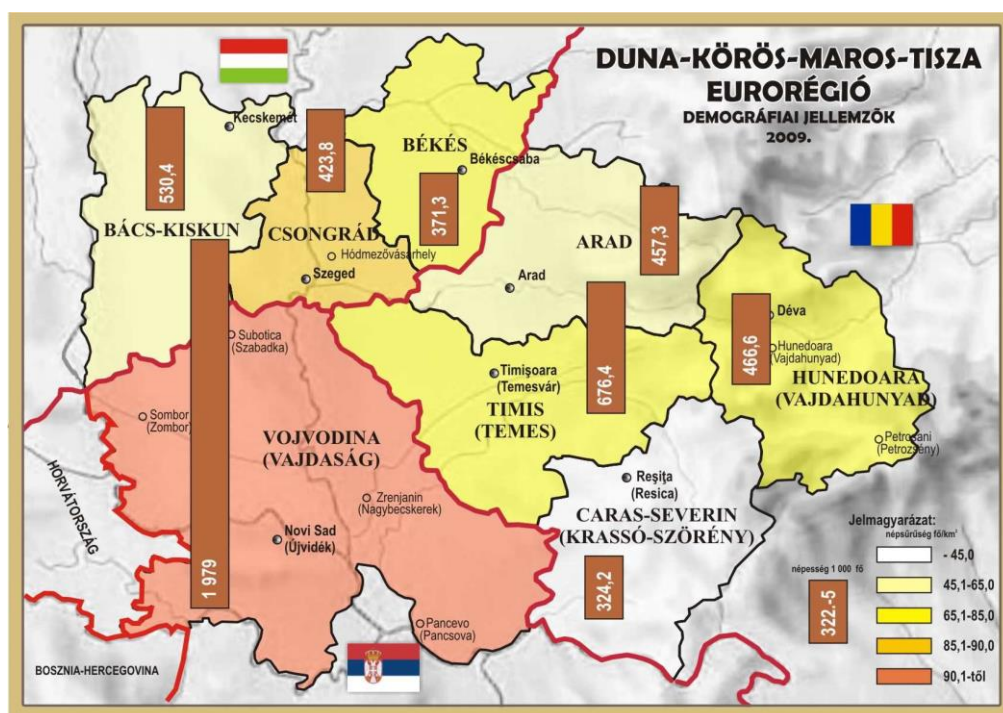


Figure 13 - The Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregion: demographic characteristics 2009.
Ed. by Pál, Á. 2009.

As far as the level of economic development is concerned, there are several asymmetries in the region. The reasons behind this phenomenon include differences in human resources and the heterogeneous development of the economy. The region's dominant economic branch is agriculture and its industry has nowadays been undergoing a change. Due

to low productivity and the lack of capital explain the fact that the agricultural traditions of the Great Plain region have been preserved. (ploughlands, vineyards, meadows and pastures) (Figure 14)

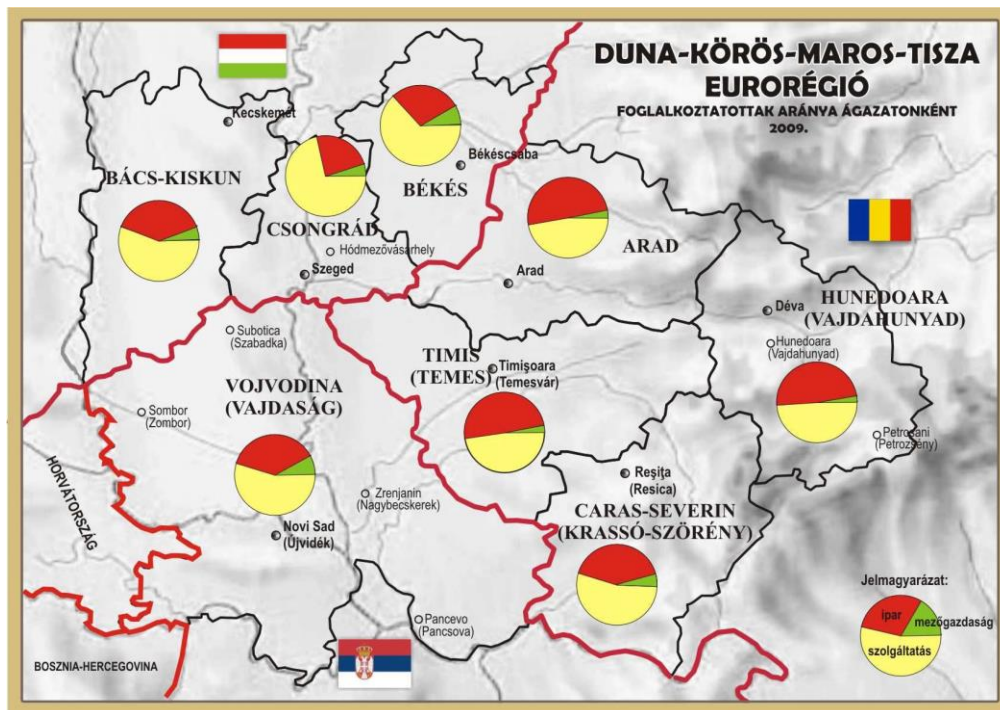


Figure 14 - The Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregion: the proportion of people employed by sectors 2009.
Ed. by Pál, Á. 2009.

After the Yugoslav war the agricultural areas in the Voivodina region were cultivated again. This is here that the ratio of ploughlands and gardens is the highest. In the Hungarian counties of the region the size of cultivated land is shrinking and the number of agricultural employees is going down, too. (Figure 15)



Figure 15 - The Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregion: unemployment to population ratio 2009.
Ed. by Pál, Á. 2009.

Industrial development is stagnating and the traditional industrial branches including food-, textile-, clothing-, leather timber industries and the production of shoes did not commonly survive privatization. The industry of the region is unable to renew itself without help. The expansion of food industry and the emergence of new industries is possible only if multinational companies invest in the region. There are already some signs indicating this slow, but steady development. In the individual counties there are various forms of enterprizes. (Figure 16.)

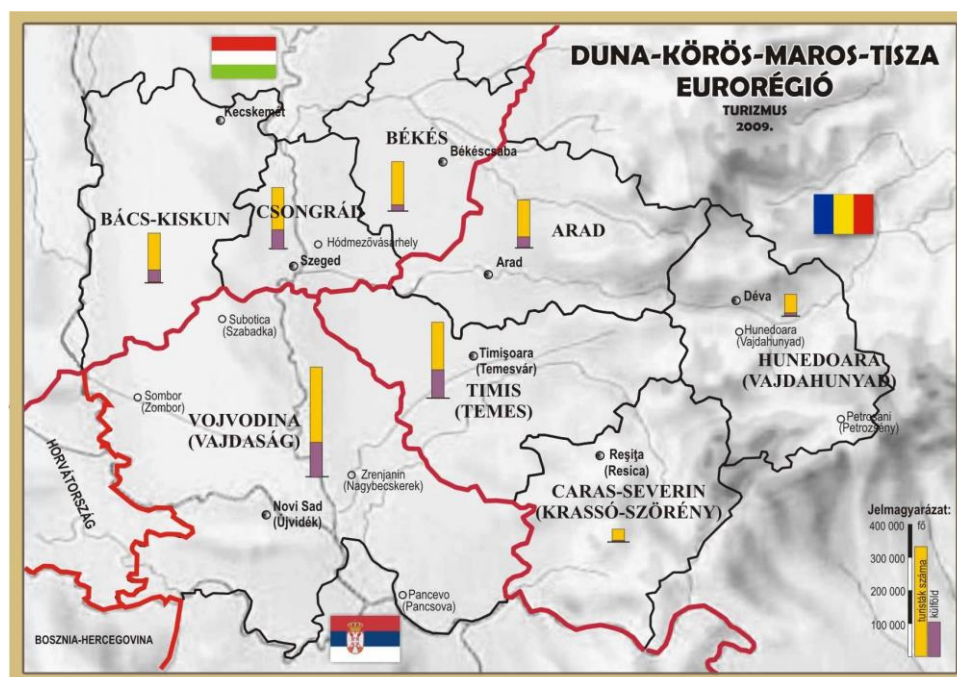


Figure 16 - The Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregion: tourism 2009.
Ed. by Pál, Á. 2009.

Entrepreneurs are primarily attracted to the counties of the Hungarian part of the region (that is also possible that there were more people willing to fill in the questionnaires here). These enterprises are primarily related to agricultural work or trade, their engagement in industrial activities is rare, although, the region has the potential to lay the foundation of state-of-the-art industrial branches including electrotechnology and precision engineering.

In addition to the investment of capital, the level of industrial development could be raised by strengthening regional economic relations, developing infrastructure and tourism. Other areas for potential development include IT-based innovations, the alleviation of environmental problems, the construction of road networks, the cleaning of waterways, cooperation in the area of education and communication and the strengthening of relations between the individual settlements. (e.g. Makó-Sannicolau Mare). Long-term aims include long-range cooperation and the strengthening of competitiveness. Small towns could become the heart and soul of further development of the Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregion. (Figure 17))



Figure 17 - The Danube-Kris-Mures-Tisa Euroregion: GDP per capita 2009.
Ed. by Pál, Á. 2009.

5. Conclusion

The developmental tendencies within the Euroregion are of peripheric nature. The network of relationships is one-sided and there are asymmetrical characteristics, which, did not disappear, instead, they have become even more manifest.

When examining all the three sides of the border it can be concluded that the main differences are hidden in the customs, language, political views and economic development of the peoples living in the border zone. The asymmetries may contribute to the competitiveness of an individual region, but they may halt the overall development, too.

The smaller regions without border crossing stations are in an even more disadvantageous situation. Between two disadvantageous regions integration is not an option; instead, cooperation should be encouraged. (For example the relationship between the more developed Hungarian and the less developed Romanian side of the border) In the new region in the making, competitiveness is a potential and its success is not granted by hard resources (agriculture and industry), but by soft resources, including culture, customs and education.

The region –except for some towns including Szeged, Subotica, Kanjiza, Makó, Sannicolau Mare – in general is not attractive enough for foreign capital. The controversy is that, if the border zone is excluded from regional development, it may mean a permanent source of tension for the three countries concerned.

Consequently, the development of these border zones is of utmost importance for them so as to catch up with other, more developed regions.

Afterword

The studies, overviewed in the article attest to the fact that the research into areas in the vicinity of Hungary's borders became a significant topic for Hungarian geographers in the last one and a half decades.

In the first phase of investigations the problem area itself was identified by researchers. Is the development of border zone settlements different from the development of those, located in other regions? If yes, what differences can be identified? Presumably, border zone location and the proximity of the border itself trigger changes in the development of a settlement, either in a positive, or, in a negative sense.

In the next phase of investigations – in the period from 1991-1994 – empirical research was carried out. In Hungary statistical analyses were carried out and questionnaire-based research was done in relation to the Austrian-Hungarian, Romanian-Hungarian, Yugoslav-Hungarian and later the Slovak-Hungarian border zones. This research was primarily aimed at exploring the economic conditions within the given border zone region and, as a result, it was concluded that the border zone location has its advantages in case a developed region meets another, relatively developed area. If on both sides of the border there are underdeveloped areas, that is 'poverty meets poverty' or, if there are asymmetries, then border zone location preserves the region's peripheral characteristics

The majority of settlements located near the Austrian-Hungarian border underwent very promising changes and innovation spread in the region. In other border zones it was only the bigger cities which were able to profit from the open borders, and this phenomenon was due to their dominant service functions including shopping, health care and banking services.

Later, mostly under the influence of Euregions-in-the-making, the interest of researchers shifted towards cross-border cooperation. In this phase of research the main question was how to boost the economy of peripheral border zone settlements and how to explore the advantages of border zone location including cooperation and project work. The

expansion of market economy, new businesses and the intensification of the flow of capital played an increasingly significant role in our renewed research.

In the midst of all these changes the question arises how to classify border zone research within geography and regional studies? The problems of border zone location represent a true interdisciplinary area in geography. The research into borders is part of political geography, but the developmental disparities of the individual areas are researched by regional geography or one or another area of regional studies. Several aspects of border zones are parts of economic geography, demography or urban geography. The 'geography of border zones' investigates the interaction of borders and/or other elements of the social and economic space and explores topics, including the emergence and dissolution of borders, their political significance, their impact on society and economy, their dividing or uniting roles, and their advantageous or disadvantageous role on the living conditions of people. The relationship between borders and their environment is increasingly mutual. Thus, generally speaking, the main research topic in the 'geography of border zones' is the border and its social and economic environment. Due to its interdisciplinary characteristics it has several branches and auxiliary sciences. It is an impossible task to enlist all of these, but the most significant ones include political geography, military geography, economic geography, human geography, demography, urban geography, economics, and, even philosophy.

It is entrusted by the author of this article that this volume would greatly contribute to keeping the exploration of border zones in the centre of the research interest of academics and that this topic will be a useful addition to the ever-expanding areas of geographic investigations.

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